**INTERNET**


---

**SITTING DAYS—2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1, 2, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 30, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1, 2, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**RADIO BROADCASTS**

Broadcasts of proceedings of the Parliament can be heard on the following Parliamentary and News Network radio stations, in the areas identified.

- **CANBERRA** 103.9FM
- **SYDNEY** 630 AM
- **NEWCASTLE** 1458 AM
- **GOSFORD** 98.1 FM
- **BRISBANE** 936 AM
- **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—SEVENTH 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 Phillip Anthony Barresi, the Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop, Mr Barry Wayne Haase, Mr Michael John Hatton, the Hon. Duncan James Colquhoun Kerr SC, 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—Mrs Kay Elizabeth Hull 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, Hon. Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams, Hon. Dick Godfrey</td>
<td>Lyons, Tas</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanese, Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, Hon. John Duncan</td>
<td>Gwydir, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Peter James</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey, Hon. Frances Esther</td>
<td>McEwen, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baird, Hon. Bruce George</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker, Mark Horden</td>
<td>Braddon, Tas</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, Hon. Robert Charles</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barresi, Phillip Anthony</td>
<td>Deakin, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett, Kerry Joseph</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beazley, Hon. Kim Christian</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevis, Hon. Archibald Ronald</td>
<td>Brisbane, Qld</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billson, Hon. Bruce Fredrick</td>
<td>Dunkley, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird, Sharon</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen</td>
<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel</td>
<td>Curtin, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen, Christopher Eyles</td>
<td>Prospect, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Russell Evan</td>
<td>McMillan, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brough, Hon. Malcolm Thomas</td>
<td>Longman, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Anna Elizabeth</td>
<td>Chisholm, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Watson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, Anthony Michael</td>
<td>Holt, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadman, Hon. Alan Glyndwr</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cauley, Hon. Ian Raymond</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciobo, Steven Michele</td>
<td>Moncrieff, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb, Hon. John Kenneth</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corcoran, Ann Kathleen</td>
<td>Isaacs, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costello, Hon. Peter Howard</td>
<td>Higgins, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crean, Hon. Simon Findlay</td>
<td>Hotham, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danby, Michael</td>
<td>Melbourne Ports, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downer, Hon. Alexander John Gosse</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draper, Patricia</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards, Hon. Graham John</td>
<td>Cowan, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliot, Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, Annette Louise</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, Katherine Margaret</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elson, Kay Selma</td>
<td>Forde, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson, Craig Anthony</td>
<td>Rankin, Qld</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entsch, Hon. Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer, Hon. Patrick Francis</td>
<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fawcett, David Julian</td>
<td>Wakefield, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Laurence Donald Thomas</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Martin John, AM</td>
<td>Batman, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Michael Durrell</td>
<td>Bass, Tas</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forrest, John Alexander</td>
<td>Mallee, Vic</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambaro, Hon. Teresa</td>
<td>Petrie, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrett, Peter Robert, AM</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gash, Joanna</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoghegan, Steven</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George, Jennie</td>
<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgiou, Petro</td>
<td>Kooyong, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibbons, Stephen William</td>
<td>Bendigo, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillard, Julia Eileen</td>
<td>Lalor, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grierson, Sharon Joy</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin, Alan Peter</td>
<td>Bruce, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haase, Barry Wayne</td>
<td>Kalgoorlie, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Jill Griffiths</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardgrave, Hon. Gary Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartsuyker, Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatton, Michael John</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawker, Hon. David Peter Maxwell</td>
<td>Wannon, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry, Stuart</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoare, Kelly Joy</td>
<td>Charlton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey, Hon. Joseph Benedict</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard, Hon. John Winston</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull, Kay Elizabeth</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irwin, Julia Claire</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenkins, Henry Alfred</td>
<td>Scullin, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangle, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Michael Andrew</td>
<td>Ryan, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jull, Hon. David Francis</td>
<td>Fadden, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katter, Hon. Robert Carl</td>
<td>Kennedy, Qld</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keenan, Michael Fayat</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Hon. De-Anne Margaret</td>
<td>Dawson, Qld</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Hon. Jacqueline Marie</td>
<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerr, Hon. Duncan James Colquhoun, SC</td>
<td>Denison, Tas</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laming, Andrew Charles</td>
<td>Bowman, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence, Hon. Carmen Mary</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ley, Hon. Susan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay, Peter John</td>
<td>Herbert, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livermore, Kirsten Fiona</td>
<td>Capricornia, Qld</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lloyd, Hon. James Eric</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin</td>
<td>Groom, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macklin, Jennifer Louise</td>
<td>Jagajaga, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, Louise Elizabeth</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, Margaret Ann</td>
<td>McPherson, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McArthur, Fergus Stewart</td>
<td>Corangamite, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McClelland, Robert Bruce</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McGauran, Hon. Peter John</td>
<td>Gippsland, Vic</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McPhail, Robert Francis</td>
<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melham, Daryl</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirabella, Sophie</td>
<td>Indi, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moylan, Hon. Judith Eleanor</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murphy, John Paul</td>
<td>Lowe, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairn, Hon. Gary Roy</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson, Hon. Brendan John</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neville, Paul Christopher</td>
<td>Hinkler, Qld</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Connor, Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Connor, Gavan Michael</td>
<td>Corio, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Julie Ann</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearce, Hon. Christopher John</td>
<td>Aston, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilcher, Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price, Hon. Leo Roger Spurway</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosser, Hon. Geoffrey Daniel</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick, Harry Vernon</td>
<td>Franklin, Tas</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall, Don James</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson, Kym</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripoll, Bernard Fernando</td>
<td>Oxley, Qld</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robb, Hon. Andrew John, AO</td>
<td>Goldstein, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxon, Nicola Louise</td>
<td>Gellibrand, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudd, Kevin Michael</td>
<td>Griffith, Qld</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawford, Rodney Weston</td>
<td>Port Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schultz, Albert John</td>
<td>Hume, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Hon. Bruce Craig</td>
<td>Maranoa, Qld</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secker, Patrick Damien</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sercombe, Robert Charles Grant</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slipper, Hon. Peter Neil</td>
<td>Fisher, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Anthony David Hawthorn</td>
<td>Casey, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Stephen Francis</td>
<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward</td>
<td>Liniari, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somilway, Hon. Alexander Michael</td>
<td>Fairfax, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southcott, Andrew John</td>
<td>Boothby, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, Hon. Sharman Nancy</td>
<td>Murray, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan, Wayne Maxwell</td>
<td>Lilley, Qld</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanner, Lindsay James</td>
<td>Melbourne, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Cameron Paul</td>
<td>Blair, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, Kelvin John</td>
<td>Wills, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticehurst, Kenneth Vincent</td>
<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tollner, David William</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>CLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truss, Hon. Warren Errol</td>
<td>Wide Bay, Qld</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuckey, Hon. Charles Wilson</td>
<td>O’Connor, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnbull, Hon. Malcolm Bligh</td>
<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale, Hon. Mark Anthony James</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale, Hon. Danna Sue</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vamvakinou, Maria</td>
<td>Calwell, Vic</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasta, Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Bonner, Qld</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakelin, Barry Hugh</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washer, Malcolm James</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Kim William</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor, Antony Harold Curties</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, Vic</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
Prime Minister
The Hon. John Winston Howard MP

Minister for Transport and Regional Services and
Deputy Prime Minister
The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP

Treasurer
The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP

Minister for Trade
The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP

Minister for Defence
The Hon. Dr Brendan John Nelson MP

Minister for Foreign Affairs
The Hon. Alexander John Gosse Downer MP

Minister for Health and Ageing and Leader of the
House
The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP

Attorney-General
The Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP

Minister for Finance and Administration,
Leader of the Government in the Senate and
Vice-President of the Executive Council
Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
and Deputy Leader of the House
The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Senator the Hon. Amanda Eloise Vanstone

Minister for Education, Science and Training and
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for
Women’s Issues
The Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP

Minister for Families, Community Services and
Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the
Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs
The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP

Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources
The Hon. Ian Elgin Macfarlane MP

Minister for Employment and Workplace
Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime
Minister for the Public Service
The Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP

Minister for Communications, Information
Technology and the Arts and Deputy Leader of
the Government in the Senate
Senator the Hon. Helen Lloyd Coonan

Minister for the Environment and Heritage
Senator the Hon. Ian Gordon Campbell

(The above ministers constitute the cabinet)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice and Customs and Manager of Government Business in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts and Sport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Charles Roderick Kemp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services and Minister Assisting the Minister for Workplace Relations</td>
<td>The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Community Services</td>
<td>The Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>The Hon. Gary Roy Nairn MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Gary Douglas Hardgrave MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Santo Santoro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business and Tourism</td>
<td>The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads</td>
<td>The Hon. James Eric Lloyd MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Frederick Billson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Mansell Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon. Robert Charles Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. John Alexander Lindsay (Sandy) Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew John Robb MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher John Pearce MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>The Hon. Gregory Andrew Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Penelope Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary (Foreign Affairs)</td>
<td>The Hon. Patrick Francis Farmer MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REPRESENTATIVES
MAIN COMMITTEE
DAY, DATE MONTH YEAR

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)
SHADOW MINISTRY—continued

Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs and Health Regulation Laurie Donald Thomas Ferguson MP
Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Gavan Michael O’Connor MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Revenue and Shadow Minister for Small Business and Competition Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Shadow Minister for Transport Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O’Brien
Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy
Shadow Minister for Homeland Security and Security The Hon. Archibald Ronald Bevis MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Shadow Special Minister of State Alan Peter Griffin MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Industry, Procurement and Personnel Senator Thomas Mark Bishop
Shadow Minister for Immigration Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Carers Senator Jan Elizabeth McLucas
Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate Senator Joseph William Ludwig
Shadow Minister for Overseas Aid and Pacific Island Affairs Robert Charles Grant Sercombe MP
Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Senator Annette Hurley
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Reconciliation and the Arts Peter Robert Garrett MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition John Paul Murphy MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and Veterans’ Affairs The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Heritage Jennie George MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Industry, Infrastructure and Industrial Relations Bernard Fernando Ripoll MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration Ann Kathleen Corcoran MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Treasury Catherine Fiona King MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Science and Water Senator Ursula Mary Stephens
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia and Indigenous Affairs The Hon. Warren Edward Snowdon MP

ix
## CONTENTS

**MONDAY, 30 OCTOBER**

**CHAMBER**

- Public Accounts and Audit Committee—Annual Report .......................................................... 1
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Protecting the Great Barrier Reef from Oil Drilling and Exploration) Amendment Bill 2006—
- First Reading ........................................................................................................................ 3
- Private Members’ Business—
  - Women in the Workforce ................................................................................................. 5
  - School Curricula .................................................................................................................. 13

**Statements by Members**—

- Fresh FM ...................................................................................................................................... 20
- Boothby Electorate ...................................................................................................................... 21
- Prostate Cancer .......................................................................................................................... 21
- Ellison Public School ..................................................................................................................... 21
- Werribee Secondary College ....................................................................................................... 22
- Blacktown: MRI Licence .............................................................................................................. 22
- Reva Electric Car .......................................................................................................................... 23
- Relationships Australia ............................................................................................................... 23
- Prospect Electorate: Pemulwuy Postbox ................................................................................... 24
- Horsham College ....................................................................................................................... 24

**Condolences**—

- Mr Richard Cleaver AM CBE ................................................................................................... 24

**Questions Without Notice**—

- Midnight Oil ............................................................................................................................... 25
- Interest Rates ............................................................................................................................... 25
- Workplace Relations ................................................................................................................... 25
- Interest Rates ............................................................................................................................... 25
- Economy ..................................................................................................................................... 26
- Interest Rates ............................................................................................................................... 26
- Workplace Relations ................................................................................................................... 27
- Interest Rates ............................................................................................................................... 27
- Workplace Relations ................................................................................................................... 27
- Distinguished Visitors .................................................................................................................... 28

**Questions Without Notice: Additional Answers**—

- Interest Rates ............................................................................................................................... 28
- Workplace Relations ................................................................................................................... 28
- Interest Rates ............................................................................................................................... 28
- Yemen ......................................................................................................................................... 30
- Interest Rates ............................................................................................................................... 31
- Iraq ............................................................................................................................................... 31
- Water Entitlements ....................................................................................................................... 32
- East Timor .................................................................................................................................... 33
- Climate Change ........................................................................................................................... 34
- School Chaplains .......................................................................................................................... 35
- Climate Change ............................................................................................................................ 36
- Climate Change ............................................................................................................................ 37
- Oil for Food Program .................................................................................................................... 38
- Indigenous Communities ............................................................................................................. 39

**Questions Without Notice: Additional Answers**—

- Interest Rates ............................................................................................................................... 40
- Water Entitlements ....................................................................................................................... 40
CONTENTS—continued

Personal Explanations........................................................................................................40
Main Committee—
  Family and Human Services Committee—Reference .............................................41
Petitions—
  Organ Harvesting........................................................................................................41
  Organ Harvesting........................................................................................................42
  Organ Harvesting........................................................................................................42
  Organ Harvesting........................................................................................................43
  Falun Gong ..................................................................................................................43
  Australian Broadcasting Corporation: Funding .........................................................44
  Fuel: Prices ..................................................................................................................44
  Legal Services ............................................................................................................44
Private Members’ Business—
  Anaphylaxis ..............................................................................................................45
  Carers Week ..............................................................................................................53
Grievance Debate—
  Climate Change ........................................................................................................60
  Iraq ............................................................................................................................62
  Legal Aid ...................................................................................................................65
  Future Materials Awards .........................................................................................67
  Westmead Hospital School .....................................................................................69
  Australian Wheat Board .........................................................................................72
  Regional Development ............................................................................................74
  Workplace Relations ...............................................................................................76
  Drought .....................................................................................................................76
  Indigenous Affairs .................................................................................................76
Maritime Legislation Amendment (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Bill 2006—
  Report from Main Committee ..................................................................................78
  Third Reading ...........................................................................................................78
Public Works Committee Amendment Bill 2006—
  Report from Main Committee ..................................................................................78
  Third Reading ...........................................................................................................78
Tax Laws Amendment (2006 Measures No. 5) Bill 2006 ............................................79
Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Amendment Bill 2006......79
Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Superannuation Safety and Other Measures)
  Bill 2006 .......................................................................................................................79
Petroleum Retail Legislation Repeal Bill 2006 ................................................................79
Trade Marks Amendment Bill 2006 .............................................................................79
Parliamentary Superannuation Amendment Bill 2006—
  Assent .......................................................................................................................79
Committees—
  Corporations and Financial Services Committee—Membership ................................79
  Schools Assistance (Learning Together—Achievement Through Choice and
  Opportunity) Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2006..............................................................79
  Medical Indemnity Legislation Amendment Bill 2006...............................................79
  Customs Amendment (2007 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2006 ....................79
  Customs Tariff Amendment (2007 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2006—
    Returned from the Senate .......................................................................................79
  Judiciary Legislation Amendment Bill 2006—
    First Reading ...........................................................................................................79
CONTENTS—continued

Financial Sector Legislation Amendment (Trans-Tasman Banking Supervision) Bill 2006—
   First Reading .................................................................................................................. 79
Trade Practices Amendment Legislation ............................................................................. 79
Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006—
   Second Reading ............................................................................................................. 80
   Consideration in Detail ................................................................................................. 108
   Third Reading ................................................................................................................. 120
Questions Without Notice: Additional Answers—
   Oil for Food Program ..................................................................................................... 121
Adjournment—
   Interest Rates ............................................................................................................... 121
   Volunteer Bush Firefighters .......................................................................................... 122
   Muslim Communities ..................................................................................................... 123
   Sri Lanka ...................................................................................................................... 123
   Solar Energy .................................................................................................................. 125
   Climate Change ............................................................................................................. 126
   Muslim Community ........................................................................................................ 127
   Muslim Community ........................................................................................................ 128
Requests For Detailed Information—
   Hansard ....................................................................................................................... 128
Notices ............................................................................................................................... 129
MAIN COMMITTEE
Ministerial Statements—
   Skills for the Future ..................................................................................................... 130
Committees—
   Treaties Committee—Reports ..................................................................................... 140
Family and Human Services Committee—Report: Government Response ...................... 147

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
   Heads of Missions—(Question No. 299) ..................................................................... 157
   Massage Service—(Question No. 1773) ....................................................................... 157
   Human Services: Staffing—(Question No. 2741) ......................................................... 158
   Medicare Smartcard—(Question No. 2961) .................................................................. 162
   Pensions and Benefits—(Question No. 3021) ............................................................... 163
   Chifley Electorate: Programs and Services—(Question Nos 3200 and 3202) ............... 165
   Massage Service—(Question No. 3334) ...................................................................... 166
   Media Training—(Question No. 3352) ......................................................................... 167
   Human Services: Office Location—(Question No. 3420) ............................................ 168
   Illegal Fishing—(Question No. 3441) .......................................................................... 169
   International Transfer of Prisoners Treaty—(Question No. 3555) .......................... 170
   Welfare to Work—(Question No. 3638) ...................................................................... 171
   Leadership Coaching—(Question No. 3694) ............................................................... 171
   Medicare Office: Wollongong—(Question No. 3717) ................................................. 172
   Australian Technical Colleges—(Question No. 3755) .............................................. 172
   Medicare Smartcard—(Question No. 3770) ............................................................... 186
   Medicare Smartcard—(Question No. 3771) ............................................................... 187
   Income and Assets Test—(Question No. 3789) ........................................................... 188
   Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 3822) ........................................... 189
   More Doctors for Outer Metropolitan Areas Scheme—(Question No. 3854) ............... 189
   Mr Scott Morrison—(Question No. 3855) ................................................................. 190
   Mr Scott Morrison—(Question No. 3857) ................................................................. 191
CONTENTS—continued

Australian Government Solicitor Advisory Board—(Question No. 3882)....................... 191
Pensions and Benefits—(Question No. 3887)................................................................. 192
Monday, 30 October 2006

The SPEAKER (Hon. David Hawker) took the chair at 12.30 pm and read prayers.

COMMITTEES

Public Accounts and Audit Committee Annual Report

Mr ANTHONY SMITH (Casey) (12.31 pm)—On behalf of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit I present the committee’s report entitled Report 408: Annual report 2005-2006, together with executive minutes on reports Nos. 391, 395, 398, 399, 400, 402, 403 and 404.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Mr ANTHONY SMITH—I am pleased to present the annual report of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit. The report is an important accountability mechanism by which parliament, and through it the public, can conveniently assess the committee’s performance.

The duties of the committee are described in the Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act. In general terms, the duties are to: examine the financial affairs of authorities of the Commonwealth, and examine all reports of the Auditor-General; consider the operations and resources of the Audit Office; approve or reject the Prime Minister’s recommendation for appointment of the Auditor-General and the Independent Auditor; and increase parliamentary and public awareness of the financial and related operations of government.

During 2005-06 the committee has fulfilled each of these responsibilities. Unlike other committees, the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit can initiate its own policy inquiries without permission or reference to any minister, government or the parliament. During 2005-06 the committee has undertaken three major policy inquiries.


The committee received 81 submissions and undertook public hearings and inspections in major capital cities and major regional areas right across Australia. The committee has now concluded taking evidence for the inquiry and will deliver its final report in the near future.

In December 2005 the committee resolved to inquire into a range of taxation matters. At September 2006 the inquiry had received 56 submissions and taken evidence at public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Launceston and Melbourne. The committee expects to report in the first half of 2007.

In March 2006 the committee resolved to review the financial reporting and equipment acquisition of both the Department of Defence and Defence Materiel Organisation. As well, the committee has continued a very full schedule in fulfilling its responsibility to review Auditor-General’s reports, during 2005-06.

Report 407: Review of Auditor-General’s Reports tabled between 18 January and 18 April 2005 was tabled in August 2006. The report contains the committee’s findings and recommendations following three public hearings into five Auditor’s reports. The reports were selected for special consideration.
from the 21 Auditor-General reports that came before the committee.

The committee has concluded taking evidence on another 16 reports that it selected from the 59 which were tabled between 17 May 2005 and 16 March of this year. The committee took evidence on the selected reports at eight public hearings. It will table its considerations and recommendations in the near future.

In May 2006, the committee reviewed the Australian National Audit Office draft budget estimates for 2006-07, and received a briefing from the Audit Office. The Auditor-General advised the committee that the office would manage within the allocated budget for 2006-07 without compromising its financial auditing function.

Section 8A of the Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act provides for the committee to approve or reject the audit minister’s—currently the Prime Minister’s—recommendation for an appointment of the Auditor-General or Independent Auditor. On 29 March 2006 the committee unanimously agreed to endorse the nomination of Mr Geoff Wilson as Independent Auditor and wrote to the Prime Minister accordingly. On behalf of the committee, I thank the previous Independent Auditor, Mr Michael Coleman. I would also like to express appreciation on behalf of the committee for the high quality of support that the Auditor-General, Mr Ian McPhee, and his staff have provided to us in relation to our inquiries.

Finally, I wish to thank my colleagues on the committee for their hard work and commitment to the committee during the year. This is the first annual report that I present as Chair of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the previous chair, the Hon. Bob Baldwin. I commend the committee’s annual report to the House.

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (12.36 pm)—As Deputy Chair of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit I also commend our annual report to the House. I support the sentiments of the chair and thank him for his efforts on behalf of our committee. I think that democracy is strengthened by the work of this committee, and I acknowledge and thank all my parliamentary colleagues who are members of that committee for their participation and their very thoughtful contributions.

I think it needs to be remembered that in the federal sphere there is no equivalent to ICAC. There is no federal public corruption body. Hopefully, we will never need one, but corruption can occur in the executive arm of government as well as the bureaucratic arm of government. If it does occur, democracy and the Australian people will be the greatest losers. But fortunately the Australian National Audit Office and the work of the JCPAA provide very close and ongoing scrutiny of all government departments and agencies. In that way they are a very powerful tool of accountability.

This annual report outlines the major inquiries that have been undertaken in this calendar year. They have been very important ones focusing on areas of government activity such as taxation, aviation security and defence expenditure. They have very direct relevance to most Australians. Those inquiries have been ambitious in their workload and their purpose, but they all offer the opportunity to bring about improvements in performance, fairness and security. I particularly look forward to the aviation security report being tabled before the end of this year. I acknowledge the hard work of the secretariat, because we have given them a particularly long and difficult year with several major inquiries happening concurrently.
One of the other areas of investigation by our committee is the regular oversight and review of all audit reports undertaken by the ANAO. We have released our reports 404 and 407, and in those we looked at financial performance and the performance outcomes in a wide range of fields. Centrelink always comes up for mention, and so does Defence. But areas like the regulation of Commonwealth radiation in nuclear activities have great currency at the moment, as do some of our other projects such as those on therapeutic goods and defence.

There have been administrative issues that I think have been dealt with very well by the committee this year, but the one that always has greatest debate is the resourcing level of the Australian National Audit Office. I make the point that we felt this time that the resource level was sufficient, but there is an area of resourcing that has not been approved, and certainly because of that the Audit Office cannot take on that role. We were in agreement that we support in the future some annual oversight by the ANAO of major Defence projects. I think an annual report would be useful to the government and certainly useful to the Department of Defence, and I look forward to that being accepted in the future so that ANAO can assist efficiency in Defence spending.

We also achieved a positive involvement in the appointment of the Independent Auditor, and it is one task the committee were intent on being involved in and exercising their duty in very properly. We made the point that a delay in having an Independent Auditor is not a good look for probity, and I am pleased to see that covered in our annual report.

We also met this year with Dr Peter Sher-gold, the Secretary to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Lynelle Briggs, the Public Service Commissioner. I hope that such meetings will become an ongoing feature of our committee, because there are issues that arise over and over again. It seems that those issues must be of interest and they certainly are of concern to those particular people in their roles. They go to rather important areas of government activity.

I want to raise a better-practice guide that has just been released by the Australian National Audit Office as something that I think shows that the committee has worked very well with the Audit Office towards overcoming some significant problem areas—areas that keep coming up, like risk management, governance, procurement and contract management, monitoring and review. This manual, ‘Implementation of Program and Policy Initiatives—Making Implementation Better’, comes with a pocket guide too, and I must say I have never seen such an excellent example of professional support and advice.

I have also enjoyed this year meeting with some Indonesian parliamentarians who were involved in governance. I think that the work that the audit committee, particularly the chair and the secretariat, do in working with governments from other countries wanting more help with governance is a great initiative. So I do congratulate all involved this year in the work of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit and look forward to further success and ongoing achievements by this important committee.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK (PROTECTING THE GREAT BARRIER REEF FROM OIL DRILLING AND EXPLORATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2006

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Albanese.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12.41 pm)—The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
(Protecting the Great Barrier Reef from Oil Drilling and Exploration) Amendment Bill 2006 is in the same form as my private member’s bill from 2004 and the same as private members’ bills moved before that by Labor members. It is unfortunate that the government has not allowed a proper debate on this bill or a vote in this House. This legislation would extend the boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park region to the exclusive economic zone. The purpose of this legislation is to do what the Howard government will not do: ensure that oil drilling cannot occur near the Great Barrier Reef.

The government’s policy, as outlined in its 2004 energy white paper, is to proceed with oil exploration and, in the future, to drill off the extremely fragile Great Barrier Reef region. Labor totally opposes this. Labor will not allow oil exploration or rigs on the reef. The Great Barrier Reef is an iconic site for Australia. The reef is a uniquely rich and beautiful environment. Its majestic colours and awesome beauty draw tourists from all around the world and, as such, the reef is a very important part of the economy of North Queensland. Protecting the Great Barrier Reef means we are also protecting thousands of jobs and a truly sustainable, dynamic tourism industry in North Queensland. Climate change, of course, also threatens the reef, and stronger action is needed to avoid extensive coral bleaching and permanent damage to the reef from climate change. To put it bluntly, if the Great Barrier Reef is damaged, so is Australia.

This bill, along with our action to avoid dangerous climate change, is part of Labor’s plan to protect the reef for all time. When it became evident in 2000 that a company called TGS-NOPEC was considering oil drilling in that area, the Labor Party expressed its strong concern. The government’s energy white paper, released in June 2004, identified four sensitive offshore basins immediately adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as high priority for oil exploration, seriously threatening the reef. The white paper confirms that the Howard government is determined to proceed with oil exploration and, in the future, drilling of the extremely fragile Great Barrier Reef region. The Liberal member for Herbert may have condemned the proposal, but it is still government policy.

It was with alarm I noted that the Liberal Party’s 2004 election energy policy, Securing Australia’s energy future, contained a map which outlined the offshore frontier basins. These frontier basins included the Queensland and Marion plateaus, the Townsville and Cato troughs and the Capricorn Basin, all of which lie to the east of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The policy highlighted their potential for petroleum exploration. Clearly, mining on or near the Great Barrier Reef is still on the government’s agenda. That is just not good enough for the people of Queensland, and it certainly is opposed by the Australian Labor Party.

Under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975, any oil drilling or prospecting in the Great Barrier Reef region is prohibited. The purpose of this piece of legislation is to extend the region so that oil drilling and prospecting in the Great Barrier Reef region—the region east of the boundary of the current marine park to the exclusive economic zone—will therefore be prohibited. It is extremely important to note that the adoption of this legislation will have no other effect than ruling out oil prospecting and subsequent drilling. There will be no effect on any fishing, commercial or recreational interests and no effect on visitation, whether it be private or through tourist operators.

All of the community in North Queensland, including commercial and recreational fishers, are opposed to any potential oil drill-
ing on the Great Barrier Reef. The tourism industry in particular is outraged that the Howard government could compromise a $4.6 billion industry for the state of Queensland by allowing oil drilling on the reef. Conservationists and the scientific community are opposed to any oil drilling on the reef. The tourism industry is opposed to oil exploration or drilling. Queensland tourism operators want to see a permanent ban on exploration or any potentially harmful activities near the reef. Industry leaders and the broader community can see the sense in protecting the reef from oil exploration and drilling, so why can’t the Howard government?

The Labor Party has pursued this issue consistently since TGS-NOPEC expressed its interest in exploration rights. The ongoing desire of the oil industry to explore in areas adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef, such as the Townsville Trough, is not going to be averted until clear direction by the government is established. This legislation provides the government with a practical no-cost mechanism to provide that direction and to rule out oil exploration and mining for good. I invite the government to take up this opportunity, allow a debate on this bill and vote for it to put it in legislation to protect the Great Barrier Reef for all time.

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.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Women in the Workforce

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (12.46 pm)—I move:

That the House:

(1) recognises the damaging impact upon Australian working women as a result of the federal Government’s WorkChoices legislation;

(2) recognises in particular the contribution Australian women make to workplaces and households across the country;

(3) takes immediate action to restore employment protection for women in the workforce;

(4) takes particular action to provide employment protection to women adversely affected by the WorkChoices legislation; and

(5) notes the Howard Government’s agenda to reduce employment conditions and employment security for women in the workforce.

I have moved this motion today to bring to the attention of the House some impacts of the government’s Work Choices legislation on the working women of Australia. In particular, I want to firstly acknowledge the important and significant role that women in the workforce play in ensuring a sufficient and productive workforce, which is so critical to the nation’s economic wellbeing. The workforce participation rate has become, and will continue to be, an important challenge for government as the population ages and the responsibility on working people to support a significant proportion of the population beyond working age increases. We are already aware of the impacts that this dynamic can have on the birthrate and also of the potentially damaging cycle of decreasing population growth with an ageing demographic.

As women entered the workforce in greater numbers over recent decades, it became clear that they and their families needed additional support in order to facilitate a balance between working and caring responsibilities. We are all aware of the growing significance of challenges such as the provision of child care in addressing this issue. However, two of the most significant issues for women in considering the amount and type of work they undertake are the predictability of working hours and the conditions under which they work. These are the issues that I believe are undermined by the
new legislation and which could actually work to push women out of the workforce or to force them to make undesirable choices between work and family responsibilities.

Australia already has a lower participation rate for women in the workforce—57.1 per cent—in comparison to other OECD countries, whilst the percentage of women employed in part-time work is higher than the average. Of most concern is that 55 per cent of women in part-time work are, in fact, employed on a casual basis and 43 per cent of these indicated in ABS data that they wanted to work more hours and were frustrated by a lack of opportunities to access training and career progression.

Earlier this year I surveyed my electorate to ask people about the challenges they face in balancing work and family responsibilities. It is the biggest response I have had to any survey of the electorate. It clearly indicated that, for many people, this was becoming an increasing problem. Most commonly, I read the comments that people had sent back which indicated that they were concerned about the capacity to plan for their family responsibilities, given the unpredictability of work responsibilities. Comments on this problem were consistent in the survey responses. One constituent wrote:

Even though I’m an experienced senior worker, because I work part time I’ve been given only minor, unchallenging work to do and have not received any workplace training in the last three years.

Another wrote:

I have to work part-time only due to the long hours my husband is now expected to work and I am unable to really pursue a career as I have to take all the responsibility for the children and household needs.

What we can see from these few examples is that families are already struggling to balance these competing demands.

I should acknowledge that some of the respondents wrote to me with very high praise for their employer’s commitment to provide flexibility to people who needed to look after children, elderly parents and so on, but it was interesting to note that these were, almost without exception, large local companies. It is clear that they had the capacity to provide some flexibility, and they should be commended for this.

A significant number of people, as I have outlined, had real problems when clashes arose between their work and family responsibilities. They made comments that talked about their ‘fear’ of seeking time off, their concern about loss of shifts if they did this, and many indicated that requests were simply refused. Many people talked about the guilt they felt about putting increasing pressures on their parents to assist with crises, such as sick children. Many of the respondents were shiftworkers and indicated that they could not access child care during the appropriate hours.

Women work, on average, in lower skilled, lower paid and lower reliability jobs generally across the retail, services and personal care sectors. They are amongst the most exposed to the new legislation, with its unbridled capacity to undermine their rights to reliable and predictable hours, fair and safe working conditions, fair access to leave and decent payment for their work. There are no doubt individual examples of women with high-demand skills and superior competency in self-representation, but they are far outweighed by women who are vulnerable in the low-skill occupations and who are afraid to assert their powers without collective rights. (Time expired)

The Speaker—Is the motion seconded?

Ms Vamvakinou—I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.
Mr BARRESI (Deakin) (12.52 pm)—I am pleased to be able to make a contribution to the motion moved by the member for Cunningham on women in the workforce. The contention on which the member for Cunningham has based this motion is false. The assertions made in the motion are false. About the only point in the entire motion that I can agree with is the recognition of the contribution Australian women make to workplaces and households across the country. We all recognise that. In fact, the government also recognises that and has provided the very flexibilities, as well as protections, that many women need through the Work Choices legislation. I will go through some of those in a short while. This motion is just one more example of the Labor Party’s preparedness to use falsehoods in an attempt to get attention for their absurd claims about this government’s workplace relations changes.

Last week I had the opportunity to visit the Queensland regional centres with the Minister Assisting the Minister for Workplace Relations.

Mrs De-Anne Kelly—Absolutely.

Mr BARRESI—In fact, we visited the electorate of the member for Dawson. We had a most enlightening experience in all the towns that we went through. One of the things that came out clearly in every town we went through is how the employees and the employers were able to sit down and negotiate the arrangements which suited their interests. Whether it was through a unionised collective agreement, a non-unionised collective agreement or AWAs, we saw through those visits that flexibility was in place and was being enjoyed by both parties in the workplace. In some cases, the arrangements had been negotiated with the support of the union movement. I had a bit of a smile on my face in one location when the union movement was involved in helping the negotiations but, at the end of the day, not one of the employees decided to join the union. I am not sure what happened there but that, once again, demonstrates that there was choice.

Since March 27, when Work Choices came in, 205,00 new jobs have been created—increased jobs, increased opportunities for Australians. Over 1,000 jobs per day have been created since March 27. Those on the other side might have had a memory lapse. They told us this time last year, as Work Choices was being negotiated, that it was going to result in mass sackings and that the more vulnerable people in our community would be the first to go. In fact, the reverse has taken place: we have seen 205,000 new jobs. Let us contrast that with the average for the last 20 years. The average for the last 20 years, for a comparable period of time, has been a growth of 79,000 jobs. This year we have seen a growth of 205,000 jobs. It is no mere coincidence. Most of those jobs—184,000 of them—have been full-time jobs. So we have seen record low unemployment and record high levels of participation. That is the truth of the matter rather than the distortions of the other side.

The member for Cunningham mentioned that the participation rate amongst women in Australia is low compared to other nations around the world. It may be low compared to other nations around the world, but it is increasing and it is improving with every week and every month that goes by. The member for Cunningham contradicted herself when she said the part-time average of participation in Australia is at the higher end. I would have thought that part-time and casual employment—which the member for Cunningham alluded to—is a choice that a lot of women make as a way of balancing the competing demands of being at home and also being at work. Women in Australia, in
many cases, are choosing part-time and casual employment as a way of meeting those very burdensome demands which are often expected of them in society, especially as they take the greatest load in most families.

Under this government, the number of women in employment has reached a record high. Women have achieved higher wages and access to greater flexibilities through a wide range of innovative working arrangements previously not available through awards. An award was very prescriptive. No matter what company you were working in, it would say that these conditions would apply and it would not take into consideration seasonal conditions, seasonal demands or things such as consumer demand for products or services, which may fluctuate from year to year. Since March 1996 the number of women in employment has increased by over one million. (Time expired.)

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (12.57 pm)—I would firstly like to congratulate the member for Cunningham on giving the House an opportunity to debate the impact of the government’s Work Choices legislation on Australian working women. Trying to balance work and family commitments is an ongoing challenge in most women’s lives. Often, these two commitments pull us in two different directions. As mothers, partners, carers and breadwinners, women often face different pressures to men. In turn, their specific needs are often also different. The ongoing contribution that Australian women make to the workplace and to households across this country must certainly never be underestimated or undervalued. Despite the critical role they play in both the family and at work, women have always had to fight for their rights to social and economic parity. The women who are most susceptible and most vulnerable to the government’s extreme Work Choices legislation are those who remain socially and financially disadvantaged and disempowered in our community. It is therefore our responsibility to recognise their plight and to fight for their rights.

This government refuses to recognise the enormous damage that its Work Choices legislation is doing and the additional difficulties that countless Australian women now face as a result of this legislation. If it were ever fair dinkum about helping women balance their work and family life in a way that protects the health and wellbeing of their families, then it would never have introduced this piece of extreme legislation and it would immediately restore employment protection for women adversely affected by the grossly misnamed Work Choices.

One of the most damaging aspects of Work Choices is the introduction of AWAs that erode security and protection in the workplace for workers, both women and men but particularly women. Under Work Choices, employers can force workers into accepting AWAs that remove conditions and safety nets from awards negotiated and fought for over a period of many years. Evidence of this can be found in ABS statistics released in June this year which show that some 90 per cent of AWAs struck since this government’s IR changes began involve the removal of at least one condition and require longer working hours, meaning less time for family and less room for women to balance the different demands of work and family life. Such is the skewed nature of the Work Choices legislation that employers are now able to impose terms and conditions and to bully and threaten their workers into accepting these terms and conditions that make balancing work and family commitments increasingly impossible.

Research shows that women are more likely to accept pay and conditions without negotiation, are less confident about negotiating individual contracts and are more likely
to be forced onto AWA’s because they leave and re-enter the workforce more frequently than men due to family responsibilities. As women are largely concentrated in retail, clerical, hospitality and community services industries, Work Choices will have a disproportionate impact on them through the process of removing award conditions and reducing pay in what are already lower paid jobs. Under AWA’s, penalty rates are often lost, annual leave and sick leave are traded off, very few agreements make provision for paid maternity leave and the gender pay gap is widened, with women on AWA’s receiving only 80 per cent of the hourly rate of men. Equally troubling is the way protections against discrimination are now at risk of being undermined by this legislation. The privatisation of employment contract details in AWA’s will make it much harder to determine whether sex discrimination in pay practices is occurring, either directly or indirectly, through the use of job classifications that isolate women in lower paid positions.

It must also be recognised that when women who are working mothers are detrimentally affected by this legislation it is also the children of those women who are affected. This was made clear to me at a community summit I recently hosted in my electorate. Representatives of the childcare industry were scathing of the effect this legislation was having on working mothers in my electorate who felt compelled to work longer hours and to effectively be on call for work at short notice. For working mothers this often means arranging child care at very short notice. Given the irregular hours and the shortage of child care across the country, this is not always possible. The childcare workers who spoke at the forum told how this affects not only the working mothers but also the children.

Working mothers who relied on family day care increasingly felt pressured to work whatever hours their employers demanded, knowing that they had no recourse open to them if they lost their job. Irregular patterns of care meant that their children were increasingly unsettled. One clear example given was of children not knowing who was picking them up from school, as they may have met their carer only that day. How settled is a child expected to be at school if they do not even know who is picking them up afterwards? How settled is a working mother expected to be at work when their child is with a carer they barely know? This is the reality of this government’s Work Choices legislation. Working women make a great contribution to the workforce and to households— (Time expired)

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (1.02 pm)—I am certainly pleased to rise in opposition to the motion that the member for Cunningham has put forward to the House today. Like many motions that come from the opposition, the problem is that this is a motion that is heavy on rhetoric but exceptionally light on fact. We heard that with both the contribution from the member for Cunningham and the contribution we just heard from the member for Calwell. If you look at the specific limbs in the member for Cunningham’s motion, I must say there is only one that I would agree with—that is, the recognition of the contribution Australian women make to workplaces and households across the country. We would universally support that proposition.

But when you delve into the facts of the other propositions in the motion put forward by the Australian Labor Party as being the negative impact of the introduction of the Howard government’s Work Choices legislation, you find that they highlight how absolutely misleading and deceptive the Australian Labor Party is being once again with this motion when it comes to Australian Work Choices legislation. Limb 5 of the motion says that the House:
notes the Howard Government’s agenda to reduce employment conditions and employment security for women in the workforce.

How absolutely absurd for the Australian Labor Party to say that it is actually a recognition that this government is seeking to drive down wages and drive down employment security. Is that really what the Australian Labor Party says this government is trying to do? If that is their proposition, where are the facts to support it? The facts are not there. But I am happy to share facts with the House because, unlike the rhetoric we have heard from the Australian Labor Party, I would like to detail some specifics to the House so that an informed choice can be made about the actual impact of the Howard government’s Work Choices legislation.

Since March 1996, we have seen the number of women in employment increase by over one million—an increase of some 28.3 per cent—to a record high of 4.6 million women now in employment in Australia. The number of mothers who are joining the labour force has also risen over the last 10 years of the Howard government. Approximately 60 per cent of single female parents and 66 per cent of coupled female parents are now participating in the labour force. As well—and importantly—the gap between men and women’s wages has closed under the coalition; so, despite rhetoric from the Australian Labor Party that the gap is widening, it is not true. The fact is that under the coalition government, between February 1996 and May 2006 female earnings as a percentage of male earnings increased from 87.1 per cent to 89.8 per cent. I would certainly support the notion that it is still not at 100 per cent—and it should be—notwithstanding that, the fact is that women’s wages under the coalition are more closely aligned to men’s wages than they ever were under the Australian Labor Party.

Let us move on to the direct impact of Work Choices since it was introduced on 27 March 2006. We see that the participation of women in the labour force has risen significantly. The female participation rate stood at a record high of 57.9 per cent in September 2006—up by a full one per cent, from 56.9 per cent recorded in March 2006. So it has gone from a record high to reach a new record high under the Work Choices legislation. What is more, the number of women in unemployment has declined under the coalition government, since the introduction of Work Choices, by some 3,200 since March. Female unemployment now, I am pleased to advise the House, has fallen by 0.2 of a per cent to equal a 30-year low of 4.8 per cent under this government. So when the opposition says that this government is about driving down working conditions and reducing the number of women in the Australian labour force, the facts show a very different story.

More importantly, we note that the member for Calwell made comments that said that women’s rights needed to be entrenched in legislation and that unless that was done women were vulnerable to exploitation. What kind of exploitation, one would wonder—perhaps the kind of exploitation that existed under the Australian Labor Party when one million working Australians were thrown on the unemployment scrapheap. Is that the kind of protection that the Australian Labor Party would offer up as providing protection to Australian women? We did not see any protection afforded to Australian women when the economy was at record lows. (Time expired)

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman) (1.07 pm)—I welcome the opportunity to join my colleagues the members for Cunningham and Calwell in highlighting the damaging impact of the federal government’s Work Choices legislation on Australian
working women. I also note media reports today that a new study has found that the number of women directors on the boards of the largest 200 companies has doubled over the last five years. However, still only 11 per cent of independent positions are held by women and almost half of the top boards do not have a single woman director. Obviously, the glass ceiling remains a reality for Australian women, but fortunately progress is being made.

I want to talk about the other women today—the women at the bottom end: the cleaners, the childcare workers, the factory workers and the hospitality workers, who struggle from week to week to make ends meet. The Work Choices bill, particularly in conjunction with the Welfare to Work changes, represents a wholesale change to the way Australian workplaces operate and as a consequence will have major implications for the Australian community over time. Wide and thorough ongoing research continues to demonstrate that women employees are disadvantaged in the labour market. They lag behind men in regard to pay. Earning less than their male counterparts is obviously the order of the day—not just for full-timers but also for part-timers. They are also on the receiving end of the highly casual nature of the Australian workforce, which is also a global trend that has got worse over the last decade. In Canada, for example, full-time working women earn 71 per cent of male wages, while here in Australia the situation is a little better—they earn 85 per cent of male wages. The fact that women receive lower wages highlights their vulnerability in the workplace in negotiating working conditions such as pay, job security, family leave, flexi-time, training, superannuation and associated issues.

The government tells us that Work Choices is intended to create a more flexible and competitive workplace, but I believe this is code for doing women over in the workplace because they start on the back foot in the first instance, anyhow. As shadow minister for the portfolios of resources and tourism, I understand well the important contribution women make to employment in both these key industries. The resources sector—mining, in particular—is no longer the workplace, or the realm, of the Aussie bloke, but because of the skills crisis and the lack of training by the Australian government, more and more women are donning a hard hat and getting out there, and helping to support the burgeoning boom and doing a great job.

Women have also achieved enormous success in the Australian tourism industry. I also note, appropriately, that Australia’s tourism ministerial council is dominated by women and almost half the employment base of the tourism industry is women. Given this, the government should not be introducing legislation that further enhances their vulnerability—and that is what this debate is about. Women will be worse off in difficult economic times when they experience the problems that confront workers generally. The government should, conversely, be actively working to protect the employment rights of women in the workforce and creating an environment that is attractive to women who are considering re-entering employment. At a time when Australia is facing a chronic skills shortage, this makes skills sense and it also makes commonsense.

However, in many ways the new Work Choices legislation continues a shift that commenced under the Howard government in the late 1990s from one of external regulation of employment regulations to internal regulation. This informalisation of the workplace creates the possibility of a lack of formality and transparency surrounding workplace relations and shifts the process of employment relations to the private sphere, where there is little or no public scrutiny of
issues or agreements, or an independent umpire to support those in the workforce who have little resources—that is, those with little power. Essentially, the new legislation translates to mean that the position of those already disadvantaged in the labour force—the facts speak for themselves—namely, women and young people, will be made all the more tenuous. Ultimately this will undermine overall productivity by preventing an important segment of the workforce from entering it and also from developing new skills, as women will be in a weaker position to negotiate training, not just wages and conditions of employment.

The motion before the House in the name of the member for Cunningham, and seconded by the member for Calwell, correctly brings to the attention of the Australian community the potential impact of the Work Choices legislation on hardworking Australian women. It will reduce their conditions of employment over time and also lead to a loss of job security. The real change in workforce participation commenced under the Hawke and Keating Labor governments of the 1980s and 1990s. (Time expired)

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (1.12 pm)—I had a good laugh over the weekend, as I saw that the Leader of the Opposition was out there trying to paint the Australian Labor Party as the ‘future party’. Over the last 10 years we have seen absolutely nothing from this opposition, apart from a Labor Party that has consistently taken an entrenched position against any form of change. The motion before the House today is a symptom of a Labor Party that is unable to come to grips with the changing face of modern Australia. We are no longer a society with an ‘us and them’ mentality of boss versus worker. The average experience of an Australian in the workplace now shows that their employer is not out to force their conditions down, is not out to reduce their wages and is not out to sack them for no apparent reason. On the contrary—the experience of the average worker is that, if they work hard, they will be rewarded and valued by their employer. This is now the reality in Australian workplaces. You can sit down with your employer and you can utilise the flexibility offered by Work Choices to come to new arrangements that are mutually beneficial to both yourself and your employer. This flexibility is most important for Australians with young families, particularly women. Yet the ALP would have you believe through this motion that what women really want is to turn back the clock to recreate the more rigid system that made it illegal to negotiate basic flexibilities between employer and employee. Surely the challenge of work/family balance is not going to be enhanced by turning the clock back to a more rigid system. Surely it is greater flexibility that will help Australians manage that balance more productively.

Work Choices is a continuation of the Howard government’s proud record on women and work. By any measure, women have prospered in the workforce since 1996. The number of women in the workforce has reached a record high. There are now over one million more women in the workforce than there were 10 years ago, which is a massive 28 per cent increase. Women have achieved higher wages and, very importantly, as the member for Moncrieff has outlined, the gap between men’s and women’s wages has closed. The number of mothers joining the labour force has also risen in the last 10 years. Approximately 60 per cent of single female parents and 66 per cent of coupled female parents are now participating in the labour force.

Work Choices continues the creation of a system that enhances the prospects of women in the workforce. ABS labour force data tell us that, in the eight months since Work Choices was introduced, women’s par-
The increased participation of women, particularly those with caring responsibilities, is supported by the range of flexible working arrangements that are now on offer in the workplace. Working mothers in particular are taking advantage of these new flexible and family friendly working arrangements that have been made available to them. The government’s workplace relations reforms make it much easier to negotiate family friendly workplace agreements that meet the needs of individual employees. A good example is Comrec, a small business in Adelaide that employs 22 people, 16 of whom are women. It has reported that, by introducing AWAs, it has been able to negotiate conditions for individual staff that help them with work/family balance, and this helps Comrec by enabling it to retain its skilled workforce in an extremely tight labour market.

School Curricula

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON (Bass) (1.17 pm)—I move:

That the House:

(1) notes as unacceptable Australia having eight different, and often inconsistent, sets of school curriculum;

(2) calls on the Commonwealth to work cooperatively with the State and Territory governments for greater consistency in both school curricula and standards for every Australian school student; and

(3) supports initiatives which will improve the education standards and accountability of educational authorities across the country, both government and non-government.

I believe that Australian governments of all political leanings should now focus intensely on the needs and best interests of our nation’s education system. This is the place of nurture and preparation for a lifetime of experiences and, hopefully, lifelong further learning. We as a country have much to be proud of in our education system. Recent achievements include: record levels of Commonwealth funding to all schools, while supporting parent choice; much-needed reforms to higher education; proper recognition of adult and vocational education; and support for values, literacy and numeracy, plain-English reporting and greater physical activity.

This is very admirable. However, in my view, this parliament needs to take the lead to forge a better standard for our school education system. There is widespread community concern about the content and standard of curriculum being developed and delivered by the various education authorities around Australia. Our nation of just 20 million people suffers from having eight separate sets of curriculum and, to different degrees, fads within systems that teachers, parents and students feel dissatisfied with.

As a former teacher, I am able to say from experience that students who move between states really do struggle to fit in; indeed, some students who move between schools within one state may feel lost in the wilderness as there is no common base curriculum, in terms of actual content or outcomes, either between states or, amazingly, within them.

We need to work to facilitate student mobility around Australia because there is a lack
of transparency in curriculum about the specific details of what students need to know. It ought to trouble any parent that their child can graduate from grade 6 without knowing their multiplication tables; it should make them angry that their child can graduate from grade 10 without knowing them. Clearly, this in itself is no proof that there is a need for change, but it is very compelling evidence indeed.

In my state of Tasmania, enormously expensive changes have been made to a new curriculum called the ‘New Essential Learnings’, which has proved to be a disaster and has had to undergo serious repairs even within these early days of its implementation. Even now, there is every prospect that students from different schools within Tasmania will be exposed to an entirely distinct school curriculum assessed against discrete local standards—or lack of them.

The education needs of students are not unique to particular states or regions. Our students need to be equipped with the fundamentals: the enduring skills and learning that will help to make them more informed and productive citizens. These needs are not unique to particular areas or jurisdictions; they are common across the country. The application of different education philosophies around the country contributes to a situation whereby students studying supposedly similar subjects may be exposed to quite different approaches to texts, ideas and social issues. Worse than this, there is some evidence of politically partisan curricula and behaviour in a small number of schools.

With this in mind, it is important that responsibility is taken to ensure that authorities in both government and non-government schools are held accountable in their role of improving and implementing education standards. A recent survey by Roy Morgan Research shows that 69 per cent of Australians do want a national curriculum. The neo-dinosaurs in the ALP are therefore swimming against the tide of much-needed reform. The Australian Science Teachers Association declared its support for a national year 12 science curriculum because in some states ‘science curriculum is a mile wide and just one inch deep’. From comments like this, it is clear that the wider community and the professional community are demanding an end to fads and a return to common-sense curricula with agreed core subjects and a renewed focus on literacy and numeracy.

The Commonwealth government needs to take a co-operative leadership role in its drive for a back-to-basics approach to ensure that we have greater national consistency and, importantly, greater accountability. All of this can and must be achieved co-operatively with state governments and non-government school authorities by improving standards from mediocrity to excellence, by supporting students with special needs, and by an additional special focus on ensuring that Australian school graduates are the world’s best.

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

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

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Gorton) (1.22 pm)—I rise to speak on the motion moved by the member for Bass. Having listened to the member for Bass, I would have to say that if one were to mark his contribution today he would get zero out of 10 because he was plagiarising. He was plagiarising the Minister for Education, Science and Training’s contribution of three weeks ago when she sought to rail against the state and territory authorities, whom she claims are not providing proper education services to children in this country. I think it is fair to say that this motion arises out of the Howard
government's intent to centralise school curricula in its own image. But, firstly, I will outline my support for the second paragraph of the motion, calling:

... on the Commonwealth to work cooperatively with the State and Territory governments for greater consistency in both school curricula and standards for every ... school student ...

Where it is both appropriate and feasible, there should be greater federal corporation in areas of public policy, including the education of our students. To that extent I accept that part of the motion moved by the member for Bass. If there are areas which can be improved, areas where there are inconsistencies that should not exist or where there is not a capacity for education to be portable across the state boundaries of this nation, then clearly one should move in that direction. But it might well be the case, however, that we should also consider the different needs in different parts of the nation. It is not so much a matter of different standards as of accepting the different peculiarities of and perhaps different emphases in what each state is doing. So there should at least be some recognition that there would be differences across what is a very large nation.

One has to question the sincerity and intent behind this motion given that it follows the commentary by the federal minister for education. Three weeks ago the minister launched an attack on the curricula of state and territory education departments. The minister's original speech, which was doctorered prior to delivery, accused the states of teaching themes which come 'straight from Chairman Mao'. One has to ask whose cultural revolution the minister was helping to impose upon the schoolchildren of Australia. Lacking any sense of irony, in one breath the minister concocted the notion that our schools are in the grip of Maoism and in the other outlined her plans to centralise our education system.

It would appear that the ambitions of the Howard government have no bounds. Once a devout federalist, the Prime Minister, since obtaining a Senate majority, has set about getting his hands upon everything within his reach. We must ask ourselves: why should a political party that once eschewed centralism seek to wrench these matters from the states and territories? The answer lies in part, in my view, in the government's ambition to impose its ideological views upon all areas of our society. The Prime Minister sees himself as a cultural warrior in a cultural war, and it would appear that the school system is to be his next conquest. If the government wanted to assist students in my electorate, it would ensure that Commonwealth expenditure for schools is determined on a needs basis.

As for the minister for education's view that students are brainwashed by left-wing ideologues, I see none of that. That is not to say that schoolteachers themselves would not have particular views. The member for Bass talked about the existence of partisan teaching. I accept that there would be examples of partisan teaching, but I would have to say that that partisanship would come from more than one spectrum of our society. It should not be acceptable, but to believe, as the minister for education would have us believe, that there is some systemic partisanship across our education system is indeed false. I cannot imagine, for example, the member for Bass, in his years as a secondary schoolteacher, asking his class to critique Shakespeare from a Marxist perspective. But what if he did? If our youth could even tell me who Marx was I would say that was a triumph of the education system. Why not get them to critique Marx? Better still, get them to read Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, John Maynard Keynes and John Kenneth Galbraith. I support this motion insofar as it encourages cooperative federalism. But this motion seems to be dogwhistling to society:
it is attempting to suggest that each teacher in school has an agenda that is against this government when in fact I would rather trust the teachers of this nation and the other governments of this nation in the way in which— (Time expired)

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie) (1.27 pm)—On most international comparisons the education that our children receive in Australian schools is of a very high standard. But this is no reason for complacency or for inaction in the face of some clearly identified issues. The first of these is the need for national consistency in terms of curricula, starting and finishing ages, qualifications and tertiary entrance. It is ridiculous in a time of such geographic mobility, both real and virtual, that we have eight different sets of curricula, five different starting ages and nine different year 12 qualifications and standards. These create significant hardship for families who are required to move interstate. As I have a large RAAF base in my electorate, I am very familiar with the difficulties created for a number of families when unexpected postings severely disrupt their children’s education. It is not uncommon for the officer being relocated to leave his or her family behind because of the incompatibility of senior curricula and a reluctance to interrupt the final years of their son’s or daughter’s education. In a situation where each year the number of students transferring interstate is roughly equivalent to the entire Tasmanian school population, it is simply unacceptable that there is not a common curriculum and that this process of movement is not made as seamless as possible.

Secondly, there is a need to ensure that, in the process of bringing in some degree of standardisation or uniformity, there is a clear commitment to ensuring the highest possible standards to ensure that our young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills which best allow them to develop their potential and which best equip them to be productive participants in the life of our community. We need to make sure that the record level of resources that the federal government is putting into education is used effectively in this regard.

It seems to me that two things are required. The first is restoring a focus on the fundamentals of literacy, of numeracy, of science and of Australian history. We need to ensure that the highest possible standards are achieved in all disciplines. Secondly, we need to ensure that our curricula are not dumbed down to the lowest common denominator, as sadly happens at times, to make them more widely acceptable. We see this particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, and perhaps also in the area of science. As the President of the Australian Science Teachers Association said recently, in supporting a national year-12 science curriculum, ‘In some states science our curriculum is a mile wide and an inch deep.’

Too often as well we have a situation where the curriculum has been compromised to follow the latest ideological fashions. For example, the trendy deconstruction of classics in literature according to ideological issues, rather than through an examination of their literary merit, is far too common.

Mr Snowdon—Oh!

Mr BARTLETT—I notice people on the other side shaking their heads. As the Head of the School of Humanities at the ANU, Dr Simon Haines, said, we should ‘make it a literature course, not a disguised political science course’. There are places for political science. Literature should be about studying literature, science should be about studying science and history should be about studying history, not de facto ways of introducing ideological preconceptions.

We see it too often. In February last year, as reported in the Australian, we had Wayne
Sawyer, the President of the New South Wales English Teachers Association, blaming the teaching profession for allowing the re-election of the Howard government because they had not been so ideologically effective as to prevent people voting for the Howard government. Then in 2004, at an Australian Education Union conference, we had a principal of a senior Western Australian high school arguing that the new three Rs in education ought to be reconciliation, refugees and republic. Those things might be commendable, but that is not the main reason parents send their children to school. The three Rs that parents want to see are reading, writing and arithmetic, and they want to see the focus on those fundamentals.

There are a multitude of other examples that could be cited. The point is this: the focus must be on academic rigour, not on political correctness. The focus must be on building knowledge and skills, not on promoting ideological agendas. Thirdly, we need to ensure that we are rewarding adequately those teachers who are doing their best in commitment and effort in teaching our young people. *(Time expired)*

**Ms OWENS** (Parramatta) *(1.32 pm)*—Public education is one of the foundation stones of our society; it provides our children with the basic entry to a good life and a prosperous future. So it saddens me to hear government members once again speaking about education as if they were in the opposition. We in the opposition often take the role of saying, ‘We should do this; we should do that.’ That is one of the roles of the opposition. We are not in government and we do not have the power—particularly now that the government has control of the Senate—to have significant daily influence in the way our education system is run. But ‘we should’ is not a role that governments play. Perhaps they do in their first year, but not in their 10th year.

We ‘should’ now focus on the quality of education, says the member for Bass. We ‘should’ now take a cooperative approach, says the member for Bass, confirming what we on this side have known for at least the last 10 years—that for 10 years this government has not done that. Governments should not be playing ‘we should’. They actually have the power. The member for Bass is one of the most powerful men in the country when it comes to public education, one of only a few hundred who have the kind of power that he has. Governments should be saying, ‘We have done this,’ after 10 years of government and, ‘We are here now, this can be better and we are doing this.’ Government members should not be calling on themselves to do better; they should just be doing better.

They shoulda done it but they didn’t. They shoulda done it because they had the power and the money. They coulda done it because they had the power and the money. They probably woulda done it if they had Liberal state governments, but they like bagging the Labor ones too much. They shoulda, they coulda, they woulda but they didn’t—and 10 years later they are saying, ‘Now we should do it.’ They should have done it 10 years ago. It is not good enough and it makes me, not just parents, angry when the member for Bass stands there and says that a graduate from grade 10 does not know the multiplication tables. Last year I heard Brendan Nelson, at the time the Minister for Education, Science and Training, saying that 15-year-olds could not read. When this government came to power 10 years ago those kids were five. They were in grade 1 when this government came to power. If, 10 years later, they still cannot read and they still do not know the multiplication tables, it is about time the government accepted some responsibility for that. Who does the member for Bass think he is, 10 years later, to walk
into this place and say that we should now do something?

Children’s lives do not wait for you. They do not wait one year. Ask any parent out there who has a child who needs a teacher’s aid in their classroom because they are having learning difficulties. Ask any parent whose child comes home every day thinking that they are just not very smart because they are having trouble reading in their first year of school. Ask any parent and they will tell you a child’s life does not wait one year. It sure as hell does not wait 10 years—and by the time we come to the election next year it will be 12 years; it will be one child’s entire school life under the responsibility of this federal government. So do not come in here 10 years later and say we should now do something, without at least acknowledging that for 10 years you have not done it.

The member for Bass now calls on the Commonwealth to work cooperatively with the states. We know that this government does not play well with others—we have watched them for 10 years. That is what this government’s report card would say: ‘Did not try on education; does not work well with others.’ When it comes to the state governments, this government—quite recently, in the field of education—takes great pleasure in standing up in this House and pretending to be the state opposition. Never mind its role as the federal government, an extremely important role—indeed, one of the most important roles you can have when it comes to public education—it stands in this House and pretends to be the state opposition.

This government takes every opportunity to bag the states. It was doing it last year. It bags teachers. It bags public education. It takes every opportunity to get front-page stories about how poor our public education system is, when those on this side of the House know exactly how good it is. Go to your local schools, members on the government side, and have a look at the work that they do.

Government members now sit here and say: ‘It is important that all governments take responsibility. It is important that all governments work cooperatively.’ I say to them: ‘Look to yourselves. Before you start calling on everybody else to do it, try and do it yourselves. You have had 10 years to work with the state governments. If you still cannot do it, if you still cannot work with the elected representatives of the states—’

Mr FORREST (Mallee) (1.37 pm)—I am pleased that the member for Parramatta finally got to the real issue here—that is, in accordance with our Constitution, states run the education system. But this is a good resolution and I commend the member for Bass for bringing it to the House’s attention. We are talking about those who are the future of the nation and the best investment we can possibly make is to ensure they get first-class, world-benchmarked education.

Other speakers have spoken about literature and English, but my real concern is science. The minister has provided me with a whole range of letters—de-identified letters—that she has received in response to her recent initiatives. This is an extract from a letter from a Victorian parent, and I suspect I know who that is because I have received similar letters. There is widespread community concern about the lack of consistency in national standards. This writer says:

My daughter attends a state school in Victoria in year 8. Next year, she will have maths and science combined in one subject. This is called a ‘progressive curriculum’ in Victoria, and I am outraged by it.

I, similarly, am outraged. When I was at school I just loved the maths and I loved the science, but they were distinctly different subjects. That is just another example that I
would give of the fads that seem to be the course of our education system. The community is demanding an end to these fads, and that we stick with consistency and rigorous standards. The nation desperately needs the mathematicians who eventually emerge as engineers. It definitely needs scientists who can investigate and research pure science. People need to understand that these are distinctly different subjects and not one and the same.

The community is also concerned about literacy and numeracy, and other speakers have drawn attention to that. But it is an indictment on us as a nation that there are currently eight separate curricula, nine separate year 12 certificates and five different eligible school starting ages. The opposition members have argued that this is the government’s fault after being 10 years in government. But I have been here a long time—I note the member for Parramatta has only recently arrived—and I can remember the efforts by former ministers. There was Minister Kemp, followed by Minister Nelson and now there is Minister Bishop, trying to work with the states to hear the community concern that is rising consistently.

The member for Macquarie makes a very valid point about how mobile our communities are—especially those in rural Australia—and the complaint about different standards across the board. I represent an electorate that has about 1,500 kilometres of state borders, half with South Australia and the other half along the Murray River in New South Wales. Communities’ members are moving, because of jobs and so forth, and it alarms parents to realise that their children have to endure different standards—sometimes the standards are lower; thankfully, sometimes they are higher, but there is just no consistency.

That is what this resolution is calling for and I am confident that the Howard-Vaile government is committed to raising academic standards across our nation—contrary to the member for Parramatta’s contribution. We have seen some progress on this matter. But I am embarrassed by any international benchmarking standard which shows that 30 per cent of Australian students did not reach the basic standard of literacy that would be required to meet the demands of lifelong learning in a rapidly changing knowledge-intensive society.

So this is a good resolution. I continue to naively hope that one day this chamber will unite in the way it presents itself. This is not an opportunity for playing politics. It is not an opportunity for laying blame. It is an opportunity to urge both the Commonwealth and state governments to continue to work together so that we can invest where we should invest—in the future of our most precious resource, our young Australians.

Mr HATTON (Blaxland) (1.42 pm)—With the exception of the member for Forrest—whose heart is good and in the right place, and who has taken this particular motion and understood the problems we have—being lectured by the government about education is like being lectured by Family First on the issue of power in the media. There is no understanding whatsoever of the fact that with power there is also responsibility.

In the past 10 years this government should have done something to fix the fundamental problems that we have—of eight jurisdictions and nine different qualifications at the level of the HSC. I know that John Dawkins started the process of trying to get national profiles and national standards, of trying to allow one child in Western Australia to have their school qualifications recognised in New South Wales and to have teacher
qualifications in New South Wales recognised in South Australia. We are looking at two decades—half Labor, half Liberal. We are looking at a problem that has been addressed in such a manner that the approach that has been taken has been glacial. And a core part of that problem has been the innate nature of a lot of the siloed education departments Australia wide. It would take a government committed to fixing the problem to address that, though. In 2006, we have not only teachers and their qualifications not recognised Australia wide, with a process that started over 20 years ago, but also our students are without common curricula Australia wide. Those are fundamental things that should be focused on.

What are the government members, with the exception of the member for Forrest, doing? What we have heard is claptrap. What we have had is the government’s culture wars. What we have is an attempt simply to use some straw figures and argue for a particular value-laden approach to these things. That will not help a kid from Western Australia to come to Sydney and have their educational qualifications recognised, and it will not help a teacher from Queensland in being able to walk into a school in Tasmania or one of the other states and easily be able to practise. Good government is about putting effort into doing good and proper things; this government has not done that for 10 years. The great speech from the member for Parramatta proved that. This government needs to be condemned in this regard.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 1.45 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 34. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Fresh FM

Mr GIBBONS (Bendigo) (1.45 pm)—Bendigo community broadcaster Fresh FM have been informed by the ACMA that, after 25 years of successful broadcasting, their licence would not be renewed simply because the ACMA believed their application was received after the statutory closing period. I believe this ACMA decision is a breathtaking example of arrogance. Fresh FM management have informed me that their application for licence renewal was dispatched on 28 April 2006, well within the prescribed period. I informed Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Senator Helen Coonan of this in a letter posted on 9 October and to date have not received even an acknowledgement of that letter let alone a reply.

ACMA have stated that they believe they have not been supplied with significant evidence that Fresh FM’s application had been sent in April. When Fresh FM re-sent the application they explained to the department that if they needed proof in the form of a stat dec then they were prepared to forward it immediately. Fresh FM have received no correspondence back from the department regarding this matter.

Fresh FM received a faxed document on Friday afternoon around 2.40 pm informing them that their licence would not be renewed. This gave the organisation very little time to speak to all of their members, sponsors, supporters and committees. Fresh FM programming provides access to a range of multicultural, minority and other community groups. They would not have access to airtime and therefore communication with their respective communities if Goldfields Community Radio were unable to continue operating.
Goldfields Community Radio also provide live sporting coverage, the only radio station in Central Victoria to do so. They provide programs specifically for young people, such as programs where school students present music and other information. They have also played a vital role, and been a willing participant in, a range of local charity activities.

(End of time)

Boothby Electorate

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (1.47 pm)—I would like to speak about two recent functions which my wife and I recently attended in my electorate of Boothby. The first one was the annual Deepavali dinner, which was hosted by the Hindu Society of South Australia. We were pleased to be the guests of Siva Selvakulalingam. Deepavali is the Festival of Lights, generally held to represent the victory of light over darkness or good over evil—things that members of parliament could certainly appreciate, on this side anyway. It was a very interesting function and we were pleased to be a part of it. It was held at the Shri Ganesha Temple in the Oaklands Park in my electorate.

The second function which we attended last Saturday night was the 2006 Pink Ribbon Ball, which we attended with over 500 people. This event raises money for breast cancer. The patron of the Breast Cancer Research Fund is Lady Joan Hardy. Alan Young, the chairman of the Flinders Medical Centre Foundation, and Deborah Heithersay, the general manager of the Flinders Medical Centre Foundation, should be commended for a well-run and highly successful event which will raise money for breast cancer research. Breast cancer will affect one in every 11 Australian women during their lifetime. The good news is that survival rates are quite high: almost 80 per cent will survive breast cancer. This important function will raise money for breast cancer research.

Prostate Cancer

Ms KING (Ballarat) (1.48 pm)—Last Friday I had the pleasure of being presented with a petition from a group of local men in my electorate. The petition seeks to have Taxotere registered on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Taxotere is a drug that can be used to fight both breast and prostate cancer. However, while Taxotere is available on the PBS for breast cancer it is not afforded the same status for those with prostate cancer.

Tragically, prostate cancer kills some 2,600 Australian men a year. Whilst prostate cancer is responsible for virtually the same number of deaths in Australia as breast cancer, community awareness of this issue is nowhere near as high. Each year 10,000 Australian men are diagnosed with prostate cancer. Taxotere has been able to extend the lives of prostate patients by an average of two months. However, as it is not registered on the PBS, people like Terry Grano in my electorate are left with no choice but to pay up to $3,000 a treatment. For many fighting prostate cancer this is beyond their means.

Despite being in a fight for their lives, a group of men headed by Terry have managed to collect 2,112 signatures on this petition. Terry and his friends were generous enough to share their stories with me and I hope that, with the tabling of this petition later in the week, their voice and stories will be heard here in Canberra. I would like to thank Dr Rod Bond for helping with the petition, Laura Turner from WIN TV for covering the story, and most of all Terry and his group of friends for all their hard work. I look forward to continuing to work with you all to raise awareness about this terrible disease.

Ellison Public School

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie) (1.50 pm)—I rise today to acknowledge the good work of Ellison Public School in Spring-
wood, where a number of measures have been introduced to encourage healthy eating habits among the students. I am greatly impressed by the excellent work of Ellison Public School and the commitment of the teachers, staff and parents. In addition to their strong focus on building knowledge, skills and values which will equip the students for responsible and productive citizenship, they are also focusing on healthy living.

Ellison Public School is one of several local schools to receive funding under the government’s Healthy School Communities program to build an awareness of healthy lifestyle choices. Ellison Public School has introduced many initiatives for educating children about the importance of good nutrition and growing fruit and vegetables. These include establishing: a ‘no-dig’ vegetable garden, a healthy menu at the canteen, and worm farming and composting. In addition to these, a sandwich press has been purchased, along with a multi-food processor and two apple slinky machines. These provide healthy food options for the students. Many students, I am reliably informed, are passing on what they have learned to their families. Well done, Ellison Public School.

**Werribee Secondary College**

Ms GILLARD (Lalor) (1.51 pm) — Last week the nation was shocked to learn that in Werribee, in my electorate, a number of youths had been involved in a violent incident whereby a young and naive girl was attacked near the Werribee River and the incident recorded on a DVD which was then circulated to other young people. Of course this is an appalling act and the matter is now in the hands of the police. Whilst this is an appalling act, unfortunately other acts are now following which are also wrong. In particular, students of Werribee Secondary College, a school associated with some of these youths, have been the subject of attacks — they have been spat at and had rocks thrown at them because they were wearing their school uniform. This is clearly inappropriate.

Werribee Secondary College is a good school, well led by the principal, Steve Butyn. The staff are caring people and, overwhelmingly, the students of Werribee Secondary College are focused on excellence and success. Two wrongs do not make a right. Clearly Werribee Secondary College students have the right to go about their business as schoolchildren unharassed, and Werribee Secondary College has my full support at this very difficult time.

**Blacktown: MRI Licence**

Mrs MARKUS (Greenway) (1.52 pm) — I rise to speak about the MRI licence that was granted to the local government area of Blacktown in the Greenway electorate in July this year. The need for a magnetic resonance imaging service in the Blacktown area came about as the local population has grown over the last few years. Indeed, that population is continuing to expand at a rapid rate. With population expansion, there are increasing pressures on the local health service and an MRI service would considerably assist both the population who are in need and the local health services. People from one of Australia’s largest and most diverse communities have required an MRI licence for many years but have been neglected by the state Labor government. This needed to change, which is why on 28 July this year the federal Department of Health and Ageing wrote offering New South Wales Health a Medicare-eligible MRI licence for Blacktown. The government’s commitment to extend the licence came about as a result of extensive campaigning by chief radiographer James Nol, me and the federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, who visited Blacktown earlier this year.
This machine is particularly effective as a diagnostic tool for diseases like cancer and, as there is no MRI service between Westmead and Penrith, local residents who may have cancer or who have suffered strokes or have soft tissue damage currently have to travel long distances for safe, radiation-free examinations. With this in mind, it is a tragedy that since the granting of the licence almost three months ago the Labor state government has failed to make any effort to move this process forward. It is the responsibility of the Labor state government to ensure this scanner is in Blacktown Hospital and is fully functional. (Time expired)

Reva Electric Car

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (1.54 pm)—Today I make a final appeal to the government to save the life of the Reva—the emission-free carbon-neutral electric car, which the Howard government has demanded be crushed later this week. Last week I visited the outlet for Reva, which is the Solar Shop in my electorate. I have learnt how this car attracts government subsidies in both Japan and the UK and of the measures taken across the EU to encourage the expansion of this market of environmentally friendly vehicles. Yet here the Howard government are too short-sighted to create a new category for registration of these impressive vehicles. When it comes to climate change we, once again, see the Howard government trailing behind global efforts.

I again appeal to the Prime Minister and to the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads to save the Reva. As these appeals have so far fallen on deaf ears I have also today written to the UK Conservatives leader, Mr David Cameron, and asked him to have a word to our PM on this issue. Mr Cameron is very keen on the Reva, being photographed with it for publicity purposes. He has stated:

To help tackle climate change we must be for greener cars … Today, many families want to become greener, and they’re looking for more options to go green. We should help them.

I agree with these sentiments. Our Prime Minister loves to follow the lead of conservative foreign leaders. I urge him to follow this lead and save the Reva and provide a framework for the future expansion of the low-emission vehicle industry. To see this car crushed would be a tragedy, and I will continue to fight against this and to fight for this industry. (Time expired)

Relationships Australia

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (1.55 pm)—Last Thursday I had the pleasure of meeting with Julianne O’Brien and Nyssa from Relationships Australia. Relationships Australia has a number of programs that operate on the Gold Coast as part of their better relationships program. I had the distinct pleasure of meeting with them to discuss how they would put to use an additional funding of some $49,966 from the Howard government. This funding is provided to Relationships Australia under round 3 of the local answers initiative of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. I was very pleased to learn of the impressive work that Relationships Australia is undertaking at Palm Beach, Robina and the Gold Coast Hospital, as well as further north around Hope Island and Runaway Bay.

Impressively, Relationships Australia is working very closely with local Gold Coast families by offering relationship education groups to individuals who may not otherwise be able to access the kind of support and counselling that many people need, especially when they are welcoming a new member of the family after a birth. I was very pleased to hear about their program—which works with people planning a family to anticipate the changes to their relationship that becoming parents can
bring and to build skills to respond to these changes—as well as their Building Better Relationships program, a group based relationship education skills building program aimed at enhancing people’s relationships by building better skills. (Time expired)

Prospect Electorate: Pemulwuy Postbox

Mr BOWEN (Prospect) (1.57 pm)—On two previous occasions in this House I have raised the need for a postbox at Pemulwuy in my electorate. On Friday we received the very good news from Australia Post that a common-sense approach would be adopted: Pemulwuy will be getting their postbox, and the postbox which was earmarked for removal on the corner of Wattle and Maple streets, Greystanes, will be saved. I would like to thank Australia Post for this common-sense approach and I would also like to thank Mr Michael Trenaman of Australia Post for his responsiveness to my office as this issue has progressed.

I take this opportunity in the House to congratulate the campaigners: Mr John Kropman, Ainsley Bock and Mr Baba of Pemulwuy and also Fiona from Pemulwuy Estate. I would also like to congratulate Graham Taylor, who has campaigned to save the postbox on the corner of Wattle Street and Maple Street. I also thank the Parramatta Advertiser and the Parramatta Sun for their support of our community campaign to have a postbox installed at Pemulwuy and to save the postbox at Wattle and Maple streets. Postboxes are an important piece of infrastructure, particularly important for less mobile and elderly members of our community. It is important that, where population increases, the infrastructure increases with it. Again, I congratulate Australia Post on their common-sense approach and I thank the members of the community who signed both petitions.

Horsham College

Mr FORREST (Mallee) (1.58 pm)—This is the first opportunity I have had to congratulate Horsham College on reaching its 80th anniversary two weeks ago. Teachers and students joined forces to mark this milestone with great events at their Dimboola Road site. The 80th anniversary event provided an opportunity to catch up with old classmates from the past and to share memorable events. All of us have fond memories of school and they were well remembered at Horsham College the week before last.

I was on the campus on Friday celebrating with Ian Trigg and also drawing attention to the safety issues the college has, being located on the Western Highway. It is a busy highway. There are enormous safety issues with buses arriving in one location, 30-wheel vehicle transport roaring past and parents dropping off their children. It is an accident waiting to happen. I am calling on VicRoads for some ameliorative measures to be put in place outside Horsham College to ensure that the wonderful celebrations they had are not marred by a disastrous accident. Congratulations to Horsham College on 80 years—a great achievement from 1926. Given the discussion the chamber has recently had on education— (Time expired)

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 2 pm, in accordance with standing order 43, the time for members’ statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

Mr Richard Cleaver AM CBE

The SPEAKER (2.00 pm)—I inform the House of the death, on Wednesday, 25 October 2006, of Mr Richard Cleaver, a member of this House for the division of Swan from 1955 to 1969. As a mark of respect to the memory of Richard Cleaver, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.
Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER—I thank the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Midnight Oil

Interest Rates

Mr BEAZLEY (2.01 pm)—May I just have 10 seconds of your indulgence, Mr Speaker? I am sure the House will join me in congratulating the member for Kingsford Smith for his induction, along with the group of which he was a member, Midnight Oil, into the ARIA Hall of Fame last night. Bono was right to say the Oils brought different people together and our colleague from Kingsford Smith is still doing that. He will make an even bigger contribution in the years ahead. We are all tremendously proud of our colleague and I know that all of us in this place congratulate him and his associates on such a wonderful achievement. Well done!

I thank you, Mr Speaker, for your indulgence. My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister’s comments last week that a possible interest rate rise next week would be ‘a stitch in time’. Prime Minister, if a stitch in time saves nine, how many stitches have been saved by the last seven consecutive rises?

Mr HOWARD—Mr Speaker, before answering the Leader of the Opposition’s question, can I join, with your permission, in extending on behalf of the government my congratulations to the member for Kingsford Smith. I associate myself with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, but that is where the association abruptly terminates.

I think, if we are talking about stitches, we can say that the last election saved 17—not stitches but 17 per cent interest rates, which is the level to which housing interest rates soared under Labor governments.

Workplace Relations

Mr WOOD (2.03 pm)—My question is also addressed to the Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister advise the House how Australian workers are benefiting from reforms to Australia’s workplace relations system? How do these developments compare to the predictions made before the system began operating?

Mr HOWARD—I thank the member for La Trobe. I am very happy to say that the Fair Pay Commission has been true to its name. It has been fair to the workers of Australia. Work Choices has been fair to the workers of Australia, and the increase of more than $27 a week that was brought down by the commission last Thursday represented the final nail in the coffin in relation to Labor’s attack on our Work Choices legislation. They told us that there would be mass sackings. Since March 2006 we have had 205,000 more jobs. Instead of mass sackings we have had mass hirings.

They told us there would be rolling industrial disputes. The fact is that the latest figures from the ABS show us that industrial disputes in Australia are at the lowest level since records began to be kept. Now, this is a result of a number of things, including Work Choices. Of course the greatest lie of all that came from the Labor Party and the union movement was that Work Choices was going to drive down wages. The Labor Party know a lot about driving down wages. When they were in government real wages actually fell. Since we have been in government real wages have risen by 16.4 per cent.

Of course, they derided Professor Harper’s commission. They call it the ‘low pay commission’, and I notice that the putative leader of the Labor Party, the national secretary of the AWU, is running around attacking the integrity of this independent body. Well, the Fair Pay Commission did the
right thing. They did the fair thing by the workers of Australia, and that represents the final repudiation of this ludicrous, dishonest attack that has been made by the Labor Party and the union movement.

They were wrong on employment, they were wrong on industrial disputes and they have been totally wrong on pay. I can say to the workers of Australia, ‘Your future is safe with the coalition.’

**Interest Rates**

**Mr BEAZLEY** (2.06 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and follows the answer he gave to the previous question bar the one from his side of the chamber. Can the Prime Minister confirm that the proportion of household income consumed by mortgage interest repayments is 50 per cent higher today than under Treasurer Keating—50 per cent higher?

**Opposition members interjecting**—

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The Leader will resume his seat. Those placards will be put down immediately! I will not give a further warning.

**Mr HOWARD**—No, I will not confirm that, because the truth is the proper comparison is the proportion of income on a new mortgage, and it is lower now than it was when you had interest rates at 17 per cent. If you actually look at the figures and the claim being made by the Leader of the Opposition, he cannot escape the heavy burden that Keating and Beazley equals 17 per cent; Howard and Costello equals 7¾ per cent. That is the measure of the difference between the economic stewardship of this government and the economic stewardship of the Australian Labor Party.

**Economy**

**Mr VASTA** (2.08 pm)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer inform the House of the latest research demonstrating how Australians, including those in my seat of Bonner, have benefited under the economic stewardship of the coalition government?

**Mr COSTELLO**—I thank the honourable member for Bonner for his question. I would refer him today to an analysis published in the *Australian* by NATSEM, the Labor Party preferred modeller, because the analysis which is in the *Australian* today—done not by the government but by NATSEM—shows that couples with no children have seen their disposable income increase 23 per cent since the government came to office and couples with children have seen their disposable income increase 29 per cent since the coalition came to office. Looking at all families and singles, the overall increase in disposable income over the 10 years since 1996-97 has been 20 per cent, showing undoubtedly that this government has put in place real benefits in terms of increased disposable income for Australian families.

Ann Harding, writing in the *Australian* today, says that the real spending power of a single aged pensioner has increased nearly a quarter since 1996-97. She says:

This growth in income has been driven by a liberalisation of the pension income test, the introduction of special tax concessions for seniors and increases in the pension rate.

Again I quote Ann Harding, the Labor Party’s preferred modeller:

And this bonanza for seniors with some private resources does not include the additional benefits bestowed by the introduction of the special subsidised rate for pharmaceuticals for self-funded retirees in 1999.

There we have the analysis by NATSEM. Families have increased their disposable income, singles have increased their disposable income and seniors that have some additional income have had a 25 per cent in-
crease in spending power—and that is not including the extension of pharmaceutical benefits to those with the Commonwealth seniors health card. What this proves is that with sound economic reform, with 1.9 million more jobs in this country and with improvements to the taxation system—all of which were opposed by the Labor Party—those that needed help in Australia have been given help, and it is only a coalition government that has the capacity to do that.

Interest Rates

Mr SWAN (2.11 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, is it the case that if there is a rate rise next week it will be the eighth stitch in time, which will have cost someone with a $300,000 mortgage an extra $383 a month in repayments?

Mr HOWARD—The question is hypothetical. However, I am very happy to answer, but I tell you something that is not hypothetical: interest rates will always be lower under the coalition than under the Labor Party. That is not hypothetical; that is a proven fact.

Workplace Relations

Mr SCHULTZ (2.12 pm)—My question is addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Would the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House of the success of the government’s industrial relations policies in regional areas, particularly in my electorate of Hume? How has this recent news been received in the community?

Mr VAILE—I thank the member for Hume for his question and particularly his interest in this matter and his representation of the working families in his area. He would be well aware that under our workplace reforms we have seen unemployment in Australia drop to 4.8 per cent across the nation. In historical levels, it has not been in this area for over 30 years. The member for Hume would also be aware that unemployment across his electorate averaged 3.9 per cent, which is a great achievement in a regional part of New South Wales. So there is a 4.8 per cent average across the nation and 3.9 per cent in the electorate of Hume. We should recall that it was 5.9 per cent in 1996, so it has come down two per cent in the life of the coalition government in the electorate of Hume.

The small area labour market figures show that over 60 per cent of regions recorded a fall in their unemployment rate over the past 12 months, and 60 per cent of areas have unemployment rates of less than five per cent. So regional Australia is sharing in the benefits of the changes and reforms that we have introduced across Australia that have seen levels of unemployment drop dramatically in those labour markets. It is very important that regional Australia continues to share in the prosperity of the nation. Since Work Choices was introduced in March of this year there have been 205,000 new jobs created in the Australian economy, many of those in regional Australia and many of them in the member for Hume’s electorate. We should recognise that.

Many regional Australians welcomed last week’s decision by the Australian Fair Pay Commission to award a $27 a week pay rise to low-paid workers. On average, a lot of the workforce and working families in regional Australia are on those basic wages and they will receive this benefit on 1 December this year. They welcome it. They also welcome the fact that it has proven the lie of the Labor Party’s fearmongering over Work Choices and the fearmongering that they have put out there that the establishment of the Fair Pay Commission would not deliver for workers. It has.

AWU boss, Bill Shorten, who aspires to sit in the seat over here occupied by the cur-
rent Leader of the Opposition, could not bring himself to acknowledge that it was a good outcome. He said:

... it is wrong if they only get an extra payment because a Federal Election will be held in 12 months.

It has got nothing to do with a federal election. Ian Harper and the Fair Pay Commission brought this ruling down because they believe these workers deserve that rise; they do and they have been rewarded for that.

We know all about the union movement’s comments in support of the Labor Party’s campaign to try and win office next year. Greg Combet said that the unions used to run Australia and it would be a good thing if they did that again. Then there was that famous comment of ACTU President Sharan Burrow, when Work Choices was first announced. She said:

I need a mum or dad of someone who’s been seriously injured or killed. That would be fantastic.

That is what Sharan Burrow had to say. We know what Greg Combet had to say. We have just seen what Bill Shorten has had to say. These are the people that control the Labor Party and want to put Australia back in the hands of the union movement.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (2.16 pm)—I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon members of the 15th delegation from the All-China Youth Federation from the People’s Republic of China who are visiting under the auspices of the Australian Political Exchange Council. On behalf of the House I extend a very warm welcome to the members.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Interest Rates

Mr BEAZLEY (2.16 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and follows the one that he previously answered from this side of the House. Can the Prime Minister confirm he said yesterday:

... inflation by historic standards is still extremely low, so are interest rates.

Can the Prime Minister confirm the ‘historic standards’ he was referring to was when inflation hit double digits and interest rates hit 22 per cent when he was Treasurer in 1982?

Mr HOWARD—I do stand by what I said yesterday. When the Leader of the Opposition was a member of a government, interest rates for housing hit 17 per cent. I cannot remember when interest rates for housing went higher than 17 per cent.

Mr Beazley interjecting—

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

Mr HOWARD—It is also the case that since this government has been in office both inflation and interest rates have, by historic standards, been low and they will remain so. The Australian people know that interest rates and, might I say, inflation will always be lower under a coalition government than a Labor government.

Workplace Relations

Mr RICHARDSON (2.18 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Would the minister inform the House how Australia’s workers are benefiting from the government’s workplace reforms? Is the minister aware of alternative proposals which would damage these benefits to minimum wage earners?

Mr ANDREWS—I thank the member for Kingston for his question and I say to him and to the members of the House that last Thursday was a great news day for Australian workers. More than one million award-reliant low-paid Australians know that from 1 December of this year they will be taking
home more money in their pay packets—for some one million Australians, a $27 increase in their minimum wages. Prior to last Thursday, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Perth and other members of the Australian Labor Party had been running around this country for the past year or so seeking to blacken the reputation of the Australian Fair Pay Commission by saying that this Fair Pay Commission would drive down the wages of ordinary Australian workers. They went around this country, day after day and week after week, seeking to traduce the reputation of the Fair Pay Commission before it had even given a decision.

In the light of that, I was very interested to look at what the Leader of the Opposition would say about this decision on Thursday. I kept my ears tuned to the radio, watched the television and looked at the wire services—I even went to the website—and I could not find a thing. Do you know that the Leader of the Opposition—having spent 12 months seeking to say that this would drive down the wages of ordinary Australians when, in fact, the Fair Pay Commission came out with a $27 increase—had absolutely nothing to say? There was dead silence from the Leader of the Opposition about this decision. He could not bring himself to say that this was a great decision for the workers of Australia, yet he sits in here each day pretending that somehow he and his party are the representatives of the workers in this country.

After Mr Combet came out and said, ‘On one hand this is a good decision, but, on the other hand, of course, we would still abolish the Fair Pay Commission that gave this good decision,’ the next day we had the Leader of the Opposition out there saying, ‘We will abolish the Fair Pay Commission.’ More roll back, more rip up. Rip up AWAs that deliver higher wages, roll back and rip up the Fair Pay Commission that delivers a $27 a week increase to the low-paid workers in Australia and even rip up the Office of Workplace Services, which has collected more than $30 million in underpaid wages for the workers of Australia.

You have to ask: why is this the policy of the Leader of the Opposition—to reintroduce an outdated and adversarial process for industrial relations that would take us back to the 1980s in Australia? There can only be one answer and that is that the Leader of the Opposition is only interested in shoring up the $70 million worth of cash that flows from the unions in this country to the coffers of the Australian Labor Party. The reaction of the Leader of the Opposition last week and this whole campaign from the ALP proves once again that they are not fit to govern this country and they are not fit to manage this economy. The reality is that this party—the coalition—remains the workers’ best friend in Australia.

Interest Rates

Mr SWAN (2.22 pm)—My question is directed to the Prime Minister. Is it the case that households have experienced an eight per cent hike in the price of bread, a 4.5 per cent hike in the price of milk, a 9.3 per cent hike in the price of vegetables, a 6.5 per cent hike in the price of eggs, a 6.3 per cent hike in the cost of recreational activities, a five per cent increase in health costs and a massive 14.4 per cent hike in childcare costs all over the last 12 months? Prime Minister, yesterday you said inflation was ‘extremely low’. If this is the case, have households imagined these increases?

Opposition members interjecting—

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

Mr HOWARD—I say in reply to the member for Lilley that I always check figures quoted by the opposition.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—
The SPEAKER—The member for Sydney is warned.

Mr HOWARD—The problem is that the member for Lilley is too friendly with the member for Perth. The member for Perth has not got a figure right yet when it has come to industrial relations. In relation to the wellbeing of the people of Australia, by any measure the Australian people are much better off under this government.

Mr Swan interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Lilley has asked his question.

Mr Swan interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Lilley is warned.

Mr HOWARD—They are far better off. When Labor were last in government, they drove down their wages. When Labor were last in government, they lifted housing interest rates to 17 per cent. When this country had an unemployment rate of about eight per cent, the now Leader of the Opposition, who was then the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, said, ‘You can’t really get it any better than that.’ He gave up on the unemployed. In the time that we have been in government we have been able to get unemployment down to a 30-year low and there is no greater measure of the wellbeing of the Australian people than the ease with which they can win not only employment but also significant increases in their wages. Under this government, we have had an increase in wages of 16.4 per cent in 10½ years versus minus three per cent in 13½ years. We are now at a 30-year low in unemployment. Whilst, as always, I will check the figures of the member for Lilley, by any measure the Australian people are better off now than they were 10 years ago, and they are better off because of the enormous contribution the men and women of this country have made to the growth, wealth and production of Australia.

One of the reasons they have made that contribution is that they have had a government that has cared for them, they have had a government that believes in incentives, they have had a government that has reduced interest rates from the absolutely Himalayan levels that they reached under the former government but, above all, they have had a government that believes in the hopes and the aspirations of the Australian people. That has been behind our commitment to industrial relations reform. We have always been about fairness and flexibility, unlike the Labor Party that has always taken the view that it knows what is best for people. It said that for 13 years. I can say without fear of contradiction that the workers of Australia did not think it was best for them that their real wages fell in that 13-year period of Labor government.

Yemen

Mrs VALE (2.26 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister confirm that Australians have been arrested in Yemen, and what action is the government taking in relation to these arrests?

Mr DOWNER—First, can I thank the honourable member for Hughes for her question and her interest. The Yemeni authorities have confirmed that they have arrested a number of people whom they suspect of having been involved with terrorist activities. In the broad, we welcome the determination by Yemeni authorities to address terrorism. This is a country where there have been a number of terrorist attacks over the years—most prominently the attack on the USS Cole but also there have been attacks that Australians have been caught up in over the years.

Amongst those who have been arrested are three Australians, who were among a
group. There were not four as has been suggested by some but three. Two of those Australians were born in Australia and one of them was born in Poland and became an Australian citizen during the 1980s. We do not have any confirmation of the official charges at this stage, but we understand that the men were detained on terrorist charges, including attempting to smuggle arms to Somalia. These are very serious charges and the government, of course, would be deeply concerned if it turns out that they are true.

In spite of this, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as usual, will provide normal consular assistance to those who have been arrested. We will monitor the welfare of those people and we will assist them to ensure that they have access to lawyers and to an appropriate judicial process. The British Embassy in Yemen is giving assistance—we do not have an embassy in Yemen—and officers from the Australian Embassy in Riyadh will continue to seek access to those Australians who have been detained. Finally, the department is in constant contact, as the House would expect, with the next of kin both here and in Yemen.

Interest Rates

Mr BEAZLEY (2.28 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and follows his answer to the previous question from this side of the House. I refer to the Prime Minister’s comment last week that a possible interest rate hike next week by the Reserve Bank might be ‘the best thing it can do for Australia’. Prime Minister, why are you saying that this is the interest rate rise we have to have?

Mr HOWARD—What I am saying is this: the bloke who gave that quote currency, along with you, took interest rates to 17 per cent.

Iraq

Mr BARRESI (2.29 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Defence. Would the minister advise the House on the composition of the Australian Defence Force commitment to Iraq and Afghanistan?

Dr NELSON—I thank the member for Deakin for his question and for his very strong support of the Australian men and women who wear our Defence uniform. At the moment, the Australian Defence Force is deployed in 10 locations throughout the world. Four of those locations are quite significant at the least, and they include Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan at the moment our troops are based predominantly at Tarin Kowt in the province of Uruzgan in southern central Afghanistan. Some 400 are based there and, of those, 270 are tradesmen and women and engineers who are involved in reconstructing roads and water projects, helping with hospital programs and providing a range of trade training activities for the Afghan people. We are working in partnership with the Dutch who are based at Tarin Kowt. The Dutch are with us under the NATO forces; they have around 1,400 soldiers who are working alongside us.

We also have at Tarin Kowt a company of 120 soldiers, supported by infantry mobility vehicles. Australians may not appreciate it but at Kandahar in Afghanistan are two Chinook helicopters supported by 110 Army personnel. Every Australian should be very proud of the work they are doing not only in engaging in aeromedical evacuation of the injured in the confrontations that are occurring with the Taliban but also in their efforts in getting our troops to where they need to be and in getting them out in times of emergency.

We currently have 1,400 troops—sailors, airmen and women—across Iraq. Of those, 110 are based in Baghdad, with their light armoured vehicles, and they are providing essential security for our diplomats and officials as they move through the streets of
Baghdad. Also, 80 of our people are working in the headquarters in Baghdad, along with our key allies and the Iraqis themselves. Two P3C Orions are based in Iraq, and they have flown 8,000 hours. They provide essential surveillance and information that supports the ground forces—the Iraqi, Australian and coalition forces. Our two C130 Hercules, supported by 150 of our airmen and women, have now flown 1,100 missions. They have carried over two million kilograms of cargo and are essential to the effort.

In the North Arabian Gulf at the moment is HMAS Warramunga, with 180 of its crew. Along with 10 other coalition ships, it is providing essential security and support to two Iraqi oil terminals—Australians should appreciate that oil is responsible for 90 per cent of Iraq’s export income. Then in Tallil 500 of our soldiers are looking after overwatch in two provinces: Al Muthanna, which transferred to the Iraqi provincial control in July this year, and Dekar, which transferred only a few weeks ago. It is important to appreciate that that battle group is in constant dialogue with the provincial government in those two provinces—we have trained almost 200 of the Iraqi security forces in that area—and provides constant support to the tribal leaders and engagement with them.

The parliament should remember what the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iraq said in Washington to the Congress, when he was there at the end of July. This is about the work that Australians have done. He said:

I am proud to witness a historic milestone in new Iraq. Al-Muthanna just became the first province to assume complete responsibility for its law enforcement and security

This is a crucial first step in a sequence of events ultimately leading to Iraq standing entirely on its own.

That is what this is about. Afghanistan and Iraq and in other places where we send our troops is about helping people to stand on their own and to project our force always with a kind heart.

Water Entitlements

Mr WINDSOR (2.34 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and relates to statements made by him at the Finley RSL Club on 26 October concerning water entitlement holders. Prime Minister, do you recall saying:

I think the most important thing in relation to water entitlements is for there to be a sense of justice for people who have paid good money for water and then have that allocation arbitrarily taken back without compensation. That is not something the Federal Government would do.

Prime Minister, given this statement and others made in this House, could you update the House on what the federal government is doing regarding the as yet unresolved taxation issues on compensation for groundwater users in New South Wales? When will the federal government move to ensure that these people get justice for giving up water for the environmental good of the nation?

Mr HOWARD—I thank the member for New England for his question. What has happened in relation to those groundwater entitlements is that the federal government has provided money under the general umbrella of structural adjustment. The actual compensation is something that falls upon the withdrawing level of government, and the withdrawing level of government, as the member will know, is the state government. At the moment, the negotiation that is taking place is about the taxation status of the payments. There is no argument about the willingness of the federal government to help in structural adjustment. The argument is that—

Mr Windsor interjecting—
Mr HOWARD—If the member for New England is patient, he will find out that we are both broadly on the same side. The difficulty that we have is that the way in which the payments have been cast by the New South Wales government attracts a certain taxation treatment. We have suggested to the New South Wales government, without in any way wishing to engage in anything that is other than totally transparent, that if the payments were couched in the nature of compensation, which they plainly are, then a different and more beneficial taxation treatment would accrue. Thus far, as I understand it, the New South Wales government has been resistant to that, because they do not want to acknowledge that if you take something from somebody you ought to compensate them.

But I do thank the member for New England for asking me this question. It enables me to say to the parliament and to say particularly to the people who are affected that I think it is absolutely outrageous what is now happening in parts of New South Wales concerning water entitlements. I spoke with somebody near Finley on Friday who had paid $30,000 on the Friday to buy water on the private market, and that water entitlement had been taken away or reduced by the New South Wales government on the following Monday without any compensation.

I know of another case, where a man—I think his name was Pat Kennedy—was paid a $100,000 interest rate subsidy by the federal government under our interest rate EC subsidy scheme, where we pay the first 50 per cent of the interest in the first year of EC and then 80 per cent in the second and subsequent years. This man had received a $100,000 subsidy from the federal government. He was then required to pay $70,000 out of that $100,000 in, effectively, water rates, but he has no water because that water entitlement has been taken away. You cannot do that in the federal government because of the just compensation clause in the federal Constitution, and rightly so.

I thank the member for New England for raising this issue. I am deeply grateful to the member for New England for raising this issue because under the federal Constitution if you take somebody’s property without just compensation it is unconstitutional, but state governments are not bound by that kind of restraint. Let me make it very plain.

Mr Price—You were part of it.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Chief Opposition Whip!

Mr HOWARD—Something in the order of 95 per cent—

Mr Price interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The Chief Opposition Whip is warned.

Mr HOWARD—Of the financial burden of exceptional circumstances is borne, rightly, by the federal government, and we don’t complain, but it is about time the New South Wales government did their bit. It is about time the New South Wales government stopped charging people in New South Wales for water they do not have. I can understand them, in a drought, cutting the allocation, but it is unconscionable, it is unfair and it is unjust that they should cut somebody’s allocation without compensating.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Sydney is on very thin ice.

East Timor

Mr TOLLNER (2.39 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister update the House on the security situation in East Timor? Will the minister also advise whether Australia will continue to lead the international security forces in East Timor?
Mr DOWNER—First can I thank the honourable member for his question and his interest. There were some serious security developments in East Timor over the last week. The international forces, led by Brigadier Rerden, and the United Nations police have brought the situation under control. I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the Australian Defence Force and the international security forces as well as the UN Police because it is dangerous and difficult work that they have had to do. As at lunchtime today the situation in Dili was calm, but there is still an underlying tension. The unrest was caused by clashes between rival gangs near the airport and in other isolated pockets around Dili. We are concerned that this violence may be organised in some instances for what might broadly be described as political reasons. The timing of the violence could be linked to the release on 17 October of a report by the United Nations Special Commission recommending action be taken against a number of people whom the UN believe to have been responsible for the violence that took place in April and May.

I am able to confirm reports that at least six people have been killed and another 50 have been injured since last Wednesday and note with concern reports that drugs have been used to fuel gang violence. I welcome the commitment by the United Nations Police to investigate this matter. We will continue to monitor the situation carefully and keep our travel advisory under constant review. At the moment it advises Australians to reconsider their need to travel to East Timor, at least for the time being, because of the uncertain security situation.

There are around 1,000 Australian troops in East Timor. As I have said, they are doing an excellent job to keep violence under control. Any suggestion that the Australian troops have been anything less than professional and impartial in carrying out their duties is wrong, and it is ludicrous. I welcome the consensus decision by the United Nations Security Council last Friday that Australia should continue to lead the international security forces in East Timor. That decision by the Security Council is consistent with the preferred position of the Australian government. I also note that last Friday East Timor’s Prime Minister, Jose Ramos Horta, reaffirmed his government’s total support for the work being done by Australian troops in restoring law and order. He said it was ‘logical and necessary’ that East Timor accept the assistance of its neighbours in providing troops to stabilise its security and that that was—and I quote him again—‘in the best interests’ of East Timor. So we will remain committed to the task in East Timor through to the general elections, which are scheduled to be in May 2007 and, no doubt, beyond.

Climate Change

Mr BEAZLEY (2.43 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to the report by respected economist Sir Nicholas Stern on the severe economic impact of climate change. Does the Prime Minister stand by his industry minister’s statement to the Sunday program on 20 August 2006 that he—that is, the industry minister—is ‘sceptical of the link between greenhouse emissions and climate change’?

Mr HOWARD—The position of the government in relation to this is that of course climate change is occurring.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr HOWARD—Of course it is occurring. Self-evidently, climate change is occurring. I await with interest the full report of Sir Nicholas Stern, but from preliminary reports—and also analysis of those preliminary reports by the ever-vigilant member for Lilley—we know a number of things. We
know first and foremost that you need to have a variety of responses to climate change. I would imagine that, if you need a variety of responses, one of the responses has to include a sensible examination of the nuclear power alternative.

Equally, Sir Nicholas, I understand—and this is self-evident—says that you cannot have a solution that does not involve in an effective way all of the international polluters. And I noticed that this was picked up. I impose a harsh discipline on myself of a morning, but one of the things I did this morning was to listen to the member for Lilley. Having said that, I have to make my peace with my colleague the Treasurer. I listened very carefully to the member for Lilley and he had a remarkable statement to make. He said it is very important for everybody to be part of the solution—countries like China and India had to be part of the solution—and, therefore, he was very disappointed that Australia had not ratified the Kyoto protocol. What he did not go on to acknowledge was that China and India, although being part of Kyoto, do not carry the same burden under Kyoto that Australia carries. That is the reason why, until that changes, this country will not join Kyoto. That is the reason why we have held back from Kyoto. And, unlike most of the European countries, we are going to either meet or go very near to meeting our Kyoto target. I have not only read the reports of the Nicholas Stern review; I have also read an article in the Guardian—it is quite a strain for me to read the Guardian, but I have nonetheless done it—and what that article indicates is that most of the sermonisers and the lecturers on this issue, namely many of the European countries, are falling a long way short of their Kyoto targets. Despite being in many cases 50 per cent short of their targets, they are the people who are running around the world giving us a lecture. Australia will meet or go very close to meeting her target, and we will continue to hold out for an international agreement that includes everybody, because that is the only fair basis on which Australia can be included.

Mr Albanese—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The question asked if he stood by the industry minister’s scepticism on emissions trading and climate change.

The SPEAKER—The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. He has raised a point of order under the standing order on relevance, and I will rule on his point of order. The Prime Minister is clearly answering the question. I call the Prime Minister.

Mr Howard—I was asked about a number of things, including Sir Nicholas Stern. I am just telling the member for Lilley that he is right, Sir Nicholas is right and everybody is right if they say the answer to this issue is to have all the polluters involved—and that is the reason why we have held back from Kyoto. And, unlike most of the European countries, we are going to either meet or go very near to meeting our Kyoto target. I have not only read the reports of the Nicholas Stern review; I have also read an article in the Guardian—it is quite a strain for me to read the Guardian, but I have nonetheless done it—and what that article indicates is that most of the sermonisers and the lecturers on this issue, namely many of the European countries, are falling a long way short of their Kyoto targets. Despite being in many cases 50 per cent short of their targets, they are the people who are running around the world giving us a lecture. Australia will meet or go very close to meeting her target, and we will continue to hold out for an international agreement that includes everybody, because that is the only fair basis on which Australia can be included.

School Chaplains

Mr Fawcett (2.49 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. Would the minister update the House on what the government is doing to ensure that students have access to chaplains in schools throughout Australia?

Ms Julie Bishop—I thank the member for Wakefield for his question. I ac-
knowledge his interest in this matter and I recognise his role and that of the member for Flinders, the member for Greenway, the member for Bowman and other government members in supporting an announcement that the Prime Minister was able to make yesterday. The Australian government has announced a new initiative to establish chaplaincy programs in schools across Australia. Schools will be able to access funding to establish chaplain positions to provide greater pastoral care and support for the spiritual wellbeing of students. Currently, a number of schools in a number of states have chaplaincy services and the school chaplains are making a very valuable contribution to those school communities. But this is only available in some states.

The Australian government is determined to ensure that all schools, government and non-government, in all states are able to have access to chaplaincy services if that is what they choose to do, and we have provided funding of some $90 million over three years to support this program. The program will be voluntary in that schools will be able to choose whether they wish to take part. We would expect that schools will consult widely with their broader school communities and they will make the decision as to who would fill a chaplaincy role.

At present, the chaplaincy service is available in a number of states. I will be writing to all state and territory education ministers to ask for their support and we will be developing national guidelines that will be available by the end of the year. Regrettably, the New South Wales government has banned the establishment of chaplain positions in New South Wales government schools. I acknowledge the broad support from the member for Jagajaga for this proposal and I would ask that she join with me in calling on the Iemma government to lift its ban on the establishment of chaplaincy positions in government schools. We want to ensure that all schools across Australia in all states have the choice and the opportunity to engage chaplaincy services if they wish to do so.

Climate Change

Mr ALBANESE (2.52 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister recall saying about climate change on 27 September this year that ‘people can talk theoretically about what might happen to Australia and the planet in 50 years time’? Doesn’t the Stern report indicate that early action on climate change is necessary to avoid a 20 per cent cut in the global economy over the next 50 years? Prime Minister, isn’t climate change here right now?

Mr HOWARD—I probably did say something like that. If I did not say it I will say it now. I think it is very important though that, as in all of these things, we do not zealously embrace a particular report or a particular piece of analysis. Of course climate change is occurring.

Opposition members—Oh!

Mr HOWARD—A chorus of approval from the opposition! Dear me, I get a chorus of approval from the opposition!

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Grayndler has asked his question.

Mr HOWARD—Let me simply say to the member for Grayndler that climate change of course is occurring and the challenge that he has—the challenge that anybody in this parliament that wants to address this thing sensibly has—is to work out the right range of policies to respond with.

Government members interjecting—

Mr HOWARD—Exactly! The first and most important thing you do when you respond to something is you do not close your mind to one important option.
Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Ballarat is warned!

Mr HOWARD—And the important option that the Labor Party has already closed its mind to is of course nuclear power. I am not saying that nuclear power is one solution to this; I do not believe that for a moment. Nor do I believe that solar and wind power represent the sole solution to this problem. You need, in my view, a contribution from renewables, and last week the Treasurer and the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources announced a major project that could represent one of the biggest investments in solar power generation in the world. This was announced in concert with the Victorian government, and today in Queensland the minister announced a number of other projects funded by the federal government that are investing in new technologies which are designed to reduce the greenhouse gas impact of the use of fossil fuels. At the moment it is undoubtedly the case that the cheapest source of energy is what is colloquially called ‘dirty coal’. If we just went on using that, we would win the economic debate—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr HOWARD—I am only saying things that the bloke sitting on your right has said, because on this issue the member for Batman speaks a great deal of sense—the member for Batman is on the money. If the member for Batman had the restraints taken off him, he would be on board in relation to nuclear power. And I can tell by the way he laughs and grins that deep down Martin is in the nuclear camp—I know that. I know Martin: if you trawl around enough, you will find Martin and a bit of enriched uranium sitting side by side.

So what you really need in this debate is to have a multiplicity of responses. You do not want to get too theological about it; you want a multiplicity of responses. You will never be able to generate baseload power using solar and wind; you can make a contribution at the margins, you can help in peak hours but you will never be able to generate baseload. The only things that will ever replace the current dirty power stations are cleaner uses of fossil fuel, or nuclear power. You will never replace them with solar or wind.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Grayndler is warned!

Mr HOWARD—Let me say to the member for Grayndler I rather welcome this debate, because quite plainly what this country needs is a very full debate. It needs a debate that has every option on the table. We do not want closed minds like that of the member for Grayndler. We want the open, expansive, embracing approach of the member for Batman. On this issue the member for Batman has more wisdom than the member for Grayndler because the member for Batman will look at all of the options—and that is certainly in Australia’s longer term interests.

Climate Change

Mr FORREST (2.57 pm)—My question follows on from the Prime Minister’s contribution, for it is addressed to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources. Would the minister update the House on recent government initiatives to support the development of low-emissions technology power generation in Australia? Will these initiatives have particular benefits in my electorate of Mallee?

Mr IAN MACFARLANE—I thank the member for Mallee for his question and for his very strong support of low-emissions technologies, particularly in the area of renewable energy. In fact, I understand that the Mildura and Swan Hill rural city councils have sought to be the solar power munici-
palities of the world. Taken with last week’s announcement of the biggest solar energy generator in the world being built in Mallee, it shows the way is being led by this government. The inconvenient truth for those who sit opposite is that this government—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The minister has the call.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr IAN MACFARLANE—You’ve been warned! The inconvenient truth for the member for Grayndler is this: this government has a very, very well-developed set of policies to lower greenhouse gas emissions. They like to think that we are not doing anything, but 2½ years ago we announced the energy white paper and in that white paper there was a whole suite of programs to ensure that this government led the way in terms of lowering emissions.

Last week we announced a $75 million grant for the Solar Systems project that is going to be in the member for Mallee’s seat and, along with that, a $50 million grant for the clean coal project at the Hazelwood power station. These projects involve world-leading technology. This morning I announced a further $125 million for two low-emission projects in Queensland: $75 million for a coal seam methane plant in the member for Maranoa’s electorate, where CO₂ emissions will be captured and injected back into the coal seam, and $50 million for a world’s first project to retrofit a Central Queensland power station—in the member for Capricornia’s electorate, if she is interested—to use oxyfuel technology. With all four projects put together, this is $250 million worth of government funding and $1.5 billion worth of investment by industry, and millions of tonnes of CO₂ will be saved and geosequestered. We will lead the world in a number of those technologies, and I make the point—

Ms Gillard—Even though you don’t believe in it.

The SPEAKER—The member for Lalor is warned.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE—that these projects would not have happened without this government’s policy that was laid out 2½ years ago and funded two budgets ago.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The minister will resume his seat. The member for Grayndler has been warned, he continues to interject and he will remove himself under standing order 94(a).

The member for Grayndler then left the chamber.

Mr Martin Ferguson—He’s leaving and I haven’t been warned yet.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE—We know you are on our side, Martin. Dave Holland from Solar Systems said:

The Low Emissions Technology Demonstration Fund is a key ingredient in accelerating our progress to very large scale, mainstream solar power generation. Without this federal funding, we would not be able to make this project happen.

What this clearly demonstrates is that it is not taxes and targets that deliver low emissions but technology—and it is this government that is investing in that technology.

Oil for Food Program

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (3.02 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Given that the foreign minister must give his permission, under Customs regulation 4QA, for the importation of goods from Iraq, will the foreign minister guarantee that every drop of Iraqi oil imported into Australia while the wheat kickbacks were being paid fully complied with the UN oil for food program and did not breach Australia’s international obligations?
Mr DOWNER—I have no reason to believe they breached obligations, and in relation to the rest of those matters we can wait until the Cole commission produces its report and then, when we see what is in it, we can have a discussion. In relation to oil imports from Iraq, I have no reason to believe there has been a breach of the sanctions—not that I am aware of.

Indigenous Communities

Mr WAKELIN (3.03 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Would the minister inform the House of recent measures to tackle sexual abuse and violence in Indigenous communities and to improve health and school attendance amongst Aboriginal children?

Mr BROUGH—I thank the member for Grey for his question and also for meeting us up at Mimili in the APY lands over the weekend, where we opened a new swimming pool. The No School, No Pool federal government policy is operating there, resulting, the principal tells me, in over 80 per cent child attendance at the school—which is a great step forward. I want to congratulate the principal for the strong leadership he is showing in that community, using this Commonwealth funded pool to have good health outcomes and good educational outcomes for the children in the APY. While we were up there, I also announced that the federal government would extend another $2.5 million to roll out a total of three pools in the region because of the success that has been demonstrated by the Mimili community.

At the same time, the unfortunate reality is that there have been young people who have succumbed to substance abuse in that region, as they have in other parts of Australia, so we have extended by $1.1 million the rehabilitation facility. This brings to a total of $3.3 million the Commonwealth expenditure for rehabilitation and for housing of appropriate staff in that region so that these people can stay where they are, be fully rehabilitated and become active members of their community.

Earlier on Saturday I was over the border in the Northern Territory, also in Pitjantjatjara lands, in the community of Mutitjulu, where I opened the new police station. This involved almost $2 million of Commonwealth funding. We all understand in this place that policing is a state and territory responsibility, but the reality is that the Territory has a lot of areas that do not have sufficient numbers of police. So the federal government, after being requested by the Territory government to be involved, came to the party. I think it is worth reminding the House where the request originally came from. It was back in 2004 that negotiations got under way which ultimately saw this police station being opened yesterday. Back then the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Clare Martin, wrote this about the Mutitjulu community in a memo of 26 November to her police minister:

Social dysfunction surrounding the substance abuse epidemic is resulting in significant human rights abuses: self-harm, violence against others, sexual abuse and child neglect. Children as young as five have contracted STDs, and young girls are being prostituted for petrol. Two-thirds of young children are malnourished and underdeveloped. That is an intolerable situation in any Australian community. The federal government recognises that and will work in a collaborative and positive way with any state and territory government to stamp out that sort of abuse of young Australians. The Mutitjulu Police Station will go some way towards rectifying that problem.

I will add that what disappoints me is that the two police officers are Aboriginal community police officers; they are not sworn police officers. They have had nine weeks
training. That means they have come straight from training to a very difficult post. I would encourage the Northern Territory government to reconsider that and acknowledge that normal police practice is to put young constables, who are on probation, who are sworn constables, with senior, experienced people. That is not occurring there and I think it is absolutely paramount that we assist these young people, who I have met and who I think are of the highest possible calibre, to be able to do their job by having the benefit of having experienced police officers with them.

There is much more to be done. The federal government has committed $130 million from the summit into sexual violence and abuse in these remote communities. We want to see a better future for Aboriginal children, men and women in these remote communities, and we have put the money on the table to make that a reality.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:
ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Interest Rates
Water Entitlements

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (3.07 pm)—Mr Speaker, could I correct one answer in one small particular and add to another?

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister may proceed.

Mr HOWARD—In answering a question from the member for Lilley, I did the Labor Party in government a great injustice. I said that real wages had fallen by three per cent—at one stage I said this. In reality, real wages fell during their 13 years in government by 0.2 per cent. It was nonetheless a fall, and I correct that error.

I was asked by the member for New England about the discussions regarding the groundwater. I have checked with my office and I am informed that discussions have taken place between my parliamentary secretary, the member for Wentworth, and the New South Wales minister, Mr Ian MacDonald. The New South Wales government is getting some legal advice on the taxation aspects of the matter and will then get back to us, and I confirm again that the Commonwealth, although it is under no legal obligation to do so, has offered to make payments matching any nominal terms made by the New South Wales government to help with structural adjustment. The issue revolves around the taxation treatment of the payments.

Our view—and I think the common-sense view—is that, however you might try and dress it up, the money being paid is compensation. And the difficulty is that the New South Wales government are pretending it is not, because they do not want a precedent to be established. Heavens above! If you snatch somebody’s right and you give them some money in return, that is compensation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr CREAN (Hotham) (3.09 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr CREAN—I do, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr CREAN—In the Mackay Daily Mercury published on Friday, the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Regional Services, Mrs De-Anne Kelly—if she is reported correctly—accused me of being a hypocrite in relation to our assertion that the government had failed to fund the aquatic centre in Mackay in accordance with the Re-
ional Partnerships program. She made that assertion on the basis that Labor, if it were elected, would abolish that program.

Labor will not abolish the Regional Partnerships program. Our commitment is to ensure—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member has shown where he has been misrepresented.

Mr CREAN—its greater transparency and accountability, and not allow the rorts—

The SPEAKER—The member will resume his seat.

Mr CREAN—Mr Speaker, I seek leave to confirm that point.

The SPEAKER—The member for Hotham will not debate the issue. If the member wishes to show where he has been personally misrepresented he may do so, but he will confine himself to that point.

Mr CREAN—I seek leave to table a press release, issued under my name, of 24 May 2006 in which we say we will keep the program, and a speech that I made on 19 July 2006 in which I say we are committed to retaining the program but improving its transparency and accountability.

Leave granted.

MAIN COMMITTEE

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie) (3.11 pm)—by leave—I move:

That unless otherwise ordered, at the resumption of the Main Committee meeting at approximately 4 pm on Tuesday, 31 October 2006, the first item of business shall be Members’ statements, each for no longer than 3 minutes, with the item of business continuing for 30 minutes irrespective of suspensions for divisions in the House.

Question agreed to.
tention, torture and live organ removal for transplants.

II. Demand that the CCP regime release all detained Falun Gong practitioners immediately.

by Mr Bowen (from 13,754 citizens)
by Mr Robb (from 68 citizens)

Organ Harvesting
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives Assembled in Parliament:
The petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that:

David Kilgour, a former MP and Secretary of State for Asia Pacific of Canada, and international human rights lawyer Mr. David Matas initiated an independent investigation into the allegations of organ harvesting from live victims in China. The report released on 6 July 2006 has come to the conclusion that Chinese officials have been committing crimes against humanity; that the authorities have been harvesting vital organs from thousands of unwilling Falun Gong practitioners and killing them in the process.

“Weir’s vital organs, including hearts, Kidneys, livers and corneas, were virtually simultaneously seized involuntarily for sale at high prices, sometimes to foreigners, who normally face long waits for voluntary donations of such organs in their home countries.”—Pg. 44 of the report.

In August 2006 both the Australian Government and Opposition agreed to ask the Chinese communist party to allow an independent investigation into the forced organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE REQUEST THE HOUSE TO INITIATE A RESOLUTION TO:

I. Australian Government to urge the CCP to immediately release all Falun Gong practitioners; and to give full access without impediment to the Coalition to Investigate Persecution of Falun Gong in China (CIPFG) to conduct an independent investigation into all jails, 610 Offices, labour camps, detention centre, and related hospitals in China.

II. Australian Government to initiate a Senate Committee Inquiry into the allegation of Organ Harvesting;

III. Australian Government to inform and discourage Australian citizens from travelling to China for organ transplants; and prevent companies, institutions and individuals providing goods and services and training to China’s organ transplant programmes; until such time as the CIPFG is satisfied that no organs used have been taken by force against the will of the donor.

by Mr Bowen (from 132 citizens)
to jails, labour camps, detention centres and related hospitals for the Coalition to Investigate Persecution of Falun Gong in China (CIPFG) and/or the UN to conduct independent investigations;

II. Establish a Senate Committee Inquiry into the allegation of Organ Harvesting;

III. Discourage Australian citizens from travelling to China for organ transplants; and prevent companies, institutions and individuals providing goods and services and training to China’s organ transplant programs until such time as it is beyond reasonable doubt that no organs used have been harvested against the will of the donor.

by Mr Somlyay (from 281 citizens)

Organ Harvesting

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

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

Witnesses, including an investigative journalist and a veteran military doctor, have revealed that Falun Gong practitioners are being held in at least 36 concentration camps in China where they are routinely subjected to the forced removals of their organs, often while still alive, which are then sold at a huge profit for transplants. The bodies are quickly cremated to destroy all evidence.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE REQUEST THE HOUSE TO INITIATE A RESOLUTION TO:

I. Call for the Australian Government to fully support the International Coalition to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong (CIPFG), and demand that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) immediately open the doors of all concentration camps, forced labour camps, hospitals, prisons and detention centres throughout the People’s Republic of China in order to allow independent teams to investigate the charges of illegal detention, torture and live organ removal for transplants.

II. Demand that the CCP regime release all detained Falun Gong practitioners immediately.

by Mr Tanner (from 120 citizens)

Falun Gong

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

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

a) Falun Gong is a self-improvement practice that espouses the principles of Truth, Compassion and Forbearance.

b) Falun Gong was banned in China 20 July 1999. About 8% of China’s entire 1.3 billion population has been targeted for “eradication” by China’s former leader Jiang Zemin.

c) Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other human rights groups have indicated in their reports that Falun Gong practitioners in China are being subjected to torture, as well as illegal and prolonged incarceration.

d) “Jiang’s horrific form of genocide is a terror that does not just destroy lives, but [aims to] destroy faith… It is a terror that must be brought to justice.” Georges-Henri Beauthier, renowned human rights lawyer.

e) “Twenty-seven lawyers from 21 countries are working to bring Jiang and his cohorts to justice across the world. It’s part of the biggest human rights case in the world since WWII.” Theresa Chu — Attorney; and

f) The implementation of this policy of eradication violates the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which China has signed, the Convention Against Torture and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, both of which China has signed and ratified. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights will convene on 14 March - 22 April 2005.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE REQUEST THE HOUSE TO INITIATE A RESOLUTION TO CONDEMN CHINA’S PERSECUTION OF FALUN GONG AT THE
UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND REQUEST CHINA TO:

I End This Monumental Human Rights Tragedy From Continuing In China And Around The Globe By Releasing All Falun Gong Practitioners Imprisoned For Their Spiritual Beliefs, Including Those Family Members Of Australian Citizens And Residents Currently Detained;


by Mr Barresi (from 381 citizens)

Australian Broadcasting Corporation: Funding

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that funding cuts to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation have led to cuts in a number of areas including, Drama, Educational programs, coverage of non-mainstream sports, local radio coverage, Radio National, Triple J, News and Current Affairs and to the ABC’s cadet training program.

We believe in the value of a well-funded and independent national broadcaster, free from Political Interference and Commercial Pressures.

We understand that the ABC has asked you for a modest increase in funding to meet the demands of a 21st-century media outlet.

With a budget surplus of nearly $10 billion, funding the ABC is surely money well spent.

Your petitioners therefore call on the House to take a strong stand in favour of adequate funding for the next trimester for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, which does a splendid job under trying circumstances and inadequate funding. Furthermore, we call on the House to increase pressure on the Federal Government to ensure that the ABC remains independent, free of political pressure and free of advertising, which would increase the chance of the ABC being influenced by commercial pressures in regards to any programming decisions.

by Mr Stephen Smith (from 457 citizens)

Fuel: Prices

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

The residents of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula draw to the attention of the House their high cost of living. On top of these costs the abolition of the freight subsidy and Fuel Sales Grant Scheme to the region on 1 July 2006 has forced up the price of fuel by more than 15 cents per litre. Fuel on Thursday Island is now approaching $2.00 per litre and in the outer Islands it is approaching $3.00. This has significantly impacted on family budgets and local businesses.

Local communities rely heavily on boat and air travel so they receive limited benefit from the fuel excise spent on roads and it is completely unfair for these communities to be paying significantly more tax in the form of GST on fuel. This petition calls on the House to reinstate the freight subsidy on fuel to the Torres Straits and Northern Peninsula to ease the rising costs of living and compensate for these unfair taxes.

by Mr Snowdon (from 1,575 citizens)

Legal Services

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

This petition of certain concerned citizens of Australia seeks to draw the attention of the House to the need for nationally funded community legal centres aimed at meeting the needs of older Australians.

The demographic forecasts for Australia indicate that by the year 2016, 16% of the Australian population (approximately 3.5 million people) will be aged 65 years and over. People in this sector of the community can be vulnerable to a variety of forms of abuse including physical and financial abuse and often have health or mobility problems that make it impossible for them to ac-
cess mainstream legal services. Legal issues arising under Commonwealth and State laws will confront many people in this age group.

There is a need for national recognition of the complexity of legal issues for this sector of the community and part of that recognition would include the establishment of specialist legal services addressing the unique needs of this ever-growing sector of the population.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to fund nationally the establishment of community-based legal services to:

- undertake community and professional education with the aim of increasing awareness of problems such as the domestic violence and financial abuse confronting older people;
- protect the rights of older Australians, particularly those made vulnerable as a result of dementia or other health issues;
- undertake case-work that will advance the interests of this sector of the community;
- advocate for appropriate law reform impacting on the rights and interests of older people.

by Mr Truss (from 13 citizens)

Petitions received.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Anaphylaxis

Ms Burke (Chisholm) (3.14 pm)—I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that it is estimated that anaphylaxis affects up to 380,000 Australians who experience a food allergy, 5-8 per cent of whom are children;

(2) recognises that tragically, three Australian students died between March 2002 and April 2003 during school hours as a result of an anaphylactic reaction;

(3) acknowledges that a simple medical treatment is all that is needed to treat an anaphylactic reaction, prevent loss of life and provide the necessary time to transport the victim to hospital for further medical treatment; and

(4) asks that the Government introduces legislation, devised in a COAG capacity, to ensure all preschools, primary and secondary schools:

(a) have necessary policies and procedures to provide effective response to a student who experiences an anaphylactic reaction;

(b) include policies that reduce the exposure to causative agents in the classroom environment;

(c) ensure staff members are appropriately trained to support life in the event of an anaphylactic reaction; and

(d) develop an individual action plan for each student that has an anaphylactic allergy that comprises treatment plans from the student’s physician.

I have spoken previously in the House about the tragic death of Alex Baptist—he was only four; he went to kindy and never came home—due to anaphylactic shock, and the continuing grief suffered by his parents. I have had the privilege of speaking to them: Nigel and Martha. Sadly, three other children have also died from anaphylactic shock since 2002. As in Alex’s case, these tragic cases also occurred during school hours.

Deaths from anaphylactic shock can be averted if the correct measures and safeguards are put in place. Amongst other things, these preventative actions would involve the training of all teachers in reducing exposure to anaphylaxis-inducing agents at school and in the correct manner to administer an EpiPen, the only effective treatment, which buys valuable time until the child suffering the attack can be seen by a medical professional. The Canadian government has introduced such a law—it is known as Sabrina’s law. The Victorian government has recently announced that if re-elected it would also introduce similar legislation. I applaud that move. I cannot see why we in the federal sphere cannot do likewise and ensure that,
via COAG, legislation consistent across all states is introduced to train all teachers and childcare workers in the analysis of anaphylaxis and the correct use of an EpiPen. The lives of our children literally depend upon it.

A recent Australian study has estimated that a quarter of the population will have a reaction to food, especially during infancy and early childhood. The number of children suffering from food allergies has doubled in a generation. Currently 10 per cent of children and two per cent of adults have some form of food allergy. Many of these food allergies are potentially life threatening. This is particularly the case with peanuts as even small traces may trigger symptoms and cause death. Recent international studies show peanut allergy has doubled over a five-year period, with approximately one per cent of children being allergic to peanuts. No comprehensive statistics are kept of deaths due to food allergies. However, one study has found that over 90 per cent of fatal or near-fatal anaphylactic shocks from food are caused by peanuts and tree nuts.

It is estimated that three to five per cent of preschool children are allergic to one or more of the common food allergens, with 0.6 per cent of Australian preschoolers and schoolchildren having suffered at least one episode of anaphylaxis. The adrenaline auto-injector treatment known as an EpiPen is currently used by one in every 544 Australian children under the age of 10. This is an extraordinary amount. Despite the lack of statistics, it is believed that up to 10 Australians die each year from anaphylaxis. Thousands more require urgent medical attention. Research conducted overseas suggests that roasting peanuts enhances allergic reaction. Preliminary investigations have been made in finding an effective vaccine. Despite the increased prevalence and the increased burden this serious condition presents for parents, teachers and our health system, there have been few studies into food allergies in Australia.

A Beazley Labor government will deliver $5 million for research into understanding the causes of serious food allergies, with a specific focus on peanut allergies, in the hope that we can find a cure. The research, with funding to be administered by the National Health and Medical Research Council, will aim to build a better understanding of the unexplained, dramatic increase in the incidence of food allergies in Australian children and to search for the answers we need to protect them. A Beazley Labor government will also work with the states and territories to ensure that uniform national guidelines for preschools and schools are implemented. These are laws that the Labor government in Victoria have announced they will introduce if re-elected.

The Labor government in Victoria will ensure that up to 70,000 teachers and childcare workers will be trained under the proposal, which will cost at least $2.1 million over five years. We know that lives are being lost because of the lack of early identification. The training program is equipping childcare workers and teachers with the resources required to take action immediately with an adrenalin injection, which can save lives. The training will include ways to minimise risk, recognise the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction, and perform emergency treatment with an EpiPen, which gives an instant adrenaline interaction. Schools would also be required by law to have an anaphylactic policy. The AMA says that Victoria is now leading the world in introducing mandatory allergy training. This should be done so that no more small lives are lost.

As the mother of a four-year-old with anaphylaxis, this turns your mind to the dangers of such a thing. When you send your small child off to child care you do not ex-
pect that they will come into contact with an allergen and never come home. Nigel and Martha Baptist ask us to remember their dear boy. He may be gone, but hopefully he is not forgotten. Indeed, the introduction of these laws by the Bracks government will mean that he is not forgotten. I move the motion today in memory of Alex and hope that we never again see a small child die through an allergy which could have been prevented if someone had been appropriately trained at that school.

The SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr ANDERSON (Gwydir) (3.19 pm)—I join with the honourable member who has moved this motion in expressing real sympathy to the parents and family of this lost child. It is not an easy experience for any family, particularly when, as I understand is the case, anaphylaxis can be dealt with. I understand the sentiments behind the motion before the House. There is no doubt that anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life-threatening form of allergic reaction. It usually comes on very suddenly and unexpectedly. It can affect many parts of the body and can result in breathing difficulties, collapse and, if untreated, in worst-case scenarios, death. Allergies to foods, medications, blood products and the venom of stinging insects such as bees, wasps and ants can result in an attack.

It has to be said that data on the incidence of the problem is quite limited. In the period 2004-05 the AIHW morbidity dataset recorded a total of just over 2,000 hospital admissions for this condition, of which 901 are believed to have been due to food allergy problems and 713 were unable to be accurately outlined in terms of the specific cause. However hospital data do not give the full picture, as episodes of anaphylaxis are largely managed without admission to hospital—for example, in emergency departments.

A South Australian study has estimated that about one child in 170 between the ages of three and 17 has had at least one episode of anaphylaxis. Of the 25 children with anaphylaxis identified in the study, that of some 14, or over half, was due to food allergies. Thankfully deaths are rare. Indeed there is an average of 15 deaths from anaphylaxis per year in Australia across all age groups. But such deaths, as we have heard this afternoon, are quite tragic. They are preventable if quick and effective action is taken to treat a person who is having such a reaction. That necessary action includes first aid, laying a person flat with elevated legs, seeking emergency medical assistance and following standard resuscitation measures if there is no pulse or breathing. Injection of adrenaline may also be required.

The safest way to give adrenaline, outside of a hospital or a doctor’s surgery, is by the use of an auto-injector. In Australia, such devices are available for both adults and children—EpiPen for adults and EpiPenJr for children. These disposable devices deliver one measured dose of adrenaline and are designed to be self-administered or given by people without formal medical or nursing training.

The Commonwealth government subsidises the cost of adrenaline auto-injector devices through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for those who have been assessed by a specialist doctor as being at significant risk of the condition. The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme requires that the injector devices be prescribed only as part of a comprehensive prevention program, which includes an emergency action plan and training in recognising the symptoms of anaphylaxis and the use of the device. It is worth noting that a
range of educational materials and suggested emergency action plans is available on the ASCIA website: www.allergy.org.au.

The policies and training that are recommended as part of this motion moved by Ms Burke would assist in both reducing the occurrence of reactions to this condition and ensuring that children who had had such reactions at preschool, primary school or high school would receive prompt and effective management. This would undoubtedly reduce the risk of death from this life-threatening condition.

In relation to subparagraph (d) of the motion: ‘develop an individual action plan for each student’, I think it is worth making the point that the Australian government subsidises the cost of adrenalin treatment for people who are known to be at significant risk. I make the point that it is not clear whether legislative approaches are necessary to achieve the very desirable aim of this proposal. If such approaches are required they would of course be the responsibility of the state and territory jurisdictions. I can advise that the government has sought input by the office of the Minister for Health and Ageing, through the office of the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in relation to further measures which could be taken in schools, which may or may not require legislative backing.

Ms CORCORAN (Isaacs) (3.24 pm)—In September 2004 two constituents in my electorate of Isaacs lost their son in circumstances that could have been avoided. As we have heard, Martha and Nigel Baptist lost their four-year-old son, Alex, to anaphylaxis, or severe allergic reaction. Alex was allergic to peanuts. I am told that he came into contact with some peanuts at kindergarten, he reacted and, despite efforts by staff to counter the reaction, he died. Alex’s death was preventable, and we must do all we can to ensure that other children do not die from similar preventable causes.

Any allergic reaction, including the most extreme form, anaphylactic shock, occurs because the body’s immune system reacts inappropriately in response to the presence of a substance that it wrongly perceives as a threat. Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction at the extreme end of the allergic spectrum. The whole body can be affected, usually within minutes of exposure to the allergen. It can, as we know, result in death. There are three things that we now need to do to minimise the risk of anaphylaxis or allergy attacks. We need to know more about allergies and why the number of children with allergies is growing and growing so quickly. We need to ensure that people who work with children have the skills and the confidence to react quickly and appropriately when a child in their care has an allergic reaction. We also need to make the community at large more aware of anaphylaxis. We need to be able to recognise an allergic reaction if someone near us has one, and we need to know what we can do until expert help arrives. Often what we do immediately can mean the difference between life and death.

Studies conducted in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada show that cases of peanut allergy alone have doubled since 2000. In Australia, the research has been minimal. Experts at Melbourne’s Royal Children’s Hospital have referred to the dramatic rise in cases as an ‘allergy epidemic’. We know that Australia has one of the highest rates of children with allergies. About one in 100 children are allergic to peanuts, as Alex was. We need to start investing in serious research to find out why so many more people are developing this condition. Labor, in government, has already committed itself to funding research into the causes of serious food allergies. I urge the present government to do likewise.
We need to ensure that those working with children are aware of the potential of an allergic reaction and what to do if one occurs. When a child with anaphylaxis has a reaction, time is crucial. In some cases it can be a matter of minutes between life and death. This means that the person caring for that child needs to be fully aware of what can trigger an attack and they need to be properly trained in how to respond. We need to ensure that those who work in child care and schools are trained in how to treat children who go into anaphylactic shock. This motion calls on the federal government, through COAG, to introduce legislation to ensure that this occurs.

Last week the Victorian government announced that it will do just that. Victoria will be the first state to mandate training for childcare workers, kindergarten teachers and school teachers. This is very good news and the Victorian government is to be congratulated on this step. Now we need the rest of Australia to follow suit.

Anaphylaxis also needs to be understood properly in the broader community. We need a community campaign to make us all aware of the dangers of anaphylaxis and the things we can do if someone near us has an allergic reaction. We need to understand that allergies are real and are not to be dismissed as imaginary. I suggest that, as a first step, everyone listening to this debate pays a visit to the website of Anaphylaxis Australia Inc., AAI. AAI was established in 1993 to support and assist those affected by anaphylaxis and it has lots of useful information on its website.

I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Chisholm for bringing this motion forward for debate. I think it would be a great thing if, at COAG, we could see that all schools, preschools, childcare centres and kindergartens have guidelines for dealing with anaphylaxis. The one caution I have is that I am not sure that it would require national legislation. I think it is something that could be done through COAG, through a council of education and health ministers working together.

—

Dr Southcott (Boothby) (3.28 pm)—I rise to speak on the motion on anaphylaxis, moved by Ms Burke. Anaphylaxis is becoming more prevalent. At least one in 100 children in Australia have had an episode of nut allergy and would be at risk from anaphylaxis. The incidence has doubled over the last 30 years. Fortunately, deaths from anaphylaxis are rare and they are also often preventable if immediate first aid is provided, which may require the use of intramuscular adrenalin through an EpiPen.

This issue has been highlighted by a number of recent cases. There has been a New South Wales coroner’s case involving the administration, on a school camp, of peanut butter to a child with peanut allergy. The coroner has made several recommendations to avoid this ever happening again. Of course, as with all types of allergy, it is very important to avoid the triggers. In most cases these are food; sometimes they are bee venom or a bee sting.

I welcome this motion from the member for Chisholm and her initiative in bringing this motion forward for debate. I think it would be a great thing if, at COAG, we could see that all schools, preschools, childcare centres and kindergartens have guidelines for dealing with anaphylaxis. The one caution I have is that I am not sure that it would require national legislation. I think it is something that could be done through COAG, through a council of education and health ministers working together.
I should also say that I am indebted to Dr Mike Gold, who is a paediatric allergist at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital, for his help on anaphylaxis and for directing me to Anaphylaxis Australia’s website, which has already been mentioned, and the professional website, the ASCIA website: allergy.org.au.

When we look at schools and anaphylaxis we see that there are no national guidelines for managing anaphylaxis in a school setting. Each state does things differently, and national guidelines would play an important role in making sure that every school and every childcare centre has the gold standard. South Australia was the first state to introduce a uniform policy on anaphylaxis. It was the first state to have EpiPens in schools. I recognise the recent efforts that Victoria has made to make sure that anaphylaxis is much better resourced in the public system.

I asked a principal of a primary school in my electorate what her school did in relation to anaphylaxis and she informed me that all teachers at that school have done a first aid course and know how to use an EpiPen. I cannot say whether this is the experience in all schools, but certainly that one school I visited had a very well thought through policy on allergy.

It is very important that all teachers have training in recognising a child with anaphylaxis, and treating it. We also need policies to help children avoid their triggers. Staff and teachers need to be trained to recognise anaphylaxis and use the EpiPen. One issue here is that there is no standard first aid course. In South Australia it is done by St John Ambulance and the Australian Red Cross. Often the quality of the first aid training depends on who is doing the training.

Another issue is the public funding of facilities which evaluate and test people with allergies. This is a responsibility for the states and territories but these services are often not well resourced and there are waiting lists for children with anaphylaxis.

There are four steps in dealing with the issue of preventing food anaphylaxis in schools, preschools and childcare centres. Firstly, it is important that the centre has medical information about the child at the time of enrolment, including a signed anaphylaxis action plan. Secondly, we need to educate the carers on the importance of avoiding triggers and using EpiPens. Ideally, education of all staff should be by qualified professionals and reinforced every year. Thirdly, every centre—every school—needs strategies to avoid triggers. This depends on the child, their peers and all school personnel. Fourthly, we need age-appropriate education of the child.

When we look at food, it is very important that there be no sharing of food. At the school level, a policy of risk minimisation for certain foods, especially peanuts and tree nuts, should be followed. This includes removing items containing nuts from school canteens. Nuts should not be taken on school camps. For children under seven, classmates of students with peanut allergy should avoid bringing sandwiches with peanut butter in them. I commend this motion to the House for bringing prominence to this issue.

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (3.34 pm)—I congratulate the member for Chisholm on bringing this motion on anaphylaxis forward. I also congratulate her for giving prominence to this issue because I think it is an example of where members of this parliament, through their personal experience in their role as community leaders, can lead community awareness and community education. And that is a very important aspect of this private member’s bill.

The term ‘anaphylaxis’ may be a mystery to a lot of people but through contact with children that have anaphylaxis events come
an understanding that it is an allergic reaction to certain things. By further discussion we arrive at an understanding that those allergens can be quite wide. There is a need in each individual case to have a particular understanding of the anaphylaxis incident.

The common incident that most people understand is a reaction to nuts, peanuts in particular. Through that understanding there is a knowledge that there is a need to have care, where there has been an allergic reaction identified, to take preventive action. So, whilst we acknowledge the incidence of anaphylaxis and whilst we acknowledge the tragedies that have occurred, we also acknowledge the good work that is being done by a great range of people in trying to make sure that the community education and awareness is heightened.

Some of the studies from overseas—particularly North American and European studies—indicate that there could be 2,500 to 4,000 new cases per year in Australia. Death from anaphylaxis is less common—an estimated mortality rate of one per three million population. Hospital emergency department data show a death rate of about one per 100 to 200 episodes of anaphylaxis presentation.

But the purpose of much of this motion is to make sure that preventative action is taken and that we have an understanding of each individual’s circumstances so that we can put in place an individual action plan for each person. That is especially important in schools, so that where there has been a previous event, and where we are able to identify the cause, there is an understanding throughout the whole school or preschool community to ensure that things are put in place to minimise the chances of there being an event.

Then the next step in the cases where there is an allergic event is that we understand that the first aid that is taken is very important. Of course one would call emergency services and seek an ambulance to attend as quickly as possible, but we need an understanding that, if people have the knowledge and therefore can act with confidence and assuredness, there is a great deal that can be done in the first few moments after the event is identified.

The training that is talked about is important in giving people that confidence. This is not something that can be done a little bit just at the start of the year where the devices such as the EpiPen might be introduced to people, where they might have a go with a pseudo one to see how it works. There is a need to talk the action through in a real-life situation, because there can be nothing more important than a person being able to be confident about the simple actions that will be taken that are of such great importance in preventing further progression of the anaphylactic events.

So I applaud the member for Chisholm. I hope that this can be looked at at COAG. I applaud the indication by Premier Bracks in making this an issue that he is willing to put resources towards so that 70,000 teachers and childcare workers can be trained in the precautionary first aid actions if there is an anaphylactic event. We emphasise the need for parents and children to understand their circumstances and to have a strategic plan in place that is shared with all those who come in contact with the child to make sure that we prevent those things. But the most important thing is that action can be taken on this and we should be confident in training people that that action can be taken and will be taken.

Dr WASHER (Moore) (3.39 pm)—Like the previous speaker, I thank the member for Chisholm for bringing this important issue before the House and I thank all the previous speakers for their great interest. Anaphylaxis
is a serious rapid onset allergic reaction that can cause death. Severe anaphylaxis is characterised by life-threatening upper airway obstruction, bronchospasm and/or hypotension. Studies have shown that food allergy is the most common cause of anaphylactic reactions in children. Although almost any food can trigger an allergic reaction, most reactions are triggered by eggs, cow’s milk, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, seeds or seafood. In adults, insect venom, such as that of the honeybee, wasps and Australian native ants—the jack jumper ant in particular—and medication can also cause problems. The myrmecia ant species, or jack jumper ant, is worth mentioning as in areas where it is present one in 50 Australian adults has reported an anaphylactic episode following stinging. In some cases cofactors can play a role in provoking an anaphylactic reaction. This so-called ‘summation anaphylaxis’ can explain the occurrence of intermittent anaphylactic episodes, despite frequent allergen exposure. In young people especially, physical activity is one of the most common cofactors contributing to anaphylaxis.

Although allergic reactions to food are common in children, severe life-threatening reactions such as anaphylaxis are uncommon. In Australia the prevalence of food-induced anaphylaxis in preschool aged children was one in 170 and in school aged children one in 1,900. In fact, a survey of 4,000 children showed 90 per cent of anaphylactic food reactions occurred in preschool aged children. However, more than 90 per cent of the fatal reactions to foods occurred in children aged five years and over.

Although anaphylactic episodes are rare, schools must have policies in place to deal with a life-threatening situation should it arise. With quick, effective action the severity of the reaction can be easily managed and a potential tragedy averted. Most state and territory government education systems have this in place already, except, unfortunately, the Northern Territory. Information about and guidelines for the management of anaphylaxis are at present in these schools. These policies recommend individual healthcare management plans for students who are at risk. The ACT, New South Wales and South Australian policies provide the most comprehensive information about anaphylaxis and its management. But, as the previous speaker said, this should be a national policy.

Any policy introduced would need to include the following four steps. First, the school must obtain medical information about each child. This must include clear identification such as a photo, documentation of the allergic triggers, documentation of the first aid response and any prescribed medication and contact details of the doctor who signed the documentation. As food allergies can change, this medical information needs to be reviewed every one to two years. Second, education of those responsible for the care of children concerning the risk, prevention and action that needs to be taken in the event of a child having a severe allergic reaction must be provided. This would include instructions on the use of an adrenaline auto-injector device such as an EpiPen.

Third, there must be the implementation of practical strategies to avoid exposure of susceptible children to known triggers, such as no trading or sharing of food; prevention of cross-contamination during the handling, preparation and serving of food; and restricted use of food in crafts, cooking classes, science experimentations and so on. Fourth, there should be age-appropriate education of children with severe food allergies. Obviously, in childcare centres and preschools children are dependent on carers for providing a safe environment.
I strongly urge state governments and private education sectors that have not implemented comprehensive policies to do so. Deaths from anaphylaxis are preventable if quick and effective action is taken. It is unforgivable for any child to be at risk due to unnecessary ignorance or inadequate policy. The motion is one of excellence.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DJC Kerr)—May I acknowledge the excellent contributions by members on all sides of the House in relation to the motion proposed by the member for Chisholm. 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.

Carers Week

Mr BAKER (Braddon) (3.44 pm)—I move:

That the House:

(1) notes that 15-21 October is Carers’ Week;
(2) notes that the theme of this year’s Carers’ Week is “Anyone, Anytime”, the objective of which is identifying carers and empowering them to access support services;
(3) recognises that there are approximately 2.6 million carers in Australia who provide unpaid help and assistance to a relative or friend, who could not otherwise manage because of disability, mental illness, chronic condition or frailty;
(4) notes that almost everyone will provide care at some time during their life;
(5) notes that around 1.2 billion hours of informal care are currently provided by family carers (as recently found by Access Economics in its report Economic Value of Informal Care);
(6) acknowledges the enormous contribution made by carers to Australian society, often at great personal cost; and
(7) calls on all levels of government, businesses and schools to consider adopting carer-friendly work practices and learning environments.

This motion acknowledges a group of extraordinary Australians—a group of over 2.6 million people who come from all backgrounds, from all walks of life and all ages. It is a group that makes an enormous contribution to Australian society, often at significant personal cost, and one that you and I may one day belong to—any one of us, anytime. I am speaking, of course, of that wonderful group of people who provide unpaid help and assistance to a relative or friend who, because of disability, mental illness, a chronic condition or frailty, otherwise could not manage. This is the group we know collectively as ‘carers’.

Carers include parents caring for children with severe intellectual, psychiatric or behavioural difficulties, people of middle age caring for elderly parents and the 390,000 young Australians providing care to a relative who is frail, has a disability or chronic illness. As noted by Access Economics in its report Economic value of informal care, over 1.2 billion hours of informal care is being provided by family members. The Howard government is fully aware of not only the incredible work that carers do for the people they care for but also the vital social and economic contribution they make to our society. In return, the Howard government’s commitment to carers has been demonstrated by the many improvements and changes to carers legislation and policy over recent years.

The Australian government provides carers with direct payments of over $2 billion each year. Carer payments provide income support to people who, because of the demands of their caring role, are unable to support themselves through substantial workforce participation. In recognition of those 1.2 billion hours of family care provided, the Howard government has introduced changes
to the carer allowance which make it easier for some to claim. New conditions have been added to the lists of recognised disabilities and some of the disability or medical condition eligibility descriptors have been modified. For example, diabetes mellitus type 1 will be added to the lists of recognised disabilities from the first of this month.

The Howard government’s 2006-07 budget provided, for the third consecutive year, a one-off bonus payment to eligible carers, costing some $358 million. For the first time, carers who receive the carer allowance and the wife pension or the Department of Veterans’ Affairs partner service pension have also received $1,000 in recognition of the care provided. In addition, eligibility for carer allowance has been extended to carers who provide substantial levels of care to a person with a disability or severe medical condition but who are not living in the same home.

Of course, caring is not just about dollars and cents. The government has introduced a range of other initiatives designed to make the lives of carers just that little bit easier both now and in the future. Sadly, some carers can become isolated and socially disconnected because of their role as a carer. The 2006-07 budget allocated $9 million over four years to fund new peer support groups specifically aimed at parents of young children with disabilities.

It is so important that we acknowledge these wonderful people in society who play such an important and pivotal role. This House acknowledges that the theme of this year’s Carers Week is ‘Anyone, Anytime’, the objective of which is identifying carers and empowering them to access support services. The list goes on. We must acknowledge the enormous contribution that carers make to Australian society, often at great personal cost, and the social and economic value of the carers to our community. We call on all levels of government, businesses and schools to consider adopting carer-friendly work practices and learning environments to continue to promote these wonderful people within our society.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DJC Kerr)—I thank the member for Braddon for introducing this matter. Is the motion seconded?

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

Ms HALL (Shortland) (3.49 pm)—I join with members in this House in congratulating carers for the fine role that they play in Australia today. Members would be aware that one in eight Australians are actually caring for someone at this particular time; 2.6 million unpaid family members care for Australians throughout Australia. If the cost of this care was factored out in dollars and cents it would amount to about $30.5 billion annually. National Carers Week, which was held between 15 and 21 October, recognised carers and the role that they play in Australia. As I have already said, there are 2.6 million carers in Australia—13 per cent of Australia’s population—who are primary caregivers for around 500,000 Australians. Of those, 75.6 per cent of carers were in the working age group of 18 to 64 years. They are making a very significant contribution by staying at home and caring for their loved ones, be they a frail aged relative or a child who is in some way in need of care.

I have raised in this House on a number of occasions issues that affect carers and those that they care for. The feelings that carers have vary. All carers, at some time or another, feel that their wellbeing is being affected—they may have stress related illnesses, anger or resentment, worry or depression, be weary or lack energy—but, at the same time, they feel satisfied by the work
that they are doing. Caring for somebody is a very hard job and I do not think that we as a nation fully recognise and pay tribute to those carers who are providing these services.

Whilst I support this motion in recognising the fine work of carers and the role that they play in our communities, I feel that the government really needs to look at the way some of its policies are affecting carers. On occasions in this parliament I have raised issues relating to carers and how they are being discriminated against because of the Howard government’s policies. There is a woman who lives in the electorate of Shortland who is 61 years of age, just short of pensionable age. Before the Welfare to Work laws kicked in, she was able to be paid a special benefit. She cared for her mother 24 hours a day; the mother suffered from dementia and needed around-the-clock care. Her mother sold her cottage in an area that had recently taken off from the point of view of real estate prices and the money that she received for that cottage was with the New South Wales Protective Commissioner. The woman who was caring for her mother had no access to that money whatsoever. She was denied a special payment because it no longer existed and was told the only payment she could receive was Newstart and that she had to meet the work test or go and do some voluntary work. When we are giving credence to the role that carers play in our society, I think we need to have laws in place that will support them financially.

Another constituent of mine was crossing the road with her husband near the Lakehaven shops when she was hit by a car. As a result, she is a paraplegic—T11-T12. Her husband, unfortunately, died. Her daughter gave up her job and decided to stay at home and look after her mother. She pays $50,000 a year in nursing fees. What has happened because of this government’s policies is that the daughter has had her Centrelink payment cancelled. The mother receives some compensation for ending up a paraplegic but now the daughter receives no money.

If we are truly recognising the role that carers play in our society, we should not be putting them in a situation where they have to live in poverty. The government is beholden to ensure that carers payments are paid to those people who need them so that they can provide the care for their loved ones that they have made the commitment to. I think the government stands condemned in this particular area.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DJC Kerr)—I thank the member for Shortland and I call the member for Fisher.

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (3.55 pm)—I do not know why you would want to thank the honourable member for Shortland for the outrageous comment that she just made. I think that it is very important in a compassionate society that carers, who do a wonderful job and who are very compassionate towards family members, are assisted as much as is humanly possible, but it would be entirely wrong to take the view that the government of the day has the responsibility to look after people from the cradle to the grave. Historically, people have been largely responsible for looking after family members, are assisted as part of the safety net by the general community as much as is humanly possible, but it would be entirely wrong to take the view that the government of the day has the responsibility to look after people from the cradle to the grave. Historically, people have been largely responsible for looking after family members and one ought not to accept as a matter of right that the community ought to take over what has traditionally been the role of the family.

However, I want to commend the member for Braddon for this motion on Carers Week, and I want to thank the member for Shortland for contributing to it—and the member for Throsby will no doubt be making a contribution as well. I think all of us would probably agree that we really want to give honour to those carers in our community.
who make significant personal sacrifices of their time and energy to care for those who for various reasons, whether they happen to be disabled, suffering illness, frail or elderly, simply are unable to continue to care for themselves.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you might be surprised to know that there are upwards of 2.5 million of these dedicated people in Australia today. That is a significant proportion of our total population of approximately 20 million. About half of those carers are primary support providers. It is the effort of carers that helps to deliver an improved quality to the life of those suffering various debilitating conditions, and it is generally the case that the carers receive little acknowledgment or thanks from the wider community for the work they do behind closed doors in their homes or in the homes of their loved ones. That is not to say that the community ought to have the primary responsibility for reimbursing those carers for the work that they do for their loved ones or family members.

Depending on the severity of the conditions suffered by the loved one, it is also understandable that a number of carers may not receive any recognisable acknowledgement or thanks from the person they care for either, so it is important to remember to recognise the invaluable work of these people. It is a job that must be done and the carers are, in the majority of cases, the only ones able to do it. They may have no choice; the alternative would be to walk away from those loved ones and their needs, which would be unthinkable to anyone with a common sense of humanity, compassion, dedication and family values. It also means the carers are shoulder- ing a heavy workload, one with significant personal cost, so carers should be honoured and held in the highest regard. It is important that the work of carers is recognised by Australian residents generally, by all levels of government, by business operators and by educational institutions such as universities and schools. Just as recognition continues to grow for the disabled and the positive contribution they are able to continue to make to our Australian society, similar recognition and support must go to carers.

Australia recently held Carers Week. I reckon that is a great week, because we are able to hold these people up as role models. This week took place from 15 October until 21 October, with the theme ‘Anyone, Anytime’. This tag line highlights the fact that carers are often placed into such roles suddenly, unexpectedly and with little choice. They are confronted with a loved one who requires significant assistance in his or her daily life and often the carer is the only person able and willing to meet that need. As a result, it is not uncommon for carers to feel a bit alienated from the outside world. Some of them have admitted to feeling guilty if they go out and enjoy an activity without the person they are caring for. Loneliness and depression can eventuate. These are issues that are out of sight and out of mind to the general broader community. Carers Week each year also aims to highlight the fact that there is support that is available and to advise carers and their loved ones of this support.

I recently had the pleasure of announcing Australian government funding of $239,536 for Suncare Community Services—an organisation in my electorate dedicated to providing respite to carers on the Sunshine Coast. These funds were allocated from the Working Carers Lifestyle Options Regional Program for a project designed to provide extended respite services to employed carers. Right across the country we have enormous government support for carers. At times maybe the support could be more, but I think this government, more than any other, recognises the wonderful role of carers. In this parliament, this forum, I want to thank carers for the wonderful work they do.
Ms GEORGE (Throsby) (4.00 pm)—I am very pleased to be able to speak in support of this motion. Caring for people with disabilities, with chronic conditions, with mental illness or with frailty is one of the most essential, but regrettably inadequately recognised and unrewarded, tasks conducted by many of our fellow citizens. The physical and emotional support provided by carers across the nation is priceless. This year’s Carers Week was organised around the theme ‘Anyone, Anytime’, and I think that theme picks up the realities associated with caring: almost everyone will provide care at some time during their life.

In terms of those in need of care, almost four million Australians have a disability, a chronic condition, a mental illness or are frail aged. The majority are cared for at home by informal or unpaid carers, rather than being cared for in assisted accommodation or residential aged care facilities. Because of this informal care provided by so many, many Australians, they have a reduced capacity for workforce participation. Official data from a recent ABS survey indicated the following: there are today about 2.6 million carers in Australia who provide informal care to a relative or a friend; that nearly half a million of these are primary carers and, not surprisingly, 75 per cent of them are women; that most primary carers are under 65 years and are of workforce age; and, perhaps more surprisingly, that 60 per cent of carers aged 15 and over have cared for five years or more, one-third have cared for over 10 years and some carers have been in this position for as long as 30 years.

In 2005, Access Economics investigated the economic value of informal care and estimated that in 2005 informal carers provided 1.2 billion hours of care. If this informal care was no longer available, the replacement value to all levels of government would be at least $30.5 billion annually. Providing informal care comes at a cost to carers in terms of their wellbeing, quality of life, financial security and opportunity to be in paid work. We all know of tales of carers who have often had to leave work or reduce their hours of workforce participation because of caring responsibilities that often come in very unexpected ways. The majority of carers who are of workforce age report great difficulties in balancing their caring responsibilities with workforce participation.

The national association Carers Australia, who advocate on behalf of carers, have argued for more flexible workplace options, more affordable quality alternative care arrangements and improved transition to work programs for carers. One-third of primary carers have household incomes which place them in the poorest one-fifth of households in Australia and, for 55 per cent of primary carers, their main source of income is a government pension. There are strong economic arguments for enabling Australians caring for the elderly and people with a disability to increase their levels of participation at work by a more effective subsidisation of their care costs. A recent report by the Taskforce on Care Costs has argued for extending the current childcare tax rebate to elder and disability care and increasing the rebate to a 50 per cent cost reimbursement—and I think that makes for good economic sense. The contribution carers make is not only to the people they love and care for but also to the community and the economy more broadly.

For caring to be sustainable, carers must have ready and affordable access to quality support services. Services such as these are often not there and not readily available. By that I mean flexible respite care, counselling and in-home services delivered on a regular basis, together with an expansion of residential care, particularly to care for the frail aged and those with dementia. We need to better appreciate the pressure carers are under,
adapt workplace practices to make them more carer friendly, provide greater institutional support and consider how our tax and welfare payments system can be better targeted to assist all carers.

Mr JOHNSON (Ryan) (4.05 pm)—As the federal member for Ryan, I am pleased to support this motion by my colleague the member for Braddon and to pay tribute to all the carers in Australia—in particular, to all the carers who live in the Ryan electorate. This is an important motion and it acknowledges the very great contribution, the very great dedication and the very great compassion of the 2.6 million carers who live in our country. The 2.6 million people who work tirelessly to assist those with disabilities often care for friends, relatives or neighbours who would otherwise have no choice but to enter full-time care facilities. Australian carers are unpaid. They make enormous sacrifices in order to assist their fellow Australians, who, as I just touched on, are usually friends, relatives or neighbours. There are some 535,000 carers in my home state of Queensland, which equates to some 14 per cent of the population, or one in every eight people.

According to Centrelink information, some 1,265 carers in Ryan receive support from the Commonwealth government, and no doubt there are many more part-time carers who do not fall within the profile of the Centrelink information and do not receive government assistance. These individuals are the unsung heroes of our community. Their tireless work and self-sacrifice benefits all of us as an Australian society. If the care provided by these carers were to be replaced by formal services, the value that has been placed on their contribution to the Australian economy would be some $30.5 billion, which is, of course, an enormous amount of money. Therefore, it is highly appropriate and highly desirable that the government and all members of the parliament formally acknowledge the place of carers in our society.

The Howard government is committed to ensuring that carers in our society are duly recognised. Each year the government provides carers with government payments of $2 billion in the form of carer payments and carer allowances. The carer payment provides income support to people who, because of the demands of their caring role, are unable to support themselves through substantial participation in the workforce. This is a huge amount of money. It is real money. This is all the more reason why it is so important that the Australian economy remain strong, dynamic and prosperous. Without a prosperous economy, the capacity of the federal government to continue to make these payments would be severely compromised. This $2 billion makes a huge difference in the lives of carers across the country.

The carer allowance is an income supplement available to people who provide daily care and attention in a private home to a person with a disability or severe medical condition or a person who is frail or aged. The carer payment was provided to approximately 95,500 carers in the 2004-05 year and the carer allowance was provided to approximately 340,000 carers in the same time frame. As part of the 2006-07 budget, the Howard government announced a number of new initiatives to continue its support of carers. In particular, this included for the third consecutive year a one-off bonus payment for eligible carers worth approximately $358 million. Recipients of the carer’s payment will receive a bonus of $1,000 and recipients of the carer’s allowance will receive a bonus of $600. Some $9 million will be provided over four years to continue to fund peer support groups for parents of young children with disabilities—an important focus—and some $3.4 million will be provided over four years for the inclusion of diabetes type 1 on
the carer allowance list of recognised disabilities.

I want to add my very strong commendation of all those in our society in the role of carers. We all know that carers do not stand out when you look at them. They can be anyone in our society—our family members, parents, partners, children, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends or neighbours. Carers are found all across our community and across all age groups, from the very young to our senior citizens. It is appropriate that this parliament acknowledges carers. They are humble Australians dedicated to the welfare of our nation.

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (4.10 pm)—I too am very pleased to speak in support of this motion concerning carers. As we know, the week 15 to 21 October had the theme ‘Anyone, Anytime’. The substance of this theme lies in empowering carers to access services in support of one of the most demanding roles in the Australian community. In all walks of life we find carers. We find carers who look after their partners, we find carers who care for elderly parents, we find carers who look after disabled children and, alarmingly, we find children who care for their parents.

I support the motion and would like to bring the role of grandparents caring for their grandchildren into the debate. The number of people affected by this area of public policy is not insubstantial. Estimates vary of the number of households in which grandparents are primary caregivers, but it is in the vicinity of 22,500. The number of children affected is around 31,000—2,500 within South Australia. This area, children in the care of their grandparents, has attracted media attention resulting from grandparents who are primary carers of their grandchildren being subjected to the new welfare-to-work rules that require such grandparents to seek work of 30 hours per fortnight, irrespective of the resulting limitation on care provided to their grandchildren. I am glad to hear that the guidelines have duly been amended, enabling exemptions to the work test for grandparents who gain custody of their grandchildren through the Family Court.

It is distressing that this section of the population is increasingly being called on to provide high levels of care for family members. I suspect that as governments we do not pay them the respect or give them the attention that they deserve. While the work test issue has, hopefully, been addressed, it is only one of the many obstacles faced by grandparents with primary care giving roles for their grandchildren. We have seen and heard of the many challenges that these carers face and the obstacles they face in being recognised as primary carers and accessing information and the wide-ranging set of community services that other carers take for granted. The Council of Australian Governments agreed unanimously in July this year to cut the red tape that has prevented grandparent carers accessing financial and other aid. As a result of the COAG arrangements, the federal government was charged with coming up with a legal description for grandparents performing this role, from which point the broader application of state, territory and federal criteria could be amended and services opened to this portion of the population. That was three months ago.

I hope that Carers Week reminds the federal government and all state and territory governments of their obligations to this section of the Australian population and of their commitments to provide these carers with access to the financial assistance, services and rights required by primary caregivers for the responsible upbringing of many of our newest generation. Medicare access, medical information access, child-care assistance,
educational rights and responsibilities and financial support must be addressed. The federal government has had the opportunity to address the work test issue. I would like to believe that the federal government will take the opportunity created at July’s COAG meeting and be seen to be leading by example. They need to do what they have agreed to do, as soon as they are able, and then take the outcomes back to COAG. I am sure many thousands of senior and junior Australians are watching all governments’ actions intently—and understandably so, because we have a somewhat unusual set of circumstances where all governments appear to be in agreement with what needs to be done in supporting grandparents who are primary carers for their grandchildren.

There have been few occasions in which the governments of Australia have had such an opportunity to make sound changes for the good of multiple generations in one policy package. I have spoken in support of grandparents and carers in this place before, and I certainly appreciate the good work of the ministers who have responsibility for the multiple areas that are affected by such a policy shift being encouraged and supported by all of us in this place. As was mentioned earlier, there are 2.6 million carers in Australia who provide unpaid help and assistance to relatives and friends who cannot manage because of disabilities, chronic illnesses and conditions or frailness. All governments, state and federal, should be doing all they can to recognise and support carers and make their lives a bit easier.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DJC Kerr)—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.

(Quorum formed)
But there are still significant pockets of resistance from those who hold out hope that the Kyoto Protocol will not be ratified and therefore not come into force.

Those who choose to delay or obstruct moves toward greenhouse gas reductions are simply ignoring the inevitable.

He also said:

There are those who foolishly believe that Australia has something to win by derailing the Kyoto Protocol.

On that basis, the Prime Minister and ministers opposite are certainly a bunch of fools because, day in, day out, they have tried to derail the Kyoto protocol. Senator Hill proudly said:

As an expression of our commitment to the Kyoto outcome, the Howard Government ensured that Australia was among the first nations to sign the Protocol.

... ... ...

Australia played a key role during the Kyoto conference in ensuring that provisions for emissions trading were included in the Protocol.

Australia played a role in getting a generous target of 108 per cent, second only to Iceland on 110. It played a role in getting emissions trading, which is at the centre of the Kyoto protocol. Of course you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Denison, played a critical role as well in ensuring there was bipartisan support and in ensuring that we all knew that you needed market based mechanisms and economic incentives to achieve those greenhouse gas reductions in the most efficient way possible. Senator Hill then said:

Again on the issue of trading, the global momentum is building behind the forces of action, rather than inaction. Another signal to the Kyoto doubters.

This is just one of the speeches in which an environment minister who actually understood something about the environment was putting the case for global action. But we know that the government followed the Bush administration in walking away from that international agreement and that the government, instead of following the enlightened views expressed by Senator Hill, preferred to follow the dinosaur views of people such as the industry minister. The industry minister has consistently been a sceptic. He said on 16 February 2005, the day that the Kyoto protocol came into force:

Whether or not those emissions are causing climate change, I don’t know.

He said on 22 August 2005, on the Four Corners program:

There is still a degree of uncertainty in the connection between global warming, which we accept that it appears as though the globe is warming but only slightly, and whether or not that is entirely or largely due to human activity. The jury’s still out on that.

On 20 August 2006, on the Sunday program, he said:

Well I am a sceptic of the connection between emissions and climate change.

Yet the same minister who says there is not a problem is happy to launch projects—spending taxpayers’ money—aimed at driving down emissions. If there is no connection between emissions and climate change, why have such projects?

So denial in the first instance, then minor measures announced, but these measures—each and every one of them—are only possible because of the market based mechanisms of state Labor governments. The Victorian solar project is only possible because of the Victorian renewable energy target. The company Solar Systems, which operates this project, has said that if the Baillieu opposition, which is committed to abolishing the Victorian renewable energy target, is elected in Victoria, the project might not even proceed—because you need that economic incentive. Again, the Queensland clean energy projects which were announced today are
only possible because of the Queensland gas electricity scheme.

The Howard government not only are climate sceptics but also are market sceptics: they do not believe that the market has a role in driving that technological change. The idea that technology will be transferred and multiplied without economic incentives is a triumph of hope over experience. It is the case that the Prime Minister has been completely contradictory on this position. He said on 22 September at Pakenham, south-east of Melbourne, when asked about the drought and climate change, that 'people can talk theoretically about what might happen to Australia and the planet in 50 years time'. The Stern review makes it very clear that climate change is happening—and it is happening right now. It makes it very clear that we have a window of opportunity of 10 years to take serious action, otherwise we will be locked into a potentially catastrophic loss of living standards. As well as that, there will be the cost to our economy.

Perhaps most offensive is the Prime Minister’s statement that China, India and all the developing world should be blamed. The Stern review identifies China, California and the European Union as the three economic entities taking the strongest action in the world. China is spending $9 billion on renewables. This is the China with a 15 per cent renewable energy target from its ratification of the Kyoto protocol. This is the China which has a majority—more than half—of the solar hot water systems that are in place throughout the world. It is offensive of the Prime Minister to try to say that China and India and other countries are not a part of it—of course they are, and they are a part of the clean development mechanism of Kyoto which will provide, by 2012, the $133 billion in projects that have already been approved.

The fact is the environment minister was up there two weeks ago opening a wind energy project funded totally through the clean development mechanism of Kyoto. It is about time this government took the issue of climate change seriously and took real action. It should ratify the Kyoto protocol, introduce an emissions-trading scheme and substantially increase the mandatory renewable energy target. (Time expired)

Iraq

Dr SOUTHcott (Boothby) (4.29 pm)—In July I was able to travel to the Middle East area of operations as part of the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program. This program is designed to give members of parliament exposure to the work that the ADF does. Having the opportunity to visit the ADF on deployment was a great honour, and I thank Flight Lieutenant Doug Hogg and Joe Nyhan from the office of Senator Sandy Macdonald, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, for their help in facilitating this visit. I was able to spend three days on HMAS Ballarat, an Anzac class frigate, which was tasked with providing security in the Persian Gulf and protecting Iraq’s oil platforms, which provide over 90 per cent of Iraq’s export income. I then spent three days with the RAAF AP-3C Orion detachment, which conducts maritime patrol operations with two Orions in support of the reconstruction of Iraq. I saw first-hand the sterling work that the men and women of the Australian Defence Force do.

My grievance today is on the Labor Party’s policy on Iraq. In recent times the Leader of the Opposition has made several statements about bringing Australian soldiers out of Iraq. At a doorstop on 9 October 2006 he said:

We will withdraw the Australian forces now operating in southern Iraq on our election to office.

Similarly, at a doorstop on 23 October 2006:
We need to bring the Australian soldiers out and get them to concentrate in our region in areas where we are dealing with direct threats to us.

We have 1,400 members of the Australian Defence Force deployed in support of the rebuilding of Iraq. The deployment is balanced and well thought through. Casual listeners may think that the Labor Party are withdrawing the troops from Iraq, but that would be wrong. Let us see what Labor are proposing. Labor are proposing that the Australian Joint Task Force headquarters in Baghdad of 63 personnel stays. They are proposing that the Royal Australian Navy commodore and 21 specialist RAN personnel who are with Task Force 158, a coalition task force of around 10 warships, stay. Labor are proposing that the SECDET, or security detachment, of 110 personnel, including the ASLAVs, stays in Baghdad. Labor are proposing that the Hercules detachment of 150 personnel stays. Labor are proposing that the AP-3C Orion detachment of 180 personnel and two Orions stay. The Anzac frigates working in Iraqi waters and patrolling Iraqi oil platforms will stay. The Force Level Logistics Asset, communications element and movement control group of 80 personnel will stay. The Australian Army training team of 30 instructors, who are currently training the Iraqi army near Tallil, will stay but will be redeployed. So, of the 1,400 personnel working in and around Iraq, Labor’s bold policy withdraws 500.

Let us have a look at what these 500 soldiers are doing. They are part of Overwatch Battle Group (West). They were previously called the Al Muthanna Task Group. They previously had a role of protecting Japanese engineers and training Iraqi soldiers in Al Muthanna province in southern Iraq. They were successful in that, and security in Al Muthanna was handed over to the Iraqi military in July this year. They are now based in Dhi Qar. There is a headquarters, a cavalry squadron, an infantry company, Australian light armoured vehicles and a number of Bushmasters. They are based at Tallil Air Base and they have a security overwatch role in two provinces: Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar. They are continuing to mentor and train Iraqi security forces. They are also involved in reconstruction activities and, in the event of a security crisis in Al Muthanna that is beyond the capability of Iraqi security forces, Overwatch Battle Group (West) may be tasked to intervene and restore order. This information is from a question on notice. The security crisis would have to be one which the national Iraqi forces were unable to deal with. So the soldiers now in Iraq’s south and south-west are very much in a back-seat role. They are training and mentoring Iraqi security forces, but they are now in the back seat and it is the Iraqi military that has responsibility for security.

In October 2005 the Defence Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade travelled to the Middle East area of operations and to Iraq, and in a bipartisan report they made a number of observations about the Al Muthanna Task Group. They said:

- The AMTG has made a very positive contribution to the security of the Al Muthanna Province.

The subcommittee also said that it had ‘a determined and well considered presence throughout the province’. Talking of the training team, it said:

The Australian team has been a significant factor in the successful development of the Iraqi Brigade capability ...

That was a report signed off by Liberal members, by Labor members and by National Party members.

How long is this group of 500 likely to be there anyway? General George Casey has said that Iraq’s own forces could take over...
the country’s security within 12 to 18 months. Brigadier Mick Moon, in a Sydney Morning Herald interview of 26 October, noted that the two Iraqi provinces of Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar had been handed over to provincial control and said:
The plan from the coalition point of view is to continually hand those provinces back.
The article reports that seven or eight of Iraq’s 18 provinces are expected to be handed to Iraqi military and security forces by the end of the year.

General Cosgrove, when asked about this, has said that the worst thing Australia could do at the moment is leave Iraq to its own devices. This would be seen as a victory for the terrorists, there is no intention of maintaining a military presence in Iraq any longer than is needed, and when the Iraqi government believes it can handle security we will go.

None of this is to say that there may not be a change in strategy in Iraq. The Iraq Study Group in the United States has been commissioned to deliver an independent assessment. It is co-chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker III and Lee Hamilton. It will report after the November 2006 mid-term elections in the United States. Some of the things that they may look at include a phased withdrawal of US forces from Iraq and US dialogue with Syria and Iran. Kenneth Pollack of the Brookings Institution, in a February 2006 article in Atlantic Monthly entitled ‘A Switch in Time’, talked of the ‘ink spot’ policy. This was used by the French in Morocco and the British in Malaya in dealing with insurgencies. The notion is that counterinsurgency strategy requires providing security in places like Iraq’s south.

This is where the ADF contingent is. It is actually the provinces where the ADF are that are the ones that have been handed over to the Iraqi military. This has been a successful operation and my proposition is that the time for them to withdraw is when the Iraqi government decide that their own security can handle it and then they can return.

The problem with the Labor Party policy is that they want to do it because they are pandering to a certain section. They are trying to play party politics with our national security. Labor want to have it both ways on Iraq. This is a policy tailored so that they can say different things to different groups. They appear to accept that withdrawing all troops from the Middle East area of operations would damage our relations with our ally the United States and would give the insurgency a victory in Iraq. This is a halfway house that is neither here nor there. It is another demonstration that the Labor Party is soft on national security.

There is an important message here: all the messages are that this deployment in southern Iraq may not be required much longer. Labor are prepared to make a symbolic commitment to withdraw a contingent which has been in Iraq since April or May last year and which may be leaving in the near future. The problem with their policy is that they will make it regardless of the situation in Iraq in 12 months time. The problem is the signal it gives. It is another demonstration that Labor is soft on national security and that they will play party politics with national security. Rather than basing national security on Australia’s national interest, they will say anything to win a vote. So we have the Leader of the Opposition on the one hand saying, ‘We will withdraw our troops from Iraq’, and on the other hand proposing to leave 900 in place.

Our commitment to Iraq is not open-ended. The issue with the Labor Party’s policy on Iraq is that they are making it for all the wrong reasons. Australian troops should depart when the Iraqi military is ready to
take over. That day is not far off. We are in the back seat, in the home straight. Labor are giving out all the wrong messages as to their resolve, as to the war on terror, as to the war against Islamists. The problem with the Labor approach is that they give out the message that Australia will not go the distance with jihadists or Islamists.

**Legal Aid**

Mr MURPHY (Lowe) (4.39 pm)—I wish to raise a matter of importance to every member of this House and, indeed, every citizen of Australia—the issue of financial and geographic access to justice, legal representation and legal aid. Specifically, I grieve this afternoon for those citizens who cannot get legal aid because of the savage cuts to the amounts budgeted for legal aid by the Howard government, particularly since 2004, and I will provide to the House the government’s own figures later in this speech.

My electorate of Lowe has of late experienced a surge in family law litigants and child support inquiries. As members of this House well know, the all-too-familiar story is the tragedy of unwilling litigants to a family law matter or a dispute concerning payments regularly finding their way into an electorate office. Often, the matters are resolved by clarifying legal issues by referral of the constituent to available pro bono legal systems, including our state and territory legal aid commissions and community legal centres. Frequently, these constituents are either under-represented—that is, they commenced a litigation or administrative process but simply ran out of money and can no longer persist with the arduous and very expensive legal process—or they simply receive poor advice resulting in costly administrative or legal tactical errors.

Either way, it is a fundamental tenet of any functional legal system that access to law—both geographic and financial access—be reasonably available to all. Never should it be that one party to a legal proceeding should be disadvantaged, either financially or geographically, in their ability to access competent legal advice in preparation of advocating on their own cause. As I say this, I have particularly sympathy for legal matters involving children, including family law and child support matters. It is easy to say that federal funding for legal aid is too low. I can only speak for my constituents in the electorate of Lowe when I note the marked increase in distressed Family Court litigants and those parties involved in the administrative strictures of the child support system.

Regularly, I refer matters to legal aid, community legal centres and the New South Wales Law Society Pro Bono Scheme. These and other legally aided bodies do a wonderful job. However, I am confident when I say that only a very small number of people actually qualify for legal aid, due to the strictures of asset and income means tests which are deliberately very low. If you own your own house and have a paltry income, you are essentially ineligible for legal aid. You may be in effective poverty but you are ineligible to defend your case and act for yourself or your interests, including preservation of apportionment of your asset base or access to your children.

This year, media reports have given much attention to the Commonwealth budget on the topic of legal aid funding in the latest round of appropriation bills. Two years ago, the Commonwealth Attorney-General, the Hon. Philip Ruddock, announced in his news release of 11 May 2004 that more money was to go to legal aid. The Attorney-General specified in that news release the:

... provision of $52.7 million additional funds over four years, including $1.3 million for program administration.

The Attorney-General went on to state that:
... this means a total of $599 million will be provided over four years for Commonwealth legal aid for family, criminal and civil matters arising under Commonwealth law.

In the Attorney-General’s 2004-2005 Budget Fact Sheet titled *Improving Legal Services*, Mr Ruddock announced under the heading ‘Legal aid for Commonwealth matters’ that:

Additional funds will be available to State and Territory legal aid commissions when they enter into new legal aid agreements from 1 July 2004. These new funds allow for ‘a new duty lawyer service for those who seek to represent themselves before the Family Court and the Federal Magistrates Court’. Another innovation from the new funding agreements is the provision of a minimum rate of pay for legal aid solicitors undertaking Commonwealth family law matters of $120 per hour. These new funding arrangements under the new legal aid agreements are woefully inadequate. I refer to an article entitled ‘Legal Aid plagued by underfunding: NLA’ dated 28 May 2004. In this it is reported that National Legal Aid Chairperson George Turnbull called on the government to address the federal budget’s failure to provide enough funding for legal aid services’. The article goes on to quote Mr Turnbull, who is reported to have said:

The Federal Budget was the Commonwealth Government’s chance to inject adequate funding and prevent the looming crisis in the family law system ...

Further, the article notes:

Although there had been an increase in funding to legal aid services, it was a case of too little, too late, Turnbull said. “The new funding levels outlined in the Budget have put us back to the levels we were operating with in 1996/1997 … before the Government slashed legal aid funding.”

I note that the damage to legal aid funding has occurred on the Howard government’s watch. The damage to legal aid funding began in 1997. The slashing of legal aid funding continued in 2004, and put this funding back to its 1997 levels in real terms. The government’s budget papers and final budget outcomes statement show that in 2003-04 the legal aid budget was $732,276,000 and in 2005-06 it had dropped to $38,778,000. That is a decline in legal aid in 2005-06 dollar terms of some 51.5 per cent since 2003-04.

On 4 October the Attorney-General was in the media again, this time on ABC Radio National’s *Breakfast* program, on the topic of legal aid cuts. In this radio program journalist Fran Kelly reported that there were ‘new accusations the federal government is trying to gag its critics’ as Attorney-General Philip Ruddock had ‘revealed plans to overhaul funding for community legal centres’. Fran Kelly noted:

In the latest edition of the Liberal Party Journal *The Party Room*, Mr Ruddock has accused the centres of running private political agendas using taxpayers’ dollars to promote left wing causes.

Mr Ruddock, I do not know about the community legal centres throughout Australia promoting so-called left-wing causes. What I can say, from the streets of Lowe in Sydney’s inner west, is that there are a lot of suffering people who are denied justice because they are incapable of paying for adequate, competent legal advice. I say, in passing, that I also believe this point resonates with members who represent rural and remote areas of Australia and who see access to justice through legal aid equally compromised by the present round of legal aid funding.

It would take too much time to list all the peak bodies, churches, lobby groups and other agencies who have persistently called for increased funding. ACOSS, the various major churches, community legal aid centres and an array of charitable agencies are amongst those who must deal with the community every day and limit or turn away clientele who have legitimate cases but simply
cannot be funded for legal aid. Today I call upon the Attorney-General to put aside such notions of left-wing agendas and look at the totality of what National Legal Aid chairman Mr George Turnbull rightly described as the looming legal aid funding crisis that is now, in 2006, upon us. I, therefore, urge the Attorney-General and this government to radically increase funding for legal aid and thus permit greater financial access to justice for those people who desperately need it. I seek leave to table the government’s own budget papers and final budget outcome which lists the amount budgeted for legal aid from 2002-03 to 2005-06.

Leave granted.

**Future Materials Awards**

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (4.49 pm)—On May 17 this year the inaugural Future Materials Awards for excellence in material innovation were held in Brisbane. I had the great pleasure of representing my colleague the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Hon. Ian Macfarlane, at this event. It was a tremendous honour to attend and to present at this awards ceremony, and I was thoroughly impressed with the quality of nominations. The innovation and development that is currently taking place in Australia is outstanding, and all Australians are benefiting from this.

Future Materials was established with federal funding in 2003 to assist the linkage between research institutions and business. While the initial grant will come to an end shortly, the Future Materials team that have operated throughout Australia have raised the profile of material developments, and the networks they have created will carry on and continue to ensure collaboration between researchers and commercial outcomes. The awards ceremony recognised an array of innovative and upcoming companies. Amongst the winners, and many of the nominated companies, a common theme was evident: the reliance on nanotechnology.

As a Queenslander it was also a great pleasure to note that, of the three awards, two of the winners were Queensland companies. The first award category was biotechnology and life sciences, in which the New South Wales company Nanocoatings Pty Ltd was recognised for its innovation in the development of new bone graft technology. Replacement of bone represents a clinical challenge for which there are restricted solutions. Currently the best solution is bone grafts from the patients—those are called autografts—but obviously this has very limited supply, and it may generate further pain at the donor site. Bone grafts from cadavers are also limited by supply, and there is the further concern of viral and prion disease transmission and long-term stability. Of the synthetic substitutes, alloplastic—which is based on hydroxyapatite, a substance derived from coral—is the most promising as it has a composition and structure very similar to bone.

Nanocoatings Pty Ltd has developed a BioAlmog, a new generation of hydroxyapatite-derived bone graft material, with enhanced biochemical and mechanical properties compared to other bone graft materials. It is very strong. The technique for producing the hydroxyapatite can also be applied to orthopaedic, ocular and maxillofacial applications, where the coating technology can be applied to various metallic and ceramic implants and substrates for engineering applications. It has such high protection against high temperature and corrosion and is wear-resistant.

The building and infrastructure awards category recognised a Toowoomba based firm, Coredev Pty Ltd, for their work in the development of a fibre composite pedestrian bridge. Coredev is committed to finding a
state-of-the-art alternative to hardwood pedestrian bridges. The firm’s development is lightweight and it can be flat-packed and then assembled using standard construction technology. Furthermore, it has excellent fire resistance. It looks good and requires very little maintenance. At the end of their life, the bridges can also be recycled for use as a high-performance ingredient in cement. The Coredev product has been designed to mimic hardwood timber behaviours, while being more sustainable from an environmental and maintenance perspective. Timber bridges are a significant asset in Australia’s infrastructure inventory. However, this once resilient bridge network is failing, as management becomes increasingly challenged with ageing timber stocks, shortages of replacement timber, increasing traffic loads and limited financial resources. Many timber bridges in the road network will be replaced by steel or concrete, but this is not a solution for the thousands of timber pedestrian bridges in our national and state parks and forests, due to their remote location and moist environment.

The final award category, that of manufactured goods, was awarded to a Queensland based company, Hydrexia Pty Ltd. It was recognised for its work in solid hydrogen storage systems. Demand for hydrogen storage is being driven by the rapid adoption of hydrogen fuel cells, which are expected to replace batteries and fossil fuel powered engines in a wide range of applications due to their superior performance and zero emissions.

The most promising alternative to gaseous and liquid storage is solid hydrate storage, whereby hydrogen is stored as a solid within the structure of a metal alloy. The hydrogen can then be transported as a solid and released as a gas for use in fuel cells or other devices. Hydrexia is commercialising a solid hydrogen storage system based on a novel magnesium-nickel alloy to which certain structure-modifying materials are added. The effect of these additions is to create nano-scale crystal defects in the alloy, giving rise to a large internal surface area on which the hydrating reaction can take place. I take this opportunity to congratulate each of the winning companies, and I acknowledge the great investment this government has made in its support of material technology.

The winning companies not only showcase Australia’s strength in research capacity but also highlight the necessity and continued enhancement of our development and niche manufacturing-commercialisation agenda. As previously mentioned, a common thread between the winning companies and many of the other nominated firms is nanotechnology. Without elaborating in great detail the science of nanotechnology, it is the manipulation of matter at the sub-100 nanometre scale to harness size-dependent properties—structural, electrical, thermal, magnetic and optical. Or, in very basic terms, a nanometre is one billionth of a metre.

By being able to break matter into molecular and atomic levels, it creates the ability to harness energy that exists only at that scale. It is about the incorporation of matter into materials, thus changing the composition of products as we currently know them. International research has forecast that goods, including nanotechnology, will be valued at between $US1 trillion and $US2.6 trillion by 2015, with employment of about 10 million people. Based on these figures, the Queensland Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Andrews, recently made some calculations of earnings for Australia. It is his expectation that nanotechnology will be worth up to $60 billion for Australia, with employment of about 125,000 persons. Nanotechnology is already incorporated into many daily consumer products, ranging from drug technology, energy, water, clothing fabrics, scratch-resistant paints, antifog and self-
cleaning glass, through to household white-goods that kill bacteria.

Australia’s first industry based facilitation body for the nano sector, the Queensland Nanotechnology Alliance, recently presented me with a pair of socks that incorporate silver nano particles which prevent foot odour and eliminate infections. While socks may seem like a novel idea, keep in mind that, for those Australians working long shifts in humid conditions, this product will aid personal comfort and will positively impact on staff productivity, with fewer workers claiming compensation based on foot infection.

At the end of the day, the nano community believes that, while researching and building the technology is of paramount importance, it is the ability to develop these products with commercial outcomes that will have real economic benefits for Australia.

Westmead Hospital School

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (4.58 pm)—I rise this afternoon to speak on behalf of a school in my electorate. It is a great school and it does some really wonderful work with its students. It is a school which this government has chosen to ignore when it comes to its flagship funding program for schools, the Investing in Our Schools program. The school in question, located at Westmead Children’s Hospital, is known simply as the Hospital School. When it comes to this school, the government has put bureaucracy over reason and the neatness of its rules over the fairness of its outcomes. As honourable members will know, Westmead Children’s Hospital is a world-class facility that my community is immensely proud of. The work they do is amazing. Children come from all over the country to be treated there. Unfortunately, in some cases the recovery process can be a very long, slow and arduous one.

The Hospital School caters exclusively for these ill and recovering children. It allows them to keep up to date with their school-work and to keep their minds occupied during the treatment and recovery ordeal. Margaret Allan, the principal, and her dedicated team of seven teachers do a great job under very difficult circumstances. The school averages around 55 to 60 students a week in five classrooms. A further 30 or so on the wards are too sick to be able to attend in person, so the teachers go to them. Sometimes there are a few more children. In good weeks there are a few less. This is one of the few schools we would like to see go out of business because of a lack of students but, unfortunately, there are always children at the school. The faces may change but the numbers do not. The school caters for children from kindergarten to year 12 and with every condition imaginable, from a broken leg to cancer. These children face unique challenges. They go to the school in wheelchairs, they take their drip poles behind them, they go in orbital frames, sometimes their whole beds are manoeuvred into the classroom and, in some cases, the teachers go to them. Students stay a day, a week, 12 months or more, so the school has to work extra hard to keep continuity going for the individual students who will be returning to their own schools, hopefully soon.

The Hospital School has to be so much more flexible than others. One wonders why then the Howard government would leave this fine school out in the cold. The federal government does have a funding program. Finally embarrassed into loosening the purse strings on funding for public education, the Howard government created the Investing in Our Schools program. The program allows for $700 million over three years for public schools and $300 million for private schools for capital upgrades and new equipment. To quote the website:

Grants are available to help repair, replace or install new items critical to a school’s needs. This
includes improvements to classrooms, library resources, computer facilities, play equipment, air conditioning and heating, outdoor shade structures, music facilities and instruments, or playing fields and sporting infrastructure.

Yet not a single cent is allowed to be given to the Hospital School at Westmead. In fact they are not even permitted to apply for funding under this program. Why would such a school be prevented from even applying for a grant to improve their facilities and the learning environment for their students? The answer can be found in a letter signed by the member for Macarthur as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. The letter attempts to explain the government’s reasoning as to why they will not help these children in need—and it is an extraordinary example of bureaucratic reasoning at that! Paragraph 2 of the letter begins:

While the Australian Government appreciates the situation of the children in hospital schools, I must confirm that IOSP funding is not available to schools with transient student populations.

I, like all of us, would hope that the students at the Hospital School at Westmead are transient—that is the point. The children remain permanently enrolled at their regular school but attend the Hospital School for short periods of time or anywhere up to three years. But you have to ask yourself how the government defines ‘transient’. What is transient—a year, three years?—and why is that an issue when it comes to this funding program? In fact, the school wanted funding to ease the transient nature of the school. They want to upgrade their technology program that links their computers with the students’ home schools for a more seamless learning environment, a program that effectively would allow the children to keep their connections with their local school to which they will ultimately return. But the Howard government has just said no. In fact, worse than that, they have said, ‘No chance.’

I do not believe that the government deliberately excluded hospital schools. Surely this was not what they intended when they designed the program. I believe it is an unintended consequence but they refuse to do anything to rectify the problem. The letter from the parliamentary secretary simply dismisses the concerns and reinforces the inequity. That is where the real crime lies here—the inaction of this government. When faced with an outrageous and obviously unintended consequence of a set of regulations in relation to a particular piece of legislation—a problem that is easily fixed—this government simply shrugs its shoulders and relies on some rather spurious bureaucratic reasoning. ‘Funding is not available to schools with transient populations’. Make no mistake—this rationale does not stand up to scrutiny. In explaining why schools with transient populations are ineligible to apply the parliamentary secretary’s letter said:

IOSP funds are allocated according to the number of enrolled students in each State and Territory. Students in hospital schools are permanently enrolled in other schools and have been included in the student populations of those schools. They cannot be counted again as this would distort the proportion of IOSP funds available to that State.

Nobody is asking that the students be counted twice—they cannot be counted twice, because they are permanently enrolled at another school and they are not permanently enrolled at Westmead Hospital School. Therefore, they would be counted only once, whether or not this school could apply for funding. IOSP funds are based on a child-by-child calculation for the state as a whole, not as a grant given to each school. The number of schools does not determine the amount of funds available for New South Wales; it is the number of permanently enrolled students across the state. So in the
grand census of New South Wales school students to determine how much money New South Wales will get as a whole state, it does not make any difference whatsoever whether you include the Westmead Hospital School in that calculation. They are enrolled once, not twice. They would be counted once, not twice. Just because you have no permanently enrolled students does not mean that you are not a school—the Hospital School is a school—and it does not mean that you do not need the same sorts of capital upgrades that schools with permanent students receive. It is a ridiculous argument. I have no doubt whatsoever that I would be hard pressed to find any parent out there who would begrudge the Hospital School a small slice of funding to buy technology to link their students back to their permanent schools—to improve their capacity to move past their illness and get back to regular life as quickly and as easily as possible.

Allowing the Hospital School to apply for grants under this program could not possibly distort the amount of funds available to New South Wales as a whole. It would affect the amount available to each school in New South Wales but by a very small amount. The parliamentary secretary’s shonky reasoning does not stop there though. He goes on to make an even more spurious argument as to why this school should not be funded, and this argument makes even less sense than the preceding argument:

It is important to bear in mind that students attending hospital schools do not miss out entirely on the benefits of IOSP funding. They will benefit at the schools at which they are permanently enrolled upon their return.

Then he goes on to state that funding the Hospital School would effectively be double dipping for those students. Yet, when you look at the bigger picture, while funding to New South Wales as a whole is calculated on the number of children, this program is not administered on a child-by-child basis at the school level. In fact, it is a competitive grants program. If one school gets two grants totalling $130,000, that is not considered double dipping, even if another school does not get any funding. So you can get two grants, that is not double dipping; no grant, that is fine. If a child changes school because their parents move, and they attend two schools in a short period that both received funding, that is not double dipping. So if a child receives access to funding in two schools because their parents moved, that is okay; yet if a child receives funding from schools because they are ill and have to attend hospital, that is double dipping. It is bureaucracy gone mad, to the detriment of a fine school in my community and to a group of students in real need. It is bureaucracy wrapped up in a false notion of fairness.

I would like to talk about fairness in this instance because there is no fairness. ‘Fair’ for a child goes out the window when he or she gets so sick or injured that they end up in hospital for long enough to go to school there. Fairness goes out the window when illness or injury rips a child out of their regular school and regular life. Life is not always fair for children—and it has not been fair to the kids at the Hospital School.

But governments can compensate. Let us put a little fairness back into the lives of the kids at Westmead. If the government wants to hide from its responsibilities behind a set of rules, it had better make sure that the rules make sense and stand up to scrutiny. This situation reeks of poor policy, poor implementation, and trying to cover an error with poorly scripted pollie-speak. The government made a mistake on this one and it is about time they fessed up and fixed it. The kids at Westmead Hospital School deserve no less.
Mr TUCKEY (O’Connor) (5.08 pm)—The purpose of this grievance speech is to call for the government to establish immediately an independent forensic financial audit of all the entities of the AWB Ltd conglomerate, particularly in terms of the internal transactions of the publicly listed company and its subsidiary AWB International. To support this request, I quote the following examples provided to me by a knowledgeable witness who would, I am sure, if given appropriate protection, be prepared to assist in such an inquiry.

The Australian wheat industry has been subject to regulated single desk marketing since the late 1940s, conducted until 1999 by a government statutory authority called the Australian Wheat Board. It managed the pooling operation based on the simple principle of sharing with growers the total proceeds of its sales, less operating and market costs which, according to the Grains Council of Australia, totalled some $53 million in its last year of operation, compared with $165 million with the present entity today.

In 1999 these operations were corporatised, with two major entities being established—that is, AWB Ltd, which was listed on the Australian Stock Exchange in August 2001, and its subsidiary AWB International, AWBI, identified as company B in the legislation, which was responsible for the management of the ongoing wheat pool operation with a constitutional responsibility to maximise grower returns. AWBI also held a veto over the issuance of export licences to other operators. This provided a monopoly over wheat growers dependent on the export market such as those in my electorate of O’Connor. However, as the parent company, AWB Ltd opted to undertake all of AWBI’s duties under a service agreement. AWBI existed with no directly employed staff and under a board of directors dominated by the board members and senior executives of AWB Ltd, leaving it open to AWB Ltd to manage its financial affairs as it chose.

In its later years of operation, the Australian Wheat Board commenced offering its pool participants a variety of financial products, particularly in terms of its expanding operations in the derivatives markets. Upon the transfer to this corporate entity, derivative trading and the operation of an extensive loan book became the foundation of AWB Ltd operations, including on behalf of the AWBI pool. Whilst AWB Ltd has constantly claimed an ability to gain physical sale price premiums due to its monopoly marketing status, it appears that where this has occurred it resulted more from derivative trading than from exceeding world prices for physical sales. This risky derivatives practice has now been fully exposed.

Under the corporatised model, growers have to borrow against the value of their as yet unsold wheat deliveries but, as the AWBI pool only provides an estimated pool return, EPR, which varies significantly from time to time, AWB Ltd provides an underwriting product at a cost of approximately $1.60 per tonne by which growers can insure themselves to borrow up to 80 per cent of the EPR announced at harvest time. In the absence of any claims, this service delivers revenues to its shareholders, possibly a profit of around $20 million per annum.

The 2001-02 pool deliveries were approximately 17 million tonnes, followed by a 2002-03 delivery of only 4.5 million tonnes, which is almost identical to the 2005-06 and 2006-07 deliveries, at 18 million tonnes and an estimated four million tonnes respectively. The significant difference, however, is that in the 2002-03 year of low production world prices fell significantly, commencing...
early in 2003, whilst as I stand here they are rising.

In fact early in 2003 the 2002 harvest EPR was reduced by about $40 per tonne, or approximately 15 per cent, which raised the threat that this reduced value of growers’ wheat could no longer cover their borrowings as underwritten by AWB Ltd and its shareholders. However, there was an available carryover of wheat from the 2001-02 season which needed to be sold forward in 2002-03. I am advised that, to avoid the possibility of breaching the underwriting, the management of AWB Ltd decided to transfer two million tonnes of that wheat at below market value into the forthcoming pool. When sold at market value by the 2002-03 pool, the profit increased the pool’s per tonne EPR to a figure in excess of the trigger level at which AWB would have had to pay compensation to lenders.

The value of this transaction was approximately $50 million, which increased the 2002-03 EPR by approximately $10 per tonne but had a minimal noticeable per tonne impact on the 17 million tonnes delivered in 2001-02. The effect on growers’ return was, however, twofold. Those who delivered to the 2001-02 pool had their overall pool returns reduced by $50 million, and those who delivered to the 2002-03 pool should have received approximately $50 million from the profits of AWB Ltd, which was avoided by this device.

Those in the AWB Ltd workforce who prided themselves on the mantra of maximising grower returns made formal protests to the AWB Ltd senior executive, whose name has been provided to me, but were ignored. I am advised that during 2001 an email was directed to the chief executive of AWB Ltd protesting about scams of this nature and that attempts were subsequently made at the most senior level to have this email removed from the company database.

Another initiative first implemented by the Australian Wheat Board was termed the ‘basis pool’. It allowed participating growers to receive the proceeds of physical sales from the national pool excluding any profit or loss from its derivatives trading, which they were free to conduct on their own behalf. However, upon corporatisation this scheme was not retained by AWBI but was taken over by AWB Ltd.

In its first year of operation under AWB management but prior to the share market listing the differential between the basis pool and the national pool was a negative $5.33 per tonne, which probably represented a reasonable assessment of the profits accrued by AWBI through its derivatives trading. However, by the 2002-03 season, this differential had become a negative $56.16 per tonne, which, after adjustment for the difference in the closing of the basis pool in November and the national pool in the following March, of $7 per tonne, could be rounded out to $50, which, under the operating conditions of the basis pool, should have represented only the profit achieved by the national pool through derivatives trading, which is a most unlikely scenario.

I am advised that a substantial and undisclosed amount was deducted by AWB Ltd for service fees over and above those charged to the national pool, which included the notorious $65 million and bonuses. In fact, it appears that by then AWB Ltd treated this pool as its own property. On one occasion a senior executive, also named to me, simply ordered the staff who were responsible for the management of the basis pool to transfer the sum of $2 million, or $10 a tonne, to AWB Ltd as management fees. This figure was subsequently reduced to $1 million when the staff involved protested vigor-
ously. The $1 million fee, however, was not disclosed as required under the financial services act.

The basis pool concept was embraced by a number of farm improvement groups in my electorate, such as the South East Premium Wheat Growers Association, the Liebe Group and the Mingenew-Irwin Group. Put simply, their expectation was to receive a payment equal to the net value of the national pool excluding the futures trading effect. Yet every year they received an escalating negative return culminating in $50 per tonne for the 2002-03 season and $40 per tonne for the 2003-04 season. For instance, to substantiate the $40 differential for 2003-04 would mean that AWBI’s future trading profit over that pool of 20 million tonnes was $800 million.

The situation stands in stark contrast with the claims now promulgated by the new management of AWB Ltd that, unless they can obtain all of the approximately four million tonnes of the 2006-07 production at prices well below the price available to wheat growers from other traders such as CBH, they will be unable to manage the losses on their forward position—which, if true, should be the responsibility of AWB Ltd and its shareholders, not distressed wheat growers battling to recover the cost of seed-

Clearly the first, and simple, task for the forensic audit is to analyse the annual profits from derivative trading within the national pool to establish the integrity of these figures or to establish that undisclosed fees and charges have been deducted from the proceeds otherwise available to participants in the basis pool scheme. I seek leave to have an AWB press release tabled. It is a simple document and the opposition is aware of it.

Leave granted.

Mr TUCKEY—In closing, let me say that this document shows how complicated AWB managed to make that very simple concept—I believe simply to confuse wheat growers, who in the end had no idea what they were supposed to be paid. They were losing $50-odd a tonne.

Regional Development

Mr CREAN (Hotham) (5.18 pm)—My grievance concerns the failure of the government, after 10 years, to develop a coherent policy for regional Australia. I am a passionate believer in the need to encourage our regions—not just those that are disadvantaged and fall behind but those that have real opportunities but are held back through various constraints and lack of services. In many of the boom mining regions, housing is a good example of this. I also fervently believe that there is a clear role for the Commonwealth government in regional development—as a facilitator and in better ensuring that resources meet particular needs of the regions.

Since I was given back responsibility for this area, I have visited almost 20 regions in the last 12 months. My party has open dialogue with area consultative committees all around the country. Last week I visited central west Queensland in the new seat of Flynn. I visited the towns of Emerald, Blackwater and Winton. I also called in at Lark Quarry. I visited Longreach and Barcaldine. I did this in response to an invitation to address Remote Area Planning and Development—RAPAD—group, which is a grouping of 11 shires. That invitation in turn arose from my contact with them in relation to their proposal for broadband access in their region.

The meeting at Winton was hosted by the mayor of the Winton Shire, Bruce Collins. It was organised by David Arnold, the CEO of RAPAD. It was a tremendously rewarding
experience, as would be attested to by the member for Maranoa, who was also there, and the state member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson. I want to place on record my appreciation to Bruce Collins and his colleagues for their hospitality, their friendship and the openness with which they discussed their ideas with me.

I met separately with Peter Dowling, the General Manager of the Central Highlands Development Corporation. I had that meeting in Emerald, where I had the opportunity to meet the mayor of Emerald, Peter Maguire, and Gary Howard, the mayor of Duaringa Shire Council in Blackwater. This is another grouping of shires who have got together to develop their visions.

Interestingly, these shires are suffering through the drought. The drought is affecting not only their pastoral industries but also the towns that service them. Drought relief, I observe, is important. Having developed the national drought policy when I was the minister for primary industries, I understand full well how important it is. That policy was built around the notion of support in difficult circumstances, but fundamentally it aimed to ensure that farmers are better prepared.

Part of the problem that this country is facing at the moment is that the current government has failed to tackle adequately the issue of climate change. This is an area of great negligence by the government. It is one thing to deal with the symptoms; it is another to address the cause. Labor has a commitment to Kyoto, raising the MRET, renewables and clean fuel technologies. This is another grievance because the government has squandered the opportunity by failing to embrace genuine bipartisanship with Labor to solve the problems of climate change and water allocations.

Another area that I visited on this trip was the Bowen Basin, which is experiencing boom times in contrast to the falling off in the pastoral sector, essentially through the great demand for coal. It is interesting that these mines are developing ‘green’ coal technologies and approaches. But what is holding them back? It is things like housing shortages and skyrocketing costs, as well as the lack of basic services such as medical and nursing facilities in these regions. It demonstrates that the failure to plan ahead always costs. If governments do not make provisions for the basic delivery of services, expansion is held back.

I was also impressed with the huge potential for heritage and tourism to be developed in this region, not only through its vast array of national parks but also through the proposal at Blackwater for a coal interpretation centre, the magnificent prehistory on the age of dinosaurs around Winton and the great work by David and Judy Elliot. This painstaking work, piecing together, with very little support, this huge prehistoric dimension in the country in order to visit the tracks of dinosaurs, a snapshot in time, a 30-second stampede 95 million years ago is just mind-boggling, and the way in which it is presented is quite magnificent. It goes together with the Stockman’s Hall of Fame, the Qantas Founders Outback Museum, the Australian Workers Heritage Centre and, of course, the Tree of Knowledge, so recently tragically desecrated by vandals with no concept of heritage. Barcaldine was not just the place of the formation of the Labor Party; it also nurtured the formation of the Country Party and the recognition that remoteness required representation in this place. A response to the shearer’s strikes of that time, 1891, also saw a union of employers formed and then the united graziers. It is this capacity to draw on the history and heritage that I do see great potential for and which governments of all persuasions and at all levels should support.
I mention these things because the groups of councils that I met with are not unique. More and more of them are coming together to go beyond the boundaries of their own specific shires to recognise that there is a vision and an agenda that cross boundaries, which they want to develop. We should be responding more effectively to those agendas and visions developed by the regions in order for them to come up with solutions, not through pork-barrel responses or responses to any wish lists but by backing proposals that stack up, that make economic sense, that are sustainable and that recognise the great contribution that these regions make.

Canberra cannot determine what is in the interests of these places—only those regions can do that—but Canberra must put itself in the position of more effectively responding to them and more effectively empowering them. Government must be responsive and supportive and forge partnerships with them to more effectively empower those solutions so they can be implemented.

I believe that a new paradigm for regional development is required, an approach which supports location-specific solutions and puts faith in a new partnership of stakeholders. I know that localism works because as a former Minister for Employment, Education and Training I established the area consultative network. What this network did then was specifically to bring together local government, industry, employers, the training sector and the community and match their skill needs with what government through its resources was able to supply, to undertake skills audits at the local level and to match labour supply with demand. That is not happening, and yet many of these regions are being held back by skill shortages. I know that in the last six months of our term of office 300,000 jobs were placed. If it worked in that portfolio, I ask myself: why not in the other portfolios? Why not empower the area consultative committees to become Regional Development Australia, to really go into the other areas of portfolio activity, identify the local needs and challenge governments through the mainstream portfolios to respond? Labor will rebrand the network. We will call it Regional Development Australia and we will give it the opportunity to get involved in infrastructure and have input on broadband, hospitals and aged care as well as water and natural resource management.

My point is that this has been 10 years of wasted opportunity. We need a change. My grievance is that we have a wasted opportunity out in the regions. If our regions are doing well, the nation prospers. It is incumbent upon government to make sure that it empowers regions more effectively and develops a partnership that works for them. Because if we get that right, it will work for the nation as well.

Workplace Relations

Drought

Indigenous Affairs

Mr WAKELIN (Grey) (5.28 pm)—Australia is about freedom of choice: individual decision making and freedom from intimidation for us all to live in a free and open society. The lowest unemployment rate in 30 years and the highest wages in our history are proof that there is a positive alternative to all comers. With 17 per cent of the private Australian workforce as union members, clearly 83 per cent of our workforce in the private sector have confidence in themselves and their employer to get a fair go rather than relying on others. The extra 205,000 new jobs created since the new Work Choices laws were passed just over six months ago show the nonsense of Labor’s scare tactics. Australia has come a long way from the first strike in 1791, when the convicts protested their need to have rations is-
sued daily, not weekly. But some still seem to want to stay back in that era. The modern Australian economy is not that, and it is a credit to the government of the day. It shows what a difference positive leadership can make.

That leads me to discuss the role and relevance of unions in the 21st century. I would contend that it is not the union movement that will determine the future of Australia, although we have heard Greg Combet quoted widely on his view about where the union movement should sit in the future of Australia. The future of Australia will be determined by the skills and knowledge which will create the wealth and give the outcome for individuals; it will not depend on other third parties through fear tactics. It will drive Australia past 2006, based on the philosophy that the Howard government has been able to articulate over the last decade. Industry, both domestic and export, is the lifeblood of our economy. Reasonable employer-employee relationships are vital, and the AWAs—that is, of course, the Australian workplace agreements—are essential to that future. To go back to a centralised, 100-year-old system which fails to recognise the diversity within the Australian economy right across this nation is an absurdity too amazing to contemplate.

It is always a great irony to me that, as someone who comes from the Liberal side of politics—the coalition part of the great tradition of Australian politics over the last 100 years—somehow I am able to be portrayed as the wealthy elite, yet I know that my income, averaged out, is significantly lower than that of many of my political opponents. I do not say that as a whinge; I just say that as a statement of fact. The philosophy that I believe in and the adaptability and flexibility that this economy is given by the philosophy that I believe in is the future, and that is what is going to drive our improvement and the wealth that is so important to all Australians and for successive generations.

I now come to discuss the drought. Drought is as old as Australia itself. It is something that we have all become very used to, and anyone who comes from the land understands that we will always be dealing with it. The current circumstances are within the extremes of the Australian climate, and I welcome the government’s approach to it. But, in saying that, it is important to acknowledge the value of the farm management deposits, which have been utilised by many within the agricultural sector, within the farming sector. I thank the government for its development of that important economic vehicle over the last decade that it has been in government.

The exceptional circumstances definition, which we all grapple with at times like this, requires in my view a very strong cooperative effort from local, state and federal government. It serves no good to have political gamesmanship at the core of much of this discussion. It is important that the principle of self-reliance be respected but that the fine balance between self-reliance and the degree of difficulty which can crush an enterprise is recognised—and that is a very difficult thing to do.

It is important that the efforts that this government has made particularly over the last decade to keep interest rates low, to keep inflation under control, to encourage the export sector and to develop the infrastructure of regional Australia—all of those factors—be recognised as very strong positives for the future of regional Australia. It will rain again. The survival of much of our agricultural sector is very important, although not as important as it once was. At one time, the agricultural sector was 40 per cent or more of the export sector of Australia, and now it is significantly lower than that. With the
mining resource development and the prices currently on offer throughout the world, the significance of the agricultural sector is nowhere near as great—but still very significant. So I thank the government for its consideration.

I acknowledge the incredible effort that the land managers, the farmers, themselves have put in to manage their land in a way which is unprecedented. Many of us can remember—and certainly we have been told of—the huge land drift problems over the last 150 years. That is a very rare thing these days. The new systems and the discipline of the land manager and the farmers are a credit to all of those farmers and land managers who have been able to bring this about, and I compliment them and acknowledge that here today.

I want to talk briefly about the contemporary situation of Indigenous people in Australia. When Minister Brough opened a new swimming pool at Mimili in the Pitjantjatjara lands last Saturday, I was reminded that it was time to reconcile the challenges of unemployment, passive welfare, violence, too much sexual abuse and poor health outcomes that still bedevil us in 2006.

In conclusion, I want to read into the Hansard the comments of Reverend William Edwards, who appeared in a private capacity before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs at a hearing held in Adelaide on 23 September 2003. He said:

At that time, Commonwealth finance was unavailable for Aboriginal work. The Presbyterian Board of Missions provided staff salaries—which were fairly low—and occasional extra funding for development work, such as fencing, well sinking et cetera. They also provided a budget in 1958 of $9,600 ... The South Australian government provided some rations for children, nursing mothers and aged persons. Child endowment was paid ... There were very few social problems in Ernabella at that time.

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

That grievances be noted.
Question agreed to

MARITIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PREVENTION OF POLLUTION FROM SHIPS) BILL 2006
Report from Main Committee
Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.
Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.
Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr HARDGRAVE (Moreton—Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister) (5.40 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT BILL 2006
Report from Main Committee
Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.
Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.
Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr HARDGRAVE (Moreton—Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister) (5.40 pm)—by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2006 MEASURES No. 5) BILL 2006
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYMENT) AMENDMENT BILL 2006
SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SUPERANNUATION SAFETY AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2006
PETROLEUM RETAIL LEGISLATION REPEAL BILL 2006
TRADE MARKS AMENDMENT BILL 2006
PARLIAMENTARY SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT BILL 2006

Assent

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

COMMITTEES
Corporations and Financial Services Committee
Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BK Bishop)—The Speaker has received messages from the Senate informing the House that Senator Forshaw has been appointed a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services upon the resignation of Senator Sherry, effective 8 am, 24 October 2006, and the reappointment of Senator Sherry to the committee upon Senator Forshaw’s resignation, effective 8 am, 25 October 2006.

SCHOOLS ASSISTANCE (LEARNING TOGETHER—ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY) AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2) 2006
MEDICAL INDEMNITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2006
CUSTOMS AMENDMENT (2007 HARMONIZED SYSTEM CHANGES) BILL 2006
CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (2007 HARMONIZED SYSTEM CHANGES) BILL 2006

 Returned from the Senate
Messages received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

JUDICIARY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2006
First Reading
Bill received from the Senate, and read a first time.
Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

FINANCIAL SECTOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (TRANS-TASMAN BANKING SUPERVISION) BILL 2006
First Reading
Bill received from the Senate, and read a first time.
Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

TRADE PRACTICES AMENDMENT LEGISLATION

Mr HARDGRAVE (Moreton—Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister) (5.44 pm)—On behalf of the Treasurer, I present the supplementary explanatory memorandum to the Trade Practices Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2005 to assist the House.
Debate resumed from 19 October, on motion by Mr Hunt:

That this bill be now read a second time.

upon which Mr Albanese moved by way of amendment:

That all words after “That” be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: “the House declines to give the bill a second reading, and expresses strong concern that:

(1) the bill is being rushed through the Parliament without proper consideration or consultation;

(2) the Howard Government has failed to halt the decline in Australia’s natural environment and best agricultural land;

(3) the bill contains no measures to cut Australia’s spiralling greenhouse pollution or protect Australia from dangerous climate change;

(4) the bill will increase the Howard Government’s politicisation of environment and heritage protection; and

(5) many of the proposed changes in the bill will reduce Ministerial accountability and opportunities for genuine public consultation;

and therefore calls on the Howard Government to:

(6) ensure climate change is properly factored into environmental decision making under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the Act);

(7) establish a climate change trigger in the Act to ensure large scale greenhouse polluting projects are assessed by the Federal Government; and

(8) allow greater time for public consultation and debate on the bill.”

Mr GAVAN O’CONNOR (Corio) (5.45 pm)—Madam Deputy Speaker Bishop, I suppose I should breathe a bit of fire into this debate, seeing that your good self and the honourable member for Kingsford Smith, who was just here with us in the House, are flush from your attendance at the ARIAS, but I will just have to play a dead bat on this for the rest of the—

Mr Hardgrave—Aren’t you in the hall of fame?

Mr GAVAN O’CONNOR—I draw honourable members’ attention to a number of very serious concerns about the operation of the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006 that were outlined in a report by the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills that was tabled in that chamber recently. The Senate committee has found that a number of sections of this piece of legislation may be considered to trespass unduly on personal rights and liberties.

The sections of the bill the Senate committee is referring to in this regard are very important ones. They deal with the national heritage nomination and listing process, of which I will speak a little more later; the application of heritage provisions to freehold land on Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands; the application of strict liability in a number of the fisheries provisions; the power to search vessels; the power to order searches without a warrant; the power to order strip searches; and other matters.

This is a very serious charge, yet the Senate committee has found that in most cases the explanatory memorandum for this bill does not include a satisfactory explanation for changes that could trespass unduly on personal rights and liberties. The explanatory memorandum offers little or no justification for many of these provisions. The parliament deserves better than this. At the very least, the public is owed a very detailed explanation of exactly why the government thinks it needs provisions that, in the words of the Senate committee, ‘trespass unduly on per-
sonal rights and liberties’. The fact that there is no explanation is yet another indication of how absolutely arrogant the government has become.

But the Senate committee has raised other serious concerns. The committee is also concerned that several clauses relating to penalties do not comply with the Commonwealth’s own Guide to framing Commonwealth offences, civil penalties and enforcement powers. This is a scathing criticism and condemnation of the government’s processes by that Senate committee, yet there is little or no explanation as to why these clauses do not comply.

A key concern of both Labor and the Senate committee is the fact that current provisions for reviews by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal of decisions are made personally by the minister. Yet all the explanatory memorandum says about this restriction on the rights of all Australians is that this ‘leaves the merits of these important decisions to be dealt with by the government’. What an extraordinary criticism and situation we face on this important piece of environmental and heritage legislation, which has been some four years in review and in the making, and which the government describes as the centrepiece of its environmental policy. Here we have this scathing criticism of it by a Senate committee.

Australians, as I have said before, are owed a much more detailed explanation of why the government is instituting these measures in this legislation. It demonstrates, yet again, that this is a government that is arrogant. Its ministers are arrogant and they pay scant regard for the proper appeal and other processes that they should have regard for in this major piece of legislation.

One of the most serious concerns raised by the Senate Scrutiny of Bills Committee relates to provisions that would allow the minister to confer police powers on persons who are not police officers. I have raised concerns about similar provisions in bills relating to quarantine and fisheries management many times over the years. It is a very serious matter. These authorised officers, who are not trained police officers, will have power to detain and search. They will have powers that are normally held by police officers. Again, the explanatory memorandum fails to offer a detailed explanation as to why the government is again going down this path in this piece of legislation.

I was pleased to note that there are persons on the other side of politics who share Labor’s concern. They share Labor’s concern about the lack of proper and convincing explanation for these serious changes, many of which have the potential to impact heavily on the normal freedoms that Australians enjoy. In the Senate recently in debate Liberal Senator David Johnston—not a member of the opposition; one of the government’s own senators—had this to say:

This explanatory memorandum is probably one of the most appalling I have ever seen in the short time I have been in the Senate. It discloses no motivation, no reasoning and no justification for some of the most draconian powers that this parliament can conceivably and possibly enact: rights of search and seizure without warrant, rights of personal frisking without warrant … this legislation should go back to the drawing board.

Hear, hear! I couldn’t agree more: this legislation should go back to the drawing board. But what a scathing criticism from somebody who is new to the parliament and has not got embroiled, I guess, too much up to now, with how the government operates. He is coming in with a cool eye on a piece of legislation and has concluded that it is the most appalling he has seen in the short time that he has been in the Senate. Well, the opposition simply rests its case.
The operations of this legislation are of vital concern to Australian farmers. Over 60 per cent of Australia’s land mass is in private hands. If any government wishes to make any great inroads on improving the environment then it needs to have the farmers of Australia working with it to achieve that objective. I am proud of the conservation efforts of most Australian farmers, and it is regrettable that in the popular media they are not given appropriate credit for what they do on their farms to improve the environment, conserve it and protect its biodiversity.

We on this side of the House are very proud of the great Landcare initiative of previous Labor governments and we commend the government for continuing funding in this vitally important area. That program has been warmly embraced by farmers and has been a catalytic program in changing the culture towards environment issues in the farming community, in establishing long-standing partnerships between farmers and community groups and in making a difference to local environments. Farmers have given willingly of their time and their knowledge of the landscape for the betterment of the Australian environment.

There are, no doubt, elements of this legislation that might find favour with Australian farmers—its noble objectives, the drive for better flexibility and streamlined processes—but in my experience it is the detail that often brings a different consideration of the initial cut and consideration of a bill and a subsequent deep concern. And there is plenty in this bill to concern Australia’s farming community, not least the staggering omission of any reference to climate change in this bill. There are 409 pages of detailed amendments to the most significant legislation dealing with the environment on Australia’s legal books and no mention of climate change! I rest my case once again.

There is another area of the bill that I would like to make comment on and which will be the subject of amendment by Labor in order to maintain the integrity of the Register of the National Estate, which contains more than 13,000 sites of natural, cultural and Indigenous heritage significance, some of those in my electorate of Corio in the Geelong region. I first raised this matter in a speech to this House in 2002, when I questioned whether adequate protection would be afforded cultural assets in the Geelong region currently on the Register of the National Estate. These assets include churches such as St Paul’s Anglican Church, Christ Church, St John’s Lutheran Church, St George’s Presbyterian Church and manse, and Sts Peter and Paul’s Catholic Church on Mercer Street. On the list are important hotels in Geelong, and I have to say I have drunk at a few of these—the Golden Age, the Bay View Hotel, the Geelong Wool Exchange and the Terminus Hotel. Other buildings and houses listed include the Corio Villa, the Dennys Lascelles Woolstore, the Geelong Army Drill Hall, the Geelong Customs House, the Geelong Town Hall, Lunan House in Drumcondra, Wimmera House and, of course, the great Osborne House.

These are unique cultural and heritage assets and their current level of protection under Commonwealth legislation will be watered down by this bill. As I noted in 2002—and I do so again—most of these assets will not be listed if this bill is made law. However, these assets are a part of Geelong’s rich heritage and culture and they must be given maximum protection as sites of real significance under Commonwealth law. That is why the integrity of the current Register of the National Estate must be maintained.

Ms HALL (Shortland) (5.56 pm)—The purpose of the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006 is to amend the Environment Protection and
Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 to make it a more efficient and effective act, to allow for the use of more strategic approaches and to provide greater certainty in decision making. I have serious concerns about the legislation that we are debating here tonight. The government has argued that it is designed to create a balance between the environment and development, and I would argue very strongly that I am very concerned about this aspect of the legislation. My fears are that it actually moves the balance between protecting and caring for our environment in favour of development. If that happens then we as a nation will be the losers.

I would like to share with the House an experience I had last week. I attended the Wyong Shire Council school environment competition award ceremony, and I was extremely impressed with the depth of knowledge the students had, the diversity of their contributions to the competition and their overall commitment to protecting and conserving our environment. These students recognise the importance of protecting endangered species, conserving water, preserving our natural environment and reversing the effects of global warming. It never ceases to amaze me that students between the ages of five and 12, as they were last week, can understand how important protecting our natural environment is, yet the Howard government does not seem to get it. These students at the presentation really demonstrated their knowledge and understanding, and I have to say this is something the government does not appear to do. These students really brought home to me the message that if we care for our environment then our environment will care for us.

Whilst I have referred to students in the Wyong Shire in this particular competition, which is run each and every year and which develops the understanding of students in that area, there are many other worthwhile projects in schools within the Shortland electorate, and the Floraville Public School immediately comes to my mind. It has won the *Sydney Morning Herald* environmental competition on a number of occasions. What is happening with our young students is that they recognise that protection of and care for our environment is the way of the future.

The Howard government needs to understand that it is not a competition between the environment and the economy, with the environment being sacrificed because it is secondary to the economy. Rather, we must protect and preserve our environment in order to ensure the survival of our planet. Without its survival, everything else is secondary. I say those words and hope that the government thinks about their meaning. It is about achieving a balance between our environment and development and ensuring that our economy is built upon that balance, rather than sacrificing our environment at the expense of economic pursuits.

As I have already mentioned, this bill is supposed to develop a balance between the environment and development. I am concerned that it is has moved more towards promoting and looking after the interests of development. The bill reduces the processing time and cost for development interests. To my way of thinking, and from the research I have done into this legislation, this demonstrates that development is the priority. When development becomes the priority, the needs and interests of the environment come into conflict; that is a problem.

Within my own electorate of Shortland—it is a coastal electorate and a very beautiful area with a pristine environment—there is a little hamlet, Catherine Hill Bay, which is a very strong link with our history in the Hunter Valley and in Australia. It has beautiful surf and a beautiful natural environment and is currently heritage listed. It has three
settlements: Mine Camp, Middle Camp and the town of Catherine Hill proper. There is enormous pressure to develop all of the land around there and to change the face of this settlement which is really a link to that area’s mining heritage. The heritage and the natural beauty of the area are two things that I think this bill should be looking at protecting, but I think the interests of development will be paramount when we come to looking at issues of environmental protection and development. That not only creates fears as to the future of our coastal communities but also worries me about the direction we are going in as a society.

This bill also provides enhancement ability to deal with large-scale projects, gives priority attention to projects of national importance through the use of strategic assessment and approval approaches and puts in place measures to enable developers to avoid impacts on the matters of national environmental significance protected by the act. It enables a better focus on protecting threatened species and ecological communities in heritage places that are of real national importance. The issue is determining what ‘real national importance’ is and it fails, I think, to bring that out clearly. The bill is also supposed to clarify and strengthen enforcement provisions of the act, and I think it probably does.

The EPBC Act is Australia’s primary environmental law. It provides a framework for environmental protection and any actions that are likely to have an impact on matters of national environmental significance. The development I just referred to at Catherine Hill Bay near Lake Macquarie is one such development that I think is in an area of national environmental significance—an area that should be protected.

The greatest weakness of this bill is its failure to address climate change. I will speak at some length about that in a moment. The bill has the ability to fast-track environmental assessments and approvals of major projects. This is very dangerous; when approvals and assessments are fast-tracked, it can lead to issues of great importance being left out. It is terribly important that the community has the ability to have proper input into these major projects and assessments and that the approval process is not truncated in any way. Also of concern are bioregional plans, which will not be legislative instruments, thus reducing parliamentary oversight; I think that speaks for itself.

The bill fails to address the concerns that we on this side of the House have expressed about World Heritage sites and the National Heritage list. Only one of Australia’s World Heritage sites is currently on the National Heritage list. That is a concern. The government has failed to ensure that our Natural Heritage sites overseas have been properly listed and taken care of. A prime example of that is Anzac Cove. I do not think there would be an Australian that would disagree with Anzac Cove being listed—and it has been.

When the list was launched in 2003, Anzac Cove was to be the first site to be placed on the list—and, as I said, no-one would disagree with that—but it has not happened. Instead, the government has requested roadworks which, as we all know from the many questions and the lengthy debate in this House, have damaged the site that is so important to us here in Australia. Ten years of the Howard government’s rule and reign in this country has put Australia’s natural heritage under great pressure.

This legislation has 409 pages of amendments which will really change the way our environment is protected. I think that that is of real concern. I do not believe that the Australian community will have the opportunity
to scrutinise and discuss the application of this bill properly before it is rushed through this parliament. Another real concern I have about the legislation is that it reduces transparency and accountability, as so much of the legislation that comes through this House does. I think that there has been a degree of arrogance by the government and it has shown an extraordinary lack of commitment to process and to ensuring that we have proper debate on this issue.

I think one of the issues that is of great concern to all Australians these days is that of climate change. I know that people in the electorate of Shortland are very concerned about climate change. There is not a day that goes by when I am not contacted by email, telephone or letter by a constituent raising this issue. Back in September I held a climate change forum in the electorate. I did so because of the enormous interest and concern within the community. It was held on a Sunday at Swansea RSL and there were in excess of 150 people there. I do not think there were many vacant spaces at all within the room. There was an in-depth discussion on that day. I can unreservedly say that everybody who attended that forum expressed their concern about the direction of the government on climate change.

Each day as I sit here in this House and hear the Prime Minister push us further and further down the nuclear path, I become more and more worried—because nuclear power is not the solution. Nuclear creates more problems than it solves. Nuclear confronts us as a nation with a whole set of new challenges. There is no way that we can get away from the fact that the waste from nuclear power is very harmful. There is no way that we can guarantee the safety of that waste forever. It is waste that lasts over generations and it will create a situation where we in Australia will be a lot less safe than we are both from a security point of view and from an environmental point of view. There have been some notable examples in the past where there have been environmental problems associated with nuclear power. I implore the Howard government to think very carefully about this.

Last week in the Main Committee the member for Ryan said in a very gung-ho way that the government planned to put a nuclear power station in the Shortland electorate. I have news for the member for Ryan: I will not stand back and let the government build a power station in the Shortland electorate. I also have the news for the member for Ryan that the people of the Shortland electorate are totally opposed to a nuclear power station being built there. The people of Shortland would like the government to make a real commitment to addressing the issue of climate change—not enlisting the help of Ziggy Switkowski, who is a person who is committed to nuclear power and a nuclear industry, and not commissioning him to do an inquiry into establishing a nuclear power industry in Australia but looking at addressing the real issues that will work towards solving global warming.

The first thing that the Howard government needs to do is to sign the Kyoto protocol. I know that the government has been opposed to signing up to Kyoto, but the reasons it gives do not hold up. The government has said that we should not be involved in Kyoto because the developing world is not involved. There are 158 countries throughout the world that have signed up to Kyoto and the notable exceptions are Australia and the US. I do not think that we can in all conscience refuse to sign up to Kyoto. It is an absolute disgrace that the government has refused to embrace Kyoto and sign on the dotted line. How can we expect to be taken seriously when we talk about climate change when we will not make the most basic commitment to solving the problem of climate
change? The first thing the government needs to do is to sign up to the Kyoto protocol.

There are many other initiatives that the government could immediately undertake to improve the situation in relation to global warming. One of the first things is to support the renewable energy industry. The government looks at it as a competition between economic growth and ensuring that we solve the issue of climate change. As I said in my opening comments, if we do not solve the issues around climate change, the issues of whether to have economic growth or whether to thrive as a country are irrelevant because they will no longer be issues. So we must immediately sign up to the Kyoto protocol, cut Australia's greenhouse gas pollution by 60 per cent by 2050, establish a national greenhouse emissions trading scheme, substantially increase the mandatory renewable energy targets and establish a climate change trigger under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. We have the ability to make a real change in relation to climate change, and I urge the government to do so. (Time expired)

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (6.16 pm)—At the outset, let me say that I am delighted to see members of the public and members of the press gallery in attendance here tonight to hear my contribution! There has been a lot of talk about climate change, and I would like to address that a bit further into my contribution. I would like to reflect on a number of things, because the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006 is very wide ranging, as I am should you would recognise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think there are 409 pages. Some of the provisions relate to the developments that can take place and the way in which the EPBC Act can, as some people have suggested, assist developments. There are similar provisions within the various state legislations for developments of significance.

One of the things I would like to touch on is the way in which the current drought has been captured by some and implanted into the climate change debate and the global warming debate. I mentioned this the other day in a speech on a matter of public importance. I was pleased that most of the other members who spoke recognised that problem: that a number of agendas were running parallel to the drought and the pain caused by the drought, particularly to country communities—although, over time, it will cause pain in an economic sense to the broader community as well. A number of speakers have spoken about the way in which Australia has looked at the water debate. A number of people have suggested that Australia has to do much more to rein in some of the over-allocation problems of water that we have had, that we have to address some of these issues agriculturally and that there has to be more water put into the system, particularly the Murray-Darling system, to overcome some of the environmental problems that have occurred in the past.

One of the issues that have been raised from time to time is the water usage patterns of the cotton industry. I know that Senator Bill Heffernan, for instance, in the Senate, has raised the issue of Cubbie Station and the impact of that on the Darling system, particularly, and on the Murray system—the various implications of Cubbie restricting flows on the environment, not only to the graziers downstream but also to the riverine environment. The two things I am about to say may seem to be in conflict, but I believe that Cubbie Station should be purchased and the water that has been contained in that area should be released into the system. What has happened with Cubbie Station, in particular, is that they have taken a principle—a legal principle, admittedly—too far. Govern-
ments—whether it be the Queensland government alone, or in conjunction with the New South Wales government or the Commonwealth government—should look at purchasing Cubbie Station at some time in the future.

The other issue I would like to touch on, if I could, refers directly to the cotton industry and the environmental impacts of that on water flows. It also refers to the Murray mouth and Lake Alexandrina. Many members may not know some of the statistics. Lake Alexandrina is virtually a dam at the end of the Murray system, with what are called ‘barrages’ that have been put in place. That system dams water back about 100 kilometres up the Murray system, partly because the land is very flat in that area. Lake Alexandrina is 22 times the size of the parliamentary secretary for water’s Wentworth electorate. It has an enormous amount of water which is relatively shallow and has a very high evaporation rate.

I am informed from doing some research that the evaporation rate from Lake Alexandrina is probably about 1,000 gigalitres a year. Over time, there have been a lot of arguments about the amount of water going down the Murray-Darling system to reach the Murray mouth. I think most people realise that the Murray mouth has a dam at the end of it now. One thousand gigalitres is an enormous amount of water bearing in mind that the lake itself holds 2,850 gigalitres of water. The government are trying to save 500 gigalitres by buying some of that water from licence holders, by efficiency means, through pipes and leaky channels et cetera to try to get more into the system. Lake Alexandrina, this dam—or lake as people would refer to it—at the end of the system holds nearly six times that amount of water. It holds 2,850 gigalitres of water.

In the debate that was held here the other day, the parliamentary secretary for agriculture—who I have regard for and who I think has great knowledge in terms of water, particularly in the Murray system—mentioned that nearly 1,000 gigalitres has evaporated from that lake system, twice as much as the government is trying to restore. There is 1,000 gigalitres of evaporation taking place on the one system of Lake Alexandrina. The cotton industry in New South Wales, which has been blamed for a lot of water problems in the whole system in the three states, uses 1,500 gigalitres of water, which is about half of what Lake Alexandrina holds. To put it another way, Lake Alexandrina holds twice the amount of water that the total New South Wales cotton industry uses and 1,000 gigalitres of evaporation from the relatively shallow system, which is 22 times the size of the parliamentary secretary for water’s electorate, is two-thirds of the total amount that the cotton industry uses in New South Wales.

I produce those figures to put things into perspective and to use climate change to drive a whole range of other debates so that we have a look at what we are doing with some of the water that we do have. I do not believe Australia has a water shortage. I disagreed with the Business Council of Australia on a number of their solutions to that problem, particularly in transferring water from rural areas to major urban areas to overcome the supposed water problems of our major cities. Those cities are surrounded by water. That is the reason a lot of those people are there, because of the water. There is no water shortage in our cities. People can argue whether re-use arrangements should be put in place. There is plenty of water there if people want to remove the salt from it. In the last figures I saw, in fact in the Business Council’s own document I think, the desalination figures were about two-thirds of
what it would take to put in place re-use facilities for urban populations.

Nonetheless, the Business Council have looked at a number of issues to do with saving water and our water problems. As I said, I agree with them in that I do not believe that there is a water problem. I think there are problems in the way in which we use water and the way in which water evaporates from open storages. I know the Menindee Lakes is something that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister is actually looking at. There is an enormous amount of evaporation there. It is very shallow; the re-engineering of those lakes could create more water by reducing the surface area and making the system deeper so that the evaporation rate is reduced. So we can have an impact on the water resources if we really want to look at some of those issues.

There is artificial recharge—very little has been done with that. If you visit parts of South Australia, particularly urban South Australia in the north of Adelaide, you can see, I admit on a relatively small scale, some of the recharge of run-off water from urban areas as well through wetlands, which has created an enormous impact from clean water being stored underground and pumped out at a future time. A lot of people would say, ‘If you put water underground, won’t it run away? How do you get it back?’ I wondered the same thing some years ago as well, but in groundwater systems you actually create a bubble with hydraulic pressures and the lateral movement in some of those systems is probably less than a metre a year. In the right sort of aquifers, you can actually contain water in a massive bubble and pump it out at a future date without mixing it with, say, surrounding salt water. So there are number of things that we really have not looked as closely at as we should.

This bill actually looks at the development issue, which I raised in the parliament about 10 days ago, which is the major development west of Werris Creek. I admit I live near Werris Creek. BHP are proposing to put in place a very large coalmine. They are currently doing some investigative work. There is a 500 million tonne massive deposit of coal there. I am not opposed to coal or coal-mining. I have a coalmine next door to me. I have a coal loader virtually on my property within view of my house and they are doing a tremendous job. Those I think are the real issues that this bill and the government should look at in terms of the BHP proposal because, unlike the land next door to where I live, this particular proposal has the potential to interfere with the groundwater systems at the head of the Murray-Darling system. The parliamentary secretary on a number of occasions has said—and I agree with him—that we do not understand sufficiently the relationships between groundwater and surface water, let alone the interrelationships between groundwater systems.

Admittedly, this massive development has been assessed through state government departments. The state government has taken it away from local government because of the significance of it. If we allow that process to take place only on a localised impact basis, it could be to the detriment of the surrounding groundwater systems, particularly downstream in terms of the Murray-Darling system. In my view, a number of interrelated aquifers are at risk. I do not believe that BHP or any coal-mining company in this nation or the world has ever been in the situation of contemplating mining in high water bearing gravels where there are interrelated groundwater systems. Those same groundwater systems are the subject of constant debate between me, the Prime Minister and others in this place about the compensation and taxation treatment of people who have lost allo-
cations of water to gain sustainability for those systems.

I am pleased that the parliamentary secretary is here. I have argued that we really should examine closely, through the national water initiative, the possibility of an independent study into not only this particular coal project—BHP will do that on a localised basis—but also the potential off-site impacts of mining in high water bearing gravels where you have interrelated groundwater aquifers. I would suggest that, when this act is interpreted, we should look very closely at those problems. If you just look at the localised impacts, you can buy land and you can destroy land, and some would say that is the price of progress. But if you have off-site effects—destroying aquifers or causing leakages and fractures—it affects not just where the mining takes place but also downstream. And those groundwater systems cover many hundreds of kilometres and provide viability not only for many productive people in the farming sector but for ecosystems as well.

I spoke earlier about the use of this bill. The arguments about climate change, drought and water are all being wrapped up into one and the drought is being used as part of the climate change debate. I do not think anybody can suggest that the current drought is part of a greater system. I think the ALP’s definition of climate change in its amendment to the bill is very shaky in that it bases long-term arrangements on some of the definitional issues surrounding climate change. Labor’s amendment (4) states that ‘the Parliament acknowledges that climate change is the greatest threat to Australia’s natural environment’. That is a fairly wide-ranging statement. I believe we can do a hell of a lot more with renewable energy et cetera, and I have spoken about that in the past. The amendment also states:

The Parliament acknowledges that climate change … … … (b) will have far-reaching impacts globally, in Australia’s region and in Australia, including:

(i) possible higher temperatures and lower-rainfall in southern Australia;

(ii) possible more frequent extreme weather events such as storms, heatwaves and drought, ...

Note that it says ‘possible’. That is one of the definitions of climate change that I think really does need to be looked at.

Many have dragged into the climate change debate the exceptional circumstances provisions for drought. I am pleased that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the member for Farrer, is here because I think the example I am about to give occurred in her presence. The Prime Minister met a farmer—I think it was in Victoria but it may have been in New South Wales—who spoke about access to and criteria for exceptional circumstances relief. His area had been declared to be in exceptional circumstances. The farmer made the point to the Prime Minister that he could not get any exceptional circumstances relief. The Prime Minister fell into a trap that was promoted in particular by the urban media. The Prime Minister said: ‘Hang on a bit! If you’re in EC you are getting something.’ That is the message that is being promoted: if you are a farmer in an EC declared area, you will receive something. That is quite incorrect—and the parliamentary secretary would know that. The Prime Minister did not know that; I think he does now.

It is very important for people to recognise that living in an exceptional circumstance declared area means nothing other than that you can apply for business assistance by way of interest rate subsidies—and most people will be knocked back for a
whole range of circumstances. Last week I spoke about Peter Cullen and others saying that the government’s drought assistance is propping up non-viable farmers. Part of the criteria for exceptional circumstances interest rate assistance for farm businesses is that non-viable farmers cannot get it—it is not available to those people—so it cannot be propping up non-viable farmers.

I will conclude by saying that, in the broader debate about climate change, drought and water usage, people should start looking at the facts involved rather than trying to send their own messages and agendas, particularly about the drought circumstances that people find themselves in. (Time expired)

Mr HATTON (Blaxland) (6.37 pm)—The Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006 is an important bill, at least in title, although I am not so sure about the implementation of it. If it was as important as the government might think it is, they might not have introduced it so quickly. They might not have created a situation where debate in this House, the House of Representatives—the house in which governments are made and unmade—should occur with an explanatory memorandum, yes, and with some amendments from the opposition, yes, but with no background information from the library at all, because this has been introduced in haste. It has also been introduced prior to the Senate committee which is to deal with this matter examining the bill.

Thus are we treated here by a government that is very proud of its environment, heritage and biodiversity legislation. It is proud of the fact that it has been in operation for six years, and the explanatory memorandum actually gives us a checklist of all the wonderful things the government thinks it has done. Then it says in the EM: ‘As for what this bill is doing, we found a whole series of areas needing change. Having put the legislation on a set of trainers for six years and having seen how it works, we have identified these things. So now we’re going to make a series of procedural changes but we don’t really want anyone to look at them too closely before we make them, so we’ll put the bill through the parliament in such a way that there won’t be enough scrutiny of it.’

This bill is really just a bean counter’s exercise. It is about this: how do you make adjustments across a range of different areas in terms of the impacts of environmental change, and how do you do it in such a way that it is cleaner and easier? Part of that is explicable in terms of what the thrust of the original bill was—the fact that this is an attempt to clean it up and that it is a way to get the federal government more directly involved, in conjunction with the states and territories, in the matter of environmental management. But this being a conservative government, we know that it is going to be all about auditing and benchmarking—not actually doing much that is very practical—because they laid that out when they first came to government.

The practical things are done by state governments. We know that, for most of what is important in the environmental and heritage area, most of the implementation is at the state administrative level—that is, whether it goes to the question of uranium mines and their implementation, which is covered by this bill, or of Ramsar wetlands or of national parks and the way in which they operate: all the vast range of environmental matters and most of the practical considerations. The Commonwealth has some particular areas of significance, particularly those that relate to environmental conditions in our fisheries, in particular those fisheries that are outside state control in Commonwealth controlled waters.
The explanatory memorandum goes to extraordinary lengths, in a Dr Kemp-like fashion, to boost this bill over and above what is being done—as Dr Kemp did when he was in education and talked a great deal about literacy and numeracy but did not actually do much other than propaganda in relation to it. When he was the minister for the environment we got this bill, and we got a lot of talk about what was proposed to be done and how important it was to look after the environment—a lot of heat but not all that much action.

Have a look at the specifics of the 490 pages of this bill. It is not late-night reading—although maybe it might be: it could be good bedside reading if you want to nod off fairly quickly. But if you actually want to take a novelistic approach to this and look at a story of a country, the story of an environment, the story of biodiversity in Australia—the actual story of the impacts of the changes that are affecting Australia right now—historically and contextually, along with what is happening now and how the primary actors, the protagonists in this story, might have their part to play, you have to look elsewhere. You would have to look outside this bill. You would have to look at what is really happening on the ground and you would have to look at a much broader picture, very much in the way that Al Gore, the former Vice-President of the United States, recently did. We saw the film here: it was displayed in Parliament House, and a book has been produced with it, looking at the whole broad issue of climate change.

Climate change? That is actually not mentioned in this bill, is it? Where can I find climate change in here? Let me look. Is it in the explanatory memorandum? Is it in the 490 pages of the bill? Is it in any of the addenda to the bill? Try as I might—I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker—but as I riffle through this at great speed I simply cannot find it. Where will I find it? Guess what: I will find it in the amendments put up by the shadow minister for the environment. I will find it not only in the general amendments that he has put in this second reading debate but I will also find it, as mentioned by the member for Windsor, under 3B in fact—not 4, in the definition of climate change. The shadow minister has the audacity to say this in the consideration in detail amendments that he will put:

‘3B Climate change

The Parliament acknowledges that climate change (a) is the greatest threat to Australia’s natural environment;
(b) will have far-reaching impacts globally, in Australia’s region and in Australia, including:
(i) possible higher temperatures and lower-rainfall in southern Australia;
(ii) possible more frequent extreme weather events such as storms, heatwaves and drought, impacts to which Australia’s natural, rural and urban environments, and many industries, are potentially vulnerable.’

It is germane to the whole question of dealing with Australia’s environment and our biodiversity that we actually take this into consideration. This is not faddishness, as it was not faddishness for all of those Australian farmers and everyone who put their money into particular ventures from 1860 until the end of the 1880s to put in wheat farms in the Mallee, the Wimmera area and Western Australia. They had wonderful seasons. For three decades Australia’s agricultural production dramatically expanded—and, as is the nature of things, people tend to think that current circumstances will last forever.

That was the expectation of those people who took those good years—three decades full—which came after a period at the end of
the 1840s when Australia, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, was under tremendous difficulty. There had been periods of drought in the 1840s, the price of land had fallen significantly and there was a great shortage of workers. Then, in the 1850s, we had the goldrushes, which took people from out of their normal occupations. It was a bit like Australia now in its effects. There was a great skills crisis across the land because people left their normal jobs and went to where the gold could be found. It is happening now, with people leaving their normal jobs and going to the mining areas to take up jobs which will bring the ‘gold’ back to them. I think the modern gold hunters will do better than their predecessors. It was the provisioners who made money in the 1850s.

The great story of Australia’s agricultural development in the 1860s to 1880s was based on a weather pattern that has not been replicated in modern Australian history. They were the very best years you can imagine. If you extrapolated any of the years in those three decades and said that they were what we were going to have, you would have continued to invest in lands in the Wimmera, in the Mallee and in Western Australia—and people have tended to do that because hope springs eternal—but the reality right now, and most of the discussion Australia-wide, although it is not here in this bill which has been brought before the House, is about the depth and effect of this current drought and whether or not this is more normal. There is the hope that it will not be so. It is a bit like the situation, but maybe worse, of the great poem Said Hanrahan by Father O’Brien where people’s current conditions were projected into the future. Whether it was drought or flood, Hanrahan always saw things on the pessimistic side. It is possible to do that for Australia, but governments and farmers and people generally need to take a very practical approach to this.

We live in dynamic climatic systems. For the whole history of this planet, people living in the biosphere have been directly affected by the way in which it is constituted. Creatures on the planet—indeed, creatures only just discovered and reported through work done by Princeton University—include microbes that have been living three kilometres down in the earth, in still waters beneath a mine in South Africa. These microbes are at least 30 million years old and untouched by the biosphere. They are not dependent at all on the sun, either directly or indirectly, for the provision of energy, but in fact live on the result of decayed uranium and the sulphur compounds that they ingest. Those colonies may in fact be the dominant life form on this planet. They could be the dominant life form on other planets. We have seen related life forms around smoker holes at the bottom of the ocean where, otherwise very deep and under very great pressure, volcanic activity allows certain niches in which life can exist and develop.

But these, even if they are the majority, are the exception, not the rule, for us. What happens on the surface of the planet is critical, and government action is critical. When it was first argued that the control of chlorofluorocarbons was possible, that the changes needed to ensure modern refrigerants would exclude chlorofluorocarbons be mandated by governments and that we could in fact improve the atmosphere and deal with the problems, there were a lot of people who said that it could not be done—there would be too much cost and it would destroy economies. Decades later we know that it is possible to get rid of CFCs. We have effectively done it and we have fixed the problem.

Likewise with the whole question of climate change. Historically and geologically, there will always be climate change. In 100 million or 200 million years from now, the likelihood of us existing as a species is al-
most negligible. The likelihood is that there will be massive climatic changes and climatic effects from the tectonic movement of the continents, that in 200 million years time there will be a new Pangaea, because the continents will smash together again. It is entirely predictable. Australia will smash into North America and will have mountains far higher than those of the Himalayas. Those mountains will in fact see Australia a vast, endless desert. But this is geological time. It is interesting to know about it, but we actually live in our current situation.

What is our task? To ensure that our biosphere is dealt with in such a way that we have a liveable ecosystem not only for ourselves as human beings but also for all the creatures that inhabit this planet. We know with certainty that a bill that deals with Australia’s environment, our environmental heritage and our biodiversity should not just be talking about nuts and bolts and it should not just be talking about how to weigh up how people will adjust to those changes; it should be talking about the fundamental changes themselves. This is clear and apparent. We know already and the punters out there know—not just the scientists but every normal, sensible human being in their Australian backyard, whether it be in Sydney or Melbourne or regional Australia—that the rainfall patterns have changed and have changed dramatically. You cannot gainsay it. We know when they measure how much water is in Warragamba Dam—that is if they tell us; they now tend not to—that the normal rainfall patterns have changed. And I have seen a similar situation in Melbourne and its major dams.

The argument of those who pursue the climate change argument is this. We have seen partial greater heating of the oceans, and it will be greater in the future. The heating of particular areas, those partial changes that we have seen, go to the question of what is involved in the definition of climate change. They also go to not only the greater climatic effects—more turbulent events like hurricanes, cyclones and so on—but also to the question of where the moisture actually falls. If you look at the fundamental patterns that are agreed upon, moisture is falling further to the south and away from the normal catchment areas. That is why the proper way to react to this is to say: ‘For people who live in Sydney or Melbourne, what you do in your backyard and your home is going to be critical in terms of not only conserving but also utilising the rain that does fall in coastal areas, because we know how much pressure is on the other areas.’

If you listen to what the farmers are saying in a number of different areas throughout Australia, you will hear some of them say that things are survivable. There is just enough there, even though there is variation within particular areas, that they can still produce their crops. They can make it through this particular period. But they know that the severity of this is great.

Just yesterday there was a report in the media of a major survey that is done each year on Australia’s wetlands, and this report was different to all of the others. This report found virtually no migratory birds in the wetlands, because the wetlands have dried. The Darling is not flowing. This is a severe, significant and fundamental change. Now, you can gainsay it and say, ‘It is part of the normal pattern, and it is not really part of the whole climate change scenario.’ But if it is—and so far not only the likelihood but the meteorological certainty is that those observable changes are part of a broader long-term pattern—then the impact of that change on the environment and our biodiversity is that it will entirely devastate our fauna and, indeed, potentially, our flora.
The key issue is how much time those populations have got to adapt to those changed circumstances. It is the rapidity of the change that has really taken everyone and grabbed them almost by the throats. And people are somewhat aghast at it because—whatever the projections were, whatever people might argue about what level of percentage of increase in average annual temperature there would be, and whether or not it is that—it has all come home very quickly.

We know that frog populations worldwide have dramatically decreased. We know that is an indicator not only of biological diversity but of environmental health. They are the litmus test of that environmental health. We also know that, as the amount of rain and snow deposited in mountain areas changes and as glaciers retreat, it is having absolute effects on the biodiversity in those areas. There are populations that are being completely wiped out. Why? And why will that continue? Because we live on a planet of variability, where particular species have adapted to particular circumstances and biological niches where they are comfortable. They have invested a great deal in doing that. Rapid change wipes them out.

We could have another great devastation. It is possible that the cumulative effects of what we are seeing now could lead to the kinds of great wipings-out that we have seen before. We know, just from the normal operation over historical time, in the past 10,000 years—in particular as we have industrialised, but even before that, during the agricultural revolution—that the action of man’s operations on his environment are to the detriment of particular species. It encourages some; it wipes others out. The degree of the knocking-out of species has grown dramatically greater over the last number of years.

The only saving grace that you could think of in this regard—and I think climate change now has to be taken as very real—is this: the past 10,000 years have been a warm period; what we should be expecting is that the next 100,000 years will be a cold or glacial period, and this may provide some buffer. But it also may be that the irregularities of these changes are so great and so fast that our biodiversity will be smashed completely.

This bill speaks to the nuts and bolts of arrangements. It should really speak to the fundamental problems. (Time expired)

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (6.57 pm)—There is an elephant in the chamber and it is called climate change. We might be discussing the most important piece of environmental legislation in this country, but let us not mention climate change. This elephant is not in the corner any more; it has wandered into the centre of the room and it is three storeys high. But far be it from this government to pay it any attention at all. In fact, nobody look at the elephant—we are just discussing the environment today.

We are comprehensively amending, on very short notice, the most important piece of environmental legislation—and they are the government’s own words—and one would assume that the government’s amendments would update the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006 to reflect current realities. So what is the most important issue facing the environment here in Australia and around the globe today? And what is not mentioned on a single one of the 409 pages of this bill? The answer to both questions is the same: it is climate change. Oops!

I can just imagine a week ago the minister saying, over in the ministerial wing: ‘Oops! We forgot to put in climate change! Let’s push it through in a week. It’s our only
chance. Maybe no-one will notice.’ And, if
that were true, we might actually have a
chance of having this bill amended. But the
unfortunate truth is that the government, in
spite of all of the evidence to the contrary,
still does not recognise climate change for
the significant issue that it is.

We as a nation, along with many other na-
tions around the world, are living beyond our
environmental means. For decades, we have
been sucking more out of this little bit of our
planet than we return, and all those decades
of living as if water and clean air were limit-
less have finally impacted on our little part
of the planet. If we do not change the way
we do things, our very way of life, our health
and our future is in very real jeopardy. I am
not overstating the seriousness of this issue.
This reality is understood around the world,
and it is understood around my community.
One of the issues that is raised perhaps more
often than any other now in our community
is water. Yet in this chamber it is not taken
seriously. In this bill, the most significant
piece of environmental legislation that we
have seen, it is not taken seriously.

Whatever the solutions are, we have not
found them all yet. This is an extremely
complex problem at a level that we have not
encountered before, and we are still finding
the answers. We will continue to find the
answers probably for years to come. How
much time do we have? We are running late
already. Climate change is here already. It is
a reality already, and we as a nation—at all
levels of government, in every community
and each of us individually—have to deal
with this and change this nation’s course. All
you have to do to send this government into
an apoplexy of indecision is whisper the
words ‘climate change’. I say to this gov-
ernment: you cannot afford to carry on as if
it will never happen to us; it is happening to
us. You cannot afford to just follow the
Prime Minister and his view that ‘the gov-
ernment is not really interested in what might
happen to Australia and the planet in 50
years time’, and I am quoting the Prime Min-
ister there—that is a statement he made just a
month ago on 27 September.

Even the Prime Minister a month ago
must have been aware of the growing chorus
of concern around the globe, and yet he says
that in his view the government is not really
interested in what might happen to Australia
and the planet in 50 years time. Why is he
the Prime Minister? Why do we have as
Prime Minister of this nation a man who is
not concerned or even interested in what
might happen to Australia and the planet in
50 years time? A lot of the voters will still be
alive in 50 years time, and certainly their
children will be. This is amazing. If for no
other reason, he has passed his use-by date.
It is time to go, John. There are 409 pages of
amendments here and not one mention of
climate change. How is that even possible
from a supposedly functioning government?
Climate change is the elephant in the centre
of the room, and the government is carefully
turning its head away. Every member of the
government, even those who know better, is
carefully making sure that they do not look
at the elephant. It is the one issue that we as
a nation must address and then, beyond that,
if we are able to, convince others on as well.

Drought is destroying this land from be-
neath us. The salt is rising. Arable land in the
traditional farm belts is shrinking. The year
2005 was the hottest year in Australia since
records began in 1861. Around the globe the
10 hottest years ever have all occurred within
the last 14 years. Sea levels have risen 20
centimetres over the past 100 years and will
continue to rise. The devastating effects of
climate change will be seen not just in the
environmental degradation of our natural
world but also in local, national and global
economies. These impacts will be just as
devastating. To give just a small example,
you need look no further than the Great Barrier Reef. It is already under threat not only from global warming but also from the government’s continued commitment to allow mining around the reef. Destroy the reef and you lose the 200,000 jobs of the people who rely on the tourism industry and the reef for their livelihood. You would take $4.3 billion out of the Queensland economy, and that is before you consider the flow-on effects of the increased jobless who have lost their livelihood from the reef.

In the next 25 years the populations of Sydney and Melbourne are expected to rise by around 30 per cent. The water supply is expected to fall by 25 per cent. It does not take a genius to see that the water restrictions we are on now will not be enough. It is perfectly obvious to anyone that if your population rises by 30 per cent and your water supply falls by 25 per cent then you have a big problem. For the Prime Minister I will say this once again, because he does not seem to get it: if your population rises by 30 per cent and your water supply falls by 25 per cent then you have a problem, Prime Minister—you will have a problem very soon. You will have an even bigger problem in 50 years time, but I know you do not care about that. You will have a problem very soon and you might like to care about that, Prime Minister. And then there are the businesses that rely on water—mechanics who flush radiators, nurseries, pool builders and so on. They will struggle to stay in business and are already struggling. Then there are the consequential knock-on effects of business closures on the rest of our community.

How much is the drought costing the country even now? Farms are failing, livestock is being devastated and crops are withering in the field. The government just allocated $2 billion in drought relief, but how long will that last and how much will we need in a couple of years time? The cost of protecting our coastline from erosion and inundation due to rises in sea level is unimaginable. It does not take another study to figure out what is going on and what must be done; it obviously does require a change of government, but not another study. We have to address climate change. It will scar our very soul as a nation to see the extent of our folly if we watch much of the land that we occupy become lost to salt and rising oceans and watch our great rivers die. That is part of our soul. It is about the way we see ourselves in this great land of ours. It will damage us irreparably if we see this great nation damaged in that way.

The impact will be catastrophic both environmentally and economically. I know this government does not particularly care about the former, or does not understand the former, but we know it cares about the latter. I have heard on the radio and on TV in the last couple of weeks that climate change has become a trendy issue for Liberal Party members to jump on board. At least they have learnt how to say it in public now, but it is time they learned how to do something about it. This bill does nothing. The recent conversion of some is too little, too late to save this bill. This bill was irrelevant before it was drafted, and pushing it through this House with disgraceful haste will not hide its flaws.

There are 409 pages of amendments to the government’s most important piece of environmental protection legislation and they do not mention the greatest threat to the world environment and to our environment: climate change. The government is rushing this bill through the parliament with incredible haste. The parliamentary secretary introduced it only five sitting days ago. The government expects to have it through the Senate by the end of the month. There are 409 pages of amendments to the most important piece of environmental legislation, in the govern-
ment’s own words, and almost no time for proper scrutiny.

Even on the surface, without looking at all the fine print where the devil really is, you can see that this is a bad bill. When the parliamentary secretary, the member for Flinders, introduced this bill he said some very interesting things about it. He spent some time outlining the successes of the current act, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. He explained how many extra fisheries have been assessed and accredited, the number of threatened species recovery plans organised, the record penalties imposed for illegal clear-felling and so on. These are all achievements for which the government should be congratulated. The EPBC Act is one that this government has been very proud of. Then the member for Flinders let the cat out of the bag, though, and told us what this legislation is really all about. In some of the finest Sir Humphrey Appleby speak, he said:

Operational improvements can be achieved by reducing processing time and decision points affecting the environmental assessment and approval of proposed development ...

Or, to put it in plain English, it can be improved through less oversight, fewer checks and balances and more destruction of both the environment and heritage. How are the government going to achieve this? The parliamentary secretary tells us how: by ‘using strategic approaches and providing greater incentive for development interests’. It is an environment and heritage bill that will ‘provide greater incentive for development interests’! They do not even try to hide it under their usual Orwellian doublespeak. When I saw ‘providing greater incentive for development interests,’ I flicked back to the title, thinking it was probably called the ‘Saving Trees from Loggers Bill’. That would be the normal way the government would name a bill that had this underbelly to it. They do not even try to hide it. They just say it right out in the open: ‘This bill will provide greater incentive for development interests.’ It is absolutely astonishing.

It seems that the original act, even watered down as it was, was just a little bit too effective. This legislation encourages development at the expense of the environment and our nation’s heritage and allows it to happen with less scrutiny and oversight from others who may have an interest. The ability for interested and even affected third parties to be involved in the process will be seriously curtailed under this legislation. This is supposed to be a bill to protect our environment and heritage. It does not even mention climate change and it sets about ‘providing greater incentive for developer interests’. No wonder the government is rushing this legislation through. You would not want anyone to notice this one, would you?

The government is right not to want anyone to notice, because it is lagging so far behind the community on this that it is out of sight. This is the issue that people are all talking about, when they walk through their dusty backyards to their barbecue. This is the issue that everyone now talks about—this is the real barbecue stopper. When I am out and about in my electorate, this issue comes up more than any other issue. I was out and about at two mobile offices on Saturday. Out of about two dozen people whom I spoke to for about an hour on Saturday morning, four of them raised this matter as a major concern—an extraordinarily high number of people who, without any soliciting on my part, walked up to me in the street and expressed their concern about the environment. They are getting incredibly aggressive, and also incredibly informed, about their expectations of government.

They expect real strategy. This is a complex and multilayered problem and they ex-
pect complex and multilayered solutions—not one-off projects designed to give an impression of activity but genuine long-term commitment, complex and multilayered strategy. In short, they expect some work. They expect a government that recognises a problem, that recognises the community’s concern about this problem and that sets about doing some real hard work trying to find some real solutions. It is not a short-term problem. There is not a short-term solution and there is not a political solution to this. The problem is simply too huge. You cannot come up with something just before the election on this one and make the problem go away. You cannot make it appear to go away. This problem is here until this government starts to find answers to this problem. The public expects hard work from this government. They expect commitment and action and this bill is nowhere near the mark. This bill should go back to the garbage bin and this government needs to start again, with some real community consultation and some real hard work.

As a community we have to learn to be smarter with water. We have to learn to adapt to our climate. It is not so long ago that some local councils forbade residents from having backyard water tanks on aesthetic grounds. Can you imagine a council surviving if they had that policy today? Addressing climate change, given the damage that has already been done, is going to take us decades. This is not an election cycle issue that can be fixed in an instant or that is going to go away. It will be years before we see tangible results, but it cannot be years before we start the work. The work is late already. Today is too late; tomorrow is later; the day after that is later still. For a government that does not care what happens to this country in 50 years time, I guess it does not have to act but, for the rest of us in this country who do care, we beg you to get off your bottoms and get to work. This is the biggest issue that the environment has faced and it is probably the biggest issue that this country has faced, and denying it will not make it go away. Denying it might make you go away at the next election, but it will not make this problem go away. Quite frankly, we cannot wait another year for you guys to lose the election to act on this. We have to act on this now.

There is no point saying that we will meet the Kyoto protocol levels if we do not ratify the document and therefore gain the benefits that it brings. Labor will sign Kyoto and engage in the carbon trading scheme that will bring economic benefits to smart companies. That is the key, of course: a smart company will make money; smart companies will stay ahead of the curve. Around the world, emission standards and carbon trading certificates are becoming fundamental to normal, everyday business operations.

If we do not set up a national carbon trading system then there are many Australian companies which will no longer be able to trade internationally because they will not be able to supply the necessary documentation regarding their environmental credentials. We have to cut emissions. It is as simple as that. Everyone knows it except, it seems, the most senior personnel in this government. Labor believe that we need to cut emissions by 60 per cent by 2050. That is our target. We on this side of the House have a target.

Due to the Howard government’s complete lack of leadership on this issue, the state premiers have agreed to set up a cooperative emissions trading scheme of their own. They are going around the government. With the federal government not prepared to act in this area, the state governments are finding a way around it—just as the community is—to find a solution to this very real problem.
Labor in government will take the lead on this issue and coordinate a national effort, which is what is desperately required in this country. We will take the lead in the region. On 5 January this year, Labor released a policy discussion paper on climate change in the Pacific outlining the seven key elements to Labor’s plan. These included: a Pacific climate centre to ensure proper measurement and monitoring of the effects of climate change; assistance for mitigation, adaptation and emergency response efforts, such as protecting freshwater sources from saltwater contamination; dealing with infrastructure decay caused by coastal erosion; assistance with intracountry evacuations when citizens have to be moved from low-lying areas to higher ground; training to help the citizens of countries that have to be fully evacuated; establishing an international coalition to accept climate change refugees when a country becomes uninhabitable because of rising sea levels; assistance to preserve the cultural heritage of those who are evacuated; and establishing a Pacific climate change alliance to add greater momentum to global efforts to deal with climate change.

But for Australia to credibly be part of such an alliance, it must ratify the Kyoto protocol and commit to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Labor is taking the lead on this issue and we are looking as far as we can into the future. This government cannot see past the next opinion poll, let alone the kind of vision that this issue requires. This bill is proof of that. You do not have to go any further than this bill to see this government’s pathetic credentials when it comes to the environment.

We know what this government thinks about refugees; it likes to put them on an island in the Pacific Ocean—they call it the Pacific solution. One wonders what they will do when we are the Pacific solution—when rising sea levels in the Pacific bring thousands of refugees to this country. We will become the Pacific solution if we do not work, not just in our own country but with our neighbours, to protect them from this great threat.

You cannot address climate change with just one initiative. It has to be a multifaceted attack. Reducing emissions is one such element and renewable energy must be another—not the odd one-off project but a real, sustainable strategy to improve this country’s development of renewable energy and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Labor will increase the mandatory renewable energy target.

The fossil fuels we use are eventually going to run out. We all know that. We have known it for some time. Why, then, is this government doing so little on renewable energies? Why has it done so little for 10 years? For 10 years we have known about this; why has it done so little? In fact, with this legislation before us today the government is moving in the opposite direction, making it easier for development interests to continue to operate without checks and balances and without any regard to the environmental impact of their operations.

Labor is willing to step up and take the lead on these vital issues that will affect generations to come. We have to, because this government will not. I urge members of this House to reject this bill and support the amendment moved by my colleague the member for Grayndler.

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (7.17 pm)—It is with pleasure that I rise tonight to speak on the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006, particularly about what it does not address, and to endorse the second reading amendment moved by my colleague Anthony Albanese, the shadow minister for the environment and member for Grayndler.
Ten years of the Howard government have seen enormous pressure come to bear on our environment. Climate change is cutting our water supply, starving our towns and cities of this essential resource. It is unfortunately a time when we can say the mighty Murray River has been at its lowest levels for 100 years and in some places a trickle represents this truly national icon. Seventeen million hectares of productive land is facing complete obliteration by 2050 due to salinity problems. Yet this bill that should be addressing this issue of tremendous importance has been rushed through. Labor is moving to amend it on a number of fronts, and the opposition’s second reading amendment highlights those.

There are 409 pages of amendments in this bill that will ultimately change the way the environment is being protected, but the government—as is its wont these days, after gaining control of the Senate—would not allow a proper examination of the consequences of this bill. Under the government’s agenda, due to be decided and resolved by the end of November, something as serious as a major piece of environmental law that governs the operations of the nation is being rushed through with unseemly haste. The bill has been referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, which is due to report in mid-November, but debate on the bill has commenced before we have had the opportunity of looking at public submissions and, most importantly, hearing public commentary.

In our view it is an appalling abuse of process and just shows the arrogance of this government. The government has to be condemned for pushing this bill through both houses without a proper time frame for consideration or without proper public consultation processes.

A quick glance at the detail shows that the amendments will curtail third-party appeal rights and will undermine public consultation processes, and the amendments will allow the further politicisation of decision-making processes on very important matters relating to the protection of our heritage and our environment.

Amazingly, the most serious global issue, that of global warming and climate change, is not even dealt with in this bill. The Howard government have left us unprepared for the dramatic challenges that lie ahead. In my view, they have no cohesive national plan to prepare for climate change. They have no cohesive national plan to cut Australia’s soaring greenhouse emissions. I can see the need for these. We need a plan for the future—a national climate change strategy.

The consequences of climate change are very real. Ask anyone; ask anyone in my electorate. As I have said, I can see the need for change. So can many others in my electorate. For example, east of my electorate, Gippsland was ablaze. With temperatures in the mid-thirties, well above the average for early October, and wind speeds reaching 100 kilometres an hour, fire fighters had an unenviable task of taming some of Victoria’s 40 fires. And three other states have declared themselves to be in extreme fire danger some six weeks earlier than the same time last year.

Other extreme weather events that many people in my electorate—and the member for Flinders—would have noticed include: two category 4 cyclones; one of the worst snow seasons on record; water stresses in our cities; unreasonable snap frosts devastating stone fruit crops; a relentless El Nino, lowering most grain yields; and now, according to the Treasurer, we are officially in the worst drought ever.
In looking at other third-party endorsements of the seriousness of the difficulties we face, read no further than Paul Sheehan in an article that he wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Talking about what Australia will become if we do not fix our environment, he said:

The Roman emperor Nero is best remembered for having his mother and wife assassinated, murdering his second wife, indulging in orgies, concerts and sporting spectacles while persecuting Christians, and blaming them for the great fire of Rome during which, most infamously, he supposedly played the lyre from the balcony of his palace. Nero playing while Rome burned is myth. The rest is not.

I wonder what history will say about us when we are gone, off to that great absolute water frontage in the sky?

That we fiddled while Rome burned? That we were the wealthiest society in our history, worth more than $350,000 for every man, woman and child, with the biggest homes, the most cars, the highest debt, the lowest savings, the highest rates of obesity and excess weight, and the greatest amount of consumerism, gambling and drug consumption, while the landscape, the lifeblood of the nation, died around us—

*Mr Hunt interjecting—

**Mr Byrne**—Paul Sheehan. He went on:

… a disaster drowned out by the clamour of consumerism.

Harsh?

I’m sure the member for Flinders thinks so.

We have elected a prime minister, four times, who has led Australia through an era of unbroken and unprecedented prosperity, yet appeared obtusely impervious to the greatest issue of our times. He promised to reduce the size and intrusiveness of government but instead increased federal taxes, including the GST, to a peacetime record of 25.7 per cent of gross domestic product, but did not use this unprecedented flow of funds to mobilise the nation against the greatest threat to its survival.

Sheehan speaks about a particular project in Coombing Park. It is about a farmer who is trying to protect his property. He wrote about what this farmer said:

“We are going down to 20 per cent stocking rate, which is below our cost of production,” King told me on Friday. “Our business cannot trade for many more years if we erode our equity each year. Even the best farmers are suffering now. The bush is dying. The towns, the landscape, the rivers are being killed by this climate change.”

Note the term “climate change”. Not “drought”.

As this farmer says:

“I have no doubts this will all accelerate as time passes. Pretty soon we will be able to see the great deserts from the Great Dividing Range.”

That was written by Paul Sheehan—no friend of the Labor Party, I can assure you. Human induced global warming and its resultant changes in our climate system is no longer an intellectual issue discussed by Blundstone-wearing urban greenies—it is mainstream, it is empirical and it is now. The government must move to tackle global warming comprehensively, as is required in the national interest, and it certainly does not in this bill.

A report set for release in Britain today warns climate change could cost the world trillions of dollars. Labor’s Treasury spokesman, Wayne Swan, last week met the report’s author, respected World Bank economist Sir Nicholas Stern, after he briefed the British cabinet on the economics of climate change. Mr Swan today said of the report:

It says basically that the globe and individual nations have a window of opportunity only of 10 or 15 years to act …

Failure to act would lead to a worldwide recession, he said, and leave large sections of the globe underwater in 50 years time. We saw that graphically illustrated on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Mr Swan also said that the Stern report said
countries needed to introduce ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions but that the government’s failure to ratify the Kyoto protocol on greenhouse gas emissions meant Australia was starting a long way behind. Labor’s environment spokesman, Anthony Albanese, has basically said the same thing.

It is not an issue that just concerns my electorate or those in this chamber. A recently released annual Lowy Institute poll reveals Australian concern over global warming to be the big sleeper of national affairs, a problem that worries Australians more than Islamic fundamentalism. Australian public convictions on climate change have crept up on the government and have now overtaken it. It is interesting that in the year 2000, amongst other timely commitments to addressing climate change, the Labor Party committed to ratifying the Kyoto protocol. Although only a small step in helping reduce greenhouse pollution globally, it remains a significant symbol of international diplomacy and one to which Labor remains committed, particularly as it sends a very powerful market signal to the world.

The government says that, if Australia ratifies the Kyoto protocol, Australian jobs will be lost to places without the same market conditions, such as India and China. From what I can see, Australian jobs are going to these countries largely because the government has failed to ratify the Kyoto protocol. Being locked out of the protocol’s mechanisms means Australians are unable to create worthwhile business opportunities from reducing greenhouse pollution. As an example, if Australia had ratified the Kyoto protocol, farmers would be able to claim large financial rewards for permanent revegetation projects. How? By selling to Kyoto countries and their companies the credits created by locking up carbon in trees and soil. But under the Howard government farmers miss out yet again.

In a similar way, any local business—even a school—that undertook an energy efficiency upgrade could sell its carbon credits in a carbon market and be financially rewarded for its efforts. In the first half of this year, the European carbon market was worth $15 billion. The government’s continued isolationist position for international action is stopping Australian businesses access global markets and it means that jobs in the new markets are being created offshore and not here, not in our country, not in our cities, our suburbs or our regions.

So if these opportunities are not arising here, where are they? What, for example, are our allies the Americans doing? Let me tell you what some of the Americans are doing. Whilst the Australian position has been aligned with that of President Bush and his anti-Kyoto stance—although we will see what happens after the midterm congressional elections—the Howard government has failed to see the substantial shift by various US national, state and city leaders taking prominent roles in the carbon constrained global market. Seven US states, 227 cities and a number of influential members of congress, both Republican and Democrat, are circumventing the Bush White House’s intransigent position. These congressmen and women, governors and mayors are committing their jurisdictions to emission reduction targets, carbon trading and renewable energy development. As the US moves forward on climate, it leaves Australia politically and economically isolated as the least prepared developed country in the world on this issue.

Let us talk about some of the leading US climate initiatives, which of course include the US banks. The Bank of New York has created a registry that it hopes will ease and increase trade in the growing global market for voluntary greenhouse gas credits, sources at the company recently said. I quote one of the sources:
"We saw an opportunity coming out of the Kyoto Protocol where companies ... can buy varieties of gas emission reductions to offset their direct emissions or offset carbon products and services to customers," a Bank of New York source based in London told Reuters in a phone interview.

The global voluntary carbon market has grown from three million to five million tonnes of CO\textsuperscript{2} credits traded in 2004 to 20 million to 50 million tonnes in 2006, and is expected to reach 100 million tonnes or more next year, according to the Climate Group, a London based non-profit organisation. The voluntary trade the Bank of New York registry targets is separate from the mandatory trade under the UN's Kyoto pact, such as the European Union's emissions trading scheme. Many US companies such as Alcoa and DuPont have cut emissions voluntarily. Carbon credits on the EU market were selling for about $US19 a tonne recently and at about $US4 a tonne on the Chicago Climate Exchange some months ago.

Let us see what major US companies say on the particular regulations:

In April 2006, a US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee panel were surprised to hear the heads of high-powered energy, utility and retail companies including General Electric, Wal-Mart, Shell, Exelon and Duke Energy say they would welcome or accept mandatory caps on their greenhouse gas emissions.

Here is another one:

RETAIL GIANT TAKES A BIG STEP — In October 2005, the world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart, announced a $500 million climate change commitment including initiatives to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% in seven years.
- Increase truck fleet fuel efficiency by 25% in three years and double it in ten.
- Develop a store that is 25% more energy efficient within four years.
- Pressure its worldwide network of suppliers to follow its lead.

- Operate on 100% renewable energy.

With $312.4 billion in annual sales and more than 6,400 stores and facilities worldwide, Wal-Mart's climate change commitment is of international business significance.

And another one:

IMAGINING ECO — In May 2005, General Electric, one of the world's biggest companies with revenues of US $152 billion in 2004, announced "Ecomagination," a major new business driver expected to double revenues from cleaner technologies to US$20 billion by 2010. This initiative will see GE double its research and development in eco-friendly technologies to US$1.5 billion by 2010, reduce company-wide emissions by 1% and improve energy efficiency by 30% by 2012. In May 2006, the company reported revenues of US$10.1 billion from its energy efficient and environmentally advanced products and services, up from US$6.2 billion in 2004, with orders nearly doubling to US$17 billion. In 2005, the company's wind energy business was worth US$2 billion, estimated to rapidly reach US$4 billion. In five years, GE expects that alternative energies will comprise more than 25% of all energy equipment revenue.

We need to stay in the emissions trading game:

To prepare for an inevitable limit on greenhouse gas emissions, over 40 US and Canadian companies and organisations, including Baxter, Ford Motor Company, Interface, International Paper, Manitoba Hydro, Motorola and Tufts University, have joined the Chicago Climate Exchange, a voluntary but legally-binding program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The scheme has been operating since 2003 to enable participants to prepare for an emissions trading future. By the end of 2006, participants are expected to have reduced emissions by 4%. In April 2006 over 1 million tonnes of CO\textsubscript{2} permits were traded through the Chicago Exchange, and in the first two weeks of May 2006, over 2.4 million tonnes of CO\textsubscript{2} permits were traded.

And if you looked at alternative fuels as well:
Microsoft magnate Bill Gates jumped into the bio-fuels market in April this year when he purchased US$84 million (AU$112 million), a 25.5% stake in common stock shares of Pacific Ethanol Inc., makers of corn-based fuel.

While not a major investment for Gates, it does indicate a market signal. Let us look at another one of our partners, China, and their efforts to reduce climate change. It was mentioned today by the Prime Minister that because China and India are not serious about global change that we should not be serious about signing the Kyoto protocol.

Contrary to popular opinion, China is leading world efforts to combat global climate change. It has ratified the Kyoto protocol. According to environmental sources, between 1997 and 2001, China reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by 17 per cent whilst its economy grew by 34 per cent. This was achieved by switching to cleaner energy sources, restructuring its economy and improving the efficiency of non-renewable energy sources such as coal. It has been calculated that China’s energy-saving measures have cut carbon dioxide emissions significantly.

Mr Hunt interjecting—

Mr BYRNE—You can tell the Chinese government this. China’s latest five-year plan includes a commitment to achieve—

Mr Hunt interjecting—

Mr BYRNE—What you have to worry about, mate, is whether or not they are going to put a nuclear power plant in your electorate. That is what I would be worried about in terms of energy efficiency. China’s latest five-year plan includes a commitment to achieving economic growth by ‘optimising structure, improving efficiency and decreasing energy consumption’.

Included in the latest five-year plan are targets for the next five years of a 10 per cent fall in total pollutants, a 20 per cent fall in total energy consumption per unit of GDP and a 30 per cent reduction in total water use. China has committed to generating, excluding hydro power, 10 per cent of its energy with renewable technology by 2010 and 15 per cent by 2020. China plans to reduce the percentage of its power which is produced by coal from 78 per cent to 40 per cent by 2030. China currently invests $9.3 billion in renewable energy, more than double the United States’ renewable investment. In 2004, China introduced auto emissions standards equal to Euro II standards. Currently, the United States cannot export cars to China as they do not meet Chinese emission standards. In 2008, China will introduce tighter auto emission standards equivalent to Euro III standards. China has reduced taxes on bicycles and introduced a fuel tax which penalises four-wheel drives and the least fuel efficient cars.

Brazil is a world leader on ethanol production, requiring 100 per cent of gasoline to be blended with ethanol. Indonesia has set a biofuels target of 10 per cent by 2010. Of course, business strategies in these countries did not change overnight. Their governments introduced policies to phase in emissions targets and low-carbon technologies, creating massive opportunities for local labour markets and export growth.

The disappointing element of this is that Australia could be part of this, but is not. What do we need to do in Australia? Australia needs a systematic response rather than a bandaid response simply because Textor and Crosby are polling and saying it is an issue for the government. We need to not be isolated and playing catch-up. We need the government to be very serious about dealing with this particular issue. If you look at renewables, the Victorian renewable energy target of 10 per cent by 2016 made the Solar Systems project viable. That project was funded by the government.
John Howard has rejected expanding the national renewable energy target beyond two per cent but is relaxed about putting a nuclear power plant in the electorate of the member for Flinders. Australia is the only country where renewable energy projects are being closed and we have seen job losses as a consequence of that. John Howard criticises Kyoto but sent Ian Campbell to China to open a $300 million renewable energy project that was funded by the clean development mechanism of the Kyoto protocol.

What I see in this bill is a lost opportunity for Australians. Mark my words: when Australians come to vote, they are no fools. They know that this change in their climate has to be addressed by a government that does not just respond to polling but responds to the genuine needs of the Australian community. Let us see if they are serious because this bill certainly proves that they are not.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage) (7.37 pm)—In rising on behalf of the government to address the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006, I firstly thank all members on either side of the House who have presented their arguments. This bill does one critical thing. It assesses and changes the provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and sets them up for the coming decade in such a way as to achieve two fundamental things: firstly, it strengthens and enhances provisions to protect the environment in relation to specific projects as they are considered, it provides a tougher regime and it provides a way of dealing with the great challenges before us as we look at individual projects; and, secondly, it does this in a way which will make it faster, more efficient and give people greater certainty and the greater ability to make decisions both on investment and on protection of the environment.

In looking at the bill, and in looking at the arguments presented, I want, firstly, to look at the background and what has been achieved over last six years under the regime established through the Environment Protection And Biodiversity Conservation Act; secondly, to deal with the changes which have been specifically outlined and addressed in the course of this legislation; and, thirdly, to deal with four of the arguments presented during the debate by our friends on the opposition benches.

Firstly, on the regime which we have inherited, the EPBC Act—the most comprehensive environmental legislation in Australian history—essentially has been in force for six years, during which time over 2,000 referrals have been made. This has led to approvals being required for 420 major proposals for development around Australia. Nearly 200 assessments have been completed and 150 approval decisions have been made. As part of that, 120 fisheries have been assessed; nearly 200 new species, communities and environmental processes have been included on the lists of threatened species, ecological communities and key threatening processes; 250 listed threatened species recovery plans have been developed; and 50 Ramsar wetland management plans have been put in place. Over 15,000 wildlife trade permits have been considered and issued and 370 places have been added to the National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists since the commencement of the new National Heritage Scheme in January 2005.

Taken together, we have seen a comprehensive piece of legislation which was intended to achieve, and which has achieved, the combination of protection of the environment and certainty for the process of investment. But this bill seeks to enhance that regime. It seeks to essentially achieve four outcomes. The first of those outcomes is about streamlining the process and reducing
red tape. In particular, it attempts to speed up the pace at which consideration and approvals are processed. That is important for those who are concerned about the environment and it is important for those who need to make judgements, decisions and investments. It will, in many cases, lead to outcomes that people who are making proposals might not necessarily want. We will see that there are difficult decisions about what is a viable proposal and whether it will have an impact on the environment. If it does have an impact on the environment—a threatened species or something else—then we will not hesitate to demand that there are adequate responses and protections put in place or otherwise the project will not proceed. It reduces the number of mandatory steps in the assessment and approvals processes and it allows for different authorisation processes to occur concurrently. That is how we are streamlining things.

The second great outcome which we seek from this bill is certainty for industry and the community. In particular, the bill allows proponents to give their views on proposed approval decisions, including any proposed conditions, before the final approval decision is made. It includes the ability to establish a transparent process for consideration and reconsideration.

The third of the major amendments contained within this bill is to establish a more strategic and flexible approach to dealing with a combination of assessments and listings. In particular, it allows the Minister for the Environment and Heritage to pursue priorities, not simply to respond to a range of different references from people in all different parts of the country. They are important, they will be considered, but it does allow most importantly for the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Department of the Environment and Heritage to pursue the most important, most pressing and most urgent needs, not merely those which have been put forward on a procedural basis. In particular, the change establishes a more strategic approach to the listing of heritage places, to threatened species and to ecological communities by strengthening the role of the minister, the Australian Heritage Council and the Threatened Species Scientific Committee in setting priorities and work programs.

This leads me to the last of the core reasons and actions contained within the amendments and this bill. It will strengthen compliance and enforcement. In particular, the amendments will establish new penalties which are aimed at ensuring the proponents do not commence proposed development action prior to the referrals assessment and approvals process under the EPBC Act being completed. In other words, there will be penalties and punishments for people who jump the gun, who try to pre-empt decisions and who simply try to cheat the process. Those are tough measures and we make no apologies for that.

Against those changes, a series of considerations have been raised by our friends on the opposite side of the chamber. The first and most significant of those is in relation to climate change. It is a generalised argument that this bill has failed to deal with climate change. It is a generalised argument that this bill has failed to deal with climate change. I want to make three brief responses in relation to climate change. The first is my very clear long-held and longstanding position that the facts on global warming are clear and absolute: it has been proceeding and is proceeding, and we have the latest information from the Bureau of Meteorology of a 0.6 degree increase in global temperature over the last century—precisely as predicted—and that this is a direct result of human activity in relation to carbon emission. I make no bones about the fact that it is real—I never have—and I regard it as a deep and clear personal responsibility and one of the
abiding tasks of my time in parliamentary life. But the big question here is: what has been the response? You would imagine, from what the opposition says, that there has been a dramatic increase in emissions from Australia. But what we find, very clearly, when we look at Australian emissions in the period from 1990 until now, is 550 million tonnes as opposed to 560 million tonnes of CO₂ or equivalent gases. There as been almost no change in the emissions profile of Australia as opposed to what the rest of the world has seen.

The other thing we want to talk about here is that our friends on the other side make a great deal of the fact that Australia is one of the few countries in the developed world that have not ratified the Kyoto protocol, yet it is like looking at the list of people who promise to kick 100 goals a year in Australian Rules football and comparing it with those who actually do. They give all the weight to the people who make the promise and give no weight to the people who actually deliver. Morality rests with performance. Let me make that statement. Morality rests with those who have actually delivered. When you look at what has happened in relation to targets, when you see what has happened in the European Union, Japan, Canada or so many other countries, you will see that other countries have promised but failed to reach their targets but that Australia is one of a handful of developed world countries that have actually reached their targets. So what you need to do is to recognise that morality rests with those who have achieved their targets, not with those who make a blithe promise, fail to achieve their targets and clothe themselves in some greater good simply on the basis of the promise and not the delivery. That is the reality: Australia is one of the very few countries in the world to have done that.

By comparison, what we see is that we have taken simple, clear and absolutely practical steps to reduce emissions. Only in the last week we have seen some of the most significant projects in the Western world in terms of practical reductions, further reducing Australia’s 560 million tonnes of CO₂ or equivalent emissions. They are real projects, whether in Hazelwood, Victoria, the Solar Systems project within Mildura or, as we have seen today, the two major carbon emissions projects in Queensland under the Low Emissions Technology Development Fund. We choose to make a difference by actually reducing emissions. The questions I would have for the Labor Party are simple ones: what is the level of the tax you will apply? If you are going to impose a cap and trade system, what is the level of the cap you will apply? Let us hear what the cap is, because that would be profoundly interesting. Against that background, I make no apology for the fact that, of all the countries in the world, Australia has done as well as any on controlling our emissions as opposed to this fantasy which has been peddled.

The second of the arguments the opposition has taken in relation to this bill is that we have failed to protect overseas historic heritage places. But we have worked with overseas governments and we have very clearly put in place a system that will allow for a list that will further enable us to deal with overseas governments in a way that will best help to assist Australia and help to protect the places overseas.

The third criticism made by the opposition is in relation to decisions on listing heritage places. The opposition has said that the minister is not going to take into account information from anyone in making his or her decision on the listing of heritage places. Let me make this absolutely clear: this provision is not new. The EPBC Act currently allows the minister to seek additional public com-
ments. After receiving advice from the Australian Heritage Council, the minister will be allowed to consider the situation but will not be forced to divert the processes and to act in a way that is utterly contrary to good process and to the way of a fair hearing.

The fourth and final criticism I want to deal with is a curious one. It is the notion that the penalties we have in place in relation to marine reserves on Ashmore Reef and in other places are too hard. That is what the opposition have told us. They have said that the penalties we are imposing on people who take protected species such as turtles, dolphins and dugongs are too hard. Well, bad luck; we make no apologies. We have set in place a difficult and tough regime which will mean that the master and recidivist crew members will be held and prosecuted and that the rest of the crew will be sent home at the earliest opportunity. If that is a tough regime, I am delighted. I stand for that and I am pleased about it.

In summing up the government’s position in relation to the second reading of this bill, what I want to say is this: we have the EPBC Act, which has set in place the strongest level of environmental protection practically that we have ever had within Australia, but we can go forward and streamline it. We can make it more effective and we can include tougher penalties. We have heard—but we reject—the positions put forward by the opposition. Against that background I want to congratulate the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon. Senator Ian Campbell, his staff and his officers. I am delighted to commend this bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Haase)—The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Grayndler has moved an amendment that all words after ‘That’ be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Question agreed to.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail
Bill—with leave—taken as a whole.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (7.53 pm)—by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) to (9) as circulated in my name:

(1) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

1A After paragraph 3(1)(ca)
Insert
‘(cb) to protect Australia from the adverse effects of climate change;’

(2) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

1B After sub paragraph 3(2)(e)(i)
Insert
‘(ia) establish a climate change trigger to ensure that large scale greenhouse polluting projects are assessed by the Federal Government; and’

(3) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

1C After paragraph 3A(a)
Insert
‘(aa) decision-making processes should consider and minimise where possible the adverse effects of climate change on Australia;’

(4) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

1D After section 3A
Insert
‘3B Climate change
The Parliament acknowledges that climate change
(a) is the greatest threat to Australia’s natural environment;’
will have far-reaching impacts globally, in Australia’s region and in Australia, including:

(i) possible higher temperatures and lower-rainfall in southern Australia;

(ii) possible more frequent extreme weather events such as storms, heatwaves and drought, impacts to which Australia’s natural, rural and urban environments, and many industries, are potentially vulnerable.

(5) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

**1E Subsection 5(5)**

Insert the following definition:

*Adverse effects of climate change* means changes in the physical environment or biota resulting from climate change which have significant deleterious effects on the composition, resilience or productivity of natural and managed ecosystems or on the operation of socio-economic systems or on human health and welfare.

(6) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

**1F Subsection 5(5)**

Insert the following definition:

*Climate change* means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

(7) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

**1G Subsection 5(5)**

Insert the following definition:

*Climate system* means the totality of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and geosphere and their interactions.

(8) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

**1H Subsection 5(5)**

Insert the following definition:

*Emissions* means the release of greenhouse gases and/or their precursors into the atmosphere over a specified area and period of time.

(9) Schedule 1, before item 1, page 5 (before line 5) insert:

**1I Subsection 5(5)**

Insert the following definition:

*Greenhouse gases* means those gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorb and re-emit infrared radiation.

I am moving amendments to the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2006 which amends the EPBC Act because this is a totally inadequate performance from the Howard government. It is an indictment that, after 10 years, they have produced what they say is their major piece of environmental legislation without any reference to climate change. And this is on the day that the Stern review in the United Kingdom, to be tabled in the coming hours, has indicated the drastic economic as well as environmental consequences of inaction on climate change. It underlines the lack of responsibility from this government.

The Stern review indicates a potential loss of global economic growth of some 20 per cent. It indicates a potential cost greater than the cost of two world wars and the Great Depression. It indicates that early action on climate change is what is required. By taking early action you will actually save money as well as save the planet.

I am moving this first block of amendments to the bill, and I have done them in two separate lots because I cannot comprehend that the parliamentary secretary for the environment and heritage opposite, in his heart, can vote against such amendments. A simple amendment to add an objective of the
act to protect Australia from dangerous climate change—is the Howard government really going to vote against that? It is a simple position whereby we add a new principle of ecologically sustainable development to note:

decision-making processes should consider and minimise where possible the adverse effects of climate change on Australia.

The amendments add a new section 3B outlining the significance of climate change. They add a definition of climate change—and we have not made up a definition; it is the definition of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change established under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to which the Australian government is a signatory. How can you argue for this massive bill, with 409 pages of amendments, totalling some 3,000 amendments to the act and not one mentioning climate change?

The Prime Minister from time to time concedes that climate change is occurring. Surely, if it is occurring, we need a reference to it in the Commonwealth's environmental legislation. But this exposes the hypocrisy of the government. The parliamentary secretary actually spoke about morality when it came to climate change. I think this is a moral question for our generation and we will be judged extremely harshly for generations to come. We will talk about two groups: one will be the climate sceptics; people will just feel sorry for them. They will be regarded as the flat-earthers of the 21st century—the industry minister, the Prime Minister some of the time, but not the parliamentary secretary. I give him credit. I think he knows that climate change is real. But you will be judged more harshly if you know the problem but refuse to do something about it—if you refuse to take the action that is necessary to avoid dangerous climate change.

These amendments that I am moving are very simple. They should not be controversial—they are straightforward, they put climate change front and centre of our national environmental legislation. Quite frankly I was shocked when I received the amendments from the government *(Extension of time granted)* to find that there was no mention of climate change. When I spoke to people—inconomists, environmentalists, people concerned about this in the scientific world—they said, 'You can't be right. It can't be right that the Commonwealth would, in the year 2006, produce 409 pages of amendments to the act, more than 3,000 amendments to the act but not one of them mentioning climate change.' We raised it in the briefing we had from the minister's office—the department frankly are embarrassed by this. Why wouldn't they be embarrassed by the lack of action?

Of course, the parliamentary secretary did speak about morality. The parliamentary secretary featured in an article by Peter Hartcher on 20 October. That was extraordinary. We had Alexander Downer stating that he had gone to the Port Elliot Show—it was hot day, it was 33 degrees, and there was a north wind—and a bunch of people, not just farmers, were saying that maybe there is something in this climate change thing. Where was the Minister for Foreign Affairs when Australia signed the Kyoto protocol back in 1997, when the Prime Minister said it was a win for jobs and a win for the environment? It is absolutely extraordinary that we have had 10 years of denial from the government and then they think they can come up with, 'We think there might be something in this climate change thing,' and announce a couple of projects and everyone will go, 'That's okay—they take it seriously.' The government will be judged very harshly by history because on this, the most important issue facing the global community, you cannot
fudge. You cannot say on the one hand that the Kyoto protocol, if we ratified it, would ruin the economy and then in the next breath say, ‘But we’ll meet the target.’ It does not make sense. You cannot have both positions—and the parliamentary secretary knows that well. You cannot say, ‘We are doing a great job,’ when the figures show that, if you exclude the decisions on land use, between 1990 and 2004—

Mr Hunt—Just look at the real figures.

Mr ALBANESE—If you look at the real figures on our emissions, you will see that they are increasing by 21.5 per cent. Under the Howard government they have exploded. The parliamentary secretary talks about meeting targets. Two weeks ago the Minister for the Environment and Heritage said in the Senate that we might not even meet our target—in spite of the concessions which have been given by the government. The truth is that the record is appalling. We have an abrogation—an attempt to undermine the protocol. This is something that environment ministers such as Senator Hill, when they had some integrity on the other side, said was foolish. Senator Hill said that only a fool would think that Australia has an interest in undermining the Kyoto protocol. Yet we have this argument that China, Japan, India and all these other countries—we heard it again today—are not part of it.

It is just extraordinary to blame the developing world—in particular China, which is identified by the Stern review, along with California and the European Union, as taking the most action to avoid climate change. We know the hypocrisy is there because, when the environment minister went to China two weeks ago, the Roaring 40s project that he opened was, of course, totally funded by the clean development mechanism of Kyoto. It was 51 per cent owned by a Chinese company and 49 per cent Australian. (Extension of time granted) Were it not for the clean development mechanism, if it had been a totally Australian based company and if it were not for the fact that it was a 51 per cent Chinese company, that project would not have proceeded. That project was, of course, by the Roaring 40s company, from Tasmania, which has not proceeded with projects worth $550 million in Tasmania and South Australia.

So here we have a situation whereby renewable energy projects in Australia are not being proceeded with. We know that the Vestas nacelle factory in Tasmania, a renewable energy manufacturing plant, shut down in August. Australia is the only country on the planet where renewable energy projects are actually being closed. In addition to that, the government says that one-off projects have been announced under the low emissions technology fund. Labor supports such projects, but one-off announcements will not go anywhere near the action we need if we are going to avoid dangerous climate change. Of the projects that have been announced, the Victorian project is only viable because of the Victorian renewable energy target and the Queensland project is only viable due to the Queensland government system—

Mr Hunt interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE—The company involved, Solar Systems, have said they may not be able to proceed with the project if Steve Bracks is not re-elected, because the neanderthals in the Victorian Liberal Party are going to move away from the Victorian renewable energy target.

Mr Hunt interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE—The clowns opposite speak about $75 million. It is a $420 million project which is only viable because you have those market based mechanisms. Unless you have economic incentives and market based mechanisms, you do not get
progress; you do not get application and multiplication of clean technology. And history tells us that. Indeed, the Howard government took credit back in 1997 for the fact that, under Kyoto, it had these economic market based mechanisms. The United States and Australia, under the previous government—and it continued under Robert Hill—pushed for emissions trading to be at the core of Kyoto because they understood that you need those market based mechanisms to drive that change through. They understood that opposition to that was a triumph of hope over experience. They understood that you do not just cross your fingers and hope that the companies do the right thing; you actually need those economic incentives.

So we have a situation whereby the government, instead of having a comprehensive plan to tackle climate change, announced this project in June 2004. That was when they announced the fund as part of the energy white paper. Then nothing happened for more than two years: for almost 2½ years not a single announcement—not one project worthy of support. Why is that? Why is this before us now? Because we are now into an election year. In the last 12 months before an election you can be certain that the money will be rolled out. What that exposes is that it is all about politics, not about good policy. This Prime Minister is only concerned about his future, not the future of this nation and of the future generations to come on this planet, because we are so far behind the rest of the world on climate change that it is an embarrassment. I put a simple proposition if the amendments that I have moved in this House are defeated: mention ‘climate change’ in the national environmental legislation; mention a neutral definition of climate change as an objective. How can that possibly be opposed by the Howard government? I am sure we may well hear some creative reasons for why. I urge the parliamentary secretary to show a bit of ticker, vote for these amendments and acknowledge that climate change is real.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage) (8.08 pm)—Nothing more clearly emphasises the differing approaches of the two sides than what we have seen today in relation to climate change. We have seen two different things. Firstly, there is the investment of $125 million in practical, real measures which will lead to major decreases in emissions in Australia—that is what the government has done today. That money will leverage more than three times that amount in total investment. That is what we on this side of the House have done on this day towards real commitments to reduce emissions, to have a real impact on climate change. And the response from the member for Grayndler? ‘No, you’ve simply got to make a statement and it will all go away.’

We acknowledged it in 125 million ways today. They are the ways of investing taxpayers’ funds in real abatement measures which are going to decrease emissions in Australia as we speak—that is what it is about. The differences in the approaches to climate change could not be summarised better than the events of this day in this place: one side making a contribution in terms of real abatement, the other side contributing to excess emissions with a proposal that they believe will clothe themselves in moral respectability whilst at the same time implying that the actual measures are in some way deficient.

I want to deal in three ways with the proposal put forward by the opposition: firstly, in relation to the generalised criticism that they make of Australia’s position under the Kyoto protocol. Again I make the point very simply that we are one of a handful of nations that are actually achieving their targets.
under the Kyoto protocol. That is shown by the work which has been put forward by the IPCC. There is no question that we are one of the only nations on the planet to be achieving our targets under the Kyoto protocol—and the others know that.

The opposition ask, and this is their killer point—my gosh! now we can all go home—‘If you are achieving your targets, why wouldn’t you ratify it?’ It is very simple. It is because there is a fundamental flaw, although I respect the intention behind it. The fundamental flaw is what I call the Union Carbide, or Bhopal, argument: as we speak, we are seeing the movement from Europe of aluminium, cement and steel production to a higher emissions, lower regulated profile in the Middle East, in other parts of the developing world, in India and in China. What is happening as a result of this great moral measure that the opposition talk about is a movement of emissions from one position to another. It is because there is a fundamental flaw and they do not want to acknowledge it. There is a fundamental flaw and that is real, serious and a problem. What we say is this: we will meet our targets but we are not going to embrace a situation which worsens and actually leads to the Union Carbide, or Bhopal, problem of taking emissions and activity from a regulated environment to one where they are going to lead to greater environmental damage—and you know it.

That leads me to the next one of their arguments. There is great morality about a trigger: we need to put in a trigger. Yet when this was put forward by Senator Hill, it was the Labor states, with the exception of one out of the eight states and territories, that rejected it. They did it themselves; they rejected this proposal. So we moved on and we pursued a policy of technology. We were happy to look at it, but it was rejected. That time has passed and we have tried to put in place the most effective and most practical regime within the developed world. I acknowledge that Iceland might be giving us a good run for our money, but in the developed world, in terms of measures leading to real emissions changes—and our total emissions profile is what matters—no country has done better. (Extension of time granted)

The third argument is about going forward—what is actually going to change emissions profiles. What we have seen over human history is the development of technology, and the use of clean-air legislation has worked in dealing with the great unsolvable problems of the past. We are looking—and this is extremely important—at calling to account the petrol tax and the tax on pensioners’ heating, which is effectively what the opposition are proposing. We saw what happened earlier this year with a 30 per cent increase in petrol prices. Not much—it did not change consumption patterns in any meaningful way. Why? Because these goods are essentially inelastic. They are not absolutely inelastic. If you jacked the price up high enough, if you changed the price by 100 per cent or 200 per cent, it would begin to affect consumption. But what really happens with inelastic goods like these is that people—middle-income families and lower income families—are hurt without the outcome you seek being achieved. That is what is fundamentally important.

The proposal on the other side is a petrol tax and a tax on pensioners’ heating. The reality is that that is precisely what will come from the mechanisms that have been proposed by the opposition. So we want to know what will be the tax on petrol if they want to decrease consumption and what will be the tax on energy for pensioners to heat their homes if they want to decrease consumption. This is the heart of the debate. The reason it is important is that it is about hurting people in their homes and in their lives on a daily basis without achieving the outcome the op-
position so desperately seek. I believe that they are absolutely sincere in wanting the outcome, but I believe that they are misguided in pursuing a mechanism which will fail to achieve the outcome and will hurt pensioners, low-income families and middle-income families on a daily basis. If you want to achieve real cuts in emissions through forcing up the price of inelastic goods, you have to force that price up enormously. The opposition need to let this House know what those price changes are.

I say there is a better way, and that is what we are doing, which is investing directly on the supply side of emissions control. That is the message from Senator Ian Campbell and that is the approach that the Prime Minister has taken. We make no apologies for pursuing an approach—in cooperation with the states—of dealing straight up with the emissions problems at source rather than attempting to use an indirect method of jacking up the price of inelastic goods. Those inelastic goods, let me remind the House, are petrol for low-income and middle-income earners. Is that a petrol tax of 30 per cent, 50 per cent, 70 per cent, 90 per cent or 200 per cent? Let us hear it. And is it a pensioners’ heating tax of 30 per cent, 50 per cent, 70 per cent, 100 per cent or 200 per cent? Again, let us hear the proposal, because in order to achieve what you want through that mechanism those are the real people who are going to be hurt. You cannot walk away from it. The opposition say it is our responsibility; I do. Do I believe in my responsibility? I do. Do I believe the problem is real? I do. Do I take it on my shoulders? Absolutely. But do I accept your mechanisms which are going to rip at the hearts of individual pensioners and low-income families? Not for one moment. Is there a morality point in this debate? Absolutely. Those are our points and I reject the amendments absolutely.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (8.18 pm)—It is an extraordinary position from the government that they are advocating a command economy approach to this. Maybe they have been listening to those Maoists in education departments. But they are wrong and they are shown to be wrong if you look at what was actually said. When he was Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, in a media release of 11 December 1997, said:
The Kyoto agreement permitting Australia an eight per cent increase in emissions of six greenhouse gases by 2012 over 1990 levels will preserve the interests of farmers, miners, manufacturing industry and the economy in general.
Former senator Warwick Parer, who was then the Minister for Resources and Energy, said:
The Kyoto protocol provides a sound basis for protecting Australia’s export competitiveness and employment prospects in our minerals processing and energy export industries.
Robert Hill, the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, said on 19 December 1997:
There are those who foolishly believe that Australia has something to win by derailing the Kyoto protocol.
John Howard said the Kyoto protocol is ‘a win for the environment and a win for Australian jobs’. You need market based mechanisms and a whole-of-government approach if you are going to fix the problem. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage mentioned clean air. In fact, greenhouse gas emissions trading is modelled on the Clean Air Act, brought in by George Bush Sr in the United States in 1990 to control sulphur dioxide—acid rain—and it was successful.

The government says that Kyoto is flawed and somehow blames everyone moving to developing countries on the Kyoto protocol. Here in Australia we are seeing manufacturing industry go to China. We are seeing Qan-
tas and Telstra move jobs offshore. Is that because of Kyoto? What an absolute non-sense. The truth is that we need market based mechanisms to drive that change through. We need it to happen. The Kyoto protocol provides $133 billion of projects through the Clean Development Mechanism. They are already in the pipeline—all approved. The fact is that Australian companies are only able to use the Clean Development Mechanism if projects are owned by overseas companies. We are seeing great Australian companies like Pacific Solar fly the flag for another nation and companies moving to New Zealand or Fiji.

It is simply irresponsible to argue that the sorts of changes that are required to address the economic and environmental problems that have been identified by reviews—most notably the Stern review on this very day—are not required. But it is not just the Stern review; it is absolutely consistent with what the participants in the Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change have called for. They want a price signal. BP, Visy, Westpac and Origin Energy—these great Australian companies—know that the action is needed. And they know that the government is frozen in time while the globe warms around it.

The government really are being left behind on this stuff, like absolute dinosaurs. The community has moved on; business has moved on. These amendments, simply asking for a climate change definition and for climate change to be included in the environmental legislation, are worthy of support.

Question put:

That the amendments (Mr Albanese’s) be agreed to.

The House divided. [8.26 pm]
Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (8.34 pm)—by leave—I move amendments (10) to (22) together:

(10) Schedule 1, after item 67, page 16 (after line 14), insert:

67A After section 25 (subdivision G)
Insert

25AAA Requirement for approval of climate change actions

(1) A person must not knowingly, intentionally or recklessly take a climate change action that has, will have, or be likely to have, a significant impact on the environment.

Civil penalty:

(a) for an individual—5,000 penalty units;

(b) for a body corporate—50,000 penalty units.

(2) Subsection (1) of this section does not apply to an action if:

(a) an approval for the person to take the action is in operation under Part 9 for the purposes of this section; or

(b) Part 4 allows the person to take the action without an approval under Part 9 for the purposes of this section; or

(c) there is in force a decision of the Minister under Division 2 of Part 7 that

(i) the action is not a controlled action; or

(ii) the action is a controlled action but this section is not a controlling provision for the action.

25AAB What is a climate change action?

A climate change action means any of the following:

(a) establishing an industrial plant or other facility which emits, or is likely to emit, more than 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide or carbon dioxide equivalent per year; or

(b) any other action, series of actions, or program of actions, which will lead, or are likely to lead, directly or indirectly to the emission of more than 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide or carbon dioxide equivalent per year.

25AAC Requirement for decisions about climate change actions

In deciding whether or not to approve for the purposes of section 25AAA the taking of a climate control action, and what conditions to attach to such an approval, the Minister must consider whether the direct or indirect emissions of carbon dioxide or carbon dioxide equivalent that are likely to result from the action will be minimised by the use of best practice environmental management and low emissions technology.
For the purpose of subsection (1), *best practice environmental management* and *low emissions technology* are management and technology to achieve an ongoing minimisation of the emissions of carbon dioxide or carbon dioxide equivalent through cost-effective measures assessed against the measures and technology currently used nationally and internationally.

What members might not know is that they have actually just voted against any recognition of climate change being included in the federal environmental legislation. This is absolutely absurd. The first lot of these amendments that we are moving onto now would establish a climate change trigger in the EPBC Act.

Introducing a greenhouse trigger would provide another measure for addressing our international responsibilities in relation to climate change and ensuring Australia meets its Kyoto target.

Those are not my words; those were the words of Robert Hill on 10 December 1999 when he released a consultation paper on the possible application of a greenhouse trigger under the EPBC Act.

The climate change trigger would apply to the establishment of any industrial plant or other facility which emits or is likely to emit more than 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide or equivalent per year—or any other action, series of actions or policies which lead or are likely to lead to the emission of more than 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide or equivalent per year. Any such action will require ministerial approval unless the minister decides that the action is not controlled under the act. If the action is approved, the minister can, under the act, attach conditions to the approval such as the need to mitigate its greenhouse emissions. This is a sensible amendment. It is sensible to actually acknowledge that one of the actions that needs to be a trigger in the federal environmental legislation is the impact of climate change.

If the government truly acknowledge that climate change exists, they should support these amendments. Labor has moved amendments which would repeal the proposals contained in this bill that will curtail third party appeal rights, undermine public consultation processes and further politicise decision-making processes. These amendments would restore the right to appeal ministerial decisions before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, which has been removed under this bill.

The bill contains seven separate measures to strip away the right to appeal ministerial decisions before the AAT. They relate to threatened species, migratory species, marine species, whales and dolphins, wildlife trade permits and complying with conservation
orders. That shows extraordinary arrogance and sets an amazing precedent. The appeal rights in relation to wildlife permits have existed since 1981. It is very important that there be a balance in the act and Labor will restore that balance and that transparency.

We have also moved an amendment to maintain the Register of the National Estate and require the government to take it into account in decision-making processes. The Whitlam government, through the leadership of my friend Tom Uren, established the Australian Heritage Commission as an independent statutory authority. The commission was responsible for managing Australia’s Register of the National Estate and it served Australia well in managing that role. Today the register has some 13,000 sites of natural cultural and Indigenous heritage significance. So I pay tribute to the register and argue that it must be maintained.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage in his second reading speech referred to the archiving of the Register of the National Estate. Let us be honest: that means it is being abolished. The bill removes the requirement for the minister to have regard to the Register of the National Estate when making decisions and five years after the act comes into force the Register of the National Estate will cease to exist.

In moving these amendments, Labor want to restore a balance in the act. The government portrays this legislation as being absolutely critical. (Extension of time granted) The government does not want debate on this legislation. In spite of the fact that we are against this legislation we did not call a division on the second reading in the interests of proper debate, but we demanded to have our amendments outlined. None of this has occurred. The fact is that currently the government and the minister are against the minister’s own legislation. Section 28A says:

Every 5 years after the commencement of this Act, the Minister must cause a report to be prepared on whether this Part should be amended …

It goes on to say:

Before preparation of the report is completed, the Minister must cause to be published in accordance with the regulations (if any):

(a) a draft of the report; and
(b) an invitation to comment on the draft within the period specified by the Minister.

None of this has occurred. One of the amendments that I have moved is an amendment to remove the suggestion in section 324JJ(5) that, in deciding whether or not to list a place on the National Heritage List, the minister must have regard to advice from the Australian Heritage Council but may also seek and have regard to information or advice from any other source. What does that mean? That we will give carte blanche to this government to take advice from any other source? Could it be from a Liberal Party branch or from a particular business with an interest? This undermines the objectivity that is required in this act.

I conclude with this statement—and it is not from me; it is from Western Australian Liberal Senator David Johnston. On 18 October in the Senate, he stated:

This explanatory memorandum is probably one of the most appalling I have ever seen in the short time I have been in the Senate. It discloses no motivation, no reasoning and no justification for some of the most draconian powers that this parliament can conceivably and possibly enact:

And further:

… this legislation should go back to the drawing board.

That is right. He got it right, and that is why we will be supporting these amendments and, if they are not successful, we will be voting against the third reading of this legis-
loration. It is sloppy legislation, hastily put together, it undermines the balance of the EPBC Act and, most importantly, it ignores the greatest global challenge facing the world community—not just the greatest environmental challenge but the greatest environmental, economic and social challenge: climate change.

Mr Ian Macfarlane interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE—The fact we have Mr Flat Earth, the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, sitting over here presiding over this act indicates it all. At least he is honest. To give him credit, he says there is no connection between emissions and climate change. He is a sceptic. That is the direction in which the government is going—climate sceptics, market sceptics trying to play catch-up with one-off announcements. The Australian public are a wake-up to you; they want real action on climate change. I commend the amendments to the House and condemn this shoddy, sloppy, hopeless piece of legislation.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage) (8.43 pm)—For the reasons outlined throughout this debate, the government reject completely the amendments moved by the opposition and we reject completely the implicit proposal for a Beazley tax on petrol for pensioners and a Beazley tax on pensioners’ heating and energy bills.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (8.44 pm)—The parliamentary secretary knows full well that Labor supports an emissions trading system. We are opposed to new taxes. You can have two price signals. The government, the parliamentary secretary, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Treasurer have all said that a price signal is necessary. You can have two forms of price signal on carbon. One is an emissions trading system. That is what we stand for. If they support a price signal, that means they must support a tax.

Question put:
That the amendments (Mr Albanese’s) be agreed to.

The House divided. [8.48 pm]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Jenkins)

Ayes…………….. 58
Noes…………….. 78
Majority………. 20

AYES

Adams, D.G.H. Albanese, A.N.
Andren, P.J. Beazley, K.C.
Bevis, A.R. Bird, S.
Bowen, C. Burke, A.E.
Burke, A.S. Byrne, A.M.
Corcoran, A.K. Crean, S.F.
Danby, M. * Edwards, G.J.
Elliot, J. Ellis, K.
Emerson, C.A. Ferguson, L.D.T.
Ferguson, M.J. Fitzgibbon, J.A.
Garrett, P. Georganas, S.
George, J. Gibbons, S.W.
Gillard, J.E. Grierson, S.J.
Griffin, A.P. Hall, J.G. *
Hatton, M.J. Hayes, C.P.
Hoare, K.J. Irwin, J.
Kerr, D.J.C. King, C.F.
Livermore, K.F. Macklin, J.L.
McClelland, R.B. McMullan, R.F.
Melham, D. Murphy, J.P.
O’Connor, B.P. O’Connor, G.M.
Owens, J. Pibersek, T.
Price, L.R.S. Quick, H.V.
Ripoll, B.F. Roxon, N.L.
Rudd, K.M. Sawford, R.W.
Sercombe, R.C.G. Smith, S.F.
Snowdon, W.E. Swan, W.M.
Tanner, L. Thomson, K.J.
Vamvakinou, M. Wilkie, K.

NOES

Anderson, J.D. Andrews, K.J.
Baird, B.G. Baker, M.
Barresi, P.A. Bartlett, K.J.
Billson, B.F. Bishop, B.K.
Bishop, J.I. Broadbent, R.
Cadman, A.G. Causley, I.R.
Third Reading

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage) (8.55 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question put.

The House divided. [8.56 pm]
Burke, A.S.  
Corcoran, A.K.  
Danby, M. *  
Elliot, J.  
Emerson, C.A.  
Ferguson, M.J.  
Garrett, P.  
George, J.  
Gillard, J.E.  
Griffin, A.P.  
Hatton, M.J.  
Hoare, K.J.  
Kerr, D.J.C.  
Livermore, K.F.  
McClelland, R.B.  
O’Connor, B.P.  
Owens, J.  
Price, L.R.S.  
Ripoll, B.F.  
Rudd, K.M.  
Sercombe, R.C.G.  
Snowdon, W.E.  
Tanner, L.  
Vamvakinou, M.  
* denotes teller

Byrne, A.M.  
Crean, S.F.  
Edwards, G.J.  
Ellis, K.  
Ferguson, L.D.T.  
Fitzgibbon, J.A.  
Georganas, S.  
Gibbons, S.W.  
Grierson, S.J.  
Hall, J.G. *  
Hayes, C.P.  
Irwin, J.  
King, C.F.  
Macklin, J.L.  
McMullan, R.F.  
Murphy, J.P.  
O’Connor, G.M.  
Pitbersek, T.  
Quick, H.V.  
Roxon, N.L.  
Sawford, R.W.  
Smith, S.F.  
Swan, W.M.  
Thomson, K.J.  
Wilkie, K.

Monday, 30 October 2006  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
121

Burke, A.S.  
Corcoran, A.K.  
Danby, M. *  
Elliot, J.  
Emerson, C.A.  
Ferguson, M.J.  
Garrett, P.  
George, J.  
Gillard, J.E.  
Griffin, A.P.  
Hatton, M.J.  
Hoare, K.J.  
Kerr, D.J.C.  
Livermore, K.F.  
McClelland, R.B.  
Mellah, D.  
O’Connor, B.P.  
Owens, J.  
Price, L.R.S.  
Ripoll, B.F.  
Rudd, K.M.  
Sercombe, R.C.G.  
Snowdon, W.E.  
Tanner, L.  
Vamvakinou, M.  
* denotes teller

Byrne, A.M.  
Crean, S.F.  
Edwards, G.J.  
Ellis, K.  
Ferguson, L.D.T.  
Fitzgibbon, J.A.  
Georganas, S.  
Gibbons, S.W.  
Grierson, S.J.  
Hall, J.G. *  
Hayes, C.P.  
Irwin, J.  
King, C.F.  
Macklin, J.L.  
McMullan, R.F.  
Murphy, J.P.  
O’Connor, G.M.  
Pitbersek, T.  
Quick, H.V.  
Roxon, N.L.  
Sawford, R.W.  
Smith, S.F.  
Swan, W.M.  
Thomson, K.J.  
Wilkie, K.

Monday, 30 October 2006  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
121

Burke, A.S.  
Corcoran, A.K.  
Danby, M. *  
Elliot, J.  
Emerson, C.A.  
Ferguson, M.J.  
Garrett, P.  
George, J.  
Gillard, J.E.  
Griffin, A.P.  
Hatton, M.J.  
Hoare, K.J.  
Kerr, D.J.C.  
Livermore, K.F.  
McClelland, R.B.  
Mellah, D.  
O’Connor, B.P.  
Owens, J.  
Price, L.R.S.  
Ripoll, B.F.  
Rudd, K.M.  
Sercombe, R.C.G.  
Snowdon, W.E.  
Tanner, L.  
Vamvakinou, M.  
* denotes teller

Byrne, A.M.  
Crean, S.F.  
Edwards, G.J.  
Ellis, K.  
Ferguson, L.D.T.  
Fitzgibbon, J.A.  
Georganas, S.  
Gibbons, S.W.  
Grierson, S.J.  
Hall, J.G. *  
Hayes, C.P.  
Irwin, J.  
King, C.F.  
Macklin, J.L.  
McMullan, R.F.  
Murphy, J.P.  
O’Connor, G.M.  
Pitbersek, T.  
Quick, H.V.  
Roxon, N.L.  
Sawford, R.W.  
Smith, S.F.  
Swan, W.M.  
Thomson, K.J.  
Wilkie, K.

Monday, 30 October 2006  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
121

Burke, A.S.  
Corcoran, A.K.  
Danby, M. *  
Elliot, J.  
Emerson, C.A.  
Ferguson, M.J.  
Garrett, P.  
George, J.  
Gillard, J.E.  
Griffin, A.P.  
Hatton, M.J.  
Hoare, K.J.  
Kerr, D.J.C.  
Livermore, K.F.  
McClelland, R.B.  
Mellah, D.  
O’Connor, B.P.  
Owens, J.  
Price, L.R.S.  
Ripoll, B.F.  
Rudd, K.M.  
Sercombe, R.C.G.  
Snowdon, W.E.  
Tanner, L.  
Vamvakinou, M.  
* denotes teller

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Oil for Food Program

Mr DOWNER (Mayo—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (8.58 pm)—Mr Speaker, I seek your indulgence to add to an answer I gave today to a question from the member for Wills.

The SPEAKER—The minister may proceed.

Mr DOWNER—He asked me whether there had been any imports of oil from Iraq which had been in breach of UN sanctions or Australian Customs regulations and I told the member I was not aware of any such breach. Just to add to that answer, my department has reminded me that the Australian Federal Police is investigating a possible breach in relation to one shipment of oil. As the investigation is under way by the Federal Police, it is not something I wish to comment on further.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER—Order! It being almost 9 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Interest Rates

Mr HAYES (Werriwa) (8.59 pm)—If there were ever a statement that crystallised in the minds of all Australians just how much this government—particularly the Prime Minister—has changed, it was when the Prime Minister made comments last week that an interest rate rise by the Reserve Bank might be the best thing that could happen for Australia.

Home ownership is not only the great Australian dream but also the cornerstone of economic opportunity and ongoing prosperity. For most Australians, to own a home is to have a physical testament to years of hard work and effort. A permanent address, some surety in the future and security for the family are of critical importance to the social and economic stability of all Australians. It is something that this government has actively undermined as it presides over a record high level of household debt repayment in this country.

While the Prime Minister has adopted the constant refrain that interest rates were nominally higher under the Keating government, it is widely accepted that the repayment burden has never been higher than under this government. Australians have never before struggled like they have presently in order to meet an interest rate rise, but Australians had never before held the same levels of household debt that they endure today.

As anyone who is paying off debt knows, it is not the level of interest rates that is the big consideration, it is the proportion of your
pay packet required to meet your mortgage repayments that matters the most. That proportion has never been higher than it is right now. Until this government, Australians had never had to dedicate up to nearly 10 per cent of their take-home pay to service their mortgage. Under this government the capacity of many Australians to buy a house has eroded and it is eroding still. Under this government the proportion of household income required to service the mortgage is 50 per cent higher than it was under the Keating government.

The Prime Minister was asked about this fact today in question time and, as always when confronted about interest rates, he dodged the question. His position, as it has been previously, is to go back over the position of interest rates under the Keating government. The people out there who are servicing their mortgages and people who are struggling for home ownership do not care about the Prime Minister’s history lessons because they only care about today’s interest rate reality—the interest rate they are paying on the mortgage, on their business loans or on their credit card debt.

Homeowners, small business owners and anyone who has accumulated credit card debt care about one interest rate and one interest rate only, and what they know is that interest rate is now on its way up. They care about interest rates now because that is the rate that is used to calculate their mortgage repayments, their credit card payments and their small business loan repayments. But worst of all is that one thing that is being driven down is their property prices. Residents of western Sydney know that another interest rate increase not only means that a greater amount of the family budget will be eaten up in servicing mortgage repayments but also will mean another drop in the value of their property.

Homeowners and those who have invested in residential properties for retirement savings care little for the Prime Minister’s excuses as they watch the value of their investment fall, driven down by rising interest rates and the continual resetting of mortgage repayments to a much higher bar. They know that this government and this Prime Minister are out of touch with their concerns. Everything that this government has done of late is the exact opposite of what working Australians want. They did not expect to have their take-home pay and job security slashed through John Howard’s extreme industrial relations laws, they did not expect to be paying more and more for health care, health insurance and medications and they certainly did not expect to be paying out record amounts in servicing their mortgage repayments. They certainly did not expect to have their property values slashed as a consequence of this government’s actions. *(Time expired)*

**Volunteer Bush Firefighters**

Mr HENRY (Hasluck) (9.04 pm)—I rise tonight to recognise and praise the heroic and valiant efforts of those who volunteer to serve Australia as volunteer bush firefighters. Last week I was invited to attend the annual general meeting of the Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades of Western Australia Inc. by the president, Mr Terry Hunter, and secretary, Mr Eddie van Rijnswoud—an invitation I gladly accepted. The Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades is an organisation run by volunteers for all members of volunteer bush fire brigades in Western Australia whose main objectives are:

- Promote the safety and welfare of volunteer bush fire-fighters
- Promote public awareness regarding fire prevention, fire suppression and fire safety
To advise and consult with bush fire brigades members, FESA, Local Government and State Government

To liaise and co-operate with kindred bodies

This organisation has 25,000 volunteer members who put their lives on the line every summer in fighting the many thousands of bushfires that break out across the state of WA. Last year I believe there were some 8,000 bush fires that these men and women fought on behalf of their communities to protect life and property, for no other reward than their own personal satisfaction.

Indications are that this summer will provide an extremely high fire risk across Australia, given the drought, below average winter rainfall and accumulated fuel loads of dense undergrowth in our forests and wooded areas. These bush fire brigades are, in the main, formed and managed by the local government or shire, such as the Kalamunda Bush Fire Brigade. This brigade is the primary agency responsible for responding to fires in the shire of Kalamunda, including areas such as Bickley, Canning Mills, Carmel, Hackett’s Gully, Piesse Brook, Pickering Brook, parts of Gooseberry Hill, Kalamunda, Lesmurdie and Walliston.

The area where I live is largely a rural-urban interface with a mix of housing and bushland. Within this area are approximately 750 households housing nearly 3,000 people. Significant risks include two primary schools, a boarding school, factories, the state observatory, four television towers, a petrol station, a sports club, three churches and numerous cool stores. There are also significant swathes of orchard land and state forest within the brigade’s area.

The brigade attends approximately 120 emergency incidents each calendar year. About 75 per cent of these are bushfires, 15 per cent are vehicle fires, three per cent are structural fires and seven per cent are other incidents. The average duration of an emergency is three hours, but large bushfires can potentially burn for days, if not weeks. Most bushfires occur between October and April each year, such as the fire we had in the Perth Hills area last year.

Typically, the brigade is made up of a membership of volunteer firefighters. None of these volunteers are paid or receive any form of remuneration for their services. These generous and heroic volunteers have various motivations for volunteering, but they have the good of the community at heart. It is well recognised that bushfire fighting is a very dangerous business, with 20 of these brave volunteers having lost their lives since 1957. Indeed, those who take on the task of combating these bushfires truly take on the Anzac spirit in securing our communities. They never give up and they look after their mates.

These volunteers come from all sections of the community. By gender, there are about 65 per cent male members and 35 per cent female members. There is no maximum age for membership—some are as old as 80 and as young as 17. Older members must have a yearly medical to ensure they remain fit enough to fight fires. The youngest age is 16, but firefighters cannot attend emergency incidents until they are 17. The average age of a member is about 35.

The Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades of WA operates a benevolent fund which provides rapid emergency relief to the families of bushfire fighters who have been injured in the line of duty. Given the incredible public service these volunteers provide, I urge our communities to make a contribution to this important fund.

Muslim Communities

Sri Lanka

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (9.09 pm)—At this time of year many of my colleagues, like
me, have the opportunity of joining in celebrations following the end of the holy month of Ramadan. On Saturday night, along with the member for Batman, I was a guest at an occasion celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr—the breaking of the fast—that was sponsored by the Alawi Islamic Social Centre. At this function, like on other occasions, the leadership of the Alawi Islamic Social Centre made quite clear their point of view about some followers of Islam in their strong denunciation of all types of terror. I quote from the speech of the President, Youssef Wannoush:

The Alawi Islamic community has strongly denounced and refuted all types and kinds of terror in the world and we continue so and refuse any relationship or link with any such monstrous acts. This is characteristic of all the Islamic groups that operate in and around the northern suburbs of Melbourne. They are very much mainstream Australia. They are very much people who are proud to be living in Australia. They are proud of their faith. They understand the values under which they live here in Australia and they know that those acts of terrorism that are done in the name of Islam are not very helpful and they denounce them as anybody else would.

But they do have a genuine concern about the way in which, regrettably, Islamic Australians are portrayed in general in the media. Again, I quote from Mr Wannoush’s speech:

When we read and listen to the Australian media about the demonising of Moslems, we become extremely anxious about the future of the Islamic communities in this country which we have willingly chosen to be our homeland. We respect and hold Australia dear to our hearts and the first lesson we teach our children is to love Australia and respect its laws. We call on government officials to govern for all Australians and to preach for the unity of all Australians without discriminating between races, religions and colours to ensure that everyone feels safe and secure and to provide future generations with the appropriate environment for all to participate and contribute without fear ...

Also on this occasion, because of events that are obvious, they denounced the idea that there is any one person who can speak on behalf of the Muslim community of Australia. I think that that is very important. Mr Wannoush reminded the people at the function of Allah’s words to all faithful believers to ‘cooperate together on generosity, tolerance and piety and refrain from all rights of evil aggression’.

In the few minutes that I have left tonight I would just like to, regrettably, talk about another conflict threat in the world, and that is in Sri Lanka. If any conflict could be described as the forgotten war of the first decade of the 21st century, the situation in Sri Lanka must surely be a candidate for that label. This year there have been over 2,000 people killed. The suffering of Sri Lankans of all communities has been great. The UN estimates that 200,000 people have been internally displaced.

So it is with real regret that we see that, yet again, the consultations about Sri Lanka, organised by the Norwegian government and held in Geneva over 28 and 29 October, have concluded without even an agreement about a future meeting. This is a very sad conclusion because, as Eric Solheim, the Minister of International Development, said in his opening address to these consultations, there are three separate ways in which the international community must tackle the Sri Lankan situation. On the humanitarian suffering in Sri Lanka, there must be relief for all those who are suffering from displacement, war, killings, and simply a return to normalcy for all communities, there must be military de-escalation and there must be, in a political sense, a future that relies on addressing the underlying problems in Sri Lanka. I hope for the many Tamils and Singhalese that have made Australia home that in some way the
Australian government can be involved. Sri Lanka is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. We are a very big aid provider to Sri Lanka. This is something on which we must have an opinion and on which we must try to reach a solution and peace. *(Time expired)*

**Solar Energy**

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (9.14 pm)—By all accounts the coming Australian summer will be longer, hotter and drier than any in living memory. In recent times, running through Sherbrooke Forest, an area in which I have lived nearly all my life, I could not believe how dry the forest is at this point in time. When we look at our newspapers of the past weeks, we see that our rivers are running dry, the earth is being cooked and there is barren dust. Hopefully this is not an imminent climatic apocalypse. I believe that whatever your position on climate change, these images should be a reminder to both sceptic and believer alike—and I am a believer—of why we must continue apace towards making alternative energy sources, in particular solar power, a larger part of our energy mix.

Solar power is unique among energy sources. Unlike wind power, photovoltaic technology is silent, motionless and, when installed on rooftops, can be virtually invisible. Unlike nuclear power, its only by-product is greenhouse-friendly, clean electricity. Unlike coal fired power, solar power can be both produced and consumed locally, at source. Moreover, Australia’s climatic conditions make much of the continent a ready-made solar power plant. Australia has more solar energy than anywhere else in the world—on average, around 1,700 kilowatts of solar energy per square metre.

Germany is currently world leader in the uptake of PV technology. In Germany today over 30,000 people are employed in the production, sale, planning and installation of PV systems, and the industry achieves a yearly turnover exceeding €3 billion. Given the benefits of solar power and Australia’s climatic conditions, I believe that Australia has a wonderful opportunity to become a world leader in this field. Its growth in Australia would benefit the environment, the economy and consumers.

I am pleased to say that the Australian government is implementing a range of measures towards ensuring that this occurs. The Adelaide Solar City proposal, announced in August, will install solar panels in more than 1,700 homes in north Adelaide, roll out 7,000 smart meters and help people save around $200 a year on their electricity bills by changing energy use and adapting energy efficiency measures. This will double the current capacity of solar photovoltaic panels in South Australia, provide energy savings of $5 million per year and, importantly, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30,000 tonnes per year—and that is what the important element is: the amount of emissions that are reduced. Through the Photovoltaic Rebate Program, the Australian government also provides assistance to householders and owners of community buildings, such as schools, to install photovoltaic systems. The government has committed $11.4 million over the two years to June 2007 to extend this to smaller manufacturers, distributors and installers of PV systems.

On 18 October, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage announced that BP Solar Australia, the largest manufacturer of solar panels in the Southern Hemisphere, had formed a joint venture with a Chinese company to provide PV technology to China’s expanding energy market. China’s domestic PV market is planned to grow from 20 megawatts in 2005 to 10,000 megawatts by 2020. The BP SunOasis venture is a great example of how Australia can export its renewable technologies to world markets.
Last Wednesday the Treasurer and the Minister for the Environment and Heritage announced the first of two major government projects under the $500 million Low Emissions Technology Demonstration Fund. One grant of $75 million was made to a $420 million project for a large-scale solar concentrator in regional Victoria. The project is to be built by Solar Systems. It will be commenced in 2008 and finished by 2013.

I also believe that the government should offer rebates of $3,500 for the installation of solar hot water services to first home buyers. Water heating accounts for about one-third of household energy use, and I believe this would be a great initiative by this government—(Time expired)

**Climate Change**

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith) (9.19 pm)—Climate change is definitely the topic on our minds in this House tonight, and I follow on from the comments of the previous member, the member for La Trobe, simply to say that resolute and much needed action on climate change is the key imperative for the Howard government. I am pleased to be able to make note of two extremely important initiatives that are taking place in the seat of Kingsford Smith. This happens at a time when the imminent release of the Stern report will show very clearly that the economic consequences of us not seriously and realistically addressing climate change mean that we face the prospect of a recession on the scale of that of the thirties. This is on the minds of the communities of Kingsford Smith. In particular, I want to note the lead that has been taken by the Maroubra Junction Uniting Church, with their project called Project Green Church. This is the Maroubra Uniting Church’s initiative towards environmental sustainability. The church will become one of the first churches in New South Wales to switch to 100 per cent renewable energy.

Earlier this month the Uniting Church’s state wide meeting voted to endorse the Project Green Church plan for renewable energy right across New South Wales. Congregations joining Project Green Church will sign up to the green power program—and I know congregations will be very keen to do that. Maroubra Junction Uniting Church has agreed to switch over to 100 per cent green power. If every Uniting Church in the New South Wales synod switched to green power, greenhouse gases would be cut by 4,500 tonnes, the equivalent of taking 1,000 cars off the road for a year. I want to applaud the initiative taken by the Maroubra Junction Uniting Church and encourage other churches, both in Kingsford Smith and further afield, to take that initiative.

Randwick City Council has again taken an important initiative in relation to addressing climate change. Randwick City Council has announced a proposal to establish a voluntary and simple form of emissions trading between local councils in New South Wales. Local councils are signatories to the Cities for Climate Protection program and Randwick City Council aims to build on the work it is already doing in reducing emissions further. It is doing what other levels of government talk about—that is, it is initiating a carbon emissions trading scheme.

The council will invite local councils to register their interest in an emissions trading scheme. They will work with environmental consultants, academic organisations and the community. The scheme will be voluntary and it will build on the efforts already underway, which I will detail in a minute, but particularly the aim is to see whether a small-scale, workable and voluntary trading scheme based on greenhouse gas emissions from council can actually be instituted. I ap-
plaud Randwick City Council for taking leadership on this issue. When leadership is so missing at the federal level, it is of great comfort to me and to the constituents of Kingsford Smith to know that our local council is prepared to take such a step. This builds on the already important work that they have done on water savings. Late in 2005, the council adopted a 20 per cent reduction target for water consumption and energy consumption at council sites. Four million litres of town water has been saved in less than 12 months through a 315,000-litre stormwater re-use system at the council’s new green-waste recycling centre at Port Botany, making this facility 90 per cent self-sufficient in its water needs. A tender just approved to construct a 140,000-litre underground stormwater re-use system at council’s community nursery at Kingsford will save more than a million litres of town water per annum when it is finished by January 2007. These are really important and significant initiatives and they are resulting in effective and measurable savings in terms of water efficiency.

On energy, there was a distribution of 55,000 energy efficient globes, free of charge, to Randwick residents over the latter part of 2005, saving an estimated 25,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas, equivalent to taking more than 5,000 cars off the road and saving residents approximately $2.4 million on their energy bills. As well, Randwick City Council is currently rolling out a home energy makeover where residents take an easy household energy pledge to receive a free home energy audit and become eligible to receive cash incentives for some householders to install their own energy saving devices—solar hot water, solar panels and home insulation. Council has increased its Green Power from one per cent to 10 per cent in its three highest use buildings and with Jackgreen Energy is providing 10 per cent free Green Power to Randwick residents. If Randwick City Council can take this level of initiative, if it can bring these kinds of programs to the people of Kingsford Smith, why can’t the federal government do something about climate change?

Muslim Community

Mrs MIRABELLA (Indi) (9.24 pm)—I rise this evening to speak on an issue very close to my heart, and that is the need to stand up for who we are as a nation and the need to say no to men who use any excuse for rape—the need to say no to Sheikh al-Hilali. I say to the sheikh: you are not always misinterpreted. You were properly interpreted when you criticised the Jews; you have been properly interpreted when you have criticised women over the last couple of decades. No amount of backtracking, no amount of excuse making will cover up the fact that you have given an excuse to all rapists to say that this woman was not adequately covered.

We live in the 21st century; women can wear what they like. You may question their taste and you may not like the style of their clothing but they have a right to wear what they like without some perverted, medieval attitude of some so-called sheikh giving the excuse that Western style coverings should lay women open to some sort of sexual abuse. This is disgraceful and absolutely unacceptable.

Tonight we had the member for Scullin blaming the media for some reason for demonising Muslims. I say to the member for Scullin: give it up, mate. Where politicians in this House and outside fear to criticise any religious ideology or any ethnic way of thinking because they think they might lose votes, thank God we have a media that is not afraid to say it as it is. There is not enough of that in this House. What is telling is the silence of so many people. What is telling is
the fact that the Muslim community is divided and silent in its criticism of the sheikh. Can it get any clearer? I have been very vocal in my views. I do not accept the view that a five-year-old girl needs to cover herself so that she does not sexually incite men. That is disgusting. These are the attitudes that belonged to centuries ago. They do not belong in the world of today and they certainly do not belong to Australia.

Also what is quite deafening is the silence of the Labor sisterhood. We have seen this before. They were not there to criticise the former Labor leader when he called a female journalist a skanky ho and they were not there to defend Australian womanhood against this slur and very dangerous incitement. Why? It is because they are not prepared to look at the best interests of Australia, Australian women and Australian society. Their factions come first and woe betide their preselection if they happen to upset some factional warlord who relies on some sort of ethnic or Muslim stacking. That is what they fear more and it prevents them from standing up for what is right.

We have known for years that former Prime Minister Keating and Leo McLeay exerted pressure to incorrectly and falsely give Sheikh al-Hilali residency and then citizenship in this country. And now we are more or less, unless the law changes, stuck with this man who has not value added any understanding of any religious system or value system but keeps on blaming the rest of us for misunderstanding him. We did not misunderstand him when he called S11 ‘God’s work against the oppressors’ and we certainly have not misunderstood him calling all of us women ‘meat’ just because we do not grab a huge sheet and wrap ourselves as if we should be ashamed of the bodies that God gave us.

We are not going to stand by and let this man get away with it. There needs to be an end to cultural relativism. Australia cannot keep making excuses for this man and his views. There can be no excuse for rape. He said that Australia is a multicultural country and everyone can do what they like. No, they cannot. There are basic laws that apply to all Australians and one Australian legal system should apply to every single Australian whether they be atheist, Christian or Muslim. On behalf of not just the women in my electorate but all Australian women I reject these comments that he has made. I will not cease criticising this man until the women in the Labor Party stand up for what is right and until those in the Muslim community stand up and reject his teachings. (Time expired)

**Muslim Community**

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (9.29 pm)—I am happy for the member for Indi to attack Sheikh al-Hilali, because he is not somebody who needs defence, but I ask her to listen to others, to listen to the broad mainstream of Australian Islamic communities and to understand that they do live in fear because of their demonisation. But they do their best to reject the outrageous comments of people like Sheikh al-Hilali and live in peace in Australia.

**The SPEAKER**—Order! It being 9.30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 9.30 pm

**REQUESTS FOR DETAILED INFORMATION**

**Hansard**

Mr Price asked the Speaker:

Further to my previous question relating to the absence of conservation of Hansard volumes (Hansard, 5 September 2006, page 68):

(1) are the Hansard volumes in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices in the various State capitals owned by the Parliament; if not who owns them; and
(2) why has no assessment been made of the condition of the older *Hansard* volumes owned by the Parliament and any need for conservation, and when will such an assessment be made.

NOTICES

The following notice was given:

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** to move:

That clauses 11.1, 11.2 and 11.3 of Determination 2006/18: Members of Parliament—Entitlements, made pursuant to the *Remuneration Tribunal Act* 1973, that provide for the aggregation of the charter and communications allowances of a member representing an electorate of 10,000 square km or more, be disapproved.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins) took the chair at 4 pm.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Skills for the Future

Debate resumed from 19 October, on motion by Mr Abbott:

That the House take note of the following document:

Skills for the Future—Ministerial Statement, 12 October 2006

Mr HAYES (Werriwa) (4.00 pm)—It is telling that the Prime Minister has recognised his recent contribution to the skills crisis and categorises it as better late than never. That is a pretty good summation of how the Prime Minister has considered the skills debate in this country for the last decade that he has been in office. The government’s record on training can only be characterised as appalling. It has long neglected the need to adequately fund training courses, and Australia is now suffering. The government’s denial of the crisis, its willingness to try to paper over the cracks, has only allowed the training system to deteriorate. Its unwillingness to look beyond to the national interest means that, quite frankly, people in this country, young people, have missed out.

A number of government members have contributed to this debate so far, and many of them have focused on job creation. They have all marched into this place and sprouted the government’s line about how many jobs the government has created and how many more apprenticeships there are. What they have not been gloating about is how many young people have been turned away from TAFE in the last decade. They have not been saying anything about the fact that, under this government’s watch, over 300,000 young Australians have been turned away from TAFE, while 270,000 skilled workers have been imported to work in this country.

Also, they have not been crowing about the OECD’s Education at a glance report, which shows that since 1995 Australia is one of the only countries that has reduced its public sector investment in education. While other countries have increased their investment by an average of 48 per cent over that period, this country has cut spending in that regard by an average of seven per cent. As a result, teenage unemployment in some areas is at a level that, quite frankly, has not been seen for a lot of years. In particular, in my region of Werriwa—but let us talk a little more broadly and take in Macarthur as well—figures released in September this year indicate that teenage unemployment is now at 27.9 per cent, the highest it has been since April 2002.

In the Liverpool-Fairfield area, the figures show that nearly one in four teenagers is unemployed. When we look further afield, we see that teenage unemployment in the Illawarra is at a staggering 41 per cent. These are people who need to be invested in. While I hope that some residents in the south-west of Sydney will be able to take advantage of the 30,000 vouchers that the government proposes in its statement, I fear there are many people who will simply be left behind. Many people will not have the opportunity to gain further skills to assist them in finding secure, long-term employment. While the actions of the government will be welcomed by some, I know that there will be far too many people who will remain out in the cold.
I was interested to hear the Prime Minister hold firm to his commitment of 25 Australian technical colleges in his announcement about his commitment to training in this country. It is on the record that I have spoken out against these technical colleges in the past and I have been of the very clear view that these technical colleges are nothing but a poor facsimile of the existing TAFE system. I know they are a poor facsimile because they are the same, for all intents and purposes, as TAFE, the biggest difference being the requirement for teachers and staff of the Australian technical colleges to be engaged on Australian workplace agreements.

As members on both sides of the House realise, the government introduced the Australian technical colleges solely as a means of driving forward their industrial relations agenda. It was not about training opportunities for the young; it was about making sure that the tentacles of their extreme industrial relations laws extended as far as they possibly could. They had no inhibition about hooking onto everything from universities to the Australian TAFE system if it would further the interest of their industrial agenda.

It seems that the tentacles are not extending quite as far as the government would like, particularly in Western Sydney. Recent reports indicate that the Australian Technical College Western Sydney is in real doubt at the moment. On 16 October this year the ABC’s AM program reported:

The Federal Government’s plan for a network of technical colleges for teenagers to finish school while completing apprenticeships is in trouble.

The Western Sydney College, which was supposed to begin operating next year, now says it won’t be taking students, and there’s a question mark over whether it will start up at all.

That means that training opportunities for Western Sydney people are in real jeopardy. That is of considerable concern as there are plenty of people in the western suburbs of Sydney who would like nothing more than a chance to get into training, get a trade and target secure and permanent employment. Of course, the Western Sydney college is not the only technical college that is struggling to get off the ground at the moment. As AM reported: ‘Only five of the colleges are operating.’

If this is the commitment of this government to training—if this is the level of commitment they will bring to introducing their Skills for the Future package—then, quite frankly, they should not have bothered. The government’s ‘better late than never’ and ‘she’ll be right’ attitude to skills has got us where we are today. Australia is suffering from a skills shortage because of this government’s inactivity in looking to the future and training young Australians.

So far under the Australian technical colleges program we have spent $18 million on 281 students. Those students must be getting some really good training because that works out at $64,000 each. The most glaring oversight in the Prime Minister’s statement is that there is nothing to help young people who want to get into training and use that training to get a job. There is nothing in his statement which will address rising levels of teenage unemployment in the south-west of Sydney. Once again, the government has abandoned the needs of the people and the businesses of Western Sydney. What makes matters worse is that it has tried to simply paper over the cracks which it has allowed to appear in its system, and the young people of south-west Sydney are paying a huge price.

Labor has plans for skills, and unlike the government’s plan, you will not have to wait until you are over 25 to participate and take advantage. Labor has responded to the need to promote economic growth and secure prosperity into the future by investing in its people. We have
been talking for a long time on our side of the House about the need to invest in the future of our young people and in the economic growth of this country. For some time now we have known that there are not going to be enough people to fill the demand for skilled labour into the future. We recognise the problem. We realise there is going to be a handbrake on growth because we have a shortage of skilled labour.

Our plans are trying to develop that and making provisions to assist economic growth through the training and education of our kids as they attempt to enter the workforce. Labor realises that it is about time that the trend of taking money away from education is reversed. Every other advanced economy in the OECD knows that to be the case. Simply investing in kids is not something we should be doing on the basis of seeking an immediate return in the next budget period. This is all about investing in generational growth and long-term economic security. That is why we have set up a program for investing in education right through from skills to higher education in this country—the very things that this government, 10 years ago, set about reversing once it got involved. This government set us on the path of reversing the trend that had occurred—that it had inherited from the Hawke-Keating government.

We know that it is important to invest in our children while they are at school and to fast-track them through apprenticeships. We outlined that in the skills blueprint in September. I have had some personal experience in this. One of my sons was able to be fast-tracked through trade training through his education while he was at school. He was able to achieve the first year of a trade apprentice training while he attended college. It took one whole year off his TAFE training as an electrician once he left school and I think it reduced his actual apprenticeship by a further six months. We know we can do these things, but we do not need to leave it to a school to do in isolation. This is something that we can actually plan to do in such a way that all kids are able to participate, not simply the lucky ones who have a headmaster who is sufficiently farsighted to think that this is a good way to assist people into vocational education.

Labor has announced that when in government it will address the fundamental skills issues: to get people back into traditional trades; to encourage them to see their apprenticeships through to the end, and to do that through a trade completion bonus; to scrap TAFE fees for traditional trades; and to get school students, like my son, to look at trades as a viable option while they are still at school. This is something that we on our side of the House are committed to, Mr Deputy Speaker Jenkins, as you are well aware. This is our policy. It is what our country needs if we are serious about addressing skills shortages into the future and if we are serious about productivity growth in our economy.

It is not enough to stand in this place, announce some big spending proposals and forget about everyone who is not 25 years and over. This government has consistently sneered at the public contribution to education. Its approach to cutting rather than contributing began in 1997 when it implemented massive budget cuts to TAFEs and universities. And that has continued ever since. In 1998, this government actually abolished the national skills shortage strategy. Just today we saw a report by Monash University that indicated that, unless the government acts on university education, gaps are set to emerge among managers, professionals and associate professionals—now and into the future. One of the authors, Professor Bob Birrell, is reported as having said today:
There’s been a decade of neglect of higher education on the part of the Coalition, and this is now showing up in serious shortages in the output of graduates from the higher education system ...

Now in a mad rush and flurry to spend—including, of course, for the obligatory advertising that is attached to this—we have a government that is out there simply attempting to cover up its 10 years of neglect of education, higher education and vocational training. *(Time expired)*

**Mr NEVILLE** (Hinkler) (4.15 pm)—I would very much like to speak on this ministerial statement, because the $837 million Skills for the Future package will give Australians the opportunity to gain new work skills and develop a far more entrepreneurial and forward-looking workforce. Gone are the days when an individual could complete a trade after leaving school and safely stay in that line of work through the whole of their working life. These days people know that they need to continuously upgrade their work skills to suit the workplace, their life situations and the needs of their families.

Take, for example, the case of electronics. Electronics in their modern form probably have not been with us for more than 30 years. If we continued to study electronics at the level that they were at 30 years ago, how would we be today with broadband, the internet, 3G and all those sorts of things? Obviously the people in those fields have to upgrade their skills. Think of the old PMG techs—the ones who stayed on. If they wanted to be part of the new generation they had to upgrade their skills—and so it will be in many occupations in years to come.

So it is not simply, as some of the opposition have suggested, a matter of creating new classes at TAFE; it is a matter of targeting the areas where new skills are going to be needed.

The government’s Skills for the Future package focuses on improving the basic skills of Australians, and I am pleased to say it will be especially helpful to adults to improve their literacy and numeracy skills as well. That is another problem. We find that, as the world becomes more technical and more advanced in the presentation of its material, literacy and numeracy become even more important. The package also focuses on trade apprenticeships, which means that workers looking to take up midcareer apprenticeships will be eligible for financial assistance, while apprentices in traditional trades can receive the necessary support to take them one further step in establishing and running their own businesses.

The package also makes a substantial new investment in Australia’s future engineering skills by funding more university places and offering extra employer incentives so that Australians can gain higher levels of technical skills, right up to diploma and advanced diploma levels. From 1 January next year, people aged 25 and over who have not completed year 12 or an equivalent qualification will be eligible for vouchers of up to $3,000 to help with the cost of study to year 12 or an equivalent level, or for courses of a vocational and technical nature to a certificate II level. Up to 30,000 of these vouchers will be available each year, and they can be used at public, private or community training provider establishments.

From the second half of next year there will be financial support for people who are part-way through their working lives and who want to take up an apprenticeship in an occupation of high demand—and we all know about this great shortage of skilled labour, especially along the Queensland and New South Wales coastline. A lot of young people today are seduced by the extraordinarily well paid jobs that have developed in the coalfields. While I do not for a minute make any disparaging remarks about their hard work—they are certainly earning tremendous money—I wonder what happens at the end of this cycle and whether some of them will have qualifications when they come back into the coastal workforce again.
Many of the adults who would be prepared to fill those gaps find it difficult to go into an apprenticeship because they have family commitments. They are paying off a house, they are paying off a car and they have kids at school, and an apprenticeship wage just will not keep them. So under this new scheme they will be able to be subsidised with a weekly payment of $150 in their first year of an apprenticeship and $100 per week in the second year. I think that will be very handy for people. A lot of people come into my office with tremendous acquired skills but without qualifications or they have been overseas and their qualification is not accepted in Australia. I think this part of the scheme will really help those people.

I think this presents a fantastic opportunity for people who may already be on a work site, on a mining site, in a labouring role or in some other position and who want to take up the new challenge of having a profession. From 1 January 2008, the government will provide an extra 500 Commonwealth supported engineering places at universities to make up for a projected shortfall in engineering graduates. Of course, this is another problem. The problem we have experienced with doctors, dentists and some sections of teaching, of getting people to go into country areas, is now swinging over on to engineers and so extra Commonwealth places supporting engineering will be most welcome.

This is a comprehensive package which will help existing workers upgrade their skills while offering a firm foundation for those needing to consolidate their basic education qualifications. The initiative also ties in neatly with the government’s existing plan for Australian technical colleges. My electorate is fortunate in having one of the Australian technical colleges. It is located at Gladstone. The Gladstone Australian Technical College is being run by a consortium made up of Gladstone Area Group Apprentice Ltd, the Gladstone Engineering Alliance, Commerce Queensland, Eagle Crane and Rigging and the Central Queensland Ports Authority. The college opened its doors in January and operates out of five state schools—Gladstone, Toolooa, Tannum, Moura and Biloela high schools and two non-government schools, Chanel College and St Stephen’s Lutheran College.

The community partnerships which have been forged in Gladstone between business, training and education and local government put the city and the wider region in a very good position to take full advantage of the framework that is offered under the ATC initiative. This particular college was targeted by the opposition this year for having only one student enrolled. I am happy to report that Gladstone’s enrolment currently stands at 29. The college aims to have 65 local students on its books in the metal and engineering trades, the automotive trades and electrotechnology. By 2009, it is hoped the enrolments will be at the 135 mark and the syllabus will be expanded to include building, construction, mining and process plant operations.

I think this should be seen against the backdrop of what is already happening in Gladstone. It was probably a bit harder to get an ATC started in Gladstone because it in a way had become the forerunner of the school to work transition. Arguably the Toolooa State High School in Gladstone was the first that took up the idea of school to work transition. Even before the official government framework had been put together, they had started a model. They give their classes in the lecture theatres of the NRG powerhouse, where the young people work in an industrial environment. They do three or four academic subjects and then for two years—years 11 and 12—they also do their trade subjects. But this is not just theory in school; it is in a real, live workplace.
A number of students last year, I think it was 90 per cent, had their apprenticeships ready when they came out of that course. About 45 per cent of the year 11s, 18 months out from finishing school, already had their apprenticeships teed up. That is a marvellous result.

Overlaying that, we will have the formal ATC model. There is yet another model at Gladstone, at Tannum Sands State High School—one of my favourites. This school tried unsuccessfully under the old ANTA arrangements to get a business-type college associated with the school for years 11 and 12. The idea of that was to again have the students’ work in the Boyne smelter, in a proper work environment, where they would see real, live work on a day-to-day basis. On top of that, it was hoped to get the kids to levels II and III of their certificates in both computer science and business studies. You can imagine someone coming out with a year 12 certificate, a certificate in computer science and another certificate in office management; they are a long way along the way. And for them to be able to say to an employer, ‘I have had some real, live training in a workplace,’ is even better. That is yet another one in the Gladstone area.

Between 1996 and 2006 there has been an increase of 104 per cent in the number of apprentices in Hinkler; it has more than doubled. This gives the lie to the remarks of some in the opposition who are trying to denigrate the traineeships. I am not saying traineeships are the same academic or skills level as a full four- or three-year apprenticeship. No-one has ever said that. But the traineeship is pitched to the level of expertise required for a particular trade, and that is important.

In Hinkler, 138 per cent of the increase in the number of apprenticeships has been completed in certificates III and IV—in other words, in the top end of the skills—but if what the opposition said was correct, you would have expected them at the lower level. That has not been the case. I suspect what is happening in Hinkler would be reflected in other seats around us, such as Capricornia, Wide Bay, Dawson, Herbert and the like.

Another coalition initiative which complements this is the Tools for Your Trade program, which provides $800 for tool kits for Australian apprentices who commenced in registered skills shortage trades from 1 July 2005. As of 18 September this year, there were 989 apprentices in Hinkler who were eligible for these tool kits. There is near enough to 1,000 kids with tool kits as well.

My colleague the member for Cowper made an interesting point when he spoke on this matter. He said, ‘The opposition has never had to worry about skills shortage because of its own inability to create jobs’—a bit harsh, but if the cap fits. As I said, this is no longer the case in Gladstone or the wider Central Queensland region.

This is also reflected in the fact that in June 2001 there were 13,800 unemployed people in the Central Queensland region—that is, Mackay, Fitzroy and the central west. I am proud to say that, five years on, that 13,800 has been reduced to 5,500; more than halved. I am also pleased to say that the number of people employed has increased from 143,000 to 194,000; that is by over 50,000. If you divide that by five, you find that is about a 35 per cent increase overall, about seven per cent per year.

In Gladstone—where I also monitor the Centrelink figures very closely, because they represent real live flesh and blood people who need assistance from government—in the 10 years we have been in government the figure has dropped from 1,838 to 805, so more than half. You
can see from that that these new initiatives—which we put in place in the earlier part of our term of government and which we have in place for the continuing term of the government—have placed the people of Central Queensland in a very advantageous position.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (4.30 pm)—While I rise to recognise and take note of Skills for the future, I would like to note that even in the Prime Minister’s own address to the House he said:

While it is clear that claims about a skills crisis are exaggerated, Australia does face real skills challenges arising from an ageing population, rapid technological change and an increasingly competitive global economy.

What the Prime Minister failed to recognise was that over the last 10 years of his government he neglected the area of skills. That is the greatest cause of the skills crisis that we are having at the moment. If we are having an ‘exaggerated’ skills crisis, it is interesting that he is throwing $837 million to boost vocational training. On the one hand we do not have a crisis but on the other hand we are going to have a large package to assist people who are obviously in areas of skill shortage.

Whilst the Prime Minister can probably take some heart from the fact that there is a healthy and dynamic labour market that has ensured that the need for workers is growing rapidly every day and that there is a need for workers in very skilled areas, he cannot take heart from the fact that for over 10 years he has done nothing about it. He has done nothing to address the shortfalls in chronic areas. They have known about them. The issue has been emphasised by leading business groups, the Reserve Bank and all of the senior modellers of the economy. They have all been saying that there are two great impediments to the economy continuing to grow as rapidly as it has: skills and infrastructure. For 10 years we have had this booming economy. They could have done something; instead they have not.

We have the only government in the OECD that is actually investing less in education and training. The OECD’s Education at a glance report showed that Australia is the only advanced economy that has reduced its public sector investment in education since 1995. It is the only one in the world. Whilst other nations have increased their spend by about 48 per cent, Australia has cut its spend by seven per cent. It does not matter how much the Prime Minister or the minister for education get up and down and quote numbers, the raw statistics show it all. The OECD report demonstrates quite dramatically that there has been a massive cut in spending on education and training, particularly in higher education and in TAFE training.

While the Prime Minister and his various ministers for education have moaned that Labor has no interest in TAFE training, they have not talked about the fact that 300,000 people have been turned away from TAFE over the last 10 years. On the one hand we have this skills crisis while on the other we have had 300,000 people who have wanted to take a real live apprenticeship that takes three to four years to do and is not a traineeship—they are actually ‘rinky dinky didge’ going to get a TAFE certificate at the end of it and come out as a skilled tradesperson. Yet these people have been turned away from the TAFE system.

In my electorate we have some phenomenal educational institutions. We have the Box Hill Institute of TAFE, one of Australia’s leading TAFE institutions. Incidentally, I met with the CEO of the Box Hill TAFE at Sydney airport the other day and I asked where he was off to. He said: ‘I am off to China to sign a deal. We will be training people through various large
hotel chains throughout China. We will be training them through the Box Hill TAFE in all 
areas of service delivery from child care, hospitality, service and maintenance to engineering.’
Here is my little TAFE in downtown Box Hill off to sign another international agreement. 
They currently have 12 or 15 such agreements with countries around the world.

Whilst we do have an Australian technical college set up, it is not in my electorate of Chis-
holm but in the electorate next door, Deakin. Money has gone into duplicating—and this is 
the absolute irony of this system—the wonderful system we have in the TAFE. The college is 
set up in a school environment at two schools in Ringwood. Instead of giving that money 
back to the TAFE sector—back to the educational sector—we try to duplicate and replicate it 
and try to retrofit a very bad model that is meant to be led by business. A lot of the businesses 
have said, ‘This is too complicated; we don’t want to do it,’ and a lot of the TAFEs have said, 
‘We do not want to get involved in this because we are actually stealing from our own supply 
of students by getting involved in these things that are way too complicated.’

So the Prime Minister’s statement on skills misses the mark. Whilst we welcome the pack-
age—because it has ripped off a lot of Labor initiatives—it has missed the mark and it fails to 
recognise the government’s 10 years of neglect. Box Hill TAFE could have taken the money 
that has gone to set up the Ringwood ATC. It could have absorbed it and continued to run its 
phenomenal programs. For the last couple of years, it has had the Victorian Apprentice of the 
Year. Its output is phenomenal. It is a world-recognised educational institution.

Down the road from Box Hill TAFE is the Box Hill Senior Secondary College. It runs a 
Year 11 and 12 program. It runs a vast range of programs. I was there a couple of weeks back 
after a fire had come through and, sadly, gutted half the school, but it is managing to continue. 
It runs a phenomenal range of programs particularly catered to individuals who do not want to 
do mainstream academia and who want to do hands-on skilled work. Again, member for Hin-
kler, this school runs a program where the students come for a couple of days and also go into 
the workforce for a couple of days, so when they get to a job they can say, ‘Yes, I understand, 
when you say I have to be here at 7 o’clock in the morning, that I have to be here at 7 o’clock 
in the morning and that my mum should not still be yelling at me to get out of bed.’ They un-
derstand the notion of being at work for the whole day—that when they feel like a snack at 
about 11 o’clock they cannot just wander off. They have notions about what being work ready 
is.

The school runs that program. It has found it incredibly successful. Box Hill TAFE have 
said time and time again that if you want an apprentice to finish their four years, give them a 
pre-apprenticeship program, then they understand what is going to be involved. It is not some-
thing where they think, ‘Gee, I would like to be a sparky or a plumber and I’ll get to hang out 
with my dog and run around in the ute,’ or something like that. There are actually fairly rigor-
ous requirements. If they do the pre-apprenticeship training, they understand what is going to 
be involved, and they understand the rigorous educational side that they are also taking on. 
But these things have been allowed to slide. The pre-apprenticeship program run through 
TAFE was defunded. They had to go to the state government to get additional funding to run 
that. They did not want to lose it because they found that it was the most appropriate way of 
ensuring that a young person was ready to go into the workforce and that the employer they 
were going to knew that that individual understood what work readiness was all about.
In the Prime Minister’s statement he talked about the challenges for people who had left school early and who had not been back in the education environment for a while and that we needed to cater for these people—some of whom, as the Prime Minister said, do not have fond memories of school. Again, the Box Hill TAFE has run a very successful program of short courses. People might come in and do something totally unrelated to a career opportunity, but they are going back into the TAFE environment. They are going back into the educational sector so that they can re-understand what it is like to be educated, what it is like to be in these places, that they are not the only person over 30 there and that they will be able to deal with it.

The previous minister for education, Brendan Nelson, used to bag these courses quite mercilessly. He got up in the parliament on numerous occasions and had a go at Box Hill TAFE for running a belly-dancing course. What he never mentioned about this belly-dancing course was that it was a full fee course. It was a short course and it was run probably for a bit of fun for a lot of people, but it also gave people the notion that they could learn and that they could go back into an educational environment. A lot of these short courses then had a very good spin-off effect, where these older people thought: ‘This is not too scary. I can now retrain, regroup and go back into the TAFE sector.’

So, again, we have all these instances of a good package in some respects. A lot of initiatives that the government has announced in the $837 million spend are Labor party policy. But it has taken too long. It has taken 10 years of neglect. You did not need to listen to us. The Governor of the Reserve Bank has been going on and on about this. The August 2006 statement on monetary policy said:

Over the year to the June quarter, employment growth was strongest in the mining and electricity, gas & water industries—but there has been a lack of skills in that area. It continued:

Survey-based indicators and vacancy data mostly suggest that demand for labour is still strong and that the labour market will remain tight. The ABS measure of job vacancies increased in the June quarter, to show a nationwide vacancy rate of 1.5 per cent, the highest level in over thirty years ... Private-sector measures of vacancies also show robust annual growth in job vacancies. ... Continued strength in labour demand has led to ongoing labour shortages. Business surveys report that firms are experiencing difficulty finding suitable labour, and employers note that this remains a key factor constraining their output. Feedback from the Bank’s liaison program indicates that labour shortages are broad-based across industries and skill levels. However, shortages are most pronounced for skilled workers in the non-residential construction and resources sectors, and in much of the business services sector.

The Reserve Bank has been highlighting it.

I was recently in Karratha. It is an interesting and very dusty place, but it is a ‘boom city’ and they cannot get skilled workers. They cannot even entice them in on the massive wages they are paying to these young people, because there is no need for them to go there. One of the businesses in the area said that the hardest people to employ nowadays are people in fast-food outlets. Why work in McDonald’s for a couple of dollars an hour when you can go out to a mine or somewhere else and earn $20 or $30 an hour? These issues have been known for a long time and I think something should have been done about them. But we have been living with myth instead of reality.
The report released today by Bob Birrell, from the Centre for Population and Urban Research at Monash University, which is also in my electorate, and requested by the Dusseldorf Skills Forum, which does fantastic work in the area of youth employment and youth skills and training, says that there have been too many myths put out by this government. Australia is the beneficiary of great economic times, but the report asks if this is delivering the education and training dividend that the country needs. The report states:

Recent Australian Government higher education and training policy has been misguided, having apparently fallen for several popular myths:

Myth 1: There has been too much emphasis on university education

Myth 2: There is inherent conflict between expanding trade training and maintaining or increasing university education

Myth 3: In future years there will be declining numbers of young people entering the workforce.

In respect of myth 1, the report indicates:

The fastest growing areas of the workforce are in managerial, professional and associate professional occupations, most of which rely on workers with knowledge and skills derived from tertiary qualifications. However over the period 1996 to 2005 there has only been a marginal increase in university commencements by domestic students—

During the Coalition’s decade in office the potential of the higher education sector to contribute to Australia’s workforce demands appears to have been neglected. There has been plenty of sectoral reform to universities but little improvement in access or opportunity.

Indeed, we have seen that there has been a decrease in access and opportunity with massive HECS fees and increases in up-front fees being more and more prominent. Regarding myth 2, that a choice must be made between trade training and university education, the report continues:

Training at the higher education and trade level should not be seen in opposition. We can and should be expanding participation in both. There are far too many young Australians ill equipped to provide the skills needed in a labour market where most of the growth is in jobs requiring technical, analytical and managerial skills. In 2005, 46 percent of school-leavers were not enrolled in any post-school education. There were large numbers of young adults not working or studying full-time: 21 percent of 20 year-old men and 33 percent of 20 year-old women, for example.

So we have this huge number of people who will take up no education or training at all. This means the skills crisis and skills divide will continue. On myth 3, that there will be declining numbers of young people entering the workforce, the report says:

Australia is not running out of young people. The total labour force will increase from an estimated 10.54m in 2006 to an estimated 13.61m in 2051, mainly due to migration. Despite this, the annual rate of growth of the labour force is estimated to fall from about 1.6 percent currently to less than half this rate by 2051. This is largely because of the waves of baby boomer retirements due to occur in coming years. The number of 15-19 year olds will increase from an estimated 1.4m in 2006 to an estimated 1.58m in 2051. National wealth will rely on productivity growth and increasing the skills of the Australian workforce. Migration and re-skilling of older workers are valid policy choices to help address this. However skilling young Australians offers both the greatest potential source of additional skilled workers, and is the most efficient and productive policy approach.

Australia’s future prospects will depend on the near universal engagement of young Australians in education and training. Not coercively but in ways that:
• sharply increase the number of funded university places for domestic students
• improve accessibility to university campuses
• offer financial support for students from families of modest income.

So instead of having this debate that it is either/or—it is either trade or university—we actually need both.

There is a fantastic book that I would recommend to anybody in this chamber, called *Wittgenstein’s Poker*. Both Wittgenstein and Popper, who are two of the 20th century’s greatest philosophers, undertook trade training. One was a cabinet-maker and one was a plumber. They both said that they probably learned more from their masters who trained them in their trade than they ever learnt at university. It is not an either/or. We need to ensure that education is for everyone and that young people are taking it up now. (*Time expired*)

Debate (on motion by **Mr Wilkie**) adjourned.

**COMMITTEES**

**Treaties Committee**

**Reports**

Debate resumed from 19 October, on motion by **Dr Southcott**:

That the House take note of the reports.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Barresi)—Before the debate is resumed, I remind the committee that it has been agreed that a general debate be allowed covering report No. 79 and report No. 80 of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

**Mr WILKIE** (Swan) (4.46 pm)—I intend to make some remarks regarding both report No. 79 and report No. 80. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties report No. 79 contains a review of 10 treaty actions, all of which are recommended for binding treaty action. The extradition treaty with Malaysia and Exchange of Notes adopts the no-evidence approach to extradition requests. Under the current arrangements for extradition to and from Malaysia, the requesting party is required to provide a brief of evidence sufficient to establish a prima facie case. The no-evidence approach requires a provision of sufficient information to determine that the person is sought in legitimate pursuit of the enforcement of the criminal law of the country making the request. The adoption of the no-evidence approach is part of an international trend towards simplifying extradition treaties. As Malaysia retains the death penalty for a number of offences, the extradition treaty with Malaysia provides a number of safeguards to ensure that a person extradited to Malaysia under the treaty will not be subject to the death penalty. Bilateral extradition treaties are reliable and effective means by which a country may request or grant the surrender of fugitives.

Protocol V on the explosive remnants of war is the fifth protocol to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. The convention is an important instrument of international humanitarian law, and Protocol V extends the scope of the convention to include measures to minimise the risks and effects of explosive remnants of war. The committee was informed that the Australian delegation played an active role in the negotiation of Protocol V and advocated striking a balance between addressing the humanitarian impact of explosive remnants of war and legitimate military needs. The delegation also supported a pragmatic approach to clearance responsibilities outside a state’s control. The committee was
also informed that Protocol V is consistent with Australia’s commitment to limiting the impact of armed conflict on civilian populations.

The amendments to the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement to ensure compliance with changes to the homogenised commodity description and coding system will, through changes to how goods are identified, seek to avoid possible confusion and subsequent delays in processing of goods by customs authorities. The homogenised commodity description and coding system, or HS, is an international system for classifying goods traded internationally.

The World Customs Organisation, of which Australia and its free trade partners are members, oversees the HS. Revision and amendment to the HS occurs every five years to reflect changes in commodities trading. HS 2007 creates new HS tariff line numbers to reflect a new product entering the market, the deletion of a tariff line number where a commodity is no longer traded, or the movement of a tariff line number from one subheading or category of goods to another to account for changes in the use of the good. The committee was informed that amendments to the Thailand-Australia Free Trade Agreement are currently being negotiated but will come before the committee for review. The committee was also informed that there will be further amendments to the Singapore free trade agreement and the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement in the future.

I want to move on to report No. 80. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties report No. 80 contains the review of two treaty actions—firstly, the treaty between the government of Australia and the People’s Republic of China on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and, secondly, the exchange of letters constituting an agreement between the government of Australia and the government of New Zealand to amend article 3 of the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement, ANZCERTA, of 28 March 1983. I spoke quite extensively in the House with regard to this particular treaty last sitting week. Both treaty actions are recommended for binding treaty action.

The mutual legal assistance in criminal matters treaty with China is similar to the other 24 such agreements Australia has in place. The mutual assistance treaty with China will assist Australian efforts to combat transnational crime in the Asia-Pacific region. In relation to the amendments to ANZCERTA, the opposition members of the committee have included a dissenting report to report 80. The opposition members of the committee support comments included in paragraph 2.69 and recommendation 1 of the report. On balance, opposition members of the committee recognise that the agreement will increase trade between Australia and New Zealand in a mutually beneficial way and serve to strengthen existing economic ties between the countries. However, the opposition members of the committee remain extremely concerned about the impact on jobs as a result of the change to the rules of origin in respect of the category of goods manufactured by Albright and Wilson Australia. Opposition members of the committee dissent from recommendation No. 2 and make a new recommendation:

(a) binding treaty action be taken; and

(b) negotiations between Australia and New Zealand commence immediately to secure agreement on retention of the RVC method of calculating ROO under the current ANZCERTA for tariff line 3402.20 before the Amending Agreement comes into force.

As I said in the House, this is extremely important for Australia because we currently have a company here that, although it is owned overseas, employs Australian workers and has profits
going into Australia and the situation arising whereby that company will be significantly dis-
advantaged as a result of these changes—drastically disadvantaged because they stand to lose
65 jobs and over $2 million of profit going into our country.

The reason this has occurred is because there was inadequate consultation by the depart-
ment with companies that could be adversely affected by these changes. When it was finally
pointed out to the department that this company could be suffering dramatically as a result of
the introduction of these measures the government said, ‘Look, we are sorry that this is going
to happen to you, but we don’t intend to do anything about it because you were too late in
responding to us.’

I find that this is absolutely outrageous. You have a company that knows they are affected.
They have come before the government in good faith and said, ‘We need these changes to
take place and take force,’ but because they got in a little bit late they were not included. This
was not the case with other industries. You can appreciate that, if this applied across-the-board
and the government had been consistent, there may be some justification here. But no. In the
clothing and textile industry, when it was brought to the government’s attention that there was
a problem, that they were going to lose jobs and income as a result of these changes, the gov-
ernment excluded men’s suits, for example, from this agreement so that it would not impact
harshly on Australian business. They also did the same with regard to some aspects of motor
vehicle parts I believe.

What we have here—make no bones about it—is a situation where the government, those
people who pretend they represent business and support business, are seeing 65 jobs go and
millions of dollars of profit going from Australia to New Zealand. What they are doing is
handing New Zealand—it is a New Zealand registered company—all this money and jobs to
the exclusion of Australians. This is something that could have been prevented, and the gov-
ernment chose not to prevent it. It is a disgraceful neglect of Australia’s interests in this par-
ticular case. The government get up there and say, ‘Look, we really care for business,’ but
when it comes down to it, even though they could have done something about it, they have
decided not to.

The opposition members of this committee believe there is something that can be done. If
the department gets out there now and starts these negotiations with New Zealand before
these measures come into effect on 1 January 2007 there is a chance that something can be
done to protect the interests of Australians, Australian jobs and Australian profits. But it takes
courage on the part of this government. They need to get out there and do it. I am not hopeful
that they will, because their record in this regard is quite appalling, but we as opposition
members believe they must. They must stand up for Australia first and cease this particular
outrage on Australian workers. We commend the report and particularly the dissenting report
80 to the House.

Mr ADAMS (Lyons) (4.55 pm)—I wish to make some comments in relation to the report
that the Deputy Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties has just spoken on—that
is, report No. 80 on treaties tabled on 28 March and 5 September this year. The report con-
cerns the exchange of letters constituting an agreement between the government of Australia
and the government of New Zealand to amend article 3 of the Australia-New Zealand Closer
Economic Relations Trade Agreement—ANZCERTA.
As the member for Swan has just commented, the report deals with the matter of Albright and Wilson, an Australian registered company. Under the heading ‘Impact on Competition’ at 2.40, we deal with the issue of how this agreement impacts on that particular company. It is a $100 million chemical company employing approximately 130 people. Some of the chemicals manufactured and mixed in this area go into detergents.

Under the agreement with New Zealand there are rules of origin. Rules of origin concern where products start off. Part of a product might start somewhere and another bit might start somewhere else and it ends up being manufactured into a product. Licensing rules of origin can be a bit complex from time to time. Under the amended agreement, the Albright and Wilson company, which has a factory at Yarraville and employs 130 people, potentially could lose 65 jobs because of the new rules. The company came before the committee to state their case and fight for some changes. There is $7 million worth of trade for this company in New Zealand, so it is not something to be fobbed off lightly. To reduce trade across the Tasman to this extent, I believe, is just damn foolish. Our trade department should have acted a little more in the interest of our country.

The Australian Food and Grocery Council attended to support the other company. Therefore, they supported the loss of 65 jobs and $7 million worth of trade to New Zealand. I do not think they should have put themselves in that position, but they did. When I asked if there was anything in this for the consumer, I was told that they did not know if it was going to lower prices for the consumer and did not know if there were any benefits in changing these rules of origin to the effect that it was going to cost Australia $7 million in trade figures and 65 jobs. They could not tell me this.

This is a real failure by DFAT. This is a failure of our Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Other arrangements were made in relation to suits, textiles and clothing and, I understand, car components. Maybe those two matters are a little closer to you and your electorate, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker Barresi. Maybe those matters would have reflected on your electorate—and not on one particular Labor electorate, where these 65 jobs are going to be lost. Maybe they would have been above the radar and maybe they would have had to be dealt with. I do not believe that it is good enough for one company to come to the table, be told the information, receive information well after people have started negotiating change and then—when they are well behind the eight ball—try to catch up and try to state their position. It is not good enough. It is not good enough from our department of trade officials. They need to do a lot better than that.

The ALP members brought down a dissenting report to indicate that we certainly support our trade agreement with New Zealand and our closer economic relationship. I was part of the Tasmanian cabinet when that was being negotiated. I can remember having a meeting about it with trade officials way back then. This has been a good agreement, and we are going well, but this situation takes us backwards. There was a failure of process here, and our department of trade ought to face up to it. It is a very poor outcome for Australia, and we should act on it. I would certainly hope—as the deputy chair of the treaties committee, the member for Swan, has stated—that those officials will go out and endeavour to rectify the issue before this treaty takes effect through these letters.

I was very disappointed in the government members. Their attitude was very poor. Instead of standing up and taking an opportunity to say that the committee means something—here is
an opportunity to stand up for the country, to go outside and do something—they failed the test. The chair comes from the same state as the minister; they are good mates. He could not quite find the energy to stand up and say: ‘Listen, we don’t think this is right; maybe we should give a strike to the department. Maybe we should shake them a bit. Maybe we should rattle the cage.’ He could not even get the government members to do that. He failed at every opportunity to do something for the country. He had the opportunity to ask the department to go back and have another look—do it for 65 workers; do it for $7 million worth of trade—but no, they could not do that.

I believe the treaties committee plays a very good role. There are times when the committee has a very good role to play, and members should stand up and be counted. There was a time for that role to be fulfilled in this matter, but the government members decided not to. They decided: ‘No, we don’t want to rock the boat; we don’t want to offend the minister; we don’t want to have to have an argument. Therefore, we’ll let go of 65 jobs and $7 million worth of trade.’ That is not in the public interest of Australia, and those government members have failed dismally to represent their country.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand) (5.04 pm)—Can I thank my colleagues who have already spoken on this—the member for Swan and the member for Lyons. They have extensively pursued in the treaties committee an issue of great importance to my electorate, and I do appreciate that and I want to publicly record my thanks to them for pursuing this issue that is of so much importance to 65 people who are currently employed by Albright and Wilson at a site in Yarrawille on the Maribyrnong River in my electorate. What I want to emphasise in addition to the details that the members for Swan and Lyon have put forward is that there is still time for the government to fix this problem. There still is time. If the Howard government has the will to actually pay attention to the plight of Australian workers and to be concerned about those 65 people in my electorate, there is time for it to fix this problem.

What is required, as has been outlined by my colleagues, is actually a fairly simple change to the agreement that has been reached between Australia and New Zealand. There is no reason that this agreement cannot come into effect on 1 January as is intended, because there are other benefits to the country in this agreement. However, there is time for a separate negotiation to be entered into and for there to be an agreement to include this exception in a schedule or for there to be any understanding that says this one small item that is affected by this agreement could remain as it currently is. By doing that—if the government were prepared to make this concession to go back to the New Zealand government and ask to negotiate this particular provision for this product—we would save 65 jobs in my electorate and we would do absolutely zero harm to the trade relationship between Australia and New Zealand. It is a nonsense to suggest that this is going to damage that relationship. In fact, it would just mean that business would be able to continue in the way that it does.

I am very disappointed that the government has decided to not only decline a recommendation from the Labor members who issued a dissenting report in part on this treaty but also ignore the government members, who flagged their express concerns. They were not prepared, as the member for Lyon has said, to include it as a recommendation. They said, in paragraph 2.69:
The Committee believes there should be ongoing negotiation between Australia and New Zealand in order for tariff line 3402.20 to be exempted from the new ROO as was done, for example, for men’s suits.

That was signed by all members of the committee, and it is urging the government to take this request seriously. It is not very often in negotiating complex trade agreements that there is a clear resolution to a problem like this. It is not hard, and we want the government to do more for the workforce in my electorate in order to try to protect their jobs and the business that is there.

I am extremely disappointed that I received a letter today from Warren Truss, the Minister for Trade and Deputy Leader of The Nationals—a person who I would have thought would be acutely sensitive to the loss of jobs in Australia—which said that he is not prepared to reopen negotiations on this agreement at this late stage. We do not require negotiations for the whole agreement to be reopened. We require negotiations to be entered into on one tiny aspect that was not properly taken account of during negotiations. It is to include an exemption which exists for other products—so we know that an exemption process can work—and, by doing that, to make sure that the jobs in Australia are continued and a relationship worth some $7 million continues between an Australian company and a New Zealand company.

The whole purpose of this agreement is to improve trade between New Zealand and Australia, but this one particular change is actually reducing trade between Australia and New Zealand. It is allowing a New Zealand company to go and buy a product at a cheaper rate in China rather than buying it from Australia and still continue to get a tariff exemption when it then imports its material into Australia. That is not the purpose of this agreement. It should not be allowed as a result of this agreement. It was a mistake by the department and the negotiators not to know about it to start with. Of course, the company wishes it had known about it early enough to be involved in those early negotiations, but it is frankly unrealistic to expect that a busy company dealing with its trade and commerce every day is going to see one ad in the Financial Review on one day, and it is unrealistic to think that that is adequate to draw people’s attention to this change.

In fact, the change was brought to the company’s attention when Unilever New Zealand sent them a letter saying, ‘We hereby give you six months notice that we’re not going to buy product from you anymore because when this agreement between Australia and New Zealand is entered into we’ll be able to get it cheaper from China.’ What does that actually do to improve the trade relationship between Australia and New Zealand? Absolutely nothing. I call on the government to reconsider its opposition to negotiating an exemption. It is never too late. To say that we wish it had been involved and included in the negotiations to start with is well and good, but do we just throw up our hands and say that we missed that part of the process and that the jobs and livelihoods of these 65 people in my electorate do not matter anymore? Surely, when there is time to fix it, and with a little bit of pressure and leadership from the Australian government, I am sure the New Zealand government would not want to jeopardise the rest of the agreement just for this single change.

I do understand that the New Zealand government have said that they are very unenthusiastic about making this change at this late stage, because a large New Zealand company will get a windfall profit as a result. But surely at the government-to-government level our obligations are not just to give a company a windfall benefit. Our obligations are to look at how we can
improve trade and create closer economic ties between the countries—not just to allow a New Zealand company to get an edge which they currently could not have if they wanted to maintain their tariff protection. It seems to us quite unreasonable and quite contrary to the spirit of the agreement.

I am extremely concerned, as I think any member of this House would be if they found that a business was going to close in their electorate and that jobs were going to be lost. I know that there have been previous agreements in different areas to exempt products when this sort of situation arises. I strongly call on the government to reconsider its opposition to this. Some members here might not be aware of this, but I do know that Minister Vaile, when he still held the portfolio, did specifically raise this issue with the New Zealand government. I appreciate that, but I now urge his successor to take this on more enthusiastically. I call on him to recognise that his role as the Minister for Trade is to actually enhance trade between the countries, not reduce it.

It will be a very sad day, when this agreement comes into effect on 1 January 2007, if the result is to immediately lose jobs in Australia—and, in case anybody listening is unclear about this, those jobs will not move to New Zealand. In negotiating an agreement for closer economic ties between Australia and New Zealand, maybe people would accept the movement of jobs across the Tasman. But even that is not what is happening. This is actually just giving a New Zealand company an opportunity that other companies do not have to buy the product from China and, when they produce the detergents and other washing products that are then imported back into Australia, still get the full exemption that they currently get when they buy product locally and manufacture it in New Zealand. That cannot be the result that was intended by this agreement, and I strongly urge the government to reconsider this.

I have been working closely with Albright and Wilson. They are obviously very keen to make sure that their business can continue. They are going to lose about 20 per cent of their factory turnover if this contract is lost. But it is not just jobs in my electorate that will be jeopardised. Albright and Wilson are also supplied by other Australian companies, like Penrice in South Australia. No doubt their business will be affected by this change as well.

I am glad that the treaties committee process allowed the committee even at a late stage to be able to assess the importance of this change and the impact it might have on jobs in my electorate. I am glad that the tabling of the report allows me to speak on it, but, after all, the purpose is to bring to the government’s attention any problems with a treaty agreement that they are about to enter into. This is a particular problem. It has been brought to their attention. They can fix it. Those 65 people in my electorate deserve more attention than the current government have given them to date. There is still two months to act, and we hope that the government will get their act together, reopen negotiations on this one small aspect of the agreement, do all they can to save those jobs in my electorate and support a local business that is trying to support our local workers. I strongly urge the government to do so.

Debate (on motion by Mrs Gash) adjourned.
Monday, 30 October 2006

Family and Human Services Committee
Report: Government Response

Debate resumed from 14 September, on motion by Mr McGauran:

That the House take note of the document.

Mrs IRWIN (Fowler) (5.15 pm)—I begin by commending the government for presenting its response to the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services report on overseas adoption in Australia. It has taken almost a year but, by comparison with the wait for response to other reports of the family and human services committee, this response has been about as close as we have seen to being on time. While we now have the Commonwealth government’s response, state governments, which were the subject of a number of recommendations, will not be making any direct response, although as I will mention later we have seen some changes proposed which affect areas dealt with in the committee’s report.

Before moving on to the substance of the government’s response, I should mention some general observations about government responses to committee reports. The first is one that all committees should be aware of when bringing down reports, and that is when recommendations call for action which is outside the authority of the Commonwealth government. While we may recommend that the Commonwealth use its influence at various intergovernmental forums, ultimately it is the states themselves which have the authority to act according to the recommendation or to reject our findings and not implement the recommendation. It is the case that, where the committee recommends action on the part of the states, generally that recommendation relies on the Commonwealth being successful in convincing the states collectively to adopt the proposal. This difficulty is made plain in the response to recommendation No. 3, where the government says:

It is noted that, while doing its best to influence the State and Territory Governments to move to greater harmonisation, the Commonwealth cannot dictate outcomes as the operational aspects of overseas adoption will remain primarily a State and Territory Government responsibility.

That is something that all Commonwealth parliamentary committees should be aware of. When making recommendations which impact on or require the cooperation of the state and territory governments, committees should first satisfy themselves that they have fully investigated the issue from the state and territory perspective and have an appreciation of the resource constraints which state and territory governments must operate under in that program area.

This brings me to the second general remark, where the resource constraints of the Commonwealth are raised. In its response to recommendation 23, which dealt with the establishment of a file ID tracking system, the government makes the statement:

The recommendation is accepted but it is acknowledged that there are resource implications involved in developing and updating such a file tracking system.

I mention these general matters because it is possible for individual committee members to push a very narrow agenda and lose sight of the broader issues.

I move on to the detail of the government’s response. For recommendation 1, the Commonwealth-state agreement dealing with the implementation of the Hague convention, we see the willing but not able response. As the response says:

---

MAIN COMMITTEE
... implementation may require a long lead time and will have resource implications which will need to be closely examined.

As that response suggests, what may have appeared straightforward to the committee during its inquiry can be far more complex when it comes to implementation—or it could be just another cop-out by the department or agency. What it comes down to is whether the parliament is satisfied that the department has adopted that recommendation and will try to implement it over a period of time. I dealt with recommendation 3 earlier, but it seems that, while the recommendation set out the committee’s wishes, it is left to the government to determine the ways and means of putting the recommendation into practice.

Recommendation No. 4 made a direct request of the government of New South Wales and, as I have already said, it requires action by an agency outside the authority of the Commonwealth government. It is heartening to see that the New South Wales government is currently reviewing this matter, but I doubt that this is solely in response to the committee’s report.

The response to recommendation No. 5, which calls for the establishment of consultative committees, suggests that such mechanisms are already in place, although not in line with the prescriptions of the committee’s report. It leaves me wondering whether our recommendation is too prescriptive in not allowing enough latitude for the states and territories to develop consultative mechanisms that best suit their own situations.

I must say that I am most disappointed with the refusal of the government to accept the committee’s recommendations Nos 6, 7 and 9. We have to remember that this was a bipartisan report; every recommendation was supported by members of both sides of the chamber. The committee’s report drew attention to the very small number of parents adopting children over five years of age. As I have said on earlier occasions regarding the tabling of the report, from the government’s point of view, the amount of money involved is quite small. But, as the committee heard, overseas adoption is a very expensive exercise for individuals and families. Some committee members went to great lengths to stress the high fees charged by state and territory governments. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that, for a small number of adoptive families, the loss of leave entitlements, as is the case with recommendations Nos 6 and 7, and the loss of maternity payment, which is dealt with by recommendation No. 9, can be seen only as cruel and heartless measures that discriminate—and they definitely discriminate—against a very small number of adoptive parents.

I also note that the committee stressed that the adoption of older children presented special problems. But, for the sake of very minor—and they were very minor—changes and expenditure, these adoptive families face a far greater monetary loss than all the state-imposed fees put together. The government allows for extending the eligibility for the immunisation allowance for children of up to the age of 16 years who have been adopted from overseas. But, even given the smallness of the cost, it refuses to allow the general maternity payment for children over two years of age.

I welcome today the announcement by Tanya Plibersek, our shadow minister for work and family. She has stated that Labor will—and we will—abolish the age restriction on the maternity payment for adoptive parents. So I take this opportunity to again remind the government that this is a bipartisan report—that both sides of the parliament agreed to it. I ask members of the government to take it up with the minister and follow Labor’s lead to abolish the age restriction on the maternity payment for adoptive parents.
Going back to recommendation No. 8, I note the comments regarding workplace agreements being used as a means of obtaining conditions for adoptive parents. While it may be possible for an employee to gain improved conditions, I have to wonder what other conditions, which would otherwise be standard, may be traded away for special arrangements for parents adopting from overseas. Regarding recommendations Nos 11, 13, 14 and 15, the government has agreed to implement procedures to make these small but important changes, while recommendation No. 12 is included in amendments to the Australian Citizenship Bill. The government agrees with recommendation No. 16, which deals with performance information on intercountry adoptions.

I must say that I share the government’s concern about the cost of collecting this information. We all agree that it would be nice to have this information but, unless it can be collected at minimal cost, I have to wonder if the money would be better spent on staffing the agencies responsible for adoption rather than on bean counters who produce reports on performance. The response to recommendation 17 appears to disagree with the committee’s conclusion that states and territories should amend their adoption legislation to include the provisions of the Hague convention. While I can appreciate the need to speed up the adoption process in many ways, I can see why there is reluctance to legislate changes which may impact on other aspects of the adoption process.

A number of the remaining recommendations were accepted by the government and involved varying degrees of administrative and intergovernment collaboration, all of which would improve the process of overseas adoption. The response to the last recommendation leaves me a little bit confused. It calls on the Attorney-General’s Department to establish a program to fund a national peak overseas adoption support group. The government’s response is that the recommendation is accepted in part, and it suggests that the support group represents the interest of the adoptive community. Because funding is required, it seems the Attorney-General’s Department is willing to fund the representative interest of the adoptive community but not other support programs. I can understand that the funding of small support groups is not something that is a responsibility of the Attorney-General’s Department but, in view of other recommendations which seek to centralise parts of the adoption process, it is hard to see how those support functions could be funded. Perhaps it would be better placed under the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

Finally, I want to refer to those recommendations which were not included in the formal report but were included as an appendix. The committee was concerned for the fate of the many Australian children in foster care and the low rate of adoption for children in care. The committee’s report was critical of the role of state governments in their handling of this issue. It is timely then to note for the House that, in legislation introduced into the New South Wales parliament last week, changes will be made which reflect a number of the concerns raised by the committee. The New South Wales Minister for Community Services and state member for Cabramatta, Reba Meagher, has indicated that the amendments will allow foster carers wanting to adopt children to do so without the consent of the birth parents. The amendments would appear to go a long way toward implementing the committee’s recommendations.

Having taken part in the intensive inquiry which led to the report on overseas adoption, it is heartening to see this relatively prompt response from the government. It is pleasing to see a number of recommendations implemented, but it is disappointing to me as a member and as
deputy chair of that committee—and, I am sure, to a number of adoptive parents I have spoken to since the tabling of the report—to see that the government cannot make the small change to remove the five-year age limit for benefits and conditions for adoptive parents. In closing, I would also like to state again that I congratulate the shadow minister for work and family for announcing today that Labor will abolish the age restriction on the maternity payment for adoptive parents, and I hope that the government will take Labor’s lead on this, because it was a bipartisan report.

Mrs Markus (Greenway) (5.29 pm)—I rise today to speak to the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services on overseas adoption in Australia. The inquiry began in February 2005. We received over 274 submissions, had about 12 public hearings and had 100 people give formal evidence. I wish to acknowledge and thank the members for Mackellar, Fowler, Throsby, Adelaide, Wakefield, Forde, Franklin, Dobell and, of course, Mitchell for their hard work and the time that they spent trying to understand the challenges that face families, individuals and couples seeking to establish a family through adoption and also some of the challenges that face children seeking to be adopted.

The terms of reference of the committee focused on inconsistencies between the states and territories and also inconsistencies between benefits and entitlements provided to families with own-birth children and those provided to families who have adopted children from overseas.

I want to acknowledge the government’s response. Overall the response of the government in accepting a number of the recommendations is very positive. Of the 27 recommendations only a few were not accepted and a couple were accepted only in part. The rest, overall, have been taken on board. I welcome the Attorney-General’s announcement—the Australian government’s response—on 14 September 2006, in which he said:

The Australian Government supports the Committee’s call for reform and has accepted the vast majority of the Committee’s recommendations.

I was also pleased to see that action has already begun, particularly in sending a delegation to Ethiopia in September to discuss, for example, that country’s program. The Commonwealth government’s response, indicating the work of the committee, noted the large number of submissions received and the enormous public interest, which helped to give voice to the concerns of many Australians about the inefficient, costly and often inaccessible process. The government’s response described the recommendations as:

... a blueprint for major reform of Australia’s overseas adoption system.

I am pleased also to see the Attorney-General’s Department having primary carriage of the implementation of the recommendations. I need to note, however, as has already been noted by the member for Fowler, that this range of reforms does require the cooperation of, and indeed collaboration with, the states. It is the states’ and territories’ primary responsibility to administer the adoption process, so they are vitally important. Many of the changes can only happen if this collaboration takes place.

The first and second recommendations really deal with the renegotiation of the Commonwealth-state agreement and the implementation of the Hague convention with respect to inter-country adoption with states and territories. I am pleased to see the Attorney-General’s Department taking greater responsibility on this. The third recommendation asked that the Attor-
ney-General’s Department ensure that, in negotiating the Commonwealth-state agreement, there be greater harmonisation of laws, fees and assessment practices.

During the course of the inquiry we had a number of families that, because of the difficulty in one state—for example, in Queensland—moved to another state where it was more accessible and easier, such as the ACT. Harmonisation of these laws across different states will certainly make it a lot easier for families and for couples and individuals seeking adoption from overseas and will also reduce the need for them to make significant changes.

In recommendation No. 4, the committee requested that the Attorney-General ask the New South Wales Minister for Community Services to insert the eligibility criteria for adoptive parents in legislation and regulation. I note that the New South Wales government has already canvassed this for the current review of the Adoption Act 2000. I also wish to acknowledge, as the member for Fowler has, and to congratulate the state Minister for Community Services on proposing the amendment to begin to address the numbers of children that may be in permanent care and have families that do want to adopt them. I commend her for that.

Contrary to the member for Fowler, I do believe that the committee played a part in contributing towards that movement by the New South Wales Labor government. The response to recommendation No. 10 states:

The Commonwealth accepts this recommendation. The Commonwealth will pursue amendments to legislation to extend the eligibility criteria for the Maternity Immunisation Allowance to cover children adopted from overseas who arrive in Australia before the age of 16 years and who are immunised to an appropriate level within two years of their arrival.

However, I wish to note that I would have liked to see acceptance by the government of the recommendation regarding a change to the maternity payment for children beyond two years of age. In recommendation No. 14, the committee requested:

The Australian Passport Office implement a regular training program for their counter staff and counter staff at post offices so that they can effectively deal with queries and applications from intercountry adoptive parents.

This recommendation was accepted by the government. The government also accepted recommendation No. 15, which requested that the Minister for Human Services encourage Medicare to introduce a policy for children who have been adopted from overseas that would ensure that staff are discrete with adoptive parents; staff receive regular training; and the issue of Medicare cards be expedited and children be included on their parents’ card, as the parents wish. I would acknowledge the Minister for Human Services, the Hon. Joe Hockey, for implementing these practices already. I am pleased to see that already adoptive parents can access greater services through Medicare.

The Attorney-General also endorsed recommendation No. 17, which focused on the importance of moving as quickly as possible to expedite applications whilst complying with The Hague standards. Often there was a delay of several years from the moment families applied for adoption to the day the adoptive child arrived in the country; sometimes it was as long as five years. It is critical that that time of delay is reduced. I will also focus on recommendation No. 19, which was also accepted by the government, which is that the Commonwealth will aim to develop cooperative models, in partnership with state and territory governments, to manage adoption programs. Again, this will require a staged approach and additional re-
Recommendation No. 22 was accepted, but again it is noted that it is in relation to the Victorian legislation.

Recommendation No. 23 was accepted, but it is acknowledged that there are resource implications. The committee asked that the Attorney-General’s Department negotiate with central authorities to coordinate the establishment of a file ID tracking system so that adoptive parents may easily track their files throughout their application. In recommendation No. 24 the committee requested:

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade ... develop protocols with the Australian central authorities to govern the follow up of files in countries of origin by embassy officials when the files become significantly overdue.

Finally, recommendation No. 27 was accepted in part by the government as it relates to facilitating the establishment of a national peak overseas adoption group, particularly for the adoptive community. It was apparent during the inquiry that many members of the adoptive community felt quite unsupported and often were very isolated. In addition, it varied from state to state what support services were available or were funded for.

It is important to note here that, at all times during the inquiry, the committee’s focus was on what was best for the children. So I will finish with a statement by Amy. On the back page is a photo of her and her best friend, and this is what Amy says:

I am thankful to be here because when I went back a couple of years ago to Ethiopia I saw all the poverty over there. It opened my eyes. I am grateful to have an education, and that I am healthy and I can grow up, because over there the life expectancy for women is—only about 38 … I know that here I can live a healthy and prosperous life, so I am grateful for that.

Mr QUICK (Franklin) (5.40 pm)—I, like other members speaking today, welcome this opportunity. This is about our third chance to talk to the committee’s report on overseas adoption in Australia. The previous speaker, the member for Greenway, mentioned the best interests of the children. In our previous report into family separation, the principal motive behind that was the best interests of the children. I think the same is being followed as we talk about the government’s response to our excellent report.

It is interesting to note that in the government’s response it says:

Taken as a whole, the recommendations create a blueprint for systemic change in the way the adoption of children from overseas are handled. The Commonwealth supports the call for reform.

I would like to place on the public record my appreciation for the promptness of the government because it was not just one agency that had to deal with this and bring all of this together; there were a variety of agencies. Sadly the government, in one of our other reports on substance abuse, took three years over two parliaments to respond. But, as I said, it is great to get a very prompt response—not only for us as members who have given up our valuable time to wander around Australia and listen to the wonderful stories of people’s challenges in trying to adopt children from overseas, but also to acknowledge the wonderful work that support groups do to support the families who have taken the step of adopting children from overseas.

I think three noes out of 27 recommendations is pretty good. I am a little bit disappointed that we could not have had 27 out of 27. One of the noes was the issue of an age limit for unpaid adoption leave. Just about everyone who spoke to us said that, the older the children, the greater the difficulty in their blending in not only with their own family but also with society.
If you go overseas and visit the orphanages, you will see the fact that there are in excess of 30 children to one carer and these children develop coping mechanisms so that they are able to be independent, even at a very early age—far earlier than any of our children in a normal family make-up. We are not talking about a great deal of money here. We should be talking about and focusing on the best interests of the children. So for goodness sake, in a federal budget of tens of billions of dollars—we are talking about 370 children adopted in 2003-04, and we are not talking about all of those for this unpaid maternity leave—why can’t we have some common sense? As previous speakers have said, this is a bipartisan report. This committee is famous for working through some very sensitive issues and coming up with constructive forward-thinking recommendations.

I congratulate the Commonwealth on deciding to take over the role of overseas adoptions and renegotiating the Commonwealth-state agreement. For too long the states have developed and maintained this rail gauge mentality on a whole range of issues, whether it is registration of nurses or teachers or solicitors; the rail system; adoption; different fees in different states; Queensland locking the whole system up for goodness knows how many years; or Tasmania and the ACT, the favoured state and territory, where families moved to because it was easier to adopt children there. Now that the Commonwealth has taken over the role, let us kick a few heads in some of these state government departments. As members of the committee realised when we tried to speak to some of these state government departments, it was a case of: ‘We are the department. We know what to do. We have been doing it for years. Leave us alone. The interests of the parents and the adoptive parents are secondary to the functioning of the department.’ For goodness sake, we are talking about the best interests of the children—370 of them. There needs to be greater harmonisation of laws, fees and assessment practices so that more families can adopt children.

When I went to China I went to Beijing and visited the agency that had sole responsibility for processing 10,000 Chinese children. Ten thousand! The files in the rooms were enormous. They were huge—almost a couple of feet high. That was 10,000 out of 100,000 that were abandoned each year. There are 10 million babies born every year in China. A hundred thousand are abandoned and they are processing 10,000.

We have wonderful opportunities. We have thousands of parents who would love to be part of the process—who, for a variety of reasons, cannot have their own biological children and would love to adopt. We now have a Commonwealth government that has said, ‘I am going to take charge of it.’ Let us drag the states kicking and screaming into doing whatever needs to be done as quickly as possible so that in the next couple of years we can double the number of children that can come here and take part in what being an Australian is all about.

As I said, it is not a great deal of money. Removing the restriction on unpaid adoption leave for children under the age of five years and introducing amendments to the Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act could be done just like a snap of the fingers. Recommendations 6, 7 and 9 could be implemented at minimal cost. I would not hesitate to say that the six members of the government would probably agree with me. When it came to putting this report in place, it seemed sensible and we all agreed. There was no disagreement at all. If we can remove the concerns about the maternity immunisation allowance, why can’t we do the other couple of things? Citizenship, school enrolment, passport applications and Medicare protocols are all ticked off. As I said, there are only three out of 27.
In relation to recommendation 27, the Commonwealth agrees about setting up a national peak overseas adoption support group, but it needs to be not only set up but adequately funded. This is a very big country. If you are adopting Chinese children in Australia and you want to maintain their cultural links to their country—if you want to bring together people from Western Australia, Tasmania or up in the northern parts of Queensland and have some sort of support group—that is going to involve some expense. Once again, we should not be talking about a heap of money within the Commonwealth budget. We are talking about only 370 kids, and if we double that in the next couple of years we are still not talking about a whole heap of money. As I said, it is important that we do this as soon as possible. The Commonwealth’s response says:

... there are significant lead times involved in the implementation of several of the recommendations, especially in renegotiating a new Commonwealth-State Agreement ...

I would hope that, with a forward-looking A-G in Philip Ruddock, with the 10 members of the department—and with the support of the shadow minister here with her enlightened approach to Labor Party policy when we get into government—the lot of us can deal with these issues sooner rather than later, because we are talking about significant lead times. With an election coming up, it could be 2010 before anything changes. As the honourable member opposite knows, when we spoke to these parents—they are wonderful parents who have incurred enormous debts, mortgaged their houses and borrowed money from families and friends to bring children from China, Somalia, Ethiopia, Vietnam or Romania, and I met some of these people this morning—we found they have to pay an arm and a leg and then, until recently, jump through a whole series of hoops. For example, people were going along to the local primary school to enrol their children and being asked humiliating questions. A school might say, ‘We can’t enrol your child unless you give us a birth certificate.’ ‘But my daughter was abandoned in China.’ It does not make any difference: no birth certificate, no enrolment. People were going along to enrol their child for a Medicare card and getting, ‘Oh, your child is adopted, is he?’ So things need to change.

It worries me that we are talking about significant lead times. For goodness sake! The government has said that this is a blueprint for systemic change. For once 10 of us agreed, ‘Here’s the blueprint; let’s drag the states.’ We need to drag them. As the honourable member opposite who is about to speak after me knows, some of the states in their attitudes are absolutely appalling—shameful. We had the minister in Queensland virtually accusing us of falsifying some of our report, yet he would not come along and give evidence in front of us.

Finally, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this, hopefully for the last time. It is a real pleasure to be part of this wonderful committee that has produced this wonderful report, which is a blueprint. I congratulate the parents who have adopted children. I have a family one door up from me in Kingston who adopted two young boys from Thailand. They are just so happy living in Tasmania. They fitted into the local school community and are a credit to their adopted mum and dad. Hopefully, when I leave this place at the next election, those three noes might join the other 24 yeses. I look forward to what the other speakers might say today, and I congratulate the government on its very prompt and in some ways inspiring response to a wonderful issue that we did not know much about when we undertook this whole inquiry. I thank the chamber.
Mr CADMAN (Mitchell) (5.53 pm)—I want to thank the previous speaker, Mr Harry Quick, for his contribution and to reflect and endorse his comments, because it was an interesting inquiry that we went into not knowing a lot about the topic. Having come through it, we know that it was a thoroughly worthwhile inquiry—not only because we had so much of the report adopted by the government but because in fact we were able to draw out other issues that I believe will be subject to further inquiries.

The issue of fostering alone is worthy of examination in Australia. State departments, we discovered, found it so much easier to look after 105,000 children—I think that was the number in New South Wales—in a fostering process and never find a solution for those children’s lives that was permanent. They were always happy to shift them on and shift them on again and find another family to look after them, so eventually they were too old to be considered for adoption or any other permanent caring relationship. That was one area that came up that I did not expect. The other one that emerged was the anti-adoption attitude in many state departments. The honourable member has mentioned the state of Tasmania, which was quite different. It was just a pleasure to see the relationship between parents and the department, the cooperative arrangements in that state and some beautiful outcomes, I have to say.

I guess part of this whole process has come about because, until Australia took the decision to become a signatory to the Hague convention, this was an area that was basically conducted by the states of Australia because they had the main carriage of the adoption law. The only role the Commonwealth had was to ensure that the immigration processes were properly carried out and were appropriate. Things changed and we became a signatory to the Hague convention, so it became necessary to modify the way in which the relationships between the Commonwealth and the states were carried out. In 1998, an agreement was entered into, but it is time to change that. Nearly 10 years have expired and it is not working satisfactorily. The House of Representatives carried out this inquiry and it produced wonderful results. Only three of the 27 recommendations were not accepted by the government, mainly because there were factors extraneous in some way to the thrust of the report and because some of them dealt with state government issues over which the Commonwealth has no control. But it was a beneficial report.

I have to say that, having looked at the Hague convention and the way in which it operates in Australia, I am delighted that the Commonwealth has decided it is going to take a leading role and that the Attorney-General will approach the states and territories to amend the agreement to commit the states and territories to provide training and resources and bring in the private sector—the not-for-profit agencies which can better relate to the community and, under proper supervision, provide a much more empathetic environment for the adoption of children from overseas. The time is long gone when the derelict and completely unsatisfactory arrangements in each state can be allowed to continue. That must be stopped. We need to change those processes, and evidence that the committee received made it obvious that the permanence and stability of children at risk were criticised by parent groups and academics.

In New South Wales, the Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care advised the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services how foster care drift can affect children. Groups said that the processes that parents are required to go through are extraordinary. In fact, the only effective adoption statistics were provided by parent groups themselves, because none of the departments had any information—or, if they did, they did not provide it to the
committee. A table appearing in our report indicates that the total adoptions in Australia were as low as 66 in New South Wales, which was equivalent to one adoption per 101,991 people, which is an extraordinarily low figure. The only figures which closely equate to the international average are those of the ACT and Tasmania. The international standard is within the range of one adoption per 10,000 to 20,000 head of population. And there we have New South Wales, with extremely high fees and total adoptions finalised in one year of 66 only. Of all the parents claiming that they want adoption, only 66 were accommodated in New South Wales.

In Queensland, they closed the books and decided not to process any more because the comment by the public servants involved was that they would process them as they received them. They closed the books for a couple of years, then opened the books and got 800 applications for adoption. They decided they would process 100 a year for the next eight years and that was the way they were going to get rid of that backlog. That is a disgusting arrangement, and I am so pleased that it is going to change. I am delighted that the government has decided to accept the report. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted, debate adjourned.

Main Committee adjourned at 6 pm
HEADS OF MISSIONS

(QUESTION NO. 299)

Mr Rudd asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 6 December 2004:

(1) Will the position of (a) Ambassador to France, (b) Ambassador to the United States, and (c) High Commissioner to the United Kingdom become vacant in 2005; if so, for each position, (i) when and where was the position advertised, (ii) what are the selection criteria for the position, and (iii) how many candidates have applied.

(2) In respect of each position, has he asked that any people who are not employees of his department be considered; if so, how many and who are they.

(3) In respect of each position, when does he expect to announce the appointment.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) To ensure Australia’s continued diplomatic representation, Heads of Missions positions are never vacant as letters of recall are only prosecuted when letters of credential for a subsequent Head of Mission are presented. The position of (a) Ambassador to France, (b) Ambassador to the United States and (c) the High Commissioner to United Kingdom have not been advertised. There are no generic selection criteria for Heads of Mission positions. Appointments for (a) Ambassador to France and (c) the High Commissioner to United Kingdom have been announced.

(2) The Minister for Foreign Affairs can recommend to the Prime Minister any suitably appropriate candidate for a diplomatic appointment. Once the Prime Minister has agreed to a candidate, the Minister for Foreign Affairs then recommends the candidate to the Governor-General. The Minister for Foreign Affairs is not required to consult with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on his recommendations for diplomatic appointments.

(3) Heads of Mission Diplomatic appointments are announced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs following agreement by the Governor-General in Executive Council, and the host government to the recommended candidate. Consequently, the timing of announcements cannot be predicted.

(a) Ambassador to France. Announced on 14 January 2005.

(b) Ambassador to the United States. Announced on 17 May 2005.

(c) High Commissioner to United Kingdom. Announced on 17 December 2004.

MASSAGE SERVICE

(QUESTION NO. 1773)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 23 June 2005:

(1) Does the department or any agency for which he 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 Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Core Department

(1) No

(2) N/A

(3) N/A
Australian Hearing
(1) No
(2) N/A
(3) N/A

Centrelink
(1) Some Centrelink workplaces previously allowed massage providers to attend the workplace, where employees paid a subsidised amount for those services. Centrelink no longer subsidises workplace massages for its staff.

In 2004, three Centrelink Customer Service Centres provided subsidised massages at a total cost of $952.27.
(2) Centrelink’s average cost was $6.14. Individual employees paid the remainder of the fee.
(3) In 2004, 155 employees utilised this service.

Child Support Agency
(1) The Child Support Agency has partly funded massages for staff under a healthy site initiative, in line with its Occupational Health and Safety strategy. No massages have been fully funded by the Child Support Agency. Data is only available for the full 2004 calendar year. For the period 26/10/2004 to 31/12/2004, the Child Support Agency approximately funded $663.59 for massages for staff.
(2) The amount funded by the Child Support Agency and the cost per massage varied between sites. The Child Support Agency paid between $2 and $10 per massage.
(3) This information is not available.

CRS Australia
(1) No
(2) N/A
(3) N/A

Medicare Australia
(1) No
(2) N/A
(3) N/A

Health Services Australia
(1) No
(2) N/A
(3) N/A

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 13 hours and 50 minutes at an estimated cost of $747.

Human Services: Staffing
(Question No. 2741)

Ms Macklin asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 29 November 2005:
(1) For the department and each agency in the Minister’s portfolio, what was the total staffing level in (a) 2001, (b) 2002, (c) 2003, (d) 2004, and (e) 2005.
(2) For the department and each agency in the Minister’s portfolio for (a) 2001, (b) 2002, (c) 2003, (d) 2004, and (e) 2005 how many New Apprentices (i) had commenced and (ii) were employed.

(3) How many of the New Apprenticeships referred to in part (2) were traditional apprenticeships (as defined by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research as an apprenticeship in an occupation in Australian Standard Classification of Occupations Group 4—Tradespersons and Related Workers—at AQF level 3 or above with an expected duration of more than 2 years full time).

(4) How many traditional apprenticeships does the department and each agency in the Minister’s portfolio intend to offer to commence in 2006.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Department of Human Services was established on 26 October 2004.

Core Department
(1) The total staffing in the core department in 2004-2005 can be found at page 228 of the Department of Human Services Annual Report 2004-2005.
(2) The core department was established in October 2004 and therefore there are no figures for previous years.
(3) No New Apprentices have been commenced or been employed by the core Department.
(4) The Core Department does not plan to offer any traditional Apprenticeships in 2006.

Child Support Agency
(c) The total staffing level in the Child Support Agency for 2002-2003 can be found at page 302 of the Department of Families and Community Services Annual Report 2002-2003.
(d) The total staffing level in the Child Support Agency for 2003-2004 can be found at page 292 of the Department of Families and Community Services Annual Report 2003-2004*.

(2) Nil
(3) N/A
(4) The Child Support Agency does not plan to offer any traditional Apprenticeships in 2006.

CRS Australia
(b) The total staffing level in CRS Australia for 2001-2002 can be found at page 447 of the Department of Families and Community Services Annual Report 2001-2002.
(d) The total staffing level in CRS Australia for 2003-2004 can be found at page 420 of the Department of Health and Ageing Annual Report 2003-2004*.
(e) The total staffing level in CRS Australia for 2004-2005 can be found at page 231 of the Department of Human Services Annual Report 2004-2005.


(2) Nil

(3) N/A

(4) CRS Australia does not plan to offer any traditional Apprenticeships in 2006.

**Centrelink**


(c) The total staffing level in Centrelink for 2002-2003 can be found at page 275 of the Centrelink Annual Report 2002-2003.


(2) (a) The number of New Apprentices (trainees) who had commenced, and were employed by Centrelink in 2000-2001 was 206.

(b) The number of New Apprentices (trainees) who had commenced, and were employed by Centrelink in 2001-2002 was 216.

(c) The number of New Apprentices (trainees) who had commenced, and were employed by Centrelink in 2002-2003 was 1,126.

(d) The number of New Apprentices (trainees) who had commenced, and were employed by Centrelink in 2003-2004 was 441.

(e) The number of New Apprentices (trainees) who had commenced, and were employed by Centrelink in 2004-2005 was 493.

Prior to 2003, New Apprentices were recruited and managed at the local level by Areas and Call Centres; no data was collected at a national level. The figures provided for the years 2001 and 2002 are based on incomplete data and should be read as indicative only.

(3) Centrelink did not employ any traditional New Apprentices as defined by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research as an occupation in Australian Standard Classification of Occupations Group 4 – Tradespersons and Related Workers.

(4) Centrelink does not plan to offer any traditional Apprenticeships in 2006.

**Medicare Australia**

(1) (a) The total staffing level in Medicare Australia (formerly the Health Insurance Commission) for 2000-2001 can be found at page 155 of the Health Insurance Commission’s Annual Report 2001-2002.

(b) The total staffing level in Medicare Australia (formerly the Health Insurance Commission) for 2001-2002 can be found at page 155 of the Health Insurance Commission’s Annual Report 2001-2002.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(c) The total staffing level in Medicare Australia (formerly the Health Insurance Commission) for 2002-2003 can be found at page 175 of the Health Insurance Commission’s Annual Report 2002-2003.

(d) The total staffing level in Medicare Australia (formerly the Health Insurance Commission) for 2003-2004 can be found at page 171 of the Health Insurance Commission’s Annual Report 2003-2004.

(e) The total staffing level in Medicare Australia (formerly the Health Insurance Commission) for 2004-2005 can be found at page 209 of Health Insurance Commission’s Annual Report 2004-2005.

(2) Nil.

(3) N/A

(4) Medicare Australia does not plan to offer any traditional Apprenticeships in 2006.

**Australian Hearing**


(c) The total staffing level in Australian Hearing for 2002-2003 can be found at page 55 of the Australian Hearing Annual Report 2002-2003.


(e) The total staffing level in Australian Hearing for 2004-2005 can be found at page 74 of the Australian Hearing Annual Report 2004-05.

(2) Nil.

(3) N/A

(4) Australian Hearing does not plan to offer any traditional Apprenticeships in 2006.

**Health Services Australia**


(b) The total staffing level in Health Services Australia for 2001-2002 can be found at page 46 of the Health Services Australia Annual Report 2001-2002.

(c) The total staffing level in Health Services Australia for 2002-2003 can be found at page 59 of the Health Services Australia Annual Report 2002-2003.

(d) The total staffing level in Health Services Australia for 2003-2004 can be found at page 47 of the Health Services Australia Annual Report 2003-2004.

(e) The total staffing level in Health Services Australia for 2004-2005 can be found at page 35 of the Health Services Australia Annual Report 2004-2005.

The Health Services Australia Group does not employ new apprentices as the nature of its operations requires all medical and allied health professionals must be qualified and registered before they can be employed.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 21 hours and 31 minutes at an estimated cost of $1171.
Medicare Smartcard
(Question No. 2961)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 7 February 2006:

(1) What sum has been allocated for the Medicare Smartcard for (a) 2003-2004, (b) 2004-2005, (c) 2005-2006, and (d) 2006-2007.

(2) What is the total cost of the Medicare Smartcard.

(3) What sum has been spent trialling the Medicare Smartcard in Tasmania.

(4) Which consultants have been engaged to carry out work relating to the Medicare Smartcard and what sum has each consultant received in each financial year that they were engaged.

(5) When will the card be available throughout Australia.

(6) What information is it technically possible to store on the card.

(7) What information is permitted to be stored on the card and, in respect of any limitations on the type of information which may be stored on the card, what are they and what are the reasons for them.

(8) What information may be accessed by using the card and, in respect of any limitations on the type of information which may be accessed by using the card, what are they and what are the reasons for them.

(9) In respect of the information stored on the card, (a) who will have access to it, (b) who will be responsible for its accuracy, and (c) can data security be guaranteed.

(10) Will the Government be supplying the hardware and software to providers; if not, why and what will be the cost to health providers; if so, what will be the cost to the Government.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Budget allocation for (a) 2003-2004 – nil (b) 2004-2005 - $3.9m (c) 2005-2006 –$400,000 (d) 2006-2007 – nil.

(2) Please refer to Question 1 above.

(3) Please refer to Question 1 above.

(4) During the 2004-05 financial year, Medicare Australia paid Giesecke & Devrient Australasia Pty Ltd (G&D) the sum of $43,945 and Taylor Nelson Sofres Australia (TNS) $18,782.50.

(5) The government announced on 26 April 2006 that it will be proceeding with the introduction of a new health and welfare access card. The access card will be phased in over a two year period beginning in 2008. This new card will be available across Australia and will replace the Medicare Smartcard.

(6) Any type of digital information can be stored on the Medicare smartcard such as images, text and digital certificates. The quantity of information that can be stored is only limited by the size of the chip.

(7) The information currently stored on the Medicare smartcard is the same as that stored on the standard Medicare card, with an option for customers to store their photograph on the chip if they choose to do so. There are mechanisms, under Medicare Australia’s existing legislation that would enable additional information, such as emergency contact details and allergies information, to be stored on a voluntary basis on the Medicare smartcard.

(8) At present the Medicare smartcard cannot be used to access any information other than what is held on the card itself.
(9) (a) The data held on the Medicare smartcard is stored on both the magnetic stripe on the back of
the card as well as on the chip, with an option for customers to store their photograph on the
chip if they choose to do so. Access to the data stored on the magnetic stripe of the Medicare
smartcard is the same as it is for the standard Medicare card. The data stored on the chip can
only be accessed by the card holder placing the card into one of the kiosks located in the seven
Medicare offices in Tasmania.

(b) The currency of the information held on the Medicare smartcard is dependent on customers
keeping Medicare Australia advised of information changes.

(c) The security features on the chip require the use of a digital certificate to make any changes to
the information held. This digital certificate is only held by Medicare Australia.

(10) The Medicare smartcard currently has the same functionality as the standard Medicare card and is
compatible with existing magnetic stripe card readers used by health professionals to access the
stored data on the magnetic stripe.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 22 hours at an estimated cost of $1280.

Pensions and Benefits
(Question No. 3021)

Ms Hall asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 13 February 2006:

(1) How many (a) pensioners and (b) self-funded retirees in the electoral division of Shortland receive
Utilities Allowance.

(2) How many Health Care Card recipients reside in (a) New South Wales and the postcode area
(b) 2259, (c) 2262, (d) 2263, (e) 2280, (f) 2281, (g) 2282, (h) 2289, (i) 2290, and (j) 2306.

(3) How many Health Care Card recipients not receiving a Centrelink payment, pension, benefit or
equivalent payment, reside in (a) New South Wales and in the postcode area (b) 2259, (c) 2262,
(d) 2263, (e) 2280, (f) 2281, (g) 2282, (h) 2289, (i) 2290, and (j) 2306.

(4) How many people in (a) Australia, (b) NSW, (c) the electoral division of Shortland, and in the
postcode area (d) 2259, (e) 2262, (f) 2263, (g) 2280, (h) 2289, (i) 2290, and (j) 2306 are recipients
of the (i) Aged Pension, (ii) Disability Support Pension, (iii) Carer Allowance, (iv) Newstart Al-
lowance, (v) Youth Allowance, (vi) Parenting Payment Single, (vii) Parenting Payment Partnered,
(viii) Family Tax Benefit A, (ix) Family Tax Benefit B, (x) Child Care Benefit, and (xi) Rent Assis-
tance.

(5) In (a) Australia, (b) NSW, and (c) the electoral division of Shortland, how many people and what
proportion of the population are receiving income assistance.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) All Age Pension customers are entitled to receive Utilities Allowance. There are 17,897 Age
Pensioners in the electoral division of Shortland.

(b) Self Funded Retirees are not entitled to a Utilities Allowance as receipt of a qualifying income
Support Payment is a basic eligibility criterion for this allowance.

(2) (a) There are 433,451 Health Care Card recipients in the state of New South Wales.

(b) to (j)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>Number of Health Care Card Recipients</th>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>Number of Health Care Card Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2259</td>
<td>3,438</td>
<td>2282</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2262</td>
<td>1,545</td>
<td>2289</td>
<td>957</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(3) (a) There are 26,769 Health Care Card recipients not receiving a Centrelink payment, pension, benefit or equivalent payment in the state of New South Wales.

(b) to (j)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>Number of Health Care Card Recipients</th>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>Number of Health Care Card Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2263</td>
<td>1,822</td>
<td>2290</td>
<td>2,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2280</td>
<td>1,583</td>
<td>2306</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2281</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) to (j) (i - v)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>Age Pension</th>
<th>DSP</th>
<th>Carer Allowance</th>
<th>Newstart Allowance</th>
<th>Youth Allowance (Other)</th>
<th>Youth Allowance (Student)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,908,553</td>
<td>706,782</td>
<td>340,005</td>
<td>453,614</td>
<td>79,545</td>
<td>285,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>621,474</td>
<td>227,624</td>
<td>113,289</td>
<td>148,079</td>
<td>22,255</td>
<td>88,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortland</td>
<td>17,897</td>
<td>6,223</td>
<td>3,163</td>
<td>3,343</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>1,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2259</td>
<td>5,944</td>
<td>2,162</td>
<td>1,157</td>
<td>1,197</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2262</td>
<td>2,564</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2263</td>
<td>4,191</td>
<td>1,336</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2280</td>
<td>3,255</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2289</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2290</td>
<td>4,379</td>
<td>1,357</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2306</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) to (j) (vi – xi)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>PPS</th>
<th>PPP</th>
<th>FTB (A)</th>
<th>FTB (B)</th>
<th>Rent Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>450,811</td>
<td>167,680</td>
<td>1,828,495</td>
<td>1,396,918</td>
<td>1,022,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>145,415</td>
<td>56,803</td>
<td>578,156</td>
<td>448,101</td>
<td>343,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortland</td>
<td>3,591</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>11,644</td>
<td>9,037</td>
<td>8,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2259</td>
<td>1,622</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>5,617</td>
<td>4,342</td>
<td>4,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2262</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>2,454</td>
<td>1,949</td>
<td>1,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2263</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2,168</td>
<td>1,739</td>
<td>2,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2280</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>2,285</td>
<td>1,718</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2289</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2290</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3,007</td>
<td>2,222</td>
<td>1,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2306</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data on Child Care Benefit is not currently available through Centrelink. Reporting on Child Care Benefit is the responsibility of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(5) (a) to (c) Whole population data is not available to Centrelink.
To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 17 hours and 52 minutes at an estimated cost of $915.

1 Age Pension population information by Electorate is available on the Department of Human Services website. The figure provided here is taken directly from the extract file produced from Centrelink Data Services used to create the information held on the website.

2 Health Care Card information by Cardholder is provided from the extract file produced by Centrelink Data Services using the same principles as applied in the Electoral file.

3 Postcode information for Cardholders is provided from the extract file produced by Centrelink Data Services using the same principles as applied in the Electoral file. The postcode values are the combined totals for all occurrences of the postcode against any electorate within the file.

4 Postcode information for Cardholders not on Income Support is provided from the extract file produced by Centrelink Data Services using the same principles as applied in the Electoral file. The postcode values are the combined totals for all occurrences of the postcode against any electorate within the file.

5 Age Pension information is sourced from Pensions Superstar database dated 10 June 2005.

6 Disability Support Pension information is sourced from Pensions Superstar database dated 10 June 2005.

7 Carer Allowance information is sourced from the Carer Allowance Superstar database dated 10 June 2005.

8 Newstart Allowance information is sourced from the Newstart Superstar database dated 17 June 05.

9 Youth Allowance Other information is sourced from the Newstart Superstar database dated 17 June 05.

10 Youth Allowance Student information is sourced from the Newstart Superstar database dated 17 June 05.

11 Parenting Payment Single information is sourced from Pensions Superstar database dated 10 June 2005.

12 Parenting Payment Partnered information is sourced from the Employment Income and Working Credit Superstar database dated 30 June 2005.

13 Family Tax Benefit A information is sourced from the FAO Family Tax Benefit Superstar database dated 24 June 2005.

14 Family Tax Benefit B information is sourced from the FAO Family Tax Benefit Superstar database dated 24 June 2005.

15 Rent Assistance information is sourced from the Rent Assistance (Customer) Superstar database dated 10 June 2005.

**Chifley Electorate: Programs and Services**  
(Question Nos 3200 and 3202)

Mr Price asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 27 March 2006:

(1) What programs and services do the department and each agency in the Minister’s portfolio provide for indigenous communities and individuals in the electoral division of Chifley.
(2) In respect of each program, (a) what sum is spent annually (i) nationally and (ii) in the electoral
division of Chifley and (b) how many people is it intended to assist (i) nationally and (ii) in the
electoral division of Chifley.

Mr Downer—On behalf of the Minister for Trade and myself, the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Any person who meets relevant criteria is eligible to access departmental and portfolio agency programs and services. To provide the detailed information sought would entail a significant diversion of resources and, in these circumstances, I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

Massage Service
(Question No. 3334)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 29 March 2006:
(1) Did the department or any agency in Minister’s portfolio pay for massages for its staff in 2005; if so, what sum was spent on this purpose.
(2) What was the cost per massage.
(3) How many staff made use of the service.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Core Department
(1) The core Department of Human Services did not pay for massages for its staff in 2005.
(2) Not applicable.
(3) Not applicable.
Child Support Agency
(1) CSA has partly funded massages for staff under a healthy site initiative, in line with its Occupational Health and Safety strategy. No massages have been fully funded by CSA.
CSA paid $1164 towards staff massages.
(2) Cost per massage was $10. CSA paid $2 per massage. CSA staff paid the $8 difference.
(3) 582 massages were performed. Some staff may have had several massages during the calendar year.
CRS Australia
(1) Yes. The total sum spent on massages for staff was $2,074.70. Massages were provided to staff under two programmes; for staff receiving massages as part of workplace injury rehabilitation and for staff receiving massage to reduce stress under a Mental Health Week initiative.
(a) The total sum for massages provided under injury rehabilitation was $331.
(b) The total sum for massages provided under Mental Health Week was $1,743.70.
(2) The cost per massage was as follows:
(a) For massages provided under injury rehabilitation, the average cost per massage was $66.20.
   (One person received 2 massages at $50 each and one person received 3 massages at $77 each;
   the cost of these five massages totalled $331, equating to an average of $66.20 per massage.)
(b) For massages provided under Mental Health Week, the average cost per massage was $16.93.
   (Please note that these massages ranged in cost from $10 to $22.40.)
(3) The number of staff who made use of the service was as follows:
(a) For injury rehabilitation, 2.
(b) For Mental Health Week, 103.
Centrelink

(1) Some individual employees are provided with remedial massages as prescribed by the employee’s treating health professional when part of an approved early intervention program. The estimated cost of these massages in 2005 was $27,000.

In addition two Centrelink workplaces previously made a contribution to the cost of non-remedial massages for staff. Centrelink ceased these payments by June 2005. The total cost of these subsidies in 2005 was $1,825.

(2) The cost of remedial massages under Centrelink’s early intervention program is approximately $60 per massage.

For the non-remedial massages the cost to Centrelink was an average of $6.14. Individual employees paid the remainder of the fee.

(3) An estimated 75 employees accessed remedial massages under Centrelink’s early intervention program in 2005.

An estimated 25 employees accessed subsidised non-remedial massages across two workplaces each fortnight prior to June 2005.

Medicare Australia

(1) Medicare Australia did not pay for massages to be provided to its staff in 2005.

(2) Not applicable.

(3) Not applicable.

Australian Hearing

(1) Australian Hearing did not pay for massages to be provided to its staff in 2005.

(2) Not applicable.

(3) Not applicable.

Health Services Australia

(1) HSA did not pay for massages to be provided to its staff in 2005.

(2) Not applicable.

(3) Not applicable.

To prepare this answer it has taken 21 hours and 23 minutes at an estimated cost of $900.

Media Training

(Question No. 3352)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 29 March 2006:

(1) Did the department or any agency in the Minister’s portfolio engage the services of a media training company in 2005; if so, how many individuals in the department and each agency received media training.

(2) For 2005, what sum was spent on media training by the department and each agency in the Minister’s portfolio.

Ms Julie Bishop—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Department (including Questacon), the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) did not engage the services of a media training company in 2005.
The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) advised that it engaged the services of a media training company in 2005. A total of 24 individuals received training.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) advised that it engaged the services of a media training company in 2005. A total of two individuals received media training.

The Australian Research Council (ARC) advised that it did not engage the services of a media training company in 2005, however, one ARC officer was media trained by a consultant engaged by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) to provide media training services.

(2) The following sums were spent on media training in 2005:

CSIRO: $10,807.79.
ANSTO: $4,331.82.
ARC: $1,500.00.

All figures are GST-exclusive.

Human Services: Office Location

(Question No. 3420)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 9 May 2006:

(1) Does his department plan to move from its current office location.
(2) Will he list all the addresses that his department has occupied.
(3) What has been the cost of moving his department to 9 May 2006.
(4) What is the estimated cost of the planned move.
(5) What is the explanation for previous and planned office moves.
(6) From which budget allocation are office relocations funded.
(7) How many work hours have been lost, by all staff, in office moves to 9 May 2006.
(8) What is the estimated loss in work hours, by all staff, in the planned office move.
(9) How long have past office relocations taken.
(10) How long is the planned office relocation expected to take.
(11) When is the planned office relocation expected to occur.
(12) For how long does his department intend to stay at the new location.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Part of the Department’s staff moved into new premises at 65 Canberra Avenue in July 2006 whilst the Department also expanded at 10 National Circuit.
(2) 25 National Circuit, Barton ACT (this was temporary accommodation for several weeks in the set up phase of the Department and involved only a few staff)
   10 National Circuit (CA House) Barton ACT (currently occupied)
   28 National Circuit (Burns Centre) Forrest ACT
   65 Canberra Avenue (MPL Building) Manuka ACT (currently occupied)
(3) To 9 May 2006, the cost of relocating the Department has been approximately $0.12m.
(4) The cost of the relocation of staff into 10 National Circuit and 65 Canberra Avenue is approximately $0.28m.
(5) The Department has been increasing in size since its establishment. The increase in size has been due to the need to build up from scratch its capacity for coordinating the delivery of Government
services as well as the addition of new functions, such as the Job Capacity Assessment programme and the Health and Social Services Access Card.

(6) Office relocations are funded from DHS’s departmental appropriation.

(7) To 9 May 2006 it is estimated that approximately 580 work hours have been required for office moves.

(8) It is estimated that 590 work hours were involved in the move to 10 National Circuit and 65 Canberra Avenue.

(9) Past relocations have taken one working day each.

(10) The relocation to 10 National Circuit and 65 Canberra Avenue took one working day plus the following weekend.

(11) The relocation to 10 National Circuit and 65 Canberra Avenue took place in July 2006.

(12) The Department intends occupying its current accommodation for the foreseeable future.

To prepare this response it has taken approximately 7 hours and 25 minutes at an estimated cost of $368.

**Illegal Fishing**

(Question No. 3441)

Mr Price asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 9 May 2006:

(1) Is there evidence showing that the policy of administrative detention referred to as ‘catch, kiss and release’ is effective; if so, what are the details; if not, why is it being continued.

(2) Can the Minister confirm the estimates of industry experts and practitioners that the success rate of illegal foreign fishers is higher than 90 per cent; if so, is this not a powerful incentive to (a) criminal syndicates who finance the boats and (b) the illegal foreign fishermen to return; if not, what is the Minister’s estimate and how is it derived.

(3) Is there a target for the number of apprehensions; if so, (a) what is it, (b) when, by whom, and how was it derived, and (c) how well has it been met over the past 10 years; if there is not a target for the number of apprehensions, will the Minister explain why not.

Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) There is no policy of administrative detention called ‘catch, kiss and release’. The Fisheries Management Act provides for legislative forfeiture and this is used in limited circumstances.

(2) The Minister does not confirm the estimates indicated in the question. It would be impossible to confirm or provide estimates as the nature of sightings cannot be used as a basis to determine a ‘success rate’.

In areas of concentrated surveillance the same vessel may be sighted by successive flights on the same or subsequent days. Additionally, vessels sighted may also include those that could be fishing lawfully or are legitimately transiting Australian waters.

(3) (a), (b) and (c). During the recent Budget process, the Australian Government set a forecast of Foreign Fishing Vessel apprehensions for the purposes of operational planning and resource allocation; however agencies will continue to apprehend as many illegal foreign fishing vessels as possible, irrespective of whether those apprehensions would result in the nominated figures being exceeded.

The performance information is detailed in the Portfolio Budget Statements 2006/07 (Attorney-General’s Portfolio).
International Transfer of Prisoners Treaty
(Question No. 3555)

Mr Melham asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 22 May 2006:

(1) What discussions or exchanges have taken place between the Australian and Indonesian Governments concerning the possible negotiation of a bilateral treaty on the international transfer of prisoners.

(2) What visits to Indonesia have been made by Australian officials to progress this matter.

(3) What visits to Australia have been made by Indonesian officials to progress this matter.

(4) Has a draft treaty text been developed by Australia and has this been provided to the Indonesian Government.

(5) When are formal negotiations expected to commence.

Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) In April 2005, I had agreed with the Indonesian Minister of Justice and Human Rights, Dr Hamid Awaludin, that Australia and Indonesia would commence discussions about a bilateral treaty. In August and October 2005, I again met with Dr Awaludin to discuss the ITP scheme. On 16 February 2006 I wrote to Dr Awaludin requesting clarification about the domestic processes required to give effect to a treaty in Indonesia. On 29 June 2006, the Attorney-General, Hon Philip Ruddock MP, and Dr Awaludin agreed on key points on the proposed treaty including the following:

- the agreement will cover all offences
- the agreement will apply to prisoners already in custody in either Australia or Indonesia
- the agreement will provide that a prisoner will serve the sentence imposed by the laws of the country in which the person was convicted
- the agreement will not apply to people facing the death penalty unless that penalty is commuted to a prison sentence, and
- the agreement will set up a framework for decisions to be made about individual cases on a case by case basis.

On 13 September 2006, the Hon Philip Ruddock and I sent a joint letter to Dr Awaludin confirming the desirability of concluding negotiations by the end of 2006.

On 9 October 2006 the Hon Philip Ruddock MP, and I both held meetings in Canberra with where a number of outstanding issues were agreed.

(2) In June 2005 and December 2005 officials from the Attorney-General’s Department travelled to Indonesia and discussed the ITP regime and the possibility of negotiating a bilateral treaty between Australia and Indonesia. On 10 and 11 August 2006, officials from the Attorney-General’s Department again visited Indonesia for discussions.

(3) The ITP scheme was discussed with Indonesian Government officials during a visit to Australia in July 2004.

(4) Details of any treaty discussions and negotiations are confidential between the parties until a treaty is signed.

(5) Dialogue between Australia and Indonesia about an ITP treaty is active and continuing. Ministers at the Australia-Indonesia Ministerial Forum in Bali in June 2006 announced that it was desirable that a treaty be signed this year.
Welfare to Work
(Question No. 3638)

Ms Hoare asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 14 June 2006:

(1) Will he advise what efforts Centrelink has made to keep welfare organisations, and other non-government organisations, aware of the Government’s Welfare to Work changes, and the expected impact of these upon prospective welfare clients.

(2) Is he aware that many welfare organisations are being contacted by clients seeking advice and assistance in relation to the proposed Welfare to Work changes.

(3) Will he provide details of the resources that have been provided to organisations and welfare sector workers in the federal electoral division of Charlton to keep them informed of the Welfare to Work changes.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Regular outreach programmes operated by Centrelink Customer Service Centres have been advising local groups of the Welfare to Work changes. Centrelink has developed a number of specific tools to provide information on the Welfare to Work changes. These include:

- A community information pack, which has been distributed to all Centrelink Customer Service Centres to assist staff deliver the Welfare to Work messages to local community groups and organisations. The pack has been distributed to peak welfare organisations for distribution through their networks.
- A CD-ROM to complement the pack and support the delivery of Welfare to Work messages.
- Information about Welfare to Work changes on the Centrelink website.

One interactive Budget broadcast was hosted in the Charlton electorate – this was at the Centrelink Customer Service Centre in Charlestown. The broadcast provided information on Budget initiatives for local community organisations.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is also providing welfare organisations with information on Welfare to Work changes. They have conducted information sessions and have developed a national communication campaign.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 2 hours and 57 minutes at an estimated cost of $169.

Leadership Coaching
(Question No. 3694)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Finance and Administration, in writing, on 19 June 2006:

(1) How many senior officials in the Minister’s Department have a personal leadership coach or trainer.

(2) In each of the cases identified in part (1), what is the cost per hour of the leadership coach.

(3) What sum has been expended on leadership coaching in the Minister’s Department during the 2005-06 financial year.

Mr Costello—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Six senior officials have used executive coaching services in 2005-06.

(2) Three officials, $286 per hour.

  Two officials, $371.75 per hour.

  One official, $220 per hour.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
All hourly rates listed above are GST inclusive.

(3) In the last financial year a total of $5,753.00 (GST inclusive) has been spent on executive coaching.

**Medicare Office: Wollongong**

(Question No. 3717)

Ms George asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 19 June 2006:

(1) What is the annual cost of providing services to the community through the Medicare Office located in Wollongong.

(2) What proportion of the cost identified in part (1) is attributed to the services undertaken by the Wollongong Medicare Office on behalf of the Family Assistance Office.

(3) What is the average annual cost of providing services through Medicare Offices in large regional centres.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The cost of providing services during the 2005-06 financial year in the Wollongong Medicare Branch Office was $994,000.

(2) The Wollongong Medicare Office began processing full FAO services in April 2006 year. FAO processing represented approximately six percent of all processing activity in April and May 2006.

(3) The average cost per Medicare Office in large regional centres during the 2005-06 financial year was around $960,000.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 5 hours at an estimated cost of $289.

**Australian Technical Colleges**

(Question No. 3755)

Ms Macklin asked the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, in writing, on 22 June 2006:

For each Australian Technical College with which the Government has signed a funding agreement:

(1) who are the parties to the agreement.

(2) what is the duration of the agreement.

(3) what is the total value of the agreement.

(4) how much (a) recurrent, (b) per student, (c) capital funding is provided (i) in total and (ii) in each year of the agreement.

(5) what is the expected annual enrolment of the college in each year of the contract for each of its campuses.

(6) when is each college expected to be fully operational.

(7) what fees will be charged.

Mr Hardgrave—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:


(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): State of Victoria as represented by the Department of Education and Training

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2005 - 2009
(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005 ($K)</th>
<th>2006 ($K)</th>
<th>2007 ($K)</th>
<th>2008 ($K)</th>
<th>2009 ($K)</th>
<th>TOTAL ($K)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,598,845</td>
<td>9,155,655</td>
<td>2,453,277</td>
<td>1,015,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,222,777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.  
Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005 ($K)</th>
<th>2006 ($K)</th>
<th>2007 ($K)</th>
<th>2008 ($K)</th>
<th>2009 ($K)</th>
<th>TOTAL ($K)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>443,000</td>
<td>1,207,000</td>
<td>1,346,000</td>
<td>1,015,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,011,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005 ($K)</th>
<th>2006 ($K)</th>
<th>2007 ($K)</th>
<th>2008 ($K)</th>
<th>2009 ($K)</th>
<th>TOTAL ($K)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,155,845</td>
<td>7,948,655</td>
<td>1,107,277</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10,211,777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Expected annual enrolment of the College (for each campus):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ringwood</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferntree Gully</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:

- $500 per student per year (general purposes).

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Gladstone – opened 2006**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College - Gladstone Region Limited

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2005 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005 ($K)</th>
<th>2006 ($K)</th>
<th>2007 ($K)</th>
<th>2008 ($K)</th>
<th>2009 ($K)</th>
<th>TOTAL ($K)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>221,187</td>
<td>2,560,990</td>
<td>2,859,880</td>
<td>1,362,446</td>
<td>1,382,246</td>
<td>8,386,749</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005 ($K)</th>
<th>2006 ($K)</th>
<th>2007 ($K)</th>
<th>2008 ($K)</th>
<th>2009 ($K)</th>
<th>TOTAL ($K)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>171,187</td>
<td>790,990</td>
<td>1,059,880</td>
<td>1,362,446</td>
<td>1,382,246</td>
<td>4,766,749</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.
(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>1,770,000</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,620,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Expected annual enrolment of the College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:
No additional fees proposed in the first two years of operation. Once the ATC is registered as a school, fees are expected to be $500 (general purposes).

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

Australian Technical College – Gold Coast – opened 2006

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College – Gold Coast Limited

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2005 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>387,000</td>
<td>1,711,850</td>
<td>1,872,500</td>
<td>3,945,000</td>
<td>4,074,000</td>
<td>11,990,350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>387,000</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>1,832,000</td>
<td>3,900,000</td>
<td>3,984,000</td>
<td>11,603,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(5) Expected annual enrolment of the College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nerang / Benowa (interim arrangement)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helensvale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.
(7) Fees Proposed:

No fees are currently charged. A tuition fee of $2,000 per student per year will apply from 2008. A scholarships programme is envisaged to assist students meet these costs.

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Northern Tasmania – opened August 2006**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College, Northern Tasmania Ltd.

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>7,551,000</td>
<td>4,646,000</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>16,674,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>2,700,000</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>9,677,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,851,000</td>
<td>2,146,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6,997,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Campus</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launceston</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnie</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:

Students enrolling in 2006 will not be charged a fee. For each year thereafter, students will be charged fees of $500 per annum (general purposes).

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Port Macquarie – opened January 2006**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Lismore

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2005 – 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6,175,869</td>
<td>8,571,281</td>
<td>1,561,237</td>
<td>1,627,702</td>
<td>1,708,001</td>
<td>19,644,090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.
Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL  ($)</td>
<td>789,508</td>
<td>2,004,490</td>
<td>1,561,237</td>
<td>1,627,702</td>
<td>1,708,001</td>
<td>7,690,938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.
(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL  ($)</td>
<td>5,386,361</td>
<td>6,566,791</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11,953,152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Port Macquarie</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manning Valley</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>405</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:
$1,251 per student (general purposes)
Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

Australian Technical College – Adelaide South – opening 2007

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Adelaide Training and Employment Centre Incorporated
(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009
(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL  ($)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL  ($)</td>
<td>9,179,809</td>
<td>2,375,197</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
<td>2,100,000</td>
<td>15,955,006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.
Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL  ($)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL  ($)</td>
<td>907,000</td>
<td>1,050,000</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
<td>2,100,000</td>
<td>5,457,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.
(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL  ($)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL  ($)</td>
<td>8,272,809</td>
<td>1,325,197</td>
<td>900,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10,498,006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christies Downs</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otway</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:

A standard fee structure based upon the current non compulsory fee structure for State Government schools in South Australia will apply to students attending the College – approximately $230 per student per annum (general purposes).

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Bendigo – opening 2007**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College – Bendigo Limited

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL ($):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,212,700</td>
<td>3,285,000</td>
<td>1,950,000</td>
<td>2,465,000</td>
<td>12,912,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL ($):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>1,460,000</td>
<td>1,950,000</td>
<td>2,465,000</td>
<td>6,875,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL ($):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,212,700</td>
<td>1,825,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6,037,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.
(7) Fees Proposed:
$200 per student (general purposes).
Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Geelong – opening 2007**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Barwon Technical College Limited.
(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009
(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($):</td>
<td>2,238,607</td>
<td>2,209,930</td>
<td>2,552,955</td>
<td>2,621,094</td>
<td>9,622,586</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($):</td>
<td>1,075,820</td>
<td>1,739,790</td>
<td>2,322,415</td>
<td>2,611,294</td>
<td>7,749,319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.
(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($):</td>
<td>1,162,787</td>
<td>470,140</td>
<td>230,540</td>
<td>9,800</td>
<td>1,873,267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>286</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:
$400 per student per annum (general purposes).
Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Gippsland – opening 2007**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College Gippsland Inc
(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 – 2009
(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($):</td>
<td>5,288,242</td>
<td>3,445,694</td>
<td>1,508,201</td>
<td>1,741,240</td>
<td>11,983,377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.
Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>1,233,886</td>
<td>1,475,532</td>
<td>1,508,201</td>
<td>1,711,242</td>
<td>5,928,861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.
(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>4,054,356</td>
<td>1,970,162</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29,998</td>
<td>6,054,516</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

- Combined ATC Enrolments At Sale & Bairnsdale Campuses: 2006 - 50, 2007 - 100, 2008 - 120
- Associate Students At Home Schools: 2006 - 3, 2007 - 8, 2008 - 22

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:
$250 per student (general purposes).
Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Hunter – opening January 2007**

- (1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College Hunter Limited.
- (2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009
- (3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>4,685,740</td>
<td>9,500,180</td>
<td>3,034,470</td>
<td>2,779,050</td>
<td>19,999,440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.
Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>1,206,130</td>
<td>2,690,590</td>
<td>3,034,470</td>
<td>2,779,050</td>
<td>9,710,240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.
(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>3,479,610</td>
<td>6,809,590</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10,289,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maitland</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singleton</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:

Fees of $350 per year per student are proposed rising to $500 in 2009 (general purposes). Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – North Brisbane – opening 2007**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College North Brisbane Ltd

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>50,164</td>
<td>11,137,997</td>
<td>2,664,809</td>
<td>3,050,551</td>
<td>2,874,664</td>
<td>19,778,185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>50,164</td>
<td>1,747,997</td>
<td>2,414,809</td>
<td>2,300,551</td>
<td>2,624,664</td>
<td>9,138,185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>9,390,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>10,640,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:

No tuition charges will apply. There will be a charge of $750 per semester for course materials. Note: All figures are GST exclusive.
Australian Technical College – North Queensland – opening 2007

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College North Queensland Limited

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2005 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>208,365</td>
<td>14,831,450</td>
<td>5,376,788</td>
<td>2,221,911</td>
<td>2,146,350</td>
<td>24,784,864</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>208,365</td>
<td>1,461,868</td>
<td>2,256,982</td>
<td>2,175,711</td>
<td>2,130,750</td>
<td>8,233,676</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13,369,582</td>
<td>3,119,806</td>
<td>46,200</td>
<td>15,600</td>
<td>16,551,188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:

Nil

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

Australian Technical College – Northern Adelaide – opening 2007

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College Northern Adelaide Inc

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>66,725</td>
<td>$4,531,554</td>
<td>$4,185,923</td>
<td>$5,048,208</td>
<td>$1,950,835</td>
<td>15,783,245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>66,725</td>
<td>1,430,623</td>
<td>1,664,486</td>
<td>1,807,458</td>
<td>1,950,835</td>
<td>6,920,127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,100,931</td>
<td>2,521,437</td>
<td>3,240,750</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,863,118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>307</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:

A low fees policy of $700 per student for 2007 will apply (general purposes) with 50% discount for families with Health Card/School Card.

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Perth South – opening 2007**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Stirling Skills Training Incorporated

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>7,381,417</td>
<td>3,842,500</td>
<td>2,580,000</td>
<td>2,520,000</td>
<td>16,323,917</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>1,725,525</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
<td>2,395,000</td>
<td>2,345,000</td>
<td>8,765,525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>5,655,892</td>
<td>1,542,500</td>
<td>185,000</td>
<td>175,000</td>
<td>7,558,392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maddington</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armadale</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.
(7) Fees Proposed:
$1,550 per annum per student – ($100 enrolment, $200 materials, $1,250 tuition fee).
Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

Australian Technical College – Sunshine – opening 2007
(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): State of Victoria represented by the Department of Education and Training
(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009
(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>672,238</td>
<td>7,728,184</td>
<td>3,690,865</td>
<td>1,582,000</td>
<td>13,673,287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.
Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>1,025,000</td>
<td>1,625,000</td>
<td>1,560,000</td>
<td>4,560,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.
(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>322,238</td>
<td>6,703,184</td>
<td>2,065,865</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>9,113,287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Campus</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed:
$180 per student.
Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College Darwin PTY LTD
(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009
(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>3,675,000</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
<td>8,375,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>1,275,000</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
<td>4,375,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Campus:</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed: Nil

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Spencer Gulf and Outback – opening 2007**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): Australian Technical College Spencer Gulf and Outback Incorporated

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>5,806,030</td>
<td>2,941,991</td>
<td>1,676,800</td>
<td>1,900,450</td>
<td>12,325,271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>1,346,000</td>
<td>1,700,200</td>
<td>1,676,800</td>
<td>1,876,000</td>
<td>6,599,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>4,460,030</td>
<td>1,241,791</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24,450</td>
<td>5,726,271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Campus</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed: It is anticipated that the annual student fee will be $700.

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Illawarra – opening 2007**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): ITeC Training and Education Limited

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>4,950,009</td>
<td>11,345,531</td>
<td>1,676,591</td>
<td>1,424,112</td>
<td>19,596,243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

Total operational funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>715,634</td>
<td>2,257,836</td>
<td>1,585,016</td>
<td>1,424,112</td>
<td>5,982,598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>4,234,375</td>
<td>9,287,695</td>
<td>91,575</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13,613,645</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Campus</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed: It is anticipated that the annual student fee will be $358 per student.

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

**Australian Technical College – Warrnambool – opening 2007**

(1) Parties to the agreement (Contracted Party): State of Victoria as represented by the Department of Education and Training

(2) Duration of the agreement: 2006 - 2009

(3) Total value of the agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>1,592,928</td>
<td>11,418,300</td>
<td>1,685,617</td>
<td>1,238,000</td>
<td>15,934,845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(4) (a) “Recurrent Funding” has been interpreted as Operational Funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>334,000</td>
<td>1,383,000</td>
<td>1,384,000</td>
<td>1,238,000</td>
<td>4,339,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Australian Technical College funding is not provided on a per student basis.

(c) (i) and (ii) Total capital funding provided; capital funding each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ($)</td>
<td>1,258,928</td>
<td>10,035,300</td>
<td>301,617</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11,595,845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Projected Student Numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Campus</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) Programmes offered ‘at full capacity’ are provided for 2009 to reflect the period of the funding agreement. Additional programmes may be added later. Definition of full capacity varies amongst Colleges.

(7) Fees Proposed: Voluntary contributions may be requested between $150 - $250.

Note: All figures are GST exclusive.

Medicare Smartcard

(Question No. 3770)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 22 June 2006:

(1) In respect of his statement of 19 June, made during consideration in detail of Appropriation Bill (No. 1), to the effect that: “In the [Smartcard] chip, the only mandatory fields will essentially be your name, your address, your date of birth and pensioner concession and so on. It might have a signature as well. Those fields are readily available for the government now, obviously”, is he aware that Mr Bashford testified before the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee in May 2006 that: “On the chip itself—and, again, I stress that this is not set in concrete yet, but this is what we think—there will be the address, the date of birth, the concession status, a signature, a photograph and the names of children and other dependants.”; if so, what is his view on this matter.

(2) Will the Smartcard microchip hold (a) biometric photographs and/or (b) the names of children and dependants.

(3) Will he confirm whether the digital signatures of 16 million Australians are already available to the Government.

(4) Will each Smartcard have an individual identification number that will be held on the (a) Smartcard microchip and/or (b) on a central database.

(5) Will he provide a definitive list of the data to be held on the Smartcard microchip.

(6) Will the Government introduce legislation to prohibit (a) the inclusion of additional information to be held on the Smartcard microchip and (b) Smartcard ‘function creep’.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Testimony provided by Mr Bashford at the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee in May 2006 was prefaced by the statement that final decisions on the design and operation of the access card had not been made. The final design of the card will be undertaken in consultation with
the Lead Advisor, Chief Technology Architect and the Access Card Consumer and Privacy Taskforce headed by Professor Allan Fels, AO.

(2) Pending advice from the Lead Advisor, Chief Technology Architect and the Access Card Consumer and Privacy Taskforce, the access card will have a digital photograph on the face of the card and in the chip. The chip will also contain the names of dependants to facilitate Medicare billing and rebates in the same way that dependants are currently embossed on the face of the current Medicare cards.

(3) Although the collection of signatures is a common occurrence in doing business with private and public organisations, for historical reasons, they have generally been captured in paper-format. People registering for the health and social services access card will be fully informed about the use of the digital signature.

(4) Every cardholder and dependant will have a unique access card number. Whether the card itself has a unique identifier is a technical design issue that will be considered by Government in due course.

(5) The final data elements have not been decided. Advice will be sought from the Lead Advisor, Chief Technology Architect and Access Card Consumer and Privacy Taskforce.

(6) The Government is examining what legislation is required to ensure the successful implementation of the access card. The specifics will be dependant upon business processes and technical specifications which are not yet finalised.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 3 hours at an estimated cost of $183.

Medicare Smartcard
(Question No. 3771)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 22 June 2006:

(1) In respect of his statement made to the AMA National Conference in May 2006 to the effect that: “The access card can only be read with an electronic reader and the safety of the information is provided by encryption and a card pin or password”, is he aware of (a) Mr Bashford’s testimony to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee in May 2006, that Smartcard information would be “protected by a PIN” and (b) the statement on page 19 of the KPMG report titled Health and Social Services Smartcard Initiative Business Case - Public Extract, that: “Given that people will not use this card as frequently as they use banking cards, people will forget their PIN and cause delays at the chemist or at the doctors and will be forced to get a new PIN from a call centre. It is simply not a practical solution.”; if so, what is his view on this matter.

(2) Will the Smartcard require the (a) compulsory and/or (b) selective use of a PIN number.

(3) In respect of the Smartcard, will the (a) degree of privacy protection and (b) system efficiency depend upon the use of a PIN number.

(4) Will the Minister explain how the use of PIN numbers will impact upon the costs and benefits of the Smartcard project.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Testimony by Mr Bashford regarding the access card was prefaced with the statement that final decisions on the design and operation of the access card had not been made. The final design of the card will be undertaken in consultation with the Lead Advisor, Chief Technology Architect and the Access Card Consumer and Privacy Taskforce headed by Professor Allan Fels, AO.

(2) Refer to the response provided for question (1).

(3) Refer to the response provided for question (1).
(4) Refer to the response provided for question (1).

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 3 hours at an estimated cost of $183.

**Income and Assets Test**

(Question No. 3789)

*Ms Hoare* asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 8 August 2006:

1. Will he clarify whether Centrelink customers who are joint tenant, resident mortgagees in a shared place of residence, but not partnered, must each declare the income and assets of the other in Centrelink’s income and assets tests in order to qualify for payments.

2. Will he explain the circumstances under which two single people living together would not be considered to be a couple by Centrelink.

3. Does he accept that there are single people sharing accommodation to defray housing costs, who are not partnered, but are unable to access full Centrelink entitlements because the income and assets of their co-tenants preclude their eligibility.

4. Does he accept that Centrelink’s current definition of a couple is outdated and should be reformed to meet contemporary standards; if not, why not.

*Mr Hockey*—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

1. No, this is not true.

2. For the purposes of the Social Security Act 1991 a marriage-like relationship exists if two people of the opposite sex, who are not close relatives, are considered to be living together as husband and wife. The Act requires the application of a test based on five factors to determine whether or not a marriage-like relationship exists.

   In determining the nature of a relationship Centrelink will consider the following five factors:

   1. financial aspects of the relationship;
   2. nature of the household;
   3. social aspects of the relationship;
   4. presence or absence of a sexual relationship; and
   5. nature of the commitment.

   Any decision taken to determine that a marriage-like relationship exists must be supported by adequate evidence.

   Section 4 (6) of the Act makes provision for certain customers to not be considered as a member of a couple. These may be those assessed under the provisions of Section 24 and certain Youth Allowance customers.

3. No, the Minister does not accept this assertion.

   If Centrelink accepts that a person is single, they would not be treated as a member of a couple by using another person’s income and assets in their assessment. As in question (1), the question would not be asked about the other person’s income and assets.

   A person who is sharing accommodation as a single might be defined as a “sharer” and receive the sharer rate of rent assistance. The sharer rate of rent assistance is less than the normal rate because the person does not pay all the rent themselves. However, that rent assistance is still unaffected by the income and assets of other tenants.

4. No. Section 4 (2) of the Social Security Act provides the definition of a ‘couple’ and Centrelink applies the provisions of this legislation and associated policy in undertaking any assessment of relationship status.
To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 2 hours and 46 minutes at an estimated cost of $156.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 3822)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 8 August 2006:

(1) Have any security incidents at (a) Sydney International Airport or (b) Sydney Domestic Airport been reported to him since 2004; if so, how many and what are the details; if not, why not.

(2) Has any alleged criminal behaviour at (a) Sydney International Airport or (b) Sydney Domestic Airport been reported to him since 2004; if so, how many episodes and what are the details.

Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Yes, from 2004 to 8 August 2006, the Australian Federal Police reported to me:

(a) Four incidents of trespass; one incident of bomb threat hoax; one incident of bomb threat involving person with mental health issues; and one incident of importation of an inert grenade at Sydney International airport.

(b) Two incidents of threats made; one incident of improvised incendiary device located on board domestic aircraft; and one incident of trespass at Sydney Domestic Airport.

(2) Yes, from 2004 to 8 August 2006, the AFP reported to me:

(a) 16 incidents and corresponding court results of narcotics offences involving incoming international passengers; one incident of corrupt behaviour of a baggage handler involving narcotics; one incident involving the arrest of three airline employees for narcotics offences; and one allegation / investigation into a drug syndicate operating within the International Airport.

(b) Nil.

More Doctors for Outer Metropolitan Areas Scheme
(Question No. 3854)

Ms Gillard asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 9 August 2006:

(1) For each of the years 1996 to 2006, how many Medicare provider numbers were allocated to the postcode area (a) 3024, (b) 3026, (c) 3028, (d) 3029, (e) 3030, (f) 3211, (g) 3335, (h) 3337, (i) 3338, (j) 3340 and (k) 3427 on (i) 1 January and (ii) 1 July.

(2) In the postcode area (a) 3024, (b) 3026, (c) 3028, (d) 3029, (e) 3030, (f) 3211, (g) 3335, (h) 3337, (i) 3338, (j) 3340 and (k) 3427, how many doctors qualified for the More Doctors for Outer Metropolitan Areas scheme in (i) 2003, (ii) 2004, (iii) 2005 and (iv) 2006.

Mr Abbott—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) This information is not available from the Department of Health and Ageing as it falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Human Services, the Hon Joe Hockey MP.

(2) (a) to (k) The smallest geographic area for which the Department routinely produces statistics is the Commonwealth Electoral Division. In your question, you requested data for numerous postcodes that are wholly or partially contained within the Commonwealth Electoral Division of Lalor. We have therefore provided information for this Commonwealth Electoral Division.

There have been a total of 11 doctors who qualified for the More Doctors for Outer Metropolitan Areas scheme as at 30 June 2005 for the Commonwealth Electoral Division of Lalor.

Data for 2003 and 2004 is unavailable. Data for 2006 is not yet available.
Mr Scott Morrison

(Question No. 3855)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Small Business and Tourism, in writing, on 9 August 2006:

In respect of the former Managing Director of Tourism Australia, Mr Scott Morrison,

(a) which company was engaged in his selection and,
(b) how many candidates were short-listed for the appointment,
(c) what was the itemised cost of the selection process,
(d) which members of Tourism Australia and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources were engaged in the selection process and final appointment,
(e) was she, her office, or any other Minister consulted about the appointment prior to its commencement,
(f) what total remuneration did Mr Morrison receive as Managing Director of Tourism Australia, by financial year, including any separation payment approved by the Tourism Australia Board in August 2006,
(g) what other benefits did Mr Morrison receive, including, but not necessarily limited to, use of a private vehicle and mobile telephone,
(h) what process will be used to select Mr. Morrison’s replacement,
(i) when will an appointment be made, and
(j) what will be the contractual period of the appointment and remuneration.

Fran Bailey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) Korn Ferry International was engaged for the recruitment for the Managing Director position at Tourism Australia.

(b) Korn Ferry International put forward more than one candidate for Board consideration.

(c) The total cost of the selection process was $108,512, which was invoiced in four instalments.

(d) The members of the Board of Tourism Australia were involved in the selection process. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources is represented on the Board.

(e) The Minister for Small Business and Tourism and the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources were informed in accordance with the process relating to appointments outlined in the Cabinet Handbook, section 6. The appointment received Cabinet endorsement.

(f) The Remuneration Tribunal has assessed the position of Managing Director in Tourism Australia at Classification Band C, Tier 1, in accordance with the Principal Executive Officer Structure under its Determination 2005/07. The position is entitled to total remuneration within a band range of $190,000 to $355,710. Details of any separation payment are the subject of a confidential Deed between Tourism Australia and Mr Morrison.

(g) Mr Morrison leased a private vehicle as part of his total remuneration. He was issued with a mobile telephone for business purposes.

(h) The position has been advertised in the national press and in online media. The recruitment process is being managed by Watermark, which will review applicants and present a shortlist of candidates for the Tourism Australia Board’s consideration. Once the Board has chosen a candidate, the appointment process from thereon will be in accordance with paragraph 6.2(b) of the Cabinet Handbook.

(i) An appointment will be made when the appointment process is complete.
(j) The contractual period will be negotiated between Tourism Australia and the preferred candidate. The remuneration will be inline with the Remuneration Tribunal’s Determination 2005/07.

Mr Scott Morrison
(Question No. 3857)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Small Business and Tourism, in writing, on 9 August 2006:

(1) Were all media statements issued by the former Managing Director of Tourism Australia, Mr Scott Morrison, subject of clearance by her office; if so, did Mr Morrison seek clearance each time he issued a media statement.

(2) Did she, her office or department issue in any form of directive to the effect that media statements by Mr Morrison and/or Tourism Australia had to be cleared by her, her office or department before being issued.

Fran Bailey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Tourism Australia, like all statutory Authorities, is aware that, in accordance with sections 16 (1) (a) and (b) of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997, Ministerial offices be informed of the details of all proposed media releases.

Australian Government Solicitor Advisory Board
(Question No. 3882)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, in writing, on 10 August 2006:

(1) How is the Chairman of the Australian Government Solicitor Advisory Board appointed and what qualifications are required for appointment.

(2) Upon what basis was John Allen appointed Chairman of the Australian Government Solicitor Advisory Board in 2000.

(3) Is the Minister aware that Mr Allen was, and remains, an instrumental member of the Higgins 200 Club, a key fundraising vehicle for the Treasurer.

(4) Was Mr Allen’s membership of the Higgins 200 Club a factor in the decision to appoint him as Chairman of the Australian Government Solicitor Advisory Board.

(5) Is he aware that after the Treasurer assumed office in 1996, Mr Allen became Chairman of the Higgins Electorate Council.

(6) Was Mr Allen’s Chairmanship of the Higgins Electorate Council a factor in the decision to appoint him as Chairman of the Australian Government Solicitor Advisory Board.

Mr Costello—The Minister for Finance and Administration has supplied the following answer to the question of Mr Kelvin Thomson MP:

(1) to (6) Consistent with long standing practice, the appointment of the Chairman of the Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) Advisory Board is brought forward for the Prime Minister’s or, at his discretion, Cabinet’s approval of the appointment.

Candidates are required to be appropriately qualified and have experience relevant to the position.

Mr Allen’s appointment was based on his individual capacity to contribute to the Board and to the achievement of AGS’ objectives.

Mr Allen’s previous executive experience in strategic management consulting and marketing, as well as his involvement in a range of boards and committees was a contributing factor in his appointment.
Pensions and Benefits
(Question No. 3887)

Ms Hoare asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 10 August 2006:
Further to his reply to question No. 2994 (Hansard, 22 May 2006, page 176), in which he referred to the
time taken to prepare his response, (a) why did he publish such detail and (b) does he accept that the
Parliament’s essential role in keeping the Government accountable and to ensure transparency of gov-
ernment activity sometimes has considerable associated costs and (c) can he confirm that he is not at-
ttempting to dissuade Members from pursuing questions relating to such matters through the Notice Pa-
per by publishing such detail.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(a) This information was provided to ensure the transparency and accountability of government activ-
ity.
(b) Yes.
(c) Yes.

To prepare this answer it has taken 1 hour and six minutes at an estimated cost of $63.