INTERNET
The Votes and Proceedings for the House of Representatives are available at

Proof and Official Hansards for the House of Representatives,
the Senate and committee hearings are available at

For searching purposes use
http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au

SITTING DAYS—2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>8, 9, 10, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 15, 26, 27, 28, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6</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** 103.9 FM
- **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—NINTH 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, Ms Ann Kathleen Corcoran, Mr Barry Wayne Haase, Mr Michael John Hatton, the Hon. Duncan James Colquhoun Kerr SC, Mr Harry Vernon Quick, the Hon. Bruce Craig Scott, Mr Patrick Damien Secker, 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—Mr Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Robert Francis McMullan 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—Mr Kevin Michael Rudd MP
Deputy Leader—Ms Julia Eileen Gillard 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 Harry</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>Andrew, 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>Bilson, 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>Causley, 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>Entschi, 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 Durrel</td>
<td>Bass, Tas</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, 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>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>Georganas, 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>Tangney, 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. Sussan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay, Hon. 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>
<tr>
<td>McGauran, Hon. Peter John</td>
<td>Gippsland, Vic</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMullan, 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>Plibersek, 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, Hon. 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>Lingiari, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somlyay, 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>Vaile, 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>
<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>
</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>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
HOWARD MINISTRY

Prime Minister                        The Hon. John Winston Howard MP
Minister for Transport and Regional Services and Deputy Prime Minister
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
Attorney-General                       The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Minister for Finance and Administration, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Deputy Leader of the House
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Minister for Education, Science and Training and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service
Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate
Minister for the Environment and Water Resources
Minister for Human Services

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry and Post</th>
<th>Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation and Manager of Government Business in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</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 Revenue and Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Workforce Participation</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone 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>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>The Hon. Gary Roy Nair MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Vocational and Further Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew John Robb MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts and Sport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Henry Brandis SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Community Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Gregory Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice and Customs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. David Albert Lloyd Johnston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>The Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources</td>
<td>The Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services</td>
<td>The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher John Pearce MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Mansell Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources</td>
<td>The Hon. Robert Charles Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Gregory Andrew Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Penelope Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training</td>
<td>The Hon. Patrick Francis Farmer MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter John Lindsay MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Brett John Mason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SHADOW MINISTRY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Kevin Michael Rudd MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Julia Eileen Gillard MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Shadow Minister for Social Inclusion</td>
<td>Senator Stephen Michael Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Water and Manager of Opposition Business in the House</td>
<td>Anthony Norman Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Homeland Security, Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs and Shadow Minister for Territories</td>
<td>The Hon. Archibald Ronald Bevis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Revenue and Competition Policy</td>
<td>Christopher Eyles Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration, Integration and Citizenship</td>
<td>Anthony Stephen Burke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Industry and Shadow Minister for Innovation, Science and Research</td>
<td>Senator Kim John Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade and Shadow Minister for Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Service Economy, Small Business and Independent Contractors</td>
<td>Craig Anthony Emerson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Shadow Minister for Urban Development and Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>Laurence Donald Thomas Ferguson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Transport, Roads and Tourism</td>
<td>Martin John Ferguson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Heritage and Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>Peter Robert Garrett MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Shadow Minister for Defence Science and Personnel and Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Alan Peter Griffin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Joseph William Ludwig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, Shadow Minister for Health Promotion and Shadow Minister for Local Government</td>
<td>Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Community Services and Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation</td>
<td>Jennifer Louise Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Robert Bruce McClelland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Careers</td>
<td>Senator Jan Elizabeth McLucas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shadow Minister for Federal/State Relations, Shadow Minister for International Development Assistance and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House
Robert Francis McMullan MP

Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry
Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O’Brien

Shadow Minister for Human Services, Shadow Minister for Housing, Shadow Minister for Youth and Shadow Minister for Women
Tanya Joan Plibersek MP

Shadow Minister for Health
Senator the Hon. Nicholas John Sherry

Shadow Minister for Superannuation and Intergenerational Finance and Shadow Minister for Banking and Financial Services
Nicola Louise Roxon MP

Shadow Minister for Education and Training
Stephen Francis Smith MP

Shadow Treasurer
Wayne Maxwell Swan MP

Shadow Minister for Finance
Lindsay James Tanner MP

Shadow Minister for Public Administration and Accountability, Shadow Minister for Corporate Governance and Responsibility and Shadow Minister for Workforce Participation
Senator Penelope Ying Yen Wong

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs
Anthony Michael Byrne MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and Veterans’ Affairs
The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Heritage
Jennie George MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Treasury
Catherine Fiona King MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education
Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition
John Paul Murphy MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Industrial Relations
Brendan Patrick John O’Connor MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation
Bernard Fernando Ripoll MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia and Indigenous Affairs
The Hon. Warren Edward Snowdon MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition (Social and Community Affairs)
Senator Ursula Mary Stephens
CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 10 MAY

Chamber
Tax Laws Amendment (Personal Income Tax Reduction) Bill 2007—
  First Reading ........................................................................................................... 1
  Second Reading ............................................................................................................ 1
Tax Laws Amendment (2007 Budget Measures) Bill 2007—
  First Reading ........................................................................................................... 2
  Second Reading ............................................................................................................ 2
Tax Laws Amendment (2007 Measures No. 3) Bill 2007—
  First Reading ........................................................................................................... 2
  Second Reading ............................................................................................................ 2
Tax Laws Amendment (Personal Income Tax Reduction) Legislation................................ 4
Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business) Bill 2007—
  First Reading ........................................................................................................... 5
  Second Reading ............................................................................................................ 5
Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2007—
  First Reading ........................................................................................................... 5
  Second Reading ............................................................................................................ 5
Committees—
  Public Works Committee—Reference ....................................................................... 7
  Public Works Committee—Reference ....................................................................... 8
Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Amendment Bill 2007—
  First Reading ........................................................................................................... 9
  Second Reading ............................................................................................................ 9
Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Amendment Bill 2007—
  First Reading ........................................................................................................... 10
  Second Reading ........................................................................................................... 10
Communications Legislation Amendment (Content Services) Bill 2007—
  First Reading ........................................................................................................... 11
  Second Reading ........................................................................................................... 11
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Bill 2007—
  Second Reading ........................................................................................................... 13
  Consideration in Detail ......................................................................................... 32
  Third Reading ............................................................................................................. 36
Governance Review Implementation (Treasury Portfolio Agencies) Bill 2007—
  Second Reading ........................................................................................................... 36
  Third Reading ............................................................................................................. 48
Health Insurance Amendment (Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation) Bill 2007—
  Second Reading ........................................................................................................... 48
  Third Reading ............................................................................................................. 65
Corporations (NZ Closer Economic Relations) and Other Legislation Amendment
  Bill 2007—
  Second Reading ........................................................................................................... 65
Ministerial Arrangements ............................................................................................. 73
Questions Without Notice—
  Economy ..................................................................................................................... 73
  Economy ..................................................................................................................... 74
  Carbon Trading ............................................................................................................ 75
  Budget 2007-08 .......................................................................................................... 76
Distinguished Visitors ................................................................................................. 78
CONTENTS—continued

Questions Without Notice—
Education...................................................................................................................... 78
Economy......................................................................................................................... 78
Education...................................................................................................................... 80
Economy......................................................................................................................... 80
Education...................................................................................................................... 81
Transport Infrastructure................................................................................................. 82
Budget 2007-08 ................................................................................................................. 83
Workplace Relations........................................................................................................ 84
Workplace Relations........................................................................................................ 85
Budget 2007-08 ................................................................................................................. 85
Workplace Relations........................................................................................................ 87
Climate Change............................................................................................................... 87

Questions Without Notice: Additional Answers—
Economy......................................................................................................................... 88

Documents....................................................................................................................... 89

Questions to the Speaker—
Questions in Writing...................................................................................................... 89
Questions in Writing...................................................................................................... 89

Budget 2007-08 ................................................................................................................. 89

Matters of Public Importance—
Education....................................................................................................................... 89

Committees—
Selection Committee—Report......................................................................................... 104
Publications Committee—Report...................................................................................... 106

Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2007—
Report from Main Committee .......................................................................................... 106
Third Reading.................................................................................................................. 107

Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2007—
Report from Main Committee .......................................................................................... 107
Third Reading.................................................................................................................. 107

Condolences—
Senator Jeannie Margaret Ferris—Report from Main Committee .................................. 107

Committees—
Privileges Committee—Membership................................................................................ 107
Australian Crime Commission Committee—Membership ................................................. 107

Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Digital Radio) Bill 2007,
Radio Licence Fees Amendment Bill 2007,
Social Security and Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (One-off Payments and Other
2007 Budget Measures) Bill 2007,
Superannuation Laws Amendment (2007 Budget Co-contribution Measure) Bill 2007,
Education Services for Overseas Students Legislation Amendment Bill 2007 and
Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Amendment Bill 2007—
Returned from the Senate................................................................................................. 108

Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2007—
First Reading................................................................................................................... 108

Corporations (NZ Closer Economic Relations) and Other Legislation Amendment
Bill 2007—
Second Reading............................................................................................................. 108
Third Reading.................................................................................................................. 109
CONTENTS—continued

Native Title Amendment (Technical Amendments) Bill 2007—
  Second Reading ........................................................................................................... 109
  Third Reading ............................................................................................................. 121
Governance Review Implementation (Treasury Portfolio Agencies) Bill 2007—
  Returned from the Senate .......................................................................................... 121
Forestry Marketing and Research and Development Services Bill 2007 and
Forestry Marketing and Research and Development Services (Transitional and
Consequential Provisions) Bill 2007—
  Second Reading ......................................................................................................... 121
Business—
  Postponement ............................................................................................................. 128
Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2007-2008—
  Second Reading ......................................................................................................... 128
Notices ............................................................................................................................... 135
Main Committee
Statements by Members—
  Taiwan: World Health Organisation ......................................................................... 137
  Workplace Relations .................................................................................................... 138
  Concord Garden Club .................................................................................................. 139
  Mental Health ................................................................................................................ 139
  Medicare ....................................................................................................................... 140
  Queensland Dams ........................................................................................................ 140
  Workplace Relations .................................................................................................... 141
  Transport Infrastructure ................................................................................................. 142
  Chifley Electorate: Ms Christine Cawsey ................................................................. 143
  Do Not Call Register .................................................................................................. 143
Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2007—
  Second Reading ........................................................................................................... 144
Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2007—
  Second Reading ......................................................................................................... 151
Condolences—
  Senator Jeannie Margaret Ferris .............................................................................. 159
Adjournment—
  National Library of Australia: Digitisation Project .................................................... 164
  Wakefield Electorate ................................................................................................... 165
  Official Visit to Canada and Germany .......................................................................... 167
  Study Tour of the United States of America ............................................................. 167
  Land and Housing Prices ............................................................................................ 168
  Veterans’ Affairs ......................................................................................................... 169
Questions In Writing
  Intelligence Information—(Question No. 5480) .......................................................... 171
  Murray Darling Basin—(Question No. 5482) ............................................................... 171
  Bushmaster Infantry Mobility Vehicles—(Question No. 5485) .................................. 174
  Human Rights: China—(Question No. 5493) ............................................................. 174
  Human Rights: China—(Question No. 5494) ............................................................. 174
  Child Care—(Question No. 5496) ................................................................................ 175
  Collins Class Submarines—(Question No. 5497) ....................................................... 176
  Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5500) ........................................... 176
  Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5501) ........................................... 177
  Pharmaceutical Allowance—(Question No. 5504) ..................................................... 177
CONTENTS—continued

Iran—(Question No. 5505)................................................................. 178
Australian Workplace Agreements—(Question No. 5506) .................... 178
Mr David Hicks—(Question No. 5512) ............................................. 179
Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5515) ..................... 179
Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5516) ..................... 179
Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5517) ..................... 180
Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5518) ..................... 180
Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5519) ..................... 180
Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5520) ..................... 181
Education Funding—(Question No. 5544)............................................. 181
Mr David Hicks—(Question No. 5546) ............................................. 182
Discretionary Funds and Grants—(Question No. 5548) .......................... 182
Volunteer Small Equipment Grant—(Question No. 5550) ..................... 194
Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5552) ..................... 195
Avalon Airport—(Question No. 5553) ............................................. 195
Sudan: Human Rights—(Question No. 5561) ..................................... 195
United Nations Human Rights Council—(Question No. 5562) ............ 196
Family Tax Benefit—(Question No. 5566) ........................................... 197
National Highway System—(Question No. 5571) ................................. 197
Road Funding—(Question No. 5573) ............................................. 197
Governor-General—(Question No. 5578) ........................................... 198
Tasmania: Rail Infrastructure—(Question No. 5583)............................... 199
Tasmania: Rail Infrastructure—(Question No. 5584)............................... 199
Education Funding—(Question No. 5586) ........................................... 200
Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport—(Question No. 5594) ..................... 201
Foreign Affairs: Consular Complaints—(Question No. 5625) ................. 201
Ethanol Production Grants Program—(Question No. 5635) .................... 203
India: Uranium Exports—(Question No. 5636) ................................. 203
Thursday, 10 May 2007

The SPEAKER (Hon. David Hawker) took the chair at 9.00 am and read prayers.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (PERSONAL INCOME TAX REDUCTION) BILL 2007

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Costello.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr COSTELLO (Higgins—Treasurer) (9.01 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The measures contained in this bill will cut personal income tax for all Australian taxpayers from 1 July 2007. The tax cuts are another step in this government’s comprehensive tax reform that has seen income tax cut in the last four budgets.

It is the government’s policy to keep the tax burden as low as possible, once necessary government services have been funded. Lowering the tax burden will enhance work incentives, improve participation and increase the capacity of the Australian economy.

The tax cuts in this bill will take effect in two stages: from 1 July 2007 and 1 July 2008.

From 1 July this year, the government will increase the 30 per cent marginal tax rate threshold so that the 15 per cent marginal rate will apply up to $30,000 of income, an increase in the threshold of $5,000.

The low-income tax offset will be increased from $600 to $750 from 1 July 2007. It will begin to phase-out at the start of the new 30 per cent threshold, $30,000, compared to $25,000 currently. This means that those eligible for the full low-income tax offset will not pay tax until their annual income exceeds $11,000.

From 1 July next year the threshold for the 40 per cent rate will rise from $75,001 to $80,001 and the threshold for the 45 per cent rate will rise from $150,001 to $180,001.

Senior Australians who are eligible for the senior Australians tax offset will not pay tax on their annual income up to $25,867 for singles and up to $43,360 for couples for 2007-08.

Overall, in percentage terms, the greatest tax cuts have once again been provided to low-income earners. These tax changes will ensure that more than 80 per cent of taxpayers face a top marginal tax rate of only 30 per cent or less over the next four years. Taxpayers earning $30,000 paid $6,222 in income tax in 1999. From 1 July 2007 they will only pay $2,850—more than halving their tax.

The increase in the 30 per cent threshold and the low-income tax offset will provide more incentive for those outside the workforce to re-enter it and those in part-time work to take on additional hours.

For 2007-08 taxpayers will not reach the highest marginal tax rate until they earn more than 3½ times average weekly earnings.

Increasing the top threshold will improve the competitiveness of Australia’s tax system compared with other OECD countries. By next year, relative to an average wage, Australia’s top threshold will be the eighth highest in the OECD. Three years ago we were 20th.

Seven years ago, the threshold for the top marginal tax rate was $50,000. If this threshold had been indexed when this government came to office in 1996, it would have stood at below $68,000 by 1 July next year. Under the government’s reforms and this bill, by 1 July 2008 that threshold will be $180,001.
This package provides $31.5 billion of benefit to taxpayers over four years and reinforces Australia’s reputation as a low-tax country. These tax cuts continue the reforms to the personal income tax system, to increase disposable income, to enhance incentives for participation and to improve Australia’s international competitiveness.

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

Debate (on motion by Mr Ripoll) adjourned.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2007 BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2007

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Dutton.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer) (9.06 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill increases the dependent spouse tax offset from $1,655 to $2,100 with effect from 1 July 2007. The full dependent spouse tax offset is available to a resident taxpayer who contributes to the maintenance of a resident spouse whose separate net income does not exceed $282. The rebate is reduced by $1 for every $4 by which the dependent spouse’s separate net income exceeds $282. This measure will increase the separate net income at which the tax offset is completely phased out from $6,901 to $8,681.

In addition, the bill increases the Medicare levy low-income thresholds for individuals and families in line with increases in the consumer price index. The low-income threshold in the Medicare levy surcharge provisions will similarly be increased. These changes will ensure that low-income individuals and families will continue to be exempt from the Medicare levy or surcharge.

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

The amendments to the Medicare levy low-income thresholds will apply to the 2006-07 income year and later income years. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Ripoll) adjourned.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2007 MEASURES No. 3) BILL 2007

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Dutton.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer) (9.09 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill makes numerous improvements to Australia’s tax laws.

Schedule 1 to this bill makes amendments to the tax integrity rules concerning private company distributions to shareholders and their associates. The amendments in this schedule reduce both the extent to which taxpayers can inadvertently trigger a deemed dividend under division 7A of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936, and the punitive nature of the provisions. The amendments remove the automatic debiting of the company’s franking account when a deemed dividend arises under division 7A.

The amendments give the Commissioner of Taxation a discretion to disregard a deemed dividend that has arisen because of
an honest mistake or omission by a taxpayer, providing greater flexibility to administration of the provisions. Further, certain shareholder loans will be able to be refinanced without triggering a deemed dividend, and division 7A compliant loans will be exempted from fringe benefits tax.

These measures will reduce ongoing compliance costs for private companies and reduce tax penalties, especially for the many small businesses that use a company structure.

Schedule 2 makes amendments to ensure that certain superannuation contributions made prior to 1 July 2007 are subject to the contributions cap in the simplified superannuation system.

This measure ensures that contributions, such as those made by a friend during the simplified superannuation transitional period, are included in the non-concessional contributions cap calculation for that period.

Schedule 3 makes amendments to allow a trustee of a resident testamentary trust to choose to be assessed on capital gains of the trust. The changes will ensure that an income beneficiary of a resident testamentary trust need not be assessed on capital gains of the trust from which they will not benefit.

Schedule 4 to this bill makes amendments to allow non-dependants of a member of the Australian Defence Force or any Australian police force, or an Australian Protective Service officer, killed in the line of duty, to access the same concessional tax treatment for lump sum superannuation death benefits as dependants. This means that from 1 July 2007, eligible non-dependants will pay no tax on the lump sum superannuation benefit left to them by someone who has died in the line of duty.

The government will also be making ex gratia payments to eligible non-dependants who received a lump sum superannuation death benefit payment over the period from 1 January 1999 to 30 June 2007. These payments will be equivalent to the additional tax paid on the superannuation death benefit and will be administered by the Australian Taxation Office.

Schedule 5 will extend by one year, an existing transitional period under the thin capitalisation rules. The transitional period allows taxpayers to elect to use current or former accounting standards to make certain calculations. The extension will enable a thorough assessment of the impact on the thin capitalisation rules of adopting Australian equivalents to International Financial Reporting Standards. It will also provide time to develop and consult on any changes to the rules that may be considered appropriate.

Schedule 6 to this bill repeals the dividend tainting rules and makes two consequential amendments. The first consequential amendment ensures that distributions from a share capital account continue to be unfrankable. The second modifies the general anti-avoidance rule that applies in relation to the imputation system. When considering whether to apply the rule, the Commissioner of Taxation will be able to take into account whether a distribution is sourced from unrealised or untaxed profits.

The changes will apply in relation to distributions made on or after 1 July 2004. This will ensure that taxpayers do not inadvertently trigger the dividend tainting rules by accounting entries required under the Australian equivalent of the International Financial Reporting Standards.

Schedule 7 clarifies the types of financial instruments that are eligible for the exemption from interest withholding tax (IWT) to correct an unintended broadening of the exemption. In addition to debentures, only non-debenture debt interests that are non-
equity shares, syndicated loans and instruments prescribed by regulation will be eligible for the IWT exemption. This realigns the exemption with the government’s policy intent and enhances the integrity of the tax base.

It will still be necessary for these debt interests to satisfy the public offer test. In the case of syndicated loans, modifications have been made to the public offer test so that it operates appropriately and accommodates market practices.

Schedule 8 to this bill inserts new rules to ensure that investment in forestry managed investment schemes is encouraged to facilitate the continued expansion of our plantation forestry estate and to reduce our reliance on both native forests and overseas imports.

Investors will be eligible for income tax deductions for any contributions they make to new schemes for developing plantation forests in Australia, provided a 70 per cent direct forestry expenditure rule and some other requirements are met.

To address the government’s concerns about the level of commissions charged, this measure incorporates an arms-length pricing rule and a requirement that all of the trees are established within 18 months.

Consistent with the rules for existing schemes, the schedule includes a rule for a manager of a new scheme to include investors’ contributions received in its assessable income in the income year the contributions are first deductible to the investors.

The government expects that secondary market trading of interests in forestry schemes will introduce pricing information and increase the liquidity of forestry scheme investments. To facilitate a deeper secondary market for forestry scheme investments, the schedule inserts new rules to allow trading of interests in existing schemes. Initial investors who hold existing or future interests will be subject to a four-year holding period, market value pricing rules, and are required to return sale or harvest proceeds on revenue account.

The schedule also clarifies the income tax treatment of sale or harvest proceeds received by secondary investors and the deductibility of payments by secondary investors to the schemes.

Schedule 9 makes amendments to require Australian trustees to collect tax from trust taxable income that is payable to the trustee of a foreign trust.

Therefore, after these changes, Australian trustees will be required to pay tax on the taxable income of the trust attributable to any foreign resident entity, whether an individual, company or trust.

Schedule 10 to this bill enables Australian managed funds to collect a non-final withholding at a single rate—the company tax rate—on distributions of Australian source income that is not a dividend, interest or royalty. Investors will then be able to claim a credit for the amount withheld when they lodge an Australian income tax return to determine their final tax liability.

Currently Australian trusts and Australian custodians face different withholding obligations depending upon whether the foreign resident is an individual, company, trust or foreign superannuation fund.

This schedule will improve the efficiency of Australia’s managed funds industry and provide greater certainty to the industry.

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

Debate (on motion by Ms Plibersek) adjourned.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (PERSONAL INCOME TAX REDUCTION) LEGISLATION

Mr COSTELLO (Higgins—Treasurer) (9.16 am)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence, in
the second reading speech on the Tax Laws Amendment (Personal Income Tax Reduction) Bill 2007 I said that taxpayers will not reach the highest marginal tax rate until they earn more than 3½ times average weekly earnings. That is from the income year 2008-09, not the income year 2007-08 as the printed speech said. I want to make that clear for the purposes of the second reading speech.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (SMALL BUSINESS) BILL 2007

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Dutton.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer) (9.17 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill implements changes to various tax acts to standardise the primary eligibility criterion for the small business tax concessions. These changes will reduce the compliance costs for many Australian small businesses. They substantially simplify the tax law to make it easier for small business to determine eligibility for a number of concessions and they are part of this government’s 2006-07 budget announcements:

- first, increasing the capital gains tax maximum net asset threshold from $5 million to $6 million;
- second, increasing the goods and services tax cash accounting threshold from $1 million to $2 million;
- third, extending the rollover relief available under the uniform capital allowance system to small business entities that have adopted the simplified depreciation rules.

The current tax laws contain a number of special arrangements for smaller businesses, variously defined. In the past, there have been different threshold criteria for determining who is a small business for particular concessions. The differences, however sensible when considered individually, have been a source of complexity and unnecessary compliance costs for small businesses.

This bill amends the income tax law to create a single definition of small business, based on aggregated annual turnover of less than $2 million.

Entities that do not meet the small business entity definition can still test their eligibility for small business concessions according to existing methods for capital gains tax, fringe benefits tax and pay as you go instalments.

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

Debate (on motion by Ms Plibersek) adjourned.

FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) 2007

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Nairn.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr NAIRN (Eden-Monaro—Special Minister of State) (9.20 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2007 primarily amends division 3 of part 4 of the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 (FMA Act). That division consists of five sections, each relating to an appropriation authority. The bill also contains a small number of consequential amendments to the
Collectively, these amendments will help reduce red tape in Australian government administration, simplify the financial framework, and simplify the administration and management of appropriations. The amendments are evidence of the ongoing, incremental improvements to the financial framework. This is the third Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Bill, with financial framework legislation amendment acts having been passed in 2005 and 2006. Each has evidenced ongoing monitoring and review, showing that incremental improvements to the financial framework continue on an ongoing basis. While this area is relatively technical, it is an important part of financial management accountability that the government takes seriously.

The amendments are primarily intended to clarify the operation of the FMA Act in relation to the management of appropriations. Division 3 of part 4 of the FMA Act is integral to the day-to-day operations of the Commonwealth. Section 32, for example, comes into play in relation to machinery of government changes. Its operation is of particular importance when functions are moved between agencies. The proposed amendments make it clear, through a finance minister’s determination, how the appropriation authority in question moves to the agency receiving the function.

Section 31, in relation to net appropriations, is being significantly streamlined. Currently the section can only be completely understood by reference to three documents: the FMA Act itself, the annual appropriation act in question, and the relevant ‘section 31 agreement’. Section 31, in its current form, requires the execution of individual agreements, of which there are currently over 80. While such agreements were obviously contemplated with the introduction of the FMA Act nearly 10 years ago, it is timely to review whether the current process remains the most efficient way of dealing with net appropriations. The proposed amendment, having a single point of reference in the regulations, reflects a more efficient way of achieving the same objective. The amendment would do away with the need for bilateral agreements, the administration of which was criticised by the Auditor-General in Audit Report No. 28 of 2005-06: Management of Net Appropriation Agreements. The amendment would instead allow for a regulation to be made, having the same effect, but allowing for a more standardised set of items capable of increasing an agency’s appropriation.

Importantly, the amendment will effectively improve parliamentary scrutiny. Where the current agreements made under section 31 are exempt from disallowance, the arrangements proposed under the amendment to section 31 would mean that the same effect is achieved, but by way of a regulation that is disallowable.

The phrasing of sections 28 and 30 currently appears similar, though the sections apply to quite distinct transactions. The proposed amendments, including to the headings of each of these sections, will clearly distinguish between the two. This will assist agencies in determining which section is relevant to a particular transaction. In short, the amendment to section 28 will clarify the status of repayments by the Commonwealth, while section 30 clarifies repayments to the Commonwealth. In addition, it will be made clearer that these sections can apply to payments between and within agencies.
Section 30A, addressing appropriations and GST, has been streamlined to remove duplicated wording. It has also been amended to clarify both the point at which the GST liability arises, and the point at which the adjustment to the appropriation takes place.

The amendments propose a new section 32A that clarifies that none of the adjustments referred to in fact take place until recorded in an agency’s accounts and records. This ensures that chief executives have full oversight and control over the appropriations for which they have responsibility, and that adjustments to appropriations do not happen automatically. It therefore gives relevant officials greater visibility of transactions they must account for. This new provision would also apply to special accounts under sections 20 and 21 of the FMA Act.

Section 53 would be amended to clarify chief executives’ role in issuing directions when delegating a power or function. The amendment would clarify that, in addition to the directions (if any) to which the chief executive is subject, he or she can issue further directions if he or she subdelegates the power in question.

Consequential amendments to the Auditor-General Act 1997 and the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 are required.

Section 52 of the Auditor-General Act 1997 currently relates to agreements made under section 31 of the FMA Act, and would, given the proposed amendments to section 31, no longer have scope to operate and therefore needs to be repealed. Section 52 provides the Auditor-General with the unique ability to consent to changes to a net appropriation agreement affecting the Australian National Audit Office. This protection would no longer be necessary once all such arrangements are moved to a regulation involving parliamentary oversight generally.

Sections 44 and 54 of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 refer to instruments made under sections 31 and 32 of the FMA Act and, given the proposals for each of those sections relating to the use of a regulation or a determination by the finance minister, would become redundant and should be repealed. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Plibersek) adjourned.

COMMITTEES
Public Works Committee
Reference
Mr NAIRN (Eden-Monaro—Special Minister of State) (9.27 am)—I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: CSIRO co-location with Queensland Government on the eco-sciences and health and food sciences precincts in Brisbane.

The proposed knowledge based research business initiative will be a collaborative venture between the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the CSIRO, and a number of Queensland government agencies at two key locations in south-east Queensland. These are the eco-sciences precinct at the Boggo Road Urban Village in Dutton Park and the health and food sciences precinct at Coopers Plains.

The eco-sciences precinct will be a centre of excellence focusing on climate change adaptation, better managing Australia’s natural resources and environment, and growing Australia’s farming, mineral, forestry, marine and tourism industries so that they are competitive and sustainable.

The eco-sciences precinct will be a centre of excellence focusing on climate change adaptation, better managing Australia’s natural resources and environment, and growing Australia’s farming, mineral, forestry, marine and tourism industries so that they are competitive and sustainable.

The two new precincts will provide accommodation for 1,200 science professionals and support staff. This consists of 1,010 at the eco-sciences precinct and 190 at the health and food sciences precinct, and in-
cludes long-term visitors and postgraduate students. The eco-sciences precinct will consist of offices and support staff areas, an education centre, a workshop, laboratories, an insect house, glasshouses, greenhouses and a cafe. Similarly the health and food sciences precinct will consist of offices and support staff areas, laboratories and a pilot plant for the development of new food products.

Co-location of the numerous partner groups at the eco-sciences precinct will create one of the largest concentrations of scientists in these fields in Australia. The two precincts will enable greatly increased sharing of high-level skills and of expensive equipment and facilities. This will increase the rate of progress and reduce the costs of research. The respective buildings have been designed to maximise opportunities for interaction between the partners, to provide flexibility in the use of space in the shorter term, and to meet the changing needs of research in the longer term. The partners have agreed to equitably contribute to the cost of shared facilities and to independently meet the cost of any special facilities required.

The estimated completion cost for the two developments is $375 million, of which the CSIRO component is estimated at $85 million. Subject to parliamentary approval, it is anticipated that early packages will be let to allow site establishment works to commence in February next year for the Boggo Road site and at the same time for the main works on the Coopers Plains site. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Public Works Committee

Reference

Mr NAIRN (Eden-Monaro—Special Minister of State) (9.30 am)—I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Rationalisation of ADF facilities at RMAF Butterworth, Malaysia.

The Department of Defence proposes to undertake a rationalisation of Australian Defence Force facilities at the Royal Malaysian Air Force—RMAF—Base Butterworth, in Malaysia. RMAF Butterworth supports deployments of aircraft from the RAAF’s air combat, airlift and aerospace operational support groups, defence exercises and visiting units, and contributes to the defence of Australia’s regional interests. Defence has an ongoing requirement in maintaining a presence at RMAF Butterworth, and consequently a long-term requirement for the facilities.

The project reinforces Australia’s commitment to the five-power defence arrangements and will enable the Australian Defence Force to provide buildings which meet modern occupational health and safety requirements with improved efficiencies. The work will also enhance defence capability by enabling personnel mobility, morale, esprit de corps and training outcomes, as well as personnel retention.

The project proposes the construction of three new headquarters buildings, a combined armoury, installation of a sewerage effluent treatment plant and the refurbishment of some existing facilities. The estimated out-turn cost of the proposal is $23.6 million.

Subject to parliamentary approval and further design, construction will start in early 2008 for completion in late 2009. On completion of the project, a small number of redundant buildings may be returned to the Malaysian Ministry of Defence. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.
AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AMENDMENT BILL 2007

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Hunt.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs) (9.33 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982 by making changes to the governance arrangements of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

ACIAR is a statutory authority within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, and its activities are part of Australia’s aid program. ACIAR was established in 1982 to assist and encourage agricultural researchers in Australia to use their skills for the benefit of developing countries, while at the same time working to solve Australia’s own agricultural problems.

The intention of the bill is to implement the government’s response to the Review of Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders conducted by Mr John Uhrig. The government has been reviewing all statutory agencies in the context of Mr Uhrig’s recommendations to achieve the most effective accountability and governance structures across the whole of government.

The government has assessed ACIAR’s existing governance arrangements against the principles and recommendations of the Uhrig review. It considers that the current board of management structure is inconsistent with the executive management template recommended by Mr Uhrig for agencies covered by the Finance Management and Accountability Act 1997 (FMA Act).

The bill creates the position of chief executive officer (CEO) in place of the current director. The CEO will be directly accountable to the minister for administrative and financial purposes under the FMA Act. In addition, the bill abolishes the board of management of the centre and establishes a seven-member expert commission. The commission, which will include the CEO, will provide expert policy and research advice in place of the current board. The current Policy Advisory Council (PAC), which includes key overseas stakeholders, will be retained. However, this bill will introduce amendments to ensure there will be no duplication of membership between the commission and the PAC.

The establishment of a commission and the position of CEO will not alter the functions of ACIAR. ACIAR will retain its capacity for collective decision making, through the new commission, while bringing its management under the CEO. These changes are consistent with the executive management template recommended by the Uhrig review.

On behalf of the government and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I would like to thank the current and previous ACIAR boards. I am grateful for their commitment and expertise which have contributed enormously to enabling ACIAR to develop effective and practical research programs to assist developing country partners solve their agricultural problems and build research capacity. I look forward to working with the new commission when it is appointed under the provisions of this bill.

Debate (on motion by Ms Plibersek) adjourned.
AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2007

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms Ley.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms LEY (Farrer—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (9.37 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Amendment Bill 2007 (the bill) amends the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Act 1992 (the administration act) to implement the outcome of the assessment of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) against the Uhrig review templates.

The APVMA is an Australian government statutory authority established to administer a joint Commonwealth and state/territory regulatory scheme, assuring the safety and effectiveness of agricultural and veterinary chemical products throughout Australia. The APVMA is an independent body corporate. It implements the legislative powers and functions provided to it under the legislation on behalf of all jurisdictions, including powers and functions conferred on it by state and territory legislation.

The amendments will provide for the authority to come into line with the best practice identified in the Australian government response to the Uhrig review recommendations. The objective of the Uhrig review was to consider existing governance arrangements for statutory authorities and office holders and to develop a best practice template of governance principles that could be applied to all statutory authorities and office holders.

My department carried out an assessment of the APVMA against the Uhrig review templates and concluded that the executive management corporate governance structure is most appropriate for the APVMA. The assessment concluded that the APVMA should retain its independence, but be reconstituted, with the current board of directors being replaced by an executive manager (chief executive officer) supported by an advisory board, with a similar range of skills and experiences to those currently specified for the APVMA board of directors. The bill before parliament implements these recommendations, which flow from the Uhrig report.

These reforms relate only to changing governance structures. As a result, there would be no significant changes to the day-to-day functions or independence of the APVMA. The APVMA would:

- remain an independent body corporate called the APVMA,
- retain its current functions and powers,
- continue to be funded by cost-recovery from industry,
- retain the provision for the conferral of powers by a state government law,
- continue current stakeholder consultative arrangements, and
- continue to receive policy direction from the Primary Industries Ministerial Council.

Consistent with the executive management governance structure, the APVMA will become subject to the provisions of the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997, rather than the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997. Staff of the APVMA will be persons engaged under
the provisions of the Public Service Act 1999 rather than persons employed under the ‘administration act’. The bill includes provision for these matters and the transitional issues associated with these reforms.

The amendments only affect the governance arrangements for the APVMA and do not impact on the authority’s functions or the administration of the national registration scheme for agricultural and veterinary chemicals. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Plibersek) adjourned.

COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CONTENT SERVICES) BILL 2007

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms Ley.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms LEY (Farrer—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (9.41 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

More Australians than ever are using mobile phones and today’s users expect their mobiles to deliver ever-increasing types of entertainment and information. Mobile phones and other hand-held devices now offer access to a range of media-rich services including broadcasting, internet and telephone content. New content services such as live streamed services are also being delivered through subscription internet portals.

Such services can be expected to bring substantial benefits for Australian consumers and new business opportunities for carriage service providers (CSPs) and content service providers; however, they may also carry potentially offensive or harmful content. The Australian government takes very seriously its responsibility to protect Australian citizens, particularly children, from exposure to illegal and highly offensive content delivered over convergent devices such as mobile handsets, and over the internet more generally.

The Review of the Regulation of Content Delivered over Convergent Devices (‘the review’) was conducted by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and released in April 2006. It found that there may be a lack of appropriate protections for users, particularly children, from inappropriate audiovisual content on mobile devices and existing regulatory frameworks may not provide an effective response.

The Communications Legislation Amendment (Content Services) Bill 2007 (the bill) gives effect to the government’s commitment to extend the current safeguards to put in place new measures to protect consumers from inappropriate or harmful material on convergent devices such as 3G mobile phones and through subscription internet portals.

The bill establishes a framework which aims to regulate emerging content services in a platform and technology neutral manner—it strengthens the regulation of ‘stored’ content where this is delivered on a commercial basis and establishes new rules to address ‘live’ and interactive content services such as chat rooms. The immediate effect of this will be that service providers supplying content services including live, streamed services over a carriage service such as a mobile phone will be subject to these new obligations.

The main focus of the bill is to extend the general approach adopted by the government in relation to content regulation to those services where it considers adequate safeguards are not currently in place.
Much of the content for these new services is likely to be based on content created for supply in relation to a range of other existing media services. The new regulations will be aligned, as far as possible, with the regulation of traditional media content. At the same time, the framework takes account of the technical and other differences applying to the delivery of content on these new platforms including their impact on the ability of service providers to practically manage the wide range of content being delivered to users.

Under the proposed new framework content that is, or potentially would be, rated X18+ and above must not be delivered or made available to the public, and access to material that is likely to be rated R18+ must be subject to appropriate age verification mechanisms.

As a general rule, where content is provided by means of a content service that is operated on a commercial basis, and is likely to be classified MA15+ or above, access must only be made available subject to appropriate age verification mechanisms. This requirement will include content provided to premium mobile services but not to a news or current affairs service, or to electronic books or magazines.

Similar limitations relating to prohibited content and age verification mechanisms will also apply in relation to live streamed services.

In the case of electronic editions of print publications such as books and magazines, where these have been classified ‘Restricted—Category 1’, ‘Restricted—Category 2’ or ‘Refused Classification’, they will be prohibited. Electronic editions of publications which are unrestricted in print form will be excluded from the new regulatory framework and will be able to be made freely available online.

Similarly, certain types of content services, including those which provide content regulated under existing broadcasting regulatory frameworks, and the content of private users’ personal communications will be excluded from the scope of the new regulatory framework.

Carriage service providers who do no more than provide a carriage service that enables content to be delivered or accessed will not be considered to be providing a content service under the new scheme.

The new regime will be based on a take-down model as used under the existing Online Content Scheme. Under the new scheme, a content service provider will need to remove access to prohibited content or potential prohibited content if ACMA issues them with a ‘take-down’ notice for stored or static content, or a ‘service-cessation’ notice for live content, or a ‘link deletion’ notice for links to content.

Where a content service provider fails to comply with a notice from ACMA, civil or criminal penalties may be pursued.

To strengthen the ability of the scheme to respond to repeated and deliberate offences by providers of stored content, such as, for example, where stored picture or video content is slightly modified or changed but still in breach of the requirements, the bill proposes to enable ACMA to issue a notice to a hosting service provider to ensure that content that is substantially similar to the stored content already subject to a take-down notice is not made available.

Consistent with the co-regulatory approach which has been implemented for other media such as television, radio and the internet, the providers of new content services will be given the opportunity to develop industry codes to implement cost-effective mechanisms and rules for meeting
their obligations under the regulatory framework.

Different sections of the content services industry will be able to develop codes of practice to give effect to certain content service provider obligations, and, where necessary, ACMA will have the power to determine industry standards where it considers that industry codes are deficient in ensuring that content services are provided in accordance with prevailing community standards.

Live content services will be regulated in a manner consistent, as far as possible, with the regulation of traditional media content and the new approach for stored or static content services provided to convergent devices.

Although pre-assessment of live or 'real-time' services is in many ways impractical, it will be mandatory that codes of practice developed for live services provided on a commercial basis include provisions to deal with the assessment of the likely nature of these services. Under these mandatory code requirements, commercial content service providers who deliver live services must seek the advice of a trained content assessor on the likely classification before providing the service if there is a reasonable likelihood that the service would be classified as MA15+ or above. If the advice indicates that the service is likely to fall within a restricted category, it is incumbent upon the service provider to deliver the service with appropriate consumer information and age verification mechanisms.

The bill also outlines examples of matters which may be addressed in a code of practice, including complaint handling procedures, consumer information requirements, promoting the awareness of safety issues including in relation to commercial chat services, and the making and retention of records.

The bill and subsequent amendments to the Telecommunications Act 1997 will implement measures to require a mobile service account holder’s consent before the location of any handsets operated under the account may be used or disclosed. This will address concerns about the potential for location based services to be used to facilitate inappropriate contact with minors.

The Communications Legislation Amendment (Content Services) Bill 2007 provides for the timely introduction of a new regulatory framework for a rapidly developing area of the communications sector. It is part of a wide-ranging package of measures introduced by the Australian government to ensure that Australian consumers have access to new, innovative services. The new framework provides appropriate protections for children from being exposed to content suited only to adults while providing industry with the flexibility to explore the potential of providing entertainment and other services over new technologies.

The government has also taken the opportunity in this bill to amend the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999 to ensure that Australia’s Indian Ocean territories comprising Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, can be included in the regular independent reviews of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Australia. This will help in ensuring that the adequacy of these territories’ telecommunications services is appropriately assessed. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Plibersek) adjourned.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AMENDMENT BILL 2007

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 9 May, on motion by Mr Turnbull:
That this bill be now read a second time.

upon which Mr Garrett moved by way of amendment:

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

“whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:

(1) affirms the object of the Principal Act - the protection of the Great Barrier Reef - but notes that the future of the reef is threatened by both short term and longer term factors, including climate change;

(2) notes that the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated in 2007 that by 2050, 97% of the Great Barrier Reef could be bleached every year as a result of climate change;

(3) condemns the Government’s incompetent handling of the structural adjustment package for the Great Barrier Reef Representative Areas Plan, which has seen the budget blow out from $31 million to more than $87 million;

(4) calls on the Government to develop and implement an action plan to help protect the Great Barrier Reef from the effects of coral bleaching and protect Australian jobs and industries dependent on a healthy reef as part of a national climate change strategy; and

(5) calls on the Government to prohibit mineral, oil and gas exploration in Australian waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park”.

Ms GEORGE (Throsby) (9.51 am)—I want to endorse the point made by our shadow minister in moving the second reading amendment which is before the parliament by saying it seems that the government has again missed the opportunity to provide a context in which this nation can adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change that are so readily evident in many parts of Australia, particularly in Northern Queensland, in the north of Australia, through developments along the Great Barrier Reef. I will return to those shortly.

The legislative amendments that are before us go to the heart of the functioning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. I want to put on record that I think GBRMPA has acted by and large in a way that promotes the best features of ecologically sustainable development. At all times it has sought to balance the environmental beauty of the reef, and the needs of commerce and other human activity, which has brought a lot of people from overseas and within Australia to the Great Barrier Reef to enjoy the remarkable pleasures that this unique reef provides.

It was with some concern that we heard a couple of years ago that the very existence of the authority was very much under threat. I am glad to say that the proposals that we are debating today put that issue to rest, but I think it is important that we note for the public record some of the contributions made in the debate at the time that the review of the authority was being undertaken. I say it is important to note those because the comments were really manifestations of a political tussle about the statutory nature of the
authority, its autonomy and independence. I fear that some of the changes that we are debating today really do play into the hands of people that want to use the authority as a political football rather than to assist the authority to meet the very significant challenges that will come before it in the decades ahead.

You will recall that in fact the National Party and some of the more conservative elements of the government worked very hard in the public domain to destroy Dr David Kemp’s legacy, launching very strong campaigns against the authority and the zon- ing plans that it had enacted for use of the reef. Let me quote a few of their views. National Party Senator elect Barnaby Joyce, as he was then, was quoted in the Courier-Mail on 1 March 2005 opposing GBRMPA’s existence as an independent agency. This is what Barnaby Joyce had to say:

GBRMPA is out of control ... We are having too many problems and we should bring it totally under government control and baby-sit it for a while.

The member for Dawson—and one would expect a more enlightened approach from someone who represents regional Queens- land—had this to say:

What we’ve had is a statutory body in GBRMPA that is out of control that has put, I think, no real scientific basis for the arguments they’ve put forward ...

That was in relation to the green zones and the zoning proposals. It is important not to forget that in fact the Queensland Nationals did a preference deal with the Fishing Party at the last election on the basis that GBRMPA’s powers would be moved into the department, with the minister alone having total control of all significant decisions. There is no doubt, in my opinion, that that deal with the Fishing Party helped to get Senator Joyce elected. The National Party always saw the review of GBRMPA—and I think behind the scenes there must have been an understanding with the government as to this—as allowing the expression of this level of hostility to GBRMPA’s functioning. So, as I have said, I am very relieved that the red-necks did not get their way, that the authority has survived and that we did not roll back the protections that GBRMPA had provided for the reef. But no doubt those people and their attitudes are still out there in the community and in both houses of this parliament, so it concerns me that some of the technical amendments that we are debating today can leave open the possibility that decisions in the future will be made on the basis of poli- tics rather than on what is in the best inter- ests of the survival of the reef. You have only to look at what happened to Senator Ian Campbell over the orange-bellied parrot is- sue—and those opposite may well smile. The truth is that obviously a political decision was made to stop what was a very important project to advance our nation’s renewable capacity. Politics played its part there and no doubt some people think that through these changes it might be easier to exercise politi- cal clout in the future. As the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources said in his second reading speech:

This bill delivers the first tranche of changes that will strengthen governance arrangements and improve transparency and accountability, particularly in relation to the zoning plan process.

That all sounds fine—very technical and very economically efficient although there is not much about the health of the reef but that is okay as far as it goes as it retains GBRMPA as an authority. However, we now see that the consultative committee that ad- vises GBRMPA will no longer have a statu- tory role. I do fear very much for Indigenous representation into the future. Not long ago I was privileged to visit the offices of GBRMPA in Townsville on a day when the authority and the local Indigenous commu-
nity were sealing an agreement for fishing rights over different sections of the reef. I thought this was a wonderful example of a government authority actually taking on board Indigenous views and voices in a most serious and effective manner. So I am concerned that the changes in the bill do not ensure continuing Indigenous representation on GBRMPA’s advisory body. I am also concerned that the minister will retain the power to make final decisions on any future amendments to the zoning plan. I believe, based on the evidence that I have cited, that politics always plays a part in such decisions and that when you leave the final decision in the hands of a minister it does leave open the potential for political abuse of the process.

I note also that under the bill there will be no further zoning changes for at least seven years from the commencement of the act. This is very disturbing. If there are to be no further zoning changes for at least seven years, that would seem to take away the right from the authority to make plans and undertake actions which would adapt to a change in world climate and take into account global warming and prevailing environmental threats to the reef. I am not sure that it is wise to be locking the government and the minister into no further changes for seven years.

Having commented on the technical aspects of the bill, I will now speak on the broader issues on the future health and viability of the reef, both in terms of its environmental beauty and significance and in terms of the economic contribution that it makes to that region and to the nation. I do not have to convince anyone in this House that in every respect the Great Barrier Reef is one of Australia’s greatest treasures. I find it staggering that we all accept that yet this government has still not placed the reef on Australia’s National Heritage List? It is the largest coral reef ecosystem in the world. It houses an incredibly diverse range of species, including fish, coral and marine turtles. It was the reef that originally made the area famous. As is pointed out in many of GBRMPA’s publications, the area also comprises an extraordinary variety of plant and animal communities, habitats and their associated ecological processes, ranging not just from the fringing coral reefs but to mangroves, seagrass beds, sandy and coral cays, sandy- or muddy-bottom communities, continental islands and, of course, deep ocean areas that surround the reef. The reef is loved and valued by all our citizens but it is also loved and recognised as an amazing environmental icon by many people across the world.

As well as the environmental majesty that is associated with the reef, we can never underestimate the economic activities that are associated with the reef. I give credit to GBRMPA for finding that fine balance between ecological preservation and human and commercial use. A recent document from GBRMPA stated:

Today the Great Barrier Reef contributes $5.8 billion annually to the Australian economy. This comprises $5.1 billion from the tourism industry, $610 million from recreational activity and $149 million from commercial fishing. This economic activity generates about 63,000 jobs, mostly in the tourism industry, which brings over 1.9 million visitors to the Reef each year.

For the nation, the reef is a particularly special icon. Tourism and recreation have been the primary uses for the reef, and many of us have enjoyed the pleasure that the reef provides, or know people who have. Even though there has been debate about the use of the reef, particularly from some people in the commercial fishing sector, commercial
fishing is still a very important industry with the richly-stocked waters offering considerable catches. The economic significance of the reef cannot be discounted but the question is: how do we maintain the health of the reef so that we can continue to derive economic benefit while at the same time preserving one of our national icons?

It is not scaremongering to say that our Great Barrier Reef today is at great threat and at enormous risk. Let me quote Mr John Schubert, a well-known reputable businessman who, thankfully, is now heading up the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. They are doing a terrific job in promoting awareness about the risks to the reef and looking at research projects that may shed light on how we can preserve the health of the reef in perpetuity. John Schubert said:

Until my appointment as chairman of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation two years ago, I was something of a sceptic. However, the marine scientists who advise the foundation convinced me that climate change is the most pressing threat to our Great Barrier Reef. The evidence presented by these scientists, the literature they have shared with me and my visits to the reef have proved to be so compelling as to prompt something of an epiphany.

John Schubert knows that climate change could devastate our Great Barrier Reef. He has the evidence, but so too does the Prime Minister and so too does the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources. This government has failed to act to protect the health of the reef just as it has failed to ensure that we mitigate and adapt to the worst possibilities under a regime of dangerous climate change.

In 2002 we had coral bleaching in the southern part of the Great Barrier Reef. The authority at the time estimated that 60 to 90 per cent of the reefs around Keppel Island were affected. We cannot afford to lose 60 to 90 per cent of any of the reefs along the Great Barrier Reef without enormous impact on not just the biodiversity of the reef but also its many functions. I also like this quote from Mr Schubert in which he described our coral reefs as ‘a canary in the mine in the context of climate change’. When you see coral bleaching and coral disease along the reef, that surely rings alarm bells to say to the Australian parliament and to the nation that it is time that we gave effect to the precautionary principle and it is time we began to understand the impact of dangerous climate change on our reef. Just in the last two days we have had further scientific evidence which points to the clear link between coral disease and warmer ocean temperatures. A team of scientists from Australia and the US studied 48 reefs spread along our Great Barrier Reef and, in the words of one of the researchers:

We’ve long suspected climate change is driving disease outbreaks ... Our results suggest that warmer temperatures are increasing the severity of disease in the ocean.

... ... ...

Our results suggest that climate change could be increasing the severity of disease in the ocean, leading to a decline in the health of marine ecosystems and the loss of the resources and services humans derive from them.

Our own Dr Bette Willis, from Australia’s Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, had this to say:

Knowing that [the reefs] may be particularly vulnerable to disease outbreaks highlights the need for caution when it comes to permitting activities that add additional stress, especially during times of high temperatures.

The scientific evidence is there. It is there without dispute. It is reputable. It is accepted by intelligent people. And it is time that this government took this issue very seriously. Just a few weeks ago, in its most recent report, the International Panel on Climate Change had this to say about coral reefs:
Corals are vulnerable to thermal stress and have low adaptive capacity. Increases in sea surface temperature of about 1 to 3°C are projected to result in more frequent coral bleaching events and widespread mortality ...

I conclude by saying that this government has watched over the gradual destruction of the Great Barrier Reef for the past 11 years and has provided no positive response to the impact of dangerous climate change on one of the world’s most delicate ecosystems and one of Australia’s national treasures. Some time ago we heard the absurd proposal from the federal tourism minister that we should investigate the use of shadecloth over parts of the reef to protect it. Have you ever heard anything more absurd?

A three degree rise in temperature would see the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef, with 97 per cent of the reef suffering coral bleaching. Let us hope we never get to the stage where we see a three degree rise in temperature. But even a one degree rise is very problematic for the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

The government knows about these threats. It has received report after report warning of the damage. Instead of acting it has delivered a decade of delay, denial and inaction on climate change. You can only help the reef if you take serious action on climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The government needs to heed the urgent warnings of all scientists who have expertise in this area before it is too late.

We urgently need an action plan to protect the reef from coral bleaching and coral disease. We need more research and we need a plan which not only protects the beauty of our reef but which protects the jobs and industries that depend on a healthy reef into perpetuity.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (10.10 am)—I speak in order to support the amendment moved by the member for Kingsford Smith and certainly to support the considered remarks of the member for Throsby. Treasurer Costello said on Tuesday in his budget speech:

We were living beyond our means. Today we are living within our means.

The idea is that we do not spoil things for our children and for future generations. I totally support and endorse that idea. But when it comes to climate change and global warming emissions, we are not living within our means. Scientists tell us that we need to reduce our greenhouse emissions by 60 per cent by the year 2050. But the policies of this government have us on track for a 27 per cent increase in emissions by the year 2020. There can be no clearer example of the way we are living beyond our means and the way we are spoiling things for the future than the impact that global warming is having on the Great Barrier Reef, one of the natural wonders of the world. And it is not as if members of the Howard government have not known this was going on. Let me quote a former Liberal environment minister:

I think that the reef is already showing significant stress from global warming. We’ve seen two significant bleaching events within the last four years on the reef. It’s always difficult to say that any particular event is due to global warming, whether it’s the drought or a bleaching event on the reef. But there’s no doubt that as the world warms and the temperatures of the oceans rise, that there are likely to be more such bleaching events.

That was Dr David Kemp, a former federal environment minister, in April 2003. So the Howard government has, for 11 years, watched over, presided over, the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef. We know that a
three degree rise in temperature would see something like 97 per cent of the reef suffering coral bleaching. The government has received report after report warning of the dangers to the reef but, instead of acting, it has delivered a decade of denial and inaction over dangerous climate change and its consequences.

Labor is committed to helping the reef. We intend to take action on climate change. We intend to prohibit oil and gas exploration in Australian waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and we intend to extend the boundaries of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park area to the boundary of Australia’s exclusive economic zone.

The Howard government has also repeatedly ignored the concerns of the Queensland fishing industry and, on four occasions during its time in office, it has been forced to act after the event to review and upgrade its fishing industry structural adjustment packages. Given that the Great Barrier Reef has such national and international significance, we need to ensure that the maximum number of relevant voices participate in the development of policy necessary for its protection.

The great historian Arnold Toynbee, writing in the early 1970s, coined the term ‘biosphere’ to describe that unique envelope surrounding our planet within which all life exists. While humanity may have an inordinate capacity to shape and fashion our immediate world, our behaviour has not been without consequence, and for other inhabitants on this planet their existence is very much affected by the world we have chosen to create. Humanity has impacted on all other life. There is an irony in the growing public awareness that, for all our great endeavours and progress, we are reaching the point where we are starting to fundamentally impact upon the very biosphere that sustains our existence. The evidence for this appears no more clearly than in those environments where life is at its most fragile. Coral reefs are among the most diverse and fragile ecosystems on the planet. They have a central importance for our tropical coastlines; they are a lead indicator of the state of play on global warming. Coral reefs are the equivalent, as the member for Throsby said, of the canary and the coalmine, giving us an early warning as to the health of the most fragile ecosystems susceptible to the consequences of human activity.

Indeed, as one prominent scientist noted, the canary and the coalmine analogy begs the question as to whether coral reefs are actually the mining team itself, given the role they play in coral ecosystems around the world. So make no mistake, the Great Barrier Reef is an asset of considerable and growing economic value for our nation and, if current estimates of the consequences of global warming are correct, our nation runs a real risk of presiding over one of humanity’s great acts of environmental, cultural and economic vandalism.

Despite the sceptics in the government, from the Prime Minister down, the science on global warming and the impact of human activity in generating greenhouse gas emissions is well and truly in. The recent data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows that concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are at their highest level for at least 650,000 years. The data shows that, in the 650,000 years prior to the commencement of the Industrial Revolution, the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere varied broadly between 180 and 280 parts per million. Today, these concentrations are in the order of 380 parts per million. More significantly, we have an acceleration of the increase. That is now of paramount concern. The long run rate of change, according to the best available data, has been in the order of 0.3 to 0.9 parts per million of CO₂ per cen-
tury. So, as the earth came out of glacial periods or ice ages, temperatures increased in the order of 0.2 degrees Celsius a century.

But today we are witnessing increases many times greater. According to the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, between 1960 and 2005 the average rate at which carbon dioxide concentrations increased was 1.4 parts per million per year and, between 1995 and 2005, the rise increased to 1.9 parts per million per year. We have experienced warming of 0.6 degrees Celsius over the past century alone and even the most mild IPCC scenarios have projections of a warming of between three and four degrees Celsius in the coming century.

What does that mean for the Great Barrier Reef? It means the painful reality that a significant amount of this peak increase is already locked in from past human activity and that the Great Barrier Reef is already facing substantial stress from global warming. There will be potential temperature rises of between two and five degrees Celsius. The IPCC’s reports suggest that, with an increase of about 2.4 degrees Celsius over the next century, coral reefs around the globe, including the Great Barrier Reef, face virtual extinction. Having completed the most extensive and in-depth study on global warming and its impact on the Great Barrier Reef, one eminent scientist in this field concluded:

... the mildest climate change scenarios are the only ones in which coral reefs have any chance of recovering in the near future ... they highlight the importance of reducing other pressures on coral reefs so as to maximise reef resilience.

It is not as though the Great Barrier Reef itself has not been sending out distress signals. The reef has experienced seven mass bleaching events since 1979—in 1980, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1994, 1998 and 2002. According to the most recent study on the Great Barrier Reef and climate change, there were no reports of mass bleaching prior to 1979:

Since 1979, bleaching events have become more intense and widespread, culminating in the statements that 1998 and ... 2002 were the strongest bleaching events on record.

When it comes to bleaching, the evidence is plain: corals that are warmer than normal will bleach and corals that become the warmest will die. Currently, the Great Barrier Reef is among the healthiest and best-managed coral reef ecosystems in the world. Despite this, it is threatened by a number of direct and indirect human activities. Worldwide, coral reefs are in very poor shape. According to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network an estimated 40 per cent of the world’s coral reefs will be lost by as early as 2010, and another 20 per cent will be lost in the next 20 years, unless urgent management action is implemented. The combination of coral change and climate change amid an intense setting of other impacts and stresses has reduced the resilience of reef systems to a point where most are threatened by elimination.

The Townsville Declaration on Coral Reef Research and Management highlights the almost unanimous opinion of the world’s leading scientists that coral reefs are globally and critically endangered. For example, prior to 1977, communities around the island of Jamaica used to have coral cover in excess of 70 per cent. Currently, it is below five per cent in most places. Overfishing and pollution have driven massive and accelerating decreases in the abundance of coral reef species and caused global changes in reef ecosystems over the past couple of centuries. Scientists are saying that, if these trends continue, coral reefs will decline further, resulting in the loss of biodiversity and economic value.

According to some estimates, almost a million species are likely to face extinction before 2040. It is not as if the government has not had ample opportunity to tackle the
challenges of global warming, both on a national and on an international level, notwithstanding the obstacle of intransigent US policy in this area. We have low-hanging fruit—for example, we can dramatically increase energy efficiency across the nation. That can be achieved through measures such as improved insulation in households and businesses, and education campaigns showing us how to minimise our energy waste by, for example, turning off electrical systems at the power point instead of having those systems on standby. We have abundant sources of renewable energy, such as solar and wind, and we have enormous energy alternatives with gas. I have spoken previously in this place about the way in which we are failing to get best use from our gas reserves. As for the position of the US, both the US President and Vice-President are representatives of big energy—and they have got form in this area. The Bush administration’s energy policy has been developed by key private sector energy companies, and the Vice-President’s anti-environmental record goes all the way back to the Nixon-Ford era as he battled for the first clean air acts in the United States.

In the area of global warming we should not follow the example of the United States administration. We run the risk of great cost to our nation and our planet if we do so. This is the moment at which the precautionary principle meets a procrastination penalty. It is all well and good to be sceptical and to have doubts but, when the objective science is in and reality bites, the time has well and truly arrived to take action. To anyone alive to the science of this issue, the science is clear. The science about the consequences of this government’s inaction and procrastination is mounting rapidly, and none of those scenarios are pretty. All of us in this parliament are ultimately merely custodians of the health of this nation for our children, for our grandchildren and for future generations.

When we fail to enact good policy, we are passing on our bills and our obligations from our generation to the next. Most profoundly, in the area of global warming, this will limit their future.

Not so long ago our government embarked on a tourism drive with the slogan: ‘Where the bloody hell are you?’ It is more than likely that future generations of Australians will be wondering and asking of this government, when it comes to global warming policy over the last decade, ‘Where the bloody hell were you?’ As for our children and future generations surveying the bleached remains of our once-great Barrier Reef and lamenting the passing of this icon, I fear the epitaph will be even more direct: ‘What the bloody hell have you done?’ Al Gore’s wake-up call on global warming, An Inconvenient Truth, quoted Winston Churchill as saying, ‘We are now entering the era of consequences.’ Indeed we are. The question is: how has this government responded to this threat? How has the government responded to this era of global warming consequences? I will quote from an article by Clinton Porteous and Scott Murdoch in the Courier-Mail in November last year. It says:

‘Floating shadecloth could be used to protect the Great Barrier Reef from the growing threat of climate change.

Federal Tourism Minister Fran Bailey said yesterday protective barriers could be attached to pontoons in a project the Government would consider helping to fund.

“One of the ways they have suggested is to use shadecloths over the most exposed parts of the reef,” she said. “I think it is a good idea. We have to be innovative in tackling what are potential problems.”

For the benefit of the minister, let me observe that the Great Barrier Reef consists of 2,800 individual reefs and extends for over 2,000 kilometres. We are not talking about a
sailcloth for 

Burke's Backyard here. We are not talking about roofing the Rod Laver Arena. Never let it be said that we have a government lacking in infrastructure vision for Australia! Maybe the minister thinks that if we paint the shadecloth in bright colours—we might get Ken Done onto it—then people will not notice that the coral has in fact lost its colour and has gone white. Talk about destroying the village in order to save it! You have conservative politicians running around trying to stoke up opposition to wind farms and claiming that they are unsightly. Here we have the tourism minister seriously countenancing a proposition to disfigure and vandalise one of the natural wonders of the world. They would sooner see the Great Barrier Reef turned into the 'Great Barrier Roof' than get serious about renewable energy. You have to ask: how is this campaign to roof the reef going so far? Have we wrecked Great Keppel Island yet? Have we walled in the Whitsundays? Have we dunked Dunk Island? Perhaps the minister might tell us these things in his summing up. In conclusion, it will be a matter of abject shame for this generation if the Great Barrier Reef is allowed to bleach and die within our lifetimes. I urge the House to support the amendment.

Ms Livermore (Capricornia) (10.28 am)—I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Bill 2007 and about the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the changes the government is proposing to make in the way it does its job of protecting the reef. I also support the amendment moved by the shadow minister for the environment, which rightly condemns the government for its failure to protect the reef from damage caused by climate change. We also call on the government to, once and for all, prohibit mineral, oil and gas exploration in Australian waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

As we have heard from many in this debate, the Great Barrier Reef is truly one of Australia’s great treasures and it stands as one of the wonders of the world. The Great Barrier Reef has an area of 35 million hectares and is the world's most extensive reef system. The reef supports over 1,500 species of fish, 300 species of hard coral, over 4,000 species of mollusc and over 400 species of sponge. The Great Barrier Reef seagrass beds provide an excellent feeding ground for the endangered dugong as well as supporting large numbers of algae which are utilised heavily by turtles and fish as a food source. The reef also provides vast areas of breeding ground for endangered green and loggerhead turtles as well as for humpback whales that migrate from the Antarctic in order to give birth in the warmer waters. The numerous islands and coral cays in the area support several hundred bird species and are used as unique breeding grounds by many of these species.

All Australians regard it as an icon of our nation and a symbol of Australia’s natural beauty that is recognised internationally. The international community has made it very clear exactly how highly it regards the Great Barrier Reef and consequently Australia’s responsibility to protect it. In 1981 the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area was included on the World Heritage List in recognition of its universal value. So all of us here—not just us Queenslanders, who are so fortunate to live beside this national icon—should understand that the Great Barrier Reef has enormous environmental significance as well as economic value to our nation. That economic value should not be ignored or underestimated. Some 200,000 jobs are directly dependent on a healthy reef, and a good number of those jobs are in Central Queensland. The reef generates about $4.3 billion for the Australian economy. That money is important to our national economy but it is
the key to survival for many regional communities in my state of Queensland.

Back in 1975 the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act established the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, known as GBRMPA. Since then GBRMPA has acted as the principal adviser to the federal government on the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. One of the primary functions of the authority is to recommend areas for declaration as parts of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and it also carries out important research into the state of the reef. But in the course of doing that job the marine park authority has fallen foul of some members of the government and particularly members of the National Party. We are concerned that this bill represents yet another attempt by this government to dilute the authority and effectiveness of GBRMPA. That is certainly an aim that the National Party have held for some time and one that has become increasingly important as a thank you to the Fishing Party for their assistance to The Nationals in the 2004 election.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Bill 2007 implements key recommendations from the review carried out last year by the secretary of the environment department, David Borthwick. That review resulted in 28 recommendations and this bill includes the first tranche of changes to the act. The key changes in this bill include: amendments required as a consequence of applying the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 to the operations of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority; changes to the governance arrangements of the authority in light of the 2003 Uhrig review of the corporate governance of statutory authorities and office holders; a requirement for a periodic Great Barrier Reef Outlook report; new statutory provisions to ensure that the current zoning plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park cannot be amended for at least seven years from the date it came into force; and the abolition of the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee, which will be replaced by a non-statutory advisory board reporting directly to the minister.

We do not have a problem with most of those proposals. The Great Barrier Reef Outlook report, for example, seems to be an appropriate and prudent way to monitor and manage the health of the reef by providing a regular and reliable means of assessing performance in its long-term protection. The bill requires those reports to be produced every five years and they must be peer-reviewed by at least three persons who in the minister’s opinion possess the appropriate qualifications to undertake such a review.

As I said, there are significant changes to the provisions in the act concerning zoning plans. The zoning plan is the primary instrument for the conservation and management of the marine park. Those plans seek to balance and manage the diverse and competing interests within the park. When it comes to zoning plans, the amendments in this bill mean that no changes can be made to the zoning plans within seven years of their coming into effect. After that, the minister will be responsible for any future decision to amend the zoning plan, not GBRMPA, but the minister’s decision will be based on the outlook report and advice from the Marine Park Authority. If the minister decides to proceed with a rezoning he or she must approve the process to be followed, including extensive consultation based on fully public and comprehensive information.

I note that there are a number of amendments aimed at increasing the amount and effectiveness of consultation to be carried out during any future rezoning process. For example, there will be an increase in the minimum public comment period for draft zoning
plans from one to three months. I note also
the minister’s commitment that engagement
with stakeholders on the development of a
new zoning plan will be improved and the
process made more transparent, with com-
prehensive information being made publicly
available throughout the process. This will
include the rationale for amending the zon-
ing plan, the principles on which the devel-
opment of the zoning plan will be based,
socioeconomic information and a report on
the final zoning plan and its outcomes.

I know that this commitment to effective
and meaningful consultation will be wel-
comed by both commercial and recreational
fishers in my electorate. The fishing commu-
nity as a whole took full advantage of the
process offered by GBRMPA during the
Representative Areas Program exercise in
2003. Representatives from both sectors
made sure that they were well-informed and
argued strongly for the interests of their
members in negotiations with GBRMPA and
won some significant concessions in the final
outcome. That process showed that we need
effective partnerships between all those with
an interest in the long-term health of the reef.
Those partnerships are only possible when
the process is built around transparency and
communication, so I welcome the commit-
ments contained in this bill to informing and
consulting with the public over future
changes.

What we object to in the bill is any sug-
gestion that this is a watering down of
GBRMPA’s effectiveness and independence.
That is why we are concerned by the abol-
tion of the Great Barrier Reef Consultative
Committee and its replacement by a non-
statutory advisory board reporting directly
to the minister and chosen by the minister. One
problem with this new arrangement is that it
removes the requirement for specific repre-
sentation from the Queensland government
or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
communities. There are also concerns from
those in the tourism industry that it may not
have any representation on either the marine
park authority or the consultative committee.
This ignores the huge contribution that tour-
ism makes to our economy in Queensland,
particularly to places like the Capricorn
Coast in my electorate. It is important that all
those with an interest in the future of the reef
have a place at the table.

It is not clear to me why this change to the
structure of the advisory body is necessary,
but we do know it will have the effect of in-
creasing the power of the minister over the
activities of GBRMPA. This is exactly what
the National Party have been demanding. If
they had had their way, the Great Barrier
Reef Marine Park Authority would have
been completely abolished and its functions
swallowed up by the environment depart-
ment. The independent GBRMPA, currently
based in Queensland, would have been re-
placed by bureaucrats in Canberra and deci-
sions about the reef would be based on poli-
tics, not science. The knives have been out
for GBRMPA within the government ever
since The Nationals in Queensland did a
preference deal with the Fishing Party in
2004.

We have seen plenty of National Party
members in Queensland lining up to have
shots at GBRMPA since that time. Barnaby
Joyce, for example, was reported in the Cou-
rrier-Mail on 1 March 2005 as saying:
GBRMPA is out of control. We are having too
many problems and we should bring it totally
under government control and babysit it for a
while.

That was following the member for Dawson,
De-Anne Kelly, who said on 26 October
2004:
What we have had is a statutory body in
GBRMPA that is out of control and that has put, I
think, no real scientific basis for the arguments
they have put forward.
The Nationals have not succeeded in abolishing GBRMPA, although as you can see from those comments they certainly gave it a good go. We need to watch these new arrangements carefully to make sure that GBRMPA’s independence is not compromised and that politics do not take over from science in management of the reef.

In contrast to those attempts to abolish GBRMPA, it was only last month that Malcolm Turnbull, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, was on ABC radio singing the praises of GBRMPA and the role it has played in protecting and managing the reef. On 7 April, Minister Turnbull declared that:

... the Great Barrier Reef is the best managed coral reef in the world.

He also said that the United Nations had:

... identified our management of the reef as a world benchmark for the management of coral reef systems—

‘a world benchmark’. The context of that quote is quite interesting. It says a lot about the government’s attitude to the reef and to GBRMPA. In that interview, the minister was under pressure for the government’s failure to address climate change and the findings in the latest IPCC report that the threat to the Great Barrier Reef from climate change is expected to be disastrous. The minister hid behind GBRMPA and tried to deflect criticism of the government by saying what a wonderful job GBRMPA is doing and how the reef is well placed to cope with the threat posed by climate change because it has been so well managed. That was very smooth of the minister, but what a hide! When the government is under pressure on climate change, GBRMPA is the best thing that has ever happened to the reef, but when it suits the government politically it is quite happy to sink the boot in and threaten the very existence of GBRMPA. It just goes to show that nothing is off limits for the government. It will even play politics with something as precious as the Great Barrier Reef, but it will not do anything to protect the reef from the threats it faces.

It is clear from previous comments and its general attitude towards GBRMPA that the government cannot help itself. It wants to meddle in the way GBRMPA does its job. It wants to hand over control to the minister and bureaucrats in Canberra. But what faith can we have that the government would do a better job of managing and protecting the reef? The government has completely neglected its responsibility to the reef over the last 11 years by failing to address the risks of climate change. Those risks are well known and well documented. In the latest IPCC report, *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability*, the chapter on Australia lays out a bleak future for the Great Barrier Reef. By 2020, 60 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef could be regularly bleached. We have already had serious bleaching in the Keppels in the Central Queensland part of the reef. By 2050, 97 per cent of the reef could be bleached every year. By 2080, there could be catastrophic mortality of coral species annually and a 95 per cent decrease in distribution of Great Barrier Reef species. There could be a 65 per cent loss of Great Barrier Reef species in the Cairns region.

We know that the government has failed to protect the reef, but what about its record of managing the reef? While there were howls of criticism from members of the government about GBRMPA during the RAP process in 2003 and 2004, it was the government that completely mangled the structural adjustment package to the fishing industry and related businesses along the coast of Queensland. The Howard government has ignored repeated warnings from the Queensland fishing industry about flaws in its so-
cioeconomic assessment processes. Initially the government grossly underestimated the economic impact of the RAP program on the Queensland fishing industry, announcing a package of just $31 million. Since then, it has had to significantly increase the package to $87 million in May 2006. We have never seen any compensation to the recreational fishing sector for the impacts on that sector of the zoning changes.

While GBRMPA is a convenient scapegoat, the government has to lift its performance in protecting and managing the reef. The government has sat back and done nothing while the Great Barrier Reef is threatened with destruction. The government has failed future generations of Australians.

In contrast to the government’s neglect of the reef, there are good things happening in Central Queensland amongst the many people and organisations committed to keeping the reef healthy. I am pleased to say that Rockhampton was fortunate to get one of the community partnerships offices which was set up by GBRMPA in 2005. The community partnerships team, led by Dave Lowe, has done a great job building relationships with those groups who use the reef and want to be part of keeping it strong and healthy. The team get out and about to public events right throughout Central Queensland, to educate people about the reef, the activities of GBRMPA and the things we can all do as individuals to play our part to help protect the reef.

The community partnerships team has really given a human face to GBRMPA in Central Queensland. Through efforts to facilitate education and to reach out to groups with an interest in the reef, it gives us more direct input into the management of the reef and the decision making that goes on with GBRMPA. It also means that when information is sought or when issues arise, when things are happening in Central Queensland which need the involvement of GBRMPA, the right people in Townsville can be contacted very easily so that GBRMPA can come on board very quickly to be involved in things that are happening at the local level. The community partnerships body has worked really hard to link in with tourism bodies, Indigenous groups, recreational and commercial fishers and regional natural resource management bodies, like the Fitzroy Basin Association, that are working on reducing the impact of upstream activities on the reef.

Another exciting initiative in Central Queensland is the number of reef guardian schools we now have in our area. Reef guardian schools sign up to incorporate education about the Great Barrier Reef into their curriculum. Through that the students are taught about the reef and, importantly, about the impacts that we all have on the reef. The schools undertake projects so that the children can understand those impacts: they work in the school but also use the school as a demonstration to the broader community through projects that reduce litter, carbon emissions and run-off from our onshore activities into the reef.

I am told that 30 schools in Central Queensland have signed up to be reef guardian schools, and have been awarded that recognition by GBRMPA. Those 30 schools give Central Queensland the highest proportion of schools within Queensland participating in that program. I think there are something like 200 schools throughout Queensland, but in Central Queensland we have the highest proportion of schools participating, which is great to see.

Another great development that we have seen in Central Queensland is the establishment of CapReef—that is, the Capricorn Reef Monitoring Program, chaired by Gra-
ham Scott. Bill Sawynok from Infosh Services coordinates the activities of CapReef. CapReef is a community based monitoring program established to improve community involvement and knowledge of the management of the Capricorn Coast part of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem by the monitoring and analysis of the local effects of management changes on the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem. As the fishing industry was most affected by the management changes, the focus of CapReef has been on collecting data that will help understand those effects, particularly in relation to recreational fishing.

CapReef has done a great job of reaching out to the fishing sector and using the information that so many recreational and commercial fishers can feed into the monitoring and analysis of what is going on in the reef. For example, in their first 18 months CapReef logged details of over 1,300 fishing trips, primarily off the Capricorn Coast and Gladstone. This year we already have 1,000 fishing trips feeding in their data to CapReef, and then CapReef will feed that into GBRMPA’s research.

CapReef is working with the James Cook University on a project to understand the social effects of the management changes on fisher behaviour and fishing locations, and it is also working with the Central Queensland University to obtain expenditure data on recreational fishing.

There is currently an application before the government under the recreational fishing community grants to enable CapReef to continue for a further 18 months from July 2007. The application is very well supported within the Central Queensland community, and you can understand why when you read just a few of the highlights of what CapReef has been able to achieve in its first 18 months. I call on the government to continue its support for CapReef in the good work that it is doing.

Back to the government’s role in all of this—its shocking neglect of the Great Barrier Reef and its responsibilities for its protection. The government has to explain to all those people in Central Queensland who are working so hard to protect the reef for the enjoyment of future generations why it continues to ignore the warning signs. (Time expired)

Mr JENKINS (Scullin) (10.48 am)—The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Bill 2007 amends the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975. As was outlined earlier in the debate, the bill makes amendments arising from the Financial Management Accountability Act 1997 and from the Uhrig review. The bill establishes a periodic Great Barrier Reef Outlook report and it also establishes statutory provisions to ensure that the current zoning plan cannot be amended for a least seven years from the date it came into force. The bill also gives the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources more power by abolishing the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee.

Through a second reading amendment moved by the member for Kingsford Smith the opposition have indicated that, whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, we reaffirm the objects of the principal act but note that the reef is very much under threat, both in the short-term and in the long-term, as a result of many factors, including climate change. We note that the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that, by 2050, 97 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef could be bleached every year.

In our second reading amendment we condemn the government’s handling of the structural adjustment package and we call on the government to develop and implement
plans to protect the Great Barrier Reef from coral bleaching and to protect the Australian jobs and industries that depend upon a healthy reef. The opposition also call on the government to prohibit mineral, oil and gas exploration in the waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

If we review the history of the way in which legislation has been passed through this place to protect the Great Barrier Reef I think we will find that, in general, it is one of the success stories. But we cannot dwell on the successes of the past so much as not to recognise that the Great Barrier Reef has never been as threatened as it is currently, in this first decade of the 21st century. Back in the late 1980s, even after 10 years of protection, there was much mystery surrounding the fact that the Great Barrier Reef was a World Heritage listed area. World Heritage listing was associated with locking up areas, which was far from the truth, and an educative process had to be gone through that could indicate that not only could we protect World Heritage value areas but also they could continue to be used by people for a variety of economic and social uses. The Great Barrier Reef is one of those areas.

The work of GBRMPA, which has been acknowledged by members on this side, has been integral not only to the protection of the reef but also to the continuing use of the reef. The multi-use zones that have been developed and the ability of the authority to administer have been very important in that process. The scientific knowledge that GBRMPA and other institutions have developed has also been important, but there is much work to be done. We have a great understanding of the phenomenon of bleaching. We understand that in the past there has been an ability of the coral to show resilience, but we also know that the severity and the frequency of these incidents is on the rise. That really tests the resilience of the reef. That is the danger. That is why we need to make sure that we understand the threat that there is to the reef. In saying that, we also have to understand that it will not only affect the reef as a living organism but also have a great impact on the surrounding environment.

There has been emphasis on the loss of jobs that would arise in the tourism industry, but let’s go to the contentious issue of the fisheries. What we have said on this side of the House, quite correctly, is that when you step back and look at the recent past you find it is the government that has botched the restructure packages and has not been up-front. It has not been the authority’s fault in any way that these things have gone pear-shaped. The impact of climate change on the fishing stocks of the reef marine park is going to be dramatic. The Treasurer in his budget speech this week talked about adaptation required following climate change. He has to understand that the mitigation has to go on but, correctly, adaptation will occur. We do not have the environmental economic case for what is going to happen as a result of climate change to the fishing stocks. That is really an appalling situation, because there are plenty of examples around the world where people are well in advance.

If we look at the Caribbean, not only does it have probably the second-largest coral reef; it has, of course, large fishing stocks and commercial and recreational fishing. The Caribbean people working on climate change have been able to model the changes that will occur to fishing stocks and have been able to model the way in which fishing stocks will change in different parts of the Caribbean. That is the type of work that we need to see in Australia.

I thought that when the Treasurer produced his Intergenerational report 2007 we might have seen one of the major intergenerational problems that confront Australia
being given due coverage. Of course I talk about climate change. But, in 122 pages, what do we get? We get about three or four pages of discussion of environmental matters, including climate change—that is how it is referred to—and what do we get? We get that it is ‘very difficult’ to do the modelling, ‘very difficult’ to predict the economic impact. This is a nonsense. If Australia is really going to prepare itself for the impact of climate change, it has to have a better review than the words that are in the Intergenerational report. I express my disappointment that this report, which the Treasurer keeps telling us is a very important aspect of the discussion of government policy, was tabled at a national press conference two days after the last weeks of sitting had concluded. So there is no opportunity, in a sense, for the parliament to be able to fully debate this document.

For the future generations we have to understand that we cannot discuss the economic impacts of intergenerational problems without looking at the social and environmental aspects. In a speech that touched upon the Great Barrier Reef that I made in the chamber in 1989, I quoted Dick Pratt, who used a quote out of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. I repeat, this was nearly 20 years ago. As a major industrialist at that time in Australia—and he continues to be—he emphasised, and I quote again:

Those responsible for managing natural resources are separated from those responsible for managing the economy. The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change; the policies and institutions concerned must.

That is why, when the government produces a document like the Intergenerational report 2007, it should not be just a financial economic document. It should have great emphasis on the interlocking of environmental and economic matters. And this document failed us. As has been stated by my colleagues in this debate, the Great Barrier Reef is a great barometer of what is happening in climate change. The bleaching of the reef gives us an absolute indication of what the waters along the east coast are doing. What we have to see is a better analysis of what is required than the suggestions of floating pontoons of shadecloth or having shadecloth orbiting the earth and things like that. At the end of the day we have to have a greater understanding of what is happening. We have to continue to match what we confront with actions that will mitigate and ensure that industry, which relies on the reef, is able to continue.

I have been heartened by discussions that I have been involved in with the tourism industry, which requires the reef for its survival. Firstly, they understand the challenges that confront the Great Barrier Reef because of climate change and, secondly, they acknowledge the good work of GBRMPA. That is important. This is a partnership between government, through government agencies, industry and the community. As my colleague the member for Throsby said, the community in this part of the world importantly includes Indigenous people. There is an understanding of the importance to those Indigenous people of the reef and its waters and an understanding of the ecological systems that the reef presents us.

As has been stated in debate, throughout the globe’s history, events have arisen because of changes in levels of carbon emissions. But the simple fact is that, as a result of anthropogenic carbon emissions, the globe is under stress that it has never been under before. It is the severity and the rate of the increase in carbon emissions that we must confront. It is time for action. All those who have been sceptical should go back to their burrows, because it is clear that we have to take some action. If, in the case of Australia,
we cannot use as the pre-eminent model the protection of the Great Barrier Reef to show what is required then we should not be in the business of discussing these issues. As the member for Capricornia said, when it suits the government, they praise the efforts of the authority; when it does not suit them for local political purposes, they try to make out that the authority is the demon.

It is interesting that only two members of the government have participated in this debate, apart from the minister. The member for Boothby participated in a more general sense, while the member for Leichhardt, who has been an open and continuing critic of the work of the authority, tried to justify his position by discussing the way in which the commercial fishing industry had been treated. But if you take a fair, arms-length view of the way in which the restructure of the fishing industry has occurred, you will see that it is really the responsibility of the government to sort out these problems. As I said, if they think they have got problems now, the changing nature of the fish stocks of the marine park as a result of climate change will mean that further assessment of the restructure will be required. If other countries and regions are already doing this, why isn’t Australia? That is just one example of where the government will have to be in partnership with industry because of the impact of climate change on the economy.

I come back to the *Intergenerational report*. It ignores climate change; it is as if climate change were simply a footnote to the intergenerational concerns of this nation. It should be of concern not only to this nation but to the globe, but, if the *Intergenerational report* is about Australia, I would have thought it would not just have been included as ‘environmental consequences, including climate change’. There should have been a whole chapter about climate change. It is then suggested, with respect to Stern, that: ‘Oh, it might be difficult to do the modelling.’ It has been admitted here, in answers during question time, that there is no modelling. It is an absolute disgrace that a nation confronting this challenge has not done the appropriate modelling, has not made it public and has not put it into the public domain as part of the debate, because this is the pre-eminent problem that confronts us.

In saying that it is a problem, it might also, like all problems, be a great opportunity. With the attitude of the government to climate change, any opportunities that arise from the way we tackle it are just thrown to the wind, as if they are incidental. All the technologies that have been developed in Australia that have a consequence for diminishing carbon emissions have only gone forward if they have gone offshore. If you go down to Tasmania and visit a wind energy park or wind farm, what do you see? They have had to form a joint relationship with the Chinese. Because we have stepped outside Kyoto, we have not gained the full impact of the CD mechanism. That is just crazy.

We would agree, of course, that the next round of Kyoto is important, but the government should not just throw the baby out with the bathwater because they want to be in the blame game. I have just returned from an IPU conference, where the central debate was about climate change. It sickened me a little that we had this north-south debate, whereby developing countries said, ‘Well, it’s the developed countries’ fault.’ We have to go beyond that in the debate. We heard yesterday in this debate and during question time the same response—‘until China does this’ and ‘until India does that’. The government cannot sit there and wash their hands of the matter; they should just get on with it.

There could be a lot of accommodation regarding the way in which nations are tackling this matter. For instance, a decrease of
40 per cent in the number of living global coral reefs in a couple of years time represents a great impact that we will all share. There is also the divided debate in Australia: in the traditional way in which Prime Minister Howard conducts business, which is always to find an excuse for pitting Australian against Australian, he wants somehow to dwell on the fact that this debate is all about people who work in the coal industry and the future of their jobs. Well, we acknowledge that. We are being fitted up by being told that we just want to exterminate that industry. That is not the case.

We agree that we have to continue to build technologies that display the cleanest use of coal—that we need to pursue technologies that do in fact efficiently capture and store carbon. But at the same time we have to look at a whole host of other things, because it is not only the threat to jobs in the coal industry; it is the threat to the jobs in the tourism industry along the Great Barrier Reef, and it is the threat to the jobs of the commercial fishers who depend upon the fishing stocks along the Great Barrier Reef. There are no winners from inaction against climate change. In fact, we all have to recognise that we all have to take some part of the pain—and I think that we acknowledge that. It is like any other adjustment that we have seen in Australia over the last few decades: you have to make sure that, when you are looking at changes, they are shared.

So I would hope that a minister like the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, who is sitting at the table and who does have an understanding of these problems, would step back from the blame game, would step back from the Pontius Pilate washing of hands in the national sense and would see that we can be a leading light to the world in the way that we tackle climate change. If we cannot take appropriate action in relation to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park on the question of climate change then we are not going to be this exemplar. The opportunity is there for us to lead the world in showing the ways forward on not only the way we apply technology but the way we manage the reef. He is right to say that GBRMPA has done a great job. It has been very hard. It has been in the context of suspicion. (Time expired)


The current zoning plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park will not be able to be amended for at least seven years from when it came into force on 1 July 2004, providing stability for business, communities and biological systems. There will be a regular and reliable means of assessing the overall condition and longer term outlook for the Great Barrier Reef, through an outlook report that will be tabled in parliament every five years. This report will be independently peer reviewed. The minister will be responsible for any future decision to open the zoning plan for amendment, and any such decision will be based on the outlook report and advice from the authority. Engagement with stakeholders on the development of a zoning plan will be more open and transparent, with an increased time frame for public consultation and comprehensive, publicly available information.
The Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee will be replaced by a non-statutory advisory board to the minister, which will provide a means of engaging with representational bodies and key experts. The authority will remain a statutory authority and body corporate and become subject to the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997. The number of authority members will be increased to a maximum of five, selected for their relevant expertise.

The amendments contained in this bill set a clear direction for the future management and protection of the Great Barrier Reef, which is one of Australia’s and the world’s most precious assets. The bill provides for continued protection of marine life and biodiversity. It also allows for ongoing and environmentally sustainable economic and recreational activity and engagement with all stakeholders.

The reef is widely regarded as the best-managed coral reef in the world. We recognise, in all of our work with the reef, the likely impacts of climate change and the increased incidence of coral bleaching because of rising sea temperatures. However, the resilience of the reef, the ability of the reef to respond to the impacts of global warming, has been enormously enhanced—as is widely recognised, and as was widely recognised just a moment ago by the member for Scullin—by the actions of the government, by the policies of the government and by the work of the authority. It is the best-managed reef in the world. In that respect, in this particular area, this is another example of the way in which Australia leads the world in the response to climate change. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Quick)—I move:

Schedule 1, page 15, after item 34 (after line 27) add:

35 Schedule 1
Repeal paragraphs (a) to (j), substitute:

(a) commences at the point that, at low water, is the northernmost extremity of Cape York Peninsula Queensland;

(b) runs thence easterly along the geodesic to the intersection of parallel of Latitude 10° 41’ South with meridian of Longitude 145° 19’ 33” East;

(c) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to the point of Latitude 12° 20’ 00” South, Longitude 146° 30’ 00”;

(d) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 12° 38’ 30” South, Longitude 147° 08’ 30” East;

(e) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 13° 10’ 30” South, Longitude 148° 05’ 00” East;

(f) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 14° 38’ 00” South, Longitude 152° 07’ 00” East;

(g) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude
runs thence north-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 14°04'00" South, Longitude 157°00'00" East;
(j) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 14°41'00" South, Longitude 157°43'00" East;
(k) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 15°44'07" South, Longitude 158°45'39" East;
(l) runs thence south-westerly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 16°25'28" South, Longitude 158°22'49" East;
(m) runs thence south-westerly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 16°34'51" South, Longitude 158°16'26" East;
(n) runs thence south-westerly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 17°30'28" South, Longitude 157°38'31" East;
(o) runs thence south-westerly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 17°54'40" South, Longitude 157°21'59" East;
(p) runs thence south-westerly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 18°32'25" South, Longitude 156°56'44" East;
(q) runs thence south-westerly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 18°55'54" South, Longitude 156°37'29" East;
(r) runs thence south-westerly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 19°17'12" South, Longitude 156°15'20" East;
(s) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 20°08'28" South, Longitude 156°49'34" East;
(t) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 20°32'28" South, Longitude 157°03'09" East;
(u) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 20°42'52" South, Longitude 157°04'34" East;
(v) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 20°53'33" South, Longitude 157°06'25" East;
(w) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 21°12'57" South, Longitude 157°10'17" East;
(x) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 21°47'21" South, Longitude 157°14'36" East;
(y) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 22°10'31" South, Longitude 157°13'04" East;
(z) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 22°31'38" South, Longitude 157°18'43" East;
(za) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 23°14'54" South, Longitude 157°48'04" East;
(zb) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 24°30'00" South, Longitude 158°19'54" East;
(zc) runs thence westerly along the parallel of Latitude 24°30'00" South to its intersection by the coastline of Queensland at low water; and
(zd) runs thence generally northerly along that coastline at low water to the point of commencement.
This has been an important debate, and I want to acknowledge the contributions of speakers in the House, including the member for Throsby, the member for Wills, the member for Capricornia and, most recently, the member for Scullin.

I refer to the remarks by the member for Leichhardt yesterday when he spoke on this matter and referred to the ‘ideological zealots who were in charge of this process through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’. Those struck me as being somewhat exceptional and extravagant comments, given that it was actually the government that was in charge of these processes. Notwithstanding that, we certainly acknowledge that the significant protection of the Great Barrier Reef is one of the Howard government’s real environmental achievements. I think it is a great pity that we have members in the House effectively bagging that position, but nevertheless we do recognise the significance of the protection that has been afforded to the reef.

The purpose of this amendment, though, is to extend the boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park region out to the exclusive economic zone, as identified by the locations described in the amendment. This is to ensure that oil drilling cannot take place near the Great Barrier Reef and reflects longstanding Labor policy which recognises the unique and significant role the reef plays as a place of outstanding natural beauty and value. This amendment follows on from private members’ bills moved previously by Labor members and senators, including most recently the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Protecting the Great Barrier Reef from Oil Drilling and Exploration) Amendment Bill 2006, by the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Grayndler.

We believe this amendment is necessary, given that, whilst drilling for oil or prospecting for oil is expressly prohibited by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, the Howard government’s policy is to accommodate exploration in areas adjacent to or near the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and thus open up the prospects of oil drilling in the area around the Great Barrier Reef. The 2004 Liberal Party election policy titled Securing Australia’s Energy Future included a map which outlined offshore frontier basins and identified their potential for oil exploration. So this amendment extends the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park region eastward to the economic zone in order to preclude any additional pressure on this sensitive area.

It is the case that the government’s energy white paper additionally identifies four offshore basins immediately adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as being of high priority for exploration and with that the possibility of subsequent oil drilling in the region. Those basins—Queensland and Cato troughs, and the Capricornia Basin, all lying to the east—have been specifically identified as prospective exploration sites despite overwhelming opposition from scientists, the fishing community and, especially in North Queensland, community groups, including conservation organisations, to any oil drilling in the region of the Great Barrier Reef. This amendment only applies to oil exploration and drilling; it does not affect any other activity, be it recreational or commercial fishing, tourism operations and the like.

Speakers to this bill made wide mention of the value of the reef for the range of services it provides, widely estimated at around $4.6 billion. The possibility that oil drilling could even be contemplated by the government puts the reef at risk and necessitates this amendment being considered by the government. The tourism industry has expressed the view that a permanent ban on any activities that have the potential to harm the reef is desirable, and there is widespread
support for such a position, which, under this amendment, would provide clarity for commercial interests as well.

In previous debates, Labor has emphasised that the terms of the amendment provide a practical, no-cost mechanism to provide direction to the oil industry and to rule out exploration and mining in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park region for good. Given the extraordinarily fragile state of the reef and surrounding environment that speakers have highlighted in this debate and the range of pressures it already faces, in particular from climate change, this action would allow an additional level of security to the reef, and again Labor urges the government to accept this sensible amendment.

The future of the wondrous Great Barrier Reef is one of risk and uncertainty. So much is at stake, given the fragile nature of the reef and the region it inhabits, especially as a consequence of the crucial challenge posed by climate change and by a range of other threats. We need to do everything we can to ensure the reef is properly protected for all time. This amendment is aimed at ensuring we have exercised that responsibility. I commend it to the House.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for the Environment and Water Resources) (11.17 am)—The extension of the Great Barrier Reef region in the manner proposed by the honourable member’s amendment was considered in the context of the government’s review of the act. The review noted that the Coral Sea, while containing ecologically important areas, is separated from the Great Barrier Reef by an area of deep water and forms a largely distinct ecosystem. The review concluded, therefore, that where protection is appropriate the establishment of Commonwealth reserves under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act is the appropriate mechanism, rather than extension of the Great Barrier Reef region. In fact, two such Commonwealth reserves already exist—Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reef national nature reserves.

The Australian Coral Sea area is currently the subject of marine bioregional planning. In last year’s budget, the government allocated more than $30 million for marine bioregional planning, a significant proportion of which is being spent to better understand the conservation values and human uses of the Coral Sea. This information will lead to the establishment of a network of representative marine protected areas throughout the Coral Sea as an adjunct to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the two existing Coral Sea Commonwealth reserves. There are in fact no active oil and gas leases in the area and there has been no recent oil and gas exploration. Only relatively small areas of the Coral Sea are thought to be prospective for oil and gas. Other potential pressures, such as those from tourism and fishing, are also known to be low at present.

In the absence of real threats to the ecological integrity of the Coral Sea and the Great Barrier Reef as a result of activities in the Coral Sea, it is difficult to justify preempting the marine planning process with an ill-considered extension to the Great Barrier Reef region. The proposal would not simply prohibit mining in those areas; it would make the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act the basis for managing Coral Sea areas, rather than the more appropriate framework of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Extending the Great Barrier Reef region in the manner proposed by the honourable member would add 922,000 square kilometres to the current 345,000 square kilometre area of the Great Barrier Reef region, an excessive addition if a buffer for the reef is the intention.
I should add that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act already provides mechanisms for managing activities outside the marine mark that impact on the marine park. Furthermore, the Great Barrier Reef outlook report—which I noticed the honourable member welcomed in his speech on the second reading—which is proposed in this bill, will facilitate the identification and assessment of any risks to the ecosystem of the Great Barrier Reef, including potential threats from petroleum and mining in areas outside the marine park. The government recognises the importance of, and has made great progress in protecting, the Great Barrier Reef and Australia’s marine environment more generally. The government will continue to base its policies and its legislative program on good science and prior, careful and considered consultation with affected businesses and communities.

Question negatived.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for the Environment and Water Resources) (11.21 am)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

GOVERNANCE REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION (TREASURY PORTFOLIO AGENCIES) BILL 2007

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 28 March, on motion by Ms Julie Bishop:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (11.21 am)—In November 2002, the Prime Minister commissioned a review by Mr John Uhrig of the corporate governance of statutory authorities and office holders. On 12 August 2004, Mr Uhrig’s report Review of the corporate governance of statutory authorities and office holders was publicly released. The Uhrig report made a number of recommendations to improve the governance of statutory authorities and office holders and their accountability frameworks. The Governance Review Implementation (Science Research Agencies) Bill 2007 is part of the response to recommendations in that report. The bill seeks to implement recommendations in relation to three statutory authorities: the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. Labor is supportive of measures which will improve the governance of statutory authorities. The implementation of the Uhrig report is currently used as the way to increase the efficiency and transparency of the operations of statutory authorities. Labor intends to support this bill as part of its commitment to consistency in the governance of statutory authorities.

The bill implements the recommendations in the Uhrig report for frameworks most suited to a particular agency. In the review’s assessment of AIMS, ANSTO and CSIRO, it was concluded that a board framework would best suit those agencies. For each of the three agencies, changes have essentially been made in respect of: the appointment of the CEO of each agency by the relevant board rather than by the Governor-General; provisions relating to the termination of and other arrangements for a CEO and acting CEO; and the removal of a legislative requirement for ministerial approval of contracts for expenditure above a prescribed value, as consistent with section 15 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997. The CEO of the Australian Institute of Marine Science will now have a maximum appointment of five years instead
of seven years. The approval for entering contracts for AIMS will now be consistent with section 15 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act by repeal of section 42 of the Australian Institute of Marine Science Act for ministerial approval of contracts for expenditure above a prescribed value, currently $1 million. This requirement will be replaced by a requirement set out in the minister’s statement of expectations, the minister being notified in advance of AIMS entering into significant contracts.

The current structure of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, which consists of the executive director and ‘not fewer than two nor more than six other members’ under section 9 of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Act 1987, is changed to require that the board consists of a CEO and at least five but not more than eight other members. This implements the recommendation that six to nine members, including an executive director, is best practice for governance by a board. The approval for entering contracts for ANSTO will now be consistent with section 15 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act by repealing section 31 of the ANSTO Act for ministerial approval of contracts for expenditure above a prescribed value, currently $5 million. This requirement will be replaced by a requirement set out in the minister’s statement of expectations that the minister is notified in advance of ANSTO entering into significant contracts. The title of the chief executive of ANSTO will change from executive director to chief executive officer, for consistency with commercial practice. As with the other two science research agencies, changes are also made in respect of the appointment of CEOs and their relationship to the board.

The approval for CSIRO contracts will be consistent with section 15 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act. Section 50 of the Science and Industry Research Act—for ministerial approval of contracts for expenditure above a prescribed value, currently $5 million—will be repealed. This requirement will be replaced by a requirement set out in the minister’s statement of expectations, with the minister being notified in advance of CSIRO entering into significant contracts. The minimum number of CSIRO board members will be increased to five members other than the CEO. A position of deputy chairperson of CSIRO will also be created in recognition of the increased workload of the chairperson. Labor notes the changes in relation to the CSIRO board and amendments to allow the appointment by the board of its CEO. These changes, however, do not address issues of concern raised last year in the media as to the apparent gagging of CSIRO scientists, in relation to reports on climate change, by the Howard government and management of that organisation. Although structural changes to the management of CSIRO which implement the Uhrig recommendations will make improvements to its management, they certainly do not make the organisation immune to politicisation. Governance changes alone do not in fact ensure independence in the face of a government that fails to respect the independence of its scientists.

This bill will also establish CSIRO as a body corporate with perpetual succession which must have a seal; which may acquire, hold and dispose of real and personal property; and which may sue and be sued. Section 9A of the Science and Industry Research Act will be amended to remove the need for ministerial approval for CSIRO to accept gifts, as consistent with existing arrangements for ANSTO and AIMS. Labor is committed to ongoing improvements in the corporate governance of statutory authorities. The implementation of the Uhrig report recommendations in respect of the application
of the Financial Management and Accountability Act and the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act frameworks will increase consistency in the corporate governance of statutory authorities and is therefore welcomed by Labor.

(Quorum formed)

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON (Bass) (11.30 am)—This morning I rise to speak in support of the Governance Review Implementation (Science Research Agencies) Bill 2007. There was some confusion with the speakers list, but it is good nonetheless to be able to debate and address this bill. The bill that we are debating this morning, and which will soon be summed up, is designed to amend the Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Act 1987 and the Science and Industry Research Act 1949. The bill will implement changes to the governance arrangements of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, ANSTO and CSIRO to reflect the government’s response, and implementation of that response, to the recommendations of the Uhrig review.

I would like first of all to make some comments about the Uhrig review and its importance. As part of its 2001 election platform the coalition government signalled its intention to examine the efficacy of governance arrangements of statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders. In November 2002, the government announced a review of the governance practices of those statutory authorities and office holders.

The review focused on the areas where businesses have the right to expect higher levels of efficiency, fairness and transparency in their dealings with government. While they are agencies to anybody in the business community, for all intents and purposes they really are government organisations and the business community does have a reasonable expectation to have an open, accountable and businesslike interface with government. A key task of the Uhrig review was to develop a broad template of governance principles that, subject to consideration by government, might then be extended to all statutory authorities and office holders. As part of the process of developing this broad template, the review was asked to consider the governance structures of a number of statutory authorities and office holders with critical relationships with business and to consider best practice corporate governance structures in both the public and private sectors. The report recommended that two templates be considered to ensure good governance of statutory authorities. Agencies should be managed by either a chief executive officer or a board structure. Both templates detail measures for ensuring the boundaries of responsibilities are better understood and the relationship between the Australian government authorities, ministers and portfolio departments is made clear. However, as Mr Uhrig explained in his review, the purpose of the template is to ‘serve as a reference point’ for the development of
governance arrangements and so it is ‘expressed as an ideal’ which the government ought to consider and respond to.

Uhrig recommended that the selection of the management template and financial frameworks to be applied be based on the governance characteristics of a statutory authority. The amendments that we are debating to the Australian Institute of Marine Science Act will enable the AIMS council to appoint and remove the CEO, who is currently appointed by the Governor-General, and also will remove the requirement for ministerial approval of contracts for expenditure above a prescribed value, which is currently $1 million. This will improve the efficiency and I would suggest also provide a sense of corporate respect in which the government will hold that organisation. Amendments to the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Act will specify that the board will consist of six to nine members, including the executive director, remove the requirement for ministerial approval of contracts—in line with the other organisations—which is currently $5 million, and change the title of the chief executive of ANSTO from executive director to CEO.

Finally, the Science and Industry Research Act amendments will enable the board to appoint and remove the chief executive. Currently the chief executive is appointed by the Governor-General. The amendments also create a position of deputy chairman in recognition of the high workload—and perhaps unreasonable workload—that the chairman has been carrying, make explicit that the board may delegate any or all of its powers, remove the legislative requirement for ministerial approval of contracts, which in this case is currently $5 million, and require the chief executive to seek the approval of the board, rather than the minister, for the payment of bonuses or intellectual property rewards to CSIRO staff. They also remove the need for the minister’s consideration when the CSIRO is offered a gift.

The bill makes changes to the governance of AIMS, ANSTO and CSIRO to implement the recommendations of the Uhrig report, which the government endorsed in August 2004. It will allow them the freedom to act that was recommended in the Uhrig report while maintaining appropriate levels of accountability.

Critics have said that the proposed amendments reduce accountability. To respond to that, I believe it is important to explain to this chamber that changes to the agencies’ governance arrangements do not reduce accountability at all. Rather, they uphold strong governance and in fact enhance the ability of the bodies to interact effectively with business and the wider community.

While the amendments provide greater freedom of the board/council to act, this is entirely in accordance with the recommendations of the report. And there are still requirements which must be noted, in the enabling legislation for each agency as well as in the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act, which ensure an appropriate level of accountability. In addition, the minister’s statement of expectation for each agency will require the agency to keep the minister fully informed of significant events and to consult with her on significant matters.

Each agency will also be subject to a quadrennium funding agreement, which will cover the four financial years commencing 2007-08. It will specify performance indicators for the agencies and agreed key areas of reporting to the Minister for Education, Science and Training and the Minister for Finance and Administration.

As for claims that changes to appointment arrangements for the CEOs of AIMS and CSIRO represent a diminution of their cur-
rent terms of appointment, they are also not correct. It has to be acknowledged that the bill contains transitional provisions that preserve the terms, conditions and tenure of the current CEOs of the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. The only exception to this is that the CSIRO board and the AIMS council, rather than the minister, will approve any leave of absence for the current CEOs.

As for claims that the appointment of a deputy chairperson of CSIRO is an unnecessary expense: the remuneration for the deputy chair will be set by the Remuneration Tribunal and the cost will be met out of CSIRO’s existing budget and, therefore, will have no financial impact. The considerable increase in the responsibilities of the chairperson over recent years does justify the creation of the extra position of deputy chair, and the arrangement is quite consistent with arrangements that are in place for ANSTO and other large statutory bodies.

The amendments to these acts are part of a range of changes that are being implemented by the government. I understand that they are relatively non-controversial. But they will, it is important to acknowledge, improve the governance arrangements and the effectiveness of the interface between these organisations and the government and—very importantly—business and the wider community.

I wish to direct a few comments, in relation to the bill, to some measures which were announced on Tuesday night which are terribly important to the future of these organisations. The organisations that are the subject of today’s amendment bill are implicitly involved in the mathematics and science communities and the greater goal of enhancing and improving educational standards in the areas of science and maths.

As a former maths and science teacher myself, and as a parent, I have a great concern for the future of maths and science in our schools and in our wider community. There is evidence that standards have fallen around Australia, and we must arrest that decline. That is why I was very pleased to see, on Tuesday night, that funding of $457.4 million has been made available for the national literacy and numeracy vouchers program. This has been discussed quite widely in the media in recent days and has been very warmly welcomed, particularly by parents but also by schools and teachers.

The vouchers will provide direct assistance to parents of students who have not been able to achieve minimum standards in reading, writing and mathematics in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 so that they can get additional help for their children. This help can be sourced out of the private sector, outside of school hours. This is a wonderful way that this government is showing support for those children in both government and non-government schools who, for whatever reason, have fallen behind. It would be welcome if the Tasmanian government’s education minister and his state colleagues would welcome this funding, because it is very significant and has every prospect of arresting the decline in standards in the lives of some of our young people.

There is also funding in the budget of $100 million for a brand new initiative which, again, is very significant. The new summer schools for teachers program will provide extra professional development opportunities for teachers and will have the flow-on effect, quite obviously, of improving the quality of teaching and the quality of learning outcomes in our young people. It will specifically relate to the major disciplines of literacy and numeracy, English, maths, science and Australian history.
An additional $53 million is being provided for another brand-new initiative: rewarding schools for improving literacy and numeracy outcomes. If schools can demonstrate that they have, by altering their teaching program or by improving the way in which their classes function, made sustained improvements in student literacy and numeracy, a very significant cash reward of $50,000 can be given. This can then be reinvested into school programs for continual improvement. I point out that this is not funding for schools that are performing highly; this is funding for schools that are able to improve. So there ought to be no controversy around it. It ought to be something that every school can strive to achieve.

There is also additional funding of $13 million over two years to implement something which I have been very passionate about for a long time—that is, for the Commonwealth to work with the states and territories to develop core curricula standards in a range of subjects, including English, maths, physics, chemistry, biology and Australian history for college-level students and also a range of subjects to year 10. This, I hope, will assist in raising standards in schools, and I trust that the states and territories will also contribute resources of their own to achieve the agreed goal of improving consistency around Australia for our students in very important subject areas.

I now turn to funding which has been made available to the specific organisations which are the subject of this bill. In fact, funding of $6½ billion in the coming financial year marks the highest amount ever spent by any Australian government on science and innovation programs. This will build on the very large investment of the $5.3 billion commitment made in 2004 through the Backing Australia’s Ability: Building Our Future Through Science and Innovation package.

The budget announced by the Treasurer on Tuesday night included funding of $50 million to support the Australian Synchrotron, in Victoria, in addition to a substantial package of funding for medical research facilities through the health portfolio. The Synchrotron will have wonderful benefits not just for pure science but also for the health and research sectors and the industry sector in the development of high-tech objects. In addition, it includes funding of $8 million over four years for Australia’s four learned academies.

CSIRO will receive $2.8 billion, including $244 million for new measures over the next four years, including expansion of a flagships program, which has been widely welcomed by the community. There will also be additional funding to support construction of the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder, funding of $16 million for the Australian Animal Health Laboratory to improve diagnostic testing of new and emerging diseases and an additional $2 million to develop a wellbeing plan for children.

Finally, ANSTO and AIMS will be supported. ANSTO will receive an additional $61 million for new measures. That will be used for the operation of the new OPAL reactor. There is funding for the automation of the radiopharmaceuticals and industrials production processes and $4 million for low-level radioactive waste compaction equipment which will substantially reduce the volume of low-level waste stored at ANSTO. AIMS will receive an additional $5 million to support research into marine ecosystems in north-west Australia, which will underpin environmental protection and sustainable use of marine resources.

I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition’s speech tonight. I am sure he will welcome all of those initiatives and acknowledge that they are a necessary part of
the response by the Australian government and the parliament to securing Australia’s future. With those comments, I again state my support for this bill and commend it to the House.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (11.47 am)—I rise to speak on the Governance Review Implementation (Science Research Agencies) Bill 2007. Can I say at the outset that Labor supports this bill. It is a mechanical bill and one that addresses a number of corporate governance issues. It follows on from a report that was commissioned by the government—the Review of the corporate governance of statutory authorities and office holders, by John Uhrig, which was undertaken in 2004. The Uhrig report is a good report. The report made a number of recommendations to improve the governance of statutory authorities and their office holders and also to improve the accountability frameworks within those institutions. It is an important document because it goes a long way to improving the way that these three very important institutions work. These three statutory authorities—the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation—are very important to Australia in science and research and through the roles they play in making Australia a more competitive and more innovative country. They give us the ability to compete with our neighbours.

Labor are supportive of the measures in this legislation because we do want to improve the governance of these bodies. We think it is important that they operate smoothly, that they run efficiently and effectively and that they deliver something in return for the public funding they receive. So there is no argument there at all.

A number of measures contained within the Uhrig report have been adopted in this bill. I will not go through all of them. They have been mentioned by other speakers in this debate and they are of a technical nature. They include a range of issues which will bring these statutory authorities into line with other authorities, bodies and boards. They go to the standards expected in the 21st century as to how these authorities, their board members and their membership will operate. They cover rules and also, very importantly, transparency.

While Labor support these measures, we are very conscious of the independence of these organisations—and I think it is an important issue for the community and the public to take note of—and the need to ensure that the research, the work that they do and the outcomes of the work are independent not only of government but also of politicisation. It is important to understand that these bodies play a significant role in Australia’s development, in our scientific base, in teaching and in research. It is a sad day when governments start to interfere at a political level in the work of these organisations, in their structures or in the appointment of staff to these bodies. Politicisation, as we have seen from the Howard government, is certainly an issue. We have seen the politicisation of our defence forces right through to the politicisation of CSIRO. It is important to note that these changes do not make these organisations immune from political interference or politicisation, and we should do the best we can to respect the independence of these scientists and these organisations.

This bill is important for a number of reasons—not just because of the technical nature of the improvements it makes but also in relation to the broader science and research that is undertaken in Australia. A dialogue has been taking place in the community for quite a number of years—which Labor has
been at the forefront of—about productivity, growth, industry and innovation, about how we build sustainability in our industries and about how we compete. These conversations, policies and viewpoints have been out there for quite some time from the Labor side, even at a time when they were considered by many people, particularly those in government, not to be important enough to warrant attention through either budgets or legislation.

Through perseverance, if nothing else, Labor has managed to put the issues of innovation and industry at the forefront of thinking at a government level and also at a community level. I think there is a greater understanding now of the things that we need to do to maintain our position in global markets. I will talk a little about the Productivity Commission report on those very issues as well. Even these minor mechanical legislative amendments contained in this bill build a broader policy machine. This larger policy machine is the nature of the government’s support for public scientific research in Australia. In this respect, Labor has some very clear policy goals that match up with our broader approach to industry, to innovation and to building sustainability. Labor also believes in the social and economic worth of sustained and comprehensive government support for our public scientific research institutions—not the dumbing down of those institutions, the ripping out of funds, interference and then, at some later point in time, deciding that that support is important again and therefore providing some extra funding. I think the principle should be that it is always important that government supports these institutions in the work they do.

If the government does not get that message, I can certainly tell the government that the community does. There is a lot of public support for scientific research and the way it improves our economy. Society as a whole probably has a greater understanding than people will grant. The Howard government on the other hand, I believe, has lost sight for many years of what public scientific institutions should be, how they operate and why they should receive significant government support. This translates as a lack of vision on the part of the Howard government. It is highlighted by the fact that there is a distinct failure to tie together scientific research, innovation and industry. A lot of money goes into these areas. We have just heard from the previous speaker about the billions of dollars and some of the new measures in the budget that support some of these institutions. While this is certainly welcome, and we welcome it in this election year, it has been very slow in coming. I think that has had a detrimental effect on our ability to innovate and compete.

But it goes further. That lack of coordination between what we do at all those levels is having a broader impact on our abilities. We can look at specific industry areas where we are falling behind, particularly in the area of innovation—for example, manufacturing and a range of other industries. We can see that what is happening now through policy and funding is a catch-up game. Catch-up games in these areas are no good. By the very nature of innovation, you can never catch up. By definition, innovators are those who lead; they are not the ones who follow. This government is less than innovative in its approach to these areas. The government follows many years behind; it has a huge lag. We keep comparing ourselves with OECD countries such as Britain, Canada, the United States and certain parts of Europe. We are lagging behind in our R&D spend. It is not only about the dollars we spend but also about how it is coordinated, about the rules and guidelines, about how we treat foreign entities and innovators in this country and about our commercialisation principles and how we aid those people in business—the
real innovators and the real leaders who take the risk upon themselves regardless of government. We do not see much support. We see a lot of money going into a whole range of areas, but when you start to look at the disparate parts of industry and innovation policy you really do have to ask the question: where is the bang for the buck? What does the community, as taxpayers, get in return for the massive amounts of money that go into these areas? I do not for one minute begrudge the money that goes into these areas—in fact, quite the opposite. I am very supportive because I think there is real progress to be made through proper funding channels in key areas of industry, through industry policy generally and in building innovation in our community, in our business leaders and also in the three statutory bodies that are within this bill. So there is a lot of work to be done.

It may be the case in other policy areas, but in this policy area it is certainly not the case that you can just wait for things to get bad, look around the world and see what everyone else is doing and decide, ‘We’ve fallen behind a fair way so now is the time to catch up.’ Catch-up in these areas is very difficult. This government’s lack of vision is a distinct problem. The policy will look good on paper. It looks very glossy. All you have to do to see what I am talking about is grab a copy of the government’s latest industry policy. This in itself is a testament to this lack of vision. Basically it is just a glossy brochure. This is a government that has been in power for 11 years. The minister has been administering his department for quite a number of years and claims to have some sort of insight and vision as to where industry should be going. With all the resources of government and the billions of dollars it spends, the government has put together what could be classed as nothing more than a marketing 101 glossy brochure. It is very thin on policy and comprises solely of a political grab bag of things that may look good in an election year.

For me, it is just not good enough in this very important area of industry and innovation. The really important part is how we sustain our current standing in the world in terms of productivity and jobs growth. I do not think it is good enough for the government to just sit back and say, ‘Have a look at how low unemployment is; have a look at how good the economy is; have a look at the things we are doing.’ That is fine, but it is not good enough on its own. You really need to compare us to the rest of the world, which is having the same resources boom as we are. If you compare our economic position to that of the other nations that we compare ourselves to—our unemployment rate and all of those factors that we look at to determine that we have a good economy—then suddenly it does not look that good. Suddenly it does not look as if this government has actually been doing that great a job; it has just come along for the ride.

These things were going to happen anyway. With the Australian economy being supported by a once-in-a-lifetime resources boom, which is being generated out of Western Australia and Queensland, you can begin to understand where the innovation is, where industry is driving and where things are being done in the economy. The whole point is that that is not actually being driven by government. Yes, we do have a good economy and unemployment is low, but how much better could it be if the government were taking an active role? Wouldn’t it be better if unemployment were down to below four per cent, not just below five per cent? Wouldn’t it be better if our economy were actually producing more jobs? The government gloats about jobs—and I am pretty happy; I want everybody in my electorate to have a job—but if we compare our participation rates with those of other countries, particularly for
older Australians and younger Australians, again we do not look so good.

So where are the policies from the government to address those issues? It is no good to just say: ‘We have done a good job. It’s all over. We can rest.’ There is no resting for government. We have to continue to be competitive and productive. We have to increase our capacity. If we do not do that, we start to fall behind. All the things that we enjoy today and all the capacity that we have today start to slip behind. The catch-up is the hard road. The link here with this bill and the catch-up is that, while these mechanical and technical changes are long overdue—and we support them—we need a bit more from government. We need more than technical changes, more than a glossy brochure on industry. The only thing I can divine out of their glossy brochure is that some sort of fix for Australian industry policy is the global supply chain. Apparently, that—contained in one sentence—defines everything this government is going to do. I believe there is a lot more we can do.

Labor have a vision. We have a plan. We have a lot of ideas. These ideas did not just come out this week or this year. They are things we have been talking about for many years. I can remember talking about productivity and innovation in industry years ago, when this government did not even know how to spell those words. These words, for government, have only just appeared. Finally, their polling told them, ‘Hey, this stuff is really biting in.’ Suddenly it is, ‘Hey this stuff is important to the community.’ The community is getting it, years after us. Sometimes you struggle on these policy issues and everybody says you have no policies, because the stuff we are talking about has not quite bitten in yet to the Textor polling and all the stuff that the government does, wasting taxpayers’ money. But when it does, finally we start to see some catch-up and a bit of money goes into these areas, which is always welcome.

It is clear that we need to support our scientific and research institutions. That is an integral part—you cannot separate this out—of industry policy and innovation policy. These are the drivers of our economy. These are the things that create the jobs. There is something that I like to remind people of when we talk about these issues. There seems to be a lot of concern in the community—and it is well-founded in a lot of areas—about our ability to compete with China. This is talked about literally every day in every workplace, in every home. The great fear is that we cannot compete against cheap labour rates. China can always build something cheaper than us; that is true. We will never beat them. We will never be able to work for the same pay rates—nor should we and nor do we want to. The problem is that that is the discussion from the government of yesterday. The discussion from government today is: how do we beat China on the innovation front? What the Chinese are doing, very cleverly, is not just competing on labour rates and their ability to make things cheaper; they are starting to innovate. They are starting to beat us at what we do best. Australia is renowned around the world as innovators, as inventors and as entrepreneurs. But, if we do not start taking that seriously and supporting the people who build that, tomorrow the battle we will have will not be on China building something cheaper than us but on China out-inventing and out-innovating us. These are the challenges we will have tomorrow. That is what gives me real concern about the government’s vision—because there isn’t one. There is nothing in their policy today that addresses the problems we will face tomorrow and next week. The government are very happy to sit here and ride home on the good economic conditions that have been delivered to them
but not by them. Let us remember that government do not create a resources boom; they just ride the resources boom. The resources boom is built by miners and by huge demand. It is built by China and India and other countries that have a huge thirst for our resources. These are the things that drive our economy. Make no mistake about that. No one denies it. But, if we do not do something on top of that, if we do not start to skill our workforce, if we do not provide the policy and the funding and the resources to our technical institutions like TAFE, to our universities and to our science and research institutions and provide the mechanisms for innovators in this country, we are going to start falling behind—and it will not be on our pay rates. That is what concerns me.

What I want to see in this place coming from government are real policies, not just technical changes like those contained in this bill. I want to see real policies that deliver some real money and real programs. There is plenty of money out there—there is no question about that. We can see it in this budget. There is plenty of money left over, and there will be more money to come—not worry. The government is not just sitting on a $10 billion surplus; it is sitting on much, much more. Come the election, we will all know about that. Where the money should be going is on skilling the workforce, making the workforce more productive, providing for young people to access TAFE and providing our science research bodies and organisations like ANSTO, CSIRO and the marine institute with the ability to deliver on that. You cannot have one without the other. We need to focus on teaching, on quality research, on all those drivers—all those things we used to be the best at. Other people are not just sitting around watching us and saying, ‘These guys are the best at that.’ No—they are saying, ‘How do we beat these guys?’

How they beat us is simple. They spend more on R&D than we do. They support their innovators more than we do. I am sure that everybody will concur with me—they would have heard a story or know of somebody. I will not list them all today, but there have been plenty of great ideas and inventions based here in Australia that could not find any support—not government support, nor industry support, nor private support. The innovators go offshore and they literally make $1 million overnight and then sell it back to us. That is our biggest problem. That is our biggest challenge for tomorrow. This is what I do not find in government policy. I do not find the answers, the policy solutions. I do not find the funding basis to deal with those challenges of tomorrow.

I will round off by just saying a couple of things: it is great to see money going back into higher education from the government. It is a funny thing—$5 billion is a lot of money. It is an endowment. It is the sort of thing that people used to do privately. The Treasurer said it: more money is now given in one fell swoop, in one day, to the university sector in the form of endowments than was given for the past 150 years of endowment by private people feeling they had a need to support higher education and doing it themselves. It is a good thing. Universities will certainly appreciate it. I cannot see too many people giving in the future now the government has given them $5 billion. Perhaps they could make those endowments to CSIRO, who always need more funding and more support.

There is no money for clean coal technology from the government. They do not see that as important. The rest of the world thinks it is important. Labor thinks clean coal technology is important. Coal is our biggest export. Coal is one of the things that drives our economy and we are not doing anything about it. We are not innovating in coal. Other
countries are innovating in coal because they can see the future. The future is tomorrow—and it is real; it is about productivity. Even France, where there is a 35-hour working week that they actually stick to, are more productive than we are. We work more than them. Why aren’t we doing something about the productivity of this nation and our ability to compete? We can compete in manufacturing. We can compete in coal. We can do more than just dig things out of the ground.

I commend this bill for the technical changes it makes but I give a very bad, negative mark to the government because they do nothing about tying together these three very important institutions or funding them in a real, significant way.

Mr FARMER (Macarthur—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training) (12.07 pm)—I rise to conclude the debate on the Governance Review Implementation (Science Research Agencies) Bill 2007. I thank the members for Ballarat and Oxley for speaking in the second reading debate and for their support of the Howard government’s introduction of the bill. I would also like to make special mention of the member for Bass and his very learned contribution to this bill. I know the people of Tasmania appreciate his support for this bill and the work he does in this place.

The bill makes relatively minor amendments to the Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Act 1987 and the Science and Industry Research Act 1949. The amendments implement changes to the governance arrangements of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, better known as AIMS; the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, known to all of us as ANSTO; and the Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation, which is the CSIRO. The bill is part of a broader exercise within the Australian government to improve transparency and consistency in relation to governance arrangements for statutory authorities and office holders, further to the government’s endorsement of the recommendations of the Review of the corporate governance of statutory authorities and office holders, better known to all of us here and to the wider sector as the Uhrig review.

AIMS, ANSTO and CSIRO were assessed in detail against the recommendations of the Uhrig review. The assessments indicated that the agencies’ current governance was largely consistent with the Uhrig board template. The government concluded that the governance of each agency should continue in accordance with that template but determined that a number of minor changes would enhance the government’s arrangements for these agencies and better align them with the board template.

The most significant amendments include removing the requirement for ministerial approval of contracts above a prescribed value for each of the agencies. This is consistent with the Uhrig review’s recommendation that the boards should have a wide power to act. Accountability will be maintained by requiring each agency—as in the Minister for Education, Science and Training’s statement of expectations—to notify the minister in advance of the agency entering into significant contracts. This is also consistent with the provisions of section 15 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997. The Uhrig review recommended that a board should have wide power to act. This includes the powers to appoint and terminate the appointment of the CEO and to monitor and assess his or her performance. Accordingly, the bill includes amendments that will enable the AIMS council and the CSIRO board to appoint or terminate the
appointment of their CEO. The ANSTO board already has this power. The bill also contains amendments that will provide the AIMS council and the ANSTO and CSIRO boards with additional discretion to terminate the appointment of their CEO if satisfied that his or her performance has been unsatisfactory for a significant period.

A position of deputy chairperson for CSIRO will be created. This is in recognition of the responsibilities and the workload of the chairperson of the CSIRO board. It is consistent with the arrangements that already apply to ANSTO and to many other large statutory bodies. The remuneration for the deputy chairperson will be set by the Remuneration Tribunal. The cost will be met out of the CSIRO’s existing budget and therefore will have no financial impact. Membership of the board of ANSTO will also be set at between six and nine members. This increase in the size of the board will enable a wide range of expertise to be brought to bear on corporate governance of ANSTO and is commensurate with the extent of technical complexity of its operations.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that the changes to the agencies’ governance arrangements do not reduce their accountability. While the amendments provide greater freedom for the agencies’ governing boards or councils to act, as recommended by the Uhrig report, there are still requirements for each agency in the enabling legislation and in the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 which ensure an appropriate level of accountability. In addition, the statement of expectation for each agency will require the agency to keep the minister fully informed of significant events and to consult with her on significant matters.

The amendments reflect the recommendations of the Uhrig review and align each agency’s governance arrangements with current best practice. This will ensure that the administration of the recently announced government funding for AIMS, ANSTO and CSIRO for the next quadrennium, their largest research budgets ever, will be efficient, effective and accountable.

I commend the Governance Review Implementation (Science Research Agencies) Bill 2007 to the House.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr FARMER (Macarthur—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training) (12.14 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT (DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING ACCREDITATION) BILL 2007

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 March, on motion by Mr Abbott:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand) (12.14 pm)—I rise today to speak on the Health Insurance Amendment (Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation) Bill 2007. This bill proposes to amend the Health Insurance Act to create an overarching framework for the establishment and operation of accreditation schemes for diagnostic imaging services. It is a very important bill, obviously, because it regulates such an important division of our health sector. Diagnostic imaging includes a range of diagnostic medical services, including ultrasounds, computer tomography, nuclear medicine, radiography, magnetic resonance imaging, positron emission tomography and bone densitometry.
The Australian government provides Medicare rebates for a number of diagnostic imaging services listed in the Diagnostic Imaging Services Table and a legislative framework is made up of the Health Insurance Act, which is being amended by this bill, the Health Insurance Regulations and the Health Insurance (Diagnostic Imaging Services Table) Regulations. Management of diagnostic imaging services under Medicare is undertaken cooperatively between the government, represented by the Department of Health and Ageing, and sector representatives, represented by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists and the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, through the radiology memorandum of understanding.

The radiology MOU is one of four collaborative agreements between the government and diagnostic imaging representative organisations made as part of the 2003-04 budget process for managing Medicare funded diagnostic imaging services. There are additional MOUs for cardiac imaging, nuclear medicine imaging and obstetric and gynaecological ultrasound. The radiology MOU is the largest of the diagnostic imaging MOUs and accounts for around 80 per cent of all the diagnostic imaging services under Medicare.

By way of background, for those who might be listening to this debate and who might not be aware of the extent of coverage of the issues we are debating today, approximately 12.6 million services were claimed under the radiology MOU in 2005-06, accounting for more than $1.3 billion in Medicare benefits for the services covered by the MOU. The point I am making is that this is not an insignificant part of the health sector; it accounts for around 10 per cent of the total Medicare budget. That is why it is so important that we ensure not only the quality of diagnostic imaging services provided to the millions of patients but also that the investment of Australian taxpayers in Medicare is well protected.

We also do not want to find ourselves in a repeat performance of late last year when the Minister for Health and Ageing was forced to provide $32.7 million in additional funding to Medicare for diagnostic imaging services because of a massive blow-out arising from changes in government policy. The blame for this blow-out lies fairly and squarely at the feet of Minister Abbott, who himself conceded that the original level of funding allocated by the government was not going to be adequate. Unfortunately, it is an all too familiar scenario for us with this minister, who is far more interested in short-term political fixes and abuse across the chamber than he is in long-term planning for Australia’s health system.

As I said earlier, the bill seeks to create an overarching framework within the Health Insurance Act for the establishment and operation of accreditation schemes for diagnostic imaging services as agreed by the government and the representatives of the sector as part of the negotiations for the current MOU. Under the scheme being implemented through this bill, all diagnostic imaging practices providing services under the MOU will need to be accredited by an approved accreditation provider in order for Medicare benefits to be payable for the services they provide. Obviously this is important for us, and we see it increasingly rolled out in the health sector that accreditation processes are the one way of ensuring that patients get quality services and ensuring that Medicare is being paid appropriately to those providers who are meeting set standards.

By allowing the minister to establish the rules and the operational details of the accreditation scheme through a legislative instrument, the bill has been designed to en-
able the introduction of accreditation schemes for other diagnostic imaging services in the future without further need to amend the act. Labor supports the legislation. We are disappointed that there is scant detail available as to how this accreditation process will actually work in practice, but we support the intention and the need to establish such a process.

We recognise that accreditation schemes are widely utilised within the health sector as a method for reviewing and improving systems of care and ensuring that consumers receive quality services irrespective of who provides the services or the facilities in which they are provided. Labor also knows how important it is to get the most out of the scarce health dollar. We support measures which will result, hopefully, in efficiencies under Medicare and in the health system more broadly.

Given that diagnostic imaging services account for such a chunk of Medicare benefits, we recognise that it is in the interests of the efficient working of Medicare and the broader health system that services are provided within a framework for continuous improvement in the delivery of safe and high-quality care. Just as past Labor governments built Medicare, we believe that we should retain, defend and strengthen it, and an accreditation system for providers of diagnostic imaging services will help to protect Medicare, which is the cornerstone of our health system.

I turn now to the provisions of the bill. The most significant changes are effected by items 5 and 11 of schedule 1. Item 5 inserts a new section 16EA to the Health Insurance Act 1973, which precludes the payment of Medicare benefits for diagnostic imaging services unless the procedures are carried out at premises that are accredited under a diagnostic imaging accreditation scheme to undertake the particular type of diagnostic imaging procedure. Where the images are captured off site—for example, by mobile services—they must be captured on equipment that is ordinarily located at a base for mobile diagnostic imaging equipment or diagnostic imaging premises accredited to undertake that procedure. So, obviously, the purpose is to make sure that using Medicare as the payment mechanism is actually the incentive. I would not say it is the ‘stick’, when you talk about carrots and sticks, but it is the way to ensure that all the providers will participate in this accreditation scheme.

Item 11 inserts a new division into part IIB of the act, which sets out the framework for the establishment and operation of diagnostic imaging accreditation schemes. New section 23DZZIAA allows the minister to establish, via legislative instruments, the accreditation schemes and to approve persons who will be accreditors—able to accredit practices for the purposes of the scheme. Under the section, the legislative instrument can specify the conditions for accreditation and provide for any matters needed to create and administer the scheme. If the legislative instrument establishing a scheme confers a power or function on the minister in administering the scheme, the minister will be allowed to delegate those powers or functions to an officer as already defined in section 131 of the act, to the department, to a person performing the duties within the department, to the CEO of Medicare Australia or to an employee of Medicare Australia.

That accreditation status of accredited practices for Medicare benefits will be recorded on the diagnostic imaging register or the location specific practice number—commonly known as LSPN—register. The type of information that will be recorded will be prescribed by the regulations when the regulations for the scheme are made. Obviously, again, the purpose of the accreditation
process is for governments to be able to play a role in ensuring that appropriate standards are met, but making this information available will also be of use to consumers and other health providers.

The bill requires that the regulation should include full and proper review mechanisms for reconsideration of any accreditation decision. I note that the new section 23DZZIAD sets out the reconsideration mechanism by the minister of accreditation decisions. This applies where an accreditation provider does not grant accreditation to a service, will not renew the accreditation, or revokes or varies accreditation such that there would be a reduction of Medicare benefits entitlements. According to the explanatory memorandum, the minister’s decision following a reconsideration of that accreditation decision will not be reviewable by the Administrative Appeal Tribunal ‘because the minister’s decision is a review of a decision of an approved accreditation provider, which itself will be required to have a full and proper review mechanism in place’. We will, of course, be keeping our eye on the process that is established in the regulations to make sure that adequate and appropriate review processes are in place. Obviously the decisions to provide accreditation or not will be very serious ones for the industry. It is a little frustrating to deal with overarching legislation that is giving power to the regulatory process when we have not seen the regulations. We are asked to understand that the things that will go in the legislation will be okay because there will be other guarantees in the regulations which we have not seen. Obviously we will keep our eye on it to ensure that the government does live up to the commitment that it has made.

Importantly, the new section 23DZZIAE makes it clear that the proprietor of an unaccredited premises or base must notify their patients that Medicare benefits are not payable before the patient undertakes any diagnostic imaging procedure. The proprietor must also advise the patient that the reason no Medicare benefits are payable is that the premises are not accredited for the procedure that the patient is having. The offence for unaccredited sites is a strict liability offence, carrying a fine of 10 penalty units for an individual and 30 penalty units, being $3,300, for a corporation. Obviously these are very important things. It is very important that the consumers are told beforehand. They might otherwise be expecting or understanding that there is a Medicare benefit payable to them when that will not in fact be the case. We have in this place also just debated a related bill changing the offences regarding inappropriate practices relating to requesters and providers of radiology services. These will no doubt tie in with those so that the two, when looked at together, will ensure that high-quality standards and the cutting out of any inappropriate practices can go hand in hand.

New section 23DZZIAF provides that, where the proprietor failed to provide that notification of the accreditation status that no Medicare benefit was payable to a patient, the amount of the Medicare benefit paid to a patient in respect of that service is recoverable from the proprietor of the diagnostic imaging premises. This debt will be in addition to any fine that can be imposed on the proprietor and is obviously aiming to ensure that there is a clear disincentive to this approach. Not only should the consumer be protected but the government also should be protected in being able to reclaim this money if it has been inappropriately claimed. These are the substantial changes proposed by this bill. The introduction of an accreditation scheme via legislative instrument for radiologists is clearly aimed at improving standards within the sector and making proprietors liable if correct procedures are not followed. These are worthy objectives. Obvi-
ously these accountability measures will also enhance the service experienced by consumers as well.

Subject to the passage of the legislation, the government has indicated the commencement date for the proposed scheme to be 1 July 2008. This will presumably coincide with the commencement of the new memorandum of understanding between the Commonwealth and the diagnostic imaging sector, as the current MOU runs out on 30 June 2008. Among the current MOU principles and objectives are those to promote access to quality, affordable radiology services and to improve the quality and delivery of radiology services—very worthy objectives that we support. Labor considers that these objectives would be even better served by a greater investment and emphasis in e-health broadly and in teleradiology in particular.

In March this year my colleague Senator Conroy announced Labor’s broadband policy, an area where the government has buried its head in the sand and continues to do so. As announced in March, federal Labor will revolutionise Australia’s internet infrastructure by creating a new national broadband network that will connect 98 per cent of Australians to high-speed broadband internet services at speeds over 40 times faster than most current speeds. ‘Why is this relevant here?’ you might ask, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Hardgrave—If he doesn’t, I will.

Ms Roxon—If the member would like to listen, he will understand why it is so important. Broadband offers enormous opportunities for e-health, enhancing the potential for a range of cost savings and service improvements for Australian citizens. E-health particularly has the potential to significantly improve access to health care services to Australians living in rural and regional areas, as well as to those Australians who find it difficult to leave their homes, such as the elderly and the disabled. It also offers ways to more flexibly and conveniently utilise our stretched health workforce. It surprises me, Mr Deputy Speaker, that a member from Queensland would be so dubious about the connections that there might be in this area.

Mr Hardgrave—He has more knowledge than you about what is actually going on.

Ms Roxon—Although he does represent an urban seat, I know he has been involved in Queensland for long enough to know that the access to many of those who do not live in the city to these sorts of services could be greatly enhanced if people were able to consult with specialists—if they were able to have a mammogram taken in Longreach that might need to be sent down the system—

Mr Hardgrave—It is already happening.

Ms Roxon—It does not happen in very many places yet, and that is the issue. If you would let me finish my speech, you would understand the point that is being made.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Wilkie)—Order! I remind the member for Gellibrand that she should be referring to members by their electorate. I also remind the member for Moreton that he should not be interjecting. He will have an opportunity to speak shortly.

Ms Roxon—Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for that reminder. It is very important, because the point I am making is that the ability to maximise the use of this technology cannot be achieved when there is not actually high-speed broadband. In some parts of the country, there are hospitals, for example, that can talk to each other because they have those connections between the hospitals. In Tasmania, for example, they do have a good system, but they do not necessarily have it connecting adequately to the rest of the country, so that the place to where they
want to send some material does not have the speed to make the transmission effective.

We know that teleradiology—that is, electronically transmitting radiographic patient images and consultative text from one location to another—is already being utilised in Australia, but enhanced broadband technology provides the key to significantly expanding these services. Given we know that there is a national shortage of radiologists—another area given insufficient attention by this minister—expanding the use of teleradiology could also be the focus of the next radiology MOU.

When we are seeing reports such as the one that appeared in the Hobart Mercury on 29 March 2007 that Tasmanian women are waiting weeks for the results of breast screening mammograms that are being sent to New South Wales to be read, we can see the advantages of technology that would allow digital images to be transmitted and viewed instantaneously between surgeries and clinics and between hospitals—or, in this case, between specialists in different states.

As I said, the proposed start date for the accreditation scheme is 1 July 2008, so this gives plenty of time for these sorts of issues to be explored properly for the new MOU and for it to tie in with the accreditation scheme. The introduction date of the accreditation scheme was postponed from 1 September 2007 after concerns were expressed by stakeholders.

We retain concerns that the proposed scheme will not be ready to commence in July next year. The government has failed to provide sufficient detail about how this scheme will operate. Obviously, if it acts very fast, there may still be time, and we hope there will be. But this bill does not provide the operational details of the proposed scheme, such as the standards to be used, the names of the approved accreditors, the accreditation process and the period of accreditation. Rather, it simply allows, as I have already highlighted, the minister to establish through the regulations the rules and operational details of the scheme.

While we recognise sector support for the introduction of the scheme, we note that representatives of the diagnostic imaging sector have also previously raised concerns relating to these operational details, and we share those concerns that the full policy implications are yet to be announced and are not apparent from this bill.

We are also critical that the full costings for the introduction of the accreditation scheme are yet to be determined. According to the explanatory memorandum to the bill, the introduction of the accreditation scheme will require enhancements to Medicare Australia’s processing systems. The costs have yet to be quantified but are estimated to be around $1.2 million, based on previous similar policies.

According to the explanatory memorandum, these full costings will be provided when the subordinate legislation is developed. It is expected that these costs will be funded from existing budgetary measures for the provision of diagnostic imaging services, but we will have to wait until the government provides us with this information. Unfortunately, this is typical of the lack of detail and slightly shabby approach that we are seeing on health. We hope that the government will allocate the requisite resources to get this accreditation process sorted out and off the ground in time for the 1 July deadline next year. We look forward to receiving more detail in due course. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Before I call the honourable member for Moreton, I remind members who are present that they need to make sure their mobile phones are
turned off or on silent before they enter the chamber.

Mr HARDGRAVE (Moreton) (12.33 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker, being a heretic about these matters, my mobile phone is switched off and in my office, but thank you for the general advice. They are ergonomically designed to mark the low-water mark on the beach, as far as I am concerned. Nevertheless, apparently they are a tool of the trade these days.

I am delighted to support the best friend that Medicare has ever had—the Howard government—and its efforts to continue the revolution of our health services in Australia. I apologise to the member for Gellibrand for being so bold and enthusiastic as to try and prompt her, because a lot of what she has just had ambitions about is actually happening, and particularly in the good state of Queensland. I have been to Greenslopes Private Hospital, and I recommend that she does the same. It is now no longer in my electorate of Moreton; it is in the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition. On the occasions when he actually visits his electorate, he should go to Greenslopes and take the member for Gellibrand with him. They will find that the Greenslopes Private Hospital is doing all of these sorts of things. In fact, it is even doing operations online, helping GPs in far-flung parts of Queensland with technical advice when the need arises. So it is absolutely true that a lot of that is going on.

The only point I would make to members opposite is that they should not listen just to Telstra when they want to talk about broadband. Telstra is banging on about stealing from the Future Fund, and the Labor Party want to go along for the ride and steal from my children’s and grandchildren’s potential tax take, to try to pay for things today. I simply say to the member for Gellibrand: well done and thank you, but you just have to understand that Telstra is not the only provider of telecommunications. Embarrassingly for the Labor Party, in Queensland the state government have their own internet broadband system which they have installed because of Queensland’s regionalisation and enormous diversity. So universities, hospitals and so forth are linked through the Queensland government system. But if you talk only to Telstra, you will not hear any of that.

Let us talk about the Health Insurance Amendment (Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation) Bill 2007. It is one of the key, quality areas of our health sector. The bill seeks to ensure the accreditation of these practices and to ensure that the consumers of these services are able to be certain of the professional standards which, in the main, are delivered. Radiologists and other people involved in this sector, because of their own professional and organisational ethics, have to deliver quality services to their patients, and they have to deliver to the caregivers the sort of advice which can come from a variety of diagnostic imaging services. I refer to MRIs all the way through to a variety of dental and other services such as computed tomography, mammography, the interventional radiology services and general X-ray and ultrasound.

These are the things that are covered by this bill. They include the sorts of practices that need to be registered under this accreditation: private specialists; radiologists; nuclear imaging or radiation oncology practices; specialist radiology, nuclear imaging or radiology oncology departments or other departments in private and public hospitals; medical practices such as sports medicine clinics; cardiology practices; vascular practices and laboratories; orthopaedic or urology practices; general practices; and chiropractic and dental practices. These practices will be asked to sign up to this accreditation to provide the sort of consumer certainty that we
want and in order to be eligible for Medicare benefits.

In the budget this week the government expanded the range of Medicare benefits available in dealing with things such as dental health. To ensure that people who have been unable to get dental services can now get those services, the government is now providing, in round figures, up to $2,000 of assistance through Medicare. That in itself is a testament to the fact that the state health systems, in particular dental health systems, have been spectacular failures. The Queensland system has been brought up a few times. The great number of people who have come to me over the years and said, ‘I have been waiting in a queue for five or seven years for my teeth to be fixed through the dental services of the PA Hospital or the QE2 Hospital,’ are of course very dismayed by the way in which the Queensland government talks a lot about dental health but does not deliver on it. Yet again we have the Australian government coming to the rescue—although we will be keeping the pressure on the state authorities to maintain their role—and through Medicare providing the means to look after those with chronic health problems as a result of failing to have their dental problems fixed.

Part and parcel of that are the services that are going to be provided by radiologists in the dental sector. That sort of program in dental services, an additional $377.6 million over four years, will assist 200,000 people around Australia, and it is absolutely important, as they go to their GPs or their dentists, that the advice they get based on the particular imaging that is required is absolutely correct. That is why this bill, as the opposition have conceded, contains a great set of measures, a quality set of measures—measures that will ensure that patients receive safe, quality radiology services. That Medicare funded services will meet industry standards and consumer expectations is further proof of the way in which this government continues its role of strengthening Medicare.

We know that state and territory government legislation regulates the licensing of X-rays and other radiation equipment in a way similar to the way in which they register medical practitioners and other health professionals. The accreditation standards being introduced in this bill will require practices to comply with existing state and territory registration and licensing laws and provide evidence of compliance to the accreditation provider. It will be in the form of current registration certificates and licences. I know that the vast majority of practices and the vast majority of health-care professionals in the system are already providing those safe, quality radiology services, but some may need to review and possibly update aspects of their service delivery to ensure compliance. We do not expect that anybody is going to need radical changes in their practices.

I am very confident as I look at the list of professional organisations that have said that the government’s bill has it right and that they have no objections to its structure, and the various signatories to diagnostic imaging memorandums of understanding which have been consulted proves this point. If MOUs have been signed by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists, the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand, the Australian and New Zealand Association of Physicians in Nuclear Medicine and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and they all agree that this is a sensible set of measures providing consumer assurance, professional standards and enhancement of the reputation of the sector then there is every reason why we should afford this bill a speedy passage.
The bill amends the Health Insurance Act 1973, which governs the payment of Medicare benefits. The legislation establishes a head of power and framework to enable the introduction of this scheme. It will allow the Minister for Health and Ageing to establish the scheme and approve accreditation providers by legislative instrument. The instrument will deal with some of the operative details of the scheme, including the standards and processing details. The member for Gellibrand, on behalf of the opposition, wants to see all of those now. That detail will be presented to the parliament at an appropriate time, as it should be, once the details of the scheme are fully developed. It is being done in a consultative way, not in a central planning, politburo way, as those opposite seem to yearn for and would probably impose if they were ever elected to government. It is a matter of working with professional bodies, recognising that these professional bodies have a capacity and are delivering on that capacity, that they have a responsibility and equally that they have a right to participate in the development of this process.

The government has further strengthened Medicare in the last couple of days with announcements in the budget, and after-hours GP services will improve with the $71.8 million funding increase for Medicare rebates. Many of those services rely on radiology to be available in a number of creative ways. It is not just about being a mouse click away; it is about those services being available literally 24/7. When I look at the way in which, in my electorate, the Health for All people at Acacia Ridge are operating their services and Dr Shabbir Hussein and his family are operating clinics in places like Underwood and Kuraby, I see we are getting more out of our GP services in the southern suburbs of Brisbane than ever before. It is further proof that there is a lot of confidence in the medical system when private individuals, doctors and their associates are willing to invest in themselves and expand their commitment not simply to operating between nine and five but to being there seven days a week and, in many cases, literally from before breakfast to midnight with an ambition to operate 24 hours a day. Services such as radiology must follow the pathway.

There is also no doubt that we need more radiologists, and the signals being sent by this legislation will continue to endorse the professionalism that is already stamped there and will show that radiology and the practice of radiology will be well supported by the government as a result of taxpayers’ money being deployed in this way.

A decade ago MRI was new technology. A decade ago MRIs were things that you used to have to struggle to get to. I had a lot of arguments about MRIs a decade ago with one of Minister Abbott’s senior advisers, Terry Barnes, in the days of Dr Wooldridge—I do not want to embarrass him—and Dr Wooldridge recognised MRI as a way forward and as a sensible piece of technology that would be assisted by government under Medicare. That has been further enhanced this week with three new Medicare eligible MRI units. The fact we have now gone from just a handful of MRI units to 115 units around the country means people are going to be able to access a variety of these diagnostic imaging services in a variety of different places—far more places than ever before.

This bill ensures that during that amazing enhancement—this massive additional rollout, this urging of the sector to roll it out even further and seek private capital to invest in themselves to provide more services to people—the enthusiastic response is underpinned by credibility, quality and professionalism, things which people in this sector
automatically aspire to and easily relate to. The matters contained within this diagnostic imaging accreditation bill will ensure that consumers can be very confident not only that the government is going to back them through Medicare but also that the quality of the services they receive will be most profound. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms HALL (Shortland) (12.47 pm)—I will commence my contribution to this debate on the Health Insurance Amendment (Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation) Bill 2007 by concentrating on a couple of the issues that have been raised by the previous speaker, the member for Moreton. He spoke at some length about dental services and the government delivering dental services to people in this budget. I will share with this House the issues around dental services that are very strong within my electorate.

Whilst the government may believe that it has delivered on dental services in this year’s budget, I was extremely disappointed with the announcement on dental services. This government has failed to recognise and meet its obligations to dental services. We have lengthy waiting lists for dental services within the public system. As a former state member, I can say that those waiting lists developed when this government, the Howard government, removed the Commonwealth dental health scheme. It was like turning off the light—one day people could go and get the treatment that they desperately needed and the next day they were denied that treatment. The initiative in the budget of course is welcome, but it is only an extension of a scheme that is not working at the moment. It is a scheme that requires a person to have a chronic condition before they can access dental health services under Medicare. I do not believe that is good enough. That will not help the people that I represent in this parliament.

Another issue that the previous speaker raised was the need for more radiologists. We definitely need more radiologists, but in the electorate of Shortland, which is the electorate I represent in this parliament, we need more doctors. In the suburbs of Belmont and Swansea all the doctors have closed their books and people cannot access a doctor when they need to. The government has failed the people that I represent in this parliament. I get letter after letter from ministers who respond by passing the buck, doing nothing, and failing to recognise the needs of people in the area that I represent.

That is another area that I was particularly disappointed about in the budget. Nothing that this government announced in the budget is going to help the people that I represent in the electorate of Shortland in this parliament to deal with the doctor shortage. The crisis in dental health and the crisis of the shortage of doctors was borne out in a survey that I have just conducted electorate-wide. Overwhelmingly, they were the two issues that were highlighted. The member for Moreton may have been extremely pleased with the government’s commitment in the area of dental services, but it did not work for the people of Shortland.

The member for Moreton varied quite substantially from the legislation before us, and I have taken the same liberty. Thank you for allowing me to do that, Mr Deputy Speaker. The bill proposes to amend the Health Insurance Act to establish an overarching framework for the operation of an accreditation scheme for diagnostic imaging services. Accreditation should happen—it is widely supported by us on this side of the House—but I am quite critical, as is the shadow minister, of the lack of thorough preparation of this scheme and of reliable costings in the legislation. It is quite worrying that there has not been a full investigation and a complete analysis done on this
legislation, but we on this side of the House have come to expect that. I sometimes think the government is a little lazy in its approach. It is important that we are aware of these issues when we debate legislation and, unfortunately, an analysis was not included in this legislation.

The government and representatives from the diagnostic imaging sector have agreed to the introduction of an accreditation scheme. In 2003, there were negotiations for a radiology MOU. Accreditation schemes have proved to be a sound method of reviewing and improving systems of care throughout the health sector. Madam Deputy Speaker Bishop, when you were the minister for aged care you oversaw accreditation in the aged-care sector. It was a very good example of the accreditation process and has been of great benefit to the aged-care sector. Indeed, it has gone a long way to ensuring the quality of aged-care services within residential settings.

I hope this legislation will do the same thing for the diagnostic imaging sector. The legislation does not provide operational details—for example, the standards to be used, the names of approved accreditors, the accreditation process and the period of accreditation. Instead it allows the minister to establish the rules and operational details of the scheme through legislative instruments. That makes me a little nervous; I like to know the details of the process. The representatives of the diagnostic imaging sector have also raised some concerns. They would like to have a little more knowledge of the operational details of the scheme, and I understand that they are still considering this aspect of the legislation.

I would also be much happier if full costings had been included with this legislation. The accreditation will require enhancement of Medicare Australia’s processing systems. These costs are estimated at $1.2 million, based on previous similar announcements. The full costings will be announced in the subordinate legislation, which is yet to be developed, and the scheme is to commence in July 2008.

Diagnostic imaging plays a very important role in our health system. It includes a wide range of diagnostic medical services, including ultrasound, CT scans, nuclear medicine, radiography, X-rays, MRIs and PET scans. The previous speaker, the member for Moreton, spent some time talking about the expansion of MRIs within the Australian community. I am a little disappointed that the budget did not provide for a PET scanner at the Mater Hospital in Newcastle, but so be it—it is at the whim of the government but to the detriment of the people of the Hunter.

The government provides Medicare rebates for a number of diagnostic imaging services listed in the diagnostic imaging service table that is attached to the legislation. Diagnostic imaging services under Medicare are undertaken cooperatively between the government, through the Department of Health and Ageing, and sector representatives, through the college. The MOU is one of four collaborative agreements between the government and diagnostic imaging representative organisations. The MOU was part of the 2003-04 budget process for managing Medicare funded diagnostic imaging services. Additional MOUs for cardiac imaging, nuclear medicine imaging and obstetric and gynaecological ultrasounds are also in place. The radiology MOU accounts for about 80 per cent of all diagnostic imaging services. The explanatory memorandum, which I will refer to more in a moment, indicates that in 2005-06 approximately 12.6 million services were claimed and the government provided more than $1.3 billion in Medicare benefits for services covered by the MOU.
It is appropriate to visit the accreditation process and to consider what accreditation delivers to the healthcare industry, to government and to consumers as a whole. The memorandum of understanding attached to this legislation recognises that accreditation is a vital tool within the industry for reviewing and improving the system and ensuring that we have safe, high-quality health services. This is what accreditation provided to the aged-care industry. As set out in the memorandum of understanding, it is a means of ensuring minimum standards of practice in operations. It is a benchmark for maintaining competency and, over time, it provides feedback on the overall enhancement of quality in a professional discipline. This is extremely important to a person who is undertaking some sort of diagnostic imaging investigation. You need to be sure that the minimum standards are in place and that there is a competency benchmark. It is very important because if standards are not in place there can be enormous health implications for the person undergoing the investigation.

Whilst we can be fairly certain that appropriate practices are in place currently, we cannot be absolutely certain. What we need to do and what this legislation will do is ensure that all staff in radiology practices will be appropriately qualified. I am certain that any Australian who was about to have some sort of health service would like to know that that was the case. The legislation will also ensure the effective management of resources, that proper systems are in place, that there are multi-disciplinary teams and that the health outcomes are the right ones because there is quality of service. People will know that, in every practice providing diagnostic imaging services, each person working there will be qualified—they will have the expertise—and that the service is being delivered in a safe environment. It is an area in which technological advances are constantly being made, and we need to make sure that the industry keeps up with those advances.

There is currently—and I think this is an important point—no regulatory mechanism to ensure that all elements involved in the delivery of diagnostic imaging services work together. This is a problem for the people of Australia who are relying on those services. There is no guarantee for the patient that optimal radiology services are being provided. Accreditation provides assurance that the amount of money that the government invests—and it is a large amount of money—in the provision of diagnostic radiology is being well spent and that we are getting the appropriate outcomes.

It is also important to note the kinds of people who use diagnostic imaging. Radiology services are provided by a diverse range of provider groups. There are specialist radiologists, vascular surgeons, cardiologists, general practitioners, obstetricians, gynaecologists, sports physicians and dentists. Also, their services can be provided in a wide range of settings. They can be provided in a consulting room of a one-man practice, in a large practice where there is a level of expertise with practitioners specialising in diagnostic radiology, or in a hospital. We need to be sure that there is consistency across the services provided. Hopefully, this legislation will deliver that consistency. Currently there is a potential for inconsistency in the delivery of the service, and there is a variation in the qualifications and experiences of practitioners, the standards of supervisors, the equipment used, the practice protocols and the administrative procedures—and they can all lead to inconsistency. That is why accreditation is so good. It establishes common standards and benchmarks that everyone delivering those services must meet.
I see this legislation as vitally important. My concerns surrounding the legislation, as I said at the commencement of my contribution to the debate, go to its lack of detail. There should be a little more consultation. There is also the issue of transparency. One of the most important elements in any legislation is transparency, and along with transparency comes accountability. The inclusion of these elements in legislation will deliver the best form of accreditation that can be put in place.

I support the legislation. I have my concerns about transparency and the lack of detail on costing but, given the overall picture of the legislation, those concerns are secondary to the need for a system of accreditation that will ensure the integrity of diagnostic imaging.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (1.13 pm)—In speaking on the Health Insurance Amendment (Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation) Bill 2007, I take the opportunity, firstly, to address the bill directly and, secondly, to raise some local issues in my electorate about the provision of MRI services.

This bill before the House appears to be quite timely. I am aware that, in recent times, there was controversy in the Sydney media about an MRI service provider using their facility after hours to conduct scans on animals for veterinarian services. I certainly hope that they were not being bulk-billed or charged under Medicare for those services! There are issues around the standards that would create concern if a machine were being used for both people and animals. I think this bill addresses the debate that occurred as a result of that controversy and the need to ensure that we have an accreditation system that, I would suspect, makes such a situation impossible to occur.

Labor supports the bill before the House today. The bill proposes to amend the Health Insurance Act 1973 to create an overarching framework for the establishment and operation of accreditation schemes for diagnostic imaging services. I understand that the proposed accreditation scheme was agreed to by the government and representatives of the diagnostic imaging sector as part of the negotiations for the radiology memorandum of understanding in 2003.

Diagnostic imaging, it is important to note, includes a range of medical services, including: ultrasound; computerised tomography—which we know generally as CT scans; nuclear medicine; radiography, or X-rays; magnetic resonance imaging, MRI scans, which I have referred to; positron emission tomography, or PET scans; and bone densitometry. With an ageing population, that last one is also a very important one. The Australian government provides Medicare rebates for a number of diagnostic imaging services, and the managing of the Medicare provision is undertaken through the radiology MOU. We should acknowledge that there were approximately 12.6 million services provided under this MOU in 2005-06, accounting for more than $1.3 billion per annum in Medicare benefits for services across approximately 3,100 practice sites. The very size of the government provision of service here is important to acknowledge, because it is part of the driving need for an accreditation process to be in place. This is certainly a field of medicine that is expanding at a rapid rate as technology develops. There is absolutely no doubt that it is timely that we address the issue of accreditation.

As part of the negotiations for the radiology MOU the government and the diagnostic imaging sector have agreed to an accreditation scheme for radiology practices. This will be a process of externally reviewing an organisation’s performance against a defined set of standards. This is important because radiology services are increasingly being
provided by a wide range of providers, including specialist radiologists, vascular surgeons, cardiologists, general practitioners, obstetricians and gynaecologists, and sport physicians. These providers operate in a variety of settings, including hospitals, single practitioner premises and multi-site corporate practices, and often in conjunction with surgical procedures. Clearly, in such a diverse industry there is a potential for inconsistency in the delivery of the services. When the government is actually deciding to allocate funding capacity to services it is important that we ensure that they are the best available.

This bill creates a scheme under which all diagnostic imaging practices providing services under the MOU will need to be accredited by an approved accreditation provider in order for Medicare benefits to be payable for such services. The bill allows the minister to establish, through a legislative instrument, the rules and operational details of the accreditation scheme. This would include the standards, the approved accreditors and the process and period of accreditation.

Whilst Labor supports the bill, we are critical of the fact that, as the previous speaker outlined, so much of the detail is not contained within the bill but is left to the minister. For example, the bill does not provide operational details of the proposed scheme, and Labor shares the concerns of the representatives of the diagnostic imaging sector about this. Whilst the proposal of the scheme as it is presented in principle in this bill appears a good and useful development, it is also true that the detailed implementation and operation of the scheme will, in the final analysis, determine the value or detriment of the scheme.

In August 2006 the Department of Health and Ageing organised a number of consultations with sector stakeholders. The problem with fully endorsing the scheme was also raised during these meetings. They listed the things that they were concerned about, including: the cost of accreditation to practice sites and the resulting impact on businesses and healthcare consumers—a polite way of saying increased costs and the potential for those to flow through to consumers, which I think would be a significant concern; the ambitious implementation timetable and the need for accreditation providers and practice sites to be well informed about assessment requirements, including the radiology accreditation standards, well in advance of 1 September 2007—and I note the implementation is now looking at July 2008; the need for the new accreditation scheme to accommodate the diversity of business structures, particularly where components of the service are undertaken by different practices such that, if the problem with quality is in one part, the whole stream of service delivery is not affected; the need for the complaints handling mechanism to distinguish between frivolous and legitimate complaints and for the investigation of complaints by accreditation providers to be limited to matters related to compliance with accreditation standards; and the importance of involving all provider groups in the development of the radiology accreditation standards to ensure their relevance and currency in both the immediate and the longer term. None of those concerns are surprising. They are the types of issues that providers would generally raise with any accreditation process. They would be familiar to us from a whole range of different accreditation schemes.

However, I think it is particularly important to note the cost issue, because many people are paying gap payments—for example, for diagnostic imaging services. To see an increase in those costs could be very problematic. And the practices themselves having to comply can be a force for driving
greater concentration of services rather than diversity of provision. In many markets in our communities, particularly in rural and regional areas, that can end up in a monopoly, where people have very little choice but to be accessing the only service available. So the devil could obviously be in the detail and, whilst supporting this bill, I think it is important to acknowledge that the success or failure of the scheme proposed in the bill will rest significantly on the unrevealed details.

I would like to also take the opportunity in this debate on the provision of diagnostic imaging services to highlight a problem in my own electorate. Since mid-2002 I have been campaigning for the allocation of a Medicare MRI licence to the Wollongong Hospital. Over the five years of this campaign more than 18,000 local people have signed petitions to the minister requesting the allocation of this licence to our local public hospital. In Tuesday’s budget I note that there was funding for the allocation of three new MRI licences. Along with my community I am again calling on the minister to allocate one of these three new licences to the Wollongong public hospital. In November 2004 the state Labor government announced that it would provide a MRI machine at Wollongong Hospital. In the same month I wrote to the federal minister for health again urging the federal government to allocate a Medicare licence to the hospital so that the many outpatients who attend Wollongong to visit the wide range of specialists who are located there can access a bulk-billed service. In March 2005 I launched a petition with local community activists calling on the government to provide the licence. We hoped to show the minister and the government the importance of this service to local people. Just six months later, on 12 September, I provided the completed petition to the minister at his Canberra office.

There were 16,357 signatures on that petition.

In the grievance debate on that day I gave two examples of local people who required the service and who had made contact with me in support of the petition. One was a young man called Chris, who needed a scan every 18 months and was having to travel to the Sydney Children’s Hospital at Randwick to have the scans. The other was Dean, who has, sadly, died since that time. Dean needed a scan every six months for the monitoring of his tumour. He was not able to work and relied on the public health system, and had to either be admitted to Wollongong Hospital overnight to access the MRI machine as an inpatient or travel to St George Hospital or Prince of Wales Hospital to access a bulk-billed service. Dean was only in his 30s. He was not a healthcare card holder; he had a young family and had gone from two incomes to one—trying to maintain mortgage payments and not lose the family home—only when his illness forced him to leave work. He could not afford the gap fees of private providers.

Each time the government has announced that a new round of Medicare MRI licences are to be allocated I have urged the minister to make one of these available to Wollongong’s public hospital, both to provide pressure to ensure more local people are able to access bulk-billing for MRI services and also to provide technological support to the work of the specialists who utilise Wollongong Hospital as the major regional referral hospital. In March 2006 the minister responded to my request that the next round include Wollongong Hospital by making the point:

I note that there is a Medicare-eligible unit in close proximity to the Wollongong Public Hospital. While this may not be as convenient for some patients as a unit in the Wollongong Public Hospital, it is able to provide Medicare-funded services for the people of Wollongong.
I do not accept the minister’s dismissal of the issue as one of convenience for some patients. It is my view, and that of many of the specialists located in Wollongong, that private and public services often service different patient groups and that public services often deal with the chronically ill, who need timely service.

The private provider in Wollongong is extremely busy and it often takes several weeks to book an MRI scan. The provider also does not automatically bulk-bill pensioners or healthcare card holders. Only weeks ago I had a pensioner come and see me as she had to have an MRI scan on her shoulder and was asked to pay a gap of $95. As she did not have the money and did not want to delay until she could save it a friend offered to drive her to Nowra to access a bulk-billing service.

Another reason I do not accept the minister’s explanation is that the Department of Health and Ageing’s guidelines for the provision of MRI Medicare licences indicates that the criteria used include:

... a range of demographic and clinical considerations, such as the number of referring specialists in the area.

Wollongong is the third largest city in New South Wales and is the major referral centre for the Illawarra, South Coast and significant parts of the Southern Highlands. Further, included in the criteria is:

The Government has also considered the needs of major hospitals dealing in orthopaedics, oncology, neurology and neurosurgery.

On each of the criteria Wollongong Hospital’s MRI service should have been allocated Medicare eligibility.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing repeated the comments of the minister in correspondence I received in September 2006. The parliamentary secretary further made the point:

The Government does not grant Medicare-eligibility for MRI units in public hospitals simply on the basis that one has been installed.

Further, the parliamentary secretary stated:

The Government’s decisions on where to locate these 10 additional Medicare-eligible units were informed by advice from the Department on areas with substantial under-serviced populations. Advice centred around populations of 100,000 to 150,000 people with access to a reasonable number of specialist referrers. It is also considered hospitals providing particular types of services, such as oncology, orthopaedics, neurology and neurosurgery.

Again, Wollongong Hospital is the major regional referral hospital for these specialties. It met all the criteria, except that there was a private provider in the town.

Finally, I want to address that issue. Firstly, I make the point that this private provider has a very limited bulk-billing policy. Indeed, when my office rang them we were told that they did not bulk bill. This causes local people to travel significant distances if they cannot afford the gap fee. Secondly, I make the point to the minister and the parliamentary secretary that there are many precedents in other areas where a licence is held by both a private and a public provider in the same area. A few examples from the department’s own website make this point. In the Hunter area licences are held by both Hunter Health Imaging Service in the radiology department of John Hunter Hospital and by Hunter Imaging Group, a private provider at Cardiff. In Gosford a licence has been held by a private provider, Gosford Radiology, since 1999 and Gosford’s public hospital since the October 2006 allocations. If you live on the North Shore you have even more options. Since 1999 a licence has been held by both North Shore Radiology and Nuclear Medicine at North Shore Private Hospital and by the New South Wales Department of Health’s Royal North Shore Hospital. Then
in November 2004 a further licence was allocated to Mater Imaging at the Mater Hospital. In Liverpool a licence has been held by a private provider, Rayscan Imaging Liverpool, since 1999 and by Liverpool’s public hospital since May 2001. People in this area were further serviced by a licence provided to Ultrascan Radiology at Campbelltown in November 2004.

I think it would be obvious from these points that I do not accept that because Wollongong has a private provider with a licence it should be banned from accessing a licence for the public hospital, when the government’s own allocations in other areas have consistently, since 1999, not ruled out the public hospital having access to that licence for the very specific types of services and patients it deals with at the very same that a licence is held by a private provider in that area.

I have no idea whether the Minister for Health and Ageing has made a decision about where those three licences are to go. I do not know whether he intends to announce them in the lead-up to the election campaign as he wanders around the country. But, if he would like a rousing and welcoming reception at Wollongong in that process, I would suggest to him that, finally, after five years of concerted campaigning on behalf of my local community and indeed the specialists who are based in Wollongong, we would be more than happy to see one of those three licences allocated to Wollongong public hospital. I thank the House for its indulgence in that slight divergence from the bill.

Ms GAMBARO (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (1.23 pm)—I would like to thank all of the members who have made an enormous contribution to this debate. On behalf of the government, I acknowledge the opposition’s support for the Health Insurance Amendment (Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation) Bill 2007. This bill establishes a framework under Medicare for the introduction of an accreditation scheme for practices involving diagnostic imaging services covered by the Radiology Quality and Outlays Memorandum of Understanding. It is clear—to put it on the record—that it is really about eligibility for Medicare and not the detail of the accreditation scheme itself. That is a separate process. I just wanted to highlight that because it was mentioned by members opposite.

Billing Medicare is a privilege; it is not a right, and patients should have timely access to high-quality radiology services. The public deserves to be assured that practices provide high-quality services. From 1 July next year, accreditation against objective but realistic standards will therefore become an eligibility requirement for receiving Medicare benefits in respect of diagnostic imaging services. Pushing for accreditation is not a reflection on the quality of services as they are being provided now, but with accreditation the government and the community can be assured that the 12 million or so diagnostic imaging services supported by Medicare annually are being provided by organisations that they are being performed against specified standards—that the over $1.2 billion taxpayer funded investment in those services is being used well.

Accreditation also adds a further quality dimension to those areas where specific Medicare billing rights are granted. This particularly relates to the allocation of Medicare licences for magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, machines. I am sure the members opposite are very interested in this. For diagnostic imaging practices and providers, accreditation will provide more assurance that their practice can support the delivery of high-quality services to patients, and it will impose a discipline on them to ensure that
they and their services stay up to the mark when it comes to excellence. Patients can also have greater confidence in services that they need and the way in which they are provided.

The transitional arrangements in the bill will ensure that existing practices will have ample time to prepare for accreditation and will not lose out if they do not have accreditation by 1 July next year. The bill also includes a mechanism to ensure that, should they not become accredited or should lose their accreditation, any such decisions will also be subjected to an independent review. No-one will lose access to Medicare without a full and fair process. The government is working closely with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists and the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, the relevant industry body, to develop a scheme that is practical and workable and will minimise the cost to practices, whether these be large, comprehensive diagnostic imaging businesses or small single-provider services. I stress strongly, though, that we are not setting the standards themselves; rather, we are leaving that to the experts. I can assure the opposition that there has been and is a process involving extensive consultation. The explanatory memorandum lists the wide range of bodies and groups who have been consulted in that process.

But getting the right balance between high standards and giving the community confidence—and also the realistic implementation of and compliance with those standards—is not a straightforward task. The government is aware that there are robust discussions going on right now between the college and the industry on such related matters. While appreciating their commitment, we trust that they will be able to work with goodwill in the public interest and reach an agreement on the nature and the structure of the practical accreditation regime. On behalf of the government and the Minister for Health and Ageing, I restate our willingness to give the college and the industry every assistance in ensuring that the 1 July 2008 commencement date is honoured. We want the parties to reach agreement on the standards regime in the near future so that the necessary planning and implementation arrangements are completed in good time—and the public expects as much. I therefore commend this bill to the House.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading
Ms GAMBARO (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (1.28 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

CORPORATIONS (NZ CLOSER ECONOMIC RELATIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2007

Second Reading
Debate resumed from 29 March, on motion by Mr Pearce:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (1.29 pm)—The Corporations (NZ Closer Economic Relations) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007 improves economic relations with Australia and New Zealand by giving effect to the treaty ‘Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of New Zealand in relation to the Mutual Recognition of Securities Offerings’ signed by both Australian and New Zealand ministers on 22 February 2006 and tabled in both houses of the Australian parliament on 28 March 2006. This is consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding on the Co-
ordination of Business Law between Australia and New Zealand.

This bill continues the work which Labor initiated on the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement in the early 1980s, an agreement that has been of enormous economic and social benefit to our two countries. Amendments to the Corporations Act 2001 will allow for the mutual recognition of the issue of securities and interests in managed investment schemes and provide for the mutual recognition of companies. This will reduce the compliance costs of business and encourage more business activity across both jurisdictions. Labor will support this legislation as it will increase opportunities for Australian businesses in the New Zealand market by reducing compliance costs without compromising Australian corporate standards.

Amendments will also be made to the Trade Practice Act 1974 with regard to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission’s disclosure of information. These are consistent with recommendations made by the Productivity Commission report of 16 December 2004, Australian and New Zealand competition and consumer protection regimes.

Essentially the bill has four initiatives. Firstly, the bill will allow for mutual recognition of securities offerings. Currently, for security, Australian and New Zealand issuers cannot use their home jurisdiction offer documents when making a trans-Tasman offer of securities or managed investment scheme interests. Instead, issuers must comply with the relevant requirements in the host jurisdictions unless the issuer is operating under an exemption in the host jurisdiction. In New Zealand, relevant provisions are found under the Securities Act 1978. In Australia, offers of securities must comply with provisions under chapter 6D of the Corporations Act 2001.

Compliance costs for businesses that operate in both jurisdictions relate to legal and corporate advisory fees and the preparation, filing and disclosure of documents. Effects of the current system include the increased cost of raising funds—the ASX estimates that the cost of providing offer documents by Australian offerers to New Zealand investors averages between $10,000 and $30,000—and the decision by the offerer not to extend the offer to other countries, thereby reducing their access to potential investors. The objective in this part is to allow for mutual recognition arrangements to reduce the regulatory barriers faced by issuers of securities and managed investment scheme interests operating in New Zealand and Australia.

Three options for mutual recognition were proposed and the one adopted by this bill is supported by Labor, in light of a range of factors. The most significant of these include: the benefits of overcoming mutually exclusive regulatory requirements; providing regulatory outcomes which are consistent with the host jurisdiction; the impact on national and parliamentary sovereignty; and the extent of regulatory complexity. The option adopted requires compliance with substantive requirements of domestic law. It allows offers to be made in a host country in the same manner and with the same offer documents, provided that entry requirements are satisfied and the offerer complies with the ongoing requirements.

Lodgement requirements for certain foreign companies carrying on business in Australia will be reduced. Companies will no longer have to lodge information or documents with ASIC if they have been lodged with an equivalent authority in their home country. However, the bill will not remove
the requirement for recognised companies to register with ASIC to operate in Australia.

Information-sharing between the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and other agencies, bodies and persons will be improved. Disclosure of information by the ACCC is enhanced through amendments proposed in schedule 3 of the bill. This will allow the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to share information with governments and other agencies, including the New Zealand Commerce Commission.

Finally, there will be additional protection of certain information which is given to or obtained by the ACCC, including information given to a foreign government body. ACCC officials will only be authorised to disclose protected information in the performance of their duties or functions or as consistent with the provisions of the Trade Practices Act.

The amendments made though this bill may also provide a basis for strengthening economic relationships with other countries in a similar way.

Labor supports initiatives to enhance economic relationships between Australia and New Zealand. This bill achieves this objective by allowing for the mutual recognition of the issue of securities offerings and companies to reduce costs associated with doing business. Labor also believes that provisions amending the role of the ACCC in terms of disclosure and protection of certain information are important to build the capacity to cooperate across the Tasman.

Mr BAIRD (Cook) (1.35 pm)—It is my pleasure to rise to support the Corporations (NZ Closer Economic Relations) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. I am wholly supportive of this legislation, which will help us to build a strong economic relationship between our two countries. It builds on the strength that has been developed from the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement, forged in 1983, which has governed and shaped Australia-New Zealand relations. That agreement has been of great benefit to both countries, and this legislation will further develop that closeness, in an economic sense, that has been developed over the past 20-odd years.

Last June-July, the Trade Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, of which I am chairman, travelled to New Zealand to look at the various implications of this agreement and, more broadly, the economic and trade relations between the two countries. The first and most important comment to make on our review is that we found how successful the CER between the two countries has been, the great achievement it has produced and how everyone is looking towards the ways in which we can further develop the relationship. We looked at how we could remove some of the regulatory complexities between the two countries and at questions of accreditation. Overall, it was seen as a great success; we did have some areas to move in but we covered over 80 per cent of the key areas that needed to be addressed.

A need was seen for a central body to oversee the CER. That arose from one of the criticisms made by the committee. Because of the diversity of operations between various portfolios, whether they be telecommunications, treasury, trade or transport, we needed some central body to be brought together to deal with the concerns that people were addressing in the CER. That was one of the recommendations that went forward to cabinet.

In July this year the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration, of which I am the chairman, will be visiting New Zealand. We will be looking at some of these
elements of our economic relationship. We will be meeting with representatives of New Zealand’s central bank and various other leaders of its economic and financial community. This committee will certainly be looking at ways by which the CER can be developed and improved.

The purpose of this legislation is effectively to work towards a single economic market for Australia and New Zealand with common regulatory frameworks. On the legal side, there is currently a memorandum of understanding on the coordination of business law between Australia and New Zealand. This legislation in part implements some of the aspects of that MOU.

The report by the Trade Subcommittee last July was unswerving in its endorsement of the 1983 agreement with New Zealand, our first ever free trade agreement. Since then we have gone on to have free trade agreements with Singapore, Thailand and the United States. In fact, the United States agreement received the highest ever vote in the US House of Representatives and Senate to endorse any free trade agreement. Now we are negotiating possible free trade agreements with Japan, China and the Gulf countries. Also, initial discussions are taking place with Mexico.

The agreement with New Zealand is our first and undoubtedly our most successful. There are a number of dimensions to our economic relationship but the major areas are tourism, trade and people, whether through migration or personal links. The CER has fostered these personal links and built strong cultural exchanges between our countries, not the least of which—as you, Madam Deputy Speaker Bishop, would know—is the Bledisloe Cup, which brings our two countries together very strongly. The movement of professionals between the two countries, for example, has allowed for an endless stream of opportunities. One area that has taken advantage of this arrangement is the film industry. Films like Lord of the Rings and King Kong have had significant Australian participation. The CER has facilitated and assisted this development.

The New Zealand trade relationship is crucial to Australia. There is no doubting the importance of this. New Zealand is Australia’s third largest investment destination and our fifth largest trading partner. At the end of 2005, the total stock of Australian investment in New Zealand was a very significant $58.9 billion. Certainly that level of investment in our closest neighbour is important in our overall economic framework. New Zealand is also our third largest destination for exports and our eighth largest source of imports. In 2005-06, two-way trade in goods and services with New Zealand amounted to almost $20 billion.

This legislation contains initiatives to help continue building this relationship, building synergy in our respective regulatory frameworks and reducing red tape. I especially want to acknowledge the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, the member for Aston, whose area of responsibility includes the CER and whose work has moved its regulatory aspects forward. The first aspect of these initiatives is the mutual recognition of securities offerings. The current arrangements for offering securities beyond the issuer’s borders mean they must comply with two substantive fundraising regimes. This increases the cost of raising capital. This often leads to matters preventing an offer being extended to investors from the other country. As part of our greater coordination of business law, Australia has entered into a treaty with New Zealand to mutually recognise securities offerings. Clear, positive economic benefits will flow out of this reduction in duplication and compliance costs. Investors can also
manage their risk more effectively through diversification of their investments.

This mutual recognition will also allow New Zealand entities to offer securities in Australia as long as they comply with New Zealand’s fundraising requirements. As a result of this bill, there are minimal additional requirements that we will now impose upon them under Australian law. And of course with mutual recognition Australian entities will be able to offer securities in New Zealand under the same terms. This bill is all about mutual recognition. I think the point that we have reached in the relationship between our two countries is that if something is acceptable in one country it should be acceptable in the other, and I certainly know the parliamentary secretary has recognised that. It makes doing business between the two countries a lot easier.

The regime is based on equivalent regulatory outcomes for equivalent disclosure to investors. However, as there are differences between New Zealand and Australian securities, investors must receive a warning statement in general terms with the offer document. There is certainly protection for investors as they will be aware of the nature of their investment. Other protection remains. Certain existing obligations of the Corporations Act will continue to apply—for example, the continuous disclosure requirements and the maintenance of a dispute resolution scheme for managed investment schemes.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission and New Zealand regulators are responsible for enforcement of the regime. ASIC will have primary responsibility for taking action against foreign issuers who fail to comply with the requirements of the regime, while the relevant New Zealand regulator will have primary responsibility for supervising a cross-border offer. ASIC has stop-order powers for New Zealand offers in Australia—for example, if an offer document is misleading. ASIC can ban a person from future use of the regime, and there are criminal penalties for breach of regime requirements. So, effectively, investors will be getting greater access to a foreign market but adequate protection of their investment will remain. The regime will apply to the issue of securities—shares and debentures—and interests in managed investment schemes but not to financial advice. There will be fewer compliance costs and less duplication but strong regulation through the involvement of both ASIC and the New Zealand regulator in the enforcement of the scheme. This is crucial for investor confidence in any cross-border security offering.

The second initiative in this bill is the reduced filing requirements to be implemented—so the first part is mutual recognition and the second part is less filing, which we are all in favour of. This will enable closer integration of company laws, in particular managing cross-recognition of company registrations, whereby companies in Australia and New Zealand can do business in the other jurisdiction without complying with all of the filing requirements applicable to other foreign companies. Currently New Zealand companies wishing to operate in Australia must comply with the filing requirements applicable to foreign companies. This is a fairly arduous task that only acts as a further disincentive to cross-border investment. The new minimal requirements acknowledge the closeness of our relationship. New Zealand has enacted exemptions so that reduced filing requirements apply to Australian companies operating in New Zealand, and it is only fair that we should reciprocate this arrangement. This is part of the government’s broader long-term commitment to reducing red tape and avoiding unnecessary compliance costs. The national reform agenda developed as part of COAG is an
example of this commitment as the government have moved to simplify corporate and financial services laws.

The ACCC information-sharing powers also form a major part of this legislation. It is crucial to promote sensible measures to help facilitate a functioning global market place and this includes information sharing by regulators. Under the current arrangements, the ACCC is prohibited from sharing information with any other regulators. This bill will change that premise by allowing the ACCC and other bodies to share certain limited information with other agencies. The amendments are closely modelled on similar information-sharing powers used by ASIC. They specify the limited circumstances in which information can be disclosed and the conditions that apply to that disclosure. There are strong privacy safeguards in the bill, and the amendments protect against any inappropriate disclosure of sensitive information. Protected information must not be disclosed unless permitted by a relevant law or in the course of duties as an ACCC official.

This bill is technical in nature. In a very practical fashion it is helping to reduce the red tape, duplication and compliance costs for business trying to operate across the Tasman. This is an important step in our growing economic relationship with our closest neighbour. I am a strong supporter of the government’s moves to synergise business laws and regulatory frameworks between the two countries. I commend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer for his efforts. It will encourage further investment—already at $60 billion—and will lead to a variety of interrelated consequences such as increased cultural exchange. I also hope to see increased business and trade opportunities stem from the introduction of this legislation. This bill is an important step forward in the development of the economic relationship between our two countries. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KERR (Denison) (1.47 pm)—I congratulate the member for Cook on his contribution to this debate on the Corporations (NZ Closer Economic Relations) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. Observers of this parliament rarely note the effective working relationships within the House. The relationship that the member for Cook and I have developed as we have undertaken various mutual responsibilities goes back a long way. I have enormous respect for him as a member of this House and it is not diminished in the least by the contribution he just made. This measure is to be welcomed. I go back in my parliamentary service nearly 20 years. One of the first committees on which I served was the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, which undertook a visit to New Zealand in, I think, 1987, following the 1983 initiation of the closer economic relationship agreements that we had entered into. Those agreements led to improvements and streamlining of the relationship. They are sensible agreements and continue to be improved and streamlined as we proceed.

Historically there are reasons why those in New Zealand, in their entitlement as a sovereign nation, have decided upon quite a different set of arrangements for the registration of companies and the management of corporate administration to those in Australia. In many ways it would have been more convenient if we had adopted the same set of arrangements, but people in New Zealand regard theirs as preferable and we in Australia proceed in our own manner. This legislation finds an effective way of allowing those who wish to undertake corporate activity between the two countries to do so with the least degree of complexity, given that there are different regulatory regimes in both countries. I
hope over time that we can bridge this divide even further.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs—which I am a member of and which is chaired by the honourable member for Fisher—recently recommended in a report further steps towards closer integration of our relationship with New Zealand. That relationship not only is embedded in the economic areas that the member for Cook has mentioned but also extends into a whole range of other areas where our countries have mutual interests. In the area of law enforcement, New Zealand ministers serve as members of our ministerial councils on law enforcement. We have effective relationships in policing, and health ministers from Australia and New Zealand also meet. It is a historical anomaly that our relationships are not even more intimate. In the early days before the adoption of our federal compact, New Zealand was an eligible colony to have federated as part of the Commonwealth of Australia but did not take that step. A part of the recommendations made by the honourable member for Fisher is that we do, over time, explore the possibility of not only having economic relationships and better and more effective relationships in a whole range of areas where we already have ministerial exchange but also political integration at a more fundamental level.

It is difficult not to be seen to be a little bit Big Brotherish in relation to this matter. Australia does have a larger population than New Zealand, the economy that it possesses is larger than New Zealand’s and the direction of its political structures has perhaps diverged even since the time when federation was first put on the table. It is a peculiarity, I suppose, that, as we become a much more centralised federation than we were in 1901, the attraction for New Zealand of joining the federation would be less because the degree of freedom of the federal entities within the Commonwealth of Australia has been considerably reduced over the last 100 years. And it is no disrespect to the High Court of Australia to observe, as both Justice Callinan and Justice Kirby did, that the manner in which the Constitution has been read in a contemporary way has permitted the central government to exercise a wider range of powers than would have been imaginable by those who first framed that compact.

So, in a sense, whilst we are moving closer in terms of a recognition that we have a common interest, economically, politically and socially, with New Zealand, perhaps the threshold to get over in terms of political integration is greater because the degree of freedom of the federal components of that national government are much less than they were in the past and therefore perhaps much less attractive to any potential New Zealand administration that might believe that there would be, in the long term, some benefit in closer political harmonisation. Those are large philosophical issues that cannot be embraced, other than by mention, in this debate, but I think they do repay some reflection on our part.

One of the things that I would hope this parliament and those who are responsible for decisions on how we proceed in our region eventually grapple with is this: I think there is a good case to be made that we should also have a constant exchange between parliamentarians, like the exchange between the ministers of our two countries. It does seem to me a little anachronistic that we as parliamentarians do not share the same closeness between our parliaments as those holding executive office. And I think it is an unhealthy thing, from a point of view of parliamentary democracy, that that is not the case.
One of the points raised in the report of the committee inquiry chaired by the honourable member for Fisher was the need to establish effective means whereby Australian parliamentarians can routinely participate in mutual deliberations with their New Zealand counterparts so that we enrich the relationship, so that, in our various deliberations, we do not stumble upon difficulties that could be avoided and so that, where we do have differences, we can put in place, by way of common interests, harmonious means of overcoming them.

Those are the only remarks I have. I have no objection to the terms of the minister’s second reading speech, which covers the reasons for our support of this legislation. It does mean that New Zealand entities that wish to issue securities in Australia can do so. It means that we can have mutual recognition of companies in both countries. It also means that our regulators, in particular those looking to deal with anticompetitive behaviour, can exchange information so that we can minimise the degree of difficulty that is caused by both national entities—for their own perfectly understandable reasons—having divergent corporation laws. It gives us a means of avoiding undue complexity—which, I must say, has in the past been a considerable stumbling block.

We did take evidence in the past—though I cannot remember precisely which committee I was serving on when we did—on the regulatory difficulties that were experienced because arrangements for recognition of the different corporate structures that existed in the two countries were not in place. There was evidence that the means of issuing securities in the two countries were complex and required very different approaches by way of disclosure and that we did not have an effective means of having a common regulator for anticompetitive behaviour. So these measures, whilst they do not bring the substantive law into exact parallel, at least provide us with an effective means of minimising the inconvenience that would otherwise be inherent.

In conclusion, I will go back to the point I made when I commenced by saying that the contribution made by the member for Cook really does reflect the wealth that this parliament has, on both sides, of members interested in the national interest and not in pursuing differences for the sake of it in these kinds of debates. In this instance, the opposition not only is content to not oppose the legislation but actively supports the intent of the legislation, sees it as a practical advance and wishes it all success.

Mr Pearce (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (1.57 pm)—I would like to thank those honourable members who have taken part in the debate today on this important piece of legislation, the Corporations (NZ Closer Economic Relations) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. The bill further cements Australia’s close economic ties with New Zealand and continues the move towards a single economic market based on common regulatory frameworks. The bill reduces duplication in regulatory compliance in trans-Tasman financial markets. It also allows the ACCC to exchange certain information with domestic and international regulators, including the New Zealand regulators, in certain circumstances.

The bill’s first initiative allows a New Zealand entity to offer securities in Australia and New Zealand based largely on compliance with New Zealand fundraising laws. Of course, mutual recognition means that Australian entities will also be able to offer securities in New Zealand under reciprocal similar regulatory arrangements. Importantly, this initiative will reduce compliance costs to business, with flow-on effects expected in
the form of increased investor choice and enhanced competition in capital markets.

The second initiative reduces the filing burden on New Zealand companies operating in Australia, with equivalent simpler filing arrangements for Australian companies operating in New Zealand. This deregulatory initiative reduces the costs for approximately 1,500 Australian companies operating in New Zealand and 500 New Zealand companies operating in Australia. Whilst the two initiatives are framed with Australia and New Zealand in mind, these arrangements could also be extended to countries other than New Zealand. The importance of these initiatives is evidenced by the trade figures with New Zealand, which is Australia’s third-largest investment destination and fifth-largest trading partner in goods and services.

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

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.00 pm)—I inform the House that the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs will be absent from question time today. He is in Melbourne to address the National Congress of the Vietnam Veterans’ Association of Australia. In his absence, the Minister for Defence will answer questions on his behalf.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Economy

Mr SWAN (2.00 pm)—My question is directed to the Treasurer. Does the Treasurer agree that robust productivity growth is necessary to underpin future growth in the economy, incomes and jobs? Treasurer, if this is a budget for the future that will lift the capacity of the economy, why do the budget forecasts of employment growth and GDP imply productivity growth of just 1.75 per cent per annum in the last two years of the forward estimates, barely half the growth rates of 3.2 per cent achieved during the 1990s?

Mr COSTELLO—in the latter part of the 1990s we had very strong productivity growth after the election of the coalition government. We exceeded Australia’s long-term average, which is around 2.3 per cent to 2.5 per cent. Labour productivity in 2005-06 was 2.3 per cent. In December it was 1.4 per cent, reflecting strong GDP growth and stable hours worked. Various cycles are determined and called by the Australian Bureau of Statistics over a five-year period. In 2003-04, the latest completed cycle, labour productivity was 2.1 per cent—so 2005-06 was a little higher than that.

Various things can and should be done in the Australian economy to lift productivity. One of those is to improve skills in the workforce. The government made a major announcement in relation to apprenticeships in the budget. But I do not think there is a productivity reform more important to the Australian economy than improved industrial relations. If you want, for example, an industry which can benefit from productivity then you do not have to go any further than the mining industry of Australia—and Australian workplace agreements have been absolutely critical to that industry.

Mr Crean interjecting—

Mr COSTELLO—There goes the sound effects man again! One of the companies that has used Australian workplace agreements more than any other is Rio Tinto. One of the directors of Rio Tinto is Sir Rod Eddington, who the Deputy Leader of the Opposition describes as ‘another voice’ in relation to Labor’s industrial relations policy. She even came into parliament last night and attempted to deny that she had used that
phrase. Not only had she used that phrase but if you download the transcript of 3 May 2007 on her own website—and I will table it; she obviously did not get to her own website in time—you can read the transcript where Neil Mitchell asked Julia Gillard this question:

What is your main adviser’s view on the policy you’ve come up with?

Gillard: Well I am happy to talk to Rod about it but that would just be another voice in the voices we’ve got ...

It is in black and white and on her own website. She tried to deny the undeniable. I suggest you go and have a chat to that other voice and get rid of your industrial relations policy. And I make this prediction: tonight, if the Leader of the Opposition does not junk Ms Gillard’s industrial relations policy, the rest of the speech will be window-dressing. We have had Medicare Gold, and this industrial relations policy, known as ‘IR Platinum’, is taking the failure of Medicare Gold to a new level. If you are interested in productivity, there is one big challenge for the Leader of the Opposition: cut her loose tonight, cut the policy loose and let us get on with productivity in the Australian economy.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the next question, I would remind the Treasurer that he should refer to members by their seat or by their title.

Economy

Dr SOUTHCOTT (2.05 pm)—My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister inform the House how a strong economy boosts employment opportunities? Are there any dangers to this continuing prosperity?

Mr HOWARD—I thank the member for Boothby for his question. I observed that, in March 1996, the unemployment rate in Boothby was 7.3 per cent. It is now 3.7 per cent. There is a nice bit of symmetry about that—7.3 per cent to 3.7 per cent. I have often said that good economic policy is not an end in itself; it is only of value if it produces a human dividend. And the greatest human dividend of all is to give people the chance of a job. By that measurement, this country’s economic policies are delivering a 32-year record of human dividends, because you have to go back to 1974 to find an unemployment rate of 4.4 per cent. That is the figure that has been recorded today. It is a wonderful result.

I happened to be at a school, the St Francis Xavier Catholic high school, in Canberra this morning. I was able to say to the school assembly—and most particularly to the young men and women who will be leaving the school and going out into the world next year—that they will enter a labour market stronger, more benign and more beckoning than it has been in 32 years. That really is what debates in this parliament and arguments between the two sides of politics are all about: which side of politics is better able to deliver the great human dividend of low unemployment. If we look at what has happened over the last year, we see that there have been no fewer than 326,600 jobs created since the introduction of the new industrial relations system. Of those jobs, 85 per cent have been full time. I am delighted to tell the House that long-term unemployment—that is, Australians who have been out of work for more than a year—is at its lowest level since that individual statistic began to be kept. It has fallen by 22 per cent over the last year. One of the reasons—I cannot put it more strongly than that because I cannot prove that it is stronger than that—unemployment has fallen from 5.1 per cent to 4.4 per cent since the introduction of the current industrial relations system is that small business has been encouraged to take on more workers because we have abolished the unfair dismissal laws.
I am asked by the member for Boothby what threats there are to a strong economy producing low unemployment. One of the threats is, of course, the industrial relations policy of the man who chooses to turn his back on the House. I might say, extending the metaphor, that he has turned his back on the unemployed of Australia by committing himself to reintroducing the job-destroying unfair dismissal laws. If you go around this country, every man and woman in small business will tell you that the greatest thing that has happened to them over the last year is the removal of unfair dismissal laws. The greatest boon for the long-term unemployed and for the unemployed generally has been the removal of those unfair dismissal laws. It can only be union-dominated ideology that would lead a political party in the present state of the Australian labour market to commit itself to the reintroduction of those job-destroying unfair dismissal laws.

This is a wonderful day for the young of Australia because it is their future that, more than anything else, will be conditioned and influenced by the labour market over the years ahead. We have a labour market for the workers of Australia like we have not had for more than 30 years. I again remind the Leader of the Opposition of the words of a Labour leader who in opposition had the courage to tell the union movement of his country that the national interest went ahead of union power. I refer of course to Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. He told the unions of Great Britain that if Labour were to be fit to govern, it had to be willing to stand up to the union movement of that country. He told those same unions, after he became Prime Minister, that fairness in the workplace started with the chance of a job. The gulf, the demarcation between Mr Blair and the Leader of the Opposition in Australia could not be starker.

Carbon Trading

Mr SWAN (2.11 pm)—My question is directed to the Treasurer, and I refer him to his interview on The 7.30 Report on the ABC on budget night where he refused to answer a question on past Treasury advice on carbon trading.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! Members on my right will come to order.

Mr SWAN—It was a spectacular performance by the Treasurer.

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Lilley will commence his question again, and he will be heard.

Mr SWAN—I refer the Treasurer to his interview on The 7.30 Report on budget night where he refused to answer a question on past Treasury advice on carbon trading. Can the Treasurer confirm that the government rejected a 2003 cabinet submission on emissions trading? Is this why Dr Henry, the Secretary to the Department of the Treasury, said he wished he had been listened to more attentively on climate change? Does the Treasurer believe the last four years is an unacceptable delay or an acceptable delay?

Mr COSTELLO—The government is about to receive a report on emissions trading prepared by an interdepartmental group which senior members of the Treasury have been participating in. I look forward to receiving that. As soon as the government receives that report it will announce its response, and I expect that to be a good response.

Ms George—You won’t get rolled this time like you did last time.

Mr COSTELLO—Oh, yes, the former ACTU president comes in on cue. There is a former ACTU president over there, one over here, one over there and another one to come.
Mr Swan—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The point of order is on relevance. The Treasurer said it is on his desk. Will we have to wait four years to see it?

Mr COSTELLO—Labor might regard Rod Eddington as ‘another voice’, but it regards the ACTU as a multiple chorus. I am going to go on and make another point about receiving the report on the carbon emissions trading scheme. This government will actually receive the report before it announces its policy, and it will actually consider the consequences of various emissions targets before it names that policy which it will undertake. That is quite different from the Labor approach, which was to name an emissions target. This is what the Leader of the Opposition did: he named an emissions target and then he set up an inquiry to figure out what it would mean. He said that he was going to have this target by 2050 and then he said to Ross Garnaut, ‘Go and find out what the effect would be.’ I tell you this: when you are dealing with economic consequences, when you are dealing with people’s lives, it is a much better principle to find out what the effect of your policies will be before you adopt them—and that is what this government will be doing.

The SPEAKER—Has the Treasurer completed his answer?

Mr COSTELLO—Yes.

Budget 2007-08

Mr CAMERON THOMPSON (2.14 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister update the House on the reaction to this week’s budget announcements on education. What is the government’s response, and are there alternative views?

Mr HOWARD—I thank the member for Blair for his question. I can inform the member that the budget provision for education has had a wonderfully positive response from the university sector—and I am not surprised. In many ways the changes announced by the government are quite historic. One has to go back almost to the time of the Murray report commissioned by the Menzies government in the 1950s to find changes of such lasting significance to the university sector in this country. I can report to the House, and specifically to the member for Blair, that there has been a strong, consistent and positive reaction from the vice-chancellors and other spokesmen for the universities around Australia.

I cannot report that there has been the same strong, consistent and positive reaction from the Australian Labor Party regarding one element of the announced policy on tertiary education—that is, the question of full fee paying degree courses at Australian universities for Australian students. It was my understanding, reinforced by very strong statements made by the former shadow minister and member for Jagajaga, that it was implacable, unalterable Labor Party policy that the full fee paying courses would not be allowed by a Labor government. In other words, they would be abolished, and the universities would be reimbursed the $500 million, over a period of four years, that would be required to put them in the same financial position.

That was my understanding until yesterday morning when the Leader of the Opposition did a very revealing interview on Sky News. During that interview, he was asked whether it was Labor’s policy to get rid of full fee places. I expected him to say immediately, ‘Yes, it is. It has been our policy for a long time.’ But he did not. He said:

Let’s have a look at what’s in the detail of the Budget papers on that.

This was a very strange answer because the budget really did not have anything to say about Labor policy; it actually had some-
thing to say about government policy. So the budget papers would be an odd place to look if you wanted to find out about Labor policy.

That was fascinating. It was obvious after he had given that interview that the Leader of the Opposition was manoeuvring for a change in policy. The confirmation came in this morning’s *Australian* with the banner headline: ‘Rudd shifts on fee degrees’, which was obviously an article written after close consultation with the Leader of the Opposition’s office. The article said, inter alia:

Last night, Mr Rudd’s office confirmed the Labor leader was now leaving the door open to a change of policy, allowing some full-fee degrees for the first time.

There is no way that respected journalists like Samantha Maiden or Steve Lewis would have written that without getting it right. They are journalists of impeccable ability and their integrity should never be questioned. It is quite obvious that they went to the leader’s office and the leader’s office said, ‘Just give him a couple of days. He’s got to manoeuvre around the troglodytes, but he’ll get it through and it will be all right.’

Sure enough, this morning, faithfully, the member for Perth and the member for Jagajaga kept the door open to a change of policy—although there is a bit of a sting in the tail from the member for Perth; he reminded the Leader of the Opposition of Labor’s longstanding policy. Both of them said, ‘Don’t worry, there will be a detailed statement before the election.’ Little did they know that there would be a detailed statement before morning tea.

Not very long after, the Leader of the Opposition went on to say, amongst a whole lot of other things, on Sky News again—they are doing very well out of this, Leader of the Opposition—‘So our view is consistent with the policy we’ve laid down over quite a period of time now that we will phase out full fee paying degrees.’ In the space of less than 24 hours he has gone from deliberately leaving the door open—either because he wanted to change the policy and ultimately got rolled or because he did not know what the policy was when he was first asked; it was a toss up, because he is not very strong on detail this Leader of the Opposition—to where Labor’s policy has always been. There may be a $500 million hole in that already shonky list of savings that the member for Melbourne has produced.

I thought to myself, ‘What has brought about this change?’ I searched the bits and pieces of scraps of paper I had of transcripts, and I saw in the flesh one of the two people I am talking about: Dr Allport who, I think, runs the Tertiary Education Union. She effectively said that the world would come to an end if Labor altered its policy on full fee paying degrees. I thought that was obviously a factor, but then I got the answer—I saw Senator Brown. Senator Brown was saying to the Leader of the Opposition, ‘Hold the line. Don’t retreat. Don’t become an imitation of the coalition. Don’t betray your true principles. Reject Howard’s outrageous policy.’ That is what Senator Brown was, more or less, saying—but not as eloquently as that.

In the end, the bottom line of all of this is that in the space of 24 hours the Leader of the Opposition, in my view, wanted to change the policy because he knows that the present policy is unsustainable, it is expensive and, what is more, it discriminates against Australians. The worst thing about this policy is that it discriminates against Australians. It is all right to charge foreigners and give them a chance to come into our universities and buy a place, but it is wrong to let Australians do that. Let me simply say to the Leader of the Opposition: if that is the way the the opposition makes policy in relation to a crucial area like this, heaven help
the country if they ever get a crack at government.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (2.22 pm)—I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon delegates attending the Political Party Development Course at the Centre for Democratic Institutions. The delegates are from East Timor, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

On behalf of the House I extend a very warm welcome to our visitors.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Education

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (2.22 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister, and it follows on from his previous answer. Isn’t it the case that, today, Australia has more than 100 full fee paying degrees that cost more than $100,000 for Australian undergraduates? Hasn’t this occurred under the government’s 35 per cent full-fee university course cap for general courses and 25 per cent cap for medical courses? If this has occurred under the government’s ‘capped’ policy, won’t the complete removal of the cap lead to open slather and more $100,000 degrees?

Mr HOWARD—Let me remind the member for Perth that the total number of students who are full fee paying students within the present ‘case load’, as the Leader of the Opposition called it in his interview this morning with Sky News, is precisely three per cent of the total number. Let me also remind the member for Perth that no better authority than Gerard Sutton—the President of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee—said at the beginning of this year that the shortage of HECS funded places had been eliminated. The boss of the universities said that there is no problem with the aggregate number of HECS funded places available. We have a booming labour market, which does have some impact on the number of people wanting to go to university. It is a known fact that in times of higher unemployment the demand for university places rises, and in times of lower unemployment there is some stepping back in the demand for university places. Against the evident need to provide more flexibility for the university sector, it is desirable to get an additional revenue stream into the universities from people who are able to contribute that revenue and there is an evident case for not discriminating against Australians—why does the Labor Party believe it is all right for somebody from America, China or England to come here and pay, but it is not all right for Australians? Or are we going to stop the foreigners as well? It is a totally illogical policy.

The fascinating thing about it is that the man who sits opposite me knows it is an illogical policy. He wanted to change this illogical policy but Bob Brown and the tertiary unions would not let him. The Leader of the Opposition wanted to change the policy. We know how much power the tertiary unions exert over the Australian Labor Party, and we all know how desperate the Leader of the Opposition is for Green preferences at the next federal election. He is as desperate for Green preferences as Mark Latham was for Green preferences before the last federal election—and you know what Mark Latham did to the forestry workers of Tasmania in order to get Green preferences before the last election. If I were a coalminer in Queensland, I would be worried about the Leader of the Opposition.

Economy

Mr BAIRD (2.26 pm)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer outline to the House the benefits that
Mr Speaker, you will no doubt hear the Labor Party claim that they believe in balanced budgets. They opposed every step we took in Australia to drive the budget back into balance, but now of course they are in favour of balanced budgets. I always say: ‘Don’t listen to what Labor says. Look at what Labor does. Look at what Labor did when it was in office at the Commonwealth level.’ One way of measuring the Labor Party is to look at the position of the state Labor governments. As a whole, what surplus would you think the state Labor governments will have in the next financial year? What would they have? The state Labor governments did have surplus in 2005-06 but they have now collectively driven state budgets into deficit. The state budget sector as a whole is in deficit. The states have to borrow to fund that deficit. The net borrowing for state-territory governments and their trading enterprises will increase by $56 billion over the forward estimates.

Here is the Commonwealth paying down debt and balancing its budget whilst the state Labor governments will be running up debt of $56 billion—but you will never hear anything about that from the Leader of the Opposition. You will never hear anything from him about what effect borrowing $56 billion would have on financial markets. You will hear a lot from him about how he is concerned about interest rates. But is he concerned enough about interest rates to ask his cobbbers at the state level to get out of financial markets and to stop putting pressure on savings? He is not that concerned. Do not listen to what Labor says; look at what Labor does. Labor is running a deficit and debt combined over the six states and two territories in this country.
Education

Mr Rudd (2.31 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Did the Prime Minister say to the Australian parliament and people—and I quote—‘I can guarantee’—or words to that effect—

Government members interjecting—

The Speaker—Order! Members on my right!

Mr Rudd—I am reading from the Hansard. Did the Prime Minister say to the Australian parliament and people:
The government will not be introducing an American style higher education system.
Did the Prime Minister go on to say:
There will be no $100,000 university fees under this government. That is a figment of the Labor Party’s propaganda machine...
Why did the Prime Minister breach his promise to the Australian parliament and to the Australian people?

Mr Howard—I think even Brand 1 asked that question when he was Leader of the Opposition and certainly the member for Hotham did. The truth is that that comment was made was in the context of HECS funded places. The Leader of the Opposition asked me about guarantees. I tell you what, Mr Speaker, I will give this guarantee, and that is that interest rates will always be lower under the coalition than under Labor.

Economy

Mr Richardson (2.33 pm)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer inform the House of the importance of various industries to the Australian economy?

Mr Costello—I thank the honourable member for Kingston his question, and I congratulate him on the good work that he is doing on behalf of his constituents. The economic growth which we have had in Australia in our longest continuous expansion has been broad based. That is one of the reasons why Australia was able to come through the Asian financial crisis, the tech wreck of 2001, the US recession of 2001, SARS, the threat of terrorism and the challenges that we have had over the last decade.

The mining industry is an important industry to Australia. It contributes about 5.9 per cent to the Australian economy and about 1.3 per cent of employment. In the last year, as I said earlier, there have been about 300,000 new jobs created in Australia and of those about 13,000 have been in the mining industry. That is something to be valued and it is a great outcome. In the time that 13,000 jobs have been put on in the mining industry, wholesale trade has put on 33,000 jobs, cafes and restaurants have put on 50,000 jobs, finance and insurance have put on 34,000 jobs, and health and community services have put on 16,000 jobs. You can see there has been a broad contribution to the Australian economy. That of course is the best economy—a balanced economy.

I have seen repeated claims over the last day or two that all of Australia’s growth and employment and its budget position are somehow just the result of the mining industry. I said that the mining industry is an important industry to Australia—and it is—but it is not the only industry that is creating jobs or creating wealth in this country. There has been a repeated claim from the Leader of the Opposition that the mining boom has contributed $283 billion into the budget over a seven-year period. That is the claim he has been making over and over again. It is a precise claim—not ‘words to that effect’, incidentally—of $283 billion.

Company tax in Australia is a little over $60 billion. The mining industry contributes eight to 10 per cent of company tax receipts—that is, about $6 billion a year. The total amount of mining tax revenue is not as
a result of the increase. Some of that $5 billion or $6 billion would be part of that increase. The Treasury estimate is that the increase in commodity prices over the last four years may well have contributed $11 billion and, over the forward estimates, may well contribute another $11 billion. That will be $22 billion over eight years, as against the claim that the Leader of the Opposition repeatedly makes of $283 billion. He is only out by a factor of 10, as it turns out! No doubt he will apologise and correct the record tonight. There is nothing like $280 billion. The Treasury estimate over eight years—four gone and four to come—is more like $22 billion.

Any person who is familiar with the Australian economy would know immediately that that claim of $283 billion could not be true. You would know it immediately by looking at the Commonwealth revenue statement. If you did not know it, your advisers ought to stop you making that particular claim immediately. We are beginning to learn something about the Leader of the Opposition. He has not done his homework. He does not understand the Australian economy. He is the man who has a focus-group-tested cliche available for every occasion. Running a $1 trillion economy takes skill and the ability to do hard work to get on top of the figures. It is not for Queensland public servants to walk in and think they can do it just as they used to get away with it in the state of Queensland. It cannot be done by bullying newspapers, either, when they start writing about it. It takes skill and it takes management because people’s lives depend on it, their houses depend on it, and the coalition is committed to it.

**Education**

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (2.40 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, is it not the case that, under the government’s full-fee approach, in university lecture theatres around Australia students are sitting side by side with students who have substantially different cut-off scores and are under different payment regimes? Is it not the case that a student may miss out on a place at university but another, with a lower mark, can buy their way in? Does the Prime Minister think it is fair that merit is out-scored by money in Australian universities? With the government abolishing the 35 per cent cap, won’t that just get worse?

Mr HOWARD—I do not think there is any doubt that as a result of the reforms announced in the budget speech on Tuesday night things will get immeasurably better in Australian universities. That is not just my view. I remind you it is the view of every vice-chancellor who has spoken on this subject since Tuesday night. We all know that the academic community of this country does not normally represent a chorus of praise for this government. It is often the case that we are criticised, I think unfairly, on occasions. Nonetheless, we respect freedom of speech as we respect academic freedom. People are free to express their views. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Perth are clutching at straws on this issue because the Leader of the Opposition has been caught out. He has to make a choice. He has to fess up either to not knowing his own party’s policy or to being heavied out of doing something he wanted to do. That in reality is what the Leader of the Opposition faces. He knew, when he did that first interview on Sky, that the policy position his party had was absurd. He knew it discriminated against Australians. He is now having a mock, humorous conversation with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer. They confect humorous disinterest.

Ms Hall—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order as to relevance.
The Prime Minister was asked a question about universities. He is in order. I call the Prime Minister.

Mr HOWARD—Let me say to the member for Perth, through you, Mr Speaker, that what I would regard as monstrously unfair and monstrously discriminatory would be a situation where you could have full fee paying foreign students sitting side by side with HECS funded Australian students in the full knowledge that Australian students would like to be sitting beside those HECS funded students but were not allowed to do so by an anti-Australian Labor Party policy.

Transport Infrastructure

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (2.43 pm)—My question is addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Would the Deputy Prime Minister outline to the House how the government's investment in infrastructure will build future prosperity in regional Australia and, in particular, in my electorate of Maranoa? Are there any alternative policies?

Mr VAILE—I thank the member for Maranoa for his question. He would recognise the significant investment that we will be making in future to land transport infrastructure networks in Australia as a result of the budget announced this week. $22.3 billion has been committed over future years to the land transport system in Australia—roads and rail—for which we take responsibility. This is to be added to the $15.8 billion that we are currently spending in AusLink 1, a 41 per cent increase in investment into Australia’s land transport system. That is $38 billion that the Australian government is spending on the land transport system over a 10-year period.

The important part about this is that it is not just about a single strategy in respect of what used to be known as the national highway system, which we inherited from a former Labor government; it goes right across the networks of road and rail systems in Australia. There are those important national corridors, both road and rail, that are important freight links into our ports across Australia. There are state highways that we are now funding improvement projects on, in conjunction with the state governments where we can negotiate an appropriate contribution from them. There are investments in key arterial roads in regional Australia, some of which are in the member for Maranoa’s electorate—an important electorate that supplies a lot of agricultural product and also resources and energy from Queensland that has to get to the port.

There is also funding for local roads and local black spots. There are very good local road and local black spot programs, and also key rail freight infrastructure, where we have had to negotiate to take over corridors from some of the state governments to improve the efficiency of rail in Australia. In this program we want to ensure that our partners, the state and local governments, help share the costs and help share the risks to ensure that the taxpayers’ dollars are being wisely invested and that we get maximum advantage out of that. So it is not just the major highways; it is the local roads that improve the lot of all Australians as far as our land transport network is concerned. We have given a long-term commitment to that.

The member for Maranoa asked whether there were any alternatives. We have seen that really the answer to that is no—certainly not from the Labor Party. There are no alternatives from the Labor Party. In fact, the shadow Treasurer was asked on radio, after the budget came out:

Is there anything in this budget that you would take out?

He said:

No, not really.
He was saying, ‘We support it.’ No, really, he would not take anything out. So he is supporting the commitment that the government is making to the Australian land transport system. Then we saw a press release from the shadow minister, the member for Batman. The member for Batman had this to say:

... Auslink I must build on the investment of Auslink II—

that is our policy, AusLink 1, and our policy, AusLink 2—

in Australia’s strategic economic transport infrastructure.

I can assure the member for Batman that that will be the case. It will build on the investment we have already made. We will get the states to invest, we will get local government to invest and we will make sure that we have a national land transport system in Australia that continues to drive economic growth in this country so that we can see the sorts of job creation that we have experienced in recent years as a result of the reforms in Australia.

We welcome the Labor Party’s support for our land transport policy. We welcome their support. We have seen, in the last week or so, the outsourcing of a lot of Labor policy development. We have seen that the Labor Party has outsourced industrial relations policy and some of their preselections to the union movement. We have seen the outsourcing of budgetary and economic policy to the Democrats. They have got it right at last because they have outsourced their land transport policy to the coalition government.

**Budget 2007-08**

**Mr Rudd** (2.48 pm)—My question is again to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister now confirm that according to his own budget papers his government’s spending on education will decline between 2005 and 2010 as a proportion of total government spending? How can the Prime Minister, four months before an election, pretend now to be interested in the future of education in Australia when his own budget papers and his own track record over the past 11 years demonstrate exactly the reverse?

**Mr Howard**—I can confirm everything which is in the budget papers in relation to education. I happily and freely do that. I repeat what I said yesterday: those budget papers reveal that over the four years of the forward estimates there will be a rise of something like 9.7 per cent in real terms in spending on education, and it will be at a rate of, I think, 3.7 per cent in real terms in relation to tertiary or university education. So I am very happy to confirm that.

Can I also confirm something else. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say something yesterday and I also heard it repeated this morning by the member for Perth while he was defending the intention of the Leader of the Opposition to change a policy he ultimately did not change through fear of upsetting Senator Brown. The member for Perth asked, ‘If the Prime Minister had been interested in tertiary education and university education, why didn’t the government, earlier in time, invest $5 billion in the Higher Education Endowment Fund?’ That is a fair question, but do you know what the answer is? Earlier in time we were still paying off Labor’s $96 billion debt and we did not have the $5 billion. This little reality appears to have escaped attention.

I think I anticipate correctly: no doubt this little line will be a runner tonight in the Leader of the Opposition’s speech. He will say, ‘It’s four months before the election; why didn’t they do it a few years ago?’ We did not have the capacity to do it responsibly a few years ago because we were still in a net debt position. Now that we have made provision for the superannuation entitle-
ments, inter alia of the men and women of the Australian Defence Force, years into the future through the Future Fund, we are in a position to make this magnificent investment.

And I have other news for the Leader of the Opposition which he will not like to hear. If the Australian people were to re-elect this government in the next election—and, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I make no boasts on that subject—they can rest assured that we will make further contributions out of future surpluses into the Higher Education Endowment Fund. It is a magnificent investment in Australia’s future. It is a feature of this year’s budget that we have taken the great prosperity this country has and we have deployed it in two ways: we have given a human dividend to the present generation, to which they are entitled, and we have laid aside a portion of that prosperity for our financial security and for the young of Australia in the future. Thank heavens we are in a position to do it! I say to the Leader of the Opposition, through you, Mr Speaker: if we had been in a better financial position a few years ago, we would have done it then. The reason we were not was that the mob who sit opposite left us with a $96 billion debt. They tried to stop us getting rid of that debt. Now we are in position to do so—

Mr Tanner interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Melbourne!

Mr HOWARD—we can make this decision.

Mr Tanner interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Melbourne is warned!

Mr HOWARD—We are proud of it, and we will be happy to proclaim the value of it from one side of this country to the other.

Workplace Relations

Mrs MIRABELLA (2.52 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Would the minister inform the House how Australia’s workplace relations system has helped to create more than two million jobs since 1996? Are there any risks to this success? Further, are there any alternative policies, and what impact would they have on job creation?

Mr HOCKEY—I thank the member for Indi for the question. I can report to the House that today the ABS reported that the unemployment rate in Australia is 4.4 per cent. I was reflecting, as I looked at the member for Adelaide, that in her lifetime the unemployment rate has never before reached that level. In fact, 1974 was the last time that the Australian unemployment rate was at 4.4 per cent. In the 12 months since we introduced a new industrial relations system for Australia, 326,000 new jobs have been created; 85 per cent of those jobs are full time; and anyone with an ounce of compassion in their body would be pleased at the fact that the teenage full-time unemployment to population ratio has fallen to 3.7 per cent. Teenage unemployment is 3.7 per cent.

I am asked about threats. The greatest threat to the continuing economic prosperity of the nation is the possible election of a Rudd Labor government. No better evidence of that have we seen than the Labor Party’s industrial relations policy, which was released at their national conference—the policy that now is in a total mess, the policy that, before it had actually been delivered, had been changed in the moments before, when the one-stop shop became a two-stop shop. Secondly, they changed on the minimum wage. They said there were 10 national employment standards, but—oops—they forgot the minimum wage, and now there are
11 national employment standards. They said that there were 24 months of 'guaranteed' leave for Australian families, and then we find out from the member for Rankin that in fact it is 12 months with a nice letter. And, on pattern bargaining, the Labor Party in their policy document say they will allow it to come back into the workplace, and then we find out from The 7.30 Report that the Leader of the Opposition has changed that policy as well—reversal No. 4. In reversal No. 5, we heard about bargaining fees. They seemed to make this policy on Neil Mitchell’s program, where the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that, yes, you could charge bargaining fees. Only a few days later on 3AW, on the same program, the Leader of the Opposition said, ‘No, you can’t charge bargaining fees.’

But I can report to the House that there is now a sixth change—can you believe it? Six in 12 days. This is on arbitration. It gets a little tricky here, but in their policy the Labor Party say that there will be last resort arbitration. Reading the Australian today, I nearly choked on my Weeties again. It is going to happen one of these days when I am eating Weeties. If they keep changing their policy, I am going to just fall over and choke on the Weeties. This morning in the Australian I read that the Labor Party had changed its policy on arbitration.

So small business is confused about the Labor Party’s IR policy. Big business is confused about the Australian Labor Party’s policy. The workers of Australia are confused. I can only hope that the Leader of the House will get the answer on the Today show tomorrow morning, when he debates the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY—You are not debating her tomorrow morning! It should be a good debate—there are two sides to the argument on a number of issues. You do not need to have two people for a debate; just put the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on TV. It will be great entertainment.

Do you know what, Mr Speaker? This is a fundamental issue. The Labor Party has failed on economic policy. The Labor Party is failing on industrial relations policy. And, when it comes to running the nation, you cannot make a mess of your industrial relations policy the way the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has.

Workplace Relations

Ms GILLARD (2.58 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and deals with the question of making a mess of industrial relations policy.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! Members on my right! The member for Barker! The deputy leader has the call and the deputy leader will be heard.

Ms GILLARD—I refer the minister to the following statements he made today: ‘I am not going to start speculating on the details of the fairness test.’ ‘It’ll all become very clear when the legislation is presented to the House.’ ‘We’re certainly working through with the draughtsmen. It is obviously a process, but we’re working through it.’ Minister, doesn’t this mean that, since 12.01 am on Monday, your government has been forcing employers to comply with a test that has not even been drafted yet?

Mr HOCKEY—No.

Budget 2007-08

Mr VASTA (2.59 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister update the House about budget initiatives on climate change through
Mr DOWNER—I thank the honourable member for Bonner for his thoughtful question. I noticed in the opposition’s responses to the budget that one of the constant refrains of the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer, the member for Lilley, is that in the budget the government is doing nothing about climate change, which simply demonstrates that the opposition is not reading the budget but just using a bit of focus group work and parroting a few lines. The truth is that there is a lot in this budget that the government is doing to address the issue of climate change, importantly including in the Asia-Pacific region, because our aid program has a particular responsibility and a particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region.

One of the issues that needs to be addressed is the environment and, rather more specifically, climate change is a significant issue. In Pacific island countries there is nervousness about the possibility of rising sea levels. That is an issue that we are addressing. For example, we are spending money on the Pacific meteorological services to help predict climate in the Pacific, including extreme weather events such as cyclones, which have a devastating effect on small island countries. We are spending money on the South Pacific Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project. This supports 12 different monitoring sites that use GPS and satellite to monitor sea level movements and the impact of those sea level movements on small island states.

If the opposition is serious about the issue of climate change, it would have something to say about these issues. It would understand what the government is doing and it would talk about those things and, I would have thought, endorse what the government was doing. We are doing other things, like helping with a global environment facility to improve land use and introduce better farming practices—for example, the planting of drought-resistant crops. This is an important issue for people who live in, for example, parts of Indonesia, where there is concern that climate change may lead to drier conditions and therefore the need to change the sorts of crops that they plant. The most important single thing the government is doing to address the issue of climate change internationally in this budget is the $200 million that we are investing in the Global Initiative on Forests and Climate. So, every time the opposition says the government is doing nothing about climate change, it rather conveniently and opportunistically ignores the importance of this great initiative.

This global initiative on reforestation and stopping the process of deforestation has been enormously well received around the world. It does not matter where you go; in developed countries and developing countries there has been very real interest in this initiative—and why not? Deforestation in developing countries accounts for 20 per cent of global CO₂ emissions. Halving deforestation would offset emissions by several billion tonnes a year. The simple fact is that, although it was announced before the budget, in this budget, funding is now being made available to address those issues.

As the year wears on there will be initiatives such as the APEC summit. The Prime Minister has already written to APEC leaders about the environment and climate change being a central issue at the APEC meeting. Of course more will be done, but the fact is that, when the Leader of the Opposition gets up tonight to make his budget reply, one of his themes will be climate change. I would expect that in articulating that theme he will begin by congratulating the government on the many initiatives in the budget designed to address climate change.
I note that the narrative of the Labor Party is that the government does not do anything about climate change. When we do, they continue with the same narrative and endeavour to convince the public that, for example, $200 million is not being spent on reforestation in the Asia-Pacific region. It is about time the Labor Party started to use the facts as part of their armoury, not just empty socialist narratives.

Workplace Relations

Ms Gillard (3.04 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. I refer to the document released by the government last Friday called A stronger safety net for working Australians and I quote the following from it:

The Fairness Test will apply to all workplace agreements lodged on or after 7 May 2007. Employers and employees who are currently making an agreement will therefore need to be conscious of the Fairness Test ...

I also refer to the full-page advertisements of the government last weekend, which state:

The Fairness Test will apply to agreements lodged on or after 7 May 2007.

Minister, are these advertisements and this document wrong or were you just wrong when you answered my last question?

Mr Hockey—No, you are wrong. I just make this point: when it comes to policy in relation to industrial relations—

Honourable members interjecting—

The Speaker—Order! The minister has the call and I remind the minister that he will address his remarks through the chair.

Mr Hockey—I am sorry, Mr Speaker. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is wrong. When it comes to industrial relations policy, it is vitally important that you actually consult the people—

Mr Edwards—Stop hiding behind your Weeties box and answer the question!

Climate Change

Mr Broadbent (3.07 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources. Would the minister advise the House on the role that coal will play in the world’s response to climate change? Are there any alternative approaches?

Mr Turnbull—I thank the member for McMillan and acknowledge his keen interest in clean coal technology. We were only recently at Loy Yang announcing the investment from the Low Emissions Technology Development Fund of $100 million into a clean coal joint venture between HRL, an Australian company, and the Harbin Power Engineering Company, from China.

Coal is an essential part of the world’s energy source today. It provides more than half of the world’s electricity. Over the next 23 years the International Energy Agency estimates that coal will deliver 83 per cent of the overall increase in energy demand. Coal will be with us for a very long time. In large
measure that is because of the fact that, in the fastest growing economies, and the fastest growing greenhouse gas emitting economies, China and India, coal reserves are to be found in abundance. China, for example, has one per cent of the world’s oil and gas reserves but 13 per cent of its coal reserves. That is one reason why China’s growth in CO₂ emissions between now and 2030 will be double that of the OECD. So Australia, as a big coal producer and coal consumer, has a vital joint vested interest with China in finding the technologies that will clean up coal—because, unless we can clean up coal, we will struggle to meet the very large reductions in emissions that we need to meet by mid-century.

The Australian government has invested more than $400 million in clean coal technology under our Low Emissions Technology Demonstration Fund. We are doing that bilaterally with China, as I mentioned a moment ago, and we are also doing it through the AP6, the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. Our position is clear. We recognise our reliance on coal. We recognise its importance to the world. We recognise that you cannot achieve the big cuts in global emissions needed without tackling emissions from burning coal.

So what is Labor’s policy? Earlier this year the member for Kingsford Smith famously said in a speech in his electorate that ‘the automatic expansion of the coal industry such as we’ve seen in the past is a thing of the past’. Only a few years previously the member for Kingsford Smith told the National Press Club: ‘Our reliance on coal for energy and export puts the Australian economy at risk.’ On the other hand, the leader of the member for Kingsford Smith’s own party in his own state, Mr Iemma, the Premier, who sat alongside of Mr Rudd at the Labor Party conference only weeks ago, has announced that he is looking at establishing a new coal-fired power station. Of course, he previously criticised the member for Kingsford Smith, saying that, in our fight to save the planet, we ought to be sure we do not destroy the country.

What does Labor stand for? Labor stands for symbols, not substance. The Leader of the Opposition wants to have a 60 per cent unilateral cut in emissions by mid-century. We all agree that we need a big cut in global emissions by mid-century, or at least in the course of this century, but for Australia to make that cut without regard to the actions of other countries would be as destructive as it would be futile and it would be sending exactly the wrong message—sending the wrong message to the country that the Leader of the Opposition claims to understand. It would be sending a message to China to the effect of saying: ‘Don’t worry, the developed world will continue cutting; you don’t have to do anything.’ The world cannot achieve the cuts in emissions that it needs without the engagement of the major developing and rapidly industrialising countries like China. The Australian government’s approach is one that recognises the reality of the greenhouse challenge and is taking the measures and developing the technology that will enable the world to meet it.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Economy

Mr COSTELLO (Higgins—Treasurer) (3.12 pm)—Mr Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the chair to add to an answer.

The SPEAKER—The Treasurer may proceed.

Mr COSTELLO—I wish to make it clear that in the answer I was talking about the fact that the Treasury estimate of revenue from
mining companies over eight years was $22 billion compared with the estimates that the Leader of the Opposition was making, which were 10 times that amount.

**DOCUMENTS**

Mr McGauran (Gippsland—Deputy Leader of the House) (3.13 pm)—Documents are tabled as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members earlier today. Details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*. I move:

That the House take note of the following documents:


Debate (on motion by Mr Albanese) adjourned.

**QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER**

Questions in Writing

Mr Georganas (3.13 pm)—Mr Speaker, under standing order 105(b) I ask that you write to the relevant ministers and seek reasons why the following questions in writing have not been answered: 3799, 3800, 4905, 4908, 5321 and 5396.

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

Questions in Writing

Ms Bird—Mr Speaker, under the same standing order I ask you to write to the Treasurer regarding question No. 507 from 8 February 2005—not difficult, just asking whether he has visited my electorate—and 1139 on 10 May 2005 to the Prime Minister regarding family impact statements in cabinet submissions.

The SPEAKER—I thank the member for Cunningham and I will follow up her request.

**BUDGET 2007-08**

Mr Albanese (Grayndler) (3.14 pm)—I refer to comments of the Prime Minister in question time saying that Steve Lewis and Samantha Maiden never get things wrong. I seek leave to table an article from 21 March, page 1 of the *Australian* headed ‘Trust running out for arrogant PM’.

Leave granted.

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

Education

The SPEAKER—I have received a letter from the honourable member for Perth proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government’s failure to underpin the prosperity of future generations by ignoring the need for a comprehensive long-term education strategy for the nation.

I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

More than the number of members required by the standing orders having risen in their places—

Mr Stephen Smith (Perth) (3.15 pm)—What a surprise! Eleven long years of complacency, neglect and blame shifting, with four months to go before an election, and suddenly the government discovers an interest in education. What a surprise! No prizes for guessing why in the budget on Tuesday night the government trumpeted its so-called education credentials. For 11 long years it has failed to invest properly in education at every level and has allowed, at every level, our competitive position with other countries to slip. Now, with four months to go until an election, suddenly the
government is taking an interest. For 11 long
years it has done nothing and now, suddenly,
it has taken an interest. The only reason for it
doing that is that it is a political fix for an
election—a John Howard political fix, a po-
litical hoax, a political smokescreen.

The attitude of the Prime Minister and the
Liberal Party is that, if they win the next
election, that is it for education. What they
have announced in the budget will be the end
of it, because it serves their political end. It
has nothing to do with a long-term enduring
commitment to increasing investment in
education at every level, raising standards of
education at every level and increasing our
competitiveness in education at every
level—not just on the state by state level but
at the national level compared with the edu-
cational levels of other nations, particularly
our regional competitors.

The single most important thing we can
do to continue to be internationally competi-
tive, to continue to be a prosperous nation
and to continue to have a good lifestyle for
future generations is to invest in the educa-
tion, skills and training of our people and our
workforce. For 11 long years the government
has been underinvesting. It started by slash-
ing and burning and then has run an ap-
proach that essentially says, ‘If there’s a
problem with standards, that has nothing to
do with us; blame a state, teacher or a trade
union. If there is a failure to invest in a uni-
versity, it has nothing to do with us; blame a
vice-chancellor or blame a university.’ The
government’s whole approach has been to
reduce Commonwealth investment in educa-
tion at every level—and then, with four
months to go, what a surprise! There is only
one reason that it has acted different at this
point in the cycle. That is because throughout
this year the Leader of the Opposition, Mr
Rudd, and Labor have made education such a
central focus, such a central issue.

Historically, Australians have regarded
education as an important social issue, where
an individual, a young Australian, is given
the given the chance to maximise his or her
potential—the chance to finish school, the
chance to go to TAFE and get some voca-
tional education and training, the chance to
go to a university. It gives young Australians,
particularly those from disadvantaged or
lower socioeconomic families, the chance to
get ahead and to break out of a cycle. It re-
mains the case—and I might be old-
fashioned—that the single most important
thing we can do for a young Australian is to
give them the chance of a good education.
That gives them the chance to get ahead in
life—and that applies particularly to young
Australians from disadvantaged or lower
socioeconomic families.

However, in the face of international or
global competition, education is now front
and centre a mainstream economic issue and
we need to view it in that light. One of our
successful industries at the moment is the
minerals and petroleum resources industry,
and that is because that industry for a long
time has known that it is competing interna-
tionally. We are now in an international
competition when it comes to investment in
education.

Our starting point is to increase the level
of investment at every point in the cycle:
early childhood education, primary educa-
tion, secondary education, vocational educa-
tion and training, universities and then
on-the-job training or professional develop-
ment. That is the difference between the La-
bor Party and the Liberal Party. That is the
difference between the opposition and the
government. We have a long-term enduring
commitment to that approach to education;
the government is about having a short-term
political fix in the face of an election in four
months time. There is the odd notion that the
Prime Minister here is being just a little too
desperate to try to claw back some credentials that are long since lost and have long since gone and have long since faded away.

Despite what the government has done in the budget, it remains the case that our investment in education—comparing it with those investments that are being made internationally—lags behind and does not match the investments of our competitors. Most compellingly, the government’s own budget papers show that, in the budget period from 2005-06 to 2010-11—the budget funding cycle—education spending goes from 7.4 per cent of total spending by the government in 2005-06 to 7.7 per cent in 2010-11. Even after what the government has done on budget night, over its period of the budget papers, over the period of the outlay years—the forward estimates—this government is responsible for a declining investment in education spending. That is why this is just a short-term political fix to try to slide the government through the election. If it wins the election, that will be the finish of any interest it has in education. If Labor wins the election, there is a long-term enduring commitment. Tonight, in his budget reply, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Rudd, will show that there is much more to be done in this area—not just in the weeks and months but in the years ahead.

There are a couple of central points that can be made. Firstly, our secondary school retention rates have stagnated for a number of years at about 75 per cent. We saw a substantial increase from the early eighties to the mid-nineties and then there was a stagnation at about 75 per cent. We need to be doing much more to increase that secondary school retention rate. Why is that? It is because all of the evidence, research and statistics show that, if a young Australian—or young student anywhere—completes secondary school, they have a much better chance of going on to vocational education and training, to university or to a semiskilled or skilled job in the workforce, which will give them a much better chance of being productive in the future.

We can find nothing in the budget for early childhood education. The positive early childhood education proposal from Labor is just one illustration of the sort of positive initiatives that can be taken up. Just this year, in addition to the proposal of half a billion dollars for early childhood education, we have seen a $110 million proposal to: encourage young Australians to both study and teach maths; ensure that we get greater consistency in our national curriculum by having a national curriculum board; raise the standards of our curriculum; and get national consistency in the core discipline areas of maths, English, science and history. We have a proposal to substantially improve and increase our literacy and numeracy performance with Labor’s literacy and numeracy plan. These are just half a dozen measures which Labor has announced this year to improve standards and to give young Australians better opportunities.

The debate this week, post budget, has centred upon universities. Let us just understand what the government has done when it comes to universities. When the government came to office in 1996, 60 per cent of the revenue which supported universities came from the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth in 1996 discharged its obligations to support its universities by effectively funding universities with 60 per cent of the funding pie. That funding is now 40 per cent of the pie. We have seen a drop under the Howard government in the funding of our universities from 60 per cent to 40 per cent. The Commonwealth contribution is down. How has that been replaced? That has been replaced in a couple of key areas: firstly, by massively increasing the HECS of individual students—massively increasing their individual
HECS debts and also massively increasing the national HECS debt. Secondly, there has been an increase in reliance by universities on fees from full fee paying overseas students and full fee paying domestic students. The proportion of revenue that universities derive from fees and charges increased from 13 per cent in 1996 to 24 per cent in 2004. The Commonwealth contribution under the Liberal Party, the Prime Minister and his government, is down. The HECS contribution for students and the debt burden of the nation are up. Fees from domestic full fee paying students are up. Fees from overseas students are up. After 11 years of neglect and of finding excuses for not making that investment and discharging that obligation, and with four months to go until the election, up comes the government with a desperate attempt to pretend it has been interested.

Let us have a look at one of the proposals to put it in context. In September last year, the minister's own department did work on infrastructure in our universities and recorded a $1.2 billion maintenance deficiency. The government says that the $5 billion Higher Education Endowment Fund solves all the problems of the world. We support the notion of a fund, but that fund will provide about $300 million worth of income. We have 38 universities, so, if you divide the $300 million by 38, that is less than $10 million per university. And we know that a decent modern infrastructure project for a university will cost anywhere between $50 million and $100 million. The ANU in the city of Canberra, just down the road from here, has a new medical research facility which cost $125 million. That is why the so-called endowment does not make up for the $1.2 billion neglect in infrastructure and maintenance which the government has allowed to occur.

The national accumulated HECS debt increased from $4.5 billion in 1996 to more than $9 billion in 2003 and to $13 billion in 2006, while personal HECS debt on average for individual students went up from $2,000 in 1996 to $8,500 in 2003 and $10,000 in 2006. I have made the distinction between 1996, 2003 and 2006 because it was in 2003 that the government last allowed universities to substantially increase the HECS contribution. Yesterday in question time I asked the minister what she had to say about the fact that, under the budget, students studying accounting, economics and commerce would have their HECS contributions increased by $1,215 a year. When you work on the basis that we have about 55,000 students in those disciplines and cascade that through the system, that is just under $200 million in increased accumulated HECS debt burden. The minister—and she repeated this on the 7.30 Report last night—said, 'That has nothing to do with us. It is the universities who charge.' The last time the government increased the HECS caps for universities, all but one university took advantage and we saw a substantial increase in HECS. So we know now that there will be a substantial increase in the debt burden for those students.

There is so much more to be done when it comes to education. The Leader of the Opposition tonight will show that and it will be illustrated again in the weeks and months ahead. There is a stark contrast here. The government's view of and approach to education at every level is complacency, neglect, underinvestment, blaming others, and cost and blame shifting. But four months from an election, in a desperate attempt to slide over the fact that this is occurring against our national interest, we see the decisions made in the budget. I do not think that in the end the community will be fooled. The community want what Labor offers, which is a long-term, enduring commitment to improving our education standards and increasing our
investment in education at every level. *(Time expired)*

**Ms JULIE BISHOP** (Curtin—Minister for Education, Science and Training and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues) (3.30 pm)—The budget highlights the government’s commitment to education. It builds on what we already have achieved and it is investing significant funds into education, but all that we announced in this year’s budget is only possible due to the Howard government’s management of our economy.

This is the government that has provided real opportunities for young Australians. The unemployment rate is at 4.4 per cent. That is the lowest rate since 1974. In my own state of Western Australia it is at 2.7 per cent. Young people have an opportunity to get a job under the Howard government. Real wages have increased by close to 20 per cent. Importantly, we have now paid back Labor’s $96 billion debt. That means the Australian government no longer has to find close to $9 billion each year to fund the interest payments on that $96 billion debt. This sort of funding can go to schools, universities, roads and health.

Labor’s contention today is that we have failed to deliver for future generations. When Labor were at the helm, more than one million Australians were unemployed. When Labor were at the helm, the highest number of eligible applicants for university—100,000 eligible students—missed out on a place. You could not get a job and you could not get into university. Labor took hope away from millions of Australians. And all through this, the member for Perth was the economics adviser to then Prime Minister Paul Keating. He oversaw failed policy after failed policy. The member for Perth was part of the team that gave the Australian people the ‘recession we had to have’. What opportunities were Labor providing then? What was their long-term plan for the future? All we got from Labor was budget deficits and government debt. Labor would not know a budget surplus if it jumped up and bit them. It is breathtaking hypocrisy for Labor to talk about future prosperity and long-term planning for this nation. Labor’s only long-term plan was to mortgage the future of the country and leave a debt for others to pay off.

Labor’s record on education is weak and flimsy. Sure, they stole the phrase from Mark Latham, but they promised an education revolution. It has turned out to be just hot air. The Australian people will never forget that the member for Perth and the Leader of the Opposition are the authors of ‘noodle nation’. Who could forget this discredited and confusing policy? Noodle nation was all the work of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Perth. Labor are the party that announced the schools hit list policy. In its first iteration, this policy would have cut $520 million in funding from 178 schools in Australia representing 160,000 students. This is what Labor in government does to education. The Deputy Speaker might be interested to know that Labor’s hit list policy lives on. The Leader of the Opposition has tried to walk away from the list, but his current position still sees the opposition winding back expenditure on Catholic and independent schools.

We ought to know what the Leader of the Opposition is like on education policy and we can have a glimpse of this. Professor Ken Wiltshire, who was appointed by the Leader of the Opposition when he was in the Queensland Public Service to advise on education issues, described the implementation of the proposed reforms by the Leader of the Opposition as ‘shoddy’. He confirmed that the Leader of the Opposition caved in to the teachers unions and failed to implement key reforms to improve school standards. I think
it is important for Australian families to know Labor’s record. Do not listen to what they say; watch what they actually do. Labor’s record shows that they will not stand up to the unions and they will not make the hard decisions to improve standards in schools to ensure young Australians receive the best possible education.

We have seen from the Leader of the Opposition a couple of half-baked, uncosted education policies. One of their harebrained ideas was to align all school holidays across the country. This was immediately discredited by business and the tourism industry: it would cost jobs and it would create chaos on the roads and in the air when all the families went on holiday at the same time. Then they dropped it. Labor are policy frauds. And it continues today. Labor are all over the shop on full fee paying places. One minute they are going to abolish full fee paying places, then they are going to allow them, then they are going to leave the door open, then they are going to decide in the lead-up to the election. The university sector and students deserve to know Labor’s policy on this now.

Tough decisions are required in government. Labor continue to walk on both sides of the street on so many issues. We have seen them say one thing to business on industrial relations and then do the exact opposite when they are told to by the unions. In education they will promise schools, parents and families one thing but do exactly the opposite when they are told to by the education unions.

Only the Howard government has been able to lock in the gains that we have made over the last 11 years and realise the potential of this country. The budget is an example of this. The Treasurer deserves to be proud of what he announced on Tuesday night: an extra $3.5 billion in funding for schools and universities, real reforms and an endowment fund for universities for the future. It has been extremely well received by parents, teachers, business and, most importantly, the education sector. Let me give you some examples of the responses. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry said:

This is the education budget the business community was looking for. The government gets an A for its education and training reforms.

The President of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee said:

It is fantastic. It is just a really great outcome for the sector and far beyond our expectations. The three areas I’ve been arguing for have all been met. Increased dollars per student, student support was met, and in the case of capital works and buildings fund, that $5 billion more than meets our expectations and so it is a spectacular outcome for the university sector.

That is not me saying that; that is not the Treasurer. It is the head of the Vice-Chancellors Committee. According to the Australian:

The universities’ Group of Eight chairman Glyn Davis last night hailed the higher education spending as a major breakthrough. “This package will be hugely welcomed by the university sector,” said Professor Davis, who is vice-chancellor of the University of Melbourne.

The vice-chancellor of Sydney university, Gavin Brown, said:

We really do welcome the endowment fund initiative.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, John Hay, said:

I was delighted to see the endowment fund was set up, and the initial $5 billion is very welcome.

Vice-Chancellor Alan Robson from the University of Western Australia said:

I am pleased to see assistance for students, particularly for young people doing postgraduate degrees, and grant assistance for mature students, and more Commonwealth learning scholarships.

The Vice-Chancellor of RMIT University, Margaret Gardner, said:
As a package, what it says is it is important that we invest in education. This is our future, and that is a positive.

The University of Tasmania, according to the Launceston Examiner, ‘has reacted with glee to the federal government’s budget. Vice-Chancellor Darryl Le Grew said the university was thrilled with increased recurrent funding of up to 10 per cent and the establishment of a $5 billion infrastructure endowment fund.’ According to the Age:

The response from Swinburne University vice-chancellor Ian Young was typical. He said the changes assured a “visionary investment” in the future of Australian higher education: “It is a massive step forward in accommodating the needs of universities and students now and in the future.”

But what was Labor’s response? In the face of overwhelming enthusiasm for the Australian government’s budget, Labor’s reaction was typically surly and typically churlish. The member for Perth said it ‘wasn’t enough’ and Labor ‘would do more’. Oh, no, Labor would never do more, because the endowment fund comes from a budget surplus. The Labor Party operate budget deficits. The Labor Party would not know a budget surplus. The last time the Labor Party were in government, they ran up a massive $96 billion debt. We had to find $9 billion, as I said, to pay off the interest. They left us with a $10 billion budget deficit. You cannot create an endowment fund of $5 billion out of a budget deficit.

The only threat to the endowment fund is a Labor government. They have already shown that they will raid the Future Fund. They would raid this endowment fund and they would not be able to produce a budget surplus so that we could put more money into the endowment fund. The Australian government, the Howard government, has already committed to putting future budget surplus amounts into the endowment fund.

Since coming to office 11 years ago the Howard government have provided strong leadership on education. We have provided record funding to schools: a 118 per cent increase in funding for state government schools alone—and these are state government schools that are meant to be funded, managed and run by state governments. We have provided record funding to universities. It is an increase of 26 per cent in real terms since 1996. These budget measures mean there will be a further 10 per cent increase for the higher education sector over the next three or four years.

This government is building on the reforms of Minister Kemp when he focused on the need to improve literacy and numeracy standards in our schools. It is building on the reforms of Minister Brendan Nelson in the higher education sector. The 2004 Backing Australia’s Future package has made the sector better off by more than $11 billion over a decade and now this budget invests a further $3.5 billion in schools and universities and a $5 billion endowment fund.

We are committed to choice in education. The Howard government believe that education is the fundamental, essential and enduring building block upon which we can build a prosperous economy and a very strong, secure nation. That is why education, science and training were the centrepiece of this year’s budget. It is the largest budget for the Education, Science and Training portfolio in our nation’s history. It reflects the Howard government’s commitment to the future prosperity and the security of this country. But this is only possible due to the economic management of the Howard government.

As I said, a centrepiece of the federal budget was the higher education endowment fund. That is going to provide an ongoing perpetual growth fund for our universities. We have been able to put in $5 billion from
the budget surplus of this year and we are going to make further contributions. The fund will be invested. The projected dividend to be distributed is based on a very conservative estimate of a six per cent return, but even that would provide over $900 million for universities over three years from 2008. Some experts are predicting that the fund could return maybe 10 or 12 per cent. That would be an enormous investment in universities with billions of dollars flowing to the sector.

What the member for Perth omits—or perhaps he does not understand higher education policy—is that the Australian government already commit significant funds to capital works and research infrastructure. The endowment fund will provide more funding, but we already commit funding to capital works and research infrastructure for our universities. Last year we provided $600 million in funding for our universities for capital programs and research infrastructure. The member for Perth refers to the ANU needing $125 million for a new medical school. Last year the Commonwealth provided $54 million for that project. We have already invested $54 million, and now we have this endowment fund for universities to be able to apply for more funding for capital and research infrastructure.

One of the great things about the endowment fund is that it will also encourage public philanthropic investment, as donations to the fund will be tax deductible. This single unprecedented initiative will chart the future course of universities in this country for the 21st century.

We know that Labor will want to steal from the Future Fund. We know that they cannot produce surpluses. All the while, the Howard government is investing in higher education. But also we have implemented a range of reforms that will assist our universities. We have increased the number of Commonwealth scholarships so that over 12,000 scholarships will be available every year. We have increased the number of Commonwealth supported places so that virtually every eligible student in this country can find a Commonwealth supported place at university.

We have also increased the capacity for students to support themselves while they are at university. We have extended rent assistance to Austudy recipients. That means about 11,000 students aged over 25 will get rent assistance. For the first time, we have extended the eligibility of youth allowance and Austudy to students undertaking master’s degrees by coursework. So, under the Howard government, we have seen a massive increase in funding for places. There are now more students at university than at any time in our history. We have delivered a budget package that will give our universities the freedom, the flexibility and the funding to become world-class institutions for decades to come.

I want the phrase ‘Australian universities’ to be a byword for excellence on an international scale. This budget opens up a new era for our universities, with the first wave of reforms to support the efforts of the university sector to diversify, to specialise and to respond to labour market trends. The Howard government has a strong record on providing Australians with choice and opportunity in education. (Time expired)

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS (Canberra) (3.46 pm)—It seems quite strange that for some time we on this side of the chamber used to get criticised by those on the other side of the chamber because we talked about universities. We have just heard 15 minutes of nothing but universities. I just reflect upon that as I begin my comments.

CHAMBER
Education is central to a prosperous future for Australia. Education is about fairness. Education is the pathway to prosperity. It is the pathway out of poverty. It is the pathway to a career, to security and to a decent standard of living. Education is the core challenge for any economy. Labor has always demonstrated an enduring commitment to this issue, emphasised again by our leadership on the issue with the commitment of a Rudd Labor government to an ‘education revolution’. On saying those words ‘education revolution’, I am immediately reminded, sadly but amusingly, of Crocodile Dundee. It was Crocodile Dundee who said, ‘That’s not a knife; this is a knife.’ It is the Prime Minister who is saying, ‘That’s not an education revolution; this is a genuine education revolution.’ I have to say to the Prime Minister that this issue is far more important than trying to put some copycat behaviour as against Crocodile Dundee. It is a far more important issue than one-upmanship. It is a far more important issue than singing that old Broadway song Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better. It is a serious issue that should stand on its own as a serious issue of government.

Those opposite have for 11 years given the pretence that they believe in education, but they have really done nothing to formulate a longstanding view to take education into the 21st century in this country. Despite what the Minister for Education, Science and Training has just claimed, those opposite have underinvested in our schools, our colleges, our TAFEs and our universities. As my colleague the member for Perth said a few moments ago, we have seen 60 per cent Commonwealth funding reduced to 40 per cent Commonwealth funding for universities alone in the time this government has been in power.

Five minutes before midnight, in what I can only describe as a cynical act of desperation with an election coming on—and, I believe, in total reaction to Labor’s leadership on this important challenge to build a world-class education system for the future—the government have put together some headline-grabbing education commitments. Whilst we on this side of the chamber welcome the announcement of some of these measures, they only begin the task of addressing the challenge of filling the education hole—an education hole this government has dug for itself over the past 11 years and is now attempting to fill. In its latest budget, this government has continued to fail to present a vision to the Australian people—a comprehensive plan for education that will take our community well into the 21st century at all levels of education.

Let us briefly look at the government’s record on education spending. We continue to slip behind our competitors. Australia’s overall investment in education is 5.8 per cent of GDP—behind 17 other OECD economies, including Poland, Hungary and New Zealand. Despite the new measures in this budget, as the Prime Minister in this place conceded, funding for education as a proportion of total government expenditure is forecast to drop from 7.7 per cent of total spending in 2005-06 to 7.4 per cent in 2010-11. What does this budget do to address this? Let us take a look at a couple of the budget’s key education announcements.

We heard 15 minutes worth of description from the minister about the Higher Education Endowment Fund—an interesting proposal and one that in principle we do not really object to. But it is like the Christmas package: sometimes the wrapping is more exciting than what is inside it. The vice-chancellors and the university sector in general are saying that this is a welcome initiative. The minister quoted probably half a dozen of them as saying that it is far beyond their expectations. Of course it is, because, given this government’s behaviour over re-
cent years in relation to funding for universities. Their expectations have been made so low.

Let us look at the $700 vouchers to help with literacy and numeracy. I notice that the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals are most upset about this. They are not at all impressed. They say:
The tutorial vouchers are a complete waste of money. Why not put the money directly into schools so we could lower class sizes, have more targeted literacy and numeracy programs? And then we wouldn’t have these problems.

In other words, why put it in another glitzy package? Why not put the money straight into the education system and allow the system to use it? The Primary Schools Principals Association says:
The $50,000 reward for schools for improvement in literacy and numeracy would reach less than three per cent of schools.

In relation to technical trade colleges, there will be three new colleges in addition to the past commitment for 25 colleges—from which we are yet to see any graduates. By the government’s own admission, Australia faces a shortage of 200,000 skilled workers over the next five years. The government’s plan for new Australian technical colleges will provide opportunities for fewer than 10,000 students by 2010.

What doesn’t this budget address? Most seriously, in my opinion, early childhood education is the foundation of our education system. What is in the budget for it? Virtually nothing. The government continues to ignore the body of national and international evidence that highlights the importance of a strong early childhood education.

The government is doing nothing, in my view, to improve affordability or accessibility to a university education for young Australians. The government has increased the HECS contribution rate for accounting, administration, economics and commerce degrees from the present annual rate of $7,118 to the highest annual rate of $8,333. In effect that means from 1 January next year universities will be able to charge new students an additional $1,215, should they decide to do so. We have heard the government say it is not compulsory. The reality is this: the last time the Howard government allowed HECS to be increased, all but a handful of universities quickly passed on significant increases in fees to their students. The government has to face and admit the fact that that will be the reality.

What else is this government up to? Again it is the stick and not the carrot—no commitment to effective, constructive collaboration. Let me give an instance concerning the ACT. I understand that, when education ministers met with the federal education minister in Darwin three weeks ago, none of these proposed changes—to universities, for instance—were even raised. There was a throw-away line in the budget papers about external assessment for year 12. I imagine the people in the ACT would be a little unsure as to whether the Commonwealth wants the cessation of our extremely successful continuous assessment model. Our college system is extremely successful, and continuous assessment is part of the success of our students. I understand the ACT government is very concerned that the ACT does not have a large enough population to support a model of designated selective entry high schools, for example.

On selective high schools, we in Canberra have programs within our schools at the moment, such as gifted and talented programs, which can be accessed by those particular students, but that does not prevent those students who may not be so gifted or talented from attending those schools. There are issues to do with equity of access to public schools, and we believe we have the mix
right. So why are the government demanding that we think about selective high schools—possibly with a connection that you do it or you do not get any funding? One could not be blamed for having that belief, given this government’s attitude. What we need if we are to achieve the best outcomes for students and their families is genuine collaboration between the Commonwealth and the states and territories. But this government prefers to grandstand, not to work collaboratively—to be almost megalomaniacs with the power and money that they have.

Federal Labor is committed in government to what we call a true education revolution. What will we do? We will support parental choice by funding all schools—whether government, non-government, religious or secular—based on need and fairness. We will set up a national curriculum board to develop a rigorous, consistent and quality curriculum for all Australian students. There is much that we will do. For example, we will invest $450 million to provide four-year-olds with 15 hours a week, for 40 weeks, of high-quality early childhood education—the very beginning of an education process for our children. We will provide up to $200 million for 260 new childcare centres based on school sites. There is absolutely no question that the budget has been filled with glitz and glamour at the last minute. What the Australian people really want is a vision for a high-quality accessible and equitable education system for everyone into the future. *(Time expired)*

Mr HARTSUYSKER (Cowper) (3.56 pm)—I welcome the opportunity to participate in this matter of public importance debate. I note that the member for Canberra was somewhat critical of the area of education in this very fine budget that this government has handed down. She will get her opportunity to pass judgement on it when we vote on it in this House, so enough of the hot air and rhetoric. If it is as bad as she says it is, she can vote against it, as can the other members opposite. If it is as bad as they say it is, they can vote against it. They can vote down all of the measures. They can vote down the $5 billion fund to support our universities. They can vote against giving a tutorial voucher to young children who are struggling at school. They can vote against new Australian technical colleges. They can vote against the whole range of measures. Rather than hiding behind all the hot air and rhetoric, they can stand up and be counted on this. It is quite hypocritical to say, ‘We don’t agree with all of this,’ and then vote for all of it. We will see where those opposite in this House really stand and we will note what they really think, especially if they really believe what they have been saying.

It is interesting that we are witnessing a new-found interest by the Australian Labor Party in the future wealth and prosperity of this country. Only yesterday we had the member for Lilley, in the matter of public importance debate, raising the notion of Australia’s productivity growth. A party that supported unions and restrictive trade union practices for years and years has suddenly discovered the notion of improved productivity! Now we have the member for Perth venturing into the field of education. You need look no further than Tuesday’s budget to see this government’s commitment to education. But the thing is that education can very much be seen in terms of cause and effect. While education can create improved productivity, a stronger economy and improved society, the reverse is also true: a strong economy can create demand for education and training. It is interesting to note that plenty of people out there realise they have real opportunities in this economy and, as a result, want to upskill; they want to improve their qualifications. They want to participate in the Australia of 2007.
If you go back to the early nineties and Paul Keating’s Australia, you note it was a very different Australia indeed. If you go back to Paul Keating’s Australia and the recession he alleged we had to have, you note there was little hope and little prosperity and that there was despair amongst many in our community. In fact, unemployment in my electorate was sitting at around 20 per cent—over 20 per cent in some places. I can tell you there was not much productivity or prosperity amongst the unemployed. When I used to go down the street in my area and talk to young people, I noted they had no hope. They were in despair as they did not feel they had a future—and that is a very depressing prospect. We had Paul Keating telling the Australian people, ‘This is the recession we had to have; we’ve never had it so good,’ yet we had countless young people and old people thrown on the scrap heap—and those people were not rushing out to get training. There were very few apprenticeships. Perhaps there might have been the odd apprenticeship for someone working for mum or dad. The number of apprenticeships in my electorate has tripled since 1996. In those days, there was no opportunity and there was a lot less demand for training because people had no hope. Education creates opportunity and opportunity can create demand for education and training.

So what do the ALP do in their first detailed policy announcement? They produce an IR policy that turns the clock back 20 years and they go full speed ahead at destroying opportunity and taking Australia backwards. They want to reduce flexibility and somehow improve productivity. They want to reduce flexibility and somehow create opportunity. It just does not work. You cannot take the high ground on education and take the low road on labour market policy. Australia is a trillion dollar economy, and the Australian Labor Party’s shop steward driven economics just will not cut it in a one trillion dollar economy. It is more complicated than that.

This government is committed to education and training, and there is no clearer example of that commitment than the budget that was handed down on Tuesday night. The $5 billion Higher Education Endowment Fund is a brilliant new initiative. It resets the ground rules for education in this country. It is a visionary policy that will provide $912 million over three years from 2008-09 and will also provide for improved capital works at our universities.

The budget also provides an additional $556.9 million over four years to assist universities to simplify funding structures and provides additional funding for key disciplines, particularly in high-demand areas. The budget provides $211.2 million over four years to allow universities to adjust student numbers and course mixes to respond to demand. It is all about flexibility: flexibility in the labour market producing results and flexibility in the education market producing results. There is $208 million for a new Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund. There is $222 million to improve access to tertiary education for students by increasing the number of Commonwealth scholarships, extending the eligibility for rent assistance to Austudy recipients and extending the eligibility for youth allowance and Austudy to those undertaking approved master’s degrees by coursework.

There is no better way to improve the educational outcomes in our schools than to improve the quality of our teachers. This budget provides $77 million to assist in providing greater practicum experience for teachers. As chairman of the education inquiry, I can say that one of the key elements impeding teacher training is the difficulty that universities are having in placing practi-
cum students. This funding will certainly assist in this regard by helping universities to provide better practicum experience and to support their students when they are out getting that vital practical experience.

This budget also provides increased funding for teacher training, with the funding for teacher training courses increasing from $7,950 to $8,217. The budget encourages ongoing professional learning, with $101.7 million over four years to improve the quality of teaching in the major, important disciplines in our schools, such as literacy and numeracy, through the Australian summer schools initiative. This is a vitally important initiative, because for teachers, and for many other professionals, it is very much a case of lifelong learning. The completion of a bachelor’s degree is only the beginning of one’s journey to becoming a teacher. It is very important that teachers upskill, particularly in those areas which are rapidly changing. It is vitally important that our teachers—the teachers who are preparing our children for the future—are totally up to speed and on the leading edge of the latest developments.

There is $457 million for literacy and numeracy vouchers to assist children in years 3, 5 and 7. I heard the member for Canberra berating this idea and dragging it down. What is wrong with assisting children who are struggling after they have been tested in years 3, 5 or 7? Why should we not specifically assist children who are struggling? You can always deploy resources in different ways, but to spread that funding right across the education system could well mean that those same children would again miss out and fall through the cracks. This is very much about identifying those students who are struggling and giving them the sort of targeted help that is going to make their school experience easy. If kids are struggling at school from an early age, they are far more likely to fall through the cracks as they get older. If we can intervene at an early stage, build their literacy and numeracy skills and make going to school a happier, easier and more fulfilling experience for them, they will enjoy a far better journey through the education system and they will grow up to be far more productive adults. It is a real win-win situation, and I was disgusted to hear the member for Canberra denigrating what is an excellent initiative—one that is going to benefit our young people and bear fruit very rapidly.

There are also $50,000 grants for schools that demonstrate a sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes. This is a very worthwhile initiative and one that we should be supporting. I will be interested to see if the members opposite support it. Enough of the hot air and the rhetoric, we will see how they vote on the day.

This government is very much focused on building our trade skills base. We recently saw the Skills for the Future program and the establishment of Australian technical colleges. This budget builds on that. There are to be more Australian technical colleges, $1,000 of support for apprentices in years 1 and 2, and $500 skills vouchers. The list is virtually endless; it goes on and on. This fine budget reinforces our education commitment and will produce great outcomes.

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (4.06 pm)—I can assure the member for Cowper that we on this side of the House understand fully that investing in education is both an investment in our children’s future and an investment in the future prosperity of Australia. We also know that investing in education, skills and training is about preparing Australia for the economic and social challenges that lie ahead. So I say to the member for Cowper, who is leaving the room: after a decade of underinvestment and neglect by...
the Howard government, it is Labor, not John Howard, that has put education back on the national agenda and at the front and centre of public debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Barresi)—The member will refer to members by their correct title—by their seat.

Ms VAMVAKINOU—Labor has done this through its ‘Education Revolution’ platform. At its core, the platform identifies education as a key building block in securing Australia’s economic future. It draws on Labor’s longstanding commitment to education as one of the most important pathways through which all Australians, no matter where they come from, are given the opportunity to start life on an equal footing and strive for self-betterment.

The Australian people know when their government is playing catch-up, with policies made on the run for short-term political gain, and that is precisely what the government’s budget announcements on education amount to. Whilst education spending has increased on average by 48 per cent amongst all the other OECD countries, in Australia it has fallen by seven per cent since John Howard became Prime Minister. Similarly, whereas higher education spending per student has gone up on average by six per cent among OECD countries, in Australia it has actually fallen by six per cent. These figures speak for themselves. They clearly delineate the massive gap that exists between words and action when it comes to the Howard government’s abysmal record on education and tell us that any ‘education revolution’ put forward by the Howard government is an education revolution in name only—and one of sheer convenience.

Under the Howard government’s watch, Australia has tumbled to last place among OECD countries when it comes to investing in early childhood education. And after all the pomp and ceremony of Tuesday’s budget blows over, Australia will still be in last place. In contrast, Labor’s Early Childhood Education Plan will, amongst other things, give every four-year-old in Australia the right to 15 hours of early childhood education a week, for up to 40 weeks per year, delivered by a qualified teacher. In contrast, the budget provides only a $700 private tuition voucher for children who fail to achieve national literacy and numeracy benchmarks in years 3, 5 and 7.

Seven-hundred-dollar literacy and numeracy vouchers are not the answer to building an early childhood education framework in Australia. Just how far, you have to ask, will $700 really go? And why wait until grades 3, 5 or 7 before trying to identify and address potential learning problems? They need to be addressed at that critical stage of preschool education. Rather, as anyone who is interested in education knows, the solution is to invest earlier in Australia’s education system and build up its capacity, services and programs to avoid at a later stage the literacy and numeracy problems which the government purports it will fix with these vouchers.

The Howard government now claims that it has an education revolution of its own. But, at a time when Australia is experiencing a chronic skills shortage crisis, how can you have an education revolution that sidesteps Australia’s TAFE colleges altogether? Over the next five years, Australia faces a shortage of 200,000 skilled workers. TAFE colleges make up 70 per cent of all vocational education and training in Australia—that is, they play a key and fundamental role in skilling-up Australia’s future workforce—but this budget provides no additional recurrent or infrastructure funding for TAFE colleges.

Labor has also consistently argued for a significant increase in recurrent and infrastructure funding for the higher education
sector. Commonwealth recurrent funding for Australian universities stood at 0.9 per cent of GDP in 1996. And after Tuesday’s budget, recurrent funding to universities will still make up only 0.6 per cent of our GDP. This gives some indication of just how bad the Howard government’s funding record has been over the last decade.

Today, students face a university system where demand for university places far outstrips the number of places actually available. They are faced with rising HECS fees and record levels of HECS debt. In my electorate of Calwell alone, students owe a staggering $58.5 million in HECS debts. And after Tuesday’s budget, HECS fees for students studying—(Time expired)

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie) (4.11 pm)—The only revolutionary thing about Labor’s education policy is that it continues to go around in circles. This is a classic case of ‘black is white’ or ‘the earth is flat’ from the Labor Party. The fact is that Labor is stung because the coalition has delivered a stronger education budget than Labor had planned to deliver itself. I am sure that they have been scratching around in the backrooms for the last two days trying to up the ante, but this is no doubt a stronger education budget than they had initially planned themselves. Their view that they are superior on education issues has been seriously undermined by the budget on Tuesday night—a view, I might say, that is as wrong as many of the other delusions they hold. Let us leave their fairyland and look at the facts regarding education funding.

The first fact is that the budget includes a massive boost of $3.5 billion in education spending. And despite the nonsense we have heard from the other side, it is worth pointing out that education spending in Australia as a percentage of GDP has grown from 5.5 per cent to 5.8 per cent over the past 10 years—a growing proportion of a rapidly growing GDP. We are spending far more than Labor were spending when they left office.

This $3.5 billion boost in education will lift standards right through the spectrum from primary to higher education, help all young Australians achieve their potential, continue to encourage young Australians into technical education and help our universities become world leaders in research and teaching. In the higher education sector, in addition to the recurrent and capital funding, the main feature of this budget is the $5 billion that will go into the Higher Education Endowment Fund—a fund that will be added to year after year as the government delivers surplus after surplus.

It is worth pointing out that there would have been no way in the world that Labor would have been able to establish an endowment fund, because they could not run surpluses. And if Labor is returned to office, there is no way in the world that they would be able to continue to add to the endowment fund, because they would quickly turn the budget from surplus back into deficit. The only way this fund is made possible is by the running of the surpluses that are a result of this government being able to correctly and competently manage the economy.

The other thing worth pointing out is that this endowment fund will attract private sector investment as well. So it will very quickly grow because of continued commitments by this government and the private sector. It will steadily grow to the point of being able to provide a real boost to capital funding for our universities.

This announcement has been warmly welcomed right across the higher education sector. I could quote vice-chancellor after vice-chancellor but, to sum up, the President of the Australian Vice-Chancellor’s Committee, Professor Gerard Sutton, said, ‘The univer-
The university sector is thrilled with the budget, which met the committee’s three requests: student support, dollars per student and the establishment of an endowment fund for university capital works. He also said, ‘This is spectacular for the university sector.’ He did not say, ‘It’s adequate,’ or, ‘It’s a bit better than we expected,’ or ‘It’s okay.’ He said, ‘This is spectacular for the university sector; there’s no doubt about it.’ Notwithstanding everything we have heard from the other side, this is spectacular for the university sector. There is no doubt about it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Barresi)—Order! The time allocated for this debate has expired.

COMMITTEES
Selection Committee

Mr CAUSLEY (Page) (4.15 pm)—I present the report of the Selection Committee relating to the program of private members’ business on Monday, 21 May 2007.

Report relating to the consideration of committee and delegation reports and private members’ business on Monday, 21 May 2007

Pursuant to standing order 222, the Selection Committee has determined the order of precedence and times to be allotted for consideration of committee and delegation reports and private members’ business on Monday, 21 May 2007. The order of precedence and the allotments of time determined by the Committee are as follows:

COMMITTEE AND DELEGATION REPORTS

Presentation and statements

1 AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO UNITED KINGDOM AND POLAND


The Committee determined that statements on the report may be made — all statements to conclude by 12:40pm

Speech time limits —
Each Member — 5 minutes.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 5 mins]

2 STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMICS, FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Review of the Reserve Bank of Australia Annual Report 2006 (First Report)

The Committee determined that statements on the report may be made — all statements to conclude by 12:50pm

Speech time limits —
Each Member — 5 minutes.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 5 mins]

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Order of precedence

Notices

1 Mr Katter: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Trade Practices Act 1974 to regulate the relationship between horticulture growers, traders and retailers, and for related purposes. (Trade Practices Amendment (Horticultural Code of Conduct) Bill 2007). (Notice given 26 March 2007.)

Presenter may speak for a period not exceeding 5 minutes — pursuant to standing order 41.

2 Mr CREAN: to move:

That the House:

(1) notes that:

(a) strong and sustained export growth is essential for long-term economic pros-
perity and to providing more rewarding, well-paid jobs;

(b) despite the resources boom, Australia has been seriously and consistently underperforming in relation to its export sector;

(c) Australia’s average annual export growth rate over the past ten years is half that recorded under Labor;

(d) Australia has now experienced 60 consecutive monthly trade deficits—the longest period of trade deficit on record;

(e) the Government has failed to double the number of exporters by 2006, as it said it would; and

(f) at the same time, the Government has halved the level of financial assistance to Australian exporters; and

(2) calls on the Government to urgently adopt a comprehensive trade strategy to address the underperformance of Australia’s exports.

(Notice given 9 May 2007.)

Time allotted — 30 minutes.

Speech time limits —
Mover of motion — 5 minutes.
First Government Member speaking — 5 minutes.
Other Members — 5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.

3 Mr Hardgrave: to move:

That the House:

(1) acknowledges that for the first time, Green Roofs for Healthy Australian Cities has been discussed at a conference held in Brisbane;

(2) notes that there are 15 green roof infrastructure associations representing urban planners, educators, horticulturalists, engineers and architects, which have now formed the World Green Roof Infrastructure Network;

(3) notes that green roofs provide a range of benefits to help counter climate change through thermal insulation, storm-water management that causes lower run-off at peak times, reduction of ambient temperatures in cities, air and water cleaning effects, direct energy savings for government, visual beauty, habitat creation, long roof life and noise insulation;

(4) notes that green roof spaces allow food to be grown through hydroponic, aquaculture, aquaponics, vermiculture and insect culture, providing additional revenues for building owners and tenants; and

(5) encourages businesses and local authorities to seek the triple bottom line from environmental practices, as exemplified by the Ford Rouge Center in Dearborn, Michigan, USA.

(Notice given 15 February 2007.)

Time allotted — remaining private Members’ business time prior to 1.45 pm

Speech time limits —
Mover of motion — 5 minutes.
First Opposition Member speaking — 5 minutes.
Other Members — 5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.

4 Mr Quick: to move:

That the House:

(1) notes that:

(a) microcredit is a proven means of eradicating poverty and that research by the World Bank in 1998 found that 40 per cent of loan borrowers had moved out of poverty after four years;

(b) at the Microcredit Summit in Halifax, Canada in 2006, Australia endorsed the goal of having 175 million families receiving microcredit by 2015;
(c) if the Microcredit Summit goal was achieved, then about half the first goal of the Millennium Development Goals, which is to halve the number of people who live on less than a dollar a day, would be met;

(d) Australia spent $14.5 million on micro-credit in its overseas aid program in the 2005-2006 financial year, which was less than one per cent of the overseas aid budget; and

(e) the USA, which has funded microcredit longer than most countries, has established a current benchmark level of 1.25 per cent of the aid budget for micro-credit spending; and

(2) urges the Australian Government to follow through with its endorsement of the 2006 Microcredit Summit Goal with an increase in funding of microcredit to $40 million per year, or a level of 1.25 per cent of the aid budget, starting with the forthcoming Budget. (Notice given 26 February 2007.)

Time allotted —30 minutes.

Speech time limits —
Mover of motion —5 minutes.
First Government Member speaking —5 minutes.
Other Members —5 minutes each.
[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.

5 Mr Ciobo: to move:

That the House:

(1) acknowledges that 2007 has been chosen by the Australian Government as the Year of the Surf Lifesaver to mark the 100th anniversary of Surf Life Saving in Australia;

(2) notes the fundamental role surf lifesavers play in keeping Australia’s beaches safe and the 500,000 lives that have been saved on Australian beaches by our surf lifesavers over the past 100 years;

(3) commends the volunteering efforts of surf lifesavers who dedicate their time to help others and save lives;

(4) pays tribute to the surf lifesaving movement, which is the largest volunteer organisation of its kind in the country, consisting of 113,000 members, including 34,000 who actively patrol Australia’s beaches; and

(5) acknowledges the integral role of the Australian Government within Surf Life Saving Australia to provide a safe beach and aquatic environment. (Notice given 27 March 2007.)

Time allotted —remaining private Members’ business time.

Speech time limits —
Mover of motion —5 minutes.
First Opposition Member speaking —5 minutes.
Other Members —5 minutes each.
[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this matter should continue on a future day.


Publications Committee
Report

Mrs DRAPER (Makin) (4.16 pm)—I present the report of the Publications Committee sitting in conference with the Publications Committee of the Senate.


LIQUID FUEL EMERGENCY AMENDMENT BILL 2007

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

Dr STONE (Murray—Minister for Workplace Participation) (4.17 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

AUSTRALIAN WINE AND BRANDY CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) 2007

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

Dr STONE (Murray—Minister for Workplace Participation) (4.18 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

CONDOLENCES

Senator Jeannie Margaret Ferris

Report from Main Committee

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Barresi) (4.18 pm)—I have to report that the order of the day relating to the Prime Minister’s motion of condolence in connection with the death of Senator Jeannie Margaret Ferris has been debated in the Main Committee and is returned to the House. I present a certified copy of the motion. I understand it is the wish of the House to consider the matter forthwith. The question is that the motion be agreed to. I ask all honourable members to signify their approval by rising in their places.

Question agreed to, honourable members standing in their places.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (4.19 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker, on indulgence, I really did want an opportunity of extending condolences because of the outstanding work of Jeannie Ferris over a very long period. So many women around Australia have indicated to me that they see her death as a terrible loss. She was such a great advocate for so many women, particularly those women who have the sorts of health problems that she drew great attention to. I do not have much time in which to speak, but I do want to add my voice to all of those in the parliament who have indicated that we will miss not only her enormous energy, her verve and her happy way of always bringing people together but also her incredible, gutsy, personal fight and enormous courage in the face of what she had to withstand in the interests of so many of us.

COMMITTEES

Privileges Committee

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Barresi) (4.21 pm)—Mr Speaker has received advice from the Chief Opposition Whip that he has nominated Mr Snowdon to be a member of the Committee of Privileges in place of Ms AL Ellis.

Dr STONE (Murray—Minister for Workplace Participation) (4.20 pm)—by leave—I move:

That Ms AL Ellis be discharged from the Committee of Privileges and that, in her place, Mr Snowdon be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

Australian Crime Commission Committee

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Barresi) (4.21 pm)—Mr Speaker has received a mes-
sage from the Senate informing the House that Senator Parry has been appointed a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission and a member of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.

BROADCASTING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DIGITAL RADIO) BILL 2007
RADIO LICENCE FEES AMENDMENT BILL 2007
SOCIAL SECURITY AND VETERANS’ AFFAIRS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ONE-OFF PAYMENTS AND OTHER 2007 BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2007
SUPERANNUATION LAWS AMENDMENT (2007 BUDGET CO-CONTRIBUTION MEASURE) BILL 2007
EDUCATION SERVICES FOR OVERSEAS STUDENTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2007
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2007

Returned from the Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

GENE TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL 2007
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.

CORPORATIONS (NZ CLOSER ECONOMIC RELATIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2007
Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 March, on motion by Mr Pearce:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr PEARCE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (4.24 pm)—I return to my summing up remarks on the Corporations (NZ Closer Economic Relations) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. I began these remarks before question time. In 2005-06, bilateral trade with New Zealand amounted to nearly $20 billion. The third and fourth initiatives in this bill enhance the ACCC’s ability to share information with certain bodies whilst also ensuring the protection of sensitive information against inappropriate disclosures. These changes will greatly assist the ACCC and other bodies in efficiently and effectively enforcing the law and in regulating industries in what is becoming a more global marketplace. They will also assist in reducing the regulatory burden on business by reducing duplication in the collection of information and by enhancing cooperation and coordination between regulatory agencies. I welcome the recent review of the bill undertaken by the Senate Standing Committee on Economics. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for its timely consideration of the bill and its conclusion that the bill should be passed in its current form. In conclusion, the initiatives in this bill further support our close economic relations with New Zealand while reducing red tape and supporting the role of the ACCC in consumer protection and competition matters. The bill thereby further delivers on trans-Tasman integration for the benefit of all Australians.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr PEARCE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (4.25 pm)—by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

NATIVE TITLE AMENDMENT (TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2007

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 March, on motion by Mr Ruddock:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (4.25 pm)—I move:
That all words after “That” be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

“whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:

(1) notes that the vast majority of the amendments contained in the bill are uncontroversial and supports the intent of the bill to streamline and improve elements of the Native Title Act and the native title application process;

(2) calls on the government to:

(a) withdraw proposals which would retrospectively overturn the rights of native title holders; and

(b) hold consultations with native title holders about these matters;

(3) believes that it is appropriate that—as Native Title concerns questions of indigenous laws and culture—corporations that include non-Indigenous members not be permitted to act as Prescribed Bodies Corporate whose primary purpose is the administration of native title rights;

(4) believes that it is appropriate that the Federal Court be the only body that is entitled to appoint default Prescribed Bodies Corporate, and that the Act should reflect this; and

(5) acknowledges the need to provide statutory authority for the charging of fees by Prescribed Bodies Corporate, but calls upon the government to develop a more appropriate fee regime in consultation with stakeholders”.

The Native Title Amendment (Technical Amendments) Bill 2007 makes a raft of changes to the Native Title Act 1993. I will touch very briefly on the provisions of the bill before I proceed to outline Labor’s general support for the bill. We do have some areas where we have some concerns, and I will go through those.

Schedule 1 will introduce the majority of the changes in this bill. These include amendments to the process for future Indigenous land use agreements and the making and resolving of native title claims, changes to the obligations of the registrar and a range of other changes. Schedule 2 simplifies a range of procedures relating to representative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies, ensuring that legal obligations on those bodies are not duplicated, improving processes for reviewing decisions and clarifying the process for transferring documents from a superseded body to a replacement body. Schedule 3 introduces a range of amendments to the operation of prescribed bodies corporate. It will close a loophole relating to the replacement of these prescribed bodies corporate with other PBCs and prescribe a regime for the charging of fees by those prescribed bodies corporate. Schedule 4 is composed entirely of minor technical amendments, and I will not go into those.

As I said earlier, Labor support the vast majority of the changes in this bill and we will be voting for them as they are technical amendments designed to streamline and improve the operation of the Native Title Act rather than radically alter it. However, there
are changes which we do not agree with or which, it would probably be more accurate to say, we believe could be clarified and improved in the best interests of all of those who will have to operate under the new scheme. I will start with a concern that was identified in the submissions to the Senate committee—that is, the new fee system that is proposed in schedule 3 of this bill. Labor can certainly understand the argument in favour of having a fee regime. The bodies are performing a statutory function, and as such it is certainly reasonable to expect at least some level of statutory prescription of fees.

According to the bill, the scheme would work in this way: a registered native title body corporate would be entitled to charge a fee for the costs it incurs for certain negotiations—including negotiations for a ‘right to negotiate’ agreement, or its equivalent under a state or territory scheme, or negotiations for an Indigenous land use agreement. A body corporate will be entitled to charge fees for costs it incurs in these negotiations. There are a limited number of persons whom it cannot charge a fee. They are set out in subsection 60AB(4). There are also certain types of negotiations for which a body corporate would not be entitled to charge a fee, and the ability to prescribe by regulation other circumstances for which a fee cannot be charged.

Concerns were raised in submissions to the inquiry of the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs on this bill that the proposed fee scheme represented a restriction rather than a facilitation of the ability for bodies corporate to charge fees. However, the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has indicated otherwise. Evidence given by their representatives at the Senate inquiry persuasively argued that statutory bodies are, by law, required to either have explicit or implied authority to charge fees. Our problems with section 60AC revolve around the fact that it provides that a person who has been charged a fee may go to the registrar to obtain an opinion about whether or not the fee is payable. The registrar then gives an opinion which may agree or disagree that the fee is payable. If the registrar decides that the fee is not payable, that opinion is binding on the body corporate.

This section also provides that the regulations may set out the scheme in greater depth. In any event, it is our view that there are still quite a few unanswered questions about the fee system that, at this stage, preclude our ability to support it. These questions include: is there a right of merits review for a native title body that believes the registrar has made an incorrect decision; will the regulations set fee scales; what procedures will the registrar have in place to assess the matters that are brought before it; what assurances are there that it will make consistent decisions; will it be a practice of the registrar to give an opinion which includes what they think to be an appropriate fee; if so, will this eventually evolve into a situation where the registrar effectively acts as a de facto agency which sets fees? Other questions of this nature present themselves and they need to be answered before the scheme can be supported. I say again that we understand why such a scheme is necessary—but those interests have to be weighed against the competing interests of registered native title bodies corporate to sustain themselves and to be viable into the long term.

At the moment, the fee scheme does not seem to address these issues. It seems to be too vague and arbitrary and potentially shifts far too much power onto the registrar, leaving the registered native title bodies corporate without certainty. Labor will move amendments to this section in the Senate in order to give such bodies corporate more
flexibility in setting fees—as long as such fees are reasonable. However, we will not be moving to strike either section from the bill. Section 60AB is necessary to allow the statutory authority to charge fees, but it is incumbent on the government to develop a workable system and to bring that before the parliament. It would be helpful if the government were to withdraw this item and devise a proper and more comprehensive process for the review of fees that sets out the rights of each participant and how they might exercise those rights. As I have previously said, we understand the need and the arguments for some level of regulation of fees, but there needs to be greater scope for a reasonable level of fees to be charged.

A second area of contention in the bill relates to the provisions in the act which deal with cases in which applicants are found not to be properly authorised. As members of the House may know, certain types of native title claims and applications must be made by a person who has been properly authorised. The problem under the current regime is that there is no clear indication of what would happen if it were to become clear during the proceedings that the applicant was not properly authorised. The proposed scheme, which we broadly support, would fix and clarify this situation. It would allow for the court to make an order that evidence must be produced by an applicant to show that they were authorised to make the application. If the court were to determine that the person was not authorised to make the application, they could make a range of orders. The court would also be entitled to continue to hear and determine the applications if it believed that such a course of action were in the interests of justice. Labor supports these provisions, and I note from submissions to the Senate inquiry that the provisions are supported and welcomed by the stakeholders.

However, one suggestion that was made in submissions which we believe has merit and should be adopted is that a person who is making an application to the court for an order to produce evidence be required to show cause as to why it should be made. This would help to make sure that such applications are not open to abuse.

The third area of difficulty with this bill relates to the potential for non-Indigenous persons to be members of bodies corporate which oversee native title rights for native title holders. Native title is an area which is distinctly indigenous and is based on Indigenous customs and laws. It is appropriate that this section be clarified to make sure that only corporations with solely Indigenous members are entitled to become prescribed bodies corporate.

Labor will also move amendments in the Senate to alter the right of review which has been introduced in these amendments. The bill before us introduces a provision which allows for registration applications that have been rejected by the registrar to be reviewed by the registrar. Labor supports the introduction of these registration provisions, but we believe that they could be improved. Specifically, we follow the submissions of the Native Title Tribunal, which argued that it would be more appropriate for a member of their body to review the rejected applications rather than the registrar who, after all, would have been responsible for the original rejection. Evidence given to the Senate committee by the North Queensland Land Council supported this proposal. In the Senate we will move amendments in line with these proposals. They are sensible and will improve the bill by giving failed applicants much greater confidence in the process. The review will not be carried out by the same body that rejected it, but by a fresh pair of eyes.

I will turn now to the proposed amendments that deal with and validate alternative
state regimes. As the submission by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission pointed out, there are concerns that this section would act to retrospectively remove the rights of native title holders. As such, we believe that these items that relate to the validation of the alternative state regimes should be delayed pending consultation with native title holders.

Finally, I turn to the issue of the new provisions for default prescribed bodies corporate. The new provisions essentially allow for the appointment of prescribed bodies corporate in circumstances where no functioning body corporate has been nominated by the native title holders. This will mean that the functions that a prescribed body corporate normally undertakes will continue to operate in circumstances where, for a variety of reasons, they currently do not. However, there are some issues with this scheme. The main concern is that the regulations will allow not only the prescription of the types of bodies corporate that may be determined as a default PBC under this scheme but also the exact bodies corporate. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission has described this, in evidence to the Senate committee inquiry, as a radical shift from the current policy on two grounds: firstly, because it moves the power away from the courts and, through regulations, to the government and, secondly, because the legislation as it stands will provide scope for the government, in future, to actually prescribe the exact body corporate that will be the PBC.

I note that the response of the department was to indicate that they do not believe that these powers will ever be exercised by a body other than a court, so I foreshadow now that Labor intends to move amendments to the bill and make sure that the Federal Court remains the body that deals with the determination of prescribed bodies corporate.

Despite the concerns I have outlined, I indicate again that Labor support this bill. We believe that it can be only a positive development towards cutting down the time it takes for native title matters to be resolved. I think that is in everybody’s interests. I foreshadow that Labor will move amendments in the Senate in line with those I have outlined in my remarks. We do so because we believe it will improve the operation of the bill rather than radically alter it. When the amendments are moved in the Senate, I hope the government will recognise that they have been moved with that intention.

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

Mr Burke—I second the amendment.

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (4.41 pm)—I rise to speak on the Native Title Amendment (Technical Amendments) Bill 2007 and to lend my support to the second reading amendment moved by the member for Jagajaga. In her speech, the member outlined the concerns the Labor Party had with sections of the amendment bill before the House. I do not propose to repeat those concerns; however, I think it is worth while going over the history of the Native Title Act as there is a lot of concern with some of these amendments and the tranche of bills that have been pushed through by this government. In the second reading speech, it is asserted that this is being done without undermining the existing balance of rights and interests under the Native Title Act. In respect of what the member for Jagajaga said, there are some question marks over that for some of the stakeholders.

The Labor Party does not oppose amendments that improve the act. This act should
be about protecting native title and the rights of prospective native title holders. The problem has been that with every piece of legislation—certainly with the 1998 bill that has now successfully amended the act—come bucketfuls of extinguishment. What also came through in subsequent pieces of legislation—it appears in this bill as well—was retrospective validation of acts that in effect might have offended the existing Native Title Act. Validation was a big issue with the original act. I must say I am getting a bit sick and tired of the federal parliament having to validate acts of the state governments, which on a number of occasions have taken the risk. In effect, instead of using provisions of the Native Title Act, they then come to us, cap in hand, and say: ‘Look, there is a question mark over this. Can you help fix it up for us?’ Some suggestions in the current bill were put forward by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commission in relation to the South Australian provisions—that what is happening is a validation of acts of the state government of South Australia, to do with section 43 and some tenements in relation to that.

I must say that I do not have a lot of sympathy for state governments. When I was practising as a lawyer, I was always cautious in my advice. If there was doubt, I did not encourage clients to act in a way that could be detrimental to them in the future but provided caution. There is no doubt that in the early stages of the Native Title Act there was a bit of uncertainty because the law was still developing. The original Native Title Act—that is, the Keating government Native Title Act—was 127 pages long; that is all it was. That act contained a preamble, which is still there—it has not been amended by this government. The preamble says:

It is particularly important to ensure that native title holders are now able to enjoy fully their rights and interests under the common law of Australia need to be significantly supplemented. In future, acts that affect native title should only be able to be validly done if, typically, they can also be done to freehold land and if, whenever appropriate, every reasonable effort has been made to secure the agreement of the native title holders through a special right to negotiate.

It goes on to say:

A special procedure needs to be available for the just and proper ascertainment of native title rights and interests which will ensure that, if possible, this is done by conciliation and, if not, in a manner that has due regard to their unique character. Governments should, where appropriate, facilitate negotiation on a regional basis between the parties concerned ...

Unfortunately, in many instances there is no negotiation and there are no consent determinations. It is a knock down, drag down fight all the way to the Federal Court or to the High Court. It is generally the Commonwealth government or the state governments that spend many millions of dollars fighting Indigenous people all the way through, telling us that they need to clarify this and clarify that. It is being done now to an act of parliament—the amended Native Title Act. This is a government that does not believe in red tape. The Native Title Amendment Act was passed in 1998 with bucketfuls of extinguishment. It has 443 pages as opposed to the original 127 pages. That is why there is a bit of cynicism in the Indigenous community when dealing with governments. I think it is fair to say that this applies to governments of any political persuasion.

That is why we need to be careful about this amendment bill. The Labor Party has basically said that by and large it supports much of what is in this bill. I think that is fair enough. It is agreed: the bill does need refining. It needs improving, but we need to be careful not to cut back on the existing rights of Indigenous Australians—which is what
seems to be happening here with some of the validation procedures. We have a minister who said in the last little while that he was not going to increase the money to native title representative bodies to help them in pursuing determinations. All that is doing is slowing down determinations of native title. We have a situation where the mining companies are saying the native title representative bodies are not being properly funded. That is another basis for Indigenous people to believe that they are not being fairly treated in this process. Indeed, we have a special responsibility as a parliament to protect Indigenous people. We were given that responsibility through the 1967 referendum, and we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of that referendum in a couple of weeks time.

A report on this bill was tabled in the Senate recently. As I see it, the Senate committee made six substantive recommendations to the government. There were also some minority recommendations from members of the Labor Party, and among them were recommendations relating to items 62 and 63 of schedule 1, which purportedly seek to clarify the scope of alternative state regimes under section 43 of the Native Title Act. There were also some additional comments by Senator Bartlett and by the Greens.

I want to take up the second reading dissertation that the government made where it said ‘without undermining the existing balance of rights and interests under the Native Title Act’, because that is what we should be about. In 1998, many amendments were picked up by the government that were originally Labor amendments. We were well advised in 1998 by people who were expert in the area. Good discussions were taking place behind the scenes whilst there was the fundamental disagreement in relation to the act. There were a couple of hundred amendments—maybe the member for Lingiari can correct me—that were picked up by the government that had originally been Labor amendments. I suspect there would have been more, but the government did the deal with Senator Harradine to sell out Indigenous interests, and the amendment bill went through with opposition from the Labor Party.

There were many more amendments on the table from the Labor Party that I think would have improved and streamlined the operation of the act. I am not saying that the act does not require amendment. I applaud the government for refining it and I understand that some consultation has taken place with Indigenous communities. I know that you will never reach unanimous agreement in this area with everyone, but that need to consult with people on the ground is important—but not with a view to basically winding back existing rights under the act.

A submission to the Senate committee came from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner on behalf of HREOC. His recommendation 1 stated:

That Item 56 not be enacted unless it is amended so that a notice under s.29 may not give notice of more than one proposed future act unless:

- each of the proposed future acts would affect land subject to claim by the one native title claim group, or to a determination of native title in favour of the one native title holding group; or
- each of the proposed future acts would affect land within the one representative body area.

There was then recommendation 2. On pages 5 and 6 of the submission—which I will not read out, because I will not take much longer—there is his recommendation in relation to South Australia:

That Items 62, 63, 138 and 139 not be enacted.

To the extent that South Australia has granted invalid titles or done other acts which are invalid
as a result of the invalidity of the Commonwealth Minister’s determinations under s.43, and it is considered necessary to retrospectively validate them:

- Amendments should follow extensive consultations with affected Indigenous peoples; and
- the validating provisions ought not go any further than validating the invalid tenements; and
- just compensation for any loss resulting from doing the acts under the invalid laws should be made payable to the native title holders ...

In effect, what we are saying is that you should not reward people who have engaged in unlawful acts, acts that are not valid within the framework of the Native Title Act. I believe that retrospective validation has occurred too many times and should not continue to occur. So I support those suggestions.

There were other recommendations that I will not go into. But the commissioner needs to be taken into account and given due consideration. He cannot just be dismissed. That is the problem here: when Indigenous people get up to protest when their rights are being trampled, or have been retrospectively trampled, very few people listen. I tell you what: if it were Rio Tinto or BHP they would be going feral. We would all be listening then. I can remember when the High Court in effect upheld 4-3 the property rights of a mining company. It was a lease over land to do with Bulla. The member for Lingiari remembers it very well. Everyone respected the High Court’s decision, which was 4-3, the same as it was in the Wik case—but, because the victors in Wik were not a mining company, all hell broke loose.

I think we need to just take a raincheck in relation to some of these amendments. I do not think it will take much to satisfy the people concerned. I implore the government to listen to them in that regard. It is time we moved forward without Indigenous people always being done over and short-changed of their rights. They are doing it tough enough as it is without us giving dispensation all the time to people who do not follow proper processes.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (4.56 pm)—I thank the member for Banks for his contribution to the debate on the Native Title Amendment (Technical Amendments) Bill 2007. He is one of the few people in this parliament who has any real appreciation of the delicacies, intricacies and detail of the Native Title Act. He has that because he was engaged, as I was, in the discussions in this parliament over the original native title legislation. He was here in the parliament when the amendments were made in 1998 and he has had an ongoing interest in this issue—and an ongoing commitment, as he was previously the shadow minister responsible for Indigenous affairs. He is well known for his advocacy of Indigenous interests as well as his advocacy of the protection of their rights as Australian citizens.

I note that the member for Banks mentioned the Wik case of the High Court. I remember that famous case and other cases in which the claimants—in this case the Indigenous people—had victories, and the furor that accompanied those victories. In particular, on this occasion, if I recall correctly, the then Deputy Prime Minister of Australia was attacking the High Court in this decision—very publicly, without any measure of feeling for or understanding of the rights that had just been won by Indigenous Australians through that court case. I think it is a major blight on the record of that person, who left this place with much acclaim as being a good man—well, a good man who did bad things. On this occasion he did a bad thing by attacking the High Court for its decision to protect the native title interests of these people. I know that the mem-
member for Banks made comment at the time about the observations that were being made about the High Court and its temerity in making this decision or upholding the rights of Indigenous Australians. I remember well, in discussions in this place and elsewhere, the views that were expressed by the member for Banks and others and their disgust at the way in which Indigenous Australians’ rights were being undermined in a very overt way and a very divisive way by the then government—led, appallingly and shamefully, by the then Deputy Prime Minister.

I am pleased to support this piece of legislation. But mostparticularly I would like the government to support the amendments that have been moved by the opposition. As we know, the purpose of the legislation is to make a range of what are termed technical changes—but in fact are not all just technical—to the Native Title Act, which will have the stated effect of streamlining it and improving its operation.

There are four schedules. Schedule 1 will introduce the majority of the changes, which include amendments to the processing of future Indigenous land use agreements, ILUAs. I observed the contribution by the member for Banks. He recalled the amendments in 1998. At that stage I was not in the parliament. I was actually employed as a policy advisor to the National Indigenous Working Group on Native Title, who were here negotiating with the government and the opposition about those changes to the Native Title Act. One of the propositions which were put forward, advocated by both the Labor Party and Indigenous interests, was the development of Indigenous land use agreements, which appeared subsequently as amendments to the Native Title Act. That was a very positive change, and one which we supported. The second thing that schedule 1 will do, referring to the making and resolving of native title claims, is to change the obligations of the registrar, and there will be a range of other changes.

Schedule 2 simplifies a range of procedures relating to representative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies—rep bodies—ensuring that legal obligations on those bodies are not duplicated, improving processes for reviewing decisions and clarifying the process of transferring documents from a superseded body to a replacement body. Schedule 3 introduces a range of amendments to the operation of prescribed body corporates, or PBCs. It will close a loophole relating to the replacement of PBCs with other PBCs and prescribe a regime for the charging of fees by PBCs. Schedule 4, I am advised, is entirely composed of minor technical amendments.

This package of amendments is pursuant to the reforms to the native title system that the Attorney-General proposed in late 2005. It is worth noting, or reminding ourselves, of the six elements of the reform proposed. Firstly, there was an independent review of the native title claims resolution process. This was undertaken by Mr Graham Hiley and Dr Ken Levy. The report was handed down in March 2006. Secondly, there were technical amendments to the Native Title Act. Thirdly, there were consultations and measures to encourage the effective function of PBCs. Fourthly, there was the reform of the native title non-claimants (respondents) financial assistance program to encourage agreement making rather than litigation. Fifthly, there were measures to improve the effectiveness of native title rep bodies. Sixthly, there was the increased dialogue and consultation with state and territory governments to encourage more transparent practices in the resolution of native title.

These reforms that were proposed were long overdue. It speaks volumes of the government and its administration of this area of
the law that the native title system seems, at least on one level, to be in such disarray, because unfortunately the implementation of these reforms has not occurred with any expedition. The Native Title Amendment Act 2006 was passed, after amendment, by this parliament on 28 March 2007. These changes drew an amount of criticism from involved parties, particularly the rep bodies, and it is clear that changes are needed to assist the performance of these organisations. One of the changes needed is to ensure that they are funded appropriately and that they are funded sufficiently to carry out their many tasks—and very onerous tasks they are, in many cases.

We now know, of course, that the progress of native title claims through the courts has been both slow and costly. According to the National Native Title Tribunal, as at 23 September 2006 there were 547 native claims pending, including 12 compensation claims. Only 91 claims have been finalised. Of these, 62 said native title existed and 29 said it did not. It is a bit of a concern—in fact, it is a real worry—that it takes so long for the processing of these claims.

For the original claimants of the Murray Islands it was an epic struggle but after the sacrifices of Eddie Mabo and others—and after he had died—the landmark decision that bears his name was handed down by the courts and that resulted, eventually, in the passage of the native title legislation. I believe it is inexcusable that there are similar delays, but there are. Unfortunately, I do not believe those people who administer this legislation understand, or are aware of, the circumstances and conditions in which many of the claimants live. Nor do they appreciate or understand the sacrifice and hardship that is suffered by many, and the difficulties they confront in putting a claim forward. It is sad but true that—as was the case with Eddie Mabo—after a claim has been lodged, it is often the case that, unless there is a negotiated outcome, by the time the claimant process has passed through the courts, the claimants are dead.

That is a really sad indictment. People’s rights have been recognised by the courts through the High Court’s decision on native title and subsequent decisions, such as Wik. The parliament has legislated to recognise those rights and put in place a procedure by which people can make claim over country. Unfortunately and sadly often their claims come to nothing before they have passed from this earth. We have to do something to try and improve the processes so that this is no longer the case and to minimise the frustration and delays that currently occur.

As the member for Banks observed, this legislation has been the subject of a Senate committee inquiry. Its report was handed down yesterday. There are a number of issues highlighted by a minority report to that committee report, which I would like to address—in particular, the changes proposed in relation to alternative state regimes; the new authorisation court processes; and a number of changes to PBCs, contained in schedule 3 of the bill.

Section 43 of the Native Title Act allows a state or territory to establish a right to negotiate procedures which operate to exclude the provisions in the Native Title Act, where the Commonwealth minister is satisfied that alternative procedures meet statutory criteria set out in section 43(2). This has been done in number of South Australian determinations in relation to mining and opal mining. According to the explanatory memorandum, the changes, specifically items 61 to 64, ‘put beyond doubt the validity of the current South Australian section 43 determinations’.

This change was attacked by HREOC in its submission. It noted that such changes are effectively giving retrospective validation to
acts done in contravention of the act. This is hardly a technical amendment, as observed, again by the member for Banks, and the government’s endeavour to pass it off as such is indicative of their attitude—unfortunate, in my view—to native title generally. In this regard, we need to delay passing these provisions until there has been proper consultation with native title holders about the validation of any relevant determination acts and negotiate just compensation where appropriate. That is the least we can do.

There are also problems with the provisions relating to default PBCs. The changes in this legislation apparently arise as a result of the recommendation in the PBC report of October 2006:
The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination should develop a comprehensive proposal for the establishment of ‘default’ bodies corporate to perform PBC functions in circumstances where there is no functioning PBC nominated by the native title holders.

There is need for a mechanism for determining default PBCs. That is clear. However, under these changes, the Federal Court would not necessarily be the body making the choice as to the appropriate body to be the default PBC. Rather, this choice could be made by regulations or by another person or body.

This is entirely problematic, as it diverges from the intention of the department that the court could continue to determine PBCs. I note that Mr Greg Roche, Branch Manager of the Land Branch, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, acknowledged this point in his oral submission to the committee hearing on Wednesday, 2 May 2007, in which he said:

Practically speaking ... we cannot currently foresee circumstances in which a body other than a court might determine the body. But we thought it useful to put a little bit of scope in this regulation-making power, in case that should prove necessary. That should not happen.

Finally, it is worth observing that HREOC described these amendments to the PBC regulation-making powers as ‘a radical shift in the current policy embedded in the act’—and indeed that is so. The court in this instance may not be the determining body. It could well be someone else. To this end, Labor is recommending that the regulation-making powers in items 1, 2, 5 and 6 of schedule 3 be restricted to ensure that the Federal Court continues to determine prescribed bodies corporate.

Another area of contention is the proposed item 7 of schedule 3. This purports to implement a fee-for-negotiation scheme which would allow PBCs to charge a fee for expenses they incur in certain types of negotiations and for other functions. Realistically, the government should be providing proper funding for PBC bodies. This should not be a substitution for proper government funding. That is very clear. I know a number of PBCs around Australia. I know how strapped for cash they have been. I know how difficult they have found it to put in place processes by which they can negotiate over rights which they currently hold. It is entirely appropriate that the government should ensure that they are properly and adequately funded. This was noted in the government’s own PBC report, Structures and processes of prescribed bodies corporate, released in October 2006, in which it said:

... it is clear that the level of resources currently available will not meet all of the requirements imposed on PBCs under the current regime. While some of these difficulties can be alleviated through possible reforms to streamline the existing statutory governance model ... we consider that there will need to be additional measures taken by Governments to ensure that PBCs may function effectively.
Having noted this, I will return to the fee regime proposed. The National Native Title Council described this proposed fee regime as discriminatory. It is very difficult to see how we could support it. We would like to see the fee scheme amended to give far more flexibility to these PBCs.

Non-Indigenous members of PBCs are also an issue. Item 5 of schedule 3 raises the prospect of non-Indigenous people being members of PBCs. This seems, unfortunately, to be something of a legislative trend now. Under the recently passed Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006, non-Indigenous people can now be included as members of Aboriginal corporations. This has a number of complications, one of which is of course that it has the potential—not that it might always do this, but it has the real potential—to undermine Aboriginal representation on these bodies. The Native Title Council expressed its strong criticism of this, stating that it would be ‘entirely inappropriate’ for non-Indigenous people to be members of PBCs, given that native title is based on Aboriginal traditional law and customs. The Native Title Act should be amended to reflect this, to prevent non-Indigenous people from being members of prescribed bodies corporate.

Another issue is the question of authorisation processes. There are concerns with item 88 of schedule 1. Under this item, the Federal Court would be able to order the production of evidence of authorisation of applicants. Where there is a defect in authorisation, the court can decide, after balancing the need for due prosecution of the application, in the interests of justice, whether it will, firstly, hear and determine the application despite defects in authorisation and, secondly, make any such order as it sees fit.

The National Native Title Council identified a concern that this might be exploited strategically in a court proceeding. An application for the production of evidence could be made by any party to the proceedings, or on the application of a member of the claim or compensation group, without showing cause as to why an order for production of evidence should be made. It seems pretty clear that this provision will be open to abuse. It is suggested therefore that the proposed provision include that the applicant for production of evidence of authorisation should be required to show cause to the court as to why such an order should be made.

Labor supports the substantial body of this bill. It makes a lot of necessary technical changes; however, it falls short of what is really required. I urge the government to consider and support the amendments moved by the Labor Party here and those moved in the Senate.

Mr NAIRO (Eden-Monaro—Special Minister of State) (5.16 pm)—On behalf of the Attorney-General, I would like to thank the members for their contributions to the debate on the Native Title Amendment (Technical Amendments) Bill 2007. I also thank the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs for its detailed consideration of the bill. I note that the committee has made several recommendations in its report, which was tabled last night. The government will be carefully considering these recommendations, and any government amendments resulting from the committee’s recommendations will be made in the Senate.

Since the Attorney-General first announced a package of reforms to the native title system in September 2005, a substantial number of measures have been developed and are now being implemented. These include the Native Title Amendment Act 2007, which commenced in April this year and implements changes to the institutional frame-
work of the native title system, along with changes to native title representation bodies and prescribed bodies corporate. This second piece of legislation will complement those changes by making a large number of minor and technical amendments to the Native Title Act to improve the workability of the act as a whole. The measures in the bill cover a broad spectrum of processes in the act, including Indigenous land use agreements, future acts, processes for making and resolving native title claims and the obligations of the registrar in relation to the registration of claims. As I said, the government will deal with the recommendations from the Senate committee as part of the Senate deliberations on this bill.

I would like to make a few comments on those and also on the amendment moved by the member for Jagajaga. The bill allows prescribed body corporates, PBCs, to charge for negotiating agreements and Indigenous land use agreements, ILUAs. There will be no schedule of fees and no prescription of things that can be charged for. The bill therefore allows maximum flexibility for parties to negotiate fees between themselves. The only limit on fees is that they must not be such as to amount to taxation. For a fee to avoid being a tax, it must be imposed in respect of a service to be delivered to the persons required to pay the fee. In practical terms, this is similar to requiring that a fee be reasonable for services provided.

The bill amends provisions dealing with replacement of PBCs, including where this occurs in accordance with the native title holder’s wishes. The new provisions are similar in scope to existing provisions, which do not specify that replacement of PBCs must be effected via a Federal Court determination. However, as a practical matter, it is likely that the regulations would give the Federal Court this role. The bill does not alter the existing situation whereby only the Federal Court can determine a PBC in connection with the making of a native title determination or where the native title holders fail to nominate a PBC in connection with the making of a native title determination. There will be further consultation on relevant regulations.

The Australian government has foreshadowed changes to the PBC regulations to allow non-native-title holders to be members of a PBC. This will enable PBCs to better represent the interests of wider Indigenous communities if this is what the native title holders want. It will also allow PBCs to include non-Indigenous people—for example, family members—in PBC decision making if this is what the native title holders want. It will be up to the native title holders to decide these matters. If the native title holders only want native title holders or other Indigenous people to be members, they will be perfectly free to impose these requirements. The Australian government has also clearly indicated that, regardless of a PBC’s membership, only native title holders would have a right to be involved in making native title decisions. There will be further consultation on relevant regulations.

The amendments in this bill are designed to put beyond doubt the validity of the current South Australian section 43 determinations in relation to mining and opal mining, which had the effect of replacing the Native Title Act right to negotiate provisions with a right to negotiate regime under South Australian legislation. I understand the South Australian regimes have been operating effectively for over 11 years.

The Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has noted its support for the enactment of these provisions given that the amendments simply seek to place on a firm footing the understanding that parties have been operating under to
date. It is in the interests of all parties that there is certainty about the way the provisions operate, and this is what the amendments in this bill will achieve.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the technical amendments have been the subject of extensive consultation and that the majority of measures in this bill reflect issues raised by stakeholders themselves following a consultation process spanning more than a year. As the measures in this bill reflect the practical knowledge of those who are involved in the native title system on a day-to-day basis, the Attorney-General expects that the amendments before the parliament will enable workable improvements to native title processes. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Question agreed to.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr NAIRN (Eden-Monaro—Special Minister of State) (5.23 pm)—by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.
come that. It has been long overdue, and we broadly support the bills.

We as a party have strongly supported the continuation of the forestry R&D that is to be carried out by the new entity and we have always had a longstanding commitment to value adding in this particular industry. I go back over the many years of my association with this industry not only during my time in parliament but also during my time, before I came into the parliament, as the President of the ACTU. As the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, subsequently as the Minister for Employment, Education and Training and as a member of cabinet, I was involved in those days in some of the difficult issues confronting the forestry industry and its future. As a government, we set about the task of calling for security of that industry’s resource, taking the view that if you could secure its resource the next best thing was to have an industry development strategy that would effectively encourage value adding to that resource. In our view, there was not much point in securing the resource only to see it go out as woodchips. If, in fact, we were able to get agreement on resource security and environmental protection, so getting a balance, it would be necessary to have as much effort as possible put into the value-adding dimension so we could take better advantage of that element of the resource that was secured for the industry.

Way back in 1992, the national forestry policy statement that the then Labor government developed was agreed as the blueprint for the future of public and private forests. It reaffirmed the commitment of all state and federal governments to the management of our forests for all Australians. Of course, it was the Labor government that effectively established regional forest agreements. Regional forest agreements were the means by which the resource could be secured. What has been lacking since the change in government is not that we were not able to get bipartisan support on RFAs—of course we were and there was a lot of focus on this in the last federal election, as you, Mr Deputy Speaker Adams, would well know—but that this government will not give its support to the commitment of development and value adding for the forest products industry. So we are delighted that this ray of light has been shone on this industry and that recognition has been given, embodied in this important legislative change.

The Forest Wood and Products Research and Development Corporation has provided a national integrated research and development focus for the Australian forest and wood products industry. It is committed to research and development that promotes internationally competitive and environmentally sustainable practices. It enhances employment opportunities and contributes to Australia’s reputation as an innovative producer of high quality forest and wood products and we support the continuation of this role. In the 1980s, the Labor government saw the importance of building the research and development commitment of our rural industries by establishing a whole gamut of research and development corporations across those sectors. We support not only the continuation of that research and development effort but also the expansion of the forest R&D organisation to include marketing of Australia’s forestry and forest products industry.

Under this legislation, we will establish an industry-owned company and that organisation will have more flexibility to fund marketing and promotional activities. The bill will create a company limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act 2001 to assume the research and development functions currently carried out by the R&D corporation for the forest and wood products industry. It will also incorporate the new functions of
marketing and promotion. Forest and Wood Products Australia, the emerging body, will continue to be funded through industry levies, as was the old R&D corporation, with the federal government matching levy components used for research and development. The major difference is the nature of the legislation controlling the new organisation. I understand that the forest industry is strongly in support of the establishment of a new entity to undertake these additional roles.

As the bill will establish a new entity with new responsibilities, it is appropriate that it be reviewed to ensure it is properly established and that the transition arrangements are appropriate. We believe it is essential that this new body is driven in relation to the industry structure by strong partnerships that recognise the relationship between state and federal governments and industry partners as well as the companies, the workforces and their unions. In our view, all stakeholders have to be involved in this newly developed structure. I hope that that is the basis upon which this bill proceeds. We will have the opportunity as a party in another place to ascertain that. The bill has been referred by the Senate Standing Committee for the Selection of Bills to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport for further review so that the Senate can give greater scrutiny to what is proposed.

The review requested by the Senate is appropriate to consider the terms of the statutory funding agreement between the new corporation and the Commonwealth. The Senate process will also enable the appropriate review and consultations to be undertaken by the committee. Labor will participate constructively in that review process. Given my long association and involvement in this industry, I, along with others, will be taking a keen interest in the outcome of those committee findings and ensuring that the framework will be right during the setting up of this new entity.

It is important to remind ourselves that in the last election the Prime Minister made a commitment to various parties involved in the industry, particularly in relation to Tasmania. We hope that the direction of the legislation, which reflects that commitment, is followed. All stakeholders have to be engaged in the future direction of this industry. On this side of the House we firmly believe that the most effective way forward is a partnership between the government and the industry partners—to get people to work as a team; to commit to value-adding activities; to be a more productive and efficient workforce engaging with the rest of the world; to export to the rest of the world; to replace imports from the rest of the world; and to use the opportunity through sensible and strategic industry development to ensure that our contribution and exports are enhanced in this vital industry to the future of this country and in particular to the state of Tasmania.

Having said that, I think it is also important to remind the House that we probably would not even be debating this bill in terms of the transition of the company were it not for the foresight that previous Labor governments had in reforming rural research and development. The research and development corporations—this one, which is moving into transition, being one of them—have pro-
vided a unique and successful partnership between government and industry in the past. In 2004-05, total spending by the Commonwealth and industry on research and development corporations was $511 million and over $230 million of that came from industry.

It is important to remind the House that it was Labor, under the stewardship of the then Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, John Kerin, who, in the mid-1980s, saw the need to reform rural research and development. It was the Hawke government and John Kerin in particular who recognised the need to narrow the gap between research and product development and saw the need to improve our export performance and productivity by marrying scientific research with the needs of industry to enable best practice and innovation in product development. That was the broad template that was laid out there. That is the specific template that we hope will be translated effectively to this particular industry. It has been significant in greatly improving the competitiveness and profitability of Australia’s agricultural, fish and forestry industries and in supporting the sustainability of primary production and our natural resource base.

In essence, the Hawke government recognised that there was a market failure in private sector research because many types of firms and individuals were unable to derive sufficient benefit to make their investment worthwhile. It was that government’s recognition of that problem, and its preparedness to make the commitment through the matching funds in relation to 14 rural research and development corporations, that laid the basis for those R&D bodies to more effectively create an environment for value-adding to our natural resource base. Of course, this government has maintained that commitment to matching funds, but it was the drive and initiative that came from a Labor government that set them up—and I take the opportunity as part of this debate to remind the House of that.

I also remind the government that our commitment to research and development went even further. Not only were we committed to research and development bodies and the matching funding but also we established the Cooperative Research Centre program, which, as the then Minister for Science and Technology, I had responsibility for implementing. Again, that is an initiative that this government has embraced.

Those 50-plus research CRCs have also been doing great work in marrying the basic research to the commercial opportunities. In terms of the R&D effort, that really did set us up to become a much more productive and innovative nation. That came about in the rural industries not only through our commitment to research and development through the CRC programs but also through our commitment to introducing a 150 per cent R&D tax concession. That was a recognition of market failure. It recognised that the returns on research were not immediate, that they happened over the longer term, and that what we had to recognise the upfront costs to businesses associated with that.

We also recognised that many of the companies getting into R&D did not turn a profit. There is not much point giving a tax deduction to a company which does not pay tax. That is why we introduced the research and development syndication for start-up companies. We also invested heavily in R&D and made expenditures through public sector R&D.

Why do I mention all this? Because one would have thought it would be a view shared by both sides of the parliament that we should retain our commitment to innovation and research and development. Indeed, before the 1996 election, the Howard opposi-
tion promised to retain 150 per cent tax deductibility. It also promised to retain syndicated research and development, only for us to find that, when it came to office, it scrapped them effectively in its first budget. Those must have been ‘non-core promises’.

What has been the impact in terms of this nation’s innovative direction? I will tell you, because I think it is pretty revealing. Labor had that suite of programs that I have just outlined—not one in particular but a whole range of programs which recognised different ways of encouraging research and development and innovation for our future to encourage more effective and innovative ways of getting products and services into not only this market but also overseas. With that suite of initiatives we saw government investment as a proportion of GDP rise to 0.24 per cent in 1995-96. With the stripping away of those initiatives the government’s investment as a proportion of R&D fell from 0.24 per cent of GDP to 0.18 per cent.

Mr Murphy—That’s a disgrace.

Mr CREAN—That is a disgrace, because what they effectively did was to drop by one-third the government’s contribution to this nation’s future. The parliamentary secretary at the table, the member for Flinders, looks aghast. It is pretty dramatic. That is why we have not been able to export as effectively as before. That is why we are not as productive as before. We have all these assertions as to how Work Choices and workplace arrangements have increased our productivity. Productivity has in fact gone down under this government’s watch. Why? Because they have stripped away our commitment to innovation, research and development.

When Labor was in office, average annual growth of real business investment in R&D rose to 11.4 per cent from 1986-87 to 1995-96. In the period 1995-96 to now, it has dropped from 11½ per cent to five per cent.

It has more than halved. By effectively taking away concessions and support, the government have been responsible for more than halving business expenditure on research and development in this country, and they wonder why we are not more productive. They wonder why we are not more competitive. They are a government which have been prepared to ride their luck—the luck of the resources boom. But what happens when the resources boom runs out? Nothing will happen unless we encourage the innovative opportunities of this nation, and that will not happen by government vacating the field. It will not happen unless the government are prepared to recognise and respond to the market failure associated with research and development expenditure not just in our economy but in all developed economies of the world.

In talking specifically about this matter and the government patting itself on the back about its commitment to R&D for one sector, let us look at what it has done to R&D in the total economy. It has stripped it bare, and the nation pays a price for lost opportunity. Sustained productivity growth in our key export sectors has always been underpinned and will be underpinned by a strong commitment to research and development and innovation. But it will not happen on its own. It will not happen unless governments are prepared to commit resources and forge partnerships with industry.

Labor support this legislation. We support the extension not just to an R&D body but to a marketing body. We see great opportunities and a great future for our wood and forest products industry. At the recent Labor Party National Conference, Labor restated its commitment to value adding in the industry and, specifically, its commitment to a wood and paper industry innovation council. We believe that you have to build strong, productive and ongoing working relationships
between all participants in the supply chain. Because of the relationship between the Commonwealth and the state governments, as well as the industry partners, the council will facilitate whole-of-government commitments, developing initiatives aimed at improving productivity, global competitiveness, increasing market access and securing the future of the sector and also a commitment to best practices in workplaces in the sector by working cooperatively together and a commitment to sustainable development of the sector. That is Labor’s commitment. We actually laid the basis for this with the regional forest agreement, as I said at the outset of this debate. But what we also have to develop is the cooperative approach within the industry.

I hope that this new structure will provide the basis for that cooperation. We will look with great interest at how, through the Senate processes, the commitments to what this new body does will play out. But there is no point in securing the resource base of this industry unless you value-add it, and you will not effectively value-add it unless you have the commitment to innovation, research, cooperation, productiveness and competitiveness within the industry. That will come by engaging and involving all the stakeholders. That is our commitment and we will honour it. We hope we have the opportunity to implement it.

I urge the government to adopt and embrace the direction forward that we talk about and believe in, not just pay lip-service to it and pretend that they will do it only to see another broken promise if re-elected. We support the bill but urge cooperation of the workforce, all the stakeholders and, through this new body, encourage not just the shared commitment to research and development but the marketing strategy and the value-adding direction for the great industry of this country.

**Mr McARTHUR** (Corangamite) (5.50 pm)—I am delighted to make a contribution to the debate on the Forestry Marketing and Research and Development Services Bill 2007 and cognate bill. I acknowledge the member for Hotham’s thoughtful remarks about his involvement with research and development. I also note the presence in the chamber of the member for Lowe, who is an expert on blue gums. I advised him on those matters on an earlier occasion. I also acknowledge the great depth of experience that you have in the forestry sector, Mr Deputy Speaker Adams. I also acknowledge the member for Hotham’s earlier experience in the foothills of the Otways, because it was there that he started to understand rural Australia. He understood all about the trees. At times he has taken it on board, and at other times he has been less than understanding about some of those matters.

He supports the inclusion in this bill of promotional activities. He talked about the national forestry statement 2002. I supported him on that statement, which then led to the regional forest agreement. The member for Hotham was very supportive of the regional forest agreement, but I draw to his attention that, in Victoria, Premier Bracks came down to the Otways—where the member for Hotham learnt something about trees—and, overnight, wiped out the RFA. I wonder what the member for Hotham would say about that. He will probably now leave the chamber because he would not be too happy about that. The RFA was a very good arrangement, whereby forestry industries could—

**Mr Crean**—Who set it up?

**Mr McARTHUR**—We agreed with it, but it was your Labor government that disbanded it both in New South Wales and Vic-
toria. So whilst you give lip-service to the national forestry statement 2002—a regional forest agreement—it was your state governments which did not do the right thing. It is my understanding that the Tasmanian government has stuck with the spirit of the RFA, much more so than the other states.

I have long had an interest in these forestry matters and I commend the thrust of this bill in terms of research and development. I have always advocated a sustainable forestry industry and have been around these arguments for the last 15 years or so. Obviously time is short for me to conclude my remarks tonight, but I would like to mention Mr Michael O’Connor, who is well known to me as a representative of the CFMEU. That may come as a surprise to those opposite. Michael O’Connor has conducted negotiations on behalf of his workforce to keep the forest workers in the forest. He has fought a number of battles on behalf of the workers. He fought a battle, I recall, in Tasmania before the last election. Michael O’Connor does have a deep understanding of the matters referred to in the bill and I think he should be participating in research and development because he can make a valuable contribution. I say that in all sincerity, because he does have an understanding of some of the key elements of tree growing, harvesting and new species. I think the member for Hotham would agree with that. I note that Mr Michael O’Connor has been elevated to the federal executive. He has had arguments with some other members of the frontbench about forestry matters. So I put that on the record and would be happy to support that particular proposal.

Like the member for Hotham, I am pleased to support the Forestry Marketing and Research and Development Services Bill 2007. These are technical bills, as members would be aware. These pieces of legislation provide for the establishment of a new body to coordinate the marketing, research and development, and the provision of services for the forestry industry. The fact that we are debating these bills today demonstrates the Howard government’s support for the sustainable forestry industry sector, and in particular the government’s strong support for those hardworking forestry and timber industry workers and their families. They make a living in the Australian bush in one of the most sustainable resource industries. Again I put on the record my strong support for these workers. They are good people. They work hard in very dangerous areas. They have worked, in my view, cooperatively with the loggers in trying to sustain the industry over time, contrary to some of the perceptions and arguments put forward by some of our city cousins.

The new forestry industry services body will replace the Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation, which has served the industry well. The FWPRDC has administered the levy paid by forest companies to undertake research and development to improve the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the sector. There have been major improvements in the genetics of tree species that have supported the improvements in productivity and efficiency. I am aware of that, as the member for Lowe would be because he knows about blue gums. The genetics of those blue gums have improved over the last 10 years. That has been a result of some of this concentrated research. It is claimed that the improved genetics of some of these species has increased yields by up to 15 per cent. This demonstrates the importance of industry research and development. The Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation was restricted in how it could expend
the levy funds raised with the emphasis being on research and development. The industry has worked with the government on the reforms that will encourage increased industry contribution to the new forestry services body to undertake a wider range of activities that the sector believes should be undertaken on its behalf. I think the member for Hotham alluded to that and supported more ongoing promotion. I am pleased that he has added his support to this.

The new body established by the Forestry Marketing and Research and Development Services Bill 2007 will continue to undertake and deliver industry-wide research and development. Government funding for R&D will be maintained at the current levels as a minimum. Under these reforms it will potentially increase because the levy base will be broadened to include a new forest grower managed investments levy. So the forest growers—and I have had a few things to say about managed investment schemes—will be making a contribution to commercial forestry. I have had some reservations, as the member for Lowe and others would know, about managed investment schemes. I will have more to say about that in this House at a later time. The Commonwealth will also match funding raised from the existing import charge imposed on logs and certain classes of primary processed forest products imported into Australia where that import charge is spent on eligible research and development. Contract payments from state and territory governments to the new forestry industry services body will also be able to receive matching funding from the Commonwealth for eligible research and development. I think that is a commendable set of arrangements. The Commonwealth will match dollar for dollar the state contribution.

An important role of the new body which has not been able to be provided by the current Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation is that the body will be able to use levy funds to promote the sustainable nature of the timber industry and promote the environmental values of wood products. The member for Hotham, the member for Batman, the member for Lowe and I would agree on that approach. We want to argue the case for the timber industry. Mr Deputy Speaker Adams, I am sure you would agree with us as well. It does provide environmental values and it is a sustainable product, contrary to some of the green environmental debates that we have seen over recent years—probably in the heartland of the electorate of the member for Lowe where they have some misguided views on the timber industry. Some of the more sensible members on both sides of the parliament have been trying to enlighten them. It is a sustainable industry and it is here to stay provided we can provide some research, provide some sensible guidelines and do not reject the regional forest agreements as some state governments have done. In view of the time, I seek leave to continue my remarks when the debate is resumed.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.
Mr Rudd (Griffith—Leader of the Opposition) (7.31 pm)—Mr Speaker, I am an optimist when it comes to our country’s future. Tonight I want to outline our plan for our country’s future. I believe budgets should not be about the next election. They should be about the next decade. They should reflect the ambition we have for our nation’s long-term future. We are truly blessed to be Australians. We live in a stable democracy, when many in the world do not. We have enjoyed great prosperity—and have benefited from a time of unparalleled world economic growth. And to cap this off, we have prospered from the rise of China, the rise of India and the global resources boom. The benefits of this are washing through the economy, creating jobs, generating new businesses and boosting government revenues to an all-time high. There is nothing to hold us back as a nation and as a people—except a lack of long-term vision. We are part of a world that is changing faster than ever.

In 2004 the world pumped out a staggering 26.6 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent emissions into our atmosphere just from fuel combustion alone. China graduated half a million scientists and engineers. India graduated more PhDs than we could possibly imagine. Italy will soon be laying out a broadband network for two-thirds of its population of up to 100 megabits per second. Big changes are coming. Big challenges are waiting around the corner. They will dramatically influence almost every aspect of our lives—some for the better, others for the worse. And some will be upon us in the blink of an eye.

How we respond to these future challenges will define the security and prosperity of our nation for generations to come. The same for our communities. And the same for our families as well.

We can either wait for these challenges to swamp us and be left behind or we can anticipate them and act now while there is still time. We can either seize the great opportunities that have been presented to us or we can squander them. Or as a great American President once said, ‘The time to fix the roof is when the sun is shining.’

The truth is the sun is shining right now on Australia. We must seize the day and get our house in order.

I believe Australia faces three core challenges to secure its future:

• First, to build long-term economic prosperity, beyond the mining boom, by rebuilding productivity growth.

• Second, to deal with, rather than avoid, the great challenge of climate change and the water crisis before the cost of inaction becomes too great.

• Third, to make sure the fair go in Australia has a future, not just a past—both within the workplace and beyond the workplace as well.

And beyond these three great challenges is the underlying challenge of remaining vigilant on our national security in an increasingly uncertain and threatening world—which is why budgets need to be about the next decade, not the next election.

Economic fundamentals

The foundations upon which our long-term economic stability is built are a conservative fiscal policy and the independence of the Reserve Bank.

If elected, the government I will lead will be grounded in the discipline of not spending more than we earn. We will maintain a budget surplus on average over the economic cycle. We will also not increase taxation as a proportion of gross domestic product. That is why Labor has already identified $3 billion in savings over the forward estimates to help
fund our future priorities. Tonight’s announcements are costed and funded. If elected, the government I lead will maintain the absolute independence of the Reserve Bank, including the integrity of the bank’s inflation target. Both these disciplines are fundamental to keeping interest rates low. On this, there is a bipartisan consensus—as noted recently by the former Reserve Bank governor Ian Macfarlane.

Equally we must remain committed to keeping taxes low. It’s important for working families hit hard by the cost of mortgage repayments, food prices, petrol, education and child care. It is also critically important for our businesses competing on the world stage.

**The productivity challenge**

Where the paths of our two parties veer in opposite directions is on the core economic challenge of how to build long-term prosperity for Australia, once the mining boom is over. Productivity is the measure of how efficiently we produce goods and services. The better trained we are, the greater our productivity. The better our use of technology in the workplace, the greater our productivity. The better our management in the workplace, the greater our productivity.

Productivity is a bit like getting the best performance out of your engine for the least amount of fuel. And productivity growth is the only reliable way to bring about long-term economic growth, more jobs and higher living standards without unleashing inflation. Australia’s recent record on productivity growth has been very poor indeed.

Productivity growth was averaging 3.2 per cent in the mid-1990s before falling to 2.2 per cent at the turn of the decade. Last month the government downgraded its estimate for the current decade to just 1.5 per cent. In fact, this year’s budget papers contain the staggering admission that productivity growth is likely to be zero. This is a sure-fire recipe for slowing down economic growth for Australia—even before the ageing of the Australian population sets in. In Australia today, this failure to improve productivity growth has been masked by the mining boom over the last four years.

Right now the economy is cruising along with a very strong tailwind, and it is called the mining boom. But sometimes the wind changes direction and then there can be lots of turbulence. And the only way to get home is with powerful engines that can do the hard yards in any conditions that throw themselves up. The mining boom, driven entirely by factors beyond Australia’s control, has pumped hundreds of billions of dollars into our national economy. And as older Australians who’ve been around for a while will tell you—mining booms don’t last forever.

The time for action is now. That’s why Labor calls now for an education revolution—an education revolution before we lose one more day of lost opportunities.

**Education Revolution**

Every country in the world knows the more you invest in the education, skills and training of your people, the more productive your economy becomes. The problem we have in Australia is that against so many of our competitor economies, we are falling behind. It is time to put a stop to this by investing in a real education revolution—not just increasing investment but also raising the standards.

For Labor, we actually believe in education. It’s not something we’ve cooked up overnight. It’s one of our core values—and it’s been one of our core values for more than a century. So what have we been doing about it? Since the beginning of the year we have released six chapters of our Education Revolution including:

- early childhood education
literacy and numeracy

boosting the teaching and studying of maths and science in schools and universities by offering a significant reduction in HECS

establishing a national curriculum through a national curriculum board to develop a uniform curriculum for the core subjects of English, history, maths and science, so that when families move across this country they will not be disadvantaged

a program to foster the building and sharing of new first-class facilities between schools, be they government schools or non-government schools.

I am particularly proud of our $450 million policy on early childhood education providing preliteracy and prenumeracy play based learning for all four-year-olds for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, with a fully trained teacher. This is a good policy.

The earlier you invest in a child’s educational opportunities, the better the result. Good for the child. Good for the economy. Good for the country. But while we offer this plan for the future, at present Australia ranks last out of the 32 richest economies in the world on the amount our national government invests in early childhood education. If we are serious about facing the challenge of the future, this must change—and it must change now.

**Trades training centres in schools**

Tonight I want to announce a further chapter in Labor’s Education Revolution. Labor sees no difference in value between a trade certificate and a university degree. I understand that not every young person wants to go to university.

If elected to government, we will implement one of the biggest reforms in vocational education and training in Australian schools in history. It’s time to help bring trade training in schools into the 21st century.

A Labor government will implement a $2.5 billion Trades in Schools program over 10 years to build new trades training centres and upgrade existing facilities and equipment in all of Australia’s 2,650 secondary schools—both government and non-government.

This will mean an investment of $729 million spread over the four years to 2010-11. Each secondary school in Australia will be eligible for capital funding of between $500,000 and $1.5 million to build trade workshops, computer laboratories and other facilities to expand vocational education and training opportunities for our young people.

Schools can apply to build metal workshops, commercial kitchens, automotive workshops, plumbing workshops and graphic design labs as well as information and communication technology laboratories. And they can purchase equipment including drills, grinders, wood and metal turning lathes, ovens, soldering and welding equipment and computers. The extra recurrent costs for running the new Trade Training Centres will be negotiated between the Commonwealth and the states.

Labor will also provide $84 million over four years to ensure access to on-the-job training for 20 weeks per year for year 9 to year 12 vocational education and trades students—again, a practical Labor initiative. This is part of a new national objective I am announcing tonight to lift year 12 retention rates from 75 per cent to 85 per cent by 2015 and to 90 per cent by 2020.

There are two main reasons why we need to do this as a nation. First, we have a skills shortage, and skills have become a core economic challenge for the nation. This is particularly the case in the traditional trades. Anyone trying to build or renovate a home...
right now will know exactly what I am talking about.

But the tragedy is that there are so many young people of school age—or immediate post-school age—who would be ideally suited to a career in the trades, who have simply dropped out altogether. This is the second core reason underpinning our Trades in Schools program—it is not only good for the economy, it is good for young Australians as well.

In 2006, 540,000 young Australians aged 16-24 were not engaged in either full-time learning or work. Access Economics has estimated that if Australia raised its year 12 completion rates to 90 per cent from the 75 per cent it is today, we would add around $9 billion to our economy by the year 2040.

I am very proud of this new chapter of Labor’s Education Revolution. It’s Labor’s core business. On Tuesday night the government stated that it would establish three new Australian technical colleges across the whole country. If elected to government, we will make every secondary school that chooses, every one of the 2,650 schools that exist across the country, into a first-class provider of technical education. That’s the difference.

**High-speed broadband**

Labor’s education revolution is reinforced by our plan to invest up to $4.7 billion in partnership with the private sector to build a high-speed national broadband network. If you have the best-trained people in the world matched with the most modern information technology in the world, you can turbocharge overall productivity growth.

In the 19th century, governments laid out railway networks as the arteries of the economy. In the 21st century, governments around the world are ensuring that high-speed broadband networks are laid out—as the arteries of the new economy. Except in Australia, where we have one of the slowest broadband networks in the Western world. And for those who don’t think that this is of real concern to the Australian small business community, or for regional and rural Australia, they need to start listening.

Labor’s plan is for a state-of-the-art fibre optic to the node national network with a speed of 12 megabits per second—capable of upscaling—to be laid out over a five-year period. This is the nation-building that the nation needs.

**BUSINESS REGULATION**

Achieving productivity growth is not just about bold visions. It also requires prudent management—in particular the streamlining of regulatory arrangements to unleash the full potential of our businesses. The government has already conducted two enquiries—the Bell inquiry followed by the Banks inquiry—and with little effect. So-called regulatory impact statements have been widely ignored. And the result is that business can’t get on with what business does best—spending most of their time developing new products, new services and new markets—as opposed to acting as compliance agents for national and state governments.

I have already announced our intention in government of adopting a simple principle: no new regulation imposed on business unless an existing regulation is withdrawn. Tonight, I also want to outline a further set of measures to help get government off the back of business and free them up to create more jobs and more wealth for the future.

**Faster Commonwealth bill paying**

First, Labor will give small business the right to charge Commonwealth departments and agencies interest on bills not paid within 30 days. Late payments are a big problem for small business because of their significant impact on cash flow.
Small businesses often waste time badgering government departments for payment, taking them away from their businesses. That will now change.

**A Superannuation Clearing House**

Second, Labor will establish an optional Superannuation Clearing House for all businesses that want to use it. Currently, under choice of superannuation legislation, businesses are required to make payments into numerous superannuation funds. This has imposed yet more form-filling and checking, cost and legal liability on business. Under Labor’s policy, businesses would simply make payments into one central clearing house at which point their legal responsibility is discharged—a practical measure for small business.

**A standard disclosure form for financial services products**

And, third, Labor will introduce a simple, standard disclosure form for financial services products. The government’s new financial disclosure regime has resulted in consumers physically being issued with long and complex documents up to 100 pages long. It has created an administrative nightmare for businesses and consumers. Labor’s standard disclosure form will be no more than three to four pages in length, containing core information. Financial services providers would be required to have any further disclosure information on their websites—another practical initiative for business.

**International competitiveness**

A core reason for rebuilding productivity growth is to ensure that our businesses are internationally competitive. For business it is a tough and highly competitive world out there. Beyond the resources sector, the budget papers demonstrate that our export performance in the years ahead will be poor. Once again, we simply cannot allow ourselves to ride on the back of the resources boom, just as previous conservative governments back in the fifties and sixties chose to ride on the sheep’s back.

This is short-sighted in the extreme. We have to be clear-minded about where Australia’s international competitive advantage lies in the future. One such opportunity lies with the Australian financial services industry and with the funds management industry in particular.

Since the superannuation guarantee was introduced by a previous Labor government in 1992, funds under management have grown from $250 billion to $1 trillion. Australia has one of the largest and most professional funds management industries in the world. But how can we turn our significant domestic funds management industry into a new export industry, given the growth in retirement incomes that is occurring across East Asia?

One of the concerns the industry faces is international tax competitiveness resulting from the 30 per cent withholding tax currently applying to distributions from Australian managed funds. My objective is to turn Australia into a funds management hub for Asia, building on the existing strengths of our funds management industry. This would earn extra income for Australia which, in turn, generates jobs and grows our economy in a dynamic sector.

So tonight I announce that Labor in government will halve the withholding tax on distributions from Australian managed funds to nonresidents from 30 per cent to 15 per cent. According to our advice, this tax currently generates some $30 million but, in our view, halving it will provide concrete assistance to Australian funds managers competing against tax regimes applying to their competitors in Dublin, Luxembourg, New York and Singapore. Our intention is to en-
able Australian businesses to take on the world and win.

Enabling business to engage with Asia

At the dawn of the Asia-Pacific century, Australia lies in a region that will generate most of this century’s economic growth. We therefore must ensure that we provide our businesses with every chance in the decades ahead to fully engage in the new business opportunities that lie ahead. My plan is to help foster a generation of Asia-literate Australians become increasingly comfortable with the languages and cultures of our region. This will help with future export opportunities.

Several years ago, the government discontinued funding for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy. That was a retrograde step. This was a cooperative program which operated with the states and territories from 1996 to 2002, which by that time had enabled hundreds of thousands of Australian school children to start learning the major languages of our region—a practical, cooperative initiative.

Tonight I announce that Labor will re-establish an Asian languages and studies strategy for Australian schools. This will cost $65 million over four years and will be done in partnership with the states and territories. If we are going to enable our businesses to take on the best and the brightest in the region and the world we have to make sure that they have all the skills necessary to do so, and that is what we intend to do.

Climate change and water

Preparing for Australia’s long-term economic future also means acting on climate change and on the water crisis. Without a plan to tackle climate change there can be no long-term solution to the water crisis. The science is in. Climate change is a reality. It is happening now. And it is affecting our future supply of water. The core economic reality is that there is an economic cost to Australia if we fail to act on climate change.

The second core reality is that the economic cost of not acting will be far greater than the cost of taking early and responsible action. For this reason, we have already released a 10-point plan on climate change, including:

- ratifying the Kyoto protocol;
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent by 2050;
- establishing a $500 million national clean coal fund;
- as well as boosting the use of renewable energy through enabling Australians to access low-interest loans to help install energy-efficient measures such as solar panels.

Because of climate change we also need to adjust by using water more wisely. Our proposed loan fund can also be used to purchase rainwater tanks and other water efficiency measures at home. We have sought to provide the Prime Minister with bipartisan support to build a national consensus around his Murray-Darling initiative. But a truly national water plan must ensure water security for all Australians including those in our cities and towns. We all know our reservoirs are dangerously low.

We can improve water security for local communities. That is why we have committed to funding the goldfields super pipe for Bendigo and Ballarat, the Geelong Shell refinery water recycling project and other major urban water projects.

Across Australia we have about 175,000 kilometres of water mains. Leaks from these pipes remain a major impediment to future water security. According to the National Water Commission, in some towns up to 30 per cent of water is lost from leaky pipes and
burst water mains. More than 155,000 megalitres goes down the drain in our capital cities each year. Water is too valuable and too precious to waste.

Tonight I announce that, if elected, we will begin by establishing a modest national fund to start plugging the leaks in the water pipes of our towns and cities—a practical Labor initiative. In office, Labor will work with state and local governments to identify relevant projects and take action. We will provide matching funds for practical projects that can achieve measurable water savings outcomes. We will allocate $250 million over the forward estimates to commence this program.

It is a modest, practical program—but one we believe represents an important foundation on which we can later build. The national government cannot simply sit on its hands and do nothing about the water crisis affecting so many of our towns and cities.

The future of the fair go

I said earlier that our nation faces three core challenges for our future: building long-term prosperity beyond the mining boom; acting on climate change and water; and making sure the fair go has a future, not just a past.

The government’s industrial relations laws have gone too far. They know it. The Australian people know it. That is why, four months before an election, they have pretended to change them. If we are elected to form the next government of Australia, we intend to restore the balance—because we believe you can build long-term prosperity without throwing the fair go out the back door.

We believe we can get the balance right between fairness and flexibility. The government believe that it is either one or the other. We intend to prove them wrong. We want to unite Australia, not see it divided.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, I conclude my remarks where I began. I am a great optimist when it comes to our country’s future. I did not come into this place tonight to outspend the Prime Minister and I have not. Instead I came to offer an alternative plan for Australia’s future. I believe if as a nation we rise to the great challenges I have outlined tonight we can build a better and more secure future for our families and for our country. So many Australians are depending on us to do so: our farmers and their families battling the drought; pensioners and carers struggling to make ends meet—notwithstanding the one-off payments they have received; working families under financial pressure, for whom tax cuts are always welcome, together with child-care relief.

All this, however, depends on building a strong economy into the future. All this depends on us now seizing the day on revolutionizing our approach to education. All this depends on us seizing the day on climate change and water. And all this still depends on ensuring that, in this great country of ours, Australia, the fair go has a future, and not just a past.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.02 pm

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Georganas to move:

That the House:

1. acknowledges that prostate cancer continues to be a major disease amongst Australian men, with approximately 12,000 men diagnosed with, and 2,700 men dying from, prostate cancer annually;

2. recognises the difficulty of men identifying prostate cancer symptoms and reluctance of many men to instigate medical consultations;

3. supports the three-year ‘Be A Man’ campaign, due to conclude early in 2008; and
(4) calls on the Federal Government to explore ways of providing funding in support of optimal treatment.

Mr Andren to move:
That the House:
(1) notes that:
(a) 26 May 2007 marks the tenth anniversary of the Bringing Them Home report;
(b) most of the recommendations of the report have been ignored by successive Coalition governments;
(c) medical evidence shows that many indigenous children who were removed from their families have been severely affected, with that effect carrying on to following generations;
(d) the Urbis Keys Young report established by the Government has revealed that some Bringing Them Home and Link-Up counselors are struggling to cope with up to more than 80 clients each, compared with the average caseload of 25 for a mental health worker in mainstream services;
(e) the same report described the Government response to the needs of the Stolen Generation as “poorly coordinated and insufficiently targeted”;
(f) the Canadian Government has implemented measures totaling $4.8 billion dollars to address its equivalent of the Stolen Generations, with 50 per cent for compensation for those indigenous children held in institutions over many years, as well as an Aboriginal Healing Foundation and Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and
(2) calls on the current and any future Government to immediately implement measures to address the continuing adverse social, physical and mental health outcomes impacting on the Stolen Generation and subsequent generations.

Mrs Mirabella to move:
That the House:
(1) notes that:
(a) Palestinian terrorists infiltrated Israel’s sovereign border from the Gaza Strip on 25 June 2006, attacked an army post inside Israel’s sovereign territory and kidnapped Corporal Gilad Shalit into Gaza;
(b) on 12 July 2006—in a similar aggressive cross-border attack from southern Lebanon—Hizbollah terrorists infiltrated sovereign Israeli territory and kidnapped Israeli Defence Force Reservists Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev;
(c) there is no territorial dispute between Israel and Lebanon, since Israel withdrew from her security zone in May 2000, under the supervision of the United Nations; and
(d) these young soldiers were serving their active duty within Israel’s borders and now, for more than nine months, have been denied their basic human rights; and
(2) urges the Government to exert pressure on the terrorist organisations, their supporters and financial backers in the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon, so that the missing soldiers are returned unharmed to their families and the country of Israel.
Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (9.30 am)—On behalf of concerned Australian communities I rise to bring to the government’s attention the application to participate in the World Health Organisation of our close neighbour Taiwan. I hereby voice my support for these concerned communities and agree with them that this issue is of the utmost importance. It is an issue that the Australian government has taken into serious consideration in the interests of promoting health both in the Asian region and globally. The preamble to the World Health Organisation’s constitution states:

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social conditions. Such a lofty purpose cannot be fully realised by excluding Taiwan, whose population of 23 million people is actually greater than the populations of 75 per cent of the World Health Organisation member states. Australia is proud of upholding and promoting democratic principles, and this is evident in recent issues around the globe such as the sending of troops to Iraq and the Australian led RAMSI deployment of troops to the Solomon Islands. Australia’s reputable support for democracies should be consistent and should reflect the thriving democracy of Taiwan and Taiwan’s bid to join the World Health Organisation.

Taiwan’s achievements in the field of health care have been most commendable. Taiwan enjoys one of the highest life expectancies in Asia and has instituted highly successful disease eradication preventative health programs. Despite its exclusion from the World Health Organisation, Taiwan has sought to share its expertise in the field of health care through numerous ongoing long-term medical development projects and has donated over $180 million to humanitarian aid programs in 95 countries and areas. If Taiwan were to be admitted to the World Health Organisation, it would have the opportunity to expand its already substantial contributions in the international healthcare arena.

Taiwan has become a major regional tourism, transport and trade hub, with a heavy flow of international traffic passing through the region, and was Australia’s ninth largest trade partner in 2006. In an era of unprecedented globalisation, given Taiwan’s level of integration into the international trading network, it would be a great and unnecessary risk to continue to exclude Taiwan from participating in the World Health Organisation’s global healthcare framework. Due to its inability to gain access to the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network of the World Health Organisation during the SARS crisis of 2003, Taiwan’s capacity to respond to the spread of the disease was severely hampered, resulting in the tragic death of 73 Taiwanese SARS victims. We cannot allow such a tragedy as this to be repeated and must recognise that disease knows no boundaries, especially with the looming threat to Taiwan and the international community’s health security of an avian influenza pandemic.

Australia and Taiwan have had long and friendly relations. Both countries have benefited from the close economic relationships that have been developed between us, and we in Australia welcome the emergence of Taiwan as one of the region’s strongest and most vibrant
democracies. Despite Taiwan’s medical achievements and the great successes of its healthcare system and humanitarian aid contributions, Taiwan remains shut outside the global health network, bereft of directly accessible expert information and communication with the World Health Organisation. The exclusion of Taiwan is a serious problem in the global network of disease prevention. *(Time expired)*

**Workplace Relations**

Mr HARDGRAVE (Moreton) (9.33 am)—As we head towards decision day later in the year, it is important in an election to look at the philosophical underpinning of the two major political groupings in Australia. While the Liberal and National parties on the government side firmly believe that individuals should have the freedom to make choices, that we should trust people and that people have a great capacity to work their way through and look after themselves and their families and then offer assistance to society, my fear is that too many on the other side of the political spectrum are motivated by a real fear that people cannot be trusted, that they will make mistakes and that they are simply victims in waiting.

One of the real proofs of that particular philosophical difference is in the area of workplace relations. While the government’s Work Choices legislation has liberated the relationship between employers and employees, introduced trust back into the workforce and allowed small businesses to talk directly to their employees without having union officials come in and try to heavy-hand and overinfluence certain outcomes, the Labor Party want to see a return to that sort of environment. Labor say, ‘We want to make the workplace fair.’ But what is fair about a workplace where you can be sacked for not being a member of a union but you cannot be sacked if you steal from your boss? That was the sort of environment that existed in Australia before the changes we have been bringing about since 1996. What is fair about an environment where no ticket—no membership of a union—means no start? How can it be fair if you are forced to join an organisation and therefore that organisation and its leadership will never be responsive to you?

We need to make unions far more responsive to the needs of average workers. Part of the problem in the union movement in Australia today is that too many union officials have never been on the tools; they have never come from the shop floor. They have been university educated and, through a series of power plays, have worked their way into positions of influence and power and then they simply manipulate themselves into various parliaments and into other opportunities within the broad trade union movement. You only have to look at the profiles of people in this place, in state parliaments around this country, in the industrial relations commissions at the state level and in other places to realise that the point I make is absolutely true. There is nothing wrong with a university education or with professionalism, but there is something fundamentally wrong when it is the workers who seem to be last in the equation. We need to make sure that people in Australia understand that that is the environment we will have. Union officials will be standing by the tills in every small business, deciding who to hire, who to fire, what time the business opens, what time the business closes, what sorts of goods and what sorts of services are offered. We do not want this restrictive, untrusting environment in Australia. It is absolutely important that we look at the philosophical underpinning of the major political parties. While state workers say that they are against Work Choices, it is their state rules, not federal rules, which govern their conduct. *(Time expired)*
Concord Garden Club

Mr MURPHY (Lowe) (9.36 am)—Today I again speak in this House about the wonderful Concord Garden Club in my electorate of Lowe. On Saturday, 24 March 2007, the Concord Garden Club held its annual Autumn Flower, Floral, Art and Vegetable Show. The standard of exhibits was outstanding. My wife, Adriana, and I were delighted to be in attendance. I again record how proud we are of the Concord Garden Club, which has been a very vibrant and active club for more than 50 years.

The members of the Concord Garden Club are truly wonderful environmentalists, and I congratulate President Alan Hancock, Secretary Marj Hogan, past president Mrs Betty Willison, past secretary Ruth Payne, and all the other members of the club who do such a great job to promote and care for our precious environment. Finally, I thank all the ladies from the Concord Ladies Auxiliary who, once again, prepared such a magnificent afternoon tea. Adriana and I look forward to the Concord Garden Club Spring Flower, Floral Art and Vegetable Show later this year. Well done, Concord Garden Club.

Mental Health

Mr TICEHURST (Dobell) (9.37 am)—I am pleased to have been able to secure $1.5 million of federal funding for the Central Coast Division of General Practice to establish a local youth mental health service. With this funding, the Central Coast Division of GPs will create a local ‘headspace’ program. This is a network of local GPs and mental health, drug and alcohol and vocational support services.

Mental health is a major concern for young people on the Central Coast and around the nation. Young people in distress often find it very difficult to seek and find help. This project will offer young people from across the Central Coast an opportunity to access coordinated services in one central location. The result will be a mental health system that is in tune with the needs of young people with a mental illness and able to provide them with the variety of care that they need. This service promises to be a breakthrough for young people and their families who find themselves battling depression, anxiety and other disorders. I know many local residents will be pleased with this announcement and with the fact that the Australian government is strongly committed to improving mental health services for all Australians.

This funding has been welcomed by young people in my electorate. I recently met with a 22-year-old resident, Ms Casey Lovelock, who had only praise for this initiative. Casey is a delegate of the New South Wales Youth Advisory Council, which advises the New South Wales Minister for Youth on matters affecting young people. It is important to note that the coast once had the highest youth suicide rate in Australia. While that statistic has levelled over recent years, there are many areas that still need to be addressed, including the lack of public transport available to these young people.

Further we announced another great youth project of $22,000 to Uniting Care Burnside to continue delivering its valuable early intervention services locally to young people and their families, providing a range of activities, including counselling, group work, family mediation and practical support. Uniting Care Burnside is one of the 103 Youth Links services around Australia that have had their funding extended. Youth Links is a prevention and early intervention program established in 1990 to support young people aged 11 to 16 and their families. It provides support and activities that are creative and challenging, to build self-reliance,
strengthen family relationships and encourage community involvement. These are great initiatives for our area of the Central Coast. We have the highest proportion of young people in New South Wales under 19 and these are very welcome announcements. These announcements also reflect the Australian government’s commitment to assisting our youth to remain connected to their families and communities. I commend them to the House.

**Medicare**

Ms HALL (Shortland) (9.40 am)—I would like to endorse the words of the member for Dobell and the support that he has expressed for those organisations on the Central Coast. They do very worthy and worthwhile work.

I would like to refer to correspondence I have had from a constituent who also lives on the Central Coast but has not had such good experiences. She tells me that she had an eye operation and that, if she had not had that operation immediately, her sight would have been badly and irreparably damaged. She had to pay for the surgery herself rather than go onto a waiting list. The cost was difficult to cover for a pensioner. The hospital expenses were $1,400, the doctors’ fees were $1,114 and the refund she received was only $596. The total cost to her as an individual was nearly $2,000, with an account for the anaesthetist still to arrive when I received this correspondence. She has also had to cover the specialist monthly fee of between $60 and $90.

She points out to me that the pharmaceutical allowance for single and married pensioners is $5.80 per fortnight. With each script costing $4.90 and sometimes $7.50, medication is very difficult for pensioners to afford. She says to me: under the Howard government, these essential costs for pensioners have increased. Some pensioners have to go without essential medication because they cannot afford it. I would like to reinforce what this lady says. I have been told time and time again how pensioners vary following the recommendations for taking their prescriptions. They take one tablet every second day or only get one script instead of two scripts—because they cannot afford it. She points out to me that at the age of 69 she is not covered by Medicare for a pap smear, which costs $90, and the same applies to mammograms. I have campaigned within the electorate very strongly to have the age at which people are eligible for mammograms extended because many people are missing out on accessing these very important services.

The majority of doctors on the Central Coast do not bulk-bill. Each visit costs between $50 and $55, my constituent points out, and the Medicare refund goes nowhere near to covering this. Without the added cost of prescription drugs, this is an enormous strain for many people on the Central Coast. A high number of medical items have been removed from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This is a problem that this constituent and many other constituents within the Shortland electorate have highlighted with me, and I urge the government to rethink this issue.

**Queensland Dams**

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler) (9.43 am)—Last month the Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources made a major funding announcement for the Burnett-Mary catchment area—$3.2 million from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust is being invested in the future of local wildlife through a specific program to study fish movements and shorebird roosts in breeding areas in the Burnett-Mary
catchment areas, particularly the coastal areas. The group will undertake two significant projects. Firstly, it will locate and map significant shorebird roosts and breeding sites north of Point Vernon and on Fraser Island, stretching up to Tannum Sands, near Gladstone. Secondly, the group will look at ways to offset the impacts of barriers to fish movements in the catchment area, particularly in the Mary River.

There is a delicious irony in this. These studies are crucial, given the state Labor government’s refusal to consider alternatives to the Traverston Crossing Dam, which will have a hugely detrimental effect on local wildlife habitats, including the Great Sandy world heritage area and the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar site because of the change in river flows. It may seem an unlikely statement for me to make, but I am one of the dam’s strongest opponents. I am not anti-dam; in fact, generally I would rate myself as being pro-dam. But I am a strong believer in better infrastructure, and when a scheme is fundamentally flawed and does not give benefits to anyone except people outside the region, I cannot support it.

What I find most offensive about the state government’s determination to plough ahead with the Traverston Crossing Dam is that it will not benefit the communities which will bear the brunt of the impact. From the point of view of economics, the resumptions in the Mary Valley alone would fund two medium sized dams. Engineering wise, the dam will be required to have extensive foundations because it is sitting on 18 metres of gravel and sand and will cause disruption to both the Bruce Highway and the North Coast railway line. At the end of the day, it is a big shallow dam—that is its favoured design—and it will lose vast amounts of water to evaporation. Aside from the environmental concerns, the dam is bound to have negative effects on the downstream tourism and fishing industries and, by association, the economies throughout the catchment and downstream areas—to say nothing of the effects on the cities of Maryborough and Hervey Bay in general and the beautiful area of River Heads in particular. The Traverston Crossing Dam is one of the most abominable projects I have ever seen put forward by a state Labor government and it should be stopped. (Time expired)

Workplace Relations

Ms HALL (Shortland) (9.47 am)—The same constituent that raised with me the health issues I have discussed today—and other issues of health which I have not raised within the parliament—also raised an issue that is of great concern to many workers and families within Shortland electorate. This lady, even though she is 69 years of age, sees how unfair the Howard government’s changes to contract laws are. She wrote to me and said that employers are increasingly requiring employees to sign up as contractors. This is something I have experienced within my office. It is a way of circumventing the laws that are in place. The employees set up a company at a cost of about $2,000 to themselves. The contractors must provide their own insurance, workers compensation, liability et cetera. The employee surrenders the right to other award conditions like annual leave and holiday pay. That is becoming the norm under the Howard government, as we all know. In exchange, the contractor is paid a higher rate of pay by the employer. Until recently, they were able to lodge annual tax returns at company rates—30c in the dollar. However, the Howard government has changed the law. Same old story, isn’t it? They are out there disadvantaging people who have the least power within the community.

Any contractor who receives 80 per cent of his work from one source now has their income classified as personal. That means that the contractor is liable to pay an increased tax rate of
up to 47c in the dollar, rather than the company rate of 30c. This is a piece of legislation I spoke on when it was in the parliament, and I expressed my concerns at that time. But it is important to see that these concerns are reflected within the community by pensioners who are out there just watching and seeing how this legislation is affecting people. This constituent also pointed out that this legislation means that the employee is unable to claim the usual company deductions, such as office, electricity, et cetera. The changes to the law mean that the employer retains all the advantages of employing someone and then treating them as a contractor, while the contractor loses the company advantage because the Howard government treats them as an employee. The changes to the contractors’ tax laws really disadvantage employees and workers. The Howard government stands condemned for this legislation, just as it stands condemned for all its efforts in the area of workers’—(Time expired)

Transport Infrastructure

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (9.50 am)—I am pleased to rise to talk about the Howard government’s investment, after over 10 years of responsible economic management, in new infrastructure for land transport. Particularly of relevance to the Gold Coast is the Howard government’s $22.3 billion investment under AusLink 2 into road transport. I am delighted that, since the Howard government has repaid the $96 billion black hole left by the Australian Labor Party and turned the $10 billion budget deficit into a $10 billion surplus, Gold Coasters can look forward to record investment in local roads as a consequence of the fine economic management that the Howard government has displayed with respect to the Australian economy.

I have to say, though, that I continue to be concerned at the Queensland state Labor government dragging its heels when it comes to road investment on the Gold Coast. At a time when the Australian government has been managing the Australian economy well, utilising the additional tax revenue that is being collected as a result of the strongly growing economy in addition to the extra company receipts that are being received and investing that money into improving infrastructure for our nation—while all this is happening at federal level—I am particularly concerned that the Queensland state Labor government continues to run the Queensland state budget into the red and as a consequence delays vitally needed road projects on the Gold Coast.

What I notice is that, at a time when Queensland received a 119 per cent increase in road funding under the AusLink program—and that does not include this additional $22.3 billion under AusLink 2—the Beattie state Labor government are running around the back suburbs of the Gold Coast in areas like Highland Park, Nerang and Mudgeeraba and saying that the reason they cannot build much-needed road infrastructure in those suburbs is that they do not have enough money. I say to all of my residents who live in those suburbs: do not let the Queensland state Labor government off the hook. I certainly will not and I also will not suffer the Queensland Labor government distorting the truth and claiming that the roads that they are 100 per cent responsible for are in some way delayed because of a lack of Commonwealth money. That simply is not true. These roads are 100 per cent within the jurisdiction of the Queensland state government. Vital road projects like the Nielsens Road interchange and the Mudgeeraba interchange—road projects that locals are demanding—are all being held up because the Queensland state Labor government simply do not have these roads as a priority in their roadworks budget. The simple fact is that the Queensland Labor government have had a
119 per cent increase in road funding and they have record revenue from GST, and they could build these roads projects. *(Time expired)*

**Chifley Electorate: Ms Christine Cawsey**

Mr PRICE (Chifley) (9.53 am)—I want to talk today about Christine Cawsey, the first female school principal of Rooty Hill High School. She was one of seven principals who received a national award for excellence here at Parliament House. I did not attend because the Minister for Education, Science and Training did not invite me to be there. But on 1 May we had a wonderful celebration at Rooty Hill High School with members of her family present. I want to quote from two students. Renee Asonitis says:

It is the students who matter most to Ms Cawsey. Working with teachers, parents and students, Ms Cawsey worked to build the reputation of the school in the local and wider community. She believes in our school motto, Persist, and in the values of the school. She especially believes we all can do our best even if we are not the best at everything. If we do our best we can succeed.

Ms Cawsey doesn’t try to do everything herself. She tries to find the strengths of each person and makes sure they have the chance to show them. She believes that the school needs every teacher to be a professional leader and she expects every one of us to live the values of our school.

Xandria Cortez writes:

During the 10 years that Ms Cawsey has been principal of the school, staff, parents and students have won many awards. We were well known for Rock Eisteddfod in 1997 but now we are also known for our achievements in competitions, debating, our relationships, our support of students needing extra help, our extension programs and our willingness to do whatever it takes to do better.

She believes that we all can succeed. She is proud to work in our wonderful school and in the western suburbs of Sydney. On behalf of all our students, parents and teachers, we want to congratulate Ms Cawsey on her award.

During her time at the school, Christine has worked to create the kind of school parents want for their kids, that students want for their learning and that teachers see as a great place to teach. She has made a big personal commitment to building teacher expertise in the school and in the teaching profession. Christine is an exceptional principal who has developed a team of teachers committed to getting the best from their students, establishing Rooty Hill High as a high-achieving high school. Over the past 10 years Christine has had a significant impact on staff and students, delivering outstanding results. The award is in recognition of her achievements, including a sustainable plan of growth for the school, focused professional learning initiatives, delivery of personalised learning, a structured lesson design process and a dedicated learning centre. I congratulate Christine on her achievements. *(Time expired)*

**Do Not Call Register**

Mrs GASH (Gilmore) (9.56 am)—It was hardly a surprise to read recent media reports that the newly introduced Do Not Call Register was inundated on its opening day. Unchecked telemarketing has every potential to develop into the latest road-rage type syndrome. It seems the predictable telephone calls from New Delhi or Cairo around dinner time triggered the reaction that I suspected they would create—a counterproductive effect for the marketeer. The matter incensed people from all walks of life, and many reacted by calling my office to do something. No amount of explaining that these calls emanated from overseas convinced people that we had little influence in stopping this intrusive and annoying practice. I had had a few of those calls myself, so I could fully appreciate people’s frustrations. Often the phone

**MAIN COMMITTEE**
calls were relentless. Because the marketeers followed a systematic prescription of cold calling, albeit to randomly selected telephone numbers, just replying to the caller immediately marked you for a follow-up call. Little wonder the new government registration website was swamped.

Few people knew that the Australian Direct Marketing Association maintained their own voluntary do not call register but that it was entirely discretionary. I applauded the ADMA for their responsible behaviour when I first spoke to the House on the subject in 2005. They themselves admitted that it was not a foolproof system. Unscrupulous marketeers were under no obligation to respect any registration, so the Do Not Call Register legislation will go a very long way in reducing the amount of nuisance calls received from marketeers. If an Australia based marketeer calls a registered number, it can be prosecuted for a breach of the act. It will not stop foreign owned marketeers from outside Australia, but I am confident that the advent of this government-supported register has ushered in a new era of responsible and considerate targeting of residents.

What I suspect will now happen in the face of this level of animosity towards unwelcome telephone soliciting is that the direct marketing industry will come up with new strategies. I have no idea what form these will take, but the government must stand ready to intercede on behalf of residents, as it has for the nuisance phone calls that this register seeks to regulate. The nature of business is such that marketing companies are constantly exploring new horizons for opportunities. This is their prerogative, but any new sales pitch should not cross the line into an unwelcome intrusion. This is tantamount to trespass and, whilst business has the right to advertise and promote its product, the consumer must also have the right to say, ‘No thanks, not today,’ and have their decision to decline the offer respected. I applaud the government for this initiative and hope that this legislation will serve as an example to those organisations that may be contemplating similar intrusive and offensive strategies. I, for one, will certainly be signing up.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley) — In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members’ statements has concluded.

LIQUID FUEL EMERGENCY AMENDMENT BILL 2007

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 28 March, on motion by Mr Ian Macfarlane:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr McMULLAN (Fraser) (9.59 am)—I rise on behalf of the opposition to indicate our support for the passage of the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2007. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Liquid Fuel Emergency Act 1984, an act introduced by the Hawke Labor government to provide the Commonwealth with the necessary authority to prepare for and handle a liquid fuel supply emergency. When introducing the bill in 1983, the then Minister for Science and Technology, Barry Jones, said:

The fundamental objectives of a national response to a major fuel shortage should be to minimise the total impact on the community—in terms of maintaining essential services and minimising economic dislocation—and to ensure that available supplies are distributed as equitably as possible.

The petroleum industry obviously holds commercial levels of petroleum stocks, reflecting their commercial decisions and judgements about the amount of stock required to maintain
the viability of their commercial operations. They have a clear incentive to operate with the minimum levels of stocks possible because it is a cost and retention of stocks unnecessarily is an inefficiency. They have to strike a commercial balance; that is their task.

The Liquid Fuel Emergency Act and its guidelines allow ministers to direct industry to establish and maintain strategic levels of petroleum reserves. The act provides the government with a number of powers—for example, contingency planning powers to facilitate management of liquid fuels in an emergency; a power for the Governor-General to declare a liquid fuel emergency; and emergency powers to regulate supplies, to regulate maintenance of stock levels and their transfer, to direct the sale of liquid fuels and to regulate refinery operations. It also includes a power for a mechanism through which demand reduction and supply measures can be implemented. As you can see, those words are neutral, but when you think about what they mean they are a sweeping set of powers and would not be lightly applied. But I think every Australian would think, in the sort of circumstance which might lead a government to recommend declaring a liquid fuel emergency and the Governor-General to act upon the recommendation, that we were in a circumstance where sweeping powers were required. That is the starting point.

This bill seeks a number of amendments to the act, the majority of which were identified in the 2004 ACIL Tasman review. That review made 31 recommendations intended to encourage parties in the liquid fuel market to carry out their own contingency planning. The Ministerial Council on Energy accepted the recommended changes in December 2005—roughly 18 months ago—and they have also been accepted by the four major petroleum producers through their organisation, the Australian Institute of Petroleum. The major changes include removing the concept of ‘high-priority’ users to encourage further contingency planning; narrowing the concept of ‘essential’ to include users ‘essential to the health, safety and welfare of the community’; a change made necessary by the introduction of self-government in 1984 in my home territory here in the ACT, which is the inclusion of a separate reference to the ACT in the act in its own right—it clearly could not have occurred in 1984; extending the delegation capacities under the act; amending the compensation provisions, removing the right to compensation of persons or corporations subject to direction in a liquid fuel emergency; extending the immunity to breaches caused by directions issued prior to a national liquid fuel emergency; and exemption from prosecution for a breach of part IV of the Trade Practices Act where conduct during a period of national liquid fuel emergency was required by direction. It is obvious why that is required. Many things that would need to be done under such a direction would be collusion if they operated in the normal marketplace. But, of course, a company operating under an order such as this could not possibly be seen to be in breach of the Trade Practices Act; they would be acting in the national interest and doing so only because they were required to by a direction. Another major change is the provision regarding the operation of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 to allow the government to respond quickly to changing circumstances and changes to the enforcement provisions of the act.

As I said in opening, the Labor Party opposition supports the passage of this amendment bill, and I would like to take this opportunity to make some brief remarks with regard to Australian production of liquid fuels. The Australian Labor Party acknowledges the significant contribution that the upstream oil and gas industry makes to our economy. Currently, Australia’s known reserves of oil to production are limited, while exploration costs are high. It may
not be well known to many Australians, but unless we find new oilfields soon domestic oil production could represent less than 20 per cent of our consumption by 2015. That is not far away. When you think about the lead times from exploration to development to production to distribution, we do not have much time to start to turn around that 2015 target and to seek to do something about that 20 per cent. We are looking at the possibility of a profound shift in the source of our liquid fuels, which has major implications for our energy security in the future.

When you think about that, Mr Deputy Speaker, compared to many countries we have been quite complacent about the issues of adequacy and security of fuel supplies. There are a number of reasons for that—and I am not making a partisan point that it is this government the previous government, or the opposition: it is Australians across the board—and one reason is that in the crucial area of energy generation we are so well endowed with coal and gas that we take for granted that our capacity to supply ourselves is going to go on forever. More recently, in the period since the rash of oil discoveries and development in Bass Strait and off the North West Shelf, with such a lot of hydrocarbons we have found ourselves much more self-sufficient than many. If you think about the part that energy security and liquid fuel security play in the diplomacy of a country like Japan and if you contrast that with the Australian situation, you can see that it might not be unfair to call it complacency. We have had a degree of legitimate comfort because of the strength of our position and the capacity of our domestic supply, but that is about to change. If we are coming to the point where less than 20 per cent of our consumption of liquid fuels will be met from domestic oil production within a mere eight years, then we need to focus much more attention on this issue. It will require us to look at alternative sources of our liquid fuels and to give serious consideration to our energy security in the future.

Our shadow minister Senator Chris Evans has been drawing the attention of those of us in the opposition and the public to the call by APPEA, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, for more support for oil exploration in Australia. You can understand that people might say, ‘They would say that, wouldn’t they?’ They are the Petroleum Production and Exploration Association. But the fact that they are, by their own charter, advocating the interests of people engaged in that area of work does not make them wrong. It does not make them automatically right, but it certainly does not mean that their argument should be dismissed. When you think about it in the context of the decline in our domestic oil production and the increased risk to our energy security, I suspect that they are quite correct. In fact, on the advice provided to me by Senator Evans, the issue of support for exploration is probably a broader point that goes beyond oil resource exploration—but that takes us too far away from the subject matter of our bill for me to go there. However, that broader question of support for resource exploration is something that, once again, Australians take for granted.

I grew up in Western Australia, where there has always been a very big focus on the resource industries and exploration across a whole range of technologies, from the most basic individual prospector to the most highly sophisticated geophysical analysis that you can get. This is something to which we need to give more attention. However, while we must continue to look for oil, our long-term energy security demands that we look to develop a secure supply of alternative liquid fuels over the medium to long term. Australia’s energy needs are best served if we have a diversity of sources of liquid transport fuels; thus the Labor Party has
made it clear that we will support the development of gas to liquids, coal to liquids and biofuels to secure a diversity of supply.

In addition to the energy security benefits of this approach, the development of alternative fuel sources could also yield benefits in terms of employment and technological know-how and lead to new export opportunities for Australia. But of course it also feeds directly into this question of the circumstances in which Australia faces a liquid fuel emergency and what might be our adequate and appropriate response to that. So, in concluding my remarks on this, I want to reiterate that the Labor opposition supports this bill which seeks to improve the efficiency of Commonwealth liquid fuel emergency response arrangements.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman) (10.11 am)—I welcome the opportunity to say a few things about the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2007. As the member for Fraser has said on behalf of the opposition, this bill is clearly supported by the opposition, but I seek to use this debate to raise a few issues related to fuel and the question of security of supply. As I have noted many times before in the House, it is disappointing that yet again it has taken the government three years to bring this bill to the House after the original act was reviewed in 2004. I suggest to the committee that this reflects the arrogance and the laziness of the Howard government when it comes to turning its mind to challenging issues which are of vital importance to the future of Australia’s economic prosperity. The fact that this bill was so far down the legislative program reflects the government’s contempt for the due process of parliament and the need to modernise Australia’s legislative framework to keep pace with a rapidly changing world.

As has been noted by the member for Fraser, the review of the Liquid Fuel Emergency Act 1984 was carried out by ACIL Tasman and included 31 recommendations to encourage parties in the liquid fuel market to carry out their own contingency planning for liquid fuel emergencies. The Liquid Fuel Emergency Act and its guidelines allow ministers to direct industry, and appropriately so, to establish and maintain strategic levels of petroleum reserves—and that is exceptionally important given the uncertainty of the world in which we operate at the moment, not only in terms of the challenges of the Middle East but also with respect to problems of the weather and sudden reductions in the production of petroleum as a result of cyclones throughout the world. Such a need obviously arises if global supplies are interrupted by war or terrorist activity or issues of climate.

Indeed, as we have noted in recent years, natural disasters can have a very significant effect on world oil and refined product markets as we have seen with Hurricane Katrina in the United States a couple of years ago. Oil production then was unfortunately shut down for an extended period in the Gulf of Mexico, as were numerous Gulf Coast refineries. Oil, petrol and diesel were diverted from markets right across the world to meet the shortfall in the United States as a result, with a huge consequent impact on the price of oil and petrol. As I have acknowledged, as a result of these cyclones the prices skyrocketed around the world as the booming economies of Asia tried to compete for supplies. The Liquid Fuel Emergency Act is very important to ensure that Australia can maintain its fuel supplies in emergency situations. But what is lacking from the debate at the moment—the opposition has been calling for this debate for some considerable years—is a long-term plan for national fuel security. This is where the debate should be in the lead-up to the next election—not just about the importance of the bill before the House, the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill, but also about en-
ergy security for Australia. Unfortunately we do not hear the government addressing this huge potential challenge to Australia. I regard this as a huge failure because the issue is actually about addressing where Australia might be in 10, 20 or 30 years time.

The opposition suggests that the best way for Australia to protect itself in an emergency situation is to have its own home-grown fuel supply industries, and Australia is well placed in the world to embrace this challenge. This would mean not only maintaining a robust refining industry but also encouraging exploration for oil in frontier areas as production declines in established basins; utilising other resources like LPG, gas and coal; and encouraging the use of biofuels. Unless we find new oilfields soon, domestic oil production could represent less than 20 per cent of our consumption by 2015 and Australia will, potentially, be in real difficulties. We are, more than ever, a net importer of oil. At the same time, we have hundreds of years supply of coal and natural gas, which means that we are required to embrace new industries. Technology to convert coal and natural gas to clean diesel is well-established and growing in significance around the world, but Australia is not moving fast enough to establish these industries which will be vitally important to industry and to Australia’s future.

When it comes to biofuels, I think it is fair to say that more has been done; but in this case we have to be careful not to overplay our hand. There is a growing ethical debate about food versus fuel, with ethanol in Australia produced from starch, grain or sugar. In the US and South America in recent months, the diversion of land from food to biofuels production is already driving up the price of food. Mexican corn prices have doubled in the last year, forcing the government to put a ceiling on tortilla prices, and sugar prices have also doubled. This shows the complex nature of the biofuels debate that is emerging worldwide today, and Australia will also be confronted with huge challenges on the issue of water in the foreseeable future.

Countries all around the world are now considering biofuels production from various crop sources. These will be grown on land that was previously used for food crops or on newly-cleared forest land. Again, this is a complex debate, given that timber and forests are carbon sinks. Interestingly, 80 per cent of Brazil’s greenhouse gas emissions have arisen because of deforestation of the Amazon basin—mainly to grow sugar cane for ethanol. This dilemma comes at a time when climate change is also perceived as a threat to world food supplies and when drought in Australia is a great concern to all of us. In fact, when members of the Australian community are asked about climate change, they often identify the issue of water as being what climate change is about. That fits into the current complex world debate which goes to whether or not we should turn food-growing areas into areas to produce crops for ethanol. That debate is going to get more and more complex and difficult in the foreseeable future.

I note a ScienceAlert report this week that indicated that industrial production of biofuels threatens to create conflict over food for humans, feed for animals and feedstock for liquid transport fuels. In Australia in recent years, with the debate about ethanol, there has been an intense lobby from the feedlot industry with respect to the production of animals about whether or not it is appropriate to take feed from that industry for the production of ethanol. So there has already been a debate in recent years, and we have all received correspondence and lobbying efforts from the feedlot industry.

I therefore believe that we must be very careful as a nation when it comes to the mandating proposed by some state governments at this time. I raise these issues because I think we have
to think our way through this complex debate. Firstly, there is no guarantee that, while we are relying on grain or sugar production for Australia’s ethanol, supplies could be maintained to meet a mandate. State governments might create a hurdle which just could not be met, given the complex debate and requirements with respect to the production of grain and sugar. We all know what that potentially means for consumers if this debate goes wrong—an increase in prices. We will see how rigorous politicians are with mandating if the debate turns that way; they will run for cover as usual because they are looking for short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions to potentially complex issues.

Prices would go up for foods that rely on grain and sugar for their production. That potentially is a real issue because of our commitment to food manufacturing and our desire to increase production. For example, when the sugar levy was brought in, the manufacturing industry in Australia was screaming because of the increase in the cost of production. So now, if we have an increase in the cost of these products as a result of mandating the use of ethanol, we will have manufacturing industry screaming yet again because of the potential loss of jobs, and some of those serious job losses could be in regional communities that more than ever are doing it tough either because of the drought or because of difficulties with recent bushfires. Then we have the issue of potential increases in price for our livestock feed, which could send meat prices through the roof. Again consumers will be screaming. Also, if we get this debate wrong, the price of petrol could go up—and we all know how sensitive an issue that is to Australian consumers. If we have to meet mandated volumes and there is a shortage, we will soon see that reflected in prices.

I raise these issues in the context of the debate about the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill and, in doing so, say there is obviously a case to encourage the biofuels industry. But I think the market is actually working. There has been a huge growth in ethanol sales amongst service stations around Australia. But I suggest caution in going down the mandating route because you might create more difficulties than were first envisaged. As I have indicated today, there could be a huge impact, not only on consumers, but also on potential choices between the production of food, including grain and meat, and the production of ethanol. Also, the impact on the price of fuel could become a huge public issue. So I say—and I caution some of my state colleagues—that in my mind commerce is the best and most efficient way of enabling consumers to choose which fuel they desire. There are clearly buyers out there now willing to purchase fuel, including ethanol, and ethanol sales are increasing dramatically as a result of encouragement by all tiers of government in Australia.

So on the basis of the complex debate that is emerging internationally and in Australia, there is no need to proceed down the mandating path at this point, and I urge strong caution. There is obviously a desire to decrease greenhouse emissions, but with respect to some of these biofuel suggestions we also need to consider whether there will be a real impact on greenhouse emissions. Obviously there is a small greenhouse benefit of about five per cent from the greenfield plants that have been constructed, but in a lot of ways this merely touches the margins.

There is a more complex debate about the issue of diesel. The conversion of coal and gas to liquids could potentially have more long-term benefits for Australia. There is also a complex debate not only about being more conscious of the greenhouse emission challenge but also about being more focused on our requirement to lock in energy security for Australia in an
unstable world, both politically and from a climate change point of view with respect to recent events—for example, cyclones in the Gulf of Mexico.

I welcome the opportunity to speak on what I regard as an important bill. It is a requirement of government to make sure that we have some security in case of emergencies, but the debate extends beyond the legislative requirement to encourage the development of new industries to ensure our energy security. In doing so, we must be cautious about encouraging ethanol by mandating. Mandating could go wrong for Australia if consumers are impacted upon in respect of both the supply and price of food, including grain and meat, and fuel. I indicate our support for the bill, but caution politicians of all political persuasions not to get carried away by emotion and to think about this debate scientifically, in respect of what is best for Australia—unlike the white shoe brigade, who will potentially gain huge personal short-term windfalls. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) (10.26 am)—I congratulate the member for Batman on his speech on the Liquid Fuel Emergency Amendment Bill 2007; there was some good, solid structure there. I remind the member for Batman that this government is not about setting mandatory targets in relation to ethanol. We appreciate his support. I also take the opportunity to remind the member for Batman about a program the federal government instituted involving $776 million for LPG conversion. We see that as another way of extending the life of energy availability within Australia. The program runs over eight years. Also to consider in that is the revenue forgone because of the reduced excises that we would claim on that. I also remind the House about the $138 million that we are expending through Geoscience Australia on further exploration. Again, I congratulate the member for Batman on his comments and appreciate his support on the bill.

The bill we are debating today will make a number of commonsense changes to the operation of the Liquid Fuel Emergency Act. It will finetune our liquid fuel emergency response regime, providing greater economic and administrative efficiency and bringing our emergency arrangements up to speed with our modern economy. The government acknowledges that in the vast majority of cases the normal operation of the market will be sufficient to deal with any shortfall in liquid fuel supplies. Some disruptions may indeed cause prices to rise and will probably result in shortages in some situations. Only the most extreme circumstances will require government intervention. The Liquid Fuel Emergency Act provides us with the tools to respond in such a situation. This bill simply sharpens those tools. The changes introduced by this bill will encourage fuel users to take steps to improve their own fuel supply reliability. These are commonsense steps to sharpen contingency management practices and encourage better planning. The bill makes appropriate provisions for compensation, gives the government sufficient flexibility to deal with the inherent uncertainty a national liquid fuel emergency would cause and clarifies the expectations of the government with regard to anticompetitive conduct in the event of an emergency.

The bill also tidies up a number of technical problems that have afflicted the act as a result of the passage of time. These changes have been the subject of an independent review by ACIL Tasman and an inquiry by the Senate Standing Committee on Economics, which is supportive of the bill. Extensive consultation between the Australian, state and territory governments and industry stakeholders has occurred. I am pleased to say that this bill has the support
of all participants on the National Oil Supplies Emergency Committee, which is charged with providing advice to government on the planning for and management of a prospective national liquid fuel emergency. The changes that this bill will make to the Liquid Fuel Emergency Act are sensible, rational and justifiable. Therefore, I commend this bill to the Main Committee.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

AUSTRALIAN WINE AND BRANDY CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL
(No. 1) 2007

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 March, on motion by Mr McGauran:

Mr CREAN (Hotham) (10.30 am)—Labor support the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2007. In essence, it provides amendments to the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Act 1980 to implement the outcome of the assessment of the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation by the Uhrig review. There have been a lot of amendments to a lot of corporations giving effect to the recommended changes from Uhrig, and we have been supportive of those changes. This bill deals with the Wine and Brandy Corporation Act. The wine industry has been one of the great export success stories of this nation in recent times. I will say a little more about that later on, because it goes to our trade performance and what I consider to be an appalling export performance on the part of this government since it has had stewardship.

To go to the bill specifically, we believe that it will lead to the better governance of the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation. That is important because Australia is the fourth largest exporter of wine and a respected leader in combining tradition with new ideas and technology. It is therefore essential that the Wine and Brandy Corporation is best equipped to assist the industry to adapt to those changes.

The corporation is a statutory authority and plays a key role in supporting an industry worth $5½ billion. The corporation’s mission is to enhance the operating environment for the benefit of the Australian wine industry. The corporation’s specific services for the wine sector include export regulation and compliance, domestic and international wine promotion, wine sector information and analysis, maintaining the integrity of Australia’s wine labels and wine making practices, defining the boundaries of Australia’s wine producing areas and assisting with negotiations with other countries to reduce trade barriers. Clearly, they are activities that involve a lot of interaction between government and industry.

The stakeholders in the corporation are the Australian government, the wine and brandy producers, who pay the wine grapes levy, and the exporters, who pay the wine export charge. So it involves government, producers and exporters. This bill will amend some of the administrative arrangements of the corporation and are designed to improve transparency. As I said, these changes have come about because of recommendations following the Review of the corporate governance of statutory authorities and office holders undertaken by John Uhrig. The
key task was to develop templates to ensure government principles which would assist the establishment of effective governance arrangements for statutory authorities.

As for the bill that is before us today, the key amendments include the appointment of the Australian government director to the corporation board—that is to be discontinued. The bill also strengthens the link between the corporation’s selection committee and the minister by including a requirement for an annual report to be given to the minister of the operations of the committee. The changes also provide for transparency to government and industry stakeholders on the process and costs associated with the selection and appointment of the members of the corporation. Labor support all of these changes. We believe that they will remove the potential for conflict of interest for serving public servants and will provide a better balance of input. They will ensure that the board is managed more at arm’s length from government and the changes will provide a more direct link between the minister and the board.

I said at the outset that wine is an Australian export success story. We are now the fourth largest wine exporting nation after France, Italy and Spain. Our wines are drunk in more than 100 countries around the world. Every day, about 2½ million bottles of Australian wine heads overseas. That is worth $2.8 billion to the national economy each year. It is an interesting reflection. I had responsibility for this industry as minister for primary industries back in the early 1990s, Mr Deputy Speaker Causley, and we served on a number of ministerial councils together—you in a different role—and worked quite effectively and cooperatively. I took the opportunity to have a look at what the wine exports were back in those days; back in the early 1990s. In those days, total exports of Australian wine were worth $293 million. The figure is now $2.8 billion, a tenfold increase in that amount of time. It is a quite staggering outcome.

Back then, our biggest market was the EC and we had restrictions on what we could get into the EC because in those days we used to label our wines as chablis and champagne and all of the other regional names that the French in particular took exception to. They used it to limit us. We were part of the negotiations in which the Australian industry was prepared to drop those regional identifications in return for improved market access. That is testament to the fact that the industry was prepared to stand on its own feet and—proud of the fact that it had its own regional varieties and had developed the quality, the expertise and the innovation—it was prepared to proudly brand its product, both by region and by label.

What this corporation does in terms of identifying Australian regions is terribly important. I know that there have been some interesting battles over what the boundaries of Coonawarra are, but, for those of us who enjoy the Coonawarra region wines, it is very important to get those boundaries right. It has been the strength of the French wine industry for centuries and other countries have followed that. Australia is able to do it and adapt in its own way.

Significantly, this was a circumstance in which it was not just the wine industry getting its act together, but the Australian government, through its trade negotiations—and, as I say, I was proud to be associated in those days as the minister responsible. We were able to push hard for improved market access into the EC on the basis of ceding that territory. We had some other difficulties with the wine industry at the time, not the least being the imposition of a tax in the 1993 budget, but we were able to eventually resolve those sorts of problems and move forward. As I say, that tenfold increase is a magnificent success story.

In those days, the EC, as I said, was our biggest export market. That is not the case now. Obviously, the US and the UK in its own right are the dominant markets. Australia is the big-
gest wine exporter to the UK. It is second only to Italy in the US and it is the third largest exporter to Canada. The industry is also making inroads into Japan and Scandinavia and it is continuing to make headway in the EC. It is also getting into other interesting markets. To maintain the quality and integrity of its wine exports, Australia has introduced a comprehensive compliance regime that requires all wines to be inspected and approved. The corporation approves wine for export from Australia. This quality dimension—this insistence on ensuring that that which we promote is actually delivered—is fundamental to the whole concept of selling Australia and keeping the reputation and brand at the forefront, not debasing it. To assist exporters to navigate the maze of regulations in international markets, the corporation has created an export market guide, providing market information and regulatory requirements for individual countries.

A key factor that led to the success of this industry was the implementation in 1994 of the European Community and Australia wine agreement, which I spoke of earlier. That agreement, which we reached in 1994, opened up the way, and I understand a new agreement will be finalised this year. I will follow that with interest. I hope it yields continuing benefits to the Australian wine industry. The role of government working with industry, and in fact driving for greater market access opportunities, is a terribly important role for government in understanding where industry is coming from and complementing its endeavours.

The corporation recently identified in its paper entitled ‘Wine Australia: Directions to 2025’ the potential for the Australian wine sector to sell an extra $4 billion worth of wine over the next four years. So not only has there been this huge tenfold increase, there are also plans to expand even more. That would lift cumulative domestic and export sales for the period to $30 billion, rather than the $26 billion expected based on current production levels and consumer trends. The gains that eventuate come through a combination of value-adding our existing wine products and new marketing focused on regional and fine wines—the promotion of our region. As more people travel to this country, they get to try these wines and they get to understand the significance and the beauty of the region and they identify with it. It is the way we would buy wines when we are overseas. That is a very smart way to promote. The activities also involve a clearer identification of niche market opportunities and a focus on business sustainability at an individual winery level—in other words, making sure that the businesses do not roll over. Whilst they can be excellent wine producers, they need to develop business and export skills.

I note also that the US free trade agreement was welcomed by the industry, though we have had a number of criticisms of the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement. I would also note that, under the agreement, US wine tariffs are unlikely to be eliminated for another eight years. Quite frankly, the government should have tried harder in this regard. This is a government that sold out the sugar industry in the home state of the former minister who is at the table, the member for Moreton. It was a disgraceful sell-out of the sugar growers in Queensland. We keep being told about the great benefits of the US free trade agreement, but why is it that, in our fastest growing market in the world, we cannot push harder and punch through for an earlier reduction in the tariff regime? Frankly, if we had been successful in pushing through with the US there, it might have had some impact in our negotiations in the Doha Round, where the Americans are also being quite difficult in their market support arrangements. We should never let up in any dimension of trade negotiations and we should use our strengths to argue
our case. The US is Australia’s largest export market for wine, and we still settled for a second-rate outcome for that industry.

The industry has proven itself, and the government could not even go in to bat for it properly for improved market access. Quite frankly, it is a disgrace and it does let the industry down. I have always understood the importance of developing a government and industry partnership, which I talked of before. When I was Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, I went in to bat for industry, because that is our role. It is not for us to tell them how to run their businesses; it is for us to be there to help them get into markets when they run their businesses properly. That is what trade negotiation should be about. It is not about having another trophy on the wall before an election to say that we have an agreement with the US, and that any agreement will do. It is about looking at the substance of the agreement. This agreement sold out the sugar growers and, quite frankly, let down the wine growers of this country. I say to the industry that, in us, they will have a much more aggressive advocate of their needs and their market access demands.

I spoke of the US free trade agreement and the wine industry’s success in developing exports. It is a great pity that, under this government’s watch, the export growth—despite the longest resources boom in 50 years—is half the rate of that achieved when Labor was in office. Think about that. Labor was in office for 13 years, from 1983 through to 1996. Labor’s trade strategy, through a range of initiatives, included its championing of the Uruguay Round and a successful conclusion to that round, its commitment to the APEC region and to the Bogor Declaration to expand market opportunities and market access in the region, and its commitment to free trade agreements if they were enhancements, not diminutions, of what we had achieved at Uruguay through APEC. Labor’s trade strategy also included looking for opportunity not just in goods but in services. Labor invested heavily in Australian flag vessels, which was very important in reducing our reliance on shipping services—and which we essentially have to buy from the rest of the world now rather than providing them. That is just one example.

Labor understood the importance of port development, infrastructure development, national rail initiatives, investing in skills, investing in innovation and using the nation’s growing prosperity to reinvest in its future. That is how our approach to trade differs from this government’s. We also introduced a number of important export facilitation schemes. Although this government has retained the name of the Export Market Development Grants Scheme, it has halved its value. That is why this government was incapable of meeting the target it announced in 2001—to double the number of exporters in this country by the year 2006. The government is nowhere near meeting that target. I said at the outset that, when Labor was in office, it was getting annual export growth of eight per cent per annum—that is, total exports—every year for 13 years. This government, in its last 10 years, has achieved just four per cent in each one of those years. So not only has it halved the Export Market Development Grants Scheme, it has halved the rate of our exports. There is a correlation between government initiatives to advance exports and the end result.

This government’s performance in relation to export growth has been appalling. It should hang its head in shame. A stark demonstration of this fact was the figure released just last Friday for the trade deficit, which shows that Australia has had yet another trade deficit for the month of March, a massive monthly deficit of $1.6 billion, the 60th consecutive monthly
trade deficit in a row. No other government in the history of this country has presided over 60 consecutive months of trade deficits. This government has managed to do it in the longest resources boom in 50 years. It is a rare feat. It is ineptitude and it demonstrates that the government has not kept its eye on the ball regarding where the sustainability of our economy lies. It is not in producing for the domestic market; it is using the strength of what we can do in the domestic market and sell to the rest of the world. Quite frankly, it has to do more than just export our commodities.

The budget handed down last night is not courtesy of John Howard and Peter Costello’s economic prowess; it is courtesy of the China economy. That is what has driven our prosperity. The government has managed the growth in receipts and revenues by doing nothing, despite the cutbacks, some of which I have talked about here today. This government should not be proud of its economic achievements; it should be ashamed of the wasted opportunity. We could be doing so much more if we had sustained the sorts of programs and initiatives in which we demonstrated the way. Australia reached a new milestone in 2006. Our foreign debt passed the half trillion dollar mark. Where is the debt truck now?

Mr Hardgrave—Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask that the member for Hotham bring himself back to the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Amendment Bill, which is before the chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hatton)—I have been listening extraordinarily closely to the member for Hotham, and I think he has dealt with the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Bill contextually and perfectly well and with the related matters with regard to trade and the budget. I call the member for Hotham.

Mr Hardgrave—Mr Deputy Speaker, further to my point of order, I say with the greatest respect that the member for Hotham has, for the last 10 minutes, not mentioned either wine or brandy—or wine drinkers or brandy drinkers. I think he is off on a little, self-indulgent, drunken spree, and I would like him to come back to the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Until that final point, you had made your point and I have no fear whatsoever that the member for Hotham will simply mention those words. But he is involved in a contextual debate which I think is undergirding the argument he has put previously in relation to the very matters in this bill.

Ms Hall—Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I take offence that the member opposite accused the member for Hotham of being on a drunken spree, and I ask that he withdraw that.

Mr Hardgrave—Mr Deputy Speaker, I was not suggesting that the member for Hotham was intoxicated by wine or brandy but that he was on an indulgent, power-drunken spree in the reminiscences of his ministry. All those things, to my mind, seem to be enormously off the mark.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Thank you both.

Ms Hall—I ask that he withdraw his remarks unconditionally.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—That has been requested. I think it is not difficult for the member to do so.

Mr Hardgrave—Which words were offensive?
The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I will deal with it in this way: the member for Moreton knows and understands quite clearly the normal, reasonable, personal approach to the fact that he went a bit far with regard to what he said. Given that we have six minutes and 35 seconds or so to go, the determination can be the member for Hotham’s as to whether he wants to continue his contribution. I will let stand what has happened, because it is to the detriment of the member for Moreton in going a bit too far. We have lost about two minutes so far of the member for Hotham’s contribution, which I was enjoying tremendously. I think we will go back to it.

Mr CREAN—Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think the only one getting carried away in this place is the member for Moreton. I did have the occasion to talk with him on Monday night in the airport lounge. We were both testing, at the appropriate time of the day, and perhaps we will at some other stage. I know the member for Moreton does not like hearing this message because it is a failed performance on his part.

Mr Hardgrave—Being almost a teetotaller, I find that pretty offensive stuff.

Mr CREAN—The point I was making at the outset is that the wine industry has been a huge success story. Why? Because a Labor government when it was in office laid a framework that enabled that industry to grow its export base. This government has cut back on the programs that assist exporters, and Australia is paying the price as a consequence. That is my point. I would have thought it was totally relevant to the bill before the House. I would have thought that if we were dealing with better governance of the Wine and Brandy Corporation, it would be important to understand what it is they are governing and to understand the framework in which they could be governing and operating a lot better if they had a more sympathetic government—a government prepared to help them rather than hinder them.

My point in drawing attention to the woeful export performance is simply this: that if the government in its 10 years in office had been able to maintain the rate of growth in exports that Labor consistently achieved in its 13 years in office then instead of a trade deficit today of $12 billion we would have a trade surplus of $23 billion. That is a big return for the economy. I think the government needs to understand that it is one thing to pass provisions that improve the governance of corporations. What they really need is governments that pass provisions that help them get into more export markets. That is what we did in the nineties and that is why the industry has increased its export base tenfold. The figures are there, but you have to put them in the context of the overall performance of the economy so far as exports are concerned since this government came to power.

With all the money washing around in the budget on Tuesday night there was not one item of expenditure designed to improve export performance; yet this is a government that in 2001 said it was going to double the number of exporters from 25,000 to 50,000. The number of exporters in this country today still sits at only 40,000, despite the resources boom. Why is that? Because the government has cut back the programs that help new exporters get into new markets. If it does not understand the significance of that, it is not listening to what industry has to say. The Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation is a representative body of the industry and it is a body that, along with others, has been complaining about the government’s cutbacks in the Export Market Development Grants Scheme; yet, with all the money that is around, the government puts in no money. Now I am told that this government was advised that unless more money was put into the Export Market Development Grants Scheme the
amount of money in the scheme would mean that those businesses in line for grants under the scheme would not be given the maximum cap. They would all have to take a cut. That reduces their ability to get into export markets.

I understand that the minister approached the Prime Minister with this very graphic piece of news. The Prime Minister knocked him back. Where is the support for our exporters? Do not come along and talk to us about the importance of improving governance if you are not prepared to talk about supporting them as exporters. Where was the money in the budget for the Export Market Development Grants Scheme? Where is the commitment to honouring the target of doubling the number of exporters? I will tell the government why it will not achieve this. It is not just that it has cut the money in the schemes that help us get new exporters; it is that it has debased the whole means by which trade policy in this country was successfully and effectively fostered under a Labor government.

This is not just a bill about improving governance; this is a bill that requires us to reflect on wasted opportunity. The wine industry is a great success story for this country and I am proud to have been part of it having been built. I want to be part of an exercise that helps it grow even stronger. I would not walk away from them regarding the US free trade agreement and sell them short. I would be going in to bat for them. That is what this government has failed to do. Whilst we support the bill, we condemn the government for failing exporters in this country so pathetically over the past 10 years.

Mr HARDGRAVE (Moreton) (11.00 am)—I will just take a moment to put something on the public record. The member for Hotham reminisced a lot about Labor’s trade policy and the position that they left the country in as far as trade and income and outgoings of the wine and brandy industry and private investors within that industry were concerned. It is worth revisiting that Labor’s trade strategy was to lower Australia’s credit rating from a AAA rating to a AA rating, creating a circumstance by which people in the wine and brandy industry, the sugar industry and small businesses throughout my electorate, the electorate of Kingston and the electorate of Farrer had to pay interest rates of 23 and 24 per cent because the risk associated with Australia was far higher as a result of Labor’s approach to managing the economy and to trade policy in those industries. It is also worth noting that, as a result of Labor’s trade policy and Labor’s administration of the wine and brandy industry, the sugar industry, the economy generally and trade policy in particular, we saw at the end of the Hawke and Keating years a $93 billion government debt, which was overseas money brought into the economy at the expense of any domestic borrower, making money in this country more expensive.

For the record I will say that the member for Hotham certainly was not intoxicated by any alcoholic beverage; I did not mean that. But there was a power drunkenness about the concepts in his presentation today, which were divorced from the subject at hand. If he wants to introduce trade policy and economic policy in the sugar industry as well as the wine and brandy industry, it must be stated clearly that Labor in government achieved a higher level of interest rates at their absolute lowest than the coalition in government has achieved with interest rates at their absolute highest—an average of eight per cent under us and an average of 10 per cent under them. I simply put that on the record because the member for Hotham has introduced the question of Labor in its international dealings somehow or other having greater prowess—$93 billion worth of international capital and a AAA rating slammed down to AA. It is now back to AAA because of good economic management. I rest my case.
Ms LEY (Farrer—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (11.03 am)—I note the reminiscences of the member for Hotham, which did reflect back over long experience. I know of his time in parliament, but we are in the here and now, and it is important that we all recognise that. I do note his comments about export markets for wine. The Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2007 is not about those things. It is a straightforward bill about governance and, without getting into semantics, about the principles of how you govern a statutory authority to do the most responsible job for the Australian taxpayer. It is not about the substance or the subject matter of that statutory authority. That is what I am summing up here this morning on behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

I am going to take a moment to demonstrate that the Australian government in fact is an active supporter of the growth of our Australian wine industry and its access to export markets. I note that, in keeping with the opposition’s lack of understanding about the water crisis in the southern Murray-Darling basin, the member for Hotham did not mention the single critical factor facing every wine grower in Australia today, and that is lack of water. Rather than reflecting on many years past—the past is history and cannot be changed; only the future can be—water is what wine growers are desperate about at the moment. We as a government are working with them so that, if there is some water in the system, we will do whatever we can to save their permanent plantings.

As for our support for the wine industry, the government has negotiated through the World Wine Trade Group a wine labelling agreement which will provide savings of about $25 million a year to the Australian industry by harmonising the labelling requirements in key export markets, including the US. I think everyone would agree that this is a vital step to take. A wine industry summit was held in June 2006, and of course it recognised that there was no quick-fix solution. However, some measures were put forward and taken. They include: extending the wine equalisation tax rebate to the first $1.7 million in sales at a cost of $126 million over four years; providing $10.1 million in Austrade export market development grants for wine export activities in the 2005-06 financial year—the member for Hotham mentioned those; they are important; they are part of the bigger picture—and providing matching payments for industry research through the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation of approximately $12 million in the 2005-06 financial year. Also, in specific locations across the country, such as Mildura-Wentworth—an area in my electorate and that of the member for Mallee, John Forrest—$500,000 will be put towards studies to support approaches to improving the operation of irrigated horticulture and communities. There is $200,000 for the Wine Grape Growers Association to help them assess their current situation and develop targeted activities, and $197,000 for the Winemakers Federation of Australia to fund projects to help boost winery tourism.

I want to put that on the record and also say that, yes, on another occasion, I can happily talk about our support for exports, but I reiterate that that is not what this bill is about. The Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation is an Australian government statutory authority. It plays an important role in supporting Australia’s wine industry. It provides strategic marketing information and analysis, export and labelling regulation, advice on trade and market access and the identification and protection of our distinctive wine regions. The production and sale
of wine have grown to be a very significant industry in Australia, with approximately 2,000 wineries generating annual sales of $4.7 billion in the 2006 financial year.

In 1981 when the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation was formed, Australia produced 366 million litres of wine, of which just 7.5 million litres was exported. In 2005-06, Australia sold 1.1 billion litres of wine, including exports of 722 million litres valued at $2.8 billion. Wine is now Australia’s third largest food export. In spite of the tough times, it is an incredible industry with an incredible contribution to make to Australian agriculture and our export markets generally.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry assesses the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation against the Uhrig board template. The assessment recommended a small number of changes to bring it in line with the Uhrig review recommendations. The assessment concluded that the position of government member on the AWBC board should be discontinued and that, given this, the skill set for board member selection should be expanded to include expertise in public administration. This change removes the potential for conflict of interest for serving public servants between their responsibilities to the minister and to the board. This is consistent with the changes being made to the eight statutory rural research and development corporations.

The bill also includes a provision for the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Selection Committee to provide the minister for agriculture with an annual report on its operations. The bill will strengthen the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation’s governance and accountability framework and maintain its capacity to work collaboratively with the Australian wine industry to market and promote Australian wine. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that the bill be reported to the House without amendment.

CONDOLENCES

Senator Jeannie Margaret Ferris

Debate resumed from 8 May, on motion by Mr Howard:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 2 April 2007 of Senator Jeannie Margaret Ferris, Senator for South Australia, place on record its appreciation of her long and meritorious public service and tender its profound sympathy to her family in their bereavement.

Mr RICHARDSON (Kingston) (11.10 am)—I rise today in support of the Prime Minister’s condolence motion for my South Australian colleague and friend Jeannie Ferris. I stand here today proud to remember a friend whose life was nothing short of inspiring but also saddened by the knowledge that she was taken from us far too soon. Jeannie’s contributions to this parliament, to our home state of South Australia and to our nation were remarkable. Jeannie’s dedication to rural Australia, her tireless work on women’s issues, particularly in relation to gynaecological cancers, and her inspirational battle against her own cancer have stamped her memory on our hearts and our minds.

The remarkable thing about Jeannie was her strength of character. I remember very clearly the Sunday evening when we arrived in Canberra to the sad news that Jeannie had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. While a sombre mood overcame the South Australian camp, it
soon become blatantly evident to us that Jeannie would not be tolerating pity, nor would she be feeling in any way sorry for herself. Jeannie attacked her battle with ovarian cancer with the same tenacity and ferocity with which she did every battle in her life, the sad reality being that this was one of the very few battles she actually lost.

I would like to pass on my heartfelt sympathy to her sons, Robbie and Jeremy, who battled not only with the loss of their mother but also with the tragic loss of their father within a week. As a father and for that matter as a son, I can only imagine the trauma and sadness which they must be suffering. While I do not know the boys personally, I have been informed that they are handling their grief with the strength and dignity that their mother was famous for, and I am sure she would be exceptionally proud of them.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pass on my sympathy to her staff—Robyn, Bronte, Simon, Vickie and Angela—who lost not only a boss but a dear friend and mentor. She spoke of them often with great pride and they have conducted themselves with the utmost professionalism while dealing with their own personal grief. Their handling of her death is testament to the lessons she imparted to them during her life.

As a new member of parliament, I was fortunate enough to have the benefit of Jeannie’s guiding hand when I first entered the parliament, and I learned very quickly to run when I heard her booming voice shouting, ‘Kym Richardson, I want to talk to you.’ Invariably that meant I had done or said something that the good senator did not agree with. I felt better when I discovered that I was not the only one on the receiving end. In fact, it was her genuine honesty and willingness to tackle anybody about anything which served her well as the Government Whip in the Senate. But it was also Jeannie’s beaming smile and genuine interest, particularly in how new members were coping and settling in with the challenges of parliament, which made her such a valuable teacher, mentor and friend.

Jeannie also served the Liberal Party exceptionally well, and we Liberals and particularly the women of our party owe her a great debt. Many of them may not realise it today and they may never come to realise the extent of the path that she has forged for them in this place and in the South Australian division of our party. Jeannie was a personal mentor to one of the female staff members in my office, and it was through this role that I truly came to appreciate the legacy Jeannie was leaving.

She was determined to make sure the young women of our party were given every opportunity that the men were given, and she worked just as hard to make sure that they maintained their desire and ambition to be involved in the political process, despite the difficulties, which she was all too well aware of, that came with being a woman, a wife and a mother as well as a parliamentarian. My staff, like me, have been moved not only by the tragedy of her death but by the triumph of her life and are grateful for the time they too were fortunate enough to spend with such an infectious and inspiring Liberal.

Jeannie managed to achieve what all of us entering the parliament hope to achieve. She in fact changed the world. Jeannie changed the world for those struggling in rural Australia. She changed the world for women suffering with cancer and, most importantly, she changed the future for a generation of Australian women who will now be vaccinated against cervical cancer. In closing: when South Australia received drought-breaking rain last week, I found it a little more than coincidental—I guess it did not take Jeannie long to start lobbying an even
higher power on behalf of the South Australian farmers, and they could not have sent a better advocate. As I bid a final farewell to a dear friend, I note that our loss is heaven’s gain.

Mr ANTHONY SMITH (Casey—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (11.15 am)—I would like to associate myself with the condolence motion and follow the remarks of the Prime Minister, senior South Australian ministers, in particular, in the House, and others who have spoken here in the Main Committee before me this day. Jeannie was known and well regarded not only by all members of the coalition but, as has been made clear in discussion on this motion, by many members of the opposition and the minor parties in the Senate. Many have spoken before me about her great characteristics—her feistiness, her dedication to the policy causes she believed in, her wonderful personality. I saw all of those firsthand here, as a member of parliament. But I wanted to talk about my friendship with Jeannie, which began many years ago, before I was elected as a member of parliament, when I worked as a staff member for the member for Higgins, now Treasurer. I think we started work together on the same day in this building. I remember trying to find my way around—it was a fair while ago; I would have called myself young in those days, in 1990. I had just started work with the member for Higgins and Jeannie had started work with Ian McLachlan.

Mr Hardgrave—I was there too!

Mr ANTHONY SMITH—Indeed, the member for Moreton was there as well. She was very friendly, sought me out—she had never met me before—and said, ‘We’ve got to get together.’ Of course, Ian McLachlan and Peter Costello were old friends and had worked on so many cases together in the industrial relations field, and Jeannie had worked with them in her previous role at the National Farmers Federation. She was a great help to me in making me feel at home back in the early 1990s. She was a wonderful influence.

Her background, having worked as a journalist and in politics—and, I think the member for Moreton would agree, in agri-politics, if you could call it that, with the National Farmers Federation—stood her in very good stead and ensured that she did a very good job working with Ian McLachlan. I think I was 22 or 23 at the time. I was astounded by the way Jeannie always knew what was going on, as a result of her experience and contacts. We would often catch up around news time. It was pretty obvious to me that she was a very knowledgeable lady.

Jeannie entered the Senate after the 1996 election, and that is where most people in this parliament know her from. She had a very distinguished career as a senator. When people look back on Jeannie’s career, and they look back at her contribution, there will be no denying that she is somebody who always stood up for what she believed in. She was prepared to argue for the things she held dear. She was prepared to argue very strongly. We saw that particularly over the last couple of years in some key debates in the Senate.

I did not always agree with her. Sometimes I did and sometimes I did not, but she would always put her case very forcefully. If you had a difference of opinion after she had put her case forcefully, she was always cheery, always happy. Many in this debate have spoken about her wonderful smile and just what a happy disposition she had, and that is how we will remember her here in this place. Her untimely death has affected many of her close friends, particularly those from South Australia. I know she was particularly close friends with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Finance. In debate on this motion we should recognise her wonderful contribution and remember the wonderful person that she was.
Mr HARDGRAVE (Moreton) (11.21 am)—It may assist the committee if I take a couple of moments to also reflect on Jeannie Ferris. I agree with the member for Casey. I know the member for Blaxland would agree too: as former parliamentary staffers, you get a feel for a variety of things across a wide spectrum.

Mr Slipper—Were you a parliamentary staffer?

Mr HARDGRAVE—I was, member for Fisher, and we are delighted that you have joined us for this debate. I enjoyed my time in that capacity, having been in the media myself for many years in Brisbane radio and television, after having started my radio career at my MacGregor State High School, which is now in my electorate. But when I met people such as Jeannie Ferris and Tony Smith, the member for Casey, there was a deal of common ground, although I suspect that they probably viewed me with a bit of suspicion because who I was working for was probably sitting on the other end of the pew in the Liberal Party broad church. But there is no doubt in my mind that Senator Jeannie Ferris was never afraid to speak her mind. I sat immediately behind her in a fairly integrity-ridden corner of the government party room. The member for Fisher is there, the member for Mitchell is there and the member for Murray is there.

Mr Anthony Smith—I must shift!

Mr HARDGRAVE—Yes, you must shift, member for Casey. It is a very good part of the world. David Fawcett, the member for Wakefield, is there and we have the member for Kalgoorlie behind us. The member for Kalgoorlie and I have a timbre in our voices which seems to travel a little further, no matter how we try to whisper a comment or two.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hatton)—I have noted that in respect of both of you.

Mr HARDGRAVE—Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I simply record with an enormous amount of public humiliation that I was rebuked on a number of occasions by Jeannie Ferris, who was also known to make comments about a few people on occasions. But I think the only thing that I can say very clearly for the record is that Jeannie, as the member for Casey said, did take differences of opinion in her stride and with good humour. She saw a lot of those things as a challenge in the robust cut and thrust of this place. No matter how many times I was rebuked—about three or four times; and I sort of fell into a shell, believe it or not, each time I did it, because I did not want to upset her by any measure. From the time I first met her at coalition staff meetings in the early nineties to the time I last saw her six or seven weeks ago, there was no doubt she stood for something. I think no matter which side of politics we happen to be on, and which particular part of our sides of politics we adhere to, standing for something is an important element in this place.

I think the biggest sword I ever crossed with Jeannie was about my constant and ready rebuke of the other place being the B team. When the red lights flash, as they are in the chamber right now, people touring in this place say, ‘What does a red light mean?’ I say, ‘When the red light flashes something is stopping generally; when the green light is flashing something is going.’ Jeannie hated hearing all of those things: ‘You have no idea how very hard we have to work to secure the government’s agenda through the Senate.’ As the Treasurer always said, on a good day we might have a majority—and Jeannie Ferris, as the government whip in the Senate, had that responsibility. There could not have been a better person to vest that heavy responsibility in and the Prime Minister was right to appoint her to that position.
As can often happen in these condolence motions, there has been a little bit of levity in my contribution which Jeannie would have enjoyed. I think the one thing she would not have enjoyed is the fact there was no time limit imposed because, for Jeannie, it was all about the bells, it was all about the time, it was all about getting there and always adhering to the standing orders and the procedures of the parliament. As I think all the whips in this building know, Jeannie often instructed, ‘Do not use the elevators during divisions; use the stairs.’ Jeannie was very motivated to serve, and serve she did. To her family, to those closest to her and to her staff, I just want to add my voice of sadness and enormous respect for Jeannie Ferris.

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (11.25 am)—I do not intend to delay the chamber for long, but I do want to place my condolences on the public record. I had a very high regard for Senator Jeannie Ferris. As the honourable member for Moreton indicated, I sat very close to her in the coalition party room. In fact, I do not know whether your own party room in your capacity as a member of the Labor Party, Mr Deputy Speaker Hatton, has an order of where people sit. In our party room, although no-one is ever given a particular place to sit, everyone knows where he or she should sit. I am in the front row next to the Attorney-General and often I would find that my seat had been usurped by Senator Jeannie Ferris and there was a bit of to-ing and fro-ing. It did not particularly worry me and it did not particularly worry her, but it was often an opportunity for both of us to participate in a little frivolity in the party room. If you arrived five minutes late, you would find Jeannie sitting in your seat.

Mr Hardgrave—Your innovation was the spare seat that was put in, wasn’t it?

Mr SLIPPER—There was a spare seat put in and then the problem evaporated subsequently. Having said that, on a very serious note, the loss of Senator Jeannie Ferris is a grave one not only to the Liberal Party and rural Australia but to the parliament of Australia as a whole. Jeannie was a robust, direct lady who never hesitated to speak her mind and, like the honourable member for Moreton, on a number of occasions I have been told to discontinue—

Mr Hardgrave—To shut up, generally.

Mr SLIPPER—to shut up, I suppose, as the member for Moreton says, would be a more direct way of getting across the message that Jeannie Ferris was trying to convey because she, of course, was trying to make sure that all of us were paying the attention that we ought to have been to the very serious proceedings taking place in the party room.

It is on the record that Jeannie Ferris was a very fine Australian. She was a devoted family woman. I would like to pass on my condolences to her sons, Robbie and Jeremy, who, as was indicated, had the double tragedy of losing both of their parents in the one week. I pay tribute to Senator Jeannie Ferris and to her family.

Some people might say that the Liberal Party of Australia is not entrenched in rural Australia. Without wanting to cast any aspersions on any other political party, it ought to be recognised that the Liberal Party of Australia is undoubtedly the largest rural party in Australia. Senator Jeannie Ferris, as Chair of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, was always a keen advocate of rural people. Her involvement with the National Farmers Federation and her work with former minister Ian McLachlan indicated that, at the core of her being, she had a desire to assist rural Australia. She had an empathy for and an understanding of people in rural and regional Australia and the particular challenges that they face on an everyday basis. Although Senator Ferris, like me, was to the conservative side of the Liberal
Party, she had a range of different views and, I found in some cases, surprising views on some issues. I disagreed with her on a number of the conscience votes that we have had in the parliament in recent times. But, having said that, I will go publicly and strongly on the record to say that Jeannie Ferris ferociously always stood up for what she believed in. She was a woman of absolute integrity. If you disagreed with her, she did not hesitate to tell you that she disagreed with you, but you could not help but respect her. Her loss to the Liberal Party is enormous. More importantly, the loss to her family, the parliament and the people of Australia is enormous. I place on record condolences on my own behalf and on behalf of my wife, Inge, to Senator Ferris’s family.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hatton)—I understand it is the wish of honourable members to signify at this stage their respect and sympathy by rising in their places.

Honourable members having risen in their places—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I thank the committee.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (11.31 am)—I move:
That further proceedings be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (11.31 am)—I move:
That the Main Committee do now adjourn.

National Library of Australia: Digitisation Project

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman) (11.31 am)—I rise as one of the parliamentary representatives on the National Library Council to advise with pride that the National Library has commenced digitising Australian newspapers. Two weeks ago the National Library commenced the digitisation of seven Australian newspapers that date back to 1803 and extend to 1954. The collection includes the Sydney Gazette, the Argus, the Courier Mail, the Hobart Town Gazette, the Adelaide Advertiser, the West Australian and the Northern Territory Times. These newspapers represent the main paper published in each state and territory. Significantly, the newspapers contain records of the social, political, economic and cultural issues of the day. Digitising the newspapers will give an insight into Australians’ earlier way of life. It will also provide the community with a more accessible understanding of our history, and I know these papers are also highly sought after to trace family histories. The project is a worldwide project and will enable easy access to a vast and rich collection of unique Australian documents.

The digitisation project of the National Library of Australia is on a par with similar systems already established in Britain and Canada, and it is something government should think about giving special financial assistance to in the near future. The National Library will digitise 500,000 newspaper pages provided by state libraries in the form of microfilm. This microfilm will be converted into digital records and then converted into text searchable files. The project has been in development for the past year and builds on the National Library’s ongoing project of digitising selected archives.

Since 1995, the National Library has digitised more than 10,000 selected rare and iconic Australian documents to make them easily available online and therefore to increase their ac-
accessibility to the broader Australian community. I take this opportunity to congratulate the leadership of the National Library for taking the initiative in developing this important national project. The unbounding commitment of the staff to this project has been critical in progressing the Library’s vision of making documents of national significance accessible to ordinary Australians.

Last week I had the pleasure of meeting a group of students visiting Parliament House from Alphington Grammar School, which is on the edge of my electorate and shared between my electorate and the member for Melbourne, Lindsay Tanner. It is exciting that this service will enable students from schools such as Alphington Grammar to access some of Australia’s most insightful records of our nation’s early days of colonial settlement. We should be encouraging more than ever the education of our young people about our history. These students are just one group of many who will benefit from the easy public access to these historically significant newspapers.

All Australians, wherever they are located, will be able to access these historical newspaper articles. This exciting project will change the way people from all around Australia and beyond can access Australia’s specific historical resources. The digitisation of newspapers will enable Australia to share its history with the world and give an insight into early Australian life and the issues of the day. I look forward with great anticipation to the first digitised newspaper articles being made available publicly online from October 2007.

I also think that, given the leadership of the National Library’s council and staff on this project, we should be encouraging the Australian government to consider in the budget rounds over the next couple of years some additional financial assistance for this very expensive project. It might also be appropriate if a number of our large newspaper proprietors thought about an investment in their own history and in a national project of significance to readers who have supported them throughout the life of their newspapers. They might also think about funding other specific projects and the work of the National Library. This is a very important historical project. I commend the project to the House and congratulate the National Library on undertaking this very significant initiative.

Wakefield Electorate

Mr FAWCETT (Wakefield) (11.36 am)—I rise today to draw to the attention of the House the opening in the electorate of Wakefield of West Avenue, which joins the developing area of Edinburgh Parks, which is an industrial area, with Elizabeth West. On one hand, the opening of a road is of itself an achievement. It is something I am very pleased to report, given that it is something that I have been working with local industry to bring to the attention of government and to achieve funding for. So that was a good thing. But it is more important to discuss why that road was required and some of the underlying initiatives of the Howard government which helped bring it about.

An expanding industrial area means that people have the confidence to invest in companies, infrastructure, training and people in a location because they believe that there is a business case for it and it is going to be profitable. There are two main sectors that are growing rapidly in Elizabeth West and Edinburgh Parks, and they are the automotive sector and the defence sector. People have seen the incentives and the investment made by the Howard government in those sectors, and that has encouraged them to make investments in them.
While many people love to run the automotive industry down and say that it is in trouble, what we are actually seeing is a significant growth in components manufacture in that area, with jobs being created both in assembly and in production to support people like General Motors Holden at Elizabeth. There is also the exporting of components overseas. That has occurred largely because of the 10-year plan that has been worked through between this government, state governments and the automotive sector which looks at what they need in terms of certainty, both from a legislative point of view—things like tariffs—and from an investment point of view.

This government has put $7.2 billion into the Automotive Competitiveness Investment Scheme to benefit the auto industry. This means, for a lot of the things that people would like to see—lower emissions, hybrid cars or diesel cars, or alternative fuels, such as biofuels or even hydrogen—that the government has now said to the auto industry, 'If you can show us that you've got a business case and you want to go down this path, we will be there to match money.' And that is not at some point in the future; that money is available right now. I have been working with GMH to look at ways that we can encourage them to show us a business case for things like hydrogen and for alternative power. The government has put those incentives there, and that has encouraged business to come. That is just one area.

Some of the other areas that the government has been providing incentives in are things like renewable energy and low emissions for vehicles. The government has been putting in a significant amount of money. In light of this week's budget, which shows that the government, through its strong economic management, has surpluses to be able to invest in this, it is important to recognise that things like the Renewable Energy Development Initiative have seen a large amount of money committed by the government to make sure that we get proof of concept and early commercialisation in a number of projects. This will help them get off and running. For example, some $5 million has gone into a project in the northern part of South Australia which is looking at geothermal energy. Under the REDI scheme, with respect to a low emissions future, some $75 million has gone towards a large-scale solar concentrator in regional Victoria.

In South Australia, near Whyalla, the Solar Oasis project is looking at using solar power to generate power for a desalination plant to produce water. Originally it was intended to be a joint project between state, federal and industry. Some good research by the ANU has looked at creating a new chemical process using ammonia to store solar energy to produce power around the clock, which overcomes one of the biggest drawbacks to solar energy. This government is committed to it and has recently announced another $7.4 million for that project. It is still waiting for the state government to come on board with that. What is important is that good economic management by this government has enabled underlying infrastructure for things like West Avenue as well as large-scale incentive plans to attract defence and automotive industries to Australia. It has also enabled us to put money into industry to develop new and innovative ways of developing energy sources. I particularly welcome the significant investments in things like geothermal and solar, including the Solar Oasis project in South Australia.
Mrs ELSON (Forde) (11.41 am)—Recently I was part of an official delegation, along with the Speaker of the House, to Canada and Germany. In the week before the delegation commenced, I decided that I would take the opportunity to conduct a study tour of the United States to examine two crucial issues that I have been, and will continue to be, actively involved in: water management and infrastructure, and planning and counselling support services for the families of those suffering from drug addiction. I knew that both of these issues had been dealt with on a much larger scale and over a longer period of time in the US than they have been here, largely due to the size of their population. I learned some very interesting things which will help inform my continuing contribution to these two issues. I will be outlining my findings more comprehensively in my official report, and I shall table that in this place shortly.

I want to spend a few minutes today talking about America and the American people. Having never visited the US, I did not know what to expect. A lot of people like to be critical and derogatory about the US as the world’s most powerful nation, but I personally have always respected and supported the close ties our two nations share. That respect and support have been greatly strengthened by my visit. I was amazed by the warmth of the American people, how friendly and helpful everyone is, their pride, and the way in which they go about their daily lives. It was an incredible experience for me. I have to wonder whether those who like to be so critical of US culture and the US as a nation have ever taken the time to visit it and see firsthand what a diverse and awe-inspiring nation it is.

I want to say thank you to the many people who helped to make my study tour so informative, interesting and enjoyable. I sincerely thank Andrea Klein and Monya Hudisick, from an organisation called Meridian International. My staff contacted them with a view to contracting their services to help with organising appointments and so forth. We heard that they were the best in the business and they certainly proved to be. In the end, we were unable to contract their services as this was not covered under the study tour budget, but they were incredibly helpful and offered their services to me without cost. I would thoroughly recommend them to any minister, department or organisation that might be planning a delegation to the US. Thank you to Andrea and Monya for their kindness in assisting me to contact so many incredible people.

I would also like to thank John Gordon and his lovely wife, Annette, from the Los Angeles Republican Coalition, who went out of their way to make me feel welcome and arranged a special speaking engagement for me at the Hollywood Congress of Republicans. The evening was fantastic—thanks to the president of the congress, Mark Vafiades—and again, we met some incredible, enthusiastic and energetic people who have the utmost respect for Australians. One of the things I loved about the US was how passionate people are about their politics. Here in Australia we tend to take a fairly relaxed approach, as we do with most things, which is not necessarily a bad thing. It was wonderful, for example, to attend an event at George Washington University in Washington and to see many hundreds of young people who were so enthusiastic about the role of politics and who wanted to be involved. I want to thank Sergio Gor, Political Director for the College of Republicans at George Washington University, for being so hospitable on such a busy night.
There were so many professional people who gave their time to help enhance my study. I want to particularly mention Melissa Trammell from the Las Vegas Valley Water District of the Southern Nevada Water Authority, who was a delightful person and spent a lot of time ensuring we met with the right people, including a tour of the incredible Springs Preserve Eco-project; Bob Walsh, from the Bureau of Reclamation, who gave us an informative tour of the Hoover Dam and a great discussion on many of the water management problems, which are very similar to the state that I live in; Jerry Fischer from the Department of Agriculture; Richard Ives from the Bureau of Reclamation in Washington; Adam Englander from the Las Vegas Recovery Centre; and Peter Turchiano from the Hazelden Drug Rehabilitation Centre in New York. There were many more people and groups that I had contact with but I do not have the time to list them all here today. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Willis and all of the friendly staff at the Australian Embassy in Washington, who were absolutely fantastic.

Following my trip to the US, I want to reaffirm how important our close ties with the American people are and how much I respect and admire their great nation. As proud Australians, we all know how fortunate we are to live in this amazing nation, but there is also much we can do to learn from the US. They certainly run a very close second as one of the greatest countries in the world.

Land and Housing Prices

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (11.46 am)—I rise today to speak on the issue of land and housing prices. I was curious to see that the Treasurer, once again yesterday, blamed land release for the high cost of housing in Australia. It is important to put this issue to bed. Certainly land release may be an issue in some areas in some parts of the country, but it is not the reason that housing costs are as high as they are at the moment.

If you look, for example, at my home state of New South Wales, and compare the relative impacts of land costs, federal taxes and interest rate rises, you will see that interest rate rises have disproportionately affected the very high cost of housing. There are ample ‘greenfield’ land stocks currently available in New South Wales, including enough zoned and serviced land for 33,000 new homes. Most of them are not subject to the state infrastructure levy. The New South Wales government is committed to increasing the number of zoned and serviced home sites to 55,000 over the next two years, establishing a land supply CEO’s group to resolve issues around land supply, and funding ‘flying squads’ to work with local councils to deal with bottlenecks in land supply.

The national figures relating to land supply show over 150,000 blocks available at the moment which are owned by developers. Listen to what the people who are responsible for this area have to say. Michael McNamara, the Operations Director of Australian Property Monitors, says:

Demand for housing is extremely flat and developers haven’t been able to sell the projects that they’ve got, let alone launch new projects—so we totally dismiss the argument that releasing more land on our city’s outskirts is going to affect affordability.

Peter Icklow, the managing director of a major Sydney developer, Monarch, said:

Every time I see John Howard blaming land supply [for low affordability] I see red because it’s just not true—there are literally thousands of lots available.
What is stopping people from building homes? It could be that we have seen four interest rate rises since the last election, that the amount that people are borrowing to buy a house today is so much greater than it was even 10 years ago, and that any tiny increase in their interest rates is having a devastating effect. For that reason, we have seen a great and, unfortunately, growing number of repossessions in recent months.

Average house prices have almost doubled since 1999, despite the only measure that the federal government has introduced relating to housing prices, the first homeowners grant, which was introduced in 2000. Housing prices have almost doubled since the introduction of the first homeowners grant. An average house used to cost about three years worth of the average wage. That figure is now seven times the annual average wage—and there is your problem of housing affordability. The interest on a 25-year loan of $320,000 is $580,000. That is an affordability problem. GST on a new home is $31,818. That is something that the federal government can affect. Developer and council levies in the example that I am using, which is an example based in Melbourne, are $9,709. So we need a Treasurer who is prepared to admit that he has some responsibility for keeping interest rates low and that he has some responsibility for federal taxes such as the GST that make new homes, in particular, unaffordable for young Australian families and are keeping young Australians out of the housing market.

Veterans’ Affairs

Mr FAWCETT (Wakefield) (11.51 am)—I rise to draw the House’s attention to the recent discovery of the remains of two soldiers in Vietnam. Australia, as people would be aware, had a large commitment to the conflict in Vietnam. In 1965, in the Dong Nai province, east of Saigon, there was a battle and two Australian soldiers, Lance Corporal Richard Parker and Private Peter Gillson, did not return from the conflict. They were recorded as missing in action. All up, six Australian servicemen were recorded as missing in action in Vietnam. The remains of Lance Corporal Parker and Private Gillson were discovered recently near Bien Hoa in south Vietnam. Australia sent across government officials to help with the identification, and their remains have now been repatriated or are in the process of being repatriated to their families, which we welcome.

What I would like to highlight to the House, though, is not only the fact that the families can now have some closure to that chapter in their lives but also the important role that groups here in Australia play in keeping alive the memory of those people who were killed in action or who have been listed as missing in action. One of the groups involved is Operation Aussies Home. A group that operates locally in the electorate of Wakefield is an Australian chapter of Rolling Thunder, a group dedicated to keeping alive the memory of people killed in action or listed as missing in action and, more importantly, to taking concrete actions to benefit the remaining families and the veterans who have returned from conflicts.

I would particularly like to mention Mr Tony Flaherty, president of the Two Wells RSL, who runs the chapter here for that organisation. I commend him for the dedicated work he does on behalf of veterans and the tireless efforts he puts into fundraising not only to create opportunities to remember veterans and their families and the sacrifices they have made—through the memorial which the group is building in Two Wells—but also to take the very practical steps when a veteran or members of a soldier’s extended family are struggling with issues to do with disabilities. They get alongside them, whether that is in relation to mental health and counselling or to very practical needs such as ramps and wheelchairs et cetera.
Their fundraising events are gaining quite a reputation in the area because of the energy and the passion they put into them. In the Two Wells community centre, they have had a number of events now where they attract names like James Blundell and Acoustic Juice. Some very significant performers come and give of their time. They make sure they fit Two Wells RSL into their schedule because of the good work that this group is doing on behalf of our veterans. The centre is packed to capacity—around 300 people—pretty much each time one of these events is held. It is indicative of the kind of work that volunteers in our community do, particularly in the veterans community.

Along with that of Tony Flaherty and the Two Wells RSL, I also note the work done by Patch Campbell and the Peter Badcoe Centre, the ex-military rehabilitation centre in South Australia, and Dennis Burge and the northern sub-branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association, who are very proactively reaching out not only to people from the Vietnam conflict but also to more recent veterans, who are returning from service in East Timor, the Solomons, Afghanistan or Iraq, and trying to be very relevant to those young men and women as they leave the Defence Force. We have been able to work with them in finding new facilities, and I thank the several past veterans’ affairs ministers and parliamentary secretaries who look after Defence estate for their cooperation in reaching a good outcome in finding a home with more tenure for the Peter Badcoe Centre, which includes those two groups: the ex-military rehabilitation centre and the northern sub-branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association. In particular, I want to thank the people who are doing that work to benefit the veterans in our community—in this case, in establishing a centre which has the potential in years to come to be a real focus point for people who are leaving the military and their families and to provide the support they need to reintegrate into our community. It is the least we can do to say thank you to the veterans for the service they have given to this country.

Main Committee adjourned at 11.57 pm
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Intelligence Information
(Question No. 5480)

Mr Melham asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 26 February 2007:
In respect of his response to question No. 2079 (Hansard, 10 October 2005, page 165), (a) is it the position of the Government that any of the following interrogation techniques constitute torture:
(i) extended sleep deprivation; (ii) exposure to extreme cold for extended periods; and/or
(iii) immobilising a person and pouring water on his or her face to simulate drowning and (b) does the Australian Government have any knowledge of the use of these techniques by United States Government personnel engaged in the interrogation of persons suspected of involvement in terrorist activities.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(a) The Australian Government does not condone torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are prohibited under international law. This prohibition is found in Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Australia is a party.
The application of the term ‘torture’ to a specific case will always depend on the particular circumstances of the case in question, including the impact on the individual of the conduct alleged to constitute torture. Whether any of the interrogation techniques referred to in parts (i)-(iii) of Question (a) will constitute torture depends on whether they fall within the definition of torture in international law, which is provided in Article 1 of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), to which Australia is a party. Generally, torture is understood to mean an act by a public official or other person acting in an official capacity, specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering, for particular purposes, such as for obtaining information or for punishment. The definition makes clear that several elements must exist for an action to constitute torture.
Torture does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.
(b) The US Administration confirmed in February 2005 that none of these techniques were used in relation to Mr Hicks or Mr Habib.

Murray Darling Basin
(Question No. 5482)

Mr Georganas asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, in writing, on 27 February 2007:
(1) How many kilometres of open channels source water from rivers within the Murray Darling Basin for irrigation purposes.
(2) What volume of water is lost, on average, from open irrigation channels through (a) evaporation and (b) seepage.
(3) What is the value of water lost from open irrigation channels through (a) evaporation and (b) seepage.
(4) How many additional gigalitres, on average, would flow through the Murray mouth if no water was lost through evaporation or seepage from irrigation channels.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Mr Turnbull—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) There are 21,002 kilometres of open channels that source water for irrigation purposes. This total consists of 14,625km of earthen irrigation supply channels, 1,191km of lined channel and 5,186km of natural water courses as water carriers (ANCID Benchmarking Summary Report 2004-05).

(2) I refer the honourable member to the following table from the ANCID Benchmarking Data Report 2004-05 which details the delivery efficiency gains for each irrigation area (‘Table 28, ANCID Benchmarking Data Report 2004-05’). Around 11,000 gigalitres per year is diverted from the Basin for irrigation purposes (‘CSIRO 2006 - The Shared Water Resources of the Murray-Darling Basin Part I’).

(3) The price of irrigation water varies in each district and is dependent on a range of factors such as location, availability of water and the nature of the entitlement including general and high security entitlements. There is currently no calculation of total value for the water that is lost through evaporation and seepage in the Murray Darling Basin.

(4) The intricate hydrological processes of the Murray Darling Basin and nature of the water entitlement systems mean there is no direct relationship between open channel seepage / evaporation losses and water flowing through the Murray mouth.
### Table 28 - System Delivery Efficiency (portion of diversions from headworks delivered to consumers) - 2004/2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Own System Average Over All Years (%)</th>
<th>Own System 2004/2005 (%)</th>
<th>Own System Target Water Delivery Efficiency (%)</th>
<th>Average Water Delivery Efficiency for Dominant Carrier Type in System 2004/2005 (%)</th>
<th>Dominant Carrier Type in System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colaamilly</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Irrigation</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrandera</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Bundaberg</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Burdekin-Haughton</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Dawson Valley</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Eton Water</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Murrumbidge</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Mary River</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Nogoa Mackenzie</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW St George</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Irrigation</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Mildura</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-MW Murray Valley</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-MW Shepparton</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-MW Central Goulburn</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-MW Northcoast</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-MW Pyramid-Boort</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-MW Torrumbarry</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-MW Swan Hill Pumped</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRW Bacchus Marsh</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRW Macalister</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRW Werribee</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warner-Mallock</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ord Irrigation</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Water</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Average

- **77**
- **75**
- **74**
- **75**

#### Business totals

- SunWater (Qld) 85 78 70 ND ND
- Goulburn Murray ( Vict) 79 ND 85 73 Channels
Bushmaster Infantry Mobility Vehicles
(Question No. 5485)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 27 February 2007: When will all protected weapon stations be fitted to the Bushmaster Infantry Mobility Vehicles on operations and what will be the final Budget cost of this measure?

Dr Nelson—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
The Bushmaster Infantry Mobility Vehicle provides a high level of protection and mobility to deployed Australian Forces. The rapid acquisition of 44 protected weapon stations was approved by the Government in July 2006. The first of these protected weapon stations was fitted on 2 February 2007, with the last expected to be fitted on 20 April 2007. The approved budget cost is $21.45 million.

Human Rights: China
(Question No. 5493)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 28 February 2007:
(1) Is the Government aware that six underground Catholic bishops as well as dozens more remain imprisoned in China, and that three have disappeared.
(2) Has the Government made any representations to the Chinese authorities about Bishop Su Zhimin, who has been missing for some ten years, and whose fate remains uncertain; if not, why not.
(3) Is the Government aware that all underground Church properties have been confiscated by the Chinese Government; if so has it made any representations to the Chinese authorities regarding this matter.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) I am aware of reports regarding the imprisonment of Catholic clergy in China.
(2) No. We have raised a number of individual cases of concern, including those of other Catholic clergy, in our Australia-China Human Rights Dialogues, including the last round of Dialogue held in July 2006.
(3) The Government is aware of reports regarding confiscation of property. The Government has not made representations on the issue of property. We have raised the broader issue of freedom of religious practice in our Human Rights Dialogues and through our Embassy in Beijing (most recently in February 2007). We continue to urge China to ensure freedom of religious practice and to uphold its proclaimed policy of religious tolerance.

Human Rights: China
(Question No. 5494)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 28 February 2007:
(1) Does the Government acknowledge the humanitarian crisis involving North Korean refugees hiding in northeast China.
(2) Is the Government aware that some of these refugees who tried to obtain sanctuary in the US consulate were captured by the Chinese authorities and put into prison, and were also prevented by the Chinese authorities from seeking asylum in other countries; if so, has the Government raised these issues with Chinese authorities; if not, why not.
(3) Is the Government aware that China, a party to the United Nations (UN) International Convention Regarding the Status of Refugees, which prohibits repatriation of refugees to places from which they have fled, has violated this convention by sending refugees back to North Korea where they
face execution or are incarcerated in prison camps; if so, has the Government raised this matter with the UN; if not, why not.

(4) Is the Government aware that the Shenyang Six, who include North Korean refugee women and orphan boys, were captured by the Chinese authorities, put in jail and not allowed to join their relatives in South Korea and Hawaii; if so, (a) can the Government confirm that these refugees remain in jail and (b) has the Government made any attempt to discuss this situation with China through the Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue.

(5) Has the Government taken any steps to bring attention to the situation of North Korean refugees in China, or requested that the UN demand that China allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to assist North Korean refugees hiding in northeast China; if not, why not.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) I am aware of reports regarding North Koreans in China.

(2) Yes, I am aware of reports of these events taking place in January 2007. We have not specifically raised these reports with Chinese authorities. Australia has raised our longstanding concerns regarding North Koreans in China with the Chinese Government, including at the two most recent Australia-China Human Rights Dialogues, held in 2005 and 2006.

(3) Australia is concerned that China is not upholding its obligations under the Convention in relation to North Korean border crossers, and has raised these concerns with China during our Human Rights Dialogue. We have also raised our concerns with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

(4) I am aware of reports of the ‘Shenyang Six’, who were detained in China on 21 December 2006.

(a) I have no information regarding whether they are still in detention in China or have been returned to North Korea.

(b) No, the 2007 Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue has not yet taken place.

(5) Yes. We have urged China through our Human Rights Dialogues to allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) access to DPRK border crossers in north-eastern China to determine whether or not they are refugees within the meaning of the Convention. In November 2006, we also raised the humanitarian situation of North Koreans in China with the office of the UNHCR in Beijing.

Child Care

(Question No. 5496)

Ms Macklin asked the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in writing, on 28 February 2007:

On what date were childcare service operators provided with the (a) Draft Child Care Quality Assurance Standards paper and (b) Draft Child Care Quality Assurance Framework and Guide, and for each document, (i) on what date did submissions on the draft close and (ii) how many submissions have been received by his department.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

A copy of the draft Standards document was circulated to members of the National Advisory Group on 25 January 2007. Some of the Advisory Group members circulated this document to service providers as they were asked to provide feedback that broadly represented their sector. The document was posted on my department’s and the National Childcare Accreditation Council’s (NCAC) websites to assist with that process.
Following that initial period of consultation with the National Advisory Group, the draft Standards were released for public comment on 16 February 2007. A Preamble and a draft Quality Assurance Framework were also released for comment on 23 February 2006.

An article about the development of an integrated child care quality assurance system will feature in the NCACs March newsletter “Putting Children First”, which is sent to every service provider registered with NCAC or registered on their mailing list.

The closing date for comments on these draft papers is 10 April 2007.

To date approximately 40 responses have been received as a result of the initial release of the standards.

**Collins Class Submarines**

*(Question No. 5497)*

**Mr Fitzgibbon** asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 28 February 2007:

What is the average operational sailing time for the Collins class submarine (a) for 2005, (b) for 2006 and (c) forecast for 2007, and to what extent has any change in this average been driven by the availability of skilled crews.

**Dr Nelson**—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Collins class submarine force has achieved the following days at sea:

(a) In 2005, the submarine force achieved a total of 490 days at sea with an average of 113 days per available submarine.

(b) In 2006, the submarine force achieved a total of 459 days at sea with an average 106 days per available submarine.

(c) In 2007, the submarine force is forecast to achieve a total of 397 days at sea with an average of 88 days per available submarine.

The availability of submarines historically has been governed by two factors; those being the maintenance schedule and Navy-instituted constraints which aim to reduce the impact of prolonged submarine sea service on Navy personnel.

Submariners are being recruited into the RAN through:

**Direct Recruitment** – Members of the public can now be recruited directly into Submarine service, without first gaining qualifications in surface ships.

**Lateral Recruitment** – Navy is focussing on internally marketing to attract existing recruits who are best placed to transition quickly into submarine service.

**More Recruitment Resources** – A new Submarine Careers Team has been created.

**Training submarine** – Navy will use HMAS COLLINS while it is berthed alongside HMAS STIRLING for training additional submariners.

**Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport**

*(Question No. 5500)*

**Mr Murphy** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 28 February 2007:

Further to the Minister’s reply to question No. 4856 that the additional detail “sought in relation to this question would result in an unreasonable diversion of AFP [Australian Federal Police] resources”, will he explain why this is the case; if not, why not.

**Mr Ruddock**—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
The eleven individual questions comprising Question 4856 in turn consist of subordinate questions that seek responses regarding four incidents. In effect, over one hundred questions are asked. As such, a substantial diversion of law enforcement resources was required to answer them. The only information not provided in my original response are details of those who discovered the people involved in the incidents, details of oral and written reports made, actions taken by the recipients of such reports, and when that action was taken. Given the comprehensive responses already provided, there is no appreciable value in further diverting law enforcement resources to obtain the outstanding information.

**Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport**

(Question No. 5501)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 28 February 2007:

Further to the Minister’s reply to question No. 4856, did officers or employees who discovered trespassers in a prohibited area provide a supervisor or other person with a written and/or oral report; if so, what are the full details of those reports; if not, why not.

Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

I am unable to answer your question to the extent requested as not all of the agencies involved in responding to the incidents fall within my portfolio. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on behalf of those agencies. I can, however, provide general details of the reporting of an incident in which an agency within my portfolio detected a trespasser. This information relates to the matter you refer to as Incident One, which occurred on 31 December 2003.

Australian Protective Service (APS) officers responded and provided relevant details of the incident to the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Australian Customs Service and Sydney Airport Corporation Limited. This information was consistent with the description of the incident provided in response to Question 4856. Given the passage of time since the incident occurred it would be quite onerous to provide more detailed information and would require substantial and further diversion of AFP resources from core airport policing functions.

**Pharmaceutical Allowance**

(Question No. 5504)

Mrs Elliot asked the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

(1) When was the pharmaceutical allowance for pensioners most recently increased.

(2) Does he intend to increase the pharmaceutical allowance in the near future to assist pensioners with the shortfall between the allowance and the increasing cost of prescription medication.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

People on low incomes are assisted with the cost of prescription medicines through the payment of Pharmaceutical Allowance in combination the operation of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme safety net. Pharmaceutical Allowance is indexed in accordance with section 1191 of the Social Security Act 1991, and any changes are announced to customers in Centrelink publications such as News for Seniors.
Iran

(Question No. 5505)

Mrs Irwin asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

Following his meeting with US Vice President Cheney, can he assure the House that if there was a US-led attack on Iran during the Bush Administration’s term in office that Australia would neither support, nor participate in, any such attack.

Mr Howard—I am advised that the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The government is deeply concerned by Iran’s recent failure to meet previous United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and International Atomic Energy Agency obligations. This includes Iran’s non-compliance with the terms of UNSC Resolution 1696, as well as those of UNSC Resolution 1737 which was unanimously adopted on 23 December 2006. The Australian Government also continues to urge Iran to resume dialogue with European Union members, the United States and the United Nations (UN) on proposals to ensure Iran’s suspension of its sensitive nuclear activities. Disappointingly, Iran has not yet responded to these proposals.

The government will continue to work with its international partners to encourage Iran to meet its obligations and take the necessary steps to restore international confidence in its nuclear programme. The government remains committed to diplomatic efforts to resolve issues relating to Iran’s nuclear programme and believes that UN processes should be given every opportunity. It is not appropriate to comment further on hypothetical future events.

Australian Workplace Agreements

(Question No. 5506)

Ms Owens asked the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

(1) How many Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) were lodged with the Office of the Employment Advocate under the WorkChoices legislation during the period 27 March 2006 to 27 February 2007 in the federal electorate of (a) Parramatta, (b) Greenway, (c) Bennelong, (d) Mitchell and (e) Reid.

(2) How many AWAs have been lodged and registered since 27 March 2006 by employers located in the postcode area (a) 2115, (b) 2116, (c) 2117, (d) 2118, (e) 2142, (f) 2145, (g) 2146, (h) 2147, (i) 2148, (j) 2150, (k) 2151, (l) 2152 and (m) 2153.

Mr Hockey—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The number of Australian Workplace Agreements that were lodged with the Office of the Employment Advocate under the WorkChoices legislation during the period 27 March 2006 to 27 February 2007 in each of the federal electorates named is as follows: a) Parramatta – 1486, b) Greenway – 1153, c) Bennelong – 1339, d) Mitchell – 619, e) Reid – 994.

(2) The number of Australian Workplace Agreements that have been lodged since 27 March 2006 by employers located in the postcode areas nominated are as follows: a) 2115 – 3, b) 2116 – 167, c) 2117 – 0, d) 2118 – 3, e) 2142 – 10, f) 2145 – 628, g) 2146 – 21, h) 2147 – 129, i) 2148 – 806, j) 2150 – 8355, k) 2151 – 41, l) 2152 – 9, m) 2153 – 232.
Mr David Hicks
(Question No. 5512)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

(1) Has he read an article titled “Government has no legal duty to help Hicks”, which was published in the Canberra Times on 27 February 2007; if not, why not.

(2) Does he agree with Solicitor-General, Mr David Bennett QC, that a general obligation for the Federal Government to protect Australians abroad “is simply something that the law has never recognised”; if so, why; if not, why not.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) and (2) As the matter is before the court, it would be inappropriate for me to comment with respect to that particular question.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 5515)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

(1) Further to the Minister’s reply to question No. 3831, was a CCTV camera control room operator responsible for camera 1 having ‘no focus’ when this incident was discovered by a Customs Officer on 23 October 2004; if not, who was responsible for this incident.

(2) What did the investigation of the incident reveal.

(3) Apart from the report to Bemac Security Pty Ltd, was any other written report provided to the superior of the Customs Officer who discovered the faulty CCTV camera on 23 October 2004; if so, what are the full details of that report.

Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Refer to answer to Question on Notice 3831. There is nothing further to add.

(2) Refer to answer to question (1).

(3) Refer to answer to question (2).

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 5516)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

(1) Further to the Minister’s reply to question No. 3872, was a CCTV camera control room operator responsible for camera 2 facing a wall on 26 January 2005; if not, who was responsible for this incident.

(2) What did the investigation of the incident reveal.

(3) Apart from the report to Bemac Security Pty Ltd, was any other written report provided to the superior of the Customs Officer who discovered the faulty CCTV camera on 26 January 2005; if so, what are the full details of that report.
Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question.

(1) Refer to answer to Question on Notice 3872. There is nothing further to add.
(2) Refer to answer to Question 1.
(3) Refer to answer to Question 1.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
( Question No. 5517)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

(1) Further to the Minister’s reply to question No. 3873, was a CCTV camera control room operator responsible for camera 1 facing a wall on 30 January 2005; if not, who was responsible for this incident.
(2) What did the investigation of the incident reveal.
(3) Apart from the report to Bemac Security Pty Ltd, was any other written report provided to the superior of the Customs Officer who discovered the faulty CCTV camera on 30 January 2005; if so, what are the full details of that report.

Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Refer to answer to Question on Notice 3873. There is nothing further to add.
(2) Refer to answer to Question 1.
(3) Refer to answer to Question 1.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
( Question No. 5518)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

Further to the Minister’s reply to question No. 3839, can the Minister provide assurance that CCTV cameras in the baggage handling area of Sydney (Kingsford Smith) International Airport captured all fields of vision at all times (a) from 17 October to 2 February 2005 and (b) since 2 February until the present time; if so, how; if not, why not.

Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) Refer to answer to Question on Notice 3839. There is nothing further to add.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
( Question No. 5519)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice and Customs, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

(1) Further to the Minister’s reply to question No. 3840, what are the full details of the three camera faults that occurred between January 2003 and 23 October 2004.
(2) What other (i) incidents and (ii) faults have occurred in the security areas under the control of the Australian Customs Service at Sydney (Kingsford Smith) International Airport since January 2003 until the present time.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Mr Ruddock—The Minister for Justice and Customs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
(1) Refer to answer to Question on Notice 3840. There is nothing further to add.
(2) Refer to answer to Question on Notice 3391. There is nothing further to add.

Iraq
(Question No. 5540)

Mr Bowen asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 20 March 2007:
In respect of the violence and persecution of minority Christians in Iraq: (a) has he, his office or his department seen reports on the testimony given by Nina Shea, Director of the Center for Religious Freedom, before the United States Congressional Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations, in particular, the statement that: “Government leaders in Iraq have been largely indifferent to the victimization of the small minorities. The Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, was quoted earlier this year urging kidnapping to target Christian women instead of Muslims. After addressing the kidnapping of his own sister Thayseer, the Speaker of the Iraqi National Assembly was broadcast by al-Iraqiya Television as stating: ‘Why kidnap this Muslim woman; instead of Thayseer, why not kidnap Margaret or Jean?’ The latter are Christian names, thus implying that it would have been better for a Christian woman to have been kidnapped, raped and killed.”; (b) what steps has he, his office or department taken to verify the authenticity of these remarks; (c) is he concerned about the ramifications of the Iraqi Speaker’s comments for those remaining members of Iraq’s minority Christian communities; (d) if these comments are accurately attributable to the Iraqi Speaker, has he made representations to the Iraqi Government regarding this matter, if not, why not; and (e) will he, on behalf of many concerned expatriate Assyrians, Mandaeans, and Chaldeans who live in Australia, make representations to the Iraqi Government concerning the Iraqi Speaker’s comments; if not, why not.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(a) Yes.
(b) to (e) My Department is not able to confirm these remarks. The Australian Government remains concerned about the current security situation and how it affects all Iraqis. The Government has made representations to the Iraqi Government on human rights, including of religious minority groups, and will continue to make representations as appropriate.

Education Funding
(Question No. 5544)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 20 March 2007:
(1) Did she read a report on 23 February 2007 in The Age titled ‘Door opens for teacher merit system’; if not, why not.
(2) Can she confirm that part of the report that reads ‘Federal Education Minister Julie Bishop has been threatening to withhold funding from the states unless they sign up to new performance-based pay measures at an education ministers meeting in April’; if not, why not.
(3) What steps will she take to ensure that the assessment of school-teacher performance via student achievement measures will be based rigorously and unambiguously on the individual teacher’s own contribution to student achievement.
(4) Will she ensure that the effects on student performance of the increasing recourse to external coaching programs will be discounted when assessing individual teaching performance; if so, how; if not, why not.

Ms Julie Bishop—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) Yes.
(2) The proposal that I put to State and Territory Education Ministers at our Council meeting on 13-14 April 2007 did not threaten the withholding of Australian Government funding if they did not agree to the recommendations it set out.
(3) In line with recent research findings, I have proposed to establish pilot schemes to develop, trial and evaluate performance-based pay approaches. I have proposed that these approaches draw on a range of criteria and evidentiary sources to assess teacher performance. One outcome of the pilot would be determining the indicators that may be used, including in relation to student achievement.
(4) See 3.

Mr David Hicks
(Question No. 5546)

Mr Murphy asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 20 March 2007:
(1) Has he read an article titled “Hicks will get a fair trial: PM” published in The Australian on 23 February 2007; if not why not.
(2) Is he aware of the Prime Minister’s comments that the “accused must be presumed to be innocent until his guilt is established by legal and competent evidence beyond reasonable doubt”; if not, why not.
(3) Is the use of hearsay evidence “competent” if the conditions and/or methods that are used to obtain that evidence are not disclosed or are unable to be ascertained by a defendant or a defence lawyer; if so, how; if not, why not.

Mr Ruddock—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(1) Yes.
(2) Yes.
(3) The Manual for Military Commissions requires trial counsel to provide to the defence a range of information, including any statements or documents that trial counsel intends to use as evidence in the prosecution case-in-chief or that are material to the preparation of the defence.
Only where the sources, methods or activities by which evidence has been acquired are classified for reasons of national security and where the evidence is considered reliable by the military commission judge may these matters be protected from disclosure. In these circumstances, the trial judge may order an unclassified summary of the sources, methods, or activities by which the United States acquired the evidence to be provided to the commission and the defence.
Such evidence would also be subject to the overriding discretion of the military commission judge to exclude any evidence when its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice.

Discretionary Funds and Grants
(Question No. 5548)

Mr Georganas asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 21 March 2007:
Since the 2000-01 financial year (a) which overseas Australian missions have had access to discretionary funds or grants to be made available to local organisations, (b) what sum has been made available to
Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The only discretionary funds or grants which overseas Australian missions have access to is the Direct Aid Program (DAP). This is a discretionary grants program administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), funded by AusAID and managed by DFAT at AusAID’s request. It is an integral component of Australia’s overseas development program, and an integral part of Australia’s wider foreign policy concerns and interests. It is a flexible, deliberately small grants program operating through 51 Australian overseas missions, funding projects in over 75 countries. DAP was designed to enable posts to respond quickly and effectively to requests for assistance by providing small grants for small scale development activities that are ancillary to the overseas development assistance program administered by AusAID. The goal of DAP is to address humanitarian hardship. In so doing it seeks to enhance and pursue international relations and public diplomacy objectives, and thereby to promote a distinctive and positive image of Australia in the world. However, the key objective is alleviation of hardship; any and all projects must meet that test to start with. A clear humanitarian or development outcome must be identified for a specific disadvantaged group of people in order for a project to be approved.

In 2006-07, DFAT is administering $AUD 4 million in DAP funds, allocated to 51 posts for projects to be implemented in 75 countries of both resident and non-resident accreditation. DFAT, with input from AusAID, allocates funds to posts based on Australia’s foreign and trade policy priorities and the development needs of recipient countries. Posts then allocate the funds to local, community-based organisations for humanitarian and development projects. In any given year, an individual post may fund as few as two or three or as many as twenty or thirty programs, depending on the size of its allocation and the type of projects it funds. Attachment A provides a year-on-year breakdown of (a) the overseas missions with access to the Direct Aid Program since the 2000-01 financial year; (b) the sum made available to each overseas mission in the initial allocation of funds by DFAT to posts; and (c) the final amount spent by each overseas mission, taking into account the reallocation of unspent funds by DFAT in February/March each year and additional ad-hoc funding received from AusAID for administration by the DAP.

With respect to part (d) of the honourable member’s question, 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.
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Direct Aid Program (DAP) - historical allocations and expenditure, FY 2000-01 to FY 2006-07  
All amounts are AUD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>46,154</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>44,996</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>41,272</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,982</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,971</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>23,285</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>18,627</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>14,440</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>27,554</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>59,689</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,001</td>
<td>120,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>98,606</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,006</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>39,677</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>49,398</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>24,999</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>24,619</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>24,863</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>57,633</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>45,938</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgetown</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>53,438</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>75,132</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>68,319</td>
<td>68,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>33,701</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>43,924</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>44,999</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>27,126</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>27,295</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>40,605</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>40,865</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>41,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>118,925</td>
<td>118,867</td>
<td>119,000</td>
<td>119,000</td>
<td>119,000</td>
<td>119,000</td>
<td>125,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>79,970</td>
<td>75,937</td>
<td>84,000</td>
<td>83,864</td>
<td>84,000</td>
<td>83,992</td>
<td>94,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>35,444</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>49,314</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>79,970</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>79,366</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>84,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,008</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>119,834</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>102,532</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>88,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornara</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>67,910</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>64,495</td>
<td>72,500</td>
<td>72,500</td>
<td>111,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total DAP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,225,210</td>
<td>3,283,869</td>
<td>3,265,257</td>
<td>3,538,079</td>
<td>3,596,615</td>
<td>4,452,035</td>
<td>3,989,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamabad</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>76,592</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>88,468</td>
<td>97,000</td>
<td>97,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>125,785</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>129,749</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,140</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>24,841</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>80,488</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>88,716</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>98,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>139,990</td>
<td>147,500</td>
<td>133,609</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauru</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>127,953</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>124,669</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>28,250</td>
<td>28,044</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku'alofa</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>32,852</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>33,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,018</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>115,889</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>115,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohnpei</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>60,169</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>59,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Louis</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moresby</td>
<td>113,000</td>
<td>111,655</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Vila</td>
<td>95,965</td>
<td>95,967</td>
<td>98,877</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of Spain</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>81,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>150,007</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramallah</td>
<td>16,709</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24,700</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24,700</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>118,516</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>119,478</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome (Albania)</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>24,546</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>59,491</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>146,350</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>145,995</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarawa</td>
<td>26,150</td>
<td>26,150</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehran</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,550</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>47,689</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>109,992</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>111,116</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>115,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>18,469</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>28,071</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>29,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>89,888</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>89,877</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>98,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zagreb</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>39,587</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>39,467</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Notes:

1 FY 2006-07 spend is a projection, based on allocations and spending to date.
2 Where possible, post annual spend is actual spend from SAP. Where this is not possible, spend = base allocation + any supplementary allocations or withdrawals of unspent funds during the fiscal year.
3 Abuja DAP established 2003-04 when post moved from Lagos to Abuja. Lagos DAP abolished end previous FY.
4 Accra DAP established 2004 when post established; previously these countries were funded from Lagos/Abuja DAP.
5 Bali DAP established 2005-06 when post opened - previously managed from Jakarta’s DAP.
6 Baghdad DAP established 2004 - previously Amman administered DAP funds for Iraq.
7 Bangkok DAP discontinued 2002, reinstated at DFAT request in 2005-06.
8 Beijing DAP includes contingency funds for DPRK and Mongolia.
9 Bridgetown DAP discontinued end FY 2003-04 when post moved to Port of Spain, Port of Spain DAP established following FY.
10 Cairo DAP discontinued at post request end 2000-01 and reinstated at DFAT request in 2002-03
11 Canakkale DAP established 2006 - previously managed from Ankara’s DAP.
12 Caracas DAP discontinued end FY 2002-03 due to post closure; funds reallocated to other posts.
13 Kabul DAP established 2006 when post established.
14 Kuala Lumpur DAP discontinued (in consultation with post) end 2000-01.
15 Separate Nauru DAP established 2006 - previously managed from Suva’s DAP.
16 Rome DAP (for Albania) discontinued end FY 2001-02 when accreditation for Albania switched to Athens, Athens DAP created following FY.
17 Wellington DAP discontinued end FY 2000-01.
18 Ramallah DAP established as separate DAP in FY 2006-07, previously managed by Tel Aviv, one-off grants to Ramallah in 2004-05 and 2005-06.
19 Moscow DAP established FY 2003-04 to provide funding for Central Asia and former Soviet republics.
20 Vienna DAP provides funding for Bosnia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST</th>
<th>Approved 2000-01 Allocation</th>
<th>Actual spend 2000-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total DAP</td>
<td>3,225,210</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. posts:</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>$ 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>$ 46,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apia</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>$ 41,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$ 50,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>$ 98,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>$ 39,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>$ 24,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>$ 57,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgetown</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>$ 53,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>$ 33,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>$ 26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caracas</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>$ 40,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>118,925</td>
<td>$ 118,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>79,970</td>
<td>$ 75,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$ 35,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>$ 79,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>$ 120,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>$ 80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honiara</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>$ 67,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamabad</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>$ 76,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>$ 125,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$ 50,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>$ 24,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>$ 80,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>$ 88,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>$ 98,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>139,990</td>
<td>$ 143,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>$ 129,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>28,250</td>
<td>$ 28,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku’alofa</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>$ 32,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>$ 120,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohnpei</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>$ 60,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Louis</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>$ 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moresby</td>
<td>113,000</td>
<td>$ 111,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Vila</td>
<td>95,965</td>
<td>$ 95,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>$ 150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>$ 118,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome (Albania)</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>$ 24,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>$ 60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>$ 146,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarawa</td>
<td>26,150</td>
<td>$ 26,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehran</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$ 23,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>$ 109,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>$ 18,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST</td>
<td>Approved 2000-01 Allocation</td>
<td>Actual spend 2000-01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>$89,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zagreb</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>$39,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3,298,250</td>
<td>$3,225,210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Direct Aid Program (DAP) | FY 2001-02

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Base allocation FY 2001-02</th>
<th>Final Allocation FY 2001-02</th>
<th>Actual spend FY 2001-02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total DAP</td>
<td>3,283,869</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. posts:</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>$44,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apia</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>$46,000</td>
<td>$45,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
<td>$110,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$49,880</td>
<td>$49,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$24,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>$46,000</td>
<td>$46,000</td>
<td>$45,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgetown</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$75,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>$43,924</td>
<td>$43,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>$-</td>
<td>$-</td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caracas</td>
<td>$41,000</td>
<td>$41,000</td>
<td>$40,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>$119,000</td>
<td>$119,000</td>
<td>$119,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>$84,000</td>
<td>$84,000</td>
<td>$83,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$49,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>$79,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
<td>$119,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>$103,393</td>
<td>$102,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honiara</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>$64,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamabad</td>
<td>$87,000</td>
<td>$87,000</td>
<td>$86,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
<td>$129,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>$87,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>$147,500</td>
<td>$153,620</td>
<td>$153,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>$124,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$29,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku’Alofa</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$34,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohnpei</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$42,615</td>
<td>$42,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Louis</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moresby</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>$125,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Vila</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$98,900</td>
<td>$98,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$150,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
<td>$119,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome (Albania)</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$-</td>
<td>$-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Base allocation FY 2001-02</th>
<th>Final Allocation FY 2001-02</th>
<th>Actual spend FY 2001-02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$59,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$145,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarawa</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$24,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehran</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$47,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
<td>$111,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$28,320</td>
<td>$28,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>$89,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zagreb</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$39,467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Direct Aid Program (DAP) | FY 2002-03

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Base allocation FY 2001-02</th>
<th>Final Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total DAP</td>
<td>3,265,257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. posts:</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apta</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
<td>$44,971.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>$20,000.00</td>
<td>$23,285.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>$110,000.00</td>
<td>$110,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
<td>$18,921.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>$46,000.00</td>
<td>$46,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgetown</td>
<td>$75,000.00</td>
<td>$75,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
<td>$27,126.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caracas</td>
<td>$41,000.00</td>
<td>$41,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>$119,000.00</td>
<td>$119,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>$84,000.00</td>
<td>$83,992.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>$80,000.00</td>
<td>$80,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
<td>$98,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honiara</td>
<td>$72,500.00</td>
<td>$72,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamabad</td>
<td>$97,000.00</td>
<td>$97,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>$70,000.00</td>
<td>$77,771.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
<td>$133,609.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku’alofa</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohnpei</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
<td>$31,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Louis</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
<td>$31,563.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moresby</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Base allocation FY 2001-02</td>
<td>Final Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Vila</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
<td>$107,040.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
<td>$119,974.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
<td>$133,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>$110,000.00</td>
<td>$110,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarawa</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehran</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
<td>$41,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
<td>$29,353.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
<td>$98,327.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zagreb</td>
<td>$40,000.00</td>
<td>$40,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Direct Aid Program (DAP) | FY 2003-04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Base allocation FY 2003-04</th>
<th>Final Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total DAP</td>
<td>$3,538,079</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. posts:</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
<td>$45,490.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
<td>$44,315.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apia</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
<td>$52,563.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>$20,000.00</td>
<td>$18,627.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
<td>$27,554.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
<td>$120,011.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>$55,000.00</td>
<td>$58,648.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
<td>$24,863.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>$46,000.00</td>
<td>$46,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgetown</td>
<td>$75,000.00</td>
<td>$68,319.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
<td>$44,939.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
<td>$27,295.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>$119,000.00</td>
<td>$125,261.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>$94,000.00</td>
<td>$93,282.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>$55,000.00</td>
<td>$56,868.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>$85,000.00</td>
<td>$84,988.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
<td>$130,666.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
<td>$88,700.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honiara</td>
<td>$111,000.00</td>
<td>$110,549.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamabad</td>
<td>$97,000.00</td>
<td>$96,793.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>$130,000.00</td>
<td>$129,339.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>$85,000.00</td>
<td>$84,999.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>$112,000.00</td>
<td>$111,924.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila</td>
<td>$90,000.00</td>
<td>$89,794.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>$130,000.00</td>
<td>$142,040.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>$130,000.00</td>
<td>$130,262.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
<td>$21,465.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku’alofa</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
<td>$119,855.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohnpei</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
<td>$62,523.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
### Post Base allocation FY 2003-04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Base allocation FY 2003-04</th>
<th>Final Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Port Louis</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
<td>$29,819.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moresby</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
<td>$125,662.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Vila</td>
<td>$110,000.00</td>
<td>$109,987.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>$125,000.00</td>
<td>$124,937.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
<td>$59,923.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>$130,000.00</td>
<td>$130,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>$115,000.00</td>
<td>$167,609.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarawa</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
<td>$24,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehran</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
<td>$40,336.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
<td>$29,952.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane</td>
<td>$95,000.00</td>
<td>$94,197.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zagreb</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
<td>$57,342.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramallah</td>
<td>$-</td>
<td>$16,709.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Direct Aid Program (DAP) | FY 2004-05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Base allocation FY 2004-05</th>
<th>Final Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total DAP</td>
<td>$3,596,615</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. posts:</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>43,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apia</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>14,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>119,000</td>
<td>159,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>94,000</td>
<td>94,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>144,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honiara</td>
<td>82,500</td>
<td>148,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamabad</td>
<td>97,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>145,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Base allocation FY 2004-05</td>
<td>Final Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku’ Alofa</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohnpei</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Louis</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moresby</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>156,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of Spain</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>81,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Vila</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramallah</td>
<td></td>
<td>24700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarawa</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehran</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>115,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane</td>
<td>105,000</td>
<td>129,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zagreb</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Direct Aid Program (DAP) | FY 2005-06**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Base allocation FY 2005-06</th>
<th>Final Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total DAP</td>
<td>$4,452,035</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. posts:</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>74,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apia</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>59,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bali</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>141,600</td>
<td>141,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>61,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>44,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>136,850</td>
<td>136,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>117,500</td>
<td>117,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>76,700</td>
<td>82,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>97,750</td>
<td>97,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>140,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>99,000</td>
<td>102,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honiara</td>
<td>99,000</td>
<td>99,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamabad</td>
<td>101,850</td>
<td>371,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>145,600</td>
<td>145,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Base allocation FY 2005-06</td>
<td>Final Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>102,000</td>
<td>125,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila</td>
<td>94,500</td>
<td>103,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>189,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>145,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauru</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>153,400</td>
<td>213,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>32,400</td>
<td>32,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku’Alofa</td>
<td>37,800</td>
<td>37,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>138,000</td>
<td>138,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohnpei</td>
<td>67,200</td>
<td>67,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Louis</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>63,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moresby</td>
<td>135,000</td>
<td>135,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of Spain</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>81,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Vila</td>
<td>132,000</td>
<td>102,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>135,000</td>
<td>135,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>134,400</td>
<td>167,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>78,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>149,500</td>
<td>149,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarawa</td>
<td>42,000</td>
<td>33,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehran</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>115,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane</td>
<td>126,000</td>
<td>106,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zagreb</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Direct Aid Program (DAP) | FY 2006-07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Base allocation FY 2005-06</th>
<th>Final Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>$ 85,000.00</td>
<td>$ 85,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra</td>
<td>$ 100,000.00</td>
<td>$ 109,445.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>$ 35,000.00</td>
<td>$ 35,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>$ 45,000.00</td>
<td>$ 44,644.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apia</td>
<td>$ 59,000.00</td>
<td>$ 59,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>$ 10,000.00</td>
<td>$ 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>$ 30,000.00</td>
<td>-$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bali</td>
<td>$ 40,000.00</td>
<td>$ 38,585.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>$ 50,000.00</td>
<td>$ 49,812.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>$ 131,000.00</td>
<td>$ 120,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>$ 55,000.00</td>
<td>$ 60,585.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>$ 20,000.00</td>
<td>$ 20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>$ 56,000.00</td>
<td>$ 56,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>$ 45,000.00</td>
<td>$ 45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>$ 30,000.00</td>
<td>$ 29,538.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canakkale</td>
<td>$ 25,000.00</td>
<td>$ 25,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>$ 136,000.00</td>
<td>$ 136,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhak</td>
<td>$ 117,000.00</td>
<td>$ 117,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ms Hoare asked the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

1. Can he confirm that no organisation has received a Volunteer Small Equipment Grant (VSEG) in consecutive years, as stipulated in the government guidelines.

2. Can he confirm that, contrary to government guidelines, the Great Lakes Historical Co-operative Society Limited received a grant in Round 2 of VSEG 2004 and in 2005; if so, how does this meet the program’s consecutive year requirements.

3. Will he advise if there will be a round of VSEG funding for 2007.

4. Can he explain why the VSEG cannot be granted to the same organisation in consecutive years.

---

**Volunteer Small Equipment Grant**

*(Question No. 5550)*

---

**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
The Volunteer Small Equipment Grant (VSEG) guidelines do not prevent an organisation receiving funding more than once. The guidelines state that priority will be given to organisations not previously funded. I will announce future VSEG funding rounds when it is appropriate to do so.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 5552)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 21 March 2007:
Further to his decision to reject the Sydney Airport Business Park Development, what advice did he receive from the independent expert consultant in respect of safety issues relating to the location of the proposed development and to what extent did those safety issues relate to the prospect of a plane crashing on take-off.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
The independent expert consultant advised that Sydney Airport Corporation Limited should be required to undertake a detailed hazard identification and risk assessment process to establish whether the proposed development would be likely to expose members of the public to an intolerable level of individual or societal risk. The event of an aircraft crashing on take-off was included in the range of risk scenarios considered.

Avalon Airport
(Question No. 5553)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 21 March 2007:
In view of the decision by the Victorian Government to bring Avalon Airport under State planning laws, how does the Airports Act 1996 apply to the operation of Avalon Airport in respect of the development of the Master Plans and Major Development Plans.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
The Airports Act 1996 (the Act) does not apply to Avalon Airport. The operations at Avalon Airport are governed through a long term lease managed by the Department of Defence.

Sudan: Human Rights
(Question No. 5561)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 21 March 2007:
(1) Is the Government aware that the International Criminal Court has indicted a high-ranking Sudanese interior minister and a Janjaweed militia leader on 51 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.
(2) Has the Government held discussions with the United Nations (UN) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) regarding measures that will be taken to indict other Sudanese officials and militia involved in crimes against humanity; if not, why not.
(3) Has the Government held discussions with the UN regarding that organisation’s attempt to prevent funds from reaching Sudanese officials and militia engaged in war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur; if not, why not.
(4) Is the Government aware of allegations that Janjaweed attackers targeted civilians believed to be supporting opposition rebels; if so, has the Government raised this matter with the UN.
(5) Is the Government aware that Sudan has refused to extradite those indicted to The Hague; if so, has the Government raised this matter with the UN.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes. The Government is aware that the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has requested the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I issue summonses to appear for a former Minister of State for the Interior and an alleged Janjaweed militia leader in respect of 51 counts of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

(2) In respect of the International Criminal Court, informal discussions have taken place regarding the prospects of further investigations into crimes which may have been committed in Darfur and which may fall within the Court’s jurisdiction. In respect of the United Nations, as the United Nations is not appropriately empowered in respect of these issues, no. It is for the International Criminal Court to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to support charges against additional persons.


(4) Yes. Australian officials have been briefed on the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur by the UN. The Government has made representations on Darfur to the Government of Sudan.

(5) The Government is aware of media reports of a statement made by the Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir, that Sudan will not hand over Sudanese citizens for trial and other media reports of a statement by Sudanese Justice Minister, Mohammed Ali al-Mardi, that Sudan has decided to suspend all cooperation with the International Criminal Court. In respect of the United Nations, as the United Nations is not appropriately empowered in respect of these issues, no. The International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor has requested the Pre-Trial Chamber I issue a summons to appear. Should such a summons be issued and not be complied with, the International Criminal Court will consider appropriate next steps.

United Nations Human Rights Council

(Question No. 5562)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

(1) Is the Government aware that the US has criticised the UN Human Rights Council for an anti-Israel bias, and for the second consecutive year has decided not to seek a seat on the UN Human Rights Council.

(2) Is the Government also aware that a US spokesman has said that the UN Human Rights Council has had a “nearly singular focus” on Israel, while countries such as Cuba, Myanmar and North Korea have been spared scrutiny; if so, has the Government attempted to raise this issue with the UN; if not, why not.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Australia is aware that a US spokesman, Sean McCormack, said on March 6 this year that the UN Human Rights Council has had a “nearly singular focus on issues related to Israel”, to the exclusion of focusing on country situations in Cuba, Burma and North Korea. Australia has expressed its view to the UN General Assembly and to the Council itself, that the Council, in accordance with its mandate, must be able to address human rights violations, work towards their prevention and respond promptly to human rights emergencies.
We specifically raised this view with the UN Human Rights Council on 23 March, when we participated in the related debate on country rapporteurs. We emphasised that the Council must be apprised of situations as they emerge, and that country-specific mandates were important for bringing to the Council’s attention the human rights situations in countries such as Burma and North Korea.

We have also raised our concerns with the UN about the human rights situation in Cuba, most recently at the UN General Assembly in November 2006. During Council sessions, we have also routinely raised issues of concern, including human rights abuses in Sudan, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and Fiji, with a view to assisting the Council focus on situations across the world.

**Family Tax Benefit**

*(Question No. 5566)*

Ms Macklin asked the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

For the financial year (a) 2004-05 and (b) 2005-06, what was the average payment amount, including supplements, made to families for (i) Family Tax Benefit part A and (ii) Family Tax Benefit part B.

Mr Brough—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

This information is readily available in departmental Annual Reports. The reference for 2004-05 is page 88, and for 2005-06 it is page 173.

**National Highway System**

*(Question No. 5571)*

Mr Katter asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

(1) Is he aware of the repeated closures of the National Highway between Townsville and Cairns during the early part of this year, and while most road closures are warranted, that sections of the National Highway are remaining closed without justification long after flood waters have subsided;

(2) In view of the circumstances outlined in Part (1), could he arrange for officials from his department to meet with State and local government representatives and officials to determine a mechanism for the speedy re-opening of closed sections of the highway following the subsidence and cessation of obstructive conditions, such as flooding.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Sections of the Bruce Highway were closed earlier this year between Townsville and Cairns due to severe flooding caused by heavy rains. Decisions on road closures are the responsibility of the Queensland Police and the Queensland Department of Main Roads, with safety the primary consideration.

**Road Funding**

*(Question No. 5573)*

Mr Katter asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

(1) Can he confirm that based on press releases issued by him and his predecessors over the past decade, some $6,000 million in Commonwealth funds has been spent on road upgrades in South East Queensland and that an additional $2,300 million has been announced for the Goodna Bypass.
(2) Is he aware that North Queensland has a population of some 1 million, but would receive barely one tenth of the amount of Commonwealth funding spent in South East Queensland, which has a population approaching 3 million.

(3) Could he assure North Queenslanders that he will endeavour to ensure that a system of funding allocation based on population and road distances, or some objective measure, will be implemented to provide North Queenslanders with a more equitable outcome.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) (2) and (3) Total Australian Government funding to Queensland for roads under various programmes from 1996-97 to 2005-06 is $4,160 million.

Details of current funding programmes are:

Under the current 5-year AusLink programme North Queensland receives just under one quarter of total Australian Government funding for road construction projects on the Network in Queensland, including:

• $220 million for new works between Townsville and Cairns;
• $128 million for flood improvements and upgrading in the Tully area; and
• $79.5 million in joint funding towards the cost of the Townsville Ring Road. The Queensland Government is contributing $39.5 million.

On 5 March 2007 the Prime Minister and I jointly announced that the Australian Government will construct the $2.3 billion Goodna Bypass as a priority under a second AusLink programme beginning in July 2009.

United financial assistance grants for roads and Roads to Recovery funds are paid annually to all local governments in Queensland. Over two thirds of funding paid under Financial Assistant Grants and Roads to Recovery is paid to councils outside South East Queensland.

Consistent with programme guidelines, about half of Queensland’s share of Black Spot funding goes to areas outside South East Queensland.

Governor-General
(Question No. 5578)

Mr Murphy asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

(1) Further to his reply to question 3997, why did he not provide an answer to each of the eleven parts of that question.

(2) Did he speak with his press secretary, Mr Tony O’Leary, about that part of Mr Ian McPhedran’s report which appeared in the Daily Telegraph on 24 August 2006 and read “The Daily Telegraph can also reveal that the Prime Minister’s office reacted angrily when Major-General Jeffery appeared on Channel 10’s Meet the Press program in May last year. The General’s staff were bluntly told by Mr Howard’s press secretary Tony O’Leary to keep the viceroy off TV—and he has barely appeared since”; if so, what did Mr O’Leary tell him; if not, why not.

(3) Has he seen a report by Ian McPhedran titled ‘PM snubs questions’ that appeared in the Herald-Sun newspaper on 20 March 2007 that read, in part, “Major-General Jeffery has the lowest profile of any Governor-General in recent history. It was reported that Mr Howard’s press secretary Tony O’Leary, criticised Government House after Major-General Jeffery appeared on Network Ten’s Meet the Press program in May last year. Mr O’Leary denied this, but sources close to the vice-regal office have stuck firmly by the charge of political interference”; if not, why not.

(4) Has he spoken with Mr O’Leary about Mr McPhedran’s report in the Herald-Sun on 20 March 2007; if so, what are those details; if not, why not.
(5) Will he now tell the Australian people what he proposes to do over the next nine months to raise the profile of the Governor-General, Major-General Michael Jeffery; if so, what are those full details; if not, why not.

Mr Howard—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) to (5) The assertion that my office sought to prevent the Governor-General speaking to the press is incorrect and a rebuttal was published in The Age on 30 August 2006. It was also repudiated by the Official Secretary to the Governor-General in his evidence to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees’ hearings into the Additional Budget Estimates on 12 February 2007.

The Governor-General’s extensive programme of public engagements is detailed in the Governor-General’s website at www.gg.gov.au and in the Vice Regal News of those newspapers that agree to publish these details.

Tasmania: Rail Infrastructure

(Question No. 5583)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 22 March 2007:

In respect of the Tasmanian section of the old Australian National Rail System: (a) when was it sold and which company originally purchased the system; (b) what was the sale price and when was it paid; (c) were any conditions attached to the sale for the ongoing maintenance and operation of the system; and (d) when did Pacific National purchase the Tasmanian rail system and were any conditions attached to the sale of the system to Pacific National for the rail system’s ongoing maintenance and operation.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) The sale of the Tasmanian section of the former Australian National Railways Commission network was completed on 14 November 1997 to Australian Transport Network Limited (ATN).

(b) The sale price was $22 million, with a $2.2 million deposit paid to the Australian Government on the signing of the sale agreement on 28 August 1997 and the balance paid on the completion date.

(c) The sale was conditional upon ATN’s undertaking, within 4 years of the completion date, of capital expenditure to the value of $20 million in connection with the operation of the business including expenditure on the refurbishment of locomotives and wagons, the refurbishment or replacement of track infrastructure, the purchase of new locomotives, rolling stock, buildings, terminals, workshops, plant and equipment and information technology and other items of a capital nature in connection with the business. The sale agreement also specified that the purchaser must not close, during the period of 5 years from the completion date, any railway line acquired as a result of the agreement or ground lease.

(d) Pacific National purchased the Tasmanian rail system in February 2004. No Australian Government conditions were attached to the sale.

Tasmania: Rail Infrastructure

(Question No. 5584)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 22 March 2007:

In respect of the Government’s approval of a $78 million, ten-year works program for the Tasmanian rail system under Auslink: (a) what sum will be allocated by the Commonwealth Government to the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) in each of the ten financial years of the program to meet the committed sum of $78 million; (b) what financial contribution will be made by the Tasmanian Government, Pacific National and/or by any other participants in the upgrade of the rail system and in which

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
financial years will their contributions be paid; (c) what instrument is being used to formalise the agreement between the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments and Pacific National for ARTC to deliver the rail project; and (d) what outstanding conditions exist between the parties in respect of the cost of ongoing maintenance and rolling stock to finalise the required infrastructure investment.

Mr Vaile—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) The Australian Rail Track Corporation is not involved in the Tasmanian rail rescue package. Funds will be paid to the Tasmanian Government over the ten year programme according to the rate of progress in its implementation. $37 million has been allocated to the project to 30 June 2009, with the $41 million balance to be paid over the remaining seven years of the package.

(b) The Tasmanian Government is contributing $4 million a year over the 10 year period for ongoing maintenance and Pacific National is contributing $38 million over the first 8 years of the 10 year programme to upgrade its rolling stock.

(c) The Australian Rail Track Corporation is not involved in the delivery of the rail project. The bilateral agreement between the Australian and Tasmanian governments relating to AusLink National Projects has been varied to include the Rail Rescue Package.

(d) There are no outstanding pre-conditions to be met by the parties in relation to the Australian Government agreed investment.

Education Funding
(Question No. 5586)

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 22 March 2007:

(1) Does the Australian Government Programmes for Schools Quadrennial Administrative Guidelines state that ‘If a State does not fulfil a condition of a grant, the Minister may determine that funds be repaid and may recover funds, reduce future payments or delay any further payments’; if not, why not.

(2) Has she ever (a) made a determination that funds be repaid, (b) recovered funds, (c) reduced future payments or (d) delayed any further payments as a result of non-compliance with a condition of a grant; if so, what are the full details of (i) the non-compliance, (ii) the amount of the grant involved, (iii) the school involved and (iv) the federal electoral division in which the school is located.

Ms Julie Bishop—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) Yes. This is a funding condition of the Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004 (the Act), and a condition of funding agreements for schools programmes funded under the Act.

Australian Government Programmes for Schools Quadrennial Administrative Guidelines 2005-2008

Part 1, paragraph 18. Meeting the conditions of the agreement:

18. Part 2 of the Schools Assistance Act 2004 prescribes the general conditions on which financial assistance is to be paid to a State in respect of government and non-government schools. Under the Act, payments to education authorities and other grantees cannot be authorised until they have signed an agreement with the Commonwealth. This agreement lists the conditions with which the State or education authority must comply in order to receive funding. In brief, these conditions refer to the following matters:
– empowering the Minister, if an authority does not fulfil a condition, to seek repayment of an amount or reduce other amounts payable to the authority or delay making any further payment to the authority; (excerpt)

(2) No.

Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport
(Question No. 5594)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 26 March 2007:

(1) Can he confirm if any planes landing at, or taking off from, Kingsford Smith Airport on the morning of 22 March 2007 were at any time given permission to vent fuel; if so, on what basis was permission given; if not will he investigate allegations that planes were sighted by residents releasing fuel on that morning.

(2) Can he outline the steps his department would take to check whether aircraft were illegally dumping fuel.

(3) Can he outline a process by which residents might be able to assist his department in detecting such incidents.

Mr Vail—the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) No. The Department will investigate allegations from residents of possible fuel releases if details of the incident(s) are provided to the Department.

(2) The Department will contact the individual(s) to ascertain the location, date, time and circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the account and circumstances support a prima facie breach of the Air Navigation (Fuel Spillage) Regulations 1999, the Department will request Airservices Australia to provide details of aircraft in the vicinity at the time of the alleged incident and contact the airline(s) involved. Depending on the circumstances and location of the alleged incident, the Department may also request information or a statement from Air Traffic Control duty officers.

(3) Residents can assist the Department by recording the exact location, date, time and circumstances of instances of possible fuel spillages and promptly providing that information, along with their name and contact details, to the Airservices Australia Noise Enquiry Unit (1300 302 240 or 1800 802 584) or the Department (02 6274 7111). If it is required, an eyewitness must also be prepared to provide a formal statement or declaration for use as evidence in legal action to corroborate or establish if a fuel spill has taken place.

Foreign Affairs: Consular Complaints
(Question No. 5625)

Mr Byrne asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 28 March 2007:

(1) What system does the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade use for handling consular complaints.

(2) In respect of the system identified in Part (1), (a) when was it implemented and (b) does it meet the recommendations outlined by the Australian National Audit Office in Audit Report No. 31, 2000-01, Administration of Consular Services and subsequently in Audit Report No. 16, 2003-04, Administration of Consular Services Follow-up Audit.

(3) For each financial year since the implementation of the consular complaints handling system, (a) how many complaints have been received and (b) are the complaints categorised; if so, (i) what are the categories and (ii) how many complaints have been received in each category.
Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a formal Consular Complaints Handling Mechanism in place. The consular complaints handling mechanism has been modelled on the Good Practice Guide for Effective Complaint Handling prepared by the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s Office and seeks to ensure that clients’ complaints are addressed in a manner consistent with the department’s obligations under the Consular Services Charter.

(2) (a) December 2004, (b) Yes.

(3) (a) In 2004-05 forty-seven (47), in 2005-06 forty seven (47) and in 2006-07 (until 31 March 07) Eighteen (18) complaints were received respectively, (b) Yes. (i) Data on complaints are collected in the following categories: consular, notarial, web/travel advice, passports, online registration, smartraveller, welfare and other, (ii) Complaints received by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade by year and category are as follows:

**2004-05**
- consular - 8
- notarial - 1
- web/travel advice - 18
- passports - 4
- online registration - 0
- smartraveller - 11
- welfare - 1
- other - 4

**2005-06**
- consular - 7
- notarial - 2
- web/travel advice - 11
- passports - 2
- online registration - 1
- smartraveller - 13
- welfare - 0
- other – 11

**2006-07 (as of 31 March 07)**
- consular - 4
- notarial - 1
- web/travel advice - 4
- passports - 0
- online registration - 0
- smartraveller - 9
- welfare - 0
- other - 0
**Ethanol Production Grants Program**  
(Question No. 5635)

Mr Martin Ferguson asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, in writing, on 28 March 2007:

In respect of the Ethanol Production Grants Program, (a) when was the program introduced, and (b) since the scheme was introduced, (i) which companies have applied for grants, (ii) which companies have received grants, (c) on which dates were grants paid to the successful applicants and (d) what was the amount of each grant paid.

Mr Ian Macfarlane—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) 18 September 2002.

(b) (i) CSR Distilleries Operations, Honan Holdings, Schumer Pty. Ltd. and Tarac Technologies. (ii) All those mentioned in (b) (i).

(c) Grants are generally claimed weekly.

(d) Details of payments to 31 March 2007 are shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHANOL PRODUCTION GRANTS</th>
<th>SEPTEMBER 2002 TO 30 JUNE 2003</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07 (TO 31/03/07)</th>
<th>CUSTOMER TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR Distilleries Operations</td>
<td>$824,942</td>
<td>$299,656</td>
<td>$599,818</td>
<td>$1,222,281</td>
<td>$7,009,309</td>
<td>$12,616,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honan Holdings</td>
<td>$20,857,998</td>
<td>$10,486,262</td>
<td>$7,671,436</td>
<td>$11,387,565</td>
<td>$14,612,841</td>
<td>$65,016,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schumer Pty. Ltd.</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$97,138</td>
<td>$414,733</td>
<td>$71,163</td>
<td>$234</td>
<td>$583,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarac Technologies</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$136,047</td>
<td>$136,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY Total</td>
<td>$21,682,940</td>
<td>$10,883,056</td>
<td>$8,645,987</td>
<td>$15,381,009</td>
<td>$21,758,431</td>
<td>$78,351,423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures are based on claims paid to customers by ITR.

**India: Uranium Exports**  
(Question No. 5636)

Mr McClelland asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 29 March 2007:

(1) Was he accurately reported in the Australian Financial Review newspaper on 17 January 2007, as saying that “we have been talking with the Indian Government about whether it would be possible to put together some arrangement with India whereby we could export uranium”.

(2) Can he confirm that India is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

(3) Could selling uranium to India prejudice the NPT regime.

Mr Downer—The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) In answer to a question at the Energy, Environment and Air Quality Forum in Los Angeles on 13 January 2007, I stated “We are thinking about it and we have been talking with the Indian Government about whether it would be possible to put together some arrangement with India whereby we could export uranium and be sure that that uranium could only be used for civil purposes – power generation. Not be used in any way, shape or form for military purposes.” I then went on to say: “This whole India issue, it’s a very difficult question because you can have the status quo – or becoming the status quo ante now – where India is not an NPT party, it has nuclear programs, it has nuclear weapons and you can take the view therefore we will have nothing to do with them. Or you can take the view that the Bush Administration has taken that well at least you can embrace some of India’s nuclear industry and you can have inspections by the IAEA – the International Atomic Energy Agency – of some of those nuclear facilities. And some inspections and some transparency
is better than none, isn’t it? So that is the debate. I wouldn’t say it’s a fierce debate in Australia. I would say in Australia it’s something that we’re feeling our way on rather cautiously, I think that might be the best answer to your question”.

(2) Yes. India is not a party to the NPT.

(3) Current Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) guidelines preclude most forms of nuclear supply to India. The United States has foreshadowed that it will formally ask the NSG to agree to make an exception to its guidelines for India, so as to allow nuclear supply to India. For an exception to the NSG guidelines to be made for India, NSG members would need to be assured that any uranium supplied to India would be subject to safeguards so that it could not be used in India’s military nuclear program but exclusively for India’s civil nuclear power program. With regard to threats to the NPT, it is the Government’s view that the greatest challenges to the NPT come from within: the unresolved cases of non-compliance by North Korea and Iran. India, on the other hand, is a responsible international state with a good record on preventing onwards proliferation of its nuclear materials and technology.