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SITTING DAYS—2008

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- PERTH 585 AM
- HOBART 747 AM
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FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST 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—Mr Henry Alfred Jenkins MP
Deputy Speaker—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—

Leader of the House—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Stephen Francis Smith MP
Leader of Opposition Business—Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP
Deputy Leader of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Kevin Michael Rudd MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Leo Roger Spurway Price MP
Government Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP

Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Brendan John Nelson MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Alex Somlyay MP
Opposition Whip—Mr Michael Andrew Johnson MP
Deputy Opposition Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Chief Whip—Mrs Kay Elizabeth Hull MP
Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

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<td>Washer, Malcolm James</td>
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PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; Nats—The Nationals; Ind—Independent

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—H Evans
Clerk of the House of Representatives—I C Harris AO
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—D Kenny (Acting)
RUDD MINISTRY

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister for Education and
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and
Minister for Social Inclusion
Treasurer
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and Leader of the
Government in the Senate
Special Minister of State,
Cabinet Secretary and
Vice President of the Executive Council
Minister for Trade
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence
Minister for Health and Ageing
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and
Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Finance and Deregulation
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Develop-
ment and Local Government and Leader of the House
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital
Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the
Senate
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Minister for Climate Change and Water
Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts
Attorney-General
Minister for Human Services and Manager of Government
Business in the Senate
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Minister for Resources and Energy and
Minister for Tourism

Hon. Kevin Rudd, MP
Hon. Julia Gillard, MP
Hon. Wayne Swan MP
Senator Hon. Chris Evans
Senator Hon. John Faulkner
Hon. Simon Crean MP
Hon. Stephen Smith MP
Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP
Hon. Nicola Roxon MP
Hon. Jenny Macklin MP
Hon. Lindsay Tanner MP
Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Senator Hon. Kim Carr
Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Hon. Peter Garrett MP
Hon. Robert McClelland MP
Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig
Hon. Tony Burke MP
Hon. Martin Ferguson MP
Minister for Home Affairs  
Hon. Bob Debus

Assistant Minister to the Treasurer and  
Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs  
Hon. Chris Bowen MP

Ministers for Veterans' Affairs  
Hon. Alan Griffin MP

Minister for Housing and  
Minister for the Status of Women  
Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP

Minister for Employment Participation  
Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP

Minister for Defence Science and Personnel  
Hon. Warren Snowdon MP

Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy and  
Minister Assisting the Finance Minister on Deregulation  
Hon. Craig Emerson MP

Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Governance  
Senator Hon. Nick Sherry

Minister for Ageing  
Hon. Justine Elliot MP

Minister for Youth and  
Hon. Kate Ellis MP

Minister for Sport  
Hon. Maxine McKew MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Childcare  
Hon. Greg Combet MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Procurement  
Hon. Mike Kelly MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support  
Hon. Gary Gray MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia  
Hon. Bill Shorten MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services  
Hon. Bob McMullan MP

Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance  
Hon. Duncan Kerr MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs  
Hon. Anthony Byrne MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister  
Senator Hon. Ursula Stephens

Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion  
Hon. John Murphy MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade  
Senator Hon. Jan McLucas

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing  
Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services
SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition
Hon. Brendan Nelson MP

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Minister for Employment, Business and Workplace Relations
Hon. Julie Bishop MP

Leader of the Nationals; Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Local Government
Hon. Warren Truss MP

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Defence
Senator Hon. Nick Minchin

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Senator Hon. Eric Abetz

Shadow Treasurer
Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP

Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing and Leader of Opposition Business in the House
Hon. Joe Hockey MP

Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
Hon. Andrew Robb MP

Shadow Minister for Trade
Hon. Ian MacFarlane MP

Shadow Minister for Families, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs and the Voluntary Sector
Hon. Tony Abbott MP

Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion

Shadow Minister for Human Services
Senator Hon. Helen Coonan

Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training
Hon. Tony Smith MP

Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Urban Water
Hon. Greg Hunt MP

Shadow Minister for Finance, Competition Policy and Deregulation
Hon. Peter Dutton MP

Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate
Senator Hon. Chris Ellison

Shadow Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
Hon. Bruce Billson MP

Shadow Attorney-General
Senator Hon. George Brandis

Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Water Security
Senator Hon. David Johnston

Shadow Minister for Justice, Border Protection and Assisting Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Hon. John Cobb MP

Shadow Special Minister of State
Hon. Chris Pyne, MP

Shadow Minister for Small Business, the Service Economy and Tourism
Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson

Steven Ciobo MP

Shadow Minister for Environment, Heritage, the Arts and Indigenous Affairs
Hon. Sharman Stone MP

Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Governance
Michael Keenan MP

Shadow Minister for Ageing
Margaret May MP

Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Personnel and Assisting Shadow Minister for Defence
Hon. Bob Baldwin MP

Shadow Minister for Business Development, Independent Contractors and Consumer Affairs, Deputy Leader of Opposition Business in the House
Luke Hartsuyker MP

Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs
Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP

Shadow Minister for Employment Participation and Apprenticeships and Training
Andrew Southcott MP
SHADOW MINISTRY—continued

Shadow Minister for Housing, Shadow Minister for Status of Women
Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Youth, and Shadow Minister for Sport
Hon. Pat Farmer MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Secretary
Don Randall MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition, Northern Australia
Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health
Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education
Senator Hon. Brett Mason
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence
Hon. Peter Lindsay MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure, Roads and Transport
Barry Haase MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade
John Forrest MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship
Louise Markus MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government
Sophie Mirabella MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
Jo Gash MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Ageing and the Voluntary Sector
Mark Coulton MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs
Senator Marise Payne
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families, Community Services
Senator Cory Bernardi
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The House of Representatives adjourned on Thursday 20 September 2007. The 41st Parliament was prorogued at 12 noon on Monday, 15 October 2007, and the House of Representatives dissolved at 12 noon on Wednesday, 17 October 2007. The Forty-second Parliament was convened for the dispatch of business on Tuesday, 12 February 2008 at 9.15 am, and the First Session commenced that day.

Tuesday, 12 February 2008

———

PROCLAMATION

The House met at 10.30 am, pursuant to the proclamation of His Excellency the Governor-General.

The Clerk read the proclamation.

OPENING OF THE PARLIAMENT

The Usher of the Black Rod, having been announced, was admitted, and delivered the message that the Deputy of the Governor-General for the opening of the parliament desired the attendance of honourable members in the Senate chamber.

Honourable members attended accordingly, and having returned—

AUTHORITY TO ADMINISTER OATH OR AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE

The Deputy authorised by the Governor-General to administer the oath or affirmation entered the chamber.

The Clerk read the authority authorising the Hon. Anthony Murray Gleeson AC, Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance to the Queen required by the Constitution to be taken or made by members of the House of Representatives.

RETURNS TO WRITS

The Clerk laid on the table duly endorsed returns to the writs for the election of members of the House of Representatives held on 24 November 2007.
MEMBERS SWORN

The following honourable members made and subscribed the oath or affirmation of allegiance:
Abbott, Anthony John, Warringah, New South Wales
Adams, Dick Godfrey Harry, Lyons, Tasmania
Albanese, Anthony Norman, Grayndler, New South Wales
Andrews, Kevin James, Menzies, Victoria
Bailey, Frances Esther, McEwen, Victoria
Baldwin, Robert Charles, Paterson, New South Wales
Bevis, Archibald Ronald, Brisbane, Queensland
Bidgood, James Mark, Dawson, Queensland
Billson, Bruce Frederick, Dunkley, Victoria
Bird, Sharon Leah, Cunningham, New South Wales
Bishop, Bronwyn Kathleen, Mackellar, New South Wales
Bishop, Julie Isabel, Curtin, Western Australia
Bowen, Christopher Eyles, Prospect, New South Wales
Bradbury, David John, Lindsay, New South Wales
Broadbent, Russell Evan, McMillan, Victoria
Burke, Anthony Stephen, Watson, New South Wales
Burke, Anna Elizabeth, Chisholm, Victoria
Butler, Mark Christopher, Port Adelaide, South Australia
Byrne, Anthony Michael, Holt, Victoria
Campbell, Jodie Louise, Bass, Tasmania
Champion, Nicholas David, Wakefield, South Australia
Cheeseman, Darren Leicester, Corangamite, Victoria
Ciobo, Steven, Moncrieff, Queensland
Clare, Jason Dean, Blaxland, New South Wales
Cobb, John Kenneth, Calare, New South Wales
Collins, Julie Maree, Franklin, Tasmania
Combet, Gregory Ivan, Charlton, New South Wales
Costello, Peter Howard, Higgins, Victoria
Coulton, Mark Maclean, Parkes, New South Wales
Crean, Simon Findlay, Hotham, Victoria
Danby, Michael David, Melbourne Ports, Victoria
D’Ath, Yvette Maree, Petrie, Queensland
Debus, Robert John, Macquarie, New South Wales
Downer, Alexander John G, Mayo, South Australia
Dreyfus, Mark Alfred, Isaacs, Victoria
Dutton, Peter Craig, Dickson, Queensland
Elliot, Maria Justine, Richmond, New South Wales
Ellis, Annette Louise, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
Ellis, Katherine Margaret, Adelaide, South Australia
Emerson, Craig Anthony, Rankin, Queensland
Farmer, Patrick Francis, Macarthur, New South Wales
Ferguson, Laurie Donald Thomas, Reid, New South Wales
Ferguson, Martin, Batman, Victoria
Fitzgibbon, Joel Andrew, Hunter, New South Wales
Forrest, John Alexander, Mallee, Victoria
Garrett, Peter Robert, Kingsford Smith, New South Wales
Gash, Joanna, Gilmore, New South Wales
Georganas, Steven, Hindmarsh, South Australia
George, Jennie, Throsby, New South Wales
Georgiou, Petro, Kooyong, Victoria
Gibbons, Stephen William, Bendigo, Victoria
Gillard, Julia Eileen, Lalor, Victoria
Gray, Gary, Brand, Western Australia
Grierson, Sharon Joy, Newcastle, New South Wales
Griffin, Alan Peter, Bruce, Victoria
Haase, Barry Wayne, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia
Hale, Damian Francis, Solomon, Northern Territory
Hall, Jill Griffiths, Shortland, New South Wales
Hartsuyker, Luke, Cowper, New South Wales
Hawke, Alexander George, Mitchell, New South Wales
Hawker, David Peter Maxwell, Wannon, Victoria
Hayes, Christopher Patrick, Werriwa, New South Wales
Hockey, Joseph B, North Sydney, New South Wales
Hull, Kay Elizabeth, Riverina, New South Wales
Hunt, Gregory Andrew, Flinders, Victoria
Irons, Stephen James, Swan, Western Australia
Irwin, Julia Claire, Fowler, New South Wales
Jackson, Sharryn Maree, Hasluck, Western Australia
Jenkins, Henry Alfred, Scullin, Victoria
Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey, Tangney, Western Australia
Johnson, Michael Andrew, Ryan, Queensland
Katter, Robert Carl, Kennedy, Queensland
Keenan, Michael Fayat, Stirling, Western Australia
Kelly, Michael Joseph, Eden-Monaro, New South Wales
Kerr, Duncan James Colquhoun, Denison, Tasmania
King, Catherine, Ballarat, Victoria
Laming, Andrew Charles, Bowman, Queensland
Ley, Sussan Penelope, Farrer, New South Wales
Lindsay, Peter John, Herbert, Queensland
Livermore, Kirsten Fiona, Capricornia, Queensland
Macfarlane, Ian Elgin, Groom, Queensland
Macklin, Jennifer Louise, Jagajaga, Victoria
Marino, Nola Bethwyn, Forrest, Western Australia
Markus, Louise Elizabeth, Greenway, New South Wales
Marles, Richard Donald, Corio, Victoria
May, Margaret Ann, McPherson, Queensland
McClelland, Robert Bruce, Barton, New South Wales
McGauran, Peter John, Gippsland, Victoria
McKew, Maxine Margaret, Bennelong, New South Wales
McMullan, Robert Francis, Fraser, Australian Capital Territory
Melham, Daryl, Banks, New South Wales
Mirabella, Sophie, Indi, Victoria
Morrison, Scott John, Cook, New South Wales
Moylan, Judith Eleanor, Pearce, Western Australia
Murphy, John Paul, Lowe, New South Wales
Neal, Belinda Jane, Robertson, New South Wales
Nelson, Brendan John, Bradfield, New South Wales
Neumann, Shayne Kenneth, Blair, Queensland
Neville, Paul Christopher, Hinkler, Queensland
O’Connor, Brendan Patrick, Gorton, Victoria
Owens, Julie Ann, Parramatta, New South Wales
Parke, Melissa, Fremantle, Western Australia
Pearce, Christopher John, Aston, Victoria
Perrett, Graham Douglas, Moreton, Queensland
Plibersek, Tanya Joan, Sydney, New South Wales
Price, Leo Roger Spurway, Chifley, New South Wales
Pyne, Christopher Maurice, Sturt, South Australia
Raguse, Brett Blair, Forde, Queensland
Ramsey, Rowan Eric, Grey, South Australia
Randall, Donald James, Canning, Western Australia
Rea, Kerry Marie, Bonner, Queensland
Ripoll, Bernard Fernand, Oxley, Queensland
Rishworth, Amanda Louise, Kingston, South Australia
Robb, Andrew John, Goldstein, Victoria
Robert, Stuart, Fadden, Queensland
Roxon, Nicola Louise, Gellibrand, Victoria
Rudd, Kevin Michael, Griffith, Queensland
Ruddock, Philip Maxwell, Berowra, New South Wales
Saffin, Janelle Anne, Page, New South Wales
Schultz, Albert John, Hume, New South Wales
Scott, Bruce Craig, Maranoa, Queensland
Secker, Patrick Damien, Barker, South Australia
Shorten, William Richard, Maribyrnong, Victoria
Sidebottom, Peter Sid, Braddon, Tasmania
Simpkins, Luke Xavier, Cowan, Western Australia
Slipper, Peter Neil, Fisher, Queensland
Smith, Anthony David Hawthorn, Casey, Victoria
Snowdon, Warren Edward, Lingiari, Northern Territory
Somlyay, Alexander Michael, Fairfax, Queensland
Southcott, Andrew John, Boothby, South Australia
Stone, Sharman Nancy, Murray, Victoria
Sullivan, Jonathan Harold, Longman, Queensland
Swan, Wayne Maxwell, Lilley, Queensland
Symon, Michael Stuart, Deakin, Victoria
Tanner, Lindsay James, Melbourne, Victoria
Thomson, Craig Robert, Dobell, New South Wales
Thomson, Kelvin John, Wills, Victoria
Trevor, Chris Allan, Flynn, Queensland
Truss, Warren Errol, Wide Bay, Queensland
Tuckey, Charles Wilson, O’Connor, Western Australia
Tuesday, 12 February 2008  HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Turnbull, Malcolm Bligh, Wentworth, New South Wales
Turnour, James Pearce, Leichhardt, Queensland
Vaile, Mark Anthony James, Lyne, New South Wales
Vale, Danna Sue, Hughes, New South Wales
Valvakinou, Maria, Calwell, Victoria
Washer, Malcolm James, Moore, Western Australia
Windsor, Antony Harold Curties, New England, New South Wales
Wood, Jason Peter, La Trobe, Victoria
Zappia, Antonio, Makin, South Australia

The Deputy withdrew from the chamber.

SPEAKER

Election

The Clerk—Honourable members, the next business is the election of a Speaker.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (11.16 am)—Clerk of the House, Members, it is with great pleasure and much pride that I nominate the member for Scullin, Mr Harry Jenkins, to be Speaker of the House of Representatives. I move:

That the honourable member for Scullin do take the chair of this House as Speaker.

Harry has been in public service for nearly 30 years. He was born in Melbourne in 1952. Harry’s close family life was marked by community service and involvement, most often centred around his father’s medical practice and later parliamentary career. Harry succeeded his father, Harry Sr, as the member for Scullin in 1986, after his father had served the electorate with distinction from 1969 to 1986. Today Harry will further emulate his father, who was Speaker of the House from 1983 to 1986.

Harry Jenkins Jr won Scullin in a by-election in 1986 after a long stint in local government as a councillor, between 1979 and 1986—two years of which he served as shire president. Before entering parliament, Harry graduated with a Bachelor of Science from the Australian National University and worked for the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. His interest in all things scientific, and particularly the environment, has not waned in the meantime.

Harry has been re-elected to what we affectionately call ‘Fortress Scullin’ in eight successive elections, consolidating the seat for Labor in 2007 by 20 per cent—a testimony to his dedicated hard work and also that of his family over many years. Harry has been a great servant of his electorate, his beloved Labor Party and especially this parliament. He has chaired and/or been an active member of over 14 House of Representatives standing committees and joint statutory or joint select committees of the parliament. Equally, his representation of this parliament overseas has been widespread and carried out with distinction.

However, Harry’s special contribution to and recognition within the parliament has been associated with his long-term work as Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker, roles he has carried out with great distinction, dignity and equanimity. Indeed, many an MP like me—very ignorant of a particular standing order or indeed of parliamentary procedures—has been seen gravitating in the chamber towards the ever-composed figure of Harry to take instruction. ‘Order!’ That is the type of voice you need, Harry. Harry’s warm personality, great depth of character, mischievous sense of humour and calmness of mood and manner, along with his encyclopedic knowledge of parliamentary processes, are richly and deservedly rewarded
today. It could not have happened to a better person.

Members, the Speaker-to-be’s star sign is Leo. I ask you to suspend any disbelief you may have in astrological predictions to ponder the following characteristics of Harry’s star sign:

Your fighting spirit is second to none! Nothing gets in the road of your ambitions, so it is quite clear that you will achieve what you set your heart upon. You desire the best, so while you could be happy with a life where you follow other people’s rules and regulations—read ‘the standing orders’ for that—mostly you will much prefer your own trail. This means you will carve out your niche and make a name for yourself and you will without doubt make your mark in the world—you can reach the top of the ladder no matter what field you choose.

Harry, you have chosen the speakership as your field, and your peers in this parliament have unanimously supported you in this endeavour. Our very best wishes accompany you in this task, and none more so than mine.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (11.21 am)—Clerk of the House, I am delighted to second the nomination of the member for Scullin to be the Speaker of the House for the 42nd Parliament. How wonderful it is to join with the member for Braddon in having this honour. Welcome back, Member for Braddon. All members would agree with me that the member for Scullin is exceptionally well qualified for the role of Speaker. His family will be very proud to see him follow in the footsteps of his father and former Speaker, Dr Harry Jenkins. The member for Scullin has served with great distinction as Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker since 1993. He will continue to distinguish himself in his new role through his great respect for the parliament and his unrivalled knowledge of the standing orders. Those credentials will give Harry authority over the chamber, but it is the ever so slightly raised eyebrow, the wry smile and the absolutely deadpan delivery that will win our affection over the coming term of the parliament. In nominating the member for Scullin, I wish him every success in his new position and I know that his performance as Speaker will reflect well on the parliament and all of us who serve here.

The Clerk—Does the honourable member for Scullin accept the nomination?

Mr Jenkins—Mr Clerk, reluctantly, yes, I do.

The Clerk—Is there any further proposal? There being no further proposal, the time for proposals has expired. I declare that the honourable member proposed, the member for Scullin, has been elected as Speaker.

The Speaker (Mr Harry Jenkins)—I wish to express my grateful thanks for the high honour that the House has been pleased to confer upon me.

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (11.23 am)—Mr Speaker, thank you for that withering look! Mr Speaker, on behalf of the government, I offer warmest congratulations on your elevation to the office of Speaker of this, the House of Representatives. The Speaker is, in a sense, the referee of the parliament. Your role is to help us play fair and abide by the rules of the House. You are only the 28th member to have held this office and I have no doubt you will perform this role with dignity and with distinction. Some might say it is in your DNA to do that, since your father, Harry Jenkins Sr, also served in the Speaker’s role on the election of the
Hawke government in 1983 through until 1986. Of course, things have changed a little since Harry Sr’s day. With the advent of cameras and webcast in the chamber, we are all under greater scrutiny. Members of the public can act now as a kind of parliamentary video referee, watching and reviewing events and basically voting on the dispensation of justice from the chair. This scrutiny is a good thing for us all—for the speakership and for each of us as members of this place. It adds to our modern democracy.

Mr Speaker, since 1986 you have been a dedicated representative of the constituents of the seat of Scullin. Now, you have the opportunity to serve the whole nation in this important role of Speaker. The chair, of course, is not unfamiliar to you. You have served as Deputy Speaker, Second Deputy Speaker and Deputy Chair of Committees. In fact, this makes you one of the most experienced of those to be elected to the office of Speaker in the history of this place. Therefore, you have seen the good, the bad, the ugly and, from time to time, the very ugly at close quarters from that chair for 18 years. You would have observed the speakerships of Speakers Child, McLeay, Halverston, Martin, Sinclair, Andrew and Hawker. One of the things we have cause to reflect on, running through that list, is that those who occupy that position do not have a particular record of longevity! May that not be the case in your case, Mr Speaker.

From that entire list of previous occupants of the chair, Mr Speaker, you have a rich and innovative set of precedents upon which to draw. I imagine also, as you grew up, there would have been many tales across the dining room table with your father about the reasonableness of government members and the unreasonableness of those opposite in those days. Well, we will see how this parliament unfolds.

You will be aware that the role you are taking on today will not be easy. Many of us are aware of the great story of the first Speaker of this House, Sir Frederick Holder, who, in 1909, rather famously exclaimed, ‘Dreadful, dreadful!’ in response to the events on the floor of the chamber and then collapsed dead on the floor. It has been a common practice and, I think, a good one in this House to remind all incoming Speakers of Sir Frederick’s demise. While you, Mr Speaker, look to be in excellent health, it would be remiss of me not to pass this on to you!

Over the years, this House has seen Speakers of many different dispositions. Each of them helped shape the tone and conduct of the parliament in their times. One thing is certain: at some point all wished for a better behaved House. Let us hope we can all do better. I do not believe in promising the undeliverable, because responsibility for delivering a better behaved House lies with each and every one of us as members. Of course we are going to have robust debates in this place—that is the heart and soul and nature of the vibrant Australian democracy, which we know and love and cherish. There will be passion on display—that has been our way; that is the Australian way. It is written very much into our folklore, our past, our history and our future. But as we express these convictions with passion, let us also show restraint. It is an immense privilege to be part of a democratic parliament where we can express our opinions—a privilege not shared universally across our world—the beliefs we hold to be dear, and express our goals without fear of retribution, except perhaps the retribution delivered at the ballot box.
The office of Speaker is highly esteemed both in our parliament and in the House of Commons, our mother parliament, as it is described. One of the most respected Speakers of the House of Commons, I am advised, was Arthur Wellesley Peel. He was Speaker of the House from 1884 to 1895. We are advised from the record that in an impassioned debate, I think on the home rule bill, a physical brawl erupted on the floor of the House—this was in our mother parliament, where things are supposed to be done better. The House should be thinking of our new Speaker as I briefly recount what followed, as told by an eyewitness and cited in Philip Laundy’s 1964 tome entitled The Office of Speaker. The intervention of the Speaker on that occasion was:

At last the tall, gaunt form of the Speaker, in wig and gown, appeared from behind the Chair and there arose from all parts of the Chamber a loud shout of greeting in which deep relief was expressed …

The cheers were prolonged as the Speaker stood on the platform of the Chair facing the House. He did not present the stern and relentless front to which Members were accustomed in times of disorder, and which they expected to see emphasized at this moment of unutterable shame. He had laid aside even that austerity and remoteness which were habitual with him on ordinary occasions. I thought he looked strangely soft and benignant. He was at once dignified and gentle, with a simple and yet noble seriousness. Not a hard word had he to say. His voice, in asking for explanations of what had happened, was quite caressing.

Like a parent, wise as well as fond, dealing with a fractious child in a brainstorm, he laid a calming hand on the troubled brow of the House and gently soothed it. And the House responded to the caress. It became subdued and humbled, and full of the spirit of reconciliation and atonement. Truly, a striking manifestation of the force of personality and tact.

Mr Speaker, I leave that exhortation from Speaker Peel for you to reflect on.

This is a wonderful day for the members who have today taken their place in the House for the first time. I congratulate them all, both on our side of the chamber and on the opposition side of the chamber. We can have no greater honour than to be elected to this place as the people’s representatives. To be here, each person has fought long and hard in the trenches of our democracy. To come here as the people’s representatives is a high honour indeed and I congratulate each one of you.

No matter how many times we have been part of the first day of a new parliament, we should all remember once again what an honour the Australian people have bestowed on each of us. For you, Mr Speaker, the day will be particularly memorable. The honour the House has bestowed on you is so clearly deserved. In your own first speech in the House, in April 1986, you said you were extremely proud to have succeeded your dad as the member for Scullin, and so you should be. Today you have won the right to feel great pride again in joining him in the ranks of the Speakers of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia. On behalf of the government, I congratulate you.

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 am)—Mr Speaker, we join with the Prime Minister in congratulating you on your election to the high office of Speaker of the Parliament of Australia. It is a great credit to you; your wife, Michele; your family; and your colleagues that you have been elected to this position. The respect that we have for you is such that we
unanimously across the parliament endorse your election.

It was 22 years ago that you came here, following in the footsteps of your father, who would be very proud. When you came here your priorities were local government; occupational health and safety; child care—which I am sure will hold you in good stead over the next three years—

Honourable members interjecting—

Dr NELSON—I know not why they laugh!—and a very strong commitment to justice, peace and humanity. In the nominating speeches we were reminded of the very long service you have given to this parliament. In numerous committees you have worked very hard, not only for your constituents in Scullin but right across the parliaments of the world in engaging Australia and our parliamentary processes with those of others.

I came here in 1996 and it has been my observation—and it is certainly that of my colleagues—that you have always treated us with respect, decency and courtesy. You have always been firm but you have always been prepared to give us advice in relation to standing orders and indeed other things. It is said—I think with some justification—that when people eventually do leave the parliament, whatever their political or other skills, they are remembered for who they are, and you are one of those people possessed of those qualities which are so essential in being the Speaker of this parliament.

I welcome also the commitment by the Prime Minister to accountability, notwithstanding the robust nature of the parliament, which is the bulwark of our democracy. We welcome it nonetheless and will be working very hard to see that we conduct ourselves as the alternative government and the opposition in a manner which does honour to the people WHO have elected us all.

In congratulating you and your family—and recognising that it is only those of us who are here, by the way, who have any idea of the sacrifices they have made for you—I would also like to take this opportunity to pay our respects and acknowledge our very high regard for the dignified and very professional manner in which your immediate predecessor, the member for Wannon, conducted himself, with the love and support of his wife, Penny. We look forward to working in the best interests of Australia under your speakership over the next three years and we warmly congratulate you on what you have achieved personally and professionally.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (11.34 am)—Mr Speaker, I join the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the National Party to wholeheartedly extend congratulations to you on your election to this high office. You have classically been the Speaker-in-waiting, serving as Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker over a long period of time, with a family tradition in the sense that you are sitting in the family seat. We know that you bring to the office the best possible practical qualifications, having done so much work as a deputy over a long period of time.

Your practical experience, your warmth of personality, your dignity and your cheery disposition have endeared you to everyone in the House. It is a rarely experienced accolade to be elected unopposed to that position. That demonstrates not just the bipartisan support that you enjoy in this office but the warmth of your colleagues towards you as you assume this office. I read in the papers some months ago that there were others who coveted the position, but I am pleased that you have been selected by your party and the
parliament in this way to take that high office.

You are the custodian of the traditions of the parliament and you are the custodian of the rights of individual members, and those are very important responsibilities. The parliament, as others have said, will sometimes be a place of robust political debate and heated exchange, and you will have an umpiring or refereeing role—depending on which code you happen to come from!—in making sure that that is carried out in an appropriate way without in any way unnecessarily or inappropriately restricting the rights of members to have their say on issues that are of particular importance.

We will certainly seek to cooperate with you in your ambition to have a House that is appropriate to the highest pinnacles of the democratic principles of our country, that gives the opportunity to effectively scrutinise the government and that gives members, particularly private members, an opportunity to raise matters of importance to them and make a meaningful contribution towards political debate in this country. It is, as the Prime Minister said, a great privilege for us all to serve in this place. Your leadership in the chair will help ensure that members will be able to effectively carry out their responsibilities to their electorates and to fearlessly represent their people.

Finally, I join the Leader of the Opposition in thanking the member for Wannon for his role as your predecessor. He also brought great experience to the position, as well as dedication and dignity. He faced the challenges under fire and sometimes he was driven to anger, sometimes justifiably, about the sorts of things that happen in the chamber. But he sought to create order and to ensure that the business of the parliament was able to proceed. We thank him very much for his role as the former Speaker and wish him every success in the future.

Congratulations, Mr Speaker, on your elevation. Let me assure you of our desire and willingness to cooperate with you to ensure that there are high standards in this place and, most particularly, that the business of the government, the business of the parliament, is conducted with the kind of decorum that the people of Australia will always expect. I extend my best wishes.

Mr HAUKER (Wannon) (11.38 am)—Mr Speaker, I too would like to join with the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party in congratulating you wholeheartedly on your elevation to the high office of the Speaker. I add that I was very fortunate to be able to work with you in your previous role as one of my deputy speakers. I appreciated the way you always, in a totally professional and genuine way, worked to cooperate, to make sure that the business of the House was undertaken in an orderly fashion. We made sure that this great chamber continued to work as we would all like it to.

As has been mentioned, you are a very experienced member of parliament and you had nearly 12 years as Deputy Speaker. Justifiably, you have earned the respect of both sides of this chamber, which is I think an essential part of being able to undertake this very important role. I have every confidence that you will uphold the dignity of the House and I think you will continue to maintain the very important part that parliament plays in the democratic processes of this country.

I was reminded to look in the House of Representatives Practice, particularly when I heard the Prime Minister quoting Philip Laundy. The Practice mentions:
The role the Speaker plays by virtue of the office requires the position to be filled by a dedicated, senior and experienced parliamentarian. The qualities required in a Speaker have been described in the following ways:

It is parliamentary rather than legal experience which is the first requirement of a Speaker. He must have an intimate understanding of parliamentary life, of the problems of Members collectively and individually, of the moods and foibles of the House; an experience which can be acquired only through many years spent on the benches of the House itself. He must have a deep-seated reverence for the institution of Parliament, an understanding of what lies behind the outward ceremony and a faith in democratic government.

I think on all counts, Mr Speaker, you qualify. With your 21 years in parliament prior to becoming Speaker—which, coincidentally, is the same time that I spent prior to becoming Speaker—I believe that your knowledge of procedures, your understanding of parliamentary life, and of course your experience all equip you extremely well for this most important role. You are the 26th person to be Speaker of the parliament, and for that I certainly congratulate you. To clarify: there were two Speakers who served on two separate occasions. It is also significant, I must add, that seven of the last 11 Speakers have come from the great state of Victoria.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr HAWKER—We will leave that one! Mr Speaker, I am sure that you also share with me in saying to all the new members of this parliament, on both sides, that we wish them every success. We trust that they will acquire a deep commitment to this House and become true parliamentarians, as I think all of them would aspire to.

It was a great privilege to be the Speaker in the 41st Parliament, to work with so many fine Australians and to have the privilege of being supported by such a professional team in the House, led by the Clerk and his deputy, by the Serjeant-at-Arms and by all the staff who work in the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of Parliamentary Services.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party for their kind remarks. I would also like to thank my staff and my wife and family for the support they have given me, as yours will give you, Mr Speaker. For me, this is also a rather unique occasion because almost 25 years ago, after being sworn in as the new member for Wannon, I was welcomed by the then Speaker, Dr Harry Jenkins, the member for Scullin. And today we congratulate the Hon. Harry Jenkins, the member for Scullin, as the Speaker now. Mr Speaker, your father would be very proud of you. I know your family and your mother, who are here today, are very proud of you. I wish you every success in this very important role.

The SPEAKER (11.43 am)—I thank the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Nationals and the member for Wannon for their kind remarks. I am not sure that I will be able to emulate Speaker Peel’s Zen-like qualities. Quite correctly, mention has been made of the role that the member for Wannon played in the 41st Parliament as our Speaker. It was a privilege to serve him as a Deputy Speaker. Over the last couple of months, he has exemplified the way in which he conducts himself by being of great assistance in making me feel that I was part of a smooth transition so that the workings of this parliament could continue. I thank David and Penny for their great kindness to me, Michele and my family.

I thank the mover and seconder of my nomination. They join a long list of colleagues that have moved and seconded my
nomination for both Speaker and Deputy Speaker. They are amongst the more successful, having engineered an election without opponent—I do not know whether they had anything to do with that. I say to them that, despite their efforts as nominee and second, they get no special privileges. Along with the rest of the urgers that are to my right, they are on notice.

I hope that those on my left will allow me a slight indulgence as I indicate my great pride that former Prime Minister Whitlam is in the gallery at the time of my election. For me and for my development in my political career, Gough has been a very important part of my life.

To my family who are in the gallery—my mother, wife, two sons, daughter, daughter-in-law, granddaughter, who has nearly had to absent herself because she is demanding equal time, parents-in-law, brother, sister and niece—I say that I have been very lucky to have the stable support of family. I reflect that I am a product of the northern suburbs of Melbourne and I have the opportunity to represent an electorate that is the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Perhaps I come from a slightly more privileged background than the people I represent, but this is a great honour—and I hope that the people of Scullin see that this is a great honour that is bestowed upon them to have their representative elevated to this high office.

The member for Wannon mentioned the staff of the House of Representatives—the clerks. I should admit that I have been a very difficult occupant of this chair from time to time for the Clerk and the deputy clerks. I hope that they will continue to excuse my stubbornness and understand that I do listen to them. I look forward to a cooperative relationship with them.

Today before the formal proceedings of the parliament, a welcome to country was conducted in the Members Hall. Matilda House talked about proper respect. I think, from all of the comments made today, that members of this House understand that, by the way in which we are able to respect each other, we in turn show that we respect those people that we represent and the nation of Australia.

Mention was made that I follow on from Speaker Dr Jenkins. From the outset it was never my intention that that would necessarily occur, but I acknowledge that it is a footnote in history that is important. Some 25 years ago, I was in the front row of the gallery in the provisional Parliament House. When I looked down on the chamber, there was a much different atmosphere. Three members of this place were there on that day: the father of the House, the member for Berowra, who has had a very distinguished career in this place; the member for O'Connor—I say that his is a much larger footnote in the history of parliamentary procedure; and the third was—and it is impossible to believe with such a youthful looking character as the member for Gippsland—an even younger member for Gippsland, who had arrived in this place for his first day.

As the Prime Minister mentioned, proceedings were much different in the old chamber. They were only broadcast on radio. We now, as the Prime Minister mentioned, have televising and webcast. We are a much more modern parliament than 25 years ago, and that of course is one of the great challenges that we confront.

To all of you, I wish you all the best in your endeavours. I hope that through my actions I am able to assist you in achieving those things that you wish to achieve. I once
again thank the House for the great honour that they have bestowed upon me.

PRESENTATION TO GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Mr Rudd (Griffith—Prime Minister) (11.50 am)—Mr Speaker, I have ascertained that it will be His Excellency the Governor-General’s pleasure to receive you in the Members Hall immediately after the resumption of the sitting at 2.30 pm.

The Speaker—Prior to my presentation to His Excellency this afternoon, the bells will be rung for five minutes so that honourable members may attend in the chamber and accompany me to the Members Hall where they may, if they so wish, be introduced to His Excellency.

Sitting suspended from 11.51 am to 2.30 pm

The Speaker and honourable members proceeded to the Members Hall, and having returned—

The Speaker—I have to report that, accompanied by honourable members, I proceeded to the Members Hall and presented myself to His Excellency the Governor-General as the choice of the House as its Speaker, and that His Excellency was kind enough to congratulate me.

AUTHORITY TO ADMINISTER OATH OR AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE

The Speaker—His Excellency also presented to me an authority to administer to members the oath or affirmation of allegiance. I now lay the authority on the table.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

The Usher of the Black Rod, having been announced, was admitted, and delivered a message that His Excellency the Governor-General desired the attendance of honourable members in the Senate chamber immediately.

The Speaker and honourable members attended accordingly, and having returned—

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr Rudd (Griffith—Prime Minister) (3.51 pm)—Mr Speaker, I have the honour to inform the House that, following the election held on 24 November 2007, the Governor-General commissioned me to form a government. Ministers and parliamentary secretaries were appointed on 3 December 2007. For the information of honourable members, I present a list of the full ministry. The document lists all ministers and parliamentary secretaries and the offices they hold. It shows those ministers who comprise the cabinet and provides details of representation arrangements in each chamber. I understand the document will be included in the Votes and Proceedings and Hansard.

The document read as follows—
### Rudd Ministry

**12 February 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Other Chamber</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Kevin Rudd MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Chris Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon John Faulkner</td>
<td>The Hon Lindsay Tanner MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Climate Change and Water</td>
<td>The Hon Penny Wong</td>
<td>The Hon Wayne Swan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Childcare</td>
<td>The Hon Maxine McKew MP</td>
<td>The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP (Water)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary</td>
<td>The Hon Anthony Byrne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon Julia Gillard MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon Julia Gillard MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Social Inclusion</td>
<td>The Hon Julia Gillard MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of Parliament)</td>
<td>The Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Youth</td>
<td>The Hon Brendan O' Connor MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector</td>
<td>The Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services</td>
<td>The Hon Laurie Ferguson MP</td>
<td>The Hon Robert McClelland MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Wayne Swan MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nick Sherry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nick Sherry</td>
<td>The Hon Lindsay Tanner MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Chris Evans</td>
<td>The Hon Robert McClelland MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance</td>
<td>The Hon Bob McMullan MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nick Sherry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon John Faulkner</td>
<td>The Hon Lindsay Tanner MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>The Hon Lindsay Tanner MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nick Sherry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance and Deregulation</td>
<td>The Hon Simon Crean MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon John Faulkner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary</td>
<td>The Hon John Murphy MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Stephen Smith MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon John Faulkner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Duncan Kerr MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance</td>
<td>The Hon Bob McMullan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Wayne Swan MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Science and Personnel</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon John Faulkner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Procurement</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Combet AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support</td>
<td>The Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon Nicola Roxon MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Joe Ludwik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Joe Ludwik</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sport</td>
<td>The Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Chris Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Chris Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Housing</td>
<td>The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Status of Women</td>
<td>The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children’s Services</td>
<td>The Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
<td>The Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Each box represents a portfolio. Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type. As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Climate Change in the Prime Minister’s portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. Except for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Finance and Deregulation, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the Department of Climate Change and the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism the title of each department reflects that of the portfolio minister.

Mr RUDD—Mr Speaker, I would also like to inform the House that the honourable member for Chifley, Mr Price, has been appointed Chief Government Whip and the honourable members for Shortland, Ms Hall, and Werriwa, Mr Hayes, have been appointed as government whips.

SHADOW MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (3.52 pm)—I inform the House that I have had the honour of being elected as Leader of the Opposition and also that the honourable member for Curtin, Julie Bishop, has been elected as Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I also inform the House that the honourable member for Fairfax, Alex Somlyay, has been elected to the position of Chief Opposition Whip; the honourable member for Ryan, Mr Michael Johnson, has been elected as Opposition Whip; and the new member for Forrest, Ms Nola Marino, has been appointed as Deputy Opposition Whip. For the information of the House, I table the full list of the shadow ministry, and I congratulate all of them on their appointment.

The document read as follows—
## Portfolio Shadow Minister Other Chamber

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
<th>Other Chamber</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and Ageing</td>
<td>Joe Hockey, MP</td>
<td>Senator Richard Colbeck</td>
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<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Andrew Robb, MP</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne</td>
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<td>Trade</td>
<td>Ian MacFarlane, MP</td>
<td>Senator Chris Ellison</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs and</td>
<td>Tony Abbott, MP</td>
<td>Senator Cory Bernardi</td>
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<tr>
<td>the Voluntary Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>Senator Nigel Scullion</td>
<td>Warren Truss</td>
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<td>Human Services</td>
<td>Senator Helen Coonan</td>
<td>Joe Hockey</td>
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<td>Education, Apprenticeships and Training</td>
<td>Tony Smith, MP</td>
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<td>Climate Change, Environment and Urban Water</td>
<td>Greg Hunt, MP</td>
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<td>Finance, Competition Policy and Deregulation</td>
<td>Peter Dutton, MP</td>
<td>Senator George Brandis</td>
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<td>Immigration and Citizenship</td>
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<td>Christopher Pyne</td>
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<td>Bruce Billson, MP</td>
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<td>Christopher Pyne</td>
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<td>Ian Macfarlane</td>
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<td>Senator Ian Macdonald</td>
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<td>Shadow Outer Ministry</td>
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<td>Justice, Border Protection and Assisting Shadow</td>
<td>Chris Pyne, MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator Michael</td>
<td>Peter Dutton</td>
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<td>Ronaldson</td>
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<td>Environment, Heritage, the Arts and Indigenous</td>
<td>Steven Ciobo, MP</td>
<td>Senator David Johnston</td>
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<td>Affairs</td>
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<td>Sharnie Stone, MP</td>
<td>Senator Ian Macdonald</td>
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<td>Corporate Governance</td>
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<td>Michael Keenan, MP</td>
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<td>Margaret May, MP</td>
<td>Senator Richard Colbeck</td>
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<td>Bob Baldwin, MP</td>
<td>Senator Nick Minchin</td>
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<td>Consumer Affairs and Deputy Leader of Opposition</td>
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<td>Business in the House</td>
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<td>Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Bronwyn Bishop, MP</td>
<td>Senator Nick Minchin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment Participation and Apprenticeships and</td>
<td>Andrew Southcott, MP</td>
<td>Senator Brett Mason</td>
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<td>Training</td>
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### Chief Opposition Whip
- **Alex Somlyay**

### Deputy Opposition Whip
- **Michael Johnson**

### Nationals Whip
- **Kay Hull**

### Opposition Whip in the Senate
- **Senator Stephen Parry**

### Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate
- **Senator Judith Adams**

### Nationals Whip in the Senate
- **Senator Fiona Nash**
THE NATIONALS: LEADERSHIP

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (3.53 pm)—I have the honour to inform the House that the Nationals have elected me as their leader and Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion as deputy leader. The honourable member for Riverina has been reappointed as the Nationals Chief Whip, and the member for Hinkler is the Nationals Whip.

I just take a moment to acknowledge at this time the retirement of the National Party whips’ clerk, Gerrie Van Dam, who has held the position for more than 30 years. Her position has not been included in the new list. I have written to the Prime Minister, asking that we be able to appoint somebody else as a whip’s clerk. We all know that our whips play an important role in managing the business of the parliament. Gerrie has been a friendly smile around this place for over 30 years and has, I think, been known to most people. Her term of service to the parliament concluded at the election.

AMENDMENTS INCORPORATION
AMENDMENT BILL 2008

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Rudd.

Bill read a first time.

Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH

The SPEAKER—I have to report that the House this day attended His Excellency the Governor-General in the Senate chamber, when His Excellency was pleased to make a speech to both houses of the parliament. I have received a copy of the speech, which will be incorporated in Hansard for record purposes.

The speech read as follows—

Honourable Senators and Members of the Parliament of Australia:

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today. I also acknowledge their traditional wisdom and enduring history and culture.

Introduction

On the 24th of November 2007, Australians voted to elect a new government.

As one of the world’s oldest democracies, it is easy for us to take elections for granted and to fail to appreciate how fortunate we are, to live in a nation where governments change hands peacefully, as a result of the free expression of the will of the people.

We have just witnessed a change of government, an event that has happened on just six occasions in the past sixty years.

Regardless of any partisan affiliation, all Australians can celebrate the success of our democracy when such changes can occur so seamlessly and with such goodwill.

The new Australian Government that was sworn into office on the 3rd of December 2007 is committed to a plan to build a modern Australia equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century.

This plan includes the following priorities:

• strengthening the nation’s long-term economic prospects by prosecuting a new productivity agenda, together with a comprehensive strategy to combat inflation, built on a strong budget surplus and a plan of action on skills and infrastructure; a plan for a ranging program of reform to build over time a world class education system through early childhood education, computers in schools for all Year 9 to 12 students, investing in trades training centres in schools and rebuilding our universities;

• national leadership in infrastructure development coordinated through Infrastructure Australia;

• a comprehensive plan to respond to the threat of dangerous climate change that includes
ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, establishing for the first time a national emissions trading scheme and an ambitious national renewable energy target; long term measures to begin dealing with urban and rural and regional water supply;
• reforming our national industrial relations laws to reflect an appropriate balance between fairness and flexibility;
• a plan to reform the health and hospitals system;
• increasing the availability of childcare as well as increasing the childcare tax rebate;
• a plan of reforming the Federation by forming partnerships with the States and Territories to tackle the legitimate demands of working families for the delivery of better services from all levels of government;
• strengthening Australia’s national and international efforts to act on emerging and continuing threats to our security as well as articulating an independent voice in the councils of the world;
• tackling the growing problem of housing affordability and homelessness; and
• acting on reconciliation with our Indigenous peoples through an apology to the Stolen Generations and developing a plan of action to help close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

Economic management

In recent months the world economy has entered a period of greater uncertainty.

Although Australia has in recent years benefited from favourable global economic conditions, in particular the rise of China and the global resources boom, the future is uncertain with downward revisions in global economic growth arising in part from recent developments in the US financial market.

At the same time on the home front inflationary pressures have been building over the past several years, creating a further threat to our long term economic growth.

The Government has been mindful of these conflicting economic currents in developing its five-point plan on inflation.

The plan is focused first on fiscal restraint, with the Government aiming to deliver a budget surplus of 1.5 per cent of GDP in 2008-09.

Second, the Government is examining options to improve private savings.

Third, it will tackle the chronic skills shortages that have been driving inflationary pressure in many areas of the economy for some years.

Fourth, a plan of action on infrastructure bottlenecks.

And fifth, the Government aims to act on the workforce participation rate by providing practical ways of helping people re-enter the workforce.

The Government is committed to maintaining a strong budgetary position by adhering to a medium term fiscal strategy that keeps the budget in surplus, on average, over the economic cycle; by reprioritising existing expenditure; and by maximising public sector efficiency.

Economic reform

The Government is also committed to improving the quality of government by focussing on outlays that boost the long-term productive capacity of the economy – rather than consumption.

Building long term productivity growth following many years of declining productivity growth is a core priority of the nation if we are to have improved living standards for working families into the future.

The Government’s productivity agenda includes reforms to education, infrastructure, innovation, workplace relations and reforming the Federation.

Central to the Government’s productivity agenda is its commitment to building a world class education system. The Government’s long-term ambition is to produce the best educated workforce in the world. The rest of the world is not standing still as they invest billions into human capital.
The Government is committed to a plan of action to prevent Australia falling further behind against critical global benchmarks. That is why the Government is committed to an education revolution.

Advanced infrastructure is critically important to raising Australia’s productivity in the long term.

The Government, in cooperation with the States and Territories, will focus on better coordination of infrastructure planning and investment – both public and private.

Nationally consistent public private partnerships will be critical in this regard.

Infrastructure Australia will be established to improve planning and coordination of Australia’s transport, water and energy infrastructure.

The Government will also work with the private sector to build a high speed national broadband network – the critical infrastructure platform of the 21st century with the capacity to fundamentally transform business, to overcome much of the tyranny of distance and to boost productivity growth.

Innovation is another key driver of productivity and economic growth. The Government aims to foster a culture of innovation by strengthening investment in creativity and knowledge generation.

It will establish the Enterprise Connect Network to link business with new ideas and technology. Incentives for business research and development will be focused on lifting investment and competitiveness.

The office of the Chief Scientist will once again become a full-time position.

The Commonwealth is establishing a new framework for cooperative Commonwealth-State relations in order to take practical steps to rationalise intergovernmental responsibilities and achieve better outcomes in areas of national priority.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) recognised at its meeting in December 2007 that there is a need for greater cooperation between Commonwealth and State governments and this should be an immediate priority.

Commonwealth-State funding arrangements will focus more on outputs and outcomes, underpinned by a commitment from the Commonwealth Government to provide incentive payments to drive reforms.

At the December COAG meeting, Australian heads of government identified the regulatory burden on business as an impediment to efficiency that needs to be lifted.

Priority areas for action that have been identified include occupational health and safety regulation, payroll tax administration, building codes, trade and professional recognition, simplified accounting methods for the hospitality sector and simplification of the Business Activity Statement.

The Government is therefore committed to a significant agenda of economic reform across the spectrum of human capital, physical capital and regulatory reform – with the overriding agenda of building long-term productivity growth.

Work and family

Workplace arrangements should deliver flexibility for employers and employees, fair wages and conditions, productive work practices and a balance between work and family responsibilities.

To meet these objectives, the Government will be introducing a new workplace relations system. In its first legislative act, the Government will abolish the capacity to make Australian Workplace Agreements.

The new workplace relations system will provide a strong safety net of minimum conditions, the right to bargain collectively for wages and conditions and fairness for both employers and employees if an employee is dismissed.

These elements will ensure that employees can fully participate in the benefits of a growing economy, while fostering productivity growth and low inflation.

The Government is committed to further measures that will relieve the pressures on working parents and help them to get the balance right.
as they juggle their work and family responsibilities.

The Government’s initiatives in this area include:

• more flexible parental leave;
• an increased focus on high quality early childhood education and child care, and
• assistance to small businesses wanting to develop family friendly practices.

Ensuring that parents have access to affordable, high quality child care that helps them to balance their work and family responsibilities is a high priority for the Government.

To further assist parents with the cost of child care, the Government will increase the Child Care Tax Rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent of out of pocket child care costs.

The Government will also improve access to quality child care through the establishment of up to 260 new child care centres on school, TAFE, university and community sites, and through the introduction of a five-star quality rating system.

Families will also benefit from the introduction of universal access to early childhood education for all four year olds for 15 hours per week and 40 weeks per year, and the national rollout of the Australian Early Development Index, which will help communities throughout Australia understand how children are developing by the time they reach school age.

**Education**

The Government was elected on a platform of implementing major changes to Australia’s education system, with the aim of achieving higher standards and better results at every level of education from early childhood to mature age.

The Government believes that lifting the quantity of investment in education and the quality of educational outcomes is highly important to Australia’s long term productivity growth and economic prosperity.

The Government will provide universal access to high-quality early childhood education for Australian children so they can build foundations for lifelong learning.

In schools, there will be a major focus on reforms to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and lift Year 12 retention rates.

The development of a national curriculum in the key areas of mathematics, science, English, history and Asian languages aims to ensure high, nationally-consistent standards for all students across Australia.

In partnership with the States and Territories, the Government will work to enhance schools’ educational infrastructure.

Funding of $2.5 billion will be provided for secondary schools to build or upgrade trade training facilities over the next ten years.

The Government will invest $1 billion in the provision of computers for Year 9 to 12 students and faster broadband connections to schools.

The Government will also create an additional 450,000 training places over four years, including 65,000 extra apprenticeships, with the first 20,000 places to be available from April 2008.

These initiatives will enhance employment prospects for young Australians and address critical skills shortages.

In higher education, the demand for graduates in maths, science and early childhood education will be addressed through incentives for graduates in relevant occupations, including the teaching profession.

To help attract and retain the best talent, the Government will improve and expand the Commonwealth Scholarship program for both undergraduates and postgraduates and offer new four-year fellowships valued at $140,000 a year to 1,000 leading researchers.

Domestic undergraduate full-fee paying places at public universities will be phased out.

**Health**

The Government is committed to ending the blame game between Canberra and the States and Territories on health and hospitals.

The Government believes the Australian people deserve better than a culture of buck-passing between levels of government.
That is why health and hospitals form such a vital part of the COAG reform agenda for 2008.

The Government understands that this reform task will not be easy and success is far from guaranteed.

Working closely with the States and Territories, reform will focus on funding for improving performance and health outcomes in key areas across the health system including:

- pressures on emergency departments;
- elective surgery waiting lists beyond clinically acceptable timeframes;
- the intersection between aged care and the hospital system; and
- better integration of preventative health care to tackle challenges such as obesity and chronic disease.

This includes funding to the States and Territories to act on elective surgery waiting lists, funding for GP super clinics, increasing the number of operational aged care places and providing additional nurses for our health care system.

Importantly, more support will be provided to health services in rural communities.

Beyond these programs the Government will re-establish the Commonwealth Dental Care Program.

Hundreds of thousands of Australians have been waiting years to have the most basic dental work done.

That is why the Government will commit $290 million to fund up to one million extra dental consultations over three years.

Failure to act on dental health is bad for general health, bad for self-esteem and bad for those seeking to break the unemployment cycle.

**Climate change and water**

The Government considers that climate change represents one of Australia’s greatest long term economic and environmental challenges.

Scientific evidence continues to underscore the seriousness of the threat of climate change and the urgency of action that is needed at a global, national and local level.

In one of its first actions, the Australian Government ratified the Kyoto Protocol and so joined the community of nations in the truly global challenge facing our common humanity.

The Government intends to play an active and significant role in the post-Bali negotiations to develop a comprehensive new agreement on climate change.

The Government has committed to reducing Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent on 2000 levels by 2050.

A major study to help Australia set robust shorter term emission reduction targets will report in mid 2008.

To help Australia meet its emissions reductions goals, a national emissions trading scheme will be established by the end of 2010.

The Government will also set a 20 per cent target for renewable energy by 2020 to expand the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

The Commonwealth will work cooperatively with the States and Territories to tackle the water crisis and respond to the impacts of climate change, including in the Murray Darling Basin that supports over 40 per cent of Australia’s food production.

The Government will invest in modernising irrigation infrastructure and purchasing water entitlements from willing sellers to put our river systems on a sustainable footing.

A $1 billion fund will be established to invest in new and reliable water supplies for urban Australia – including desalination and recycling – and rebates will be available for families to invest in water conservation at home.

The prolonged and severe dry conditions in parts of Australia have had a serious impact on the livelihood of rural Australia.

While recent weeks have seen rains in many parts of Australia, long term water shortages remain an acute concern.

The Government will implement climate change adaptation programs to help support farm-
ers in adapting farming practices as they face the changing climate.

The Government’s drought policy will ensure that farmers receiving government assistance are better prepared to deal with the increasing frequency of dry conditions predicted for the future.

**Housing**

The Government plans several measures to address challenges relating to housing affordability and homelessness.

Home ownership is out of reach for many Australian families, and many Australian cities are experiencing large increases in rental costs and a shortage of rental stock.

This is of particular concern because the current shortage of housing supply affects the most disadvantaged people in the Australian community.

The Government will establish First Home Saver Accounts—accounts that reward disciplined savings with government contributions.

These will help people save a larger home deposit and will improve affordability.

The Government will also increase housing supply and make houses less expensive—by releasing Commonwealth land for housing, by investing $500 million in housing-linked infrastructure, and by providing financial incentives to encourage private sector investment in affordable rental properties.

The Government understands there is no single solution to the crisis in housing affordability.

Any attempt at improving affordability needs to involve the three levels of government working together with the community and private sectors.

A National Housing Strategy will be implemented. Working with the States, Territories and local government, a National Housing Affordability Agreement will be developed which incorporates measures to improve housing affordability for home buyers, renters and public housing tenants.

**Social inclusion**

The Government will implement a new policy agenda focused on social inclusion. The focus on social inclusion aims to improve the opportunities for all Australians to participate fully in Australian economic and social life.

In working to advance social inclusion, the Government will work in close partnership with State, Territory and local governments, business and the not-for-profit sector.

Policies that aim to improve social inclusion and address disadvantage include the Government’s commitment to halve the number of homeless people turned away from homeless services each year for the next five years; universal access to pre-school for four year old children; a national action plan on literacy and numeracy; establishing a dental health program; halving the gap in mortality rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children under the age of five within a decade; achieving a 90 per cent year 12 retention rate by 2020 and developing a national employment strategy for those with a disability or mental illness.

**Indigenous policy**

The Government is committed to advancing reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia, beginning with a formal apology to the Stolen Generations and extending to a range of initiatives aimed at closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in health outcomes and educational achievement.

Across the Australian community, there is a strong sense that we have more work to do to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

One of the great privileges of serving in the office of General-General is the opportunity to see and experience so much of our nation’s rich Indigenous cultures.

Serving in this role also makes one more acutely aware that while we have made progress, we still have a distance to travel.

The richness of Indigenous culture is often under-recognised and, as a nation, we have much to
learn about the history of Indigenous Australians – a history that stretches over 60,000 years.

The Government’s intention to develop a national curriculum in history offers the prospect that more of this history could be incorporated into our education programs.

The apology to the Stolen Generations that will go before the Parliament tomorrow represents an important further step towards reconciliation and I commend the intention to you, honourable Members and Senators, and indeed all Australians, as worthy of your support.

The Government acknowledges Indigenous Affairs as a key priority.

The Government will seek to rebuild the relationship with Indigenous people and communities based on respect and involve Indigenous leaders and communities in important decisions.

Working with COAG partners, the Government intends to focus on closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, focusing on three specific areas:

- closing the 17-year life expectancy gap within a generation;
- halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade, and
- halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements within a decade.

National security and international relations

The Government intends to strengthen Australia’s relationship with both traditional allies and regional partners, while also re-engaging with Australia’s tradition of active middle power diplomacy to address the range of transnational challenges that will define our future including the threat of terrorism, nuclear proliferation, new threats to border security, human security as well as the impact of climate change.

Australia’s alliance with the United States will remain central to Australia’s strategic interests.

A stronger working relationship between Australia and the United Nations is also a priority.

The Government’s support for the United Nations and multilateral approaches recognises that cooperative engagement is a core means of securing long-term peace and development.

The Government will also work to strengthen relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region in light of its importance to Australia’s economic prosperity and regional stability.

The Government recognises that there are both immediate and potential longer term threats to Australia’s national security.

The Government will develop a National Security Strategy Statement to guide our military, police, diplomatic and international assistance efforts as we face the security challenges of the 21st century.

The Government will commission a Defence White Paper to guide defence capability and ensure that defence expenditure provides the defence force that Australia needs.

In consultation with the United States, the United Kingdom and Iraq, the Government will withdraw Australian combat troops from Iraq at the end of the next rotation, due for completion in mid-2008.

To contribute to a secure and stable Iraq, Australia will enhance its humanitarian and development assistance to Iraq.

Australian troops will continue to be deployed in Afghanistan as part of the international force in that region.

The Government is also committed to stability and security in our immediate region, where the Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police perform crucial stabilisation and support roles in East Timor and the Solomon Islands.

The Government is committed to strengthening Australia’s export performance.

The multilateral trading system and the World Trade Organisation Doha Round negotiations will be placed at the centre of Australia’s trade policy. Australia will continue to support regional and bilateral free trade agreements which are compatible with, and enhance multilateral outcomes.

Measures will also be taken to lift Australia’s export competitiveness.
During recent years there has been a growing recognition that with coordinated international efforts, major progress can be made on reducing global poverty.

The Government will lift Australia’s contribution to these efforts in support of the internationally-agreed Millennium Development Goals.

The Government will increase the level of Australia’s overseas development assistance to 0.5 per cent of gross national income by 2015-16.

Australia’s aid program will play a critical role in promoting economic development, reducing instability and improving governance in the South Pacific.

Governance and transparency

The Government will implement new measures to help make government more accessible to the community and more transparent in its decision making.

The Government will hold regular Community Cabinet meetings in capital cities, regional towns and remote communities across Australia.

The Government began this in Perth in January.

These meetings will give Australians from all walks of life the opportunity to talk to government ministers on a broad range of national and local issues.

The Government is seeking to prepare Australia for the challenges of the future.

To do so, it has stated its preparedness to listen to the ideas that Australians have for the future of our country.

On the 19th and 20th of April, the Government will convene an Australia 2020 Summit.

This Summit will bring together 1000 of Australia’s best and brightest minds to discuss and debate Australia’s long-term future.

The Government is committed to then examining the policy ideas that arise from the Summit and reporting back on them later in the year.

The Government wants to leave no stone unturned to ensure Australia is on the right track for the future – and that means listening to Australians to hear their ideas for our country’s future.

It is important for the nation to lift its planning horizon beyond the three year electoral cycle, and to begin serious planning for the decade ahead and beyond.

Laws relating to government information will be enhanced by promoting a culture of disclosure and transparency.

This includes enhanced Budget transparency by providing greater disclosure of accessible and useful government financial information.

A Freedom of Information Commissioner will be appointed to take overall responsibility for access to government information and improve review processes.

Conclusion

The Australian Government is committed to building a modern Australia capable of meeting the challenges of the future.

It is committed to bringing a fresh approach to governing.

It is committed to being a government that listens to the Australian people, that consults with the Australian people and that is upfront with the Australian people on the problems it can solve — and the problems that lie beyond the powers of any government to solve.

The Australian Government has a vision for Australia’s long-term future.

The Government wants to seize the great opportunities that lie before us and make Australia competitive on every level with the rest of the world with the aim of making this great country of ours an even greater place in which to live.

Address-in-Reply

Mr Rudd (Griffith—Prime Minister) (3.55 pm)—I move:

That a committee, consisting of Mr Hale, Mrs D’Ath and the mover, be appointed to prepare an Address in Reply to the speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor-General to both Houses of the Parliament and that the committee report at the next sitting.

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

EAST TIMOR

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (3.56 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence: I would like to make some remarks about recent developments in East Timor. I think the parliament and the nation of Australia were shocked to hear of the developments in Dili yesterday morning. All in this chamber—government and opposition members—have been long committed to the success of the East Timorese democracy. It was therefore with great and profound shock that we received the news that an assassination attempt had been made on both the President and the Prime Minister of that newly democratised country. The facts have yet to be fully determined but, as honourable members know, the President of East Timor, Jose Ramos-Horta, once injured, was immediately transferred to Australian controlled medical facilities in Dili and then, by medical evacuation, to Darwin. My most recent advice is that his condition remains very serious.

Furthermore, on the question of the present and future of the government, we the Australian government have been in close contact with our counterparts in Dili in the last 24 hours. Yesterday I spoke on two occasions with the Prime Minister of East Timor, Xanana Gusmao, to satisfy in our minds that he and his family were safe and also to confirm with him the request which was made for further and additional military and police assistance from Australia. Having received that request, a decision was yesterday taken by the National Security Committee of the government to provide additional military assistance in the form of a company-level deployment out of the Lavarack Barracks in Townsville and a further supplementation of the AFP complement in East Timor, with a further 50 to 70 to be deployed there.

The Prime Minister of East Timor further requested that I make an early visit to Dili, and I propose to do that later this week. We are advised that the present situation is that the streets of Dili remain calm. This, however, is a very fluid environment, and all of us in this parliament who have observed the throes of the emergence of this new democracy since the independence ballot some years ago know how volatile things can become. It will therefore require our continued efforts and attention to respond to security developments as they unfold. Therefore, we took a further decision late last night and this morning, in response again to a legitimate request from our friends in the government of East Timor, to supplement the military and police assistance I referred to earlier with the dispatch of HMAS Perth, which was in the region, to anchor offshore from Dili to provide further logistical support to our deployment there. I am sure I speak for all honourable members when, on behalf of this parliament and this country, I pass our sense of shock and solidarity to our friends in Dili at this appalling attack on their democracy and affirm our resolve to stand by the democratically elected government of East Timor at this time of great duress and challenge.

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (4.00 pm)—Mr Speaker, I also seek your indulgence to speak on the same matter. On behalf of the alternative government, I commend the response of the Australian government, which has been both swift and appropriate, to the crisis that appears to have evolved in East Timor over the last 24 hours. The attempted assassination of the President, Jose Ramos-Horta, a great leader and friend of Australia, and also Xanana Gusmao, the Prime Minister, represents an attack on democracy.
attack of this nature, albeit in East Timor, is an attack on us and the values that are important to our country. Governance, economic reform, security and the many things that Australia, along with other nations, including New Zealand and the United Nations, have been involved in in East Timor are essential not only to the security of East Timor itself but indeed for our region and our own country.

I publicly thank the Prime Minister for the assistance that he has given in briefing us on the situation in East Timor. I also say on behalf of the opposition that there is clearly very strong bipartisan support for seeing that this fledgling democracy succeeds and that those East Timorese enjoy the same peace, security, freedoms and rights that we do in our own country, which we too often take for granted. I would also ask the Prime Minister to assist in seeing that either I or my foreign affairs spokesman are also able to travel to East Timor as soon as practicable to discuss the situation there with the leadership in East Timor, the United Nations security forces and our own military commanders on the ground. In the meantime, the government will receive all the support that it needs from the opposition. If there is any further assistance that we can provide, in any way, shape or form, to the East Timorese people, I can assure you it will be given by this side.

Sitting suspended from 4.02 pm to 5.00 pm

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Election

Ms KING (Ballarat) (5.00 pm)—Mr Speaker, I add my congratulations to you on your elevation to the chair. I move:

That the honourable member for Chisholm, Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke, be elected Deputy Speaker.

I am delighted to nominate Anna as Deputy Speaker of this House. Anna has served as the member for Chisholm since 1998. She is a south-eastern suburbs girl through and through, having been born in Ashwood, having studied at Monash and living in Box Hill. She even at one point in her life worked in Chadstone shopping centre or, as we Victorians know it, Chaddy. Anna is incredibly hardworking, and I know that her constituents, including my parents, will be absolutely delighted if she becomes Deputy Speaker. It is an enormous privilege and one of which I know the constituents of the electorate of Chisholm will be very proud.

Anna holds a Bachelor of Arts and a master’s in commerce and has brought to this place her breadth of experience in representing workers in the banking and insurance industries. Anna in her time in this place has taken on many challenges—and I want to acknowledge just a few—through the committees she has served on, including the Standing Committee of Privileges and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services. In particular, I want to acknowledge that in her prior role as Deputy Chair of the House Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration she demonstrated her capacity for work. In particular, her work on the local government report on cost shifting led to a much stronger recognition in this place of the role of deputy chairs.

Anna has pursued many issues during her time in this place that have had a significant impact not only on her constituents but also on all of our constituents. She pursued the issue of telemarketing calls and eventually saw the introduction of the Do Not Call Register. She has been a champion for more funding and rights for people with eating
disorders and she has brought the issue of anaphylaxis much broader attention.

It is a great privilege to work with Anna, and she is widely respected for her passion, dedication and hard work—all skills I know she will bring to bear in her role as Deputy Speaker. I know that John and Madeleine, her two children, are both in the gallery and they, alongside Steve and her mother, Joan, will be very proud of Anna today. I am again delighted to nominate Anna Burke, the member for Chisholm, as Deputy Speaker and I wish her every success in this position.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (5.02 pm)—Mr Speaker, I also congratulate you on your deserved election as Speaker of this House, and I second the motion moved by the member for Ballarat. I was elected at the same time as Anna Burke in 1998, so one can see that, with the elevation of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and the fine speeches of the returned brother from Braddon and the member for Capricornia, it is a vintage that is reaching maturity. Anna’s honour in this particular role as Deputy Speaker is deserved as she is one of the great characters of this federal parliament. Not surprisingly, her honours thesis at university was on Trollope’s great works, the Barchester Chronicles, which are about the characters and intrigues of the Victorian era and the Victorian church. The member for Chisholm is one of the people around this place that make a difference, as the member for Ballarat recounted, not just in the areas of anaphylaxis and children and eating disorders of young models; the Do Not Call Register is something that I think impressed this whole parliament. In fact, she is a paradigm of a parliamentarian who is able to use her parliamentary skills as an opposition backbencher to convince a government to take up an issue. So she is a person who has made a great deal of difference in this place.

In another context, the Prime Minister used the word ‘schadenfreude’, which is an unfortunate expression that means taking pleasure in the misfortune of others. I would like to introduce another word to this parliament, ‘nachas’, which means the derived pleasure one gets in seeing one’s friends and people who deserve to do well.

If Anna becomes Deputy Speaker, I know her husband, Steve, who has done such a great job in helping her with the two kids that she has borne while she has been a member of this parliament, John and Madie, will get nachas from her activities, as will her mum, Joan. All of her friends in Melbourne and her wider political circle will get great pleasure from her new role, but I think all members of this House who appreciate what individual members of parliament can do will derive great pleasure from the success of the Deputy Speaker.

Mrs HULL (Riverina) (5.05 pm)—I move:

That the honourable member for Maranoa, Mr Scott, be elected as Deputy Speaker.

The member for Maranoa has a vast range of experience in this House. He was first elected in 1990 and he has represented for a long period of time the people who reside within that 600,000 square kilometres of land. He is an avid supporter of rural and regional interests and a great champion of those interests in this House. In his past life, he was an Australian Nuffield Farming Scholar and in 1993 he studied the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Commission and the processing, marketing and promotion of Australian wool in the UK and Europe.
Mr Scott undertook a variety of shadow ministries in opposition and then he rose to be Minister for Veterans’ Affairs from 1996 to 2001. His achievements were great in that area. He created an enormous number of programs that assisted the health of our service veterans and their families. He established one of the most highly successful programs; that is, Their Service—Our Heritage commemorative program, incorporating the Regional War Memorials program. He was also a Deputy Speaker for the House of Representatives between 2002 and 2007.

The member for Maranoa is a passionate, dedicated and committed member of the Nationals. He has certainly served this House in a magnificent capacity since his election in 1990, having experienced, as I said, the benches of opposition, the benches of government, the benches of government ministry, the back benches again and then the Speaker’s panel, where he has served with distinction. The member for Maranoa has always maintained his absolute, ardent support and representation for his region. In his maiden speech he said: Let us not be fooled into thinking that the heart of Australia can be ignored. Our future—this country’s future—will depend on the development and utilisation of all our land—

and, of course, all our people. I commend to you, Mr Speaker, the nomination of the member for Maranoa, Mr Scott.

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler) (5.08 pm)—I rise to second the nomination of Bruce Scott for the role of Deputy Speaker. In nominating Mr Bruce Scott, my colleague has explained to the parliament that he is vastly experienced in the field of primary industry. He is a former Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, he has served on the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and been a chair of one of its subcommittees, and he has spent six years on the Speaker’s panel, so he does not come to the job in any way inexperienced.

Coming from as big an electorate as he does, he has insights into what drives the robustness of this place and its passions when it comes to talking about matters of the outback and of primary industry. A Speaker or a Deputy Speaker, in assessing when someone is passionate about something, needs to be able to empathise with what the person on his or her feet is saying. I think Bruce Scott would add a new dimension to that.

We have heard that the speakership has been coveted rather well over recent years by Victorians, and it is no less so today with your good self, Mr Speaker, and the first nomination for Deputy Speaker. I suggest to you that someone from an electorate of 600,000 square kilometres in Queensland could add another dimension to that even-handedness.

In Bruce Scott’s electorate there are 154 schools—I do not have anything like that in my electorate—and you can tell from that that there are lots of little places he has to go to. He has 419 postcodes, which tells you how many communities he is expected to visit. I raise those things with you, Mr Speaker, to show that Mr Scott is someone who can empathise with people on their feet when they talk about things that are perhaps not part of robust across-the-chamber exchanges but are to do with looking after Australians who are sometimes in dire straits.

In his electorate in the last 12 months he has seen the worst drought in a decade, he has seen floods of gargantuan proportions and he has seen fire. So he adds another perspective to the Speaker and the other Deputy Speaker in coming to this job. We are also
conscious, as National Party nominators today, of the bipartisanship of the Liberal Party in allowing this role to be contested by the National Party, and we thank our Liberal colleagues for that.

The SPEAKER—Order! The time allowed for nominations has expired. In accordance with the standing orders, the bells will be rung and a ballot will be taken.

The bells having been rung and a ballot having been taken—

The SPEAKER—Order! The result of the ballot is: Ms Burke, 83 votes; Mr Bruce Scott, 64 votes. Ms Burke is elected Deputy Speaker and Mr Scott shall be the Second Deputy Speaker.

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (5.28 pm)—I would like to congratulate the member for Chisholm and the member for Maranoa on their election to these positions in the House. The member for Chisholm, of course, I know best; we were elected to this place together. She is a person who has worked hard representing the interests of working families in the financial sector. She has extensive parliamentary experience, having served as deputy chair on three parliamentary committees: the Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration; the Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services; and the Privileges Committee. She is a person deeply engaged in the affairs and events of her local community, something I know from having spent much time in her community with her over the years. I also know she is a person deeply committed to her family: her kids, John and Madeleine, and her husband, Steve, who I understand are in the gallery today. John and Madeleine should be proud of their mum. They should be proud of what Anna has achieved. It is a good thing that she does for us in this place.

As for the member for Maranoa, we have known each other off and on over the years. I congratulate him on his election to this position. I had the privilege of visiting his electorate on a couple of occasions since the election, both in Roma and in Charleville, and I understand full well the remarks made by the member for Hinkler about the difficult times his constituents have been going through with flood and drought, and the associated economic uncertainties and uncertainties for families. I said when we won this election that we intended to be a government for all Australians, and that means rural Australians—the communities that you represent in this place, Member for Maranoa.

We congratulate both members on their election.

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (5.29 pm)—I join with the Prime Minister in congratulating firstly the member for Chisholm on her election to the deputy speakership. I notice that she was born in one of the great years, 1966—when of course St Kilda beat Collingwood by a point—and came to the parliament in 1998. At that time she expressed a lot of concern about the demise, as she saw it, of collectivism; I suspect it is on the way back. She also expressed intense and genuine commitment to multiculturalism and a strong economic future for Australia, at least as she sees it.

I also congratulate Steve, John and Madeleine, the member for Chisholm’s family. As backbenchers, she and I travelled on an exchange together at one stage and there was an issue with a febrile baby, as I understand. I do not think that those of us in this place who are men will ever be able to understand how difficult it is for women who have
young families to come to this place. I have seen what the member for Chisholm has been able to do over the decade she has been in this parliament and raised those two children—as have other members on both sides of the House. That in itself, apart from her other achievements, is a great credit to her and her supportive and loving husband, Steve. We congratulate the member for Chisholm on her election to the position of Deputy Speaker.

We are very disappointed, however, that it was not the member for Maranoa. Joan and the member for Maranoa have had, I think, 40 years of marriage. That is principally behind what he has been able to achieve in his life. As we heard in the nominating speeches, prior to coming to parliament he was involved in merino sheep farming, grains and all of those concerns as a farmer. He has also represented the farming community since 1990. As the member for Hinkler reminded us, that rural community includes 150-odd schools, not to mention the enormous size of the electorate of Maranoa. To be able to represent it on issues of drought, agriculture, telecommunications, roads and the things which we in cities too often take for granted, and to do so and attract the respect that he has right across the chamber, is an enormous credit to the member for Maranoa. He is very deserving of the position of Second Deputy Speaker.

I might also add that, when the member for Maranoa was the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, he carried that portfolio and the memory of Australia’s veterans with great dignity. To the very best of his ability and in a way that made every Australian proud, he represented those men and women who have served our country in uniform.

On behalf of the opposition, I congratulate the member for Chisholm and the member for Maranoa. I know they will do a superb job in supporting you, Mr Speaker.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (5.32 pm)—I am delighted to also join in congratulating the member for Chisholm and the member for Maranoa on their election. I am sure they will provide very able support to you, Mr Speaker, and help ensure that this parliament runs smoothly and that members have the opportunities they need to bring forward issues and to effectively debate the important policy issues confronting our nation. I guess the numbers in this place virtually ensured the result. There are not too many shocks when these elections are held. Both members have talents and skills that fit them well for the post. Both are experienced representatives. Both have had the opportunity to meet and work with people in their communities over long periods of time. I am sure that that background fits them well for the tasks ahead of them.

I have a particular friendship and association with the member for Maranoa. We are neighbours. We came into parliament together and I have certainly appreciated working with Bruce over that very long period of time. Others have made reference to the size of his electorate. One other little statistic that is of interest is that his electorate stretches from the Northern Territory and South Australian borders to within about 100 kilometres of the coast—maybe even less than that. It comes across the Great Dividing Range and adjoins my electorate in the west. He has had the experience of seeing a great deal of our country.

I also acknowledge particularly his role as veterans’ affairs minister. This is a very difficult portfolio and sometimes there are contentious issues. They are important issues and Bruce was able to undertake those re-
sponsibilities with goodwill and with the overwhelming support of the veterans’ community. He met and mixed well with them and I am sure those skills will hold him in good stead in the task ahead.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, Bruce and Joan have been a wonderful team. It is great to welcome Joan to the gallery. They are great hosts. They are people who very much understand the issues of the community. Bruce will be a very important, significant and effective representative of the parliament when called upon to act in that regard.

Congratulations to our two deputy speakers. We commit ourselves to work cooperatively with them to achieve their own objectives in those offices.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (5.35 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence, I want to say how privileged I am to win the first Labor ballot in this place. After nine years straight—in my instance—of losing every one, it is a magnificent thing to be here on the winning side. I want to add my congratulations to the Speaker and the Second Deputy Speaker for the honour that this parliament has bestowed upon us.

To my colleagues, I want to say thank you for filling out the ballot papers correctly. In some instances you do not always get that right! It is a magnificent thing to be in the Labor Party and know that we are all pulling together.

I really want to say thank you to the member for Ballarat and the member for Melbourne Ports for the lovely words they said to me on my election to this place. I have been here for nearly 10 years and sometimes I think it seems like yesterday. In my maiden speech I talked about the light on the hill, the great Labor tradition of us striving to do better for this nation. I know that under this parliament we will be doing better for our nation. I am proud to be part of that journey.

I want to say a big thankyou to my mum, Joan, who is here today and who has done a great service in my life; to my husband, Steve, whom I literally would not be here without; and to Maddy and John, who have literally known no other place because I have done them the disservice of actually giving birth to both of them since I have been here. It has been a pretty tough journey for them, so I want to say thank you very much.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (5.36 pm)—On indulgence, Mr Speaker, I thank my colleagues, and anyone else behind me who might have voted for me. Because it was not show-and-tell we are not quite sure, but I think the numbers do stack up. I do want to thank my colleagues for their support. I also want to thank the Prime Minister for his very generous comments, particularly in relation to his visits to my electorate where, as Prime Minister, he witnessed the devastation of drought and then of flood, and for his commitment to making sure that those affected—in many parts of Australia—are not forgotten in this place.

I also thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationals for their very kind and generous comments. I really appreciate them, as does, I know, my wife, Joan, who is with us here today. To the people who nominated me, the member for Riverina and the member for Hinkler, your words were equally generous. I do thank you for those generous words and the confidence that you have shown in me.

Having served for six years on the Speaker’s panel, I have to say that it has given me a good grounding in being able to
understand the nuances of the House that arise from time to time. I have also learnt a great deal from working with you, Mr Speaker, on the Speaker’s panel. I know that in your role as Speaker—your appointment to which I congratulate you on—we will be able to work together and, importantly, ensure the smooth running of this great centre of democracy in this country of ours.

I also want to mention something of the former Speaker, Mr David Hawker, because, while serving on that panel I also worked with you, David. On one occasion, I and my wife travelled with you and your wife on parliamentary business. My wife and I certainly appreciated your friendship. Of course, I also appreciated the advice that I received from you from time to time while working on the Speaker’s panel.

Notwithstanding the experience that I received on the Speaker’s panel and as a member since coming to this parliament, in some ways there is no better grounding than the grounding you get from working in agropolitics. I was involved in that prior to coming to this House. I led a number of local, state and national bodies. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, as you might appreciate, that when people get organised—and farmers do get organised—and come to meetings, there is never any predetermined outcome. In fact, one of those organisations was a union of employers that had its genesis in the Barcaldine district way back in 1892, at the same time as your great party, Mr Speaker, was founded. Farmers can get very well organised, and chairing those meetings has given me a great insight into being able to balance the opinions of people and to make sure that voices are heard and are given the time that they need.

I proudly represent the federation seat of Maranoa. I think it is fair to say that all of us in this place are products of the environment in which we have grown up. There have been some comments, from both sides of the House, in relation to my past and to my experience. They are a product of the people I represent in this place. I am sure it would not be lost on the new Prime Minister that we have a Deputy Speaker from Queensland. I am sure that will not only be good for Queensland but also a balance to the Speaker and the other Deputy Speaker, who are both from Victoria. I am sure that will not be lost on the Prime Minister, being a Queenslander himself. There has not before been a Deputy Speaker or Chairman of Committees, as they were known in previous times, from the seat of Maranoa. Sir Charles Adermann represented the seat Maranoa from 1943 to 1949. He then transferred to the seat of Fisher, and from that position he became a deputy chair of committees. So I have a great deal of pride in being appointed to this position here today. But I share that pride with my constituents, because they are the people who have sent me to this place. Without their support, I would not be standing here today. It is with great pride that I share this honour with my constituents in Maranoa.

It is also a proud moment for my wife. I must say that, without her support over many, many years, I would also not be standing here today. Once again, I thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationals and others who have spoken kindly about my wife, Joan, because in this place it is so easy to forget the contribution that spouses and partners make to each and every one of our lives here. It is easy to forget the sacrifices that they offer up in support of their husband, wife or partner who is serving in this place. It is also great to have my brother and sister-in-law with me here today. I am sure that with good communications,
some of my constituents who are on broad-band—and there will be more next year if it is operating in my constituency—will be watching online today as well.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by once again congratulating you on your elevation to that position. I know that you will do a magnificent job and bring great dignity to the position. I look forward to working with you to uphold the standing orders and to ensure that we deliver them fairly and without fear or favour. I thank the House.

NATIONAL APOLOGY TO THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

Notice of Motion

Mr Rudd (Griffith—Prime Minister) (5.43 pm)—Mr Speaker, I seek your indulgence to lodge a notice of motion. I formally give notice of the terms of a motion for an apology to the stolen generation that I will move tomorrow.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr Albanese (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (5.43 pm)—by leave—I move:

That:

(a) so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent, at the next sitting, the Prime Minister speaking for an unspecified period of time on a motion offering an apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples and for the Leader of the Opposition to speak for a period of time equivalent to that taken by the Prime Minister; and

(b) standing order 133 (Deferred divisions on Mondays and Tuesdays) and standing order 33 (Limit on business) be suspended for this sitting.

Question agreed to.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Kim Edward Beazley AO

Mr Rudd (Griffith—Prime Minister) (5.44 pm)—I move:

That the House records its deep regret at the death on 12 October 2007, of the Honourable Kim Edward Beazley (Snr) AO, a former Federal Minister and Member for Fremantle, and places on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Kim Edward Beazley was a great public servant, a great man and a great representative of the people of Western Australia. He championed education in his time as Minister for Education in the Whitlam government, leaving a lasting legacy: opening up access to tertiary studies for working families and their children and substantially increasing investment in education.

Mr Beazley was born on 30 September 1917 in Northam, Western Australia. He won a place at the Perth Modern School, topping the state in history and English. He went on to study politics at the University of Western Australia. After graduating, he became a teacher and subsequently tutored in history and politics at the university before entering politics.

In 1945, at the age of 27, Mr Beazley won the seat of Fremantle at a by-election following the death of Prime Minister John Curtin. He entered the House of Representatives as its youngest member. He retired before the election in 1977 as its longest serving member. It was an extraordinary career. It spanned three eras: the Chifley Labor government, the long difficult years in opposition and divisions within the Labor Party and the party’s return to power in 1972. He was one of only four members of the Chifley caucus still to be a member of parliament 23
years later, when Gough Whitlam led the party back to power.

By the time of his departure from politics after 32 years service, Mr Beazley was affectionately acknowledged as the ‘Father of the House’. Kim Beazley Sr served with distinction and with dedication. He is remembered as the minister who abolished university fees, putting a tertiary education within the reach of all young Australians—including this then young Australian. He was also responsible for introducing needs based funding for all schools, both private and public, ending the bitter sectarian debate about state aid.

But his contribution went far beyond his time as minister and the education portfolio. He was instrumental in placing Aboriginal rights on the public agenda. He made a great contribution to improving welfare policies in relation to Aboriginal people. During his parliamentary career, Mr Beazley served with dedication and distinction on a number of parliamentary committees. His commitment to education and Aboriginal affairs can be seen in the other committees he served on—the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and the Joint Select Committee on Aboriginal Rights in the Northern Territory. He also served on a number of House of Representatives select committees including the committee on Specific Learning Difficulties; on Voting Rights of Aborigines; and on the Grievances of Yirrkala Aborigines and Arnhem Land Reserve committee, to name but a few.

Between 1964 and 1972, he was the parliamentary representative on the Council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. He was also Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs. His contribution to education policy and Aboriginal affairs was recognised when the Australian National University awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Laws in 1976.

After retiring from parliament in 1977, Mr Beazley remained involved in education. From 1981 to 1985, he was Pro Chancellor of Murdoch University, Western Australia’s second university that took in its first students in 1975.

In parliament he was highly respected as a fine orator—some say one of the greatest orators of his generation. He was a highly principled man, a man of great and deep intellect, a man of great and deep faith. He was a man who sought to bring his faith to bear on both the public policy debates of his time and his approach to politics itself. In recognition of his service to politics and government, Mr Beazley was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1979.

On behalf of the government, I offer condolences to his wife, Betty, and their children, Kim Beazley, the former Leader of the Australian Labor Party, and Merilyn Wassen and their respective families. Sadly, his youngest son, David, passed away in 2006.

If we reflect on the public career of Kim Beazley Sr and the contributions he made to education policy and Aboriginal affairs, these are the hallmarks of a truly distinguished career in this place—not just measured by the length of years he served here but by the quality of his contribution and his lasting impact on public policy, particularly in the area of higher education.

For any of us here to lose our fathers is a difficult time and, because Kim Beazley Jr is a friend to so many of us in this place on both sides of the aisle, we remember Kim at this time of the loss of his father as well. They were very close. They shared a lot of time together. Our thoughts in particular are with our friend and former parliamentary...
Dr NELSON  (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (5.50 pm)—In joining to support the Prime Minister’s motion, there is no doubt that Kim Beazley Sr was one of the most significant political figures of the 20th century—significant not only because of his contribution to public life and that of his party but also for the family he produced, which in no small way is a measure of the man.

Born in 1917 in Western Australia to Alfred and Mary, he was one of nine children. Mary’s very strong Christian faith was passed on to her son, who carried it through his parliamentary career. He came from the poorest of working-class families. He went to school without shoes. In fact, he recounted the time when the Duke and Duchess of York visited his school where he and others without shoes were consigned to the back of the flag waving. But Kim Beazley Sr did not miss out on the love of learning and he would later say, ‘If you can read and write, your future is in your own hands.’

He won a scholarship to Perth Modern School and topped the state in English and history. He went on to gain a BA and train as a teacher before he came to parliament after the death of John Curtin, of course, in 1945. In 1946, he married Betty Judge, who was an athlete, the 880 yards champion, and a fellow graduate from the Perth Modern School. They had three children, as we all well know: Kim; David, who the Prime Minister again reminded us was sadly lost in 2006 on what one can only imagine must have been the most difficult day for Kim Beazley Sr in his public and his private life; and their daughter, Merilyn. His son Kim Jr, of course, followed in the footsteps of Kim Sr and gave exemplary service to the parliament and, indeed, to his party and Australia. The Beazley’s second son, David, of course, as we know, was lost in 2006.

When he came to Canberra, Kim Beazley Sr became known as ‘the student prince’ for his eloquence and erudition. A somewhat serious fellow—which I suspect in part he passed on to his son Kim Jr—he went on to become one of the most accomplished speakers and debaters in the parliament. His deep Christian conviction led Kim Beazley Sr to be concerned with improving the lives of the poor. It also led to his involvement in Moral Rearmament, a group committed to preserving high ethical standards in public life, which was indeed reflected in everything that Kim Beazley Sr did. In fact, some people say that his dedication to his values cost him his leadership of the Australian Labor Party. But it certainly made him an outstanding person and an outstanding parliamentarian. It seems that, as a member of the right of the Labor Party at a time when the left was ascendant, he often found himself on the wrong side of the argument. His stance as an anti-communist once even raised allegations that he had informed Menzies of his concerns that the communists were taking over the Labor Party.

But it was not until the election of the Whitlam government, as we just heard from the Prime Minister, that Mr Beazley had the opportunity to implement policy. Although he had great knowledge of foreign affairs, Whitlam appointed Kim Beazley education minister, where he made an enormous impact. His notable achievements include the introduction of free university education and the creation of a schools commission, which introduced needs based funding for schools. He was also deeply committed to improving the lives of Indigenous people and support-
ing Papua New Guinea in its transition to independence. His work with Indigenous communities continued long after his parliamentary career ended—indeed, the measure of his commitment.

He said a couple of things that are worth remembering—one of which I will not remind those opposite of, but he said of schooling: we might have been barefooted but we could recite Wordsworth. In 1953 Kim Beazley’s declaration that he would strive to live his life with honesty led to much bewilderment in some political quarters. One political columnist wrote at the time that no-one with even a slight working knowledge of politics could fail to delight in the confusion that could result from even one of our politicians resolving to be absolutely honest.

With that I leave the House to reflect on an extraordinary life and an extraordinary contribution to his party and to Australia.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) (5.55 pm)—Mr Speaker, first of all I will add my congratulations to you on your elevation to the speakership. I know that your good humour and sense of fair play will make sure that this House reflects what all Australians hope it will.

Kim Beazley Sr is often viewed—and I think the Leader of the Opposition really picked this up—as something of a political enigma, a moral man in a not-so-moral profession. In fact, his own words reveal the high moral integrity that constituted his very being and guided both his political and personal life. This was clearly reflected when he said: ‘If you do not accept the importance of conscience, you accept only the importance of power.’ Not only was Kim Beazley Sr immovably true to his own conscience, which was not always to his political advantage, he was also widely regarded as the conscience of the Labor Party—no easy task, we can tell you. At his funeral in October last year his son, the Kim Beazley we all know, told the hundreds in the congregation that his father wanted to be remembered for two things. One was his conviction that he had a duty to pursue the dignity of our Indigenous people, the other was his conviction that education should focus on the needs of the child—that every child counted. He was determined to address sectarianism.

Today I asked Kim what his father would have thought of the apology to the stolen generations which is to be offered by the parliament tomorrow. His response was simple: ‘Dad’s whole life was about saying sorry,’ he said. From the early days of his political life he worked to improve the lives of Aboriginal Australians. It was his conviction that, if he focused on the issue rather than laying blame, he would catch the conscience of the people. He was, as his son recalls, a voice for Aboriginal Australians at a time when many were unable to speak forcefully for themselves. I can only imagine how satisfied he must have felt with the emergence of a generation of articulate, passionate Indigenous Australians more than capable of arguing their own case.

He was a pioneer in the campaign for Aboriginal land rights back in the early 1950s. And in 1952, in a first for the federal parliament, Kim Beazley Sr made the first speech on Aboriginal reconciliation in the House of Representatives. In 1963 he travelled to Yirrkala in Arnhem Land to support the Yolngu people, who were speaking out against a bauxite mine planned for their land on the Gove Peninsula, a mine given the go-
ahead without consultation with them. The Yolngu people made a traditional petition fashioned from a piece of bark. Today this now famous bark petition is here in Parliament House, brought to Canberra by the Yolngu people, a permanent reminder of the fledging land rights movement. Kim Beazley Sr was there with the Yolngu people as they brought their struggle to national attention.

After 27 years in parliament and with the election of the Whitlam government, Kim Beazley Sr at last entered the ministry, and with the education portfolio came his chance to make a difference. One of his first initiatives was to encourage Aboriginal children to be taught in schools in their own language with English as a second language. Until then, in some states teachers could be penalised under the law for teaching in an Aboriginal language or in any language other than English. When he left the ministry, Aboriginal children were being taught in 22 of their own languages.

He instigated a national inquiry into education which resulted in innovative reforms, including programs for Aboriginal children, migrant children, children with special needs, technical education and adult education. It was under his direction that legislation enshrining the principle of Commonwealth funding for all schools based on need was passed, ending forever the bitter and divisive debate in the Labor Party and in the community over state aid for non-government schools. And of course thousands of people from my generation gratefully remember him as the minister who abolished university fees.

Kim Beazley Sr will be remembered for many things: his formidable intellectual capacity, his effectiveness as a minister, his sharp debating skills and his immense moral integrity—not that he was one to be above having a dig at his opponents. One of his remarks, which has passed into parliamentary folklore, was directed at the then Country Party when he accused them of ‘socialising their losses and capitalising their profits’. He will be remembered for what he stood for. He stood for justice and equality; he stood up for the disadvantaged and the oppressed; he was a champion for public duty and the overarching imperative for our national leaders to act with integrity and honesty. To his family I give my heartfelt condolences.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.01 pm)—Kim Edward Beazley was elected to the federal seat of Fremantle in 1945 following the death of John Curtin. He was just 27 years old. He had recently graduated from the University of Western Australia with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in history. Just four years later, in 1949, Kim’s former university lecturer in history, Paul Hasluck, was elected to the adjoining federal seat of Curtin, which had been created in a redistribution after the war of the Federation seats of Perth and Fremantle.

Over a period of more than two decades, these two Western Australians from opposing political parties made the long haul across the continent to represent their adjoining constituencies. Sir Paul, aged 44 when he was elected, was somewhat dismissive, perhaps slightly envious, that the far younger Beazley had succeeded to the seat of Fremantle. He did not, according to Sir Paul, seem the sort of candidate that the Labor Party usually favoured. Writing in 1958, Sir Paul recollected Beazley, his former student, as ‘tall, fresh faced, prancing, intolerant of other students’ opinions and rather fond of his own’. I suspect Sir Paul had that view of all his former students. But writing in 1981,
Sir Paul’s wife, Alexandra, had a rather different recollection, and in this instance, as in so many others, we should trust the woman. Alexandra remembered Kim Beazley in the parliament as a dashing young man who stood out among the tired and older looking men of Labor. She pointed out that they could boast few young members with a university education. The most noticeable was Kim Beazley, a good and thoughtful speaker who was so handsome he acquired the nickname ‘the Student Prince’.

Kim Beazley was a renowned public speaker. His parliamentary speeches have been described as ‘eloquent and elegant, often with a brilliant summing-up’. With a sharp intellect and a sensitive conscience, he made an invaluable contribution to the parliamentary debates of the day. As longstanding residents of the beautiful beach suburb of Cottesloe, once in the electorate of Fremantle and now in the electorate of Curtin, Kim Beazley Sr and his wife Betty were familiar faces around the western suburbs. Those who know the political make-up of my electorate may understand when I venture to suggest that, in their capacity as the foundation members of the Cottesloe branch of the Labor Party, there were perhaps some rather lonely evenings at their branch meetings. I have fond memories of more recent elections while visiting the polling booth at Cottesloe Primary School, when I observed Kim and Betty Beazley securing their spot to hand out how-to-vote cards for the Labor Party. In a polling booth that has generally returned a primary vote for the Liberal Party of 70 per cent or more over the past 50 years, the Beazleys remained cheerfully committed to the Labor cause, and Betty would bring a basket of biscuits to share amongst the volunteers, Liberal and Labor alike.

Kim Beazley Sr had three great commitments in his life: his family, the Labor Party and his faith. He had a great many more causes for which he argued passionately throughout his life. After 23 years in opposition, he was appointed Minister for Education in the Whitlam administration. Former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam later wrote that he believed that the transformation of the education system was his government’s most enduring single achievement and that Kim Beazley’s efficiency and integrity was one of his government’s great personal success stories. Canberra took over responsibility from the states for funding tertiary education. The Commonwealth Schools Commission was established, and assistance to non-government schools was increased. Kim Beazley was proud of the fact that he was able to establish a school chaplaincy program, an initiative revived many years later by the Howard government. His strong belief in the value of education was no doubt inspired by his own experience. He was a bright student, who won a place at Perth Modern School—also in the Curtin electorate—which has educated many of Western Australia’s and Australia’s leaders. He topped the state in English and history in the 1935 Leaving Certificate exams before completing his Bachelor of Arts at the University of Western Australia. He was a teacher before entering parliament.

By the time he retired in 1977, Kim Beazley Sr was the longest-serving member in the House. His passion for education continued long after his parliamentary career ended. He joined the Senate of Murdoch University and served for three terms, the last four years as Pro-Chancellor. In 1983, the Burke government appointed him to chair an inquiry into primary and secondary education in Western Australia, focusing par-
particularly on the advent of technology. He advocated a technology revolution no less. The most prestigious academic award for secondary students in Western Australia is named the Beazley Medal in recognition of his achievements.

Kim Beazley Sr had a keen understanding of the properties of responsible government and the necessity of maintaining the highest ethical standards in public life. I extend my deep sympathies to his family, particularly Kim Beazley Jr, who has every reason to be immensely proud of his father’s legacy and the contribution that the Beazley name has made to Australian public life over 60 years.

The SPEAKER—As a mark of respect to Mr Beazley Sr, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER—I thank the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Albanese) adjourned.

Mr Peter James Andren

Mr Rudd (Griffith—Prime Minister) (6.08 pm)—I move:

That the House expresses its deep regret at the death on 3 November 2007, of Mr Peter James Andren, former Independent Member for Calare, and place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Peter was born on 28 August 1946 at Gulargambone in New South Wales. He graduated from Macquarie University with a Bachelor of Arts degree and trained as a teacher at the Alexander Mackie College in Sydney. He taught for three years, between 1965 and 1968, and in subsequent years he remarked that he still regarded teaching as the most honourable of all professions. He made a career shift into television journalism in 1968 at the height of the Vietnam War, and those years of seeing all the incoming war footage on television news left an enduring impression on him. He worked as a news producer for the Seven and Nine networks in Sydney before moving to the central west of New South Wales in 1977. There he became the news editor for the Orange radio station 2GZ and then newsreader for the Prime television network station at Orange.

Peter first entered parliament in 1996, having won the seat of Calare as an Independent. It is rare for a politician to be elected to the House as an Independent member. It is even more uncommon to enter the House for the first time as an Independent. More commonly, those who serve as Independents have previously won office as a member of a party and have subsequently left that party. Peter won the seat of Calare in 1996 with a vote of 63.3 per cent after the distribution of preferences. By 2001 he had increased that margin, with a further 15.1 per cent swing in the election that year. This made Calare the second-safest seat in the country. That was an extraordinary achievement for an Independent.

As others have commented, Peter’s achievement in not just securing that seat but also increasing his margin in it is testament to his local popularity and also his deep commitment to many of the policy debates we have had in this parliament. Peter’s popularity in his electorate was all the more remarkable for the fact that many of the stances he had taken prior to the 2001 election were deemed unpopular and out of sync with his regional electorate. There was a great public admiration for Peter’s integrity that transcended conventional political alignments. Peter was a forthright Independent member who brought dignity, honesty and integrity to Australian politics—and
these are rare commodities. He was well regarded by all sides of politics and respected for his thoughtful and controversial contributions to debates on subjects as diverse as refugees, Iraq, Indigenous affairs, mandatory sentencing, renewable energy and telecommunications.

Peter was a particularly important friend and colleague to the member for New England as well as the member for Kennedy. He was a man of principle and an absolute Independent. He worked hard and cared deeply for his constituents. In his 2003 book *The Andren Report* he described his job as one of pastoral care, except he conceded that it was he who needed the flock most. I think his observation about pastoral care is important for all of us as local members of parliament to reflect on. I am advised that he used to tell his staff that they should treat every single inquiry at his electorate office as if it was the most important event happening in that person’s life at that moment. That is an important discipline for us all to reflect on. As we are caught up in the affairs of this place, so many people who need the most basic and elementary of government services come to members of parliament, often as a last resort. They need a friendly ear, a friendly face, someone to talk to, someone to try and make the bureaucracy work for them. Peter’s observations in his book *The Andren Report* on the role of a local member are worthy of all of our collective reflection, study and application.

Peter was a deeply compassionate man. In *The Andren Report* he recounts a moving story from his childhood days living near the railway line at Camden. I would like to share a bit of it with the House. This is Peter Andren, in his own words, as a little boy growing up:

I was rapidly forming my ideas about who was regarded as important, and who was not, in this society. A small and bent old guy, white-bristled and perennially dressed in a dirty grey suit … used to shuffle up the street past our house to the pub on the corner. He embodied evil in my childish mind, although I never stopped to analyse why. He just looked an outcast and, somehow, threatening. When I saw him coming I’d run and squeeze myself between the wall of the house and the side paling fence, an alleyway barely a foot wide. I’d crouch down hiding in the dampness and spider webs as I watched him toddle passed on his way ‘up the street’. One day he stopped and looked down the side of the house at me, directly catching me crammed into the tiny space and frozen with fear.

‘Don’t worry about me, lad,’ he said. ‘I’m not going to hurt you.’

The sadness in his old, grey eyes hinted at many stories of his loneliness, his rejection. I felt scared and ashamed. He moved on, with that slow, painful gait. He lived alone, and eventually died alone, in his little shack down behind the saleyards, near the river flats. I never asked my parents, or anyone else, who this man was. But I knew from that day on that he was misunderstood, harmless. I began to understand the meaning of rejection and of isolation, and of the cruel injustice of prejudice. I’ve probably been trying to make it up to him ever since.

What an eloquent story, an eloquent reflection of a moment in Peter Andren’s life when he realised the impact of rejection and isolation on others—values which shaped his subsequent public and political career.

When his cancer was diagnosed on 10 August last year, Peter was planning an audacious run for the Senate. Peter Andren had guts—real guts. He was about to take on the entire political machine and run for the Senate, and we will never know whether that gamble would have succeeded. I strongly suspect it might have. Peter Andren’s death is a loss to our parliament, and this 42nd Par-
I would like to recognise today the fact that Peter’s partner, Valerie, along with friends and former staff members, are here in the public gallery and that Peter’s great friend Tony Windsor, the member for New England, will also be a speaker in this condolence motion. On behalf of the government, I offer condolences to Val and sons, Greg and Josh.

Dr Nelson (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (6.16 pm)—I rise obviously to support the motion in support of Peter Andren, a great man, a kind man and a man who will be deeply missed not only by Val but by those who knew him and those whom he touched in his pastoral life as the member for Calare, although of course on many occasions on policy and other matters we and those opposite did not agree with him.

Peter was born in 1946 in Gulargambone in north-west New South Wales. His father was a stationmaster and Peter grew up in a succession of country railway towns. Later in life, he talked about the need to restore rail infrastructure to ease the pressure of trucking on rural roads. He studied arts at Macquarie University and worked as a teacher, the profession of which he was most proud, before switching careers to work as a news producer in Sydney for the Seven and Nine networks. After returning to the Central Coast of New South Wales, Peter became a TV newsreader in Orange. He was much loved by his partner and childhood sweetheart, Valerie Faber, and sons, Greg and Josh. At his funeral, Valerie said, amongst other things, that Peter was ‘a man with an open heart who allowed people in’.

He was elected to represent the electorate of Calare in parliament in 1996. His success in winning his seat in 1996 came in part from his significant ability to tap into the sense of dislocation and uncertainty that many Australians felt in that era. In his maiden speech, he said:

In a world that is becoming more confusing, more threatening, far more violent and less personal by the day, people need leadership from politicians who will hear their calls regardless of the political implications.

... ... ...

Lest one side or the other in this place believes it has a mortgage on common sense, might I warn that the traditional role of parties in Australian politics is under strong challenge. There is a growing awareness in the electorate that honest, effective representation of constituents’ interests can be achieved through channels other than political parties.

Whilst we might debate the point, they were prophetic words that should be well heeded by all of us and those whom we represent.

He was, as the Prime Minister just reminded us, immensely popular in his electorate of Calare—much to the consternation, I suppose, of both of our major parties—and increased his margin over the years to hold one of the safest seats in the country. By the 2004 election, Mr Andren had increased his primary vote to over 50 per cent, a result that many of us have envied. In parliament, he campaigned for greater investment in economic and social infrastructure for rural and regional Australians and worked to make parliamentary and electoral processes more transparent and accountable. His friend and our fellow parliamentarian, from whom we will hear in a moment, the member for New England, called him ‘a man of the highest integrity and the conscience of the parliament’.
At the time of his diagnosis with pancreatic cancer, a cruel disease, Peter Andren was intending to run for the Senate. Had he been able to run, he would have had an excellent chance of being elected. In fact, he probably would have been. Peter died on 3 October, in the middle of the election campaign, and the hustle of an election campaign and the travelling media sideshow was such that it meant that members here did not perhaps put enough time aside to adequately reflect on his passing and what his contribution had been to this parliament and to Australia.

Amongst the dealings I had with him when I was Minister for Education, Science and Training, trying to develop a complex reform program for higher education, I concluded that he was a man with an open mind, that he was prepared to listen to a reasonable idea and that he was prepared to take people as he found them. I also saw him as a man who constantly nurtured the inner integrity of his own intellect. I think in the end he, like people who are really remembered, is remembered for the humanity that he really showed to others, even though at times many of us envied the fact that he was not constrained by the disciplines of being a member of a political party.

We remember him today for his dedication to the people of Calare and for the high standards that he set for all of us in this place. To his family—Greg, Josh and his childhood sweetheart, Valerie—on behalf of the coalition, I extend our deepest sympathies for your loss. We are better for having known him.

Mr Windsor (New England) (6.21 pm)—Thank you, Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, for those words. Peter had respect for both of you and I am very pleased to have heard you both speak. This is a very sad time of course for a lot of people in here—from all sides of parliament, not just from the crossbenches. As the Leader of the Opposition said, in my view Peter was the conscience of the parliament. On occasion I disagreed with him, as did the member for Kennedy and as did many in this place, but he did reflect a logical view of many, many issues. If we refer back to some of the issues that Peter Andren stood for and voiced his opinion on in this place over his 11 years of service to the parliament and to the people of Calare, we will see in hindsight that on quite a lot of those issues he was right. Whether it was the war in Iraq or whether it was the asylum seekers, they were significant issues on which Peter took a stance. Sometimes Independents are accused of being populist—that they can drift here and there and pick up a popular issue and appeal to their electorate. On issues of that significance, Peter took a very real stance of principle and intellectual argument.

On the issue of Telstra, the sale of public infrastructure, there is no doubt in my mind—and others would disagree with this and they have the right to disagree—that Peter’s agitation during the period of the first tranche sale led to the formation of Telstra Countrywide, which is still in place today and which some people would argue has led to some of the innovations that have occurred for country users of telecommunications. Obviously much more needs to be done.

Peter Andren led the charge on the Snowy Hydro turnaround. The former Prime Minister and others in this room were good enough to recognise that that policy initiative was not a good one for Australia and that Australians did not want it. Peter was able to lead that campaign to a successful outcome when all the parties in New South Wales, Victoria and this place had voted to sell Snowy Hy-
dro. Peter Andren, a voice amongst few, was able to speak for the people. I think it says something about our political system and something about the former Prime Minister that from time to time we are able to accept from the people a view that may be different to the one that is politically expedient in our chambers in terms of partisan politics. But it was Peter Andren who first raised that issue and Peter Andren who led the charge to make the change possible. If we reflect in 100 years time on the Snowy Hydro and many other infrastructure schemes that have been developed across Australia—hopefully in that period of time; hopefully in the next three years—we should remember people like Peter Andren, who have made a great effort.

Peter was an advocate for Aboriginal rights, and it is a great tragedy that he is not here today. His partner, Valerie, is, and she knows the genuine feeling that Peter had for Aboriginal people. I think all of us are aware of the speeches that he gave in this place defending the rights of Aboriginal Australians. There was a turning point today in terms of the welcome to country ceremony, and I congratulate again both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on their conduct today. I thought it was tremendous—and I think Peter Andren would have thought the same—that we were having an opening of a parliament that recognises the first Australians of all those generations ago. Peter’s last speech was about the intervention in the Northern Territory. He felt very strongly about that. He did not believe that many of the things being contemplated in that legislation were in fact correct, and there may be some revisiting of some of those issues. But his spirit was in this parliament this morning and it will be in this parliament tomorrow morning when an apology is made to the first Australians. He would have been very proud to be part of that contribution.

As the Prime Minister said, it is a tragedy that he did not survive to test his wit in the Senate, because he may well have captured the imagination of people as a true representative of all Australians and actually pulled it off. Prior to his illness, Peter was scheduled to come to our home and talk to people who were interested in what he was trying to do in the Senate—that is, to make the Senate a house of responsibility. He was to be a guest speaker at a garden party at our home. Many people were coming, and then we were notified that Peter was not well and would not be able to attend. It was a great shock to us then and it was a great shock to all of us that Peter lasted such a short time.

Peter was a stickler for parliamentary reform, and I think there are some issues outstanding that should be addressed by the parliament. If any of the new members of parliament wish to reflect on those ideas, they are in Hansard. Many of them make a great deal of logic not only in terms of the operation of this place and the way our electoral system works but also in terms of how people in the community reflect upon the conduct of parliamentarians. There is no doubt, prior to my time here, that Peter Andren’s agitation led to the travel entitlements et cetera of members of parliament having to be tabled from time to time in the parliament so that the general public would be aware of those particular issues.

Peter Andren was a great man; he was a great representative. He did genuinely believe that people who came through the door deserved to be represented in this place to the ministers, to the bureaucracy and, from time to time, in the press to use the press to advantage. His early years in the press held him in good stead in this place. But the tele-
vision media or other media were not the first stop for Peter. He always tried to adjudicate and to correct the circumstances of people’s complaints prior to going direct to the press. I am sure that many of the former ministers would agree with that.

I would like to mention by name a few people who are in the gallery today, because Peter did not just become elected and do everything on his own. He did it with the help of his constituents, the people in his electorate of Calare. His partner, Valerie, who has already been mentioned, is with us today. His sister, Trish, is here. His former chief of staff and adviser, Tim Payne, and his family are here. Also here are Chris Gregory, Helen McHugh and Gavin Priestley—all good friends of Peter.

I am sure Peter would also want me to recognise the people that assisted him to be a good representative. They are not only the family and friends who supported him but also his staff: Helen Bergen, Dianne Abbott, Eileen Webb, Brian Hustwayte, Peter Stark and Tim Mahony. I was with Tim Mahony yesterday at the airport in Sydney and again in Canberra; unfortunately he is unable to be here today. All the staff loved Peter. They worked very, very hard for him and they are obviously very sad at his passing and that they cannot be here today.

I would like to read a small passage from Peter’s first speech in this place. Those who attended his funeral would have got the feeling that he had great respect for his parents and the way in which they brought him up. He also had great feeling for his children, Josh and Greg, who are unable to be here today. At Peter’s funeral, they were a tribute to their father. The way they spoke and the way they presented themselves and represented their family at Peter’s funeral were an absolute tribute to their father. I would like to conclude with the final paragraph of Peter’s maiden speech, back on 9 May 1996:

To my father and mother, both deceased, thanks for the strength and guidance that brought me here to this place. May my colleagues in the 38th Parliament of Australia embrace the feeling my parents had for this country and represent all Australians: those with skills and those without, those with means and those without. Unless we provide for all, with real opportunities and not just handouts, then the profits, the growth and dividends we create are a fraud, a mirage.

Peter Andren was a great Australian and his loss is a great loss. It is a great loss to his family, obviously. It is a great loss to the people of Calare, who he dearly loved. It is a great loss to country representation in relation to issues, and it is a great loss to this parliament. I thank Peter for being my friend and I am sure the member for Kennedy and many others in this place will recall Peter with great fondness. It is a tragedy that he has left us, but his memory will live on as his having been a true Independent of the people and a true representative of people in this place.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (6.33 pm)—I would like to join in this motion of condolence on the death of the former member for Calare, Peter Andren. He certainly made a very substantial contribution to this parliament in a unique way. It has been said by many that he was perhaps the only true Independent in the parliament, in that he came into this House without any prior association with a political party and he vehemently upheld his independence right through his time in the parliament.

As we have heard, he came into this House in 1996 as the member for Calare, taking the seat from Labor during the landslide election result that year. I campaigned against him in Calare during that election. I
spent some time in Orange and in other places, but I have to admit that I left the electorate with the view that we were facing a very formidable opponent. Peter was very well known and very well liked throughout his electorate. People liked him personally; others supported him because of the notion that Independents might have some influence in the parliament or perhaps one day even have a balance of power. He certainly held the view that he had a role in putting forward views in a forthright way and in ensuring that the whole House was kept on its toes. He certainly sometimes drew the ire of members of this place. His views were sometimes controversial. He was a particularly regular commentator on issues such as members’ pay and superannuation, and he usually gave the media the grab they were looking for. He was, as some have said, a conscience of the parliament in relation to that issue and a number of others.

We tried hard to defeat him in elections, with spectacularly unsuccessful results. I sometimes felt that Labor were perhaps a little half-hearted in their campaigns in Calare, probably because of some degree of realism that it was going to be a difficult seat to win but also because of the fact that, generally, Peter Andren’s views were perhaps more comfortably embraced by the other side of the House than by us. Nonetheless, there were times when everyone in this chamber tasted the ire of his views, which he presented always in a courteous but aggressive and thoughtful way.

In 2001 his popularity reached something of a peak when he got 75 per cent of the two-party vote. However, as others have said, whilst he was popular he was not a populist. Some of the views that he espoused would have been opposed by 75 per cent of the people in his electorate. Yet they respected him to such an extent that they were prepared to support him. He was, I think, an example of somebody who did not seek popularity. It came because of the work that he did and because of his willingness to stand up for causes that he believed in.

Peter was struck down by a particularly virulent cancer that gave him and his family little warning of its arrival and precious little time to adjust to what now seems, tragically, to have been inevitable. I hope that one day we can say that this and these kinds of cancer will not be a death warrant, as they seem to be today. The work of many Australian and international researchers gives us some hope that there may be some successes in coming years. The sad thing was that someone like Peter, who had made his decision not to seek re-election for this House but indeed to pursue an alternative course, did not live to see the election following his retirement. He did not have an opportunity to enjoy any of the good things of retirement that no doubt would have been very much in his heart in the more difficult times of his parliamentary career. Peter often, and certainly proudly, wore his badge as an Independent, which I know he felt sometimes to be liberating but at other times immensely frustrating. I think his intention in running for the Senate was to endeavour to be in a place where he might as an Independent have potentially more influence in policy setting. Whether he would have been successful we will never know, but it is a tragedy that his life was cut short and that he did not have the opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of retirement.

After Peter’s death, my colleague John Cobb became the member for Calare, assisted slightly by a redistribution. John particularly asks that his sympathy be attached to this condolence motion. He has the honour to succeed Peter as the member for Calare,
and that in itself will be a daunting task. I would like to place on record that my deepest sympathy goes to his partner, Valerie, and sons, Greg and Josh, to his many family members and relatives, to his friends, to his constituents, who grieve his loss, and to Australians who appreciated his forthright views on such a wide range of important issues.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (6.39 pm)—I was quite fascinated during all of my time in this place with Peter Andren. There was a precedent for him. I knew Doug Jennings, a very close friend of mine, who was in the state house. Both were men of compelling morality. They had a sense of duty and responsibility. Morality is the word that keeps leaping to my mind. My colleague the member for New England said, as every speaker has said, that Peter took positions which were most unpopular. Personally, I pleaded with him both on the refugees question, on which I disagreed with him, and on the war in Iraq, on which I disagreed with him, as I pointed out the political unwisdom of doing what he was doing because there was no doubt that it was enormously damaging to him politically. But that was not where he was coming from. He was not thinking in terms of politics at all and his attitude was if he got beaten he got beaten.

Before I became an Independent in this place, I asked the library to check something: up until Ted Mack, no Independent had ever been re-elected in this place, so if you became an Independent you knew you would get one shot at it and that was it. Peter also knew that. I spoke to him before I became an Independent. When I became an Independent he had only had one term, so he was looking down the gun barrel of no more terms. He could have got—and I feel very confident in saying this—a Labor endorsement or a Liberal endorsement at any time. He could have consolidated his position in this place and had that seat forever. But that was not what he chose to do. It was the same as with the issues that I referred to before, Iraq and refugees. For many years Peter refused to take superannuation. He and Bjelke-Petersen are the only two I know of that ever had a real moral position on such things.

Finally, on his decision to run for the Senate, again I was the person that passionately argued with him. I said that he was going to be a contributor forever if he stayed in this place whereas if he ran for the Senate I did not think that his chances were very good. Again that was not where Peter was coming from. It was from a sense of morality and duty. As I have said, in public life, in 34 years as a member of parliament, Peter was a person—and Doug Jennings was the only other one that I can think of—that acted at all times out of a very— and I cannot give any other explanation other than to say this—deep love of their country and a very strong belief in doing what is the right thing to do. His position was, and I hope no-one interprets this as a political statement, that until the crossbenchers had the power we would not have a democracy—as he saw a democracy anyway. The argument was put out there and there were people, like me and the member for New England, that adopted that argument. Whether we are right or whether we are wrong is not important, except that he had a perspective different from that which everybody else had and he was prepared to follow that perspective even though it left him with no superannuation and no seat in parliament. He had no job to go back to and no qualifications to take him back to a job, so at all times he was looking down into his open grave—and similarly with the Senate run.
I must join my colleague in saying I felt very strongly about Snowy Hydro. I am writing a history of Australia. You cannot write a history of Australia without writing about the Snowy. While I had very strong passions about it, there is really no doubt in my mind that the Snowy would have been sold if it had not been for Peter Andren. Australia’s greatest asset would have been gone if it had not been for Peter. Some 80 per cent of Australians believed in that too, but I did not have the confidence to put up a fight while my colleague from New England may or may not have had the confidence. Peter most certainly did. He believed, I suppose, that it was really the right thing to do so he was going to do it and we stepped in behind him and then a whole stack of people all over Australia were leading and taking their own convictions forward.

Having said all of those things, one asks what you say about the life of Peter Andren. I cannot help but say that what leapt to my mind was Ralph Honner, the great leader at Kokoda of the 39th Battalion, which rescued and saved this country. His final statement in his last address on Kokoda Day was that ‘they will always be to me smiling kids forever’. My last image of Peter is this. One of our advertisements was of him in my ringer’s hat laughing at me with his hands open. I think of Peter like I think of those people who saved Australia, the boys up on Kokoda. The image that leaps to my mind is of a laughing kid forever. It is terribly tragic that he has died young, but there is another way of looking at him: a hero that should provide inspiration to every single one of us in this place.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

Debate (on motion by Mr Albanese) adjourned.

**Special Forces Sergeant Matthew Locke**

**Trooper David Pearce**

**Special Forces Commando Luke Worsley**

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (6.46 pm)—I move:

That the House record its deep regret at the deaths in late 2007 of Sergeant Matthew Locke, Trooper David Pearce and Private Luke Worsley while on combat operations in Afghanistan and place on record its appreciation of their service to their country and tender its profound sympathy to their families in their bereavement.

We extend our condolences to Sergeant Locke’s wife, Leigh-Ann, and his son, Keegan; to Trooper David Pearce’s wife, Nicole, and their two children, Stephanie and Hannah; and to Private Worsley’s mother and father, Marjorie and John. I also want to offer my sympathy to the extended family and friends of these brave Australian soldiers, including to their fellow soldiers, who also feel their loss keenly.

Like the Leader of the Opposition, I have had the pleasure and privilege of meeting many of our men and women in uniform, and it is always a remarkable time that you have with them when they are on deployment. I had the pleasure and privilege of meeting our troops serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, when I visited those countries just before Christmas. On that visit, as always, I was impressed by their courage, their commitment and their professionalism and by the way they uphold the great traditions of the Australian military. These three soldiers who gave their lives were part of that tradition—and that tradition is as important today as it ever has been.

More than 3,500 Australian troops are currently deployed in front-line operations around the world, from Afghanistan to the Solomon Islands. They are making valuable
contributions to humanitarian operations, peacekeeping, border protection and nation building. They are working on regional missions and UN operations and under bilateral arrangements. The tragic events—very tragic events—in East Timor yesterday underscore the dangerous conditions in which our forces are often required to serve. Those events have also reminded us of how Australia’s defence forces are recognised for their role in bringing security and stability to various regions, as the East Timorese government has requested the deployment of extra personnel to assist in the challenges which it now faces. The government has agreed to that request and we are aware that we are sending Australian troops and police into a tense and volatile situation. We know that they will do a thoroughly professional job and we hope that they will return home safely.

Our troops on active service overseas should never be far from any of our minds. All of us in this place should be proud of their work. We should not forget the dangers they face. Even when they are not in the newspapers, they are out on operations that are never ever recorded; each day that they are out there, they are facing life-threatening situations—and they do it with extraordinary courage and professionalism.

These three soldiers—Sergeant Locke, Trooper Pearce and Private Worsley—died while serving their country, and this parliament and the government owes them a debt of gratitude, a debt that we are aware we can never fully repay to their families. These men made significant contributions while serving with the Australian Army, which they loved, and they made significant contributions to securing peace in Afghanistan to try to allow that country to rebuild. They did so in a very difficult and a very dangerous—an increasingly dangerous—operating environment. Other brave Australians soldiers continue their crucial work.

These were valued members of their regiments. Their commanders and fellow soldiers describe them as loyal, courageous and dedicated. They will be remembered, as we in this place should remember and reflect on the fact that our troops abroad, particularly those in Afghanistan, are facing increasingly difficult and dangerous times ahead—and I fear greatly the prospect of further losses. On behalf of the Australian government and all members of the House, I offer our prayers, our thoughts and our support to the families and friends of Sergeant Locke, Trooper Pearce and Private Worsley, brave soldiers all.

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (6.50 pm)—I obviously join very strongly in support of this motion of condolence for Trooper David Pearce, who is survived by his wife, Nicki, and daughters, Stephanie and Hannah; Special Forces Sergeant Matthew Locke—or ‘Maddie’ Locke, as he was called—who is survived by his wife, Leigh, and son, Keegan; and Special Forces Commando Luke Worsley, who is survived by his parents, John and Marjorie. I had the honour, I suppose, of being the Minister for Defence in sending each of them off to Afghanistan. I say this to the member for Hunter: I think it is fair to say that no person goes into being the Minister for Defence without leaving it as a different person, having a different outlook on things.

Unlike the others whom we are honouring today, these three men gave their lives in our name. When I sent them off, as I did the others, I would have said to them: you are going in our name; you are wearing our uniform; you have the Army rising sun on one shoulder and you have the Australian flag on the other; but you do so to remind us that there...
are some truths by which we live as Australians that are worth fighting to defend and, in particular, to see that we shine a light into dark corners of the world where people cannot begin to even imagine the freedoms that we enjoy in our own country, which too often are taken for granted by so many Australians and which have been given us by more than 100,000 Australians who gave their lives, in our name, in other parts of the world.

Each of these men died in Afghanistan, as the Prime Minister just reminded us. Poppy Pearce was in his 40s. He joined the Army late in life. He was a member of 2/14 Cavalry and he was in an ASLA V when it was hit by an improvised explosive device. It is noteworthy that before he left he spoke to his family—as soldiers do, by the way—about the prospect of being killed. He said to his family, ‘If I’m going to die, I’d rather die doing something worth while than getting run over by a bus.’ At his funeral in Brisbane, which was attended by the Prime Minister and the former Prime Minister, John Howard, his brother Edward Pearce said that his death should not be in vain. He said: ‘Let this harden our will to prevail. Let us not lose sight of his mates who are still there.’

These three men who gave their lives for us, literally, were at the very sharp end of something that our generation is engaged in: fighting resurgent totalitarianism, which is in the form of Islamic extremism. These men on our behalf were fighting people who have hijacked the good name of Islam to build a violent political utopia. We will honour these men and their deaths, and we will also honour their families, if we make absolutely certain that we are nothing less than determined to prevail in this. We thank all of them. We thank those with whom they served. We thank their commanding officers. We particularly thank them for reminding us of who we are and the things that are really important in life.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Minister for Defence) (6.54 pm)—I thank the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition for their very appropriate and sincere comments. I did not know Trooper David Pearce, Sergeant Matthew Lockwood or Private Luke Worsley, but having attended their funerals, where I spoke with their loved ones—their partners, their families, their ADF colleagues and their friends—I feel like I knew all of them very, very well. That may sound a little strange, as strange as it was to me when I found myself crying for people I had just met and for soldiers I had never met. Such is the power of who they were, what they were and what they gave for their country.

When you have the privilege of becoming the Minister for Defence or, for that matter, the shadow minister for defence, you gain a clearer insight into the courage, skill, dedication and commitment of our Defence Force personnel. At the funerals of Poppy Pearce, Matty Locke and Luke Worsley, I met many people who have a better appreciation of those attributes than possibly any one of us here—mums, dads, wives, partners, sons, daughters and, of course, mates. It was those people who made me feel like I knew the three heroes the House is paying tribute to tonight. Through emotional conversation, eulogies and jokes, they painted a picture of their loved ones that left us in no doubt they were true Australians with wonderful caring and a tough outlook on life.

Trooper David Pearce was serving with the Reconstruction Task Force in Oruzgan province when he was fatally wounded on 8 October 2007. Trooper Pearce previously served in the Solomon Islands with the 9th Battalion of the Royal Queensland Regiment.
between 2005 and 2006. On the day we lost him, he was the driver for a patrol returning from reconnaissance when his ASLAV was attacked with an improvised explosive device. The security element to which he belonged was protecting our engineers undertaking important reconstruction work in Oruzgan province.

Sergeant Matthew Locke was serving with the Special Air Service Regiment in Oruzgan province in southern Afghanistan when he was fatally wounded on 25 October 2007. With complete disregard for his own safety, Sergeant Locke braved heavy enemy fire to neutralise the Taliban advancing on the Australian position. In doing so, he saved the lives of his mates. Matty Locke had extensive operational experience in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2006, his courage was recognised with a Medal for Gallantry—one of Australia’s highest military honours.

Private Luke Worsley was a commander. He was serving with the Special Operations Task Group, again in Oruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, when he was fatally wounded on 23 November 2007. It was his second tour of duty in Afghanistan. He had also served with distinction in East Timor. Private Worsley was fatally wounded by small arms fire while participating in a planned attack by our forces against Taliban leaders and their supporters—again, in Oruzgan province. He was, I might add, the first man through the door.

I join the Prime Minister in expressing my deepest sympathy to the families and friends of Sergeant Locke, Trooper Pearce and Private Worsley. I also extend sympathy to the wider defence family, who feel these things very closely and over 3,000 of whom continue to serve their nation in operations around the world. Further, I take this opportunity to record the government’s sincere appreciation for the continuing professionalism and dedication demonstrated by the Australian Defence Force in the service of a grateful nation.

Tonight, we think of all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the defence of our nation. We also think of those who have suffered injury, including those who have been permanently incapacitated. The most recent of those was Sergeant Michael Lyddiard. Michael lost his right eye and his lower right arm while trying to protect his mate while dealing with an explosive device. I sincerely admire his courage, his strength of character and the good humour he has shown in his public appearances since that accident. We salute all those who serve and all those who have served. We thank all those who supported them, in particular those who paid a heavy price by giving up one whom they loved so much. As Australians, we love our sporting heroes. We admire them for their skill, their speed, their strength and, indeed, their courage. I think we could all find more time to think about all those in uniform who share those same attributes but for whom the stakes are much higher.

Mr B A L D W I N (Paterson) (7.00 pm)—As I rise today in support of this motion of condolence, it is important that we pause to reflect on the contribution of those brave, patriotic, professional soldiers—namely, Trooper David Pearce, Special Forces Sergeant Matthew Locke and Special Forces Commando Luke Worsley. These men were Australia’s finest, and they made the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of freedom, democracy and security for the people of Afghanistan. Our Australian Defence Force personnel play a key role in fighting terrorism at its source as a part of the NATO led International Security Assistance Force. Around 970 Australians play a key, pivotal role in sup-
porting the democratically elected Afghan government in their struggle against the Taliban extremists.

Australian soldiers are internationally respected. They are proudly ranked amongst the very best in the world. But the price paid by these fine Australians and indeed their families is very high and incomprehensible to many of us. Trooper David ‘Poppy’ Pearce was serving with the Reconstruction Task Force when he died on 8 October 2007. A son of Liverpool in New South Wales, he started his career in the Australian Army late in life, as a 36-year-old, when he joined the reserves in 2002. Three years later it became his life when he joined the Regular Army after serving in the Solomon Islands, hence the name ‘Poppy’ Pearce. Trooper Pearce served with the 9th Battalion of the Royal Queensland Regiment in the Solomon Islands in 2005-06 before being posted to the 2/14 Light Horse Regiment in October 2006. The tragic incident occurred when Trooper David Pearce was driving an ASLV returning from an engineer reconnaissance task six kilometres from the base in Afghanistan.

Lieutenant Colonel David Wainwright, the Commanding Officer of the Reconstruction Task Force, said in part:

David’s dedication and commitment to our mission in southern Afghanistan was typical of his willingness to help others. Words will never go close to express his efforts, his legacy will endure and he will never be forgotten.

Lieutenant Gavin Vague, the Troop Leader, said:

You could not find any other individual who adequately sums up the legacy of the Australian soldier. A brave, motivated, hardworking and loyal soldier. A true character that could bring a smile to the men during the hardest of times.

Special Forces Sergeant Matthew Locke, also known as ‘Locky’ or ‘Grub’, was killed on patrol on 25 October by small arms fire from Taliban extremists and is the first Australian soldier to be killed by direct enemy gunfire since the start of this war on terrorism. Sergeant Locke was involved in Operation SPIN GHAR, which directly supported an International Security Assistance Force and Afghan national security forces operation to target and clear Taliban extremists from the area around Tarin Kowt, in the Oruzgan province.

Sergeant Locke joined the Army in 1991 and was a high achiever. During his 16-year military career—10 years of which he spent in the elite Special Air Service Regiment—Sergeant Locke completed active service in a number of operational theatres as well as being awarded the Medal for Gallantry last year for his gallantry in hazardous circumstances.

A professional, dedicated, decorated soldier, during his service in the Australian Defence Force, Matthew was awarded the Medal for Gallantry, the Australian Active Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Australian Defence Medal, the United Nations Medal with the United Nations Transitional Authority East Timor Ribbon, the Iraq Clasp to the Australian Active Service Medal, the International Coalition Against Terrorism Clasp to the Australian Active Service Medal, the Infantry Combat Badge and the Returned from Active Service Badge.

To understand the bravery of Sergeant Locke, I will read an extract from the Medal for Gallantry citation:

In one such incident the Anti-Coalition Militia attempted to outflank the Observation Post and Sergeant Locke without regard for his own personal safety, led a two man team to locate and
successfully neutralise the Anti-Coalition Militia in order to regain the initiative and protect his patrol from being overrun.

Whilst deliberately exposing himself to intense rifle and machine gun fire from the Anti-Coalition Militia, he again neutralised the lead assaulting elements whilst suppressing other Militia until the arrival of offensive air support. Whilst still under sustained fire, Sergeant Locke then directed indirect fire to effectively neutralise another Anti-Coalition Militia advance on his patrol’s position. The courageous and gallant actions of Sergeant Locke were instrumental in regaining the initiative from the Anti-Coalition Militia and allowing the successful exfiltration of the patrol on foot prior to first light the next day.

Sergeant Locke’s actions of gallantry whilst under enemy fire in extremely hazardous circumstances, displayed courage of the highest order and is in keeping with the finest traditions of Special Operations Command-Australia, the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

To his wife, Leigh, and 12-year-old son, Keegan, we owe a great deal of gratitude.

Private Luke Worsley was killed by small arms fire while participating in a planned attack by our forces against Taliban leaders. Private Worsley enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in October 2001. He served in East Timor as part of Operation CITADEL and had previous service in Afghanistan with Delta Commando Company Group. This was Private Worsley’s second tour of Afghanistan. He qualified as a commando in 2004. Those that speak highly of him include Lieutenant Colonel Mark Smethurst, who said in part:

Luke’s actions upon entering the room, warning of the enemy threat, almost certainly saved the lives of other members of his team.

The tributes that were paid at the funeral of Luke were in a dimension that most people could not understand.

Luke was also a very dedicated and decorated hero. For his service in East Timor and Afghanistan, Luke was awarded the Australian Defence Medal; the Australian Active Service Medal, with clasp ‘East Timor’; the United Nations medal, with the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor ribbon; the International Coalition Against Terrorism clasp; the Afghanistan Campaign Medal; the Infantry Combat Badge; and the Return From Active Service Badge. Luke was also awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry for his service with the Special Operations Task Group in 2006.

These fine men have become part of Australia’s history. Perhaps what best sums up the contribution and fears of our serving men is a poem that was read at Luke Worsley’s funeral service. I would like to read it into Hansard. It is called The Final Inspection:

The soldier stood and faced God,
Which must always come to pass,
He hoped his shoes were shining,
Just as brightly as his brass.

‘Step forward now, you soldier,
How shall I deal with you? Have you always turned the other cheek?
To My Church have you been true?’
The soldier squared his shoulders and said, ‘No, Lord, I guess I ain’t,
Because those of us who carry guns,
Can’t always be a saint.
I’ve had to work most Sundays,
And at times my talk was tough,
And sometimes I’ve been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.
I know I don’t deserve a place among the people here,
They never wanted me around,
Except to calm their fears.

Luke’s actions upon entering the room, warning of the enemy threat, almost certainly saved the lives of other members of his team.

The tributes that were paid at the funeral of Luke were in a dimension that most people could not understand.
If you’ve a place for me here, Lord,
It needn’t be so grand,
I’ve never expected or had too much,
But if you don’t, I’ll understand.’
There was a silence all around the throne,
Where the saints had often trod,
As the soldier waited quietly,
for the judgment of his God.
‘Step forward now, you soldier,
You’ve borne your burdens well,
Walk peacefully on Heaven’s streets,
You’ve done your time in Hell.’
The Liberal Party support this condolence motion because Australian soldiers are the finest that have ever been seen.

The SPEAKER—Order! As a mark of respect, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having risen in their places—

The SPEAKER—I thank the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Albanese) adjourned.

Mr Leonard Joseph Keogh
Dr Kenneth Lionel Fry
Ms Helen Mayer
Hon. Robert Lindsay Collins AO
Mr Matt Price
Mr Bernard Douglas (Bernie) Banton AM
Hon. Sir Charles Walter Michael Court AK, KCMG, OBE
Sir Edmund Percival Hillary KG, ONZ, KBE

The SPEAKER (7.11 pm)—Order! I inform the House of the following deaths.

Leonard Joseph Keogh died on 10 October 2007; he represented the division of Bowman from 1969 to 1975 and 1983 to 1987. Dr Kenneth Lionel Fry died on 10 October 2007; he represented the division of Fraser from 1974 to 1984. Ms Helen Mayer died on 7 February 2008; she represented the division of Chisholm from 1983 to 1987. The Hon. Robert Lindsay Collins AO died on 21 September 2007; he was a former senator, who represented the Northern Territory from 1987 to 1998, and a minister. Mr Matt Price, the journalist, died on 25 November 2007. Mr Bernard Douglas (Bernie) Banton AM, a victim of asbestosis, mesothelioma and asbestos related pleural disease, died on 27 November 2007. The Hon. Sir Charles Walter Michael Court AK, KCMG, OBE, a former Premier of Western Australia, died on 22 December 2007. And Sir Edmund Percival Hillary KG, ONZ, KBE, New Zealand mountaineer and first-known climber to reach the summit of Mount Everest, died on 11 January 2008.

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (7.12 pm)—Mr Speaker, I would like to seek your indulgence to make some remarks about a number of those persons to whom you have just referred.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr RUDD—Bernie Banton died on 27 November 2007. He became the face of the campaign to achieve justice for the many sufferers of asbestos related diseases. He worked at the James Hardie facility located at Camellia in Sydney’s Western Suburbs. He worked there for six years in the late 1960s and early 1970s alongside other members of his family. As we know, exposure to just one asbestos fibre can be deadly. Those workers had constant, intensive exposure to asbestos dust day after day. Indeed, those workers were known at the time as the ‘snowmen’ because at work they were covered from head to toe in the white dust of asbestos, from the manufacture of kalite. When Bernie
Banton left that job in 1974, there were 136 workers at that facility. As the years passed, one by one they fell victim to asbestos related diseases. As of 2006, only nine of these 136 former employees of the facility were still alive—only nine out of 136. That is a terrible and shocking statistic.

Bernie fought asbestosis, asbestos related pleural disease and finally mesothelioma. He settled his own compensation claim in 2000 but his real fight was only just beginning—the fight for justice for all the victims of asbestos related diseases. Alongside Greg Combet and the great support he received from the trade union movement, Bernie played a critical role in bringing James Hardie to justice through his contribution to negotiations and his high profile and effective public advocacy for justice.

Bernie’s own life was touched by tragedies beyond his own illnesses: the deaths of so many of his co-workers, the death of his own brother Ted from mesothelioma and the fact that his brother Albert currently has asbestosis. Despite the tragedies around him and in his own life, Bernie never became embittered. Instead, he thought about the lives of others who would suffer from these illnesses: fellow workers; their wives and mothers, who daily washed their dust-covered clothes; ordinary Australians who were exposed to asbestos; and the families who lost loved ones and lost their livelihoods as a result.

Bernie thought of what he could do to make sure that they would have support and help in the long years of battling declining health. He fought to make sure their families were not left nothing after they were gone. He became a familiar sight to Australians on our TV screens with his rasping voice and his oxygen tubes, fighting day in, day out for a fair go for working families. Bernie was determined not to give up the fight until it was won, until James Hardie did the right thing for the thousands of past and future victims of asbestos. It was an extraordinary contest, this genuine little Aussie battler, Bernie Banton, staring down the might of a mega corporation—and Bernie won. Backed by Greg Combet, backed by the trade union movement, he kept working for the cause of asbestos victims to the last days before he succumbed.

I will always remember my visit to Bernie just a few weeks before his death. Though facing death he was absolutely full of life, always asking how the campaign was running, asking what further could be done for those suffering from these dreadful diseases. He said to me: ‘Kevin, were it not for the unions, I never could have prevailed.’ He was a genuine Australian hero, an ordinary bloke with an extraordinary heart who led an extraordinary life—a man of faith, courage and conviction. In his fight for justice Bernie somehow reached out and touched the Australian soul, reminding us all of what it is to be Australian, reminding us all of the need to look out for one another and reminding us all that we need a fair go for all, not just for some.

Bernie became a living symbol of basic human decency, and this was reflected in the state funeral held for Bernie on 5 December last year, provided by the government of New South Wales. I believe that in the future kids will talk about the story of Bernie Banton. It will become part of Australian folklore, and I think that is a good thing. On behalf of the Australian parliament I extend our thoughts and prayers to the Banton family, to Karen and to Bernie’s five children.

I would also like to make some remarks about the passing of Matt Price. On the day after the election last year we received the
terrible news of Matt Price’s death. He had become one of the nation’s great journalists, and he was still a relatively young man. John Hartigan from News Ltd described Matt in his 2007 Andrew Olle lecture as a ‘quality bloke’. I cannot think of a better description. He was a professional. He was witty. He was a first-class human being. He was a great Western Australian with a passion for sport.

Matt’s writing career began with a cadetship at the Albany Advertiser, a small paper in the south of Western Australia. He moved then to the Daily News in Perth, a paper that has since disappeared. This was followed with a stretch at Channel 9, a few years working in television bureaus in London and then back to Perth. In 1997 he joined the Australian and it was in the years following that that he rose to national prominence through his political writing. Those in the Canberra press gallery and members and senators on both sides of the House knew him as a friend, but he was a friend of so many people. In the days after his death, at his funeral in Perth and at his memorial in the Great Hall here in Parliament House, we heard many touching stories of the generosity and kindness of this thoroughly decent young man. He wrote on politics, he wrote on sport, but you knew he could write on just about anything and it would be quirky, informative, entertaining. He was terrific.

For those of us who served in this House before the election, I doubt that many parliamentary days passed without us picking up a copy of the Aus to read ‘The Sketch’ and to read Matt Price skewer one of us or the other—and, if it was not us that day, we would know it would be us the next day. Matt daily chronicled parliamentary events for the national daily. Matt sketched cartoons with words and there he did, tastefully, artfully, the task of disembowelling each of us, always with a smile. Matt always described this to me as one of the important character-building experiences of national political life. He was a great writer. His writing brought colour and warmth to the often dry debates in this chamber. The election campaign trail was not the same without him. For those of us returning to the House, it is hard to imagine this new parliamentary session without Matt Price.

Matt was destined to a long and distinguished career as one of the greats of Australian political journalism. It is sad for all of us as his friends and colleagues that we will never see him reach his full potential. But for Matt, the core of his being, the core of his life, the absolute core of his life, was his wonderful family. Many of us have spent time with them and see his life and his love for them radiated through each of them. So for Matt’s wife, Sue, and his kids, Jack, Matilda and Harry, your loss has been terrible. Our hearts go out to them, as we remember Matt and his contribution to our time in this place.

I would like to add to that, Mr Speaker, a contribution on the life of Sir Charles Court, a great Western Australian and a son of the Liberal Party. As Premier Carpenter said, no man has had as much influence in the development of Western Australia in the past 50 or 60 years as Sir Charles Court. It may be of some surprise to those opposite, but the first person ever to award me a prize in public speaking for anything was Sir Charles Court.

Mr Abbott interjecting—

Mr Rudd—As Tony Abbott has just said, he was capable of error. Sir Charles’s parliamentary career began in 1953 and extended to 1982. That is a long stretch. Sir Charles will be remembered for the key role he played in the development of the Western
Australian mining industry, first as Minister for Industrial Development in the sixties and as Premier from 1974 to 1982.

Charles Court was a passionate advocate of Western Australia. He never shirked a fight with Canberra—it did not matter who ran Canberra, even when it included his Liberal Party counterpart Sir Robert Menzies. Sir Charles was always a great believer in the capacity and the economic potential of the Western Australian mining industry. He oversaw many years of rapid population growth and major economic development. As Premier he played a major role in the development of the Pilbara, gas exploration, development of the North West Shelf, the Kwinana industrial strip and the Ord River scheme. He also made a major contribution to the development of export markets, in particular in Japan. Charles Court brought great energy and commitment to his public life. He lived a long and distinguished life and his place in Australian history is truly assured. He is one of those giant figures in Australian politics, a person who decided never to come here but a person who shaped so much of what the nation is by his contribution in state politics—and the nation is, I believe, poorer for his passing.

Finally, with your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I wish to speak about Sir Edmund Hillary. Sir Edmund passed away on 11 January. He had a long life, one of remarkable achievements. Through his life he touched and inspired people around the world, first as a mountaineer but later as an environmentalist and as a great humanitarian. Sir Edmund began life working as a beekeeper—I didn’t know that—but his spirit of adventure and challenge led him to incredible feats. He was the first person, as we know from our primary school social studies books, together with Tenzing Norgay, to stand on the summit of Mount Everest, on 29 May 1953. To get to the summit back then took determination, dedication and, above all, human courage. We can see these same qualities in his life’s work.

Conquering Everest was just the first of many achievements. He was a writer and a man of great global environmental conscience. He was dedicated to helping also the people of Nepal. In the 1960s he founded the Himalayan Trust. The trust opened schools, hospitals and clinics for the people of Nepal. Later, in response to the threat of deforestation, he worked tirelessly to have the area around Everest declared a national park, enforced by legislation of the government of Nepal. The area is now listed as a World Heritage site.

On behalf of the Australian government and all members of this House, I extend my sympathy to Sir Edmund’s family, his loved ones and friends, and to the people of New Zealand. Sir Edmund Hillary, in so much of our thinking, equals New Zealand. He has been an enormously successful ambassador for our friends and allies across the Tasman, a great internationalist, a great humanitarian, and the world is poorer for his passing.

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (7.23 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence also: firstly, I support very much the remarks of the Prime Minister in relation to the late Bernie Banton. Bernie was, in my opinion, a people’s hero in a country that desperately needed one. He died at the age of 61 from asbestos related mesothelioma. He sought justice for the victims of asbestos related diseases and won that $4½ billion compensation fund from James Hardie Industries to compensate these victims—and, as the Prime Minister so rightly
said, he could not have done it without the support of the union movement.

Mr Banton’s full-time job was at a James Hardie owned factory in Sydney’s western suburbs where he worked making moulds from cement silica and asbestos. Less than 10 of the 137 employees of that plant are still alive today. He and his fellow workers at the factory were known as ‘snowmen’, because every day when they left work they were covered with white asbestos powder. One of his brothers, Ted, had already died of the disease, and another, Albert, also suffers from asbestosis, and all three worked at the James Hardie factory.

As we have heard, in 2004 he went every day to a special commission of inquiry into James Hardie’s use of asbestos. The inquiry recommended a negotiated settlement, which Bernie played a large part in securing. He fought not just for himself but for others—in fact, he fought for others more so than for himself. He wanted to make sure that others did not have to suffer the immense pain that mesothelioma causes. He played the pivotal role in negotiating the compensation fund from James Hardie Industries, and his success in this role represented the very best of what can be achieved when a group of people—in this case, supported by the unions—can achieve for working people.

Bernie will be remembered for his fighting spirit, his courage in the face of insurmountable barriers, and his sense of humour. When hearing of the rather large payout of a Hardie chief, Bernie said: ‘It’s taken my breath away, and I only have 20 per cent of it left.’ At his funeral, his brother Brian said that Bernie was able to forgive Hardie industries before he died. To forgive those who had caused him and others great pain is a testament to his character and one of the principal reasons he is remembered, and remembered so fondly, and regarded so highly. He is survived by his wife, Karen, his five children and 11 grandchildren.

I would also like to join the Prime Minister in condolence in relation to Matt Price. It is hard to speak about Matt without speaking about the so-called ‘spearing’ to which the Prime Minister referred, but it would not be possible for me to do that without it being at my expense. He was born in 1961 in Perth and, as we know, he died on 25 November 2007. The son of an accountant, he was educated in the Catholic school system. He was prodigiously talented. In fact, a very senior person in our former government regarded him as ‘the most outstanding journalist in the Canberra gallery’.

He could summarise a situation with great perception and often with an extraordinary sense of humour. He was always going to be a journalist. He had worked for the Albany Advertiser, the Perth Daily News, the Nine Network, and Sky News in London. He won the inaugural Paul Lyneham Award for Excellence in Press Gallery Journalism in 2003. His bio on the Australian website said:

Career highlights include covering the Lockerbie bombing, the Sydney Olympics and watching Fremantle win the AFL premiership. The latter hasn’t happened yet, but it will. Oh yes, it will.

I hear Julie Bishop laughing. When doctors found tumours in his brain in early October last year, Matt wrote a message to his friends telling them he was about to undergo exploratory brain surgery and about to enter ‘a long, dark tunnel’. He signed off with this message:

No pithy punchline, just the obvious observation—life is fragile, hug your loved ones.

Of all of the things that were said about him and the kind of person that he was, I think Mike Harvey’s description of how he came
into the lives of him and his partner, Cynthia Banham, who suffered amazing injuries in the crash in Yogyakarta last year, is most telling. Mike Harvey said this:

Cynthia was in a week-long coma and her life was in the balance. Matt was everywhere for us. Every day he would be calling or visiting me or his family were cooking me dinners, just the little things that friends do to take the pressure off in such terrible circumstances.

We had many long conversations about the fragility of life during this time and his sense of spirit and optimism helped us both get through the most terrible six months.

He never imposed himself on us, not once. His emotional strength was a pillar for both of us.

Cynthia was out of hospital for the day, and Matt and Sue and the kids came, and he was excited for us, he was really, genuinely excited because it was such a step for us in our recovery process. That gave us great emotional strength. I don’t know what I would have done had he not been around to help me, to push me, to constantly be a shoulder to lean on. I will miss him terribly.

As the Prime Minister observed, the centre of Matt’s life was his family—nothing else and no-one else. He did not take us very seriously, nor did he take himself very seriously, and he will be remembered not for what he was but for who he was. The Prime Minister said that he did not achieve his full potential, and he did not, but he surely helped us achieve ours, and we will miss him greatly.

I also join in the condolence for Sir Charles Court. Sir Charles was a true giant of the 20th century, and today we remember in him a great Liberal leader. To correct the Prime Minister: he was not a ‘son’ of the Liberal Party; he was a father of the Liberal Party. He was a pioneer and a visionary, whose commitment to the state of Western Australia and to our country continues to reap rewards to this very day. In fact, every Australian who hears about our surplus and our very strong economic circumstances needs to reflect for a moment on the fact that that has been given to us in no small way by this man’s vision and determination to develop the resources sector in the state of Western Australia.

Sir Charles was born in Sussex, England on 29 September, 1911. He came to Australia with his parents as a baby. He was raised by parents of Labor leanings, who also taught their son the value of hard work and instilled in him the importance of family and maintaining high moral standards, values with which he would find himself very much at home in the Liberal Party. His drive and work ethic led Sir Charles to be the first of his family to enter a profession, accountancy, and he helped establish the firm of Hendry Rae and Court. Sir Charles joined the conservative movement in part due to his anger at the obstruction of the war effort, as he saw it, by militant unions. Sir Charles felt the call to duty and enlisted in the Army as a private in 1940 before rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and serving with distinction in the Pacific. Upon discharge in 1946, he entered the Western Australian parliament as the member for Nedlands.

Within three years of entering parliament, Sir Charles became Deputy Leader of the Opposition and, following the election of the Liberal Country Party government of David Brand in 1959, was appointed Minister for Industrial Development, the North West and Railways. It was at that time that Sir Charles began laying the foundations for the development of Western Australia’s enormous mineral resources. He was particularly successful in ensuring the Pilbara was opened up for iron ore exploration and the commercial exploitation of these vast reserves. One particular innovation was to ensure that mini-
ing companies paid for the pipelines, townships, railways and other infrastructure needed to service the mining fields. The capital required to finance this infrastructure necessitated the involvement of the big multinational companies, and Sir Charles was assiduous in his work to attract overseas investment to the west. In this regard, Sir Charles was well ahead of his contemporaries in ties with Asia, in particular with Japan. He was the principal driver behind Canberra’s decision to lift the ban on exporting iron ore. As Sir Robert Menzies, another fine Liberal leader, said: ‘Sir Charles was a remarkable man who would never take “no” for an answer.’ After the defeat of the Brand government in 1971, he was the natural choice to lead the opposition; indeed, he was a wise choice for the Liberal and National Country Party. It won back government from the Tonkin Labor government in 1974, and Sir Charles was to remain Premier until his retirement at the age of 70 in 1982. His commitment to developing Western Australia’s regions also saw the development of the North West Shelf gas reserves and the establishment of the Ord River scheme. Whilst both these projects were criticised in their infancy, Sir Charles’s vision has been vindicated in recent years. Western Australia is looked at with envy by the other states for the dynamism, entrepreneurial spirit and optimism of its people.

Among his personal interests, Sir Charles was an accomplished cornet player, performing in several orchestras including for the final Australian performances of Anna Pavlova. His love of the arts and education led to the restoration of Her Majesty’s Theatre, the establishment of Murdoch University and the Art Gallery of Western Australia. He was a man of enormous integrity and intelligence, who set the foundation stones for the prosperity of modern Western Australia and for the way in which it drives Australia’s national prosperity. He was the patriarch of a great, wonderful extended family, he was a patriarch of the Liberal Party of Australia and he was the patriarch of a modern, vibrant, prosperous Western Australia. He is survived by his wife, Judy, by his children, Victor, Barry, Ken, Richard and Geoffrey, and by 16 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

I would also like to support the condolences for Sir Edmund Hillary. Sir Edmund Hillary devoted his life to exploring, mountaineering and helping the Nepalese people. He was truly devoted to helping others and built his life based on humility and generosity. He will be remembered first and foremost as the first man to climb Mount Everest, a feat achieved in May 1953 with Sherpa Tenzing Norgay. Sir Edmund’s life demonstrated that the human spirit, inspired by the fragile yet powerful emotion of hope, can overcome any adversity. He lived the two qualities that are foundations to a successful life. The first is an unshakeable and powerful inspiration of hope to overcome anything, and the second is a life in the service of others. As such, he will be remembered as a true giant of our generation.

Sir Edmund’s achievements extended well beyond mountaineering and exploring. He devoted much of his life to helping the Sherpa people of Nepal to build hospitals, schools and bridges in the remote areas of the Himalayas. During the Second World War, Sir Edmund served in the New Zealand Air Force. He was appointed New Zealand High Commissioner to India, Nepal and Bangladesh in 1985. He also served as the Honorary President of the American Himalayan Foundation, which helps improve the living conditions in the Himalayas. I think
the Prime Minister, when Leader of the Opposition, described himself as ‘having to climb an Everest’. Sir Edmund left us a popular expression which describes knowing that something is going to be extraordinarily difficult to achieve and overcome, but which can nevertheless be done. And so I say that we too will climb that Everest.

Sir Edmund is survived by his wife, Lady June Hillary, and his two children, Peter and Sarah. We offer our condolences not only to them but to the people of New Zealand for having given this great man to the world.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Deputy Prime Minister) (7.36 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence: I wish to make some remarks about two men who died within days of each other—and both died too soon. The first, of course, is the journalist Matt Price. Matt Price was one of those amazing characters. As the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have said, he certainly made a mark on this place. He was the purple-shirted, colourful Western Australian larrikin who changed journalism in this country with his unique writing style. He would put a humorous label on everybody’s head and use his former sports journalist’s eye to call the play of the day. If it was just funny, that would have been good enough. But, beneath the humour, Matt Price always had penetrating insights. He always knew what was moving and what was important in Australian politics and he made sure, through humour, that it was read. If it were just us who rushed to read ‘the Sketch’ every day, that would make Matt Price a good journalist. But what made him a great journalist was that he was the interpreter of political events for Australians right around the country, the person they relied on to get an insight into what was happening in this place.

This was reinforced for me when the Prime Minister and I attended Matt Price’s funeral in Perth on 30 November last year and when the current Manager of Opposition Business, Joe Hockey, and I attended and spoke at Matt’s memorial at Parliament House on 13 December. At each event there were Australians who had never met Matt Price. They came because they felt like they knew him from reading what he wrote in the newspaper. They felt like he was a friend, and they mourned his loss. That Matt Price loved politics is known to all of us. It is particularly known to me because on election night I received a text message from him congratulating me on our victory in winning that election. Matt died the next day. That is a man who loved politics. But, beyond that, he was a man who loved life and had a generous and bounding spirit to go with it. At the memorial at Parliament House his family friend the Sunday Telegraph editor Neil Breen said the following—and it is just so true of Matt:

“Whenever your phone rang and you saw it was Matt calling, you’d laugh because you knew the world’s happiest man was on the other end of the line. You’d answer and his favourite greeting was, ‘Great man, mate, you’re the greatest.’ All phone calls would finish with, ‘OK, great man, got to go, you’re the greatest.’ And off he would go to ring someone else and tell them they were the greatest.”

That was Matt Price—boundless energy, boundless love of life—and that was what made his succumbing to cancer so quickly and so young so difficult to take. Matt Price was born in 1961. He died on 25 November 2007. As someone also born in 1961 can I say with some emotion that it is too young to die. Of all the things Matt valued in life, the thing he valued and loved the most was his family. Our condolences go to his wife, Susie, and his children Jack, Matilda and
Harry. We had the privilege of sharing the funeral with them in Perth, and it was tremendous to see them at the memorial service here in Canberra. But, of course, they are the ones who would most keenly be feeling the loss of Matt.

I would also like to briefly make some remarks about Bernie Banton. I do not claim to have known Bernie Banton well. I am looking forward to a speech which I am sure will be made at some point by the member for Charlton, Greg Combet, a man who knew Bernie Banton well and stood shoulder to shoulder with him in his fight for a modicum of justice for the victims of James Hardie. Can I say this about Bernie Banton, a man who, at the age of 61, also died too young: to face your own death with dignity is an accomplishment, but to face your own death with dignity and use your last days to fight for others is truly a heroic act. Bernie Banton was a hero. Our condolences go to his wife, Karen, and to his children, Dean, Melinda, Adam, Brent and Chris, who knew that about their husband and father.

The SPEAKER—As a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER—I thank the House.
Committee and delegation reports on Fridays in the House
Each Member 10 mins maximum, as recommended by the whips

in the Main Committee
Each Member 10 mins

Matter of public importance
Whole discussion
Proposer 1 hr
Member next speaking 15 mins
Next 2 Members speaking 15 mins
Any other Member 10 mins each

Private Members’ business on Fridays
Whole debate as recommended by the whips

2 Definitions (new definitions, as follows)
Chief Government Whip includes another government whip acting on behalf of the Chief Government Whip
Chief Opposition Whip includes another opposition whip acting on behalf of the Chief Opposition Whip.

Petition is a formal request to the House to take action that is within its power to take. A petition for presentation to the House must comply with the standing orders.

Petition terms consist of the reasons for the petition and the request for action by the House.

29 Set meeting and adjournment times
(a) The House shall meet each year in accordance with the program of sittings for that year agreed to by the House, unless otherwise ordered and subject to standing order 30.

(b) When the House is sitting it shall meet and adjourn at the following times, subject to standing orders 30, 31 and 32:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>day</th>
<th>2 meeting commences</th>
<th>3 House adjourns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>12 noon</td>
<td>9 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2 p.m.</td>
<td>9 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>2 p.m.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

30 Changes to meeting times
The Speaker or a Minister may initiate a change to the meeting times of the House in the following circumstances:

(a) At any time, a Minister may move without notice a motion to set the next meeting of the House.

(b) A Minister may move on notice a motion to set a future meeting or meetings of the House.

(c) When the House is not sitting, the Speaker may set an alternative day or hour for the next meeting, and must notify each Member of any change.

31 Automatic adjournment of the House
(a) At 8.30 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays, 7.30 p.m. on Wednesdays and 4.30 p.m. on Thursdays the Speaker shall propose the question—That the House do now adjourn. This question shall be open to debate— maximum time for the whole debate shall be 30 minutes—and no amendment may be moved.

(b) If this question is before the House at the time set for adjournment in standing order 29, column 3 (times of meeting) the Speaker shall interrupt the debate and immediately adjourn the House until the time of its next meeting.

(c) The following qualifications apply:

Division is completed

(i) If there is a division at the time set for the adjournment to be proposed in standing order 31(a), that division, and
any consequent division, shall be completed.

Minister may require question to be put

(ii) If a Minister requires the question to be put immediately it is proposed under paragraph (a), the Speaker must put the question immediately and without debate.

Minister may extend debate

(iii) When the Speaker interrupts the adjournment debate under paragraph (b), a Minister may ask for the debate to be extended by 10 minutes to enable Ministers to speak in reply to matters raised during the debate. After 10 minutes, or if debate concludes earlier, the Speaker shall immediately adjourn the House until the time set for its next meeting.

Question negatived

(iv) If the question is negatived, the House shall resume proceedings from the point of interruption.

Unfinished business

(v) If the business being debated is not disposed of when the adjournment of the House is proposed, the business shall be listed on the Notice Paper for the next sitting.

(d) Following the conclusion of the grievance debate on Fridays, the Speaker shall, subject to standing order 55(c), without a question being put, immediately adjourn the House until the time set for its next meeting.

33 Limit on business after 9 pm

No new business may be taken after 9 p.m., unless by order of the House before 9 p.m.

34 Order of business

The order of business to be followed by the House is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. House order of business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prayers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prayers</td>
<td>Government Business</td>
<td>9.15 am</td>
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<td>Government Business</td>
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<td>3.30 pm</td>
<td>documents, ministerial statements</td>
<td>documents, ministerial statements</td>
<td>documents, ministerial statements</td>
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<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>9.15 am</td>
<td>9.20 am</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.20 pm</td>
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<td>documents, ministerial statements</td>
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<td>adjournment debate</td>
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<td>9.00 pm</td>
<td>adjournment debate</td>
<td>adjournment debate</td>
<td>adjournment debate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAMBER
35 Priority of business
Government business shall have priority over committee and delegation reports and private Members’ business except on Fridays as provided by standing order 34 (order of business).

39 Presentation of reports
(a) Members can present reports of committees or delegations:
   (i) as agreed by the whips, following prayers on Fridays; or
   (ii) at any time when other business is not before the House.
(b) Members can make statements in relation to these reports:
   (i) during the special set period on Fridays (standing order 34); the whips shall recommend time limits for statements, of not more than 10 minutes for each Member; or
   (ii) at any other time, by leave of the House.
(c) The Member presenting a report may move without notice, a specific motion in relation to the report. When a report has been presented on Friday under paragraph (a)(i), debate on the question shall be adjourned to a later hour and a motion may be moved that the report be referred to the Main Committee. In other cases debate shall be adjourned to a future day.

40 Resumption of debate on reports
(a) After presentation of reports on Fridays proceedings may be resumed on motions in relation to committee and delegation reports moved on an earlier day.
(b) For debate in accordance with paragraph (a) the whips shall recommend:
   (i) the order in which motions are to be considered;
   (ii) time limits for the whole debate; and
   (iii) time limits for each Member speaking, of not more than 10 minutes.
(c) During the period on Fridays provided by standing order 192 proceedings may be resumed in the Main Committee on motions in relation to committee and delegation reports referred that day or on an earlier day.

40A Removal of committee and delegation reports orders of the day, to be omitted.

41 Private Members’ business
(a) In the period set for committee and delegation reports and private Members’ business under standing order 34, private Members’ notices and orders of the day shall be considered in the order shown on the Notice Paper. When the time set by standing order 34 (order of business) or recommended by the whips ends, the Speaker shall interrupt proceedings and put the question.
(b) If
   (i) the whips have recommended that consideration of a matter may continue on a future day;
   then
   (ii) at the time set for interruption of the item of business or if debate concludes earlier, the Speaker shall interrupt proceedings and the matter shall be listed on the Notice Paper for the next sitting.

Private Members’ bills—priority
(c) The whips, in making recommendations to the House:
   (i) shall give priority to private Members’ notices of intention to present bills over other notices and orders of the day; and
   (ii) shall set the order in which the bills are to be presented.

First reading
(d) When each notice is called on by the Clerk, the Member in whose name the notice stands may present the bill, together with an explanatory memorandum (if available), and may speak to the bill for no longer than 5 minutes. The bill shall be then read a first time and the motion for the second reading shall be set down on the Notice Paper for the next sitting.
Second reading
(e) If the motion for the second reading is agreed to by the House, further consideration of the bill shall be accorded priority over other private Members’ business and the whips may recommend times for consideration of the remaining stages.

Alternation of notices
(f) Subject to paragraph (c)(i), the whips shall provide for the consideration of private Members’ notices to alternate between those of government and non-government Members.

41A Selection of private Members’ and committee business
(a) For the period for committee and delegation reports and private Members’ business on Fridays, the whips shall recommend the order of consideration of the matters and the times allotted for debate on each item and for each Member speaking.

(b) The Chief Government Whip shall report the recommendations of the whips to the House and shall move without notice the motion—

_That the House adopt the report._

(c) The Chief Government Whip must report to the House under paragraph (b) in time for the report to be adopted by the House and published on the Notice Paper of the sitting Thursday before the Friday being considered. The report shall be published in Hansard.

(d) The House may grant leave for the order of consideration of the matters, and the times allotted for debate on each item and for each Member speaking, set by the House to be varied.

42 Removal of business
The Clerk shall remove from the Notice Paper items of private Members’ business and orders of the day relating to committee and delegation reports which have not been called on for eight consecutive sitting Fridays.

43 Members’ statements on Fridays
After Prayers on Fridays the Speaker shall call on statements by Members. The Speaker may call a Member, but not a Minister (or Parliamentary Secretary*), to make a statement for no longer than 90 seconds. The period allowed for these statements shall extend until 9.15 a.m.

* Including Assistant Ministers who are Parliamentary Secretaries

44 Grievance debate
(a) Following the conclusion of committee and delegation reports and private Members’ business on Fridays, the first order of the day shall be grievance debate.

(b) After the Speaker proposes the question—

_That grievances be noted_—

any Member may address the House or move any amendment to the question. If consideration of the question has not been concluded after 1 hour and 20 minutes, debate shall be interrupted and any questions put.

51 Privilege matter raised when House is sitting
(a) At any time during a sitting, a Member may raise a matter of privilege. The Member shall be prepared to move, without notice, immediately or subsequently, a motion, declaring that a contempt or breach of privilege has been committed, or referring the matter to the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests.

(b) The Speaker may:

(i) give the matter precedence and invite the Member to move a motion as stated in paragraph (a); or

(ii) reserve the matter for further consideration.

(c) If the matter is given precedence, consideration and decision of every other question shall be suspended until the matter of privilege is disposed of, or debate on any related motion is adjourned.
(d) The Speaker may grant precedence to a privilege motion over other business if satisfied that:
   (i) a prima facie case of contempt or breach of privilege has been made out; and
   (ii) the matter has been raised at the earliest opportunity.

(e) If a matter of privilege related to the proceedings of the Main Committee is raised in the Main Committee, the Deputy Speaker must suspend the proceedings and report to the House at the first opportunity.

52 Privilege matter raised when House not sitting

(a) When the House is not sitting and is not expected to meet for at least two weeks, a Member may raise with the Speaker a matter of privilege which has arisen since the House last met and which the Member proposes be referred to the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests.

(b) The Speaker must refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests immediately, if satisfied that:
   (i) a prima facie case of contempt or breach of privilege has been made out; and
   (ii) the matter requires urgent action.

(c) The Speaker must report the referral to the House at its next sitting. Immediately after the Speaker’s report, the Member must move that the referral be endorsed by the House. If the motion is not agreed to, the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests shall take no further action on the matter.

55 Lack of quorum

(a) When the attention of the Speaker is drawn to the state of the House and the Speaker observes that a quorum is not present, the Speaker shall count the Members present in accordance with standing order 56.

(b) On Mondays and Tuesdays, if any Member draws the attention of the Speaker to the state of the House between the hours of 6.30 p.m. and 8 p.m., the Speaker shall announce that he or she will count the House at 8 p.m., if the Member then so desires.

(c) On Fridays, if any Member draws the attention of the Speaker to the state of the House, the Speaker shall announce that he or she will count the House following the conclusion of the grievance debate, if the Member then so desires.

(d) If a quorum is in fact present when a Member draws attention to the state of the House, the Speaker may name the Member in accordance with standing order 94(b) (sanctions against disorderly conduct).

106 Giving notice

(a) In all cases, a Member giving a notice of motion must deliver it in writing to the Clerk at the Table. In addition, the Member may state its terms to the House during the period of Members’ statements on Fridays under standing order 43.

(b) The notice may specify the day proposed for moving the motion and must be signed by the Member and a seconder.

(c) Unless the Member has stated the terms of the motion to the House, as provided under paragraph (a), a notice of motion which expresses censure of or no confidence in the Government, or a censure of any Member, must be reported to the House by the Clerk at the first convenient opportunity.

108 Order of notices

The Clerk shall enter notices on the Notice Paper in the order in which they are received, and before orders of the day. Standing orders 41 (private Members’ business), 41A (selection of private Members’ and committee business), 42 (removal of business), 45 (order of government business), and 113 (motion not moved) also apply to the order of notices. A notice of motion becomes effective only when it appears on the Notice Paper.
Deferred divisions on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays
(a) On Mondays and Tuesdays, any division called for between the hours of 6.30 p.m. and 8 p.m. shall be deferred until 8 p.m.
(b) A division called for on a Friday shall be deferred until the commencement of the next sitting, unless otherwise ordered.
(c) The Speaker shall put all questions on which a division has been deferred, successively and without amendment or further debate.
(d) This standing order does not apply to a division called on a motion moved by a Minister on Mondays and Tuesdays, during the periods specified in this standing order.

Notice of intention to present bill
(a) A Member giving a notice of intention to present a bill must deliver the notice in writing to the Clerk at the Table. In addition, the Member may state the terms of the notice to the House during the period of Members’ statements on Fridays, under standing order 43.
(b) The notice must:
(i) specify the title of the bill and the day for presentation; and
(ii) be signed by the Member and at least one other Member.
(c) A notice of intention to present a bill shall be treated as if it were a notice of motion.

Main Committee’s order of business
(a) If the Committee meets on a Wednesday or Thursday, the normal order of business is set out in figure 4.
(b) If the Committee meets on a Friday from 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. to consider orders of the day relating to committee and delegation reports, these orders of the day shall have priority over other business, unless otherwise ordered.

Figure 4. Main Committee order of business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.30 am</td>
<td>9.30 am</td>
<td>Government business and/or committee and delegation reports</td>
<td>Government business and/or committee and delegation reports</td>
<td>Committee and delegation reports if required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approx 10.00 am</td>
<td>approx 10.00 am</td>
<td>approx 12.30 pm</td>
<td>approx 1.00 pm</td>
<td>approx 1.00 pm</td>
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<td>approx 4.00 pm</td>
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<td>approx 8.30 pm</td>
<td>approx 8.30 pm</td>
<td>approx 7.30 pm</td>
<td>approx 7.30 pm</td>
<td>approx 7.30 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The meeting times of the Main Committee are fixed by the Deputy Speaker and are subject to change. Adjournment debates can occur on days other than Thursdays by agreement between the Whips.
204 **Rules for the form and content of petitions**
(a) A petition must:
   (i) be addressed to the House of Representatives;
   (ii) refer to a matter on which the House has the power to act;
   (iii) state the reasons for petitioning the House; and
   (iv) contain a request for action by the House.
(b) The terms of the petition must not contain any alterations and must not exceed 250 words. The terms must be placed at the top of the first page of the petition and the request of the petition must be at the top of every other page.
(c) The terms of the petition must not be illegal or promote illegal acts. The language used must be moderate.
(d) The petition must be in English or be accompanied by a translation certified to be correct. The person certifying the translation must place his or her name and address on the translation.
(e) No letters, affidavits or other documents should be attached to the petition. Any such attachments will be removed before presentation to the House.
(f) A petition from a corporation must be made under its common seal. Otherwise it will be received as the petition of the individuals who signed it.

205 **Rules for signatures**
(a) Every petition must contain the signature and full name and address of a principal petitioner on the first page of the petition.
(b) All the signatures on a petition must meet the following requirements:
   (i) Each signature must be made by the person signing in his or her own handwriting. Only a petitioner incapable of signing may ask another person to sign on his or her behalf.
   (ii) Signatures must not be copied, pasted or transferred on to the petition or placed on a blank page on the reverse of a sheet containing the terms of the petition.
   (c) A Member must not be a principal petitioner or signatory to a petition.

206 **Lodging a petition for presentation**
(a) Petitions may be sent directly to the Standing Committee on Petitions or via a Member.
(b) The Standing Committee on Petitions must check that each petition lodged for presentation complies with the standing orders, and if the petition complies it shall be approved for presentation to the House.

207 **Presenting a petition**
A petition may be presented in one of two ways:
(a) The Speaker shall present petitions and the Clerk announce them each sitting Friday, in accordance with standing order 34 (order of business).
(b) A Member may present a petition during:
   (i) the periods of Members' statements in the House, in accordance with standing order 43, and in the Main Committee, in accordance with standing order 193;
   (ii) adjournment debate in the House in accordance with standing order 31, and in the Main Committee in accordance with standing order 191; and
   (iii) grievance debate in accordance with standing order 44.

208 **Action by the House**
(a) Each petition presented shall be received by the House, unless a motion that it not be received is moved immediately and agreed to.
(b) The terms of petitions shall be printed in Hansard.
(c) The Standing Committee on Petitions shall respond to petitions on behalf of the House and report to the House.
209 Petition may be referred to a Minister for response
(a) After a petition is presented to the House, the Standing Committee on Petitions may refer a copy of the petition to the Minister responsible for the administration of the matter raised in the petition.
(b) The Minister shall be expected to respond to a referred petition within 90 days of presentation by lodging a written response with the Committee.
(c) The Clerk shall announce any ministerial responses to petitions. After the announcement, ministerial responses shall be printed in Hansard and published on the House’s internet website.

210 Petition to comply with standing orders, to be omitted.

211 Announcement of petitions and responses, to be omitted.

212 Petition referred to Minister for response, to be omitted.

213 Action by the House, to be omitted.

215 General purpose standing committees
(a) The following general purpose standing committees shall be appointed:
   (i) Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs;
   (ii) Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts;
   (iii) Standing Committee on Communications;
   (iv) Standing Committee on Economics;
   (v) Standing Committee on Education and Training;
   (vi) Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations;
   (vii) Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth;
   (viii) Standing Committee on Health and Ageing;
   (ix) Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation;
   (x) Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government;
   (xi) Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs; and
   (xii) Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources.
(b) A committee appointed under paragraph (a) may inquire into and report on any matter referred to it by either the House or a Minister, including any pre-legislation proposal, bill, motion, petition, vote or expenditure, other financial matter, report or document.
(c) A committee may make any inquiry it wishes to make into annual reports of government departments and authorities and reports of the Auditor-General presented to the House. The following qualifications shall apply to these inquiries:
   (i) Reports shall stand referred to committees under a schedule presented by the Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee.
   (ii) The Speaker shall determine any question about responsibility for a report or part of a report.
   (iii) The period during which an inquiry into an annual report may be started by a committee shall end on the day the next annual report of the department or authority is presented to the House.
   (iv) If a committee intends to inquire into all or part of a report of the Auditor-General, the committee must notify the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit of its intention, in writing.
(d) Each committee appointed under paragraph (a) shall consist of 10 members: six government and four non-government Members. Each committee may supplement its membership by up to two members for a particular inquiry, with a maximum of one extra
government and one extra non-government Member.

216 Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests

(a) A Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests shall be appointed to:

(i) inquire into and report on complaints of breach of privilege or contempt which may be referred to it by the House under standing order 51 or by the Speaker under standing order 52, or any other related matter referred to it by or in accordance with a resolution of the House; and

(ii) inquire into and report on the arrangements made for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of a Register of Members’ Interests;

(iii) consider proposals by Members and others on the form and content of the Register of Members’ Interests;

(iv) consider specific complaints about registering or declaring interests;

(v) consider possible changes to any code of conduct adopted by the House; and

(vi) consider whether specified persons (other than Members) ought to be required to register and declare their interests.

(b) The committee shall consist of 11 members: the Leader of the House or his or her nominee, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or his or her nominee and nine other members, five government and four non-government Members. When the Opposition is composed of two parties, the non-government Members shall consist of at least one member of the smaller opposition party.

(c) The committee may call for witnesses and documents, but when considering a matter concerning the registration or declaration of Members’ interests it must not exercise that power or undertake an investigation of a person’s private interests unless the action is approved by at least 6 members of the committee other than the Chair.

(d) The committee may report when it sees fit, and must report to the House on its operations in connection with the registration and declaration of Members’ interests during the year as soon as possible after 31 December each year.

217 Library Committee

(a) A Library Committee shall be appointed to consider any matter about the provision of library services to Members referred to it by the House or by the Speaker.

(b) The committee shall consist of seven Members.

220 Standing Committee on Petitions

(a) A Standing Committee on Petitions shall be appointed to receive and process petitions, and to inquire into and report to the House on any matter relating to petitions and the petitions system.

(b) The committee shall consist of ten members: six government and four non-government members.

222 Selection Committee, to be omitted.

250 Committee receiving allegations against Members

(a) Only the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests may inquire into or make findings about the conduct of a Member, unless the House directs another committee to review the conduct of a Member.

(b) If a committee (other than the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests) receives information or an allegation about a Member, the committee shall inform the Member and give the Member an opportunity to make a submission about the matter. Unless the committee considers the matter is without substance, it shall report the matter to the House and wait for its directions.
Privileges Committee—publication of records
(Resolution adopted 7 December 2000)
That:
(1) the House authorises:
   (a) the publication of all evidence or documents taken in camera or submitted on a confidential or restricted basis to the Committee of Privileges or to the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests and that have been in the custody of the Committee for at least 30 years; and
   (b) the transfer of these records to the National Archives of Australia to enable public access to the records;
   provided that, where the Speaker accepts advice that the release of a particular record would affect the national security interest, or represent an unreasonable intrusion upon the personal affairs of any person, alive or dead, or would otherwise be an exempt record under s. 33 of the Archives Act 1983, if that Act had applied to the record, the release and transfer of that record is not authorised by this resolution;
(2) this resolution has effect notwithstanding the provisions of any other resolution or standing order of the House; and
(3) this resolution has effect from 1 January 2001 and continues in force unless and until amended or rescinded by the House in this or a subsequent Parliament.

Registration of Members’ interests Requirements of the House of Representatives

(1) Registration of Members’ interests
That:
(a) within 28 days of making and subscribing an oath or affirmation as a Member of the House of Representatives each Member shall provide to the Registrar of Members’ Interests, a statement of—
   (i) the Member’s registrable interests, and
   (ii) the registrable interests of which the Member is aware (a) of the Member’s spouse and (b) of any children who are wholly or mainly dependent on the Member for support,
   in accordance with resolutions adopted by the House and in a form determined by the Committee of Members’ Interests or by the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests from time to time, and shall also notify any alteration of those interests to the Registrar within 28 days of that alteration occurring, and
(b) the statement to be provided by a Member shall include:
   (i) in the case of a Member who was not a Member of the House of Representatives in the immediately preceding Parliament, interests held at the date of his or her election and any alteration of interests which has occurred between that date and the date of completion of the statement, and
   (ii) in the case of a Member who was a Member of the House of Representatives in the immediately preceding Parliament, interests held at the date of dissolution of the House of Representatives in the previous Parliament and any alteration of interests which has occurred between that date and the date of completion of the statement.

(2) Registrable interests
That the statement of a Member’s registrable interests to be provided by a Member shall include the registrable interests of which the Member is aware (1) of the Member’s spouse and (2) of any children who are wholly or mainly dependent on the Member for support, and shall cover the following matters:
(a) shareholdings in public and private companies (including holding companies) indicating the name of the company or companies;
(b) family and business trusts and nominee companies—
   (i) in which a beneficial interest is held, indicating the name of the trust, the nature of its operation and beneficial interest, and
   (ii) in which the Member, the Member’s spouse, or a child who is wholly or mainly dependent on the Member for support, is a trustee (but not including a trustee of an estate where no beneficial interest is held by the Member, the Member’s spouse or dependent children), indicating the name of the trust, the nature of its operation and the beneficiary of the trust;
(c) real estate, including the location (suburb or area only) and the purpose for which it is owned;
(d) registered directorships of companies;
(e) partnerships indicating the nature of the interests and the activities of the partnership;
(f) liabilities indicating the nature of the liability and the creditor concerned;
(g) the nature of any bonds, debentures and like investments;
(h) saving or investment accounts, indicating their nature and the name of the bank or other institutions concerned;
(i) the nature of any other assets (excluding household and personal effects) each valued at over $7,500;
(j) the nature of any other substantial sources of income;
(k) gifts valued at more than $750 received from official sources, or at more than $300 where received from other than official sources provided that a gift received by a Member, the Member’s spouse or dependent children from family members or personal friends in a purely personal capacity need not be registered unless the Member judges that an appearance of conflict of interest may be seen to exist;
(l) any sponsored travel or hospitality received where the value of the sponsored travel or hospitality exceeds $300;
(m) membership of any organisation where a conflict of interest with a Member’s public duties could foreseeably arise or be seen to arise, and
(n) any other interests where a conflict of interest with a Member’s public duties could foreseeably arise or be seen to arise.

(3) Register and Registrar of Members’ Interests

That:
(a) at the commencement of each Parliament, and at other times as necessary, Mr Speaker shall appoint an officer of the Department of the House of Representatives as the Registrar of Members’ Interests and that officer shall also assist the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests in relation to matters concerning Members’ interests;
(b) the Registrar of Members’ Interests shall, in accordance with procedures determined by the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests, maintain a Register of Members’ Interests in a form to be determined by that committee from time to time;
(c) as soon as possible after the commencement of each Parliament the chairman of the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests shall table in the House a copy of the completed Register of Members’ Interests and shall also table from time to time as required any notification by a Member of alteration of those interests, and
(d) the Register of Members’ Interests shall be available for inspection by any person under conditions to be laid down by the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests from time to time.
Right of reply of persons referred to in the House

(Resolution adopted 27 August 1997)

That:

(1) Where a person who has been referred to by name, or in such a way as to be readily identified, in the House, makes a submission in writing to the Speaker:

(a) claiming that the person has been adversely affected in reputation or in respect of dealings or associations with others, or injured in occupation, trade, office or financial credit, or that the person’s privacy has been unreasonably invaded, by reason of that reference to the person; and

(b) requesting that the person be able to incorporate an appropriate response in the parliamentary record;

and if the Speaker is satisfied:

(c) that the subject of the submission is not so obviously trivial or the submission so frivolous, vexatious or offensive in character as to make it inappropriate that it be considered by the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests; and

(d) that it is practicable for the Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests to consider the submission under this resolution,

the Speaker shall refer the submission to that Committee.

(2) The Committee may decide not to consider a submission referred to it under this resolution if the Committee considers that the subject of the submission is not sufficiently serious or the submission is frivolous, vexatious or offensive in character, and such a decision shall be reported to the House.

(3) If the Committee decides to consider a submission under this resolution, the Committee may confer with the person who made the submission and any Member who referred in the House to that person.

(4) In considering a submission under this resolution, the Committee shall meet in private session.

(5) The Committee shall not publish a submission referred to it under this resolution or its proceedings in relation to such a submission, but may present minutes of its proceedings and all or part of such submission to the House.

(6) In considering a submission under this resolution and reporting to the House the Committee shall not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the House or of the submission.

(7) In its report to the House on a submission under this resolution, the Committee may make either of the following recommendations:

(a) that no further action be taken by the House or by the Committee in relation to the submission; or

(b) that a response by the person who made the submission, in terms specified in the report and agreed to by the person and the Committee, be published by the House or incorporated in Hansard, and shall not make any other recommendations.

(8) A document presented to the House under paragraph (5) or (7):

(a) in the case of a response by a person who made a submission, shall be succinct and strictly relevant to the questions in issue and shall not contain anything offensive in character; and

(b) shall not contain any matter the publication of which would have the effect of:

(i) unreasonably adversely affecting or injuring a person, or unreasonably invading a person’s privacy, in the manner referred to in paragraph (1); or

(ii) unreasonably adding to or aggravating any such adverse effect, in-
jury or invasion of privacy suffered by a person.

(9) The Committee may agree to guidelines and procedures, not inconsistent with this resolution, to apply to the consideration by it of submissions.

(10) This resolution shall continue in force unless and until amended or rescinded by the House in this or a subsequent Parliament.

These changes put forward by the government to standing orders are intended to make parliament more accessible, more accountable and more democratic. We know that parliament must constantly adapt to modern-day situations. I will also be moving a motion later to allow members of parliament who are nursing infants to proxy their vote to their party whip. For the first time in history, today we open the parliament with a recognition that we are on traditional Indigenous land and that Australian history goes back well before the 18th century. Tomorrow the Prime Minister, on behalf of the parliament and with the support of the Leader of the Opposition, will apologise to members of the stolen generations.

As part of these changes to standing orders, we are taking measures to make committees run more effectively. We are setting up a new Petitions Committee to make sure that the millions of Australians who petition the parliament have their voices heard. Since Federation, petitions have gathered dust in the bowels of parliament, largely ignored. More than one million Australians signed over 900 petitions to the House of Representatives between 2004 and 2007. Of those, only two were actually responded to. Almost 15,000 Australians petitioned the previous government in 2007 alone for a Commonwealth dental scheme. The creation of the Petitions Committee is an important reform that strengthens the democratic rights of citizens and ensures that parliament is listening and responding appropriately.

There are other amendments to the standing orders, which I note were provided to the Manager of Opposition Business over five hours ago—which is more courtesy than we on this side of the House received during the opposition’s 12 years of government. The opposition would like to have you believe that somehow this is turning parliament and its practices on their heads. The fact is that private members’ business now occurs on Mondays. When it occurred under the previous regime there were no divisions, there were no quorums and people respected the fact that it was private members’ business. That will occur now, but it will occur on Fridays. The difference is that the standing of private members’ business will be raised and there will be more time for private members’ business.

The opposition say that they want Friday sittings. They say that they are in favour of the parliament sitting for five days a week—they just didn’t get around to it in their 12 years of government. The opposition say that they want a matter of public importance debate on Monday—they just didn’t get around to it in their 12 years of government. The opposition say that they want a question time on Friday—they just didn’t get around to it in their 12 years of government.

The opposition do say what they are opposed to. They say they are opposed to many of the standing orders with regard to private members’ business day on Friday. But of course we know that earlier tonight they voted for the suspension of a standing order that applies between 6.30 and 8.00, introduced by them in the last parliament, which allows for a delay in the counting of a quorum or the counting of a division during that time. This was their provision, which we
have used in the private members’ business day provisions for Fridays. And of course it is the same way that the Main Committee operates. The Main Committee, an important function of this parliament, cannot have divisions in it. The Main Committee cannot have quorums called. In the Main Committee we deal with government legislation and we deal with private members’ business—important discussions taking place with no division and no quorums.

Under the Rudd government, parliament will be scheduled to sit five days a week, for the first time since Federation. The government has proposed Friday sittings to give members time to raise important issues in the parliament. In the last parliament there was no scheduled Monday sitting in almost one out of every three sitting weeks. For 17 of the 53 weeks that the 41st parliament was in session, there was no private members’ business whatsoever. Even though private members’ business was scheduled on Mondays, not once was it ever moved by the then government to another day of the week. The government has relied upon legal advice from the Australian Government Solicitor that indicates that our proposition, using their standing orders, is perfectly within order.

Under the Howard government the parliament sat, on average, for 67 days a year. Last year parliament sat for only 50 days. Under the Rudd government, parliament will sit for 82 days this year, with Monday to Friday sittings on most weeks. That includes 67 question times in 2008 as compared with the 63 question times that occurred over the 12 years of the former government. I note that the Leader of the Opposition, who will be the first speaker against these proposed changes, has called for questions from the public—on 3AW, I think. He said, ‘We haven’t got any ideas about what to ask, so we’ll ask the public to give us questions so we can ask them in parliament.’

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE—We have community cabinets. We, for the first time, are not only having question time in this chamber; the Rudd government, its entire cabinet, are going, as we did to Perth, to communities, allowing, for example, 16 questions directly from the public, as part of our commitment to opening up access to government, to harnessing the ideas of the brilliant men and women who make up this great nation—something that those opposite reject.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE—I have to say, from the behaviour of those opposite, that they actually just do not get it. This is a debate about standing orders and about lifting standards in the parliament, and what we have from the opposition is behaviour that is in breach of the standing orders, as they breached the standing orders day after day in the previous parliament. The previous Leader of the House never once got up and referred to a standing order or to the House of Representatives Practice—it was just about who had the numbers.

Let’s not have any nonsense about there being no consultation about these issues. The fact is that the government announced this initiative way back in December. There was no opposition from those opposite in December and no opposition from those opposite in January. It took them until this week, because we have an opposition bereft of ideas with nothing to say about the real issues confronting the nation—nothing to say about the education revolution, nothing to say about infrastructure, nothing to say about
the debacles in defence and nothing to say about climate change and the water crisis.

The big issue on which they are going to take a stance on this first day of the new parliament is standing orders. What they have done is get a speaking list and tell every member who is not a new member that they have to be on the speaking list. So there are 40-odd members of parliament down to speak on this resolution tonight—hour after hour of speeches. What the opposition want, of course, is for us to gag the resolution before the House. I have indicated to the Leader of the Opposition and the Manager of Opposition Business that we will not be doing that. If they think that this is worthy of hour after hour of debate then that is fine. Let the Australian public know that that is their vision for the nation, their idea of the No. 1 priority facing this parliament. The fact is that they have nothing positive to say about the real issues facing the nation.

I was surprised that there was opposition to this proposal, because private members’ business is seen historically as being to the great advantage of the opposition. It is actually a time when you can have motions moved in the parliament. It is a time when you can have, during the grievance debate, ideas raised. Some ideas from your back-bench might actually be good; they might actually feed into the debate that is going on within the coalition about what you stand for. That might not be a bad thing, to actually encourage a bit of debate, because it is quite clear that you cannot have it both ways. You cannot, on the one hand, say that the Labor Party has opened up debate for the opposition to take advantage of it, as was written in the Laura Tingle article in the Australian Financial Review two weeks ago, and yet come in here and say that this situation, in which we have in effect exactly the same rules as applied for private members’ business on Monday and exactly the same rules as applied in the Main Committee, is an atrocity.

The fact is that you have to look at what the opposition did when they were in government to see how fair dinkum they are. Let us look at their credibility when it comes to Matters of Public Importance. The previous government unilaterally cancelled eight MPIs in the last parliament alone. Over the 12 years of the Howard government there were 56 days when MPIs were proposed by the opposition but cancelled by the government. Indeed, on the last day of parliament, the dying hours of the Howard government, the government threw out the MPI entitled ‘The need for fresh thinking and new leadership to secure Australia’s future prosperity’. The opposition, the then government, might have thrown out our MPI, but the people of Australia threw them out because they understood that there was a need for fresh thinking and new leadership. The Australian people had other ideas.

Even the Main Committee was not immune from the Howard government’s contempt for parliament. There were at least six days in the last parliament when the Main Committee did not even sit. Why did they not sit when they were scheduled to? Because they had nothing to do.

Mr Bowen—They’d run out of puff.

Mr ALBANESE—This was a government that was stale, out of puff, out of ideas, out of touch, and it is now out of office. And we can see why. It is quite clear that the former Howard government was ready to depart, and the people of Australia saw to that on 24 November.

There is some considerable irony in the fact that it is the Manager of Opposition
Business who is talking about accountability of the parliament and talking about the conditions upon which he is prepared to work on Friday. Just think about that. The Manager of Opposition Business does not want to work five days a week. That is really what is going on here. But when he was the minister, he was responsible for imposing on working families AWAs which allowed a seven-day working week for many working people, scrapping unfair dismissal laws, slashing sick leave, cutting penalty rates on weekends and public holidays, and putting unfair and extreme AWAs onto vulnerable employees. We have the opposition saying, ‘We think it is okay for young, vulnerable working Australians to be presented with these contracts and to have to sign up, giving away their provisions,’ and yet also saying, ‘We have to have conditions upon which we are prepared to work five days a week.’

The Leader of the National Party let the cat out of the bag last week. The coalition gathered for a two-day party room meeting. It is pretty clear that nothing positive or constructive came out of it. Afterwards they gathered at Menzies House for a little celebration of how well they had gone in the last year—

Mr Pyne—Madam Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—Under which standing order?

Mr Pyne—Under relevance. The member speaking is required to speak to the amendments to the standing orders. He is straying dramatically from that subject; I think that is quite clear. He is now talking about the Liberal Party conference last week. I ask you to draw him back to the subject of the amendments. He has run out of material—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I have heard your argument. The minister is being relevant.

Mr ALBANESE—Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is about whether the opposition is prepared to support the government in having a five-day working week for parliamentarians. That is what this motion is about. The fact is that the Leader of the National Party told a gathering of his colleagues last week to ‘consider the next three years as a holiday before we return to our rightful place on the government benches’. That is the other thing that is going on here. Look at the propositions which have been put forward. The opposition does not comprehend that it actually lost the election, that this side of the House has a mandate and that part of our mandate is increasing our accountability to the parliament. The list of speakers that is circulating still has all its members on the government side. No; you are now on the right side of the House. I got a letter today about a constituent from someone signed ‘Minister’ from that side of the House—the Minister for Small Business and Tourism. It has not yet come to terms with the fact that it has changed.

On this side of the House, we are determined to increase accountability. For example, when it came to AWAs, the person who was minister for Work Choices refused to table the details of AWAs. The fact is that the distinction is pretty clear here. This parliament will sit for 82 days. Previously, the Howard government sat for 67 days. We will have 67 question times. The Howard government had on average 63 question times, including 50 in 2007. Of MPIs cancelled by the previous government, there were eight in the last parliament and 56 over its 12-year life.
The fact is that these provisions will allow for greater sitting of the parliament. We have moved private members’ business to Friday, raising the status of private members’ business, allowing for more than an hour of extra time during that period, and we have added three hours 25 minutes of government business. Unlike this mob opposite, we have a huge agenda for the nation. We have a mandate to implement that agenda and we will be pursuing it throughout 2008. This is a sensible proposition which should be supported by the opposition. If you want to keep sitting all night, you can. It just shows what your priorities are. It just shows that you do not have anything positive to say about the future of the nation. I commend the changed standing orders to the House.

Dr Nelson (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (8.03 pm)—The first thing that I think we need to do here is specifically have a look at what is being proposed. It is common when new governments are formed or there has been a change of government for there to be some changes in standing orders. It is equally common for the opposition of the day to take exception, for various reasons, to the changes to those standing orders. I think it reflects the depth of concern that we on this side have in relation to this: we are here at just after 8 pm on the first sitting day of this the 42nd Parliament preparing for a debate that is likely to go into the early hours of the morning about something that we feel very deeply about. This is no trivial change. These are precedent-making changes, including changes to the standing orders, which will for the very first time reduce the accountability of the government, through the parliament, to the people of Australia.

We are also considering this on the eve of a very large event which we understand will occur tomorrow and which is the centre of national attention. We are debating this on the evening of the first sitting day of the parliament, where there has understandably and quite rightly been a focus on other things. I have had a senior member of the government say to me today, ‘Can you try and keep it short, because don’t forget we’ve all got our families here.’ In one sense, we would like to keep it short, but we would not be doing the right thing by those families or the rest of the country if we were not to take up this debate.

Let us just have a look at what is being proposed here—and we were informed about this through the media, which increasingly appears to be the way in which this government will work, with a significant army of people massaging that media message. We were told through the media in December—just before Christmas when understandably people were focused on other things—of an order of business that would include five sitting days, four question times and three matters of public importance. To the average person listening to Neil Mitchell on 3AW—the Leader of the House may not have a high regard for Mr Mitchell and his listeners but we do—I say we will be very happy to put questions on behalf of members of the Australian community to the Prime Minister and other ministers as we go through the course of this parliament. That is what this debate is all about. This is the Australian community’s parliament. We were told at Christmas we would go to five sitting days. The message that was delivered to the average Australian, who may not pay a lot of attention to what happens in the parliament, was: the parliament sits for four days and your MPs are going to sit for five days. In other words, the Australian public was being led to believe by the incoming Prime Minister that we were going to work harder.
Let us make it absolutely clear: everyone on this side is very happy to work five days a week in the parliament. We know that we have obligations and responsibilities to our constituents, who expect to see us on a Friday. The constituents of the member for Kalgoorlie expect to see him on a Friday. The constituents of the member for Kennedy expect to see him on a Friday. I also suggest the constituents of the member for Leichhardt certainly want to see him on a Friday. I would expect that all three of those members want to hear what their constituents think and want said on their behalf on a Friday. Having said all that, I note we are very prepared and very committed to sitting on a Friday. We on this side have no difficulty with sitting five days a week. Our concern is that Australians are being led to believe that it is a fair dinkum five-day sitting week. In fact, it is not.

Mr Hartsuyker—It’s a clayton’s sitting week.

Dr Nelson—Yes, it is a clayton’s sitting week. On that fifth day there will be no question time but we will have a sitting day. What that means is this. The taxes of the average Australian, who at the moment is struggling with increasing home mortgage interest rates, increased interest rates on their credit cards and on their car loans and is having to pay more to put petrol in their tank—even though they had been led to believe it would be cheaper with a change of government and their families are struggling with groceries—already contribute $1 million a day on average to the running of this parliament. This parliament is going to take $1 million of their money—it is not our money; it is their money—so we can come here to sit on a Friday. We on this side are very comfortable, very happy and very prepared to do that even though we believe our constituents will be disadvantaged by us not being in our electorates. We are prepared to do that but we expect, on behalf of the Australian people, that when we get here the Prime Minister is going to be sitting there, there is going to be a line of ministers along there and they are going to answer questions from here. That is our concern. The accountability of the executive to the legislature is here. It is all of us coming here from our electorates with the questions that our constituents—that is, fair dinkum everyday Australians—want asked on their behalf about the things they are really worried about—of the Prime Minister, whom I note is not here, of the Deputy Prime Minister, whom I note is not here, and of most of the ministers of the government, who are not here. We want them to be here to answer questions not only from us but, through us, from the people, the fair dinkum workers who are listening to Neil Mitchell on 3AW or from anyone else throughout Australia. They must answer questions about things about which they and their families are very concerned.

We were then told this, on 8 February this year. We had the release of an updated order of business with three minor changes. At this stage the average person out there is probably thinking, ‘What does this mean?’ We were told we would move one hour of government business from Tuesday to Monday, there would be documents and ministerial statements added to Monday but not a session for a matter of public importance. For those Australians who are listening to this, a matter of public importance is a matter whereby the parliament makes a decision on any one sitting day that something is so important that a debate should be brought on, usually by the opposition but sometimes by the government. For those listening, it follows question time. It provides the opportu-
nity whereby, if the issue of the day is that grocery prices are causing families to actually have to go without food in the climate that they are in, we will have a debate about it. We expect the minister on the other side or the Prime Minister to actually engage in a debate with us about that issue of the day, that matter of public importance—important not only to us but, by definition, to the public, the people we represent. That is what we are upset about. We are upset about the fact that if we are here on a Friday a million dollars is ripped out of the pockets of the average working family by the government led by the Prime Minister. So we expect to be here to work. We expect the government to work. We expect it to be accountable, to answer questions on behalf of the Australian people.

This is very interesting. Today I listened very carefully to the Governor-General’s speech, which is, as we know, the speech of the government and its agenda for the forthcoming three years of this parliament. From page 18, under ‘Governance and transparency’, I quote:

The Government will implement new measures to help make government more accessible to the community and more transparent in its decision-making.

The Government will hold regular Community Cabinet meetings in capital cities, regional towns and remote communities across Australia.

Accountability actually means that you turn up. If the government believes the parliament should sit five days a week, we will support that as there are many things Australians are concerned about. They are very frightened, for example, about the lack of an economic plan from the Treasurer, who appears to be in a back room reading books about how to run an economy. That is one of the things they are frightened about. In fact, we want him and the Prime Minister and ministers to be here on Friday, to answer questions about those issues that worry average Australians.

The next issue about which I know other speakers on our side will speak is the legality of this. Okay, there is the morality of it, the morality of ripping a million dollars out of the pockets of Australians to fund the working of a parliament in which a Prime Minister does not turn up to answer any questions. There is that aspect to it, but we would like to see this legal advice. We also have legal advice and we are very concerned that this is in breach of section 39 of the Constitution in relation to quorums. The government owes it to the Australian people to show them the legal advice that they paid for which demonstrates and proves that this is constitutionally lawful. I also note that the leader of government business—

Mr Price—Leader of the House!

Dr NELSON—The Leader of the House said that these things are, to use his expression, ‘good for opposition’. That implies that these changes are being made because, if they were not made, the opposition might be in some way disadvantaged. In fact, this is a disadvantage to the Australian people. In terms of transparency and openness, we have been lectured for some months by the Prime Minister, followed by a significant media machine, about how he is accessible and accountable. We listened ad nauseam in the parliament over the last year or so to the then Leader of the Opposition, now Prime Minister, making these statements about accountability. Here he is on 15 February 2005:

The core element of the Westminster system of government is ministerial accountability to parliament and to this House. The last time I looked, honourable members, the person who answers to this parliament on behalf of the government was called the Prime Minister ...
I could not have said it better myself.

An opposition member—Except on a Friday.

Dr NELSON—Except on a Friday. It reminds us of the last Labor Prime Minister we had, a man called Paul Keating, who put on a roster; he rostered himself on and off—which is probably the way we are heading back under the unionised government that has just been elected, and here we are already. We are going to have five sitting days, but the Prime Minister is not going to turn up on one of them. What will happen next week? Next week will we be told, ‘Well, actually he’s cutting back to three days a week and his ministers are cutting back further’?

The government is showing at this very early stage all of the evidence that it does not want to be accountable where it really counts. I also notice that the Prime Minister will be very, very happy to turn up on Gold FM, Triple M or any one of the very good radio programs across Australia—he will go on Rove—but I notice that he is not quite so willing to turn up to the scrutiny of the ABC and some of its more penetrating interviewers. I notice that those opposite have a very sophisticated way of avoiding scrutiny when it comes to the really tough interviews. That is now coming into the parliament; it is now coming in here.

The Australian people are not going to have their ministers turning up on a Friday, even though they are paying them good money to be here; those ministers are not going to turn up to answer questions. We are not going to have a debate on a Monday on a matter of public importance. If, for example, petrol goes from $1.35 to $1.50 a litre on Sunday, forget about having debate on a matter of public importance in the parliament.

Whilst I understand that Australians will always see the opposition questioning the motives of any government that moves to change the standing orders, it is very, very important that they understand that this is a significant change. For the first time we are going to have a scheduled sitting day without a question time, which is when questions are asked on behalf of Australians of the Prime Minister and his ministers. That is a step into a darkness of reduced accountability of the executive to the parliament—to the people of Australia—which is a backward step, and every Australian—(Time expired)

Mr TANNER (Melbourne—Minister for Finance and Deregulation) (8.18 pm)—At the first Labor caucus meeting after the election victory of the Rudd government, a rather sobering fact was pointed out, I think by the chairman of caucus, Daryl Melham, the member for Banks. That is that only about a dozen of us have been members of a Labor government in this place previously; only about a dozen of us who are members of this government in the House of Representatives were members of the former Labor government that lost office in 1996. It is a rather sobering thought that I am one of them.

I actually was here for the last term of the former Labor government—and it does have its benefits; it does have significant benefits. In particular, in the context of this debate, it has given me some good memories. It has brought back great memories of the great champions of parliamentary democracy that from time to time lurk within the ranks of the Liberal and National parties. Sadly, those champions of parliamentary accountability and democracy have been on the interchange bench for a while—for nearly 12 years.

But what is extraordinary is the recovery, the amazing transformation, that has occurred. As a result of one election outcome,
they are now in opposition, and the champions of accountability, the champions of parliamentary democracy—who for so long have been so quiet and who for so long have had nothing to say about the question of the accountability of the executive to this parliament—have suddenly rediscovered their voice. It is indeed a great thing—the change that an election brings and the sudden realisation that the atrocities that they have committed in government can no longer be seen as a good thing because they no longer suit their political interests.

The champions of parliamentary democracy that we see here today are the same people who for the last 11 or 12 years have done everything possible to restrict and minimise the ability of this parliament to scrutinise and hold to account the executive. Why? Because they were the executive; they were the government. Suddenly we see a dramatic change in tempo, a dramatic change in mood and a dramatic change in position on issues because they no longer are the government.

I turn to the individual reforms. There are a number of quite significant reforms here, the most important of which is the creation of more sitting days. There is a five-day sitting week for the parliament, which entails more private members’ business for the parliament, more government business for the parliament and more debate on bills than has previously been seen in the parliament. There are a number of other changes, which have not been mentioned much—although they have been mentioned by the Leader of the House—but which are worthy of noting: a petitions committee, so that petitions from the community can actually be dealt with seriously in this parliament—

Opposition member interjecting—

Mr TANNER—What did you have when you were in government? You had nothing. You had nothing and made no attempt whatsoever to consider this issue. We have also enacted reforms to the Privileges Committee to ensure that it has a broader remit.

One thing the opposition are objecting to, and objecting to very vociferously, is the change in sitting arrangements. They are demanding more matters of public importance debates. They are suggesting that because we are moving private members’ business to Fridays there should be a matter of public importance on Mondays. In other words, when they were in government, for nearly 12 years, they were happy to allow the opposition to have three matters of public importance debates per week, but now they claim they are entitled to four MPI debates a week. Under this proposal from the government, there will be more question times than the average that applied over the course of the Howard government.

The arrangements that are proposed with respect to divisions and quorums that will apply on a Friday are precisely the same arrangements that were put in place by the former government, with the support of the then opposition, with respect to the 6.30 pm to 8 pm period on ordinary sitting days in order to facilitate sitting through dinner. They are precisely the same arrangements to defer quorum counts and to defer divisions for the convenience of the House. So, apparently, an arrangement that currently applies, at their instigation with our support, between 6.30 and 8.30 on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday is okay, but the same arrangement is not okay on Friday.

The logic that applies to the proposal we put forward for sittings on Fridays is the same logic that applied with respect to the creation of the Main Committee, which we
in opposition also supported and which has proved a valuable mechanism for this parliament. We are putting forward a proposal that will mean more debate on government business and will mean less guillotining of important legislation. It will mean more opportunity for members of the opposition to debate government legislation than would otherwise be the case. And it will mean more opportunities for private members—whether they are government, opposition or cross-bench members—to debate issues that they wish to raise in private members’ business, whether it is through the grievance debate, private members’ motions or 90-second statements.

Having been a backbencher briefly a few years ago, I am conscious of the fact that opportunities are fairly limited for backbenchers to get up in this parliament and speak on issues of concern, particularly to their own electorates, and on issues that they may not get an opportunity to deal with through legislation. Sometimes you have to wait quite a while to get an opportunity to get up and speak. Anything that expands the opportunity for ordinary members of parliament to make a contribution like that is a good thing.

I think it is worth scrutinising the content of the argument put forward by the opposition as to why these changes should not proceed. They are implying that somehow the amount of notice of the fine print, the detail of the proposals, they have received is inadequate. These are the same people who brought forward major legislation of far greater significance to the Australian people—like the *Tampa* legislation and like the Northern Territory intervention legislation—without any kind of serious notice to the parliament. The usual arrangement is that a bill is introduced one week and then formally debated the following week. The opposition gets an opportunity in the intervening period to consider that piece of legislation and form a view about whether it will vote for it. I can recall many times in opposition where that usual arrangement was breached by the former government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms AE Burke)—Minister for Finance and Deregulation, the member for O’Connor has a point of order.

Mr Tuckey—Sit down. Take your seat. Learn your manners.

The Deputy Speaker—Excuse me. I have the chair, not you.

Mr Tuckey—Tell him to resume his seat.

The Deputy Speaker—No, I get to do that; you do not. Thank you. Please be seated. The member for O’Connor will be seated!

Mr Tuckey—No, I will not.

The Deputy Speaker—Yes, you will. The member for O’Connor will be seated!

An opposition member—He has a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker—He can stand now. Thank you. The member for O’Connor.

Mr Tuckey—Thank you. The point of order is that the member is misleading the House. They said they would never do anything like he mentioned—

The Deputy Speaker—The member does not have a point of order. Please resume your seat.

Mr Tanner—You are doing better than Brendan, Wilson. That is a good start. I recall time after time the former government putting legislation to this parliament without
any serious opportunity for the opposition to consider that legislation—legislation on absolutely critical issues of fundamental importance to this nation. Now they have the gall to stand up here and complain that they have received inadequate notice of changes to the standing orders that were publicly identified several weeks ago. They are the same people who were prepared to stand up here and introduce legislation on fundamentally important issues to the Australian people virtually without notice. They gave the opposition and the crossbench members virtually no opportunity to seriously consider the content of that legislation. They now have the absolute gall to complain about the amount of notice they get on changes that have been previously flagged by the government. That is simply astonishing.

It is also worth considering some of the specific propositions that the new Leader of the Opposition put forward. I have to say, first impressions count in this game. Today, we have seen a pretty ordinary start. The opposition leader has lost none of the unctuousness and the sophistry that carried him so well in his ministerial positions in the previous government. He is suggesting that we are going to be reducing the accountability of government as a result of these changes. In fact, the amount of government business time is actually going to increase—in other words, the opportunity for the parliament to hold the executive accountable on the most fundamental thing, legislation, will actually increase. The amount of time available to debate legislation will actually increase. The amount of question times being scheduled by the government will be actually higher for the forthcoming year than the average amount of question times per annum that occurred under the Howard government.

I notice that the opposition leader also complained about the fact that the Leader of the House identified through the media that these changes were going to occur. Again, this is the same group of people who routinely announced major policy changes and major government initiatives through the media, without announcing them in the parliament, without indicating to the parliament what the government’s priorities were. They made it a matter of routine to announce major initiatives through the media—on the Sunday morning TV shows, you name it. It happened time after time. Now, somehow, because they are in opposition, an indication in December—some time before the parliament is due to sit—through the media that the government is intending to make changes to the way that the parliament works is some kind of heinous offence. It really is an absurd proposition.

I noticed also that Dr Nelson, the opposition leader, stated that the Friday sittings that the government proposes will not be fair dinkum—that somehow they will not be real. Apart from anything else, this demonstrates extraordinary contempt for backbenchers, and extraordinary contempt for ordinary members of parliament and the private members’ business that will be transacted on those Fridays. And I noticed that the opposition leader complained about the possibility that perhaps not all ministers may be present during the transacting of this private members’ business. Can I ask the opposition leader how many Mondays he was in here, sitting in private members’ business and listening to the private members’ motions? How many Mondays was he loyally sitting in here listening even to the members of his own party making grievance speeches and doing private members’ motions? Somehow, transferring this from the Monday to the Fri-
day—and I may not be here; I may be in my office or at a committee meeting or something like that—is dreadful, somehow it is wrong!

But the most extraordinary thing about the opposition leader’s contribution here and about the fact that he and his colleagues have listed over 40 speakers to speak on this motion is what it says about the priorities of the new opposition. Of all the issues that we in this parliament are now facing, of all the major themes that we have to grapple with, this is the big thing. This is the major issue, for which we have to line up virtually the entire caucus, the entire Liberal Party and National Party, to speak on. We actually pay to this issue the compliment of having the opposition leader make his first substantial speech in the parliament on this issue—working on Fridays. That is the issue that they are upset about: the prospect of a five-day working week.

It is not big debate about whether or not we should have an apology to Indigenous Australians. That debate has been going on in public within the Liberal Party and the National Party, the coalition. They still have not quite worked out where they stand. They are divided; they are confused. It is not a debate about whether or not Work Choices is dead. The opposition leader says that Work Choices is dead. At the same time his deputy is out there with a shovel digging up the corpse, trying to revive it, trying to breathe life back into Frankenstein’s monster. It is not a debate about that, though, is it? It is not a debate about whether or not Work Choices, individual contracts and the ability to rip away penalty rates and overtime from ordinary working people should be in the legislation of this country. It is not about those issues either. And it is not about inflation. It is not about whether or not we need to cut back on government spending. The shadow Treasurer, the member for Wentworth, says that is all a fairytale. The Leader of the Opposition says that the former government left the economy in absolutely tiptop shape, absolutely perfect shape. He says that everything is fine, there is no problem.

None of these issues warrants a serious assault on the government, a serious attempt to create a major public policy debate in their first attempt as an opposition. The big issue is whether or not you get to turn up on Fridays, whether or not there should be a five-day parliamentary sitting week—that is the big issue! It tells you everything about the new Leader of the Opposition and everything about the new opposition. The hypocrisy of their position, where they are now standing up and advocating positions that they violently opposed and trod all over for the previous 12 years, really is breathtaking. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—Manager of Opposition Business) (8.33 pm)—The principle of accountability is clear. It is not a notional concept; it is a real concept. ... ministers must be responsible to the Parliament because the Parliament is the people’s house—that’s where the Executive of the Government answers to the people through the Parliament. So said Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister, on 2UE on 5 December 2007. The Prime Minister himself said ministers must be accountable in the parliament. And what is the first decision of the new government in this parliament? It is to remove question time from sitting Fridays. For the first time since question times were inserted into the standing orders in 1950, we have a government that is scheduling sitting days without question times. We stand ready to come here on any day that is scheduled, but on that day we want the Prime Minister and the ministers to
be accountable for their actions and their words.

I want to correct some of the misinformation being spread around by the Leader of the House. Let me be very clear. Since 1970, in election years the parliament has on average sat 57 days with 54 question times. In non-election years it has sat on average 69 days with 66 question times. Under the Howard government, in non-election years we averaged 70 days with 68 question times, which means that the Leader of the House has already deliberately misled the chamber about the record on question times—

Mr Albanese—Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member opposite accused me of deliberately misleading the House. He actually cannot do that except by a substantive motion. So either he moves a substantive motion or he withdraws.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)—Member for North Sydney, it is unparliamentary and I ask that you withdraw it.

Mr HOCKEY—If it addresses the issue, I withdraw, but I will make this point—

Government members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY—I am sorry. I withdraw.

Mr Albanese—Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order: the member for North Sydney has to withdraw unconditionally.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I am ruling that it was an unconditional withdrawal. The member for North Sydney has withdrawn unconditionally.

Mr HOCKEY—To quote the Leader of the House:
... you don’t need, on top of that—

that is, the actions of the government—

rules of engagement that allow a laziness and complacency to evolve in government.

They are his own words and yet the first action of the Leader of the House is to change the standing orders to remove, for the first time since federation, the capacity of the House on any single scheduled sitting day to have a question time. That is his first act and he says to the Australian people that it is the responsibility of the parliament to keep the government honest and to keep ministers accountable to avoid complacency, weakness and arrogance.

Let us be very clear about what the government is proposing here. They are increasing the scheduled sitting days for this year. We have no problems with that at all. In fact, we will be here en masse for those scheduled sitting days, and if they want to schedule more sitting days we will be here as well. What we have a problem with is that they are having no question time on 14 of those days. On 14 of those days there will be no question time. Since 1970, the highest number of scheduled sitting days without question time was seven. Now they are doubling it and they claim to be introducing greater accountability and greater transparency.

Secondly, and I think very significantly, the government is proposing to have no divisions or quorums during the course of private members’ business. This is a substantial initiative from this government. Previously there has been agreement between the government and the opposition that during dinner breaks quorums or divisions are deferred. In fact, it was in the standing orders that there would be quorums but they would be deferred. Now they are saying they are going to start a parliamentary sitting day without a quorum. They are trying to delay quorums until the end of a sitting day, despite the endeavours of the opposition to ensure that government members at least turn up.
We will—and I guarantee this—over the next few months, and years if necessary, remind this place and remind the government of the words of the new member for Leichhardt, who said:

From what I can gather, there won’t be any question time on Friday, so we will be able to shoot through ...

The new member for Leichhardt, who has not even made his maiden speech in this place, has said to the Australian public, ‘We are going to have a part-time parliament on Fridays.’ At the cost of a million dollars a day to the Australian taxpayers, we are not going to have the ministers turn up. The Prime Minister will be swanning around the country, but we are going to have parliament sit on a Friday. That is not accountability; that is not transparency; that is a fraud. You cannot claim to be a more accountable government and then schedule 14 sitting days of this parliament where the ministers and the Prime Minister do not even bother to turn up and where the member for Leichhardt cannot even get off his hide to stay here to do the job that the people of Leichhardt have put him in to do. If he does not want to be in parliament, we will find someone who wants to be in parliament. If other members of the government do not want to be here to answer the Australian people, we will find people who do, because that is what we believe in: accountability and transparency.

As though he had a gift from the gods, the Leader of House stood up in this place and said, ‘We have legal advice to say that our quorum arrangements are not in breach of section 39 of the Constitution.’ That is taxpayer funded advice—table the advice. It is very simple: table the advice. The Leader of the House stood in this place not a moment ago and said of this advice, ‘We have that legal advice to say it is all kosher.’ Well, table the advice. We have got no problems with it. The Leader of the House raised the issue of legal advice; he should table the advice. There is not going to be a day that passes where we will not be after that legal advice. If everything they are doing is kosher with the Constitution, which is very explicit about the quorum of this parliament, then they have got nothing to hide and they should table the legal advice. It was paid for by the taxpayers. The Leader of the House said, ‘We are going to be more transparent, open and honest.’ No problems, we agree; please be more transparent, accountable and honest. Table the legal advice saying that the quorum provisions that you are putting through the parliament tonight are legal. If you have got nothing to hide then no problem; we can accommodate that.

The amendments which we received at three o’clock today were 18 pages long and covered a vast range of issues. Only hours ago we got 18 pages of changes to the standing orders that, for the first time since Federation, guarantee that scheduled sitting days will not have question times. That is not good enough. That is not greater accountability, greater transparency and greater honesty; that is not being fair dinkum with the Australian people. That is not part of the equation.

It goes one step further. Understand the history of the current arrangements. There have been various manifestations of the standing orders and the scheduling of the parliament over the last few years, but the Howard government essentially kept the arrangements put in place by the Keating government in 1994 and the Hawke government in 1992, where at various times private members’ business moved from Friday to Monday. Even when Paul Keating was a part-time Prime Minister, he had a question time with private members’ business. Even
Paul Keating—the bastion of accountability to this parliament, the part-time Prime Minister—had question times when there was private members’ business. He would not schedule a sitting day without question time, and nor would Bob Hawke or Gough Whitlam. None of them ever scheduled regular sitting days of this parliament without question times. This mob comes in here preaching and spinning about accountability and transparency to the Australian people, yet their first action is to reduce the accountability and transparency of their own government to this parliament.

The deal has always been—and it is in the *House of Representatives Practice*—that, when private members’ business is held on a Monday, there is an agreement between the opposition and the government that there will be no documents tabled, no ministerial statements, no MPI and, in return, there will be private members’ business. What has happened is that the Labor Party in government have taken away MPIs and private members’ business but reintroduced the tabling of documents and reintroduced ministerial statements. So they have covered themselves. They have broken the deal. They have covered themselves under the *House of Representatives Practice*, but they do not care about the opposition’s voice because they do not want accountability and transparency.

I will be moving a number of amendments to the proposal put forward by the government. Having only received these at three o’clock today, it is quite remarkable that we have been able to get eight amendments up. Do you know what, Mr Deputy Speaker? We want the parliament to sit more hours than the government is proposing, because we want question time every day. We want MPIs every day. We want accountability every day. We want to have a full-time government, not a part-time government. I seek leave to move together the amendments that have been circulated in my name. I will be seeking that at the appropriate time.

We are going to debate this and, if it needs to go all night, we will do it all night. We have never been in a situation where a government has tried to schedule regular sitting days of this parliament without the accountability of the Prime Minister and his ministers to this parliament. We believe in parliamentary democracy. We believe in the Westminster system. We believe in accountability. We believe in transparency—and do you know what else we believe in? We believe in the fact that this government cannot run roughshod over democracy. We will not cop that. The Australian people will not cop that.

It is an early indication of the arrogance of this government that they should seek without consultation to change the details of the standing orders to the detriment of the parliament and democracy. I tell you what, Mr Speaker: it is not good enough for them to present us only a few hours ago with the details of the changes to these standing orders and yet at the same time to go out and preach to the Australian people how they are a more accountable and transparent government. If you are going to be hypocrites, why do it so early in your term? You have the next three years to be hypocrites again. I do not think you will disappoint me in that regard. But the fundamental point is that you will disappoint the Australian people because you told the Australian people that you would be more accountable and yet for the first time since Federation you are scheduling regular sitting days and deliberately taking away the right of the Australian people to have questions asked of their Prime Minister and their
That is a shame when it comes to democracy. It is a shame that it is the behaviour of a new government. It is arrogance in the extreme, and the losers out of this are the Australian people, who under the Labor Party are going to end up funding a part-time parliament.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)—Does the member for North Sydney seek leave?

Mr HOCKEY—I did. I seek leave.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—You haven’t sought leave.

Mr HOCKEY—I did. I moved the amendments and I sought leave to have them dealt with—I am sorry.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member for North Sydney was going to seek leave at the appropriate time.

Mr HOCKEY—No, I did ask.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Then the leave has not been granted.

Mr Albanese—Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. What occurred during the debate was that the Manager of Opposition Business sought leave. It was not granted, because you did not proceed with that. He has not moved the amendments. I have no problem with someone else being given leave—

Mr HOCKEY—No, I moved them.

Mr Albanese—The amendments were not moved by the Manager of Opposition Business.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I heard what the member for North Sydney said. I thought he said he would move them at the appropriate time—he sought leave. But I then did not ask: is leave granted?

Mr Albanese—On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the Manager of Opposition Business did indeed indicate that at an appropriate time—

Mr HOCKEY—No, I didn’t say at an appropriate time.

Mr Albanese—He did say that—that he would move the amendments. He did not do that, Mr Deputy Speaker. You have to, in moving an amendment—I’ve got a bit of experience of opposition over 12 years, Joe—read it into the Hansard.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The minister has made his point of order. The member for North Sydney did seek leave, and I at the time did not pull him up and ask, ‘Is leave granted?’, but you then handed the amendments to one of the clerks. The member for North Sydney asks whether leave is granted. It would assist the House—

Mr Albanese—I rise on a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Tuckey—When do you want to knock off, Albanese?

Mr Albanese—I am fine. I quite like the parliament. My point of order is this: we have no problem with granting leave to the opposition. We are not trying to be difficult here. But the fact is that the amendments have not been moved. We can now give leave to someone. Given that you yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I haven’t sat the member for North Sydney down.

Mr Albanese—His time has expired, Mr Deputy Speaker. You have to do it within your 20 minutes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The minister will resume his seat. The member for North Sydney sought leave, he passed the amendments to the Clerk and he has moved them. I
am ruling that he has moved them. I had not
sat down the member for North Sydney and,
as he walked, I said, ‘Would you please
move those amendments.’

Mr HOCKEY—To assist the House, Mr
Deputy Speaker: I said during my speech, ‘I
move these amendments,’ handed them to
the Clerk and said, ‘I seek leave to have
them debated together.’ I moved the amend-
ments and I passed them to the Clerk to seek
leave. If you want to deal with them one by
one, I am happy to accommodate that. I am
trying to be helpful here, but if the Leader of
the House thinks he is being a little bit
cute—

Mr Albanese—No, I’m not!

Mr HOCKEY—I deliberately did move
them.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Leader of
the House, it would help the House consid-
erably if you would grant leave. I have con-
sulted with the clerks, and the member for
North Sydney confirmed what I have already
ruled, which is that the member for North
Sydney asked leave to move his amendments
together. It would assist the House if the
minister would grant leave and we could
then proceed.

Mr Albanese—Mr Deputy Speaker, I
have no problem with granting leave. That
does not mean, though, that the amendments
have been moved, and the member’s time
has expired. Someone else will have to move
them.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I ask the
minister: it would assist the House if you
would grant leave for these amendments to
be moved together; is leave granted?

Mr Albanese—I have no problem with
granting leave.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Then leave
is granted.

Mr Albanese—But someone has to move
them now.

Mr HOCKEY—I moved them!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I will now
call the member for North Sydney in his
concluding remarks—

Mr HOCKEY—I want to, once again, for
the edification of the Leader of the House,
point out that I said: ‘I move the amend-
ments and I seek leave that they be debated
together.’ That is what I did. I moved the
amendments and I sought leave for them to
be debated together. I handed them to the
Clerk.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—That is right.

Mr HOCKEY—Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—And I asked
for the Leader of the House to assist the
House by granting leave. The minister has
agreed to grant leave; I will call for the sec-
ond.

Mr Albanese—I rise on a point of order,
Mr Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—What is
your point of order?

Mr Albanese—My point of order is this,
and it will finish up here: leave has been
granted. We are not trying to be difficult
here. The fact is, though, that leave was
granted after the member’s time had expired.
There is a problem—by definition, that has
occurred. Someone else should move it. If,
perchance, these amendments were carried,
there would be a big problem here. This is a
debate about standing orders. This is a de-
bate about order in the House. What is occur-
rming here is that standing orders are being—
The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The minister has made his point; he is now debating the issue.

The amendments read as follows—

1. Proposed standing order 29, “Set meeting and adjournment times”, line beginning “Friday”, Omit the line, substitute: “Friday 8.30am 4.20 pm”.


3. That the Order of Business figure following proposed standing order 34 “Order of Business” be omitted and the “Order of Business” figure attached to these amendments substituted.

4. Proposed standing order 43 “Members’ statements on Fridays”, omit “The period allowed for these statements shall extend until 9.15 am”, substitute: “The period allowed for these statements shall extend until 8.45 am.”

5. After proposed standing order 44 “Grievance debate” insert: 46 Discussion of definite matter of public importance

(a) On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, a Member may propose a definite matter of public importance be put to the House for consideration.

6. Proposed standing order 133 “Deferred divisions on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays”, omit the heading, substitute: “133 Deferred divisions on Mondays and Tuesdays”.

7. Proposed standing order 133 “Deferred divisions on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays”, omit paragraph (b).

8. After proposed standing order 55 “Lack of quorum”, insert: “97 Daily Question Time (a) Question Time shall begin at 2pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, at which time the Speaker shall interrupt any business before the House and call on questions without notice”.

And an amendment to the House of Representatives Order of Business.

The amendment to the House of Representatives Order of Business read as follows—

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – CHAMBER ORDER OF BUSINESS

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CHAMBER
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)—I call the honourable member for Curtin to second the amendments.

Ms Julie Bishop—I second the amendments and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The original question was that the motion be agreed to. To this the honourable member for North Sydney has moved certain amendments. The question now is that the amendments be agreed to.

Mr PRICE (Chifley) (8.55 pm)—Well, we have had a vintage performance from the Manager of Opposition Business. I was certainly moved by his outrage. In fact, I was quivering when he was addressing the issue of a quorum. But I do understand from his contribution that he has no idea of exactly what is being done.

Let me make the first point: all honourable members who are in the chamber will hear the confection and outrage about quorums. Well, on a sitting Friday, on private members’ business Friday, you have to start with a quorum, and we will be starting with a quorum. There is nothing in these standing orders that changes the requirement for a starting quorum on a Monday, on a Tuesday, on a Wednesday, on a Thursday or on a Friday. So all that outrage about ‘no quorum to start the sitting on Friday’ is absolutely wrong—dead wrong!

What else is happening to quorums? Honourable members who have been in this parliament before will know that we have an arrangement on Mondays and Tuesdays for the dinner break. Anyone can call a division then; anyone can call a quorum. But, if they do, it is deferred.

Mr Georgiou—By agreement.

Mr PRICE—By arrangement, we don’t—absolutely. And do you know what? On sitting Fridays, when private members’ business is being conducted, you can call a quorum if you want, but it will be deferred—big deal!

Mr Georgiou—It is a big deal!

Mr PRICE—Honourable members opposite do not seem to understand that what has happened is we are shifting private members’
business on a Monday to exclusively have private members’ business on a Friday—no government legislation, no bills and no ministerial statements. It is purely devoted to backbench members—such as even Wilson Tuckey! You know, if you ask for a Friday, Wilson, you will be able to utilise—

Mr Tuckey—I have a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The point of order is that apparently we are even going to undermine the standing orders.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)—What is your point of order?

Mr Tuckey—I am the member for O’Connor in this place, and it is not a bad idea that someone who is lecturing us on the standing orders complies with them!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member for O’Connor will resume his seat. He does not have a point of order; he has got a point.

Mr PRICE—I apologise to the member for O’Connor.

Mrs Hull interjecting—

Mr PRICE—I acknowledge that, Kay—I mean, Member for Riverina. But the point is this: what is being conducted on a Friday is exclusively for private members. Member for O’Connor, let me make the point that the amount of business is increasing quite dramatically. There will be something like 40 hours of extra time if you are moving a delegation report or a committee report or a private member’s motion. It is about 40 hours extra time compared to the time that you provided in the last parliament and what would still be the case if there had not been an election—40 hours of extra debate. That means every backbencher, should they decide to put in a notice of motion of concern to their constituents or about a particular passion of theirs, will be able to get that into the House and debate it. In this government you are going have more opportunity—

Debate interrupted; adjournment proposed and negatived.

Mr PRICE—We are going to get more time. Private members can come to the parliament and talk about the passions that interest them. It may be about the situation in East Timor. It may be about the provision of a drug on the PBS. I do not know what they may raise, but they are free to raise it and they will have more time to raise it. Isn’t that an important responsibility that all of us share—that is, the backbench members, not the executive? There is no extra time for the executive, no extra time for parliamentary secretaries, no extra time for ministers; it is all extra time for the backbenchers. And, by the way, your shadow ministers, just as we did in the last parliament, can also move private member’s motions, so they will have more opportunities. How can you possibly argue, as the Leader of the Opposition argued, that somehow this is less accountable?

The point I want to make is as follows. What state does the Manager of Opposition Business, Mr Hockey, come from? New South Wales. What state does the Leader of the Opposition come from? New South Wales. What state does the shadow Treasurer come from? New South Wales. And what has been happening in the New South Wales parliament since 2002? They have got private members’ Fridays. If the Manager of Opposition Business were half fair dinkum, he would be getting on to the Leader of the Opposition in New South Wales and saying, ‘Are you going to promise to bring in a question time on Fridays if you win the next election? Are you going to bring in ministerial statements on Fridays if you win the next election?’

Under these proposals, there are no fewer question times in the sitting pattern. We are still having a question time on Monday, we are still having a question time on Tuesday,
we are still having a question time on Wednesday and we are still having a question time on Thursday. Why would you have a question time when a day is especially devoted to the backbench, with more hours to the backbench?

Mrs Hull interjecting—

Mr PRICE—I say to the member for Riverina: there is an improvement in terms of committee reports. I acknowledge that the member for Riverina chaired a very important committee in the last parliament. You can be in this parliament on a Friday tabling your report and you will still get the same five minutes a side for the report, but at 10 o’clock in the Main Committee all your committee members who serve with you can have another 15 minutes—and you can as well. All those backbench members who serve tirelessly on parliamentary committees trying to bring reform and change, who listen during their parliamentary committee work to the people of Australia out there in voter land, can get 15 minutes on the reports. You know what? Under these reforms, almost contemporaneously with the report tabling, those members who are not chairs or deputy chairs can be in the Main Committee for at least 15 minutes talking about the report, talking about the recommendations, talking about why they are so important either for their constituents or for Australia as a whole. I think that this is a welcome move.

Do you think that the opposition have a good track record when it comes to giving breaks for backbenchers? Of course not. The most significant reform in recent time was the establishment of the Main Committee—and guess what: the opposition of the day bitterly opposed it. It was damnation! It was ruination! Democracy was utterly going to collapse! And you know what? In the UK they thought it was such a good idea that the ‘mother parliament’ has got Westminster Hall. It is an exact copy of the Main Committee, which the coalition so bitterly opposed as a ‘damnation of democracy’ here in Australia.

I am quite unashamed. I want to say on the public record to the Leader of the House that I think that this is an important reform. And like the Howard government previously and people like the member for McPherson, who chaired the Procedure Committee—as with all new arrangements, new changes—we will have a look at it in the Procedure Committee and see how well and effectively it is working. But do not come into the parliament and say, ‘Backbench members are getting less opportunity; they are being denied opportunity,’ or give some cock-and-bull story about there being less accountability because of these changes to devote a special day to private members, or say that somehow these arrangements are going to absolutely abolish the need to have a quorum at the start of the parliament on Friday, that no-one can be here and the Speaker can be forced to commence the proceedings. You just do not understand what is being proposed and, more importantly, you are misunderstanding the benefits that backbenchers on this side of the House—and, I might say, backbenchers on that side of the House and the occasional shadow minister—are going to gain from these changes.

The last point I would like to talk about is the proposal regarding nursing mothers. Please understand that there was an agreement on this issue between the chief whips in the last parliament. This does not exactly reflect that agreement because we use the term ‘lactating mothers’. That is the only difference in the motion being proposed, with one exception. Again, I give credit to the honourable member for Riverina: she requested it. I thought it was a reasonable proposition and the Leader of the House agreed. We have a statement that it will not
be used as a precedent for any other situation. It is a system that utterly depends on the honour of the Chief Opposition Whip and me. If we lack honesty and we lack integrity then it will fail.

But I want to make this point: no woman in the parliament, on either side, has approached me and said that we need this provision—not one. There has been no committee of women who thought it up and said that we need to do it. But it is about time that the parliament understood that, increasingly, young women are coming into this parliament wanting to combine their careers as parliamentarians and mothers and, indeed, the joy of having a child. The old men’s club has to wake up at some point and understand that the rules need to change. We may never need this provision in this parliament, it might never be utilised, but we are drawing a line in the sand and saying that, bit by bit, we are going to change and acknowledge the fact that, increasingly, we have women members. We have 11 women members in the new class of 2007 and, over time, we will have even more women coming into parliament. We need to start taking that into account and make changes to make this a more family-friendly parliament and acknowledge the younger members, including women, who are coming into parliament.

If I had listened to the opposition and believed all they said, I do not know how I could possibly vote for these proposals. I think the opposition has completely misunderstood the intent and purpose of the proposals. There is always the safety factor that the Procedure Committee will review them, finetune them and make changes. Can I put something on the table and say that I would be very happy if the Procedure Committee looked at, for example, a standard finishing time of eight o’clock on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Will that happen? I do not know. But I sincerely hope that the Procedure Committee, when it is established—if we can ever establish it tonight—might get a chance to review these new arrangements and come up with appropriate recommendations.

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth) (9.09 pm)—I remind the member for Chifley that everything he has said will be achieved by the amendments proposed by the opposition. The essence of what we are proposing is that there be the same accountability on Fridays as there is on other days of the week. The feature that distinguishes the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy from so many others around the world is the accountability of the executive at question time. It is fundamental. It is the most important part of parliament. For most members of the public it is when they see their government held to account. To have a meeting of parliament without question time really is denying the very essence of the accountability that we hold so dear. So that the members of the government can address this point, I particularly want to draw to the attention of the House section 39 of the Constitution. It states:

Until the Parliament otherwise provides, the presence of at least one-third of the whole number of the members of the House of Representatives shall be necessary to constitute a meeting of the House for the exercise of its powers.

‘Parliament’ means the House, the Senate and the Governor-General—the Queen, the sovereign. In 1989 the parliament ‘otherwise provided’ to reduce the quorum down to one-fifth. That is why the quorum is now 30; otherwise, it would have been 50. The simple fact is that the House cannot meet without a quorum. We are free to agree, if we wish, not to call a quorum. That is, in effect, what the existing standing orders do in the 6.30 to eight o’clock timeslot, and that is reflected in the standing orders at the moment. But the constitutional fact remains that, if a quorum...
is not present, the House cannot meet, and deferring a quorum is simply not constitutional. I see that the member for Isaacs is here. I welcome him, as a new member, to the House, and I invite him to comment on this.

The language of the Constitution is absolutely clear: the House cannot meet unless a quorum is present. If a quorum is called at any time on a Friday, it has to be dealt with when it is called. You cannot defer a quorum by virtue of the standing orders because otherwise you would be able to subvert the whole purpose of the constitutional provision. At the very heart of this proposal by the government is an infringement, a breach, a denial of the Constitution itself. They say they have legal advice. Let us see it. That is the point. The Constitution is plain: you cannot have a meeting of the House unless there is a quorum present. That is the point. What power is there in the standing orders to overrule the Constitution of the Commonwealth?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (9.13 pm)—Only a few hours ago after the appointment of the Speaker, the Prime Minister was talking about the importance of having a parliament that functions smoothly, provides opportunity for policy debates and gives an opportunity for members of parliament to keep the government accountable. He has said that on a number of occasions previously, and members have quoted from his earlier statements. Let me add another one. On the Nine network this week—not an ancient comment, just this week—the Prime Minister said:

… my job—
as the Prime Minister—
is to try and restore some respect to the place …
The Prime Minister earlier said:

In the past I think a bad tradition has crept in whereby rarely was the parliament used as the forum of the people … I will be encouraging ministers to use the parliament much more in that respect …

So a couple of days ago the Prime Minister was going to ask his ministers to use the parliament more. A few hours later, 14 sitting days will be held every year without a minister present, without anybody bothering to show up. What sort of accountability is that? Indeed, we will have a part-time parliament. There will be several days a week when ministers will attend, but on Fridays no ministers will be present in the parliament.

The reforms being presented today are not minor adjustments to the standing orders. This is radical reform that reduces the accountability of the parliament. And I am glad to be speaking after the Chief Government Whip, because it is well known around the place that he is the architect of these new proposals, and he has embarrassed the Leader of the House by trying to force them through the parliament. I think the Leader of the House knows that this is an assault on the democratic process and that this is denying the proper processes of accountability in the parliament, yet he is being set up here by the Chief Government Whip to try and put these sorts of proposals through the parliament.

It has always been the tradition that the government consults the opposition about significant changes to the standing orders. That has not happened in this case. The government announced before Christmas that they were going to make these significant changes—with a lot of fanfare, with the usual compliant media trotting along in agreement. This was sold to us by the Leader of the House as being extra sitting days, extra accountability. In reality, it is not. It is less accountability.

There will be fewer question times under these new arrangements than there were previously. There will be more sitting days with no ministers present than we have ever coun-
tenanced in the past. There will be less accountability, fewer opportunities for questions to be asked, fewer answers provided. There will be fewer sitting weeks than there have traditionally been in the past. There will be more days when there will be no ministers present but fewer when the parliament will have the opportunity to question ministers and to get answers. There will be fewer weeks, fewer question times, fewer matters of public importance. Ministers will attend parliament less often. That is the fundamental nature of these reforms and we should not forget it.

The government is bringing this in without going through a proper process of consultation. In an announcement in the media five hours before this debate begins, details of the proposals are made public. It has not gone off to the Procedure Committee, as you would normally expect. We have had Procedure Committee meetings regularly, year in, year out. There have been plenty of opportunities to talk about these sorts of things; it has not happened. We could in fact have a Procedure Committee meeting over the next week or two and introduce these things a little bit later on, but no, the government is going to insist that these items, these changes, be imposed upon the parliament immediately. That is not an appropriate way for us to negotiate the workings of this parliament.

A lot of the procedures in this parliament are essentially by convention. They are not written in detail in the standing orders. They are not in the Constitution. They are by convention. If the government is going to break down the convention by just arrogantly imposing its will on the everyday sittings of the parliament, the trust and the confidence that makes this parliament work will be destroyed.

The Keating government went into its second term before the most arrogant Prime Minister in our history declared that he was too important to have to attend parliament, rostering himself off every second day. The Keating government went into its second term before ministers decided that only half of them needed to be bothered to turn up every day. This government is doing it on its very first day. Ministers are going to excuse themselves from 14 sitting days in a year.

I know we have all heard about the new frontbench made up of 70 per cent union officials. They are experts at negotiating, I am told, the best possible pay and conditions. Well, they have really hit the jackpot here. On their very first day, the frontbench, the union officials, have negotiated themselves a rostered day off every Friday. Every Friday they take the day off—14 days off before they have even started, no cuts in pay, no improvements in productivity, just 14 days off a year before we even start.

I would like to emphasise that this is a thinly disguised attempt by the government to make sure that ministers can trip around the country, do whatever they like, and not turn up for parliament on this day. They have no intention of being here on a Friday. I challenge the two ministers at the table to give us a guarantee that they will be here on Fridays. I challenge the Leader of the House: will you be here on Fridays? One of the ministers previously at the table has already acknowledged that he has got no intention of being here on a Friday.

If you ever had any doubt that some of them might turn up, ask yourself: why we are getting up on Thursdays at 5 pm? Why are we not sitting for an extra five hours on Thursday? If we were then you would not need the extra day on Friday. Most members are going to have to stay here in Canberra on Thursday night, but the House is getting up
at five o’clock. Well, the cat is out of the bag: the reason it is getting up at five o’clock is that the ministers will all be flying out. They will all be leaving on Thursday afternoon, and you will not see them again.

Can I address a few comments to the government backbenchers, who are the victims of a lot of these proposed changes. You are the cannon fodder. You are the people that are expected to turn up for the divisions. You are the ones that are going to have to be here when the quorums are called. Your days are going to be ruined because there will be quorum after quorum after quorum. You are the victims. You are going to be expected to sit here in the parliament and work all day Friday while your leaders, the frontbench, are all at home. They are all at the cricket, having lunch or having the day off, but you are going to have to stay here working.

On Thursday nights, when you are sitting alone in your hotel room in Canberra, you will know that the ministers are already back with their families in their capital cities, enjoying a night with their kids or going to the school play. You will be here lonely and deserted in Canberra while your ministers are enjoying themselves back at home. And all day Friday, when you are here working, the ministers will be off to have lunch with their mates. They will be tripping around the countryside, having another rostered day off.

Most of you are union officials as well. How did you let them get away with this? You have a reputation for your tough negotiating skills but you have let your bosses take the day off while you stay working in the factory. What sort of a deal is that? You have certainly allowed the frontbench, the union bosses, to ride roughshod over you on your very first day. You will have to work here in parliament on Friday but no-one will be listening. You will be making a grievance debate speech but the minister who can fix it will not be here; he will be at the cricket or having lunch with his mates. You will be wanting to raise a matter of significance in a 90-second statement and there will be nobody here to listen. Nobody who has the capacity to make a decision will even be listening. They will all be travelling around the countryside having a great time while you are here doing the hackwork.

We are prepared to be here. We are prepared to do what needs to be done. We are prepared to have more parliamentary sittings. It is pretty tough for people who live in Western Australia or even in a country area like mine. I will not be able to get home at all on the weekends because of the time that is involved. But I will be here and I will be enthusiastically wanting to ask questions of ministers who will not be here. They are probably going to be campaigning in your electorate or mine while we are here doing our jobs for the parliament. Let me assure you that I, for one, will be asking questions every week about where the ministers were on Friday. Were they in the parliament answering to the parliamentarians and to the people or were they off enjoying themselves on their rostered day off?

I will be asking where the government members are. We have already had one member, the member for Leichhardt, let the cat out of the bag. He is going to shoot through. I will be making sure that the people of Leichhardt know that their member shot through—that because he thought the parliamentary sittings so unimportant and because he had no matters of importance to raise from the people of his electorate he shot through. You cannot blame him for planning to shoot through, because there will be no minister here to hear what he has to say. Whatever he says will be lost. His pearls of wisdom will disappear into thin air because there will be no minister here to hear
them. There will be no accountability; there will be no opportunity to get the facts through and to make sure that the concerns of your constituents can be genuinely heard.

Where will our ministers be? The Leader of the House is obviously embarrassed to have to try to pilot through the parliament this lemon of a change to the sitting arrangements of the parliament, which will reduce accountability and make the life of his backbench members pretty uncomfortable. The Chief Government Whip is the one who is going to have to lock you all in this place for the Friday. He will have to lock you in here because you will have to be here to make up the numbers. Your ministers will not. They will all be having their rostered days off. I think it is about time you asked when you will have your rostered days off. The ministers will not be in here for the quorums; it will be the backbenchers who will be in here for the quorums. You are the ones who are going to have to try to make this new system work, because the ministers are simply walking away from it.

If I am to support proposals like this, I want an assurance that ministers will be present on Friday. If they are prepared to give us an assurance that they will be here when the parliament is sitting then that will make the sittings worth while. Members will feel that what they have to say, their contributions on important issues, will be listened to by the people who can make decisions. But, if the ministers are not going to be here, they should not be such hypocrites as to demand that other people are here when they are not. Do not be such a hypocrite as to suggest that other people should come? If we are going to sit on Friday, we have to have ministers in the House, we have to have a question time and we have to have a matter of public importance. It has to be a proper parliamentary sitting day.

While I am at it, why can’t we have a matter of public importance debate on a Monday? Why does that have to be left off the program as well? Particularly as you are proposing to have these extra private members business hours on a Friday, why aren’t we also having an MPI on a Monday? The reality is that this government does not want any accountability. It does not want to have to answer the questions. It has been elected without ideas, it does not know what it is going to do, it does not have a clue how to manage the economy—it is going to fly in 1,000 people to give it a few ideas so that it knows what to do—and so it is trying to avoid scrutiny.

I welcome the architect of the ideas back into the chamber, because he is going to have the tough job of trying to explain to people why this will be of any benefit at all to them. Has he endeavoured to explain to his backbenchers why it is reasonable for them to sit here in Canberra while the ministers are all at home enjoying life with their families, while they are rostered off for every Friday? Why is that fair? Why is that reasonable? Why couldn’t you consult the parliament about introducing a fair and reasonable system? This is an assault on accountability. This is a dreadful start for a government that came in suggesting that it was going to be more accountable and more open. This will be a closed government not prepared to answer questions and not prepared to expose itself to scrutiny.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (9.28 pm)—I congratulate you on your election today,
Madam Deputy Speaker Burke. We are already at the longest first day of parliament that this House has seen. We are here debating and we have had the other side alleging that there has been a lack of consultation. I want to deal with the consultation issue before I hit any of the substantive issues themselves.

First of all, we just heard from the member for Wide Bay that the way to introduce changes to procedures is always to do it through the Standing Committee on Procedure prior to introduction. Let us not forget the last time we had a change in procedure in this House. The last time it occurred was with a change to the MPI rules. The previous Leader of the House was sick of the Independent members jumping for the call during MPIs, so, instead of allowing the MPI to go for as long as members of parliament chose to jump, the government put a time limit on it. Did that go to the Procedure Committee prior to the decision, because that was the last time that the previous government made a change to procedures? Did that go to the Procedure Committee? No, it did not go to the Procedure Committee. We found out about it when it was put on the Notice Paper the day before. We came in that morning, had a look at it, and that was when we found out about it. The complaint about lack of consultation is a complaint about something that was announced weeks and weeks ago, something that was made clear a very long time ago. We get told: ‘We knew about the detail—that was not necessarily a problem—but we hadn’t seen the piece of paper.’

Let us not forget a rather significant ‘piece of paper’ that went through this very chamber during the last parliament—a ‘piece of paper’ that ran for about 700 pages called Work Choices. I remember sitting over there on that side when we started the debate, and not one member of the parliament was even able to have a copy of the bill. The bill itself was not available to the parliament when the parliament began debating it! And now we hear a complaint about something that only runs for a page and a half: ‘We only got the final detail five hours earlier.’ We were expected to commence debate on something that was going to tear out the rights of working families. When we came to the chamber to debate it, the copies still had not reached this chamber. So, please, if you want to have an argument about the substantive issues, have an argument about the substantive issues, but don’t come crawling into the chamber complaining about the lack of procedure when what you have been given, in every sense, is way in excess of what the previous government ever offered the then opposition—ever.

So what do these changes mean? What is it that the opposition are actually getting outraged about? Well, we used to have three MPIs in the course of a week. And, outrageously, this year we are going to have, in the course of a week, three MPIs. In the course of a week we also used to have four question times. And, outrageously, this year, in the course of a week, we are going to have four question times. But what is also going to happen is that we are no longer going to be getting rid of private members’ business. We are no longer going to be having the situation, as we had in the last parliament, where the executive says, ‘What backbenchers want to move in private members’ business or what people want to talk about in a grievance debate—we’ll just knock those off the agenda every time we aren’t able to keep up with the program.’ Of the 53 weeks of sitting in the last parliament, on 17 occasions there was no private members’ business at all. By having the Friday sittings we are guaranteeing that private members’ business will no longer be knocked off. That is what used to happen. So we are going to a situation where
you will get the same number of question times, you will get the same number of MPIs, but the backbench will be guaranteed to be able to have their say.

It is probably no surprise that the current frontbench of the coalition is a bit upset. I have to say, if there were ever a group of people who would have a clear incentive to make sure their backbench did not have too much to say, it would be the current opposition. They have gone through this period of wanting to find something to be passionate about. We had the speeches and we heard the interviews on what they would be passionate about. Are they passionate about saving Work Choices? Some of them say they are; some of them say they are not. They will go back and forth trying to work out what issues they will be passionate about there.

Mr Tuckey—Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is a matter of relevance. This is a question about standing orders. The minister will get plenty of time on a future occasion, if his boss lets him, to talk about Work Choices and other issues. I suggest he sticks to—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—The member for O'Connor will resume his seat. This has been a far-reaching debate. I think the minister is in order.

Mr BURKE—I do not think the member for O'Connor appreciates the level of passion that the Australian people have seen from this opposition for the first time. Everything else has been: ‘We’re not sure what we think about this; we’ll wait to see what we think about that. We need to consult; we need to have the form of leadership that says, “I’m going to lead by finding out what everybody tells me to think and then, once they’ve told me, I’ll show that sort of leadership.”’ That has all been put out there. But then, finally, we get passion. And the same group of people who were able to be quite dismissive about taking away the rights of workers, the same group of people who had no plans for the future and were not willing to get passionate about somebody losing their entitlements, were able to find real passion today—because whose working lives were they talking about? Their own. Finally, we find members of the coalition caring about working families—their own working families. They are the only ones that you will see any level of passion about from the opposition.

Of all the people to have led the case for the opposition on this, we have the same person who did not care about 100 per cent of AWAs taking away at least one protected award condition but did care about what his working day would be like on a Friday. He did not care when 63 per cent of all agreements removed penalty rates but he did care whether or not he would get an RDO on a Friday. He did not care whether 52 per cent of AWAs removed shiftwork loadings but did care about whether or not he would get a bonus MPI to be able to put away some of the private members’ business. He did not care about 46 per cent of AWAs cutting public holiday payments but he did care, and did care passionately, about his alleged right to try to pick up a public holiday every Friday. Under this government—

Mr Tuckey—You’re saying that constituent work isn’t work!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The member for O’Connor!

Mr Tuckey—Well, he’s saying he doesn’t believe in his constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker. He doesn’t want to—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The member for O’Connor will be warned if he is not careful.

Mr BURKE—I have to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am so glad he put that on the record, because the Leader of the Op-
position said the exact opposite. The Leader of the Opposition was saying, ‘We believe our constituents will be disadvantaged by our not being in our electorates.’ The Leader of the Opposition says he believes the constituents will be disadvantaged by this, and yet he says he is willing to support sitting on Fridays. He wants to change all the rules. He says he is willing to go along with sitting on Fridays but he says he believes his constituents will be disadvantaged. I do not share that concern. I actually think our constituents do well by the advocacy that we run in this parliament. I am surprised that he thinks so little of his own role that he is willing to say that, if they are not there on a Friday, if he is not out in his electorate on a Friday but is—allegedly—representing his constituents in the parliament, they are being disadvantaged by that. But, if he does believe they are being disadvantaged by that, he should not come in here and argue, ‘We’ll go along with the change but it is just the question time bit that we care about’ or ‘it is just the MPI bit that we care about.’

The truth is what the opposition cares about in this is their own working day. The very same group of people that was willing to carve up the working day of working families in Australia suddenly finds a new level of passion and a new level of energy that no radio interview has shown, that no speech has shown and that no in-depth interview on one of the Sunday morning programs has shown. Today in this parliament we get venom, we get passion and we get real anger. We get people like the current Manager of Opposition Business and like the current—and I use the word ‘current’ carefully—Leader of the Opposition showing this level of absolute passion: ‘While we might be willing to get rid of the working conditions of other people, don’t get rid of the working conditions of members of the Liberal Party and the National Party in this place.’

We do not think it is that outrageous for parliament to sit five days a week, and we certainly do not think it is outrageous to replace a system where there used to be four question times with a new system where there will be four question times. We do not think it is outrageous to replace a system where there used to be three MPIs with a new system where there will be three MPIs. But we do think it is important to make sure that we no longer get rid of 17 days of private members’ business. We believe it is important that when local members of parliament put a motion on the Notice Paper they actually have a chance of its being debated. We want to make sure that when local members of parliament want to participate in the grievance debate on behalf of their constituents they actually get the opportunity to do so here in this parliament. One of the interjections that came over earlier from members of the opposition was, ‘Oh, well, they’ve got the Main Committee in which to do that.’ Sorry, but the Main Committee was never set up as a way of preventing local members of parliament from ever being able to advocate in this room. This room is not meant to be the wholly owned subsidiary of the executive so backbench members of parliament never have an opportunity to speak. That might be the vision of some people who were in the previous government, but that is certainly not the way that this government runs things. If you want to fix that, you have to allocate dedicated time for private members’ business.

Mr Tuckey interjecting—

Mr BURKE—‘Like the Mondays,’ the member for O’Connor says. That is right: the Mondays where 17 out of 53 never happened! Mind you, there have been times in the past when parliament has sat on a Friday.
It did not happen during the last term, but there have been times when parliament has sat on a Friday because there was legislation that had to kick over—we had to wait for a message to come back from the Senate. So what did we do? We used to pretend it was still Thursday. That is what we used to do. We would let the House go until about midnight or shortly after, we would then adjourn and when we came back on the Friday we would pretend it was still Thursday. That is the way in which the previous government used to have very occasional Friday sittings without there being a question time. We are making sure that parliament will sit longer than it used to. We are making sure that parliamentarians will have the opportunity, one that used to be taken from them, to actually represent their constituencies.

If there were ever a signal of what the opposition believe passionately in and of how clearly they care about this issue, it would be to look at the order of speakers. On this issue they have put forward 46 speakers on their list. I will be the final speaker for the government but we are looking forward to hearing—if they want to go through all the 46 on their list—their speakers. We are here to listen. It is an interesting circular list. It begins with the Leader of the Opposition and the member for North Sydney, both of them from the north side of Sydney. It ends with the member for Macarthur, who is also now from the north side of Sydney. So there is a lovely circularity to the speaking order and I want to see it run all the way, beginning on the North Shore of Sydney and ending on the North Shore of Sydney.

There is a reason why the people opposite fell out of touch; there is a reason why it happened. It is that sort of contempt in their thinking: ‘Let’s have a quick slogan. Let’s find something to complain about. Let’s just have a quick slogan and put the message out and maybe the public will buy it. Maybe we’ll be able to bluff it through.’ There comes a point where those sorts of arguments run out. If anyone from the other side wants to come up here and argue that somehow parliamentary business is going to suffer and accountability is going to suffer under this new system, then they will have to explain why four in 2008 is a smaller number than four was in 2007—because the number of question times is the same. They will have to explain why three MPIs in 2008 are fewer than three MPIs in 2007. As a group of people who did not put things through the Procedure Committee, as a group of people who readily gagged debate, as a group of people who dumped on this parliament most significant legislation to take away the rights of working families and started the debate without a copy of the bill even being in the room, they do not have a lot to start with. But by the time they get to the member for Macarthur, who has recently moved to the north side of Sydney, it is going to be a great finish.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin) (9.42 pm)—May we look back on this first day of the 42nd Parliament and ask, ‘How did a new government get so arrogant so quickly?’ On day one it has launched, as its first piece of government business, an attack on parliamentary democracy. The opposition is strongly committed to the integrity of the parliament and we support its functions and its primacy in our democracy. We believe in accountability and transparency, but that is not what this government motion is all about. There is a very apt description of this government motion. It is a stunt designed by the Prime Minister to generate a media headline and to give a false impression of activity and accountability. At first blush the public would believe that the proposal to sit on Fridays was the act of a new government putting its stamp on the parliament. However, the attendant publicity generated by the
Prime Minister was that members would at last be working a five-day week, for the first time since Federation—a cheap shot at all parliamentarians as if this is the first time any of us have ever worked a five-day week. This was a slur not just on the Liberals and the Nationals but also on the Labor members and the Independents. The inference that underpinned the Prime Minister’s slur on the reputations of all of us is that we all travel home on Thursday nights and then we have a long weekend every weekend. That is borne out by the reaction, the feedback, to the publicity that the Prime Minister generated through various news sites with members of the public deriding what they had been told was a four-day sitting schedule before we slacked off.

The Prime Minister knows full well that we go back to our electorates on Thursday nights to deal with the demands of and assist our constituents. In fact, most of us on both sides of the House have a full day of constituent meetings on Fridays. The Prime Minister obviously thought that his colleagues were a soft target. Because the public love nothing better than a bit of pollie bashing, he deliberately set out to perpetuate the myth that parliamentarians on both sides of the House are lazy and have never done a decent week’s work. We are left to conclude that either the Prime Minister set out to mislead the Australian public or he is judging others by his own standards. If the Prime Minister has taken all his Fridays off, that is a matter for him. But he would know very well that the vast majority of this parliament, of his colleagues on both sides of the House, work very hard for six or seven days a week and rarely get a full day off once a week. But the last thing that any parliamentarian needs is for the Prime Minister of this country to cast aspersions on his hardworking and dedicated colleagues.

There are many misconceptions about parliamentarians and the nature of our work, and the last thing we need is for the Prime Minister to reinforce those misconceptions and the cynicism there is about those who occupy public office. However, this exercise has been illuminating. It has provided us with an insight into the modus operandi of the Rudd government. Mark Latham, in his infamous diary, said that this Prime Minister is ‘addicted to the media’. His assessment is brutally accurate in this instance. The Prime Minister fed his media addiction with a headline that the new government will ‘force MPs to finally capitulate to a full working week’. The Prime Minister knows that most of us work every day of every week and most weekends, and many people struggle to find time to spend with their family and friends. He knows that his colleagues work hard, but the allure of a cheap headline was just too much for him.

Today, through this motion, the Rudd government has revealed its true nature. We see a government and a Prime Minister focused on the five-second grab, the empty rhetoric and the cheap stunt—a government that is more interested in an easy headline than in the hard work of government. The Prime Minister’s cliches and slogans are fast becoming the stuff of legend, yet beneath the veneer of the slogans what do we find? We find, on the one hand, an education revolution that is nothing but a laptop delivered to high school students and, on the other, his cutting of $1 billion in funding from primary schools through the abolition of the Investing in Our Schools Program and his empty promise to solve the skills shortage by providing every school with a lathe and a microwave while simultaneously abolishing the highly successful Australian technical colleges that provide secondary students with specialist technical training.
This week we had the Prime Minister’s crocodile tears about standards in literacy and numeracy, which coincided with his announcement that the government will abolish a $500 million tutorial program to assist struggling schoolchildren with literacy and numeracy. This is the Prime Minister who promised before the election to reduce the price of groceries and the price of petrol but who now says that he has no control over these things. This is the Prime Minister who railed on about infrastructure bottlenecks but who has asked for an urgent report to be on his desk in 2009—

Government members interjecting—

Ms JULIE BISHOP—I am just getting to the AWAs bit; I am getting to that bit.

Dr Emerson—Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order on the point of relevance. This is a debate about the standing orders. We are prepared to be here all night, if we want to have a discussion about the government, the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition, but there is a minor point of relevance here to which I would draw your attention.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—This has been a wide-ranging debate.

Ms JULIE BISHOP—This is the Prime Minister who railed on about infrastructure bottlenecks and who has asked for an urgent report to be on his desk in 2009. One of his staff, in a moment of honesty, admitted this week that the Prime Minister’s 2020 talkfest of 1,000 people was not expected to come up with anything; it was simply designed to ‘give the impression’ that the government had long-term plans. This motion is all about giving an impression: the parliament is sitting on Fridays because the government has so much business to do.

We enter parliament in the knowledge that we are required to represent our constituents during sitting weeks, but this Prime Minister’s insatiable hunger for newspaper headlines has significantly increased the pressure on all members. While headlines are easy, I note that the Prime Minister has left it to the Leader of the House, the member for Grayndler, to clean up this mess—and now we know we are in trouble. The opposition will be here whenever the parliament is scheduled to sit, but this frantic scrambling to change the standing orders reveals that this decision was made without consultation, without any thought for the consequences and without any regard for the workings of the parliament—and, I suggest, without due regard to the legal and the constitutional implications.

The worst aspect of this proposal is that the Prime Minister of this country will refuse to attend question time on what will be a regular scheduled sitting day and neither will he answer a matter of public importance on a regular scheduled sitting day. His soaring rhetoric about higher standards of accountability has come crashing back to earth, deflated by the reality of this action. The government seeks to be very cunning in reducing the opportunities for scrutiny and accountability: it has provided itself with more time for government business early in the week so that government members can ‘shoot through’, according to the new member for Leichhardt—

A government member—Don’t verbal him.

Ms JULIE BISHOP—You would like the quote? I am sorry; I did not realise that you did not have the quote. It was in the Australian on 11 February 2008. The member for Leichhardt says that they are going to ‘shoot through’ on Thursday night and head home while shifting time for members of the opposition to Fridays.
The time for private members’ business has now been downgraded to the point where it is in danger of irrelevance, which is no doubt the real motivation of the government as it tries to clean up this mess. Private members’ business on Friday will be prevented from having a division or, indeed, a quorum. Does this mean that, if one member wishes to speak on a Friday, every other member can leave the building? Does this mean that the $1 million that it costs to keep this place operating on a Friday will be for one person? The Prime Minister’s whim has added to that operating cost simply because of his thirst for another cheap headline.

The answer to the question is in fact in the House of Representatives Practice. At the commencement of each sitting day, the Speaker takes the chair. If a quorum, currently one-fifth of members, is not present, the bells are rung for five minutes and if a quorum is not present after the bills have been rung, the Speaker adjourns the House until the next sitting day. The member for Chifley says, ‘Don’t worry; we’ll have 30 people here at the commencement of Friday sitting days.’ That raises a concern which is troubling my legal mind. I ask the Leader of the House to answer this question: if a quorum is called on a Friday morning and then deferred—

Government members interjecting—

Ms JULIE BISHOP—This is a serious question. If a quorum is called on Friday morning and then deferred to the end of the day, what is the position of parliamentary privilege throughout that day? How is parliamentary privilege affected? Are the proceedings of that Friday covered by parliamentary privilege? I see the Leader of the House shaking his head. I assume that the government has sought legal advice on this issue because it will affect the workings of this parliament and the standing of each member of this House. I invite the Leader of the House to assure all members that the issue of the status of parliamentary privilege has been the subject of legal advice.

One of this Prime Minister’s first acts has been to make it harder for members to achieve a work-life balance during the sitting schedule. While the Prime Minister clearly has no concern for his parliamentary colleagues and is willing to sacrifice their time on the altar of his insatiable quest for media attention, he should display some compassion for the families of members. The Prime Minister spent the last 12 months using the phrase ‘working families’. He should think about the partners, children and extended family members patiently waiting at home. These people are the real losers from this farcical arrangement. However, if we are to work a five-day parliamentary week, that is fine, I will be here. But it must be a full and proper working parliament for those five days. That is why I support the amendments moved by the Manager of Opposition Business that Friday be a proper scheduled sitting day with a question time, with a matter of public importance and with the Prime Minister and all his ministry present. The issue of parliamentary privilege will not then arise.

Respect for the institution of the parliament dictates that the government should not treat sitting days as the plaything of the Prime Minister. This should not be used as a basis for an attack on the reputation of members. Friday sittings must be full working days with divisions, quorums, a question time and an MPI. Anything less is a part-time parliament. The opposition will be the guardian of accountability. We will check the excesses and the arrogance of the executive. I challenge the government to put its money where its mouth is and support the opposition amendments. Otherwise, may the government be condemned for voting down amendments to have ministers and the Prime
Minister attend a question time and have a matter of public importance on a scheduled sitting day. Try and explain that one in a five-second grab.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (9.56 pm)—Madam Deputy Speaker Burke, in the spirit of the occasion, let me offer my personal congratulations to you and invite you to convey to the Speaker formally my congratulations, which I have already conveyed to him informally. I have had the opportunity over some time of viewing many changes in relation to parliamentary procedure. I have not been encouraged to get into the debate about these matters which go to mere manner and form. But, on this occasion, I think there are some important issues that confront us because they involve systemic changes, if I might put it in that form, to the system of rules under which this parliament operates.

It is interesting, as the Leader of the Opposition drew attention to earlier, that these amendments sit uncomfortably, in my view, with the comments made by the Governor-General on behalf of the government in the speech that His Excellency made at the opening of this the 42nd Parliament. He said that this government is going to trade on implementing measures to help make government more accessible, more transparent in its decision making. If you go further in the speech, and it is line after line, the government has stated its preparedness to listen to the ideas of Australians for the future of our country. It wants to leave no stone unturned to ensure Australia is on the right track for the future, and that means listening to Australians, according to the Governor-General. If you were in any doubt when you got to the conclusion, he goes on to say that the government is committed to being a government that listens to the Australian people, consults with the Australian people and is up front with the Australian people. But when it comes to this parliament, where the Australian people elect members to sit and to speak for them, of course what we have are proposals to constrain that effectiveness, that accountability, that transparency. One can be forgiven for coming to a view that what is proposed here is a systemic change to ensure that there is, in fact, less opportunity for accountability.

I know during the debate Mr Burke, the member for Watson, was saying, ‘We’ve still got three MPIs a week and we’ve got four question times a week; really there’s nothing to worry about,’ but in fact, if you were trying to put in place extra days of sitting within the existing framework, we would of course be sitting for extra weeks. That is the reality. His argument was illusionary, in my view, and it is an argument that has been pursued in other ways. People have taken particular examples and said that at other points in time during our parliament we have seen MPIs suspended. That has happened, but the context has usually been when there has been another debate in another form—namely, the suspension of standing orders to move a censure of the government. And it would not be surprising if, when you had had the opportunity to debate for three hours the censure of a government, you came to the view that you did not need the extra opportunity for an MPI. That has happened quite frequently, as the member for Kooyong has noted.

But, equally, when it comes to issues where you may have a quorum or a division and you have agreement in large part between the government and the opposition that you will not call a division when somebody is having a meal, that may provide a basis for suspension of, largely, the whole of a sitting. As I have listened to this debate tonight, my real concern has been that these proposals, which do envisage that the parliament will continue to sit without a question time and without the opportunity to discuss a matter of public importance—and
people will be required to be here to maintain a quorum, at least at the start of the day—will mean that ministers will be slipping away. I have heard that ministers will be slipping away. I have heard suggestions that ministers will in fact be sitting in their rooms.

Mr Georgiou—Quietly!

Mr Ruddock—Quietly, yes—I imagine they would be quiet. They would perhaps be seeing their officials and reading their briefs with half an ear to what is going on in the chamber, but I suspect in fact they would be doing something else.

Interestingly, I was asked whether I would be at a function in Sydney next Thursday night. I had to say, ‘No, the parliament’s sitting on Friday; I’m going to have to stay in Canberra.’ They said, ‘Why is it that the minister is able to come and you can’t?’

Mr Albanese—What did you used to do? You never went to functions during the week!

Mr Ruddock—Very rarely.

Mr Albanese—As a minister.

Mr Ruddock—As a minister, very rarely. In relation to matters where some ministers might have to absent themselves, that is understood, but I suspect that what we are seeing here is the emergence of a double standard.

I want to pick up the comments that were made by the member for Wentworth as well as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, because I have some concerns about the way in which issues relating to quorums are going to be addressed. The member for Wentworth raised the provision of the Constitution, section 39, which goes to the requirement of the parliament to have a quorum. It provides that the parliament might vary the quorum, and we have already done that, but I do not think such a provision envisages that there should be no quorum and I do not think it envisages that the parliament should essentially bring itself to the point where a provision of the Constitution is without any impact, without any effect. My concern is that I do not know what view a court might hold. I imagine you might be able to get a legal opinion. You might not want to show us the legal opinion, but I imagine any self-respecting legal opinion would be, ‘This is a matter in which I’ve formed a view as to what might happen but we won’t know until the matter is the subject of some determination.’ I have seen plenty of opinions like that, because people are usually fairly guarded, fairly cautious. They usually do not offer a black-and-white answer in relation to those matters because you cannot give one until you know there is a determination.

The real concern one has is that, if this were happening in relation to legislation, the matter might well be challenged. Somebody might be concerned about some legislation that this parliament has enacted and want to see it struck down. I could imagine if you were dealing with a situation where there was legislation whose passage was in doubt, you would be very concerned. I suppose some people are taking the view that, with private members’ matters, grievance debates and parliamentary committee reports, there are less likely to be issues that may be the subject of a challenge. But the Deputy Leader of the Opposition correctly raises the issue—in relation to grievance, for instance—that somebody may raise a matter that concerns an individual who thinks that it goes to his or her reputation and a challenge may go to the very question of whether or not the person was protected and was sitting in a parliament to which privilege attached.

The member for Grayndler pooh-poohs this idea. He says it would not arise. I can say quite truthfully that in my personal experience, if people feel very strongly about
an issue, they might well seek to test that very question. If they are testing a variety of questions as to whether they have been defamed, why wouldn’t they want to see tested properly the lawfulness of a defence that says these comments were protected? It seems to me that you have to establish first that at the start of the meeting—I think it is standing order 54—there is a quorum, and that means that 30 members have to be present. The government are going to have to ensure that 30 members are present. They are going to look pretty silly if they cannot ensure 30 members are present on Friday to support the sitting.

Then we go on and we look at the particular provisions that will operate under paragraph 55, about when there might be a lack of a quorum. Under proposal (c) it says:

On Fridays, if any Member draws the attention of the Speaker to the state of the House, the Speaker shall announce that he or she will count the House following the conclusion of the grievance debate, if the Member then so desires.

What an extraordinary proposition. If somebody calls for a quorum, it cannot be counted immediately. It must be counted at the end of the day, at the very point in time when more people may have vacated the premises. You can imagine what those wanting to get back to Perth and some of the more outlying places, who have got their grievance up and have spoken on their private members’ business, will do. They will decamp. There is no requirement for them to be here. So we might get to the end of the day with the Leader of the House and a couple of his cronies keeping watch; they will do the count and say, ‘Oh, we have got a count of three.’ What does that tell you? It tells you that after the first test of this issue at the beginning of the day, at some point in time—particularly when attention was called to the state of the House—you could not establish that there was a quorum present.

If I were participating in those debates, with the potential for doubt as to whether or not privilege would pertain, it would constrain me very significantly in what I might be prepared to say. It could certainly have the import of ensuring that my effectiveness as a member of parliament was very significantly impaired. If some of my colleagues from Western Australia—I know they are enthusiastically following this debate—had some issues that they wanted to raise in relation to some of those matters that are being investigated by a state corruption body and they wanted to talk to some of those issues in the House where they felt that something was not being adequately addressed, they might be a little concerned.

When I was a young solicitor, my master solicitor used to say to me in relation to these issues when they arose that you should always look at these questions with ‘more abundant caution’. While I would not want to give a legal opinion on the lawfulness of these matters and the impact that it might have on parliamentary privilege, I would urge anyone who is examining these questions to exercise ‘more abundant caution’. In fact, I would encourage the Leader of the House to have those issues looked at. I think he should give an assurance that he will get legal advice for members so that they can be satisfied that they are going to be properly protected.

Mr Albanese—So they can defame people?

Mr Ruddock—I am suggesting that sometimes there are very serious issues that have to be raised. The Leader of the House would not want to talk about defaming people in this House and using parliamentary privilege for the purpose of raising those issues. At various times, I have been the subject of some allegations of that sort by people like you and some of your colleagues.
That is the point that I would make. (Time expired)

Mr GEORGIOU (Kooyong) (10.11 pm)—Deputy Speaker Burke, I first of all congratulate you on your election. I am sure you will do a fantastic job. As I was sitting here listening to some really empty rhetoric from the government, I thought to myself: how did a day that started so well, with a fantastic welcome to country ceremony that ignited everyone’s enthusiasm and that the government, I believe, was complimented on, end with such acrimony and empty rhetoric from the government side? The reason is transparent. What the government have done is create a huge mess that they cannot even defend themselves against. What they have done is try to construct a day in parliament without quorums, without divisions—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr GEORGIOU—no, this is a very serious matter—where people do not have to attend the parliament, where apparently one starting quorum is enough, where there is no question time and there is no MPI. Can you imagine if the Howard government in its worst moments tried to do that to the then opposition—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr GEORGIOU—We can all judge. When Paul Keating said, ‘Question time is a courtesy extended to the House by the executive branch of government,’ he was vilified, and subsequently people said that this was a real sign of arrogance. I think people have to rethink that, because what we have now is a real sign of arrogance, if it is not just a total misunderstanding of the impact of what has been proposed.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr GEORGIOU—Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the House is being just a little loud.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The people at the table are being a bit too loud. The member should be heard in silence.

Mr Albanese—We are bored.

Mr GEORGIOU—Be bored in silence. It is just astonishing that the government is trying to knock off MPIs, question times, quorums and divisions. You call that a parliamentary day! There is a real issue, as has been raised, about the constitutionality of not being able to have quorums. There is a real question about whether in fact the House will be in session. We are assured that it will be. We ask for the legal opinions; they are not forthcoming. Firstly, I would like to see the legal opinions because I think all of us are at risk if it is found that the House is not sitting with its full functions.

Secondly, I believe there are genuine issues about the ability of members to service their electorates if they are forced to be in Canberra on Fridays. It is not that significant for some members who live nearby—Sydney, Melbourne. It is very significant for people from Western Australia. It is significant for people from the Northern Territory, and I think that needs to be taken into consideration.

I think that there is a real issue regarding the impact of this on private members’ business. The great argument has been put by the Leader of the House—and I congratulate him on his elevation—that somehow this is no different from what happened in the past during private members’ business: that there were no suspensions, no divisions, no quorums. Let me seek to make the Leader of the House remember the suspension of standing orders moved on 16 February 2005. Mr Albanese moved:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent order of the day No. 6, private members’ business, relating to the Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change (Kyoto Protocol
Ratification) Bill 2005, being called on forthwith...

There was a suspension in private members’ business, a suspension of standing and sessional orders moved. Mr Windsor—this particularly impacts on the Independents—moved:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for New England from moving the following motion immediately:
That this House:
(1) bring forward the debate on the Private Members’ bill—Fuel Quality Standards (Ethanol content) Amendment Bill 2005;

There was a division. Let me just go to another one: Mr SF Smith moved:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent private Members’ business Notice No. 3 standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Perth being called on and debated...

We have always had suspensions of standing orders in the context of private members’ bills. I think that this is of fundamental importance not just because the Leader of the House misinformed the House about the practice but because I believe it goes to the heart of the rights and abilities of backbench members, private members, to pursue their interests. Let us face it: the characteristic move of the eighties, nineties and into the 2000s was the progressive encroachment of party discipline on the ability of private members to pursue issues. What this does is further undermine the ability of private members to pursue matters—

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

Mr GEORGIOU—listen—which are of fundamental importance to them and which are sometimes of fundamental significance for issues of conscience.

The Labor Party talk a lot about conscience but their party rules prevent them from pursuing it, so constantly we are confronted by calls of conscience on this side of the House, which of course is not something the Labor Party can subject themselves to. But let me just mention three subjects which were pursued by way of private members’ bills during the recent past: the ratification of the Kyoto protocol on greenhouse gas emissions, the quashing of the Northern Territory’s power to legislate with respect to euthanasia, and the bill on mandatory sentencing also affecting the Northern Territory. The last of these was of course moved at the initiative of the then member for Calare, the late Mr Andren. I take this opportunity to reiterate the great respect I have for Mr Andren, a respect which I know is shared by members on both sides of the House.

At that particular time, the member for Calare brought forward a private member’s bill which was called the bill to overturn mandatory sentencing in the Northern Territory. This caused a significant degree of interest on both sides of the parliament. As a result of discussions within the coalition party room, which were subsequently made public, a suspension was moved allowing Mr Andren to debate the suspension of standing orders on the bill. As a consequence of that, the government made very significant amendments to its position on the mandatory sentencing of children in the Northern Territory—and, to be fair, that meant the mandatory sentencing of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory. Without the ability to support a suspension, which will be precluded by the sorts of changes that are being offered up by the government, this sort of thing would simply not be possible. Did the Chief Government Whip recognise this when he was drafting these? Did he recognise that it would be impossible for a person to move a motion and then to move a suspension of standing orders to have a debate on the issue? No. If he realised that, then it is not
merely messy but culpable. I do not know how this was conceived, but the reality is that it cuts to the heart of the ability of private members to pursue issues, an ability which has already been truncated for decades in the Labor Party by its party rules and by the evolution towards greater and greater party discipline on our side of the House.

I think it is also important to raise another matter. There has been a lot of talk about consultation and the ugly things that the former Leader of the House did to the poor old opposition, but let me say that the major changes that were moved in 2004 to the standing orders were actually done by consensus, as was the move not to have divisions or quorums between 6.30 and eight. This was done by consensus. This was a major change, not a one-off change.

Mr Bevis—We were being reasonable.

Mr GEORGIOU—Yes, and now you are being unreasonable. So what has changed? What has changed is that I think you have lost sight of something that governments sometimes do lose sight of: the fact that there is a significance to the House that transcends momentary partisan interests. What you have done is to create a mess. I urgently request that you stop, that members of the government, on whom this will impact—it is not just us—stop. It will particularly impact on the Independents and it will impact on private members on this side of the House, but—do not frighten yourselves—it will actually impact on you as well, because it will lead to a degradation of the standards in this House. Just before concluding, I would like to say that I would like to believe that this was somebody’s smart idea that was not thought through, and that the government was willing to reconsider this.

(Quorum formed)

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (10.25 pm)—I thank the member for O’Connor for producing an audience. This debate and these motions are about two things. Firstly, they are about the attempt to provide the impression of activity, which is the hallmark of the government’s early months. Let me be absolutely clear that the early months, the first 100 days, of this government have not been about activity but about the impression of activity. Let me run through the details. First, let us talk about the promises they have breached so far, all designed to give the impression of activity.

On 18 November, Mr Rudd made a little promise to the people of Australia. He said that this House would be recalled before Christmas. Strangely, it never happened. Nobody asked him to make the promise. Nobody compelled him. It was a self-inflicted wound. It was a promise which he did not intend to keep. He made it to the Australian people in the last week before an election. It was a gross violation of trust, but it was designed to give the impression of activity. And guess what? This House did not start until today. And why is that?

When there was nothing preventing the House being called last week or the week before that, what we saw was a House that started later than in 2007, later than in 2006, later than in 2005, later than in 2004, later than in 2003, and the list goes on. So the promise made to the Australian people was: ‘I will get the parliament to work before Christmas,’ but it never happened. Why is it, I ask the members of the government, that their leader promises this to the Australian people and does not deliver? And why did he not even call parliament earlier than we have been brought back?

The second of the promises was on 29 November. What we saw on 29 November was again a unilateral promise to the Australian people that there would be no holidays but for Christmas Day and Boxing Day. I
note something very simple: the transcript which makes that statement, as of this evening, has been taken off the Prime Minister’s own website. I checked it before coming into this House. The promise has been taken off the Prime Minister’s own website. I would be delighted if perhaps the Prime Minister’s parliamentary secretary could indicate why this transcript has been taken off the website and whether this practice of expunging history will be a practice taken forward from this day forward. Where is the transcript of 29 November with the Prime Minister’s promise—unasked for by anyone else—that ministers would work on all days other than Christmas and Boxing Day? Because we know that between 21 December and 14 January there is not a single transcript from the Prime Minister on his website. Nobody asked him to make this promise—but, again, it was the impression of activity which he sought to cultivate, whilst not living up to it. Who is happy with the fact that their Prime Minister makes a promise, when not sought by anyone else, and does not live up to it? That is the second example of the impression of activity.

The third is that on 19 September his Minister for Foreign Affairs and his Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts made the promise on his behalf to the Australian people that they would send the Oceanic Viking out to sea within days. Nothing happened. When Christmas came, the ship was still in port in Fremantle. When New Year came, the ship was still in port in Fremantle. When the first week of January came, the ship was still in port in Fremantle. And when the second week of January came, the ship was still in port in Fremantle. All this adds up to a pattern of deception and a process of providing an impression of activity.

Mr Snowdon—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is a bit belated but it is about relevance: I am wondering what ships have got to do with the matter that is before the chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—Thank you, Minister. This has been a wide-ranging debate. I call the member for Flinders.

Mr HUNT—Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. The activity of 18 November, 29 November and 19 December represents promises to the Australian people, not one of which was carried through, and all of which were based on the notion of creating an impression of activity when in fact there was no substantive action. The promise of parliament before Christmas, the promise of no holidays and the promise of the ship at sea within days all were broken. They have led to precisely this point and precisely this moment. What we see with these changes to the standing orders and to the way in which the parliament works is the same pattern of attempting to establish the impression of activity whilst at the same time undermining accountability—and that is a serious action. This may be the first government in Australian history that, upon entering the treasury bench, has actually sought to decrease rather than to strengthen accountability. That is the sum total and the net effect of that which is being proposed by the Leader of the House on the floor of this chamber.

What are the elements of parliamentary accountability about which we have serious concern? The starting point is that we do not care if we work on Friday, Saturday, Sunday or public holidays. What we care about is a part-time parliament in which accountability is decreased. I want to deal with that in three ways. Firstly, let me deal with the question of the number of question times. Last year, 70 question times were set down on the record. Of course, an election intervened, but we were willing to face 70 question times. This year, under this new, bold system, we
find a reduction in the number of question times. More significantly than that, though, is that this House will operate under a set of rules which provide a considerable danger to the protections of members and of the public, upon which this House has been based for over 100 years. I want to put a different argument to that which I think anyone else has run this evening, and that is the question of protection of the public. One of the reasons the standing orders allow for divisions and for the Speaker of the day to make rulings to cut off a speaker is that, otherwise, if a member of this parliament—and let us not make assumptions that it will be somebody from one side or the other—as has happened in the past, were to unfairly traduce a member of the public and to make a serious accusation in violation of the conventions and the rules which have been set down to protect the public, there would be no protection and no recourse. Members on the government bench know this. Forget the members of this House. This opens up a new and dangerous situation where the very protections laid out in this House to accompany the freedoms that members have will be lost to the members of the public. There is a balance here. The members of this House have the freedom of parliamentary privilege but, on the other hand, they are subject to the disciplines of the Speaker, and the Speaker’s ability to enforce those disciplines is utterly dependent upon the capacity to evict people from the House, to do so according to the laws of this House and to do so in such a way that there will be divisions to enforce those laws. So we have a very dangerous precedent here where, for the first time ever, members of this parliament will not be subject to a corresponding protection for members of the public, and that, I think, is a profound new direction. Is that what we stand for—the untrammeled right of a member to in some way traduce a member of the public? We stand here as their representatives but we do not stand here with an untrammeled power. It is not an intended consequence of that which has been proposed by our friends on the government benches, but it is an absolute and clear consequence that there are no protections for the public, and that is something fresh, new, unprecedented, not within the spirit of this parliament and not within our obligations to the people of Australia. If there is one member on the other side who believes that we should have an untrammeled right—because that is what we are creating today—to traduce members of the public, then speak up, because a new and dangerous precedent is being established.

Let me move on to another myth—that is, this notion that private members’ business is a time during which there may not be the need for some other form of division which would allow the opposition to move a suspension of standing orders. As the previous speaker, the member for Kooyong, noted, there have been many examples where the previous opposition interrupted private members’ business to seek a suspension of standing orders to bring to the parliament and the people of Australia items that they thought were of extreme gravitas, of moment, of imminence and of importance. I am not sure whether they were or were not, but I believe in their right to have done so. But that right will not exist on Fridays. That right will not exist during private members’ business.

We all know that the goal here is actually very simple. The goal is, firstly, to give the impression of activity and back it up by taking away accountability at precisely the same time. The truth is—and here is the second great political objective—that it is about keeping opposition backbenchers out of their electorates whilst letting government members travel and work in opposition members’
seats at precisely the same time. If this were a serious proposal for something other than a part-time parliament with no protections for ordinary members of the public then we would have a commitment from our friends on the government benches that their ministers and frontbenchers would attend the parliament every day it is set down, other than under extraordinary circumstances. If they give a guarantee to that effect then I am happy to withdraw that complaint. But I do not think there will be any guarantee. In fact, what was previously a parliamentary day has only today been termed ‘backbenchers’ day’. We have lost the notion that this is a parliamentary day. It has become something less because people will flee and the ministers will not be here.

I started this discussion by talking about the concerted impression of activity and by placing these changes to the standing order in that context. We have seen, firstly, at the political level, the deception of 18 November, when it was promised that the parliament would be back before Christmas.

Mr Albanese—What?

Mr HUNT—On 18 November your learned leader promised that this parliament would be back before Christmas. It was his promise, it was not sought by any of us, and he breached it. On 29 November there was a promise that there would be no holidays. There is no problem with people doing that, but not if you lie about it, not if you tell the Australian people that there will be no holidays—

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member will withdraw.

Mr HUNT—I withdraw. The third promise was on 19 December. Again, there was a promise of activity by sending the Oceanic Viking out within days. None of that happened. But what we do see is a continuation of those public statements in this forum, in this House whereby the government seeks to promote the impression of activity. Under the impression of activity, we have a decrease in question time, a decrease in protection for the public and, above all else, a concerted decrease in the accountability of this place. For that, I stand in support of the position put forward by the member for North Sydney and reject those propositions put forward by the government.

Mr Albanese—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: as Leader of the House I have had an inquiry as to what time the staff of the parliament could be expected to stay here. We do not care particularly, but you might show some courtesy towards the workers who keep the parliament going by letting them know.

The SPEAKER—There is no point of order. The Leader of the House will resume his seat.

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler) (10.41 pm)—Mr Speaker, may I first congratulate you on your elevation to the speakership. I have always been an admirer of your fairness and justice—and I will undertake to sing Danny Boy at the first Bundaberg Rum night! Having put that to one side, I want to talk about a very important thing tonight, and that is these Friday sittings. The government has argued that there is nothing unusual about this because at present we suspend divisions between 6.30 pm and 8 pm in the early part of the week for the dinner break. The point I would make there is that that was consen-
That was on for a short time and it was by consensus. If someone did feel aggrieved, at an absolute maximum the longest it would take to have that matter rectified or tested on the floor of the parliament was \(1\frac{1}{2}\) hours. Then we were told the other thing that, in the second chamber, we do not have divisions and that this somehow justifies the Friday scenario that the government is putting to us. The second chamber was put in place, again consensually, to facilitate other opportunities to see minor and non-controversial legislation debated by those who want it. If there was a serious dispute in that chamber, it was referred to this chamber at the earliest opportunity and dealt with.

These are not good analogies, and the government are skating on very thin ice by using them as precedents. The government also use as a form of justification that our party, when in government, cancelled a number of MPIs. What they did not tell the House, and especially the new Labor members, was that, on those days, there was another form of debate, generally a censure, which gave the government of the day, in many instances, the opportunity to debate the very same question. After at least 35 to 40 minutes of that, was it necessary to have an MPI, probably on the same matter, immediately following? No, it was not. So that is a third analogy that lacks validity.

If you were really fair dinkum about this, why would you not have the members’ day on Thursday? If it is true that all your ministers are going to be sitting quietly in their offices on Friday—a claim, I might add, that I am cynical enough to believe will not happen—why not reverse the days, and why not sit the parliament on the Thursday till 8 pm and finish it, say, with a question time at midday or with an MPI at one o’clock on the Friday? Why not do that?

If you were really fair dinkum about ministers being in their offices and the backbenchers—particularly opposition backbenchers—not being exploited, then I challenge you: what possible objection would you have to a Thursday, if you are not happy with a Monday? If you want to be truthful, in talking about the number of question times, why would you not have one on that day? If you are talking about MPIs in the context of five days of sitting, and three out of four days was valid under the old arrangements, why would four out of five days not be valid under the new arrangements? We have generally conceded in the past that it is not necessary to have an MPI on a day when private members’ business is the dominant matter because in theory question time, though it has not always been so since the introduction of the Dorothy Dixer, was the time for members, including backbenchers, to test the government. On every ground this lacks any substance.

Let me give you the practical example of what happens in electorates. I, for one, take the matter of being back in my electorate on Friday very seriously. I cannot get home on Thursday night, so I am up at half past four to get the very first plane to Brisbane on a Friday morning to get home to my electorate by about 9.30. When daylight saving is off, I cannot make that connection. It is bad enough then that I do not get back to my office till about midday, but if you translate that scenario to a sitting Friday I will not get home till probably mid-morning on a Saturday. So what happens to a member like me who cannot get home on the Friday night? You go to your electorate on Friday, you get home late morning or midday on Saturday and on Sunday at 10 past 10 you get on the plane to come back to Canberra. Is that a proper use of the government’s or the parliament’s resources? What do you have time to do? Unless there were a really important
function in your electorate at some time in the afternoon or the evening of Saturday, what purpose would there be in going home? Do you go and spend a couple of thousands of dollars of the ratepayers’ money going home to do your washing? That is the effect of this motion. You would be going home to do little more than your washing. It is all right for members who can get home on the night or in the late afternoon of the day when the parliament adjourns.

Mr Albanese—You can stay!

Mr NEVILLE—I see the Leader of the House over there, having a bit of a chiack at me, making a few smart-arse remarks.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member will withdraw.

Mr NEVILLE—A few smart alec remarks, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER—And he will be very careful.

Mr NEVILLE—And he is sitting on the back bench, out of his place, while he is doing it, I might add. Let me tell you what I saw one day, because, as I said, I take my duties here seriously. I very seldom ask for leave. On one occasion I had to do a representation for a minister on a Thursday evening, and to make the connection I had to go out to Canberra airport around about 4.15. I arrived there at 4.30. There were 20 members of the then opposition in the lounge. If in opposition you were so serious about this matter that you could not stay in the parliament till five o'clock on a Thursday—and you have a new member for Leichhardt who is already talking about shooting through on Friday—what confidence can we have on this side of the House that you are going to treat this matter seriously? We can have no confidence in that whatsoever. Let me be a little more cynical than that. If there is no disciplining ministers to be here, where will they be? Some earlier speakers said that they might be with their families, possibly having a round of golf, having a leisurely Friday in their electorates or VIPing here and there. A more cynical view is that they will be white-anting us in our own electorates.

Mr Snowdon—God forbid!

Mr NEVILLE—Heaven forbid, says the member for Lingiari, that anyone would come into our electorates. The member for Berowra has just been telling us that he is invited to a function on Thursday night where the minister will be present but that if he is carrying out his duties he will not be able to. Even before you have introduced this measure, even before it has come into this House, you are already breaking the rules yourselves.

Friday is important to me in my electorate. Lots of things happen in my office on a Friday, with people who have not been able to get to me during that week or previous weekend wanting to see me. A week’s work may lead up to that Friday and I may have people wanting to see me. There would be functions to attend. I suppose 30 per cent of the evening functions I attend occur on a Friday night, and on most occasions under these rules I will not be able to get home. As I just put to the House, if I do not get home till Saturday morning is there much point in my going home at all? This measure will, at certain times of the year, confine me to Canberra and not allow me to carry out my duties.

The Prime Minister said that he was going to work the parliament five days per week. Except in the most extreme cases, under all governments of both political persuasions right back to Federation, we have not sat on Fridays. Why? I think that the founding fathers and the pre- and post-war executives of those governments recognised that people have to get back to their electorates and that they work in their electorates. That the Labor
Party would try to create the impression that this is somehow making members of parliament work five days a week is, as one previous speaker said, a slur on every backbench member of parliament in this place and on those who have gone before them in previous parliaments. Were they all slackers who should have been lined up at the barrier for a five-day week? Is that what the government is saying? This is an ill-conceived thing that has been very poorly thought through.

I will not go over what we have heard to any great extent, but if you cannot have a quorum—if the quorum ceases to be important—how do you establish the House in the morning? How do you, for example, have a division? You cannot have a division. We all know that some members of parliament have very robust thoughts about matters they bring up as private members’ business. They are matters which do not normally get onto the Notice Paper but which you really want to test in the parliament so that your constituents are aware of an issue in your electorate. As the member for Berowra made very clear, the first thing is that the matter of privilege—until the Leader of the House is kind enough to let us see the legal opinion—is suspect.

Let me put a second scenario to you, Mr Speaker, because you have been the guardian of some of these things. What do we do when one of those robust debates is going on, the Speaker constantly calls a particular member to order, then either sends them out, names them or tells them to resume their seat and someone in the opposition wants to contest that by dissenting from the Speaker’s ruling? What do we do then? This could apply either way. It could be that a Deputy Speaker from the coalition makes a ruling that is quite offensive to the government and there will be no way of testing that ruling. So on every front this thing is flawed.

I have told you of the effects on my electorate and I have told you that there are probably alternatives. I do not mind coming here. The Prime Minister should not create the impression that I mind coming here to do work. I do not mind that one bit. I would be happy to sit for another week or another fortnight and do it in an orderly and proper fashion, as has been the custom for the last 107 years and, under our current practice, for the last 50-odd. Mr Speaker, this matter should be opposed.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10.56 pm)—Firstly, I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your elevation to such high office. Something that has not been mentioned about your good self today has been your passion for the environment and the work that you have done on committees, which I have witnessed very clearly, as well as your passion for future generations to engage in environmental matters and the work that you have put into that. I felt that that was not mentioned today. I would like to raise that with you now. I congratulate you and the Deputy Speaker on your appointment to your positions. I said to you privately today—and I do not mind telling those both in the House and watching on broadcast—that all good things come to those who wait. You have waited, you have been patient and you have come to a place and a time when you have achieved your goal.

I want to go back to when the member for Watson was talking about the opposition. He said that the opposition finally has some backbone on this issue. My great disappointment tonight is that we are talking about an issue that the broader Australian public listening to this broadcast could not care less about, and that is what is going on in this House. While they will have understood what the member for Hinkler and other members of the House have said, they will ask why, when tomorrow
we are going into a day that is about hope, about the future and about steps towards reconciliation, we would be discussing this matter at length in the House tonight. For me, we have to because we need to be constantly vigilant in everything we do with regard to the freedoms we enjoy. The member for Watson talked about passion. I have three positions that I want to take here. Firstly, this should have had more consideration. It should have gone to a committee and come back with bipartisan support as to how we might approach it. Secondly, I am very happy with five days of full-on parliamentary activity. If that is what you want, bring it on. That was my understanding of what the new Prime Minister put forward to the public of Australia. I was of the understanding and other people were of the understanding that we were just going to sit another day, which would give plenty of time for all of the new backbenchers and all of those within this House to have a greater opportunity to speak. Thirdly, there are problems, and the member for Hinkler came close to them. I say to the new members: I hope you have bucketloads, barrow loads, trailer loads of passion about what you do in this House on behalf of the Australian people. Never, ever misunderstand the important role that you play and what an honour it is to be a member of this House, whatever role you play within it. Whatever job you are given, wherever you are, very few people come to this House, and you are greatly honoured by the constituents who have elected you to this place.

The problem is this. Say on a Friday a recalcitrant, passionate member of parliament decided he was going to be extremely passionate about an issue that somebody on the other side might take issue with. You would end up, unusually in this place, in uproar—and we have seen the former opposition now in government try it week after week when the Speaker was trying to take control of the House. What would be left at the Speaker’s disposal? One option is expulsion for an hour. If the individual recalcitrant member from either side of the House then says, ‘I’m not moving,’ are we going to call on the Serjeant-at-Arms to pull out a shotgun and drive him or her out of this House? I don’t think so! It has never happened before and it will not happen in the time of this parliament. So what is the next thing that you can do? The Speaker can then name that person, and there would be a vote of the House for their removal and a discussion in the course of that debate. But that cannot happen on a Friday: ‘Oh, but we can defer the debate’—so the mayhem goes on in the House for the Friday, which is now called backbench Friday. It is only backbenchers who are causing this mayhem, not frontbenchers. So you have a day of recalcitrance riding over the authority of the Speaker, which can then be tested at the end of the day if there is anybody left to test it. If there is nobody left to test it, it can be held over until the next sitting of parliament three weeks later. Are the members of parliament at that time still as passionate about the issue three weeks later or are we left with a whole lot of people in trouble?

What would actually happen, I believe, is this. Given the intransigence of the room, the Speaker would then, out of disorder in the parliament, call a halt to the proceedings. That is what would happen: it would finish on the spot. If you want to get a bit of notoriety in this place—and don’t do this!—you would cause that mayhem and you would cause the Speaker to call you to account. You would then call the Speaker to account, you would dissent from the Speaker’s ruling and the parliamentary sitting would be closed. You would be on the front page of the local Examiner, or whatever it is, the next day—and you would probably not make it onto the front of anything else because no-one would be bothered.
I have said my piece; we have been asked to say our piece and sit down. I am very happy to say this. If you want to work an extra day, we will be right behind you. We will give you 100 per cent support right now if you give us a reasonable opportunity to have a full day of parliament with all the opportunities that go with that and all of the safeguards that have been put in place by the members who have gone before us in this place who have had wisdom and knowledge and had consideration of these issues. That is why we have the standing orders we have today; those who have gone before us have put them in place so we do not have to go through this type of debate. That is why the standing orders are so important: they come out of a wealth of experience, knowledge and consideration.

Mr Georgiou—And consensus.

Mr BROADBENT—Yes, and I thank the member for Kooyong—and agreement. I draw my remarks to a close right there with the last word I used being ‘agreement’. I started off by saying we should be going off to resolve this matter behind closed doors and not trouble the Australian people with this issue when there are such big issues before the nation and the parliament today on which they want to hear from us. I will leave that for the consideration of the House.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (11.03 pm)—Madam Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to offer my congratulations on your elevation to that new position. I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak on the proposed changes to the standing orders. Tonight we are considering a very important question which goes to the very heart of how this parliament works. I believe that the people of this country have the right to expect that, when this parliament sits, it is a fully functioning parliament that sits each and every day. The people of this country have the right to expect that the executive will be in the parliament when it sits and that the parliament will be accountable to the people each and every day. The people of this country have the right to expect that, when a member raises an issue of concern to their electorate, there are members of the executive present to hear those concerns. We do not want clayton’s sitting days. If this parliament is to sit, it should be fully functional. There should be a question time and the executive should be present. If the House is to sit on a Friday it should not be an optional day. The role of members of this place is to represent their electorates in the House when it sits. At $1 million a day this parliament is not a ‘do drop in’. It is not a matter of choice as to whether or not you bother turning up. When this parliament sits its members should be here. Their constituents should rightfully be able to expect them to be here voicing the concerns of their area and having them heard by the executive.

The announcement by the Leader of the House on 18 December last year was pure doublespeak. He said that for the first time since Federation the parliament will regularly sit five days a week. Any reasonable person would assume that we would have a question time and that the normal functions of the House would continue five days a week. He did not say that the fifth day was, in fact, a clayton’s sitting. He said that the parliament would sit more days, allowing greater accountability and scrutiny. But there is no accountability in a clayton’s sitting day. There is no extra scrutiny in a clayton’s sitting day. He said that the Rudd government was committed to parliamentary reform to ensure greater accountability. If the government were really committed to greater accountability it would welcome the opportunity to respond to the concerns that would be raised in a question time in the House on a Friday. It would welcome the opportunity to
state the case of the government as to why the measures it proposed or the responses it made were appropriate. But on a Friday we will not have a question time.

As a member of this House I have frequently noted that it is really important to look at what the Australian Labor Party do and not listen to what they say. To see if their Friday sitting day will be as effective as they claim it will be, you only have to look at what their performance on a Thursday is like. I did a bit of research on Labor’s performance on a Thursday sitting day. I happened to chance on a particular date, which was 20 September last year. There was a division at 4.46 on 20 September last year. Last year in this place there were some 60 members. I thought, ‘How many members of the Australian Labor Party turned up for the division at 4.46 on 20 September 2007?’ With 60 members you would think it was probably reasonable to have 55. There would have been a few away and so on and so forth. It was not 55. You would think that 50 would have been a reasonable number. It was not 50. Was it 45 perhaps? It was not 45. Forty-four members turned up for the division on the Thursday. If roughly one-third are not bothering to turn up for a division on a Thursday, it begs the question: how many people would be bothering to turn up in this place, at a cost of $1 million a day, on a Friday? One-third might be in the Qantas Club lounge or wherever they are when they are on important other business outside of this House. Forty-four out of 60 were here on 20 September last year. If they could not be bothered turning up on a Thursday, how could we reasonably expect them to turn up on a Friday, that clayton’s sitting day?

Members have canvassed a whole range of issues—privilege, accountability, giving the taxpayer value for money and what constituents can rightly expect in the representation that they receive when this House is sitting. I believe that the changes proposed by Labor do not reflect what the public heard when that statement was made. I believe the public heard that they were getting five full sitting days, value for their taxpayers’ money, a question time and a fully functioning parliament—they were not going to be seeing this half-baked proposal that currently stands before us. I commend the amendments proposed by the opposition. I certainly would be very keen to ensure that the government reconsiders the current plan that it has on the table.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (11.09 pm)—The atmosphere in which this debate is taking place is a good example of what we can expect under the current government that has just come into power. I think that what we will be seeing is dictator Rudd, who, while taking the so-called moral high ground, has no concern at all for the wishes of the parliament and no respect for members. He has been elected on the basis of saying he wants more transparency, that he wants to be ‘the reasonable leader’ and that we are going to be sitting more days to have fuller and fairer debate and more accountability, but it is all a facade; it is all a fake. Coming into this parliament today we are told that the most important issue we have to deal with is the apology, when we see the great difficulties that the economy is in. He has chosen this occasion to do so—no matter what is said in this parliament and no matter what support is given—and the nation is still divided.

On the procedural issue before us tonight, what we are seeing is a fundamental breach of the compact that he tried to draw with the Australian people during the election period. The argument is mounted: we are going to sit an extra day, Friday, with no question time, no divisions and no quorums. I think the new member for Leichhardt got the interpretation right when he said:
From what I can gather, there won’t be any question time on Friday, so we will be able to shoot through ... Shoot through is right. The fact of the matter is that, if there is no question time, it is not a meaningful sitting day.

The proposal has been put forward that the opposition is quite prepared to sit additional days. Indeed, it would welcome that. Perhaps we could sit for an extra two weeks instead of the Fridays. Sitting for 20 weeks would not be a problem. The government is going back to 18 weeks. People want value for money. The Leader of the House, who is sitting at the table, would like to say that there is some argument for saving money by having this curious clayton’s sitting day—the sitting day you are having when you are not having a sitting. If we are going to call the parliament together, the people of Australia want value for money, and value for money is seeing you being accountable during question time.

I was in this chamber when Paul Keating decided that there would be a part-time ministry, when the government would put on only certain ministers on a particular day so that they did not have to be accountable to the questioning of the opposition. The invective that we used to hear from Prime Minister Keating—the invective and the lack of accountability—was what, at the end of the day, led to his being thrown out of office by the Australian people. If the current Prime Minister wants to go down the route, I would say that three years of having him as Prime Minister is going to be too long. I could imagine that we would be looking at an early election. My goodness, if the Australian people see—as no doubt they will—that you are not people of your word, then out you will go.

Let us look at it. You said you wanted to have more accountability, so we are now having a clayton’s sitting day. Question time has been ruled out, which means that your ministers can go into marginal seats in preparation for the next round of elections while our members of parliament will be sitting in this parliament doing what they are paid to do—be here. This is a government that does not stand up to its promises. I think one of the things you said you were going to do was stop interest rates going up: failed. Second, I think you said you were going to stop grocery prices going up: failed. Third, I think you said you were going to stop petrol prices going up: failed. You said you were going to be a more transparent government: failed. So we are not really off to a very good start for you lot.

Then there is the question of constitutionality, going to section 39 of the Constitution. That has been raised by some of my colleagues. The danger is this. Those of you who have been chairs of committees—and committee meetings are deemed to be meetings of the parliament—have always been fastidious about maintaining a quorum during hearings for one reason and one reason only: the wish to maintain privilege for the people giving evidence. If you looked like losing quorum, you would either suspend the hearing or move to a subcommittee if that were possible. The same question lies here in this House. If it were deemed that the quorum provisions, as you are proposing them, meant that privilege was not afforded to members whilst they were speaking, that could only be tested by someone saying something defamatory and it ending up in court with the court determining whether or not that privilege applied. By doing this, you are putting at risk all members of the House.

Personally, as chairman of various committees, I have always taken the precaution that, if I was about to lose quorum, I would either have a motion and move to a subcommittee or suspend the hearings because it
was not worth putting those witnesses at risk. I do not believe that it is worth putting the members of this House at risk on the question of privilege. I think, if you are in any way reasonable men, you will consider that very seriously. There are interesting case law precedents already. Things that you say can link you to statements that you have made outside the parliament, and the court can deem that they were sufficiently close to the statements that you had made in the House such that the privilege that is afforded to you is not so afforded for the purposes of that case.

So there are all sorts of areas of difficulties that I think have not been considered. There is also the haste with which things have been dealt with along these sorts of lines. With regard to the apology, the fact that we only saw the text of it in the House late this afternoon and the Australian newspaper had it on its website before we members of the parliament were given a copy is an absolute outrage and shows the contempt in which this government holds the parliament. In other words, this tightly guarded set of words was not given to the members of the parliament; it was given to the press. Yet we had called for those words to be given to us and for the general public to know what was to be debated tomorrow. Again, we are going to breach the conventions that we follow here.

Tomorrow we are going to have two speakers on the apology and then we are going to vote on it. We can all have a debate about it later when it is irrelevant to the passage of that motion, whether or not it is carried. Again there is a contempt for the parliamentary procedures and the proper proceedings of the House. I simply say that this is showing us the contempt that the government holds for the parliament. Whereas we have heard before complaints about the power of the executive and the legislature losing power, this time power is going to be concentrated in the hands of the leader, who is going to be dictatorial in all things in this chamber. This is a fine point for us to make here, to hold the ground and say: if we are going to sit, then there must be a question time. If you want to sit 14 days more then let us sit two weeks more. Let us be fair dinkum about it and not pretend that you are going to work harder or wish to work harder, when all you are offering is a clayton’s sitting date.

Mr ANTHONY SMITH (Casey) (11.18 pm)—The motion by the Leader of the House, as all of the speakers on our side have said, was conceived as a stunt and has unravelled as he has prepared the substance of it. As the member for Flinders outlined earlier, from the moment this government won election, it was obvious that it was rushing through the processes without looking at the substance. Within days of the election—in fact, in the week before the election and the week after—the new government was saying the parliament was going to resume before Christmas. That never eventuated. That quietly drifted away. It was an excited announcement made in the wake of an election, without any obvious thought of the practical fact that it takes days and in many cases weeks before many of the seats—and members who are here today—are actually confirmed. The notion that an election on 24 November would allow parliament to sit before Christmas was always ridiculous.

But it was in this vein that the Leader of the House and the Chief Government Whip conceived Friday sittings. In the cheap spin that has been the backbone of so much of the policy announcement of those opposite, it was thought this would be quite a popular move. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, it was to convey the impression that all of a sudden parliament would sit for five days for the first time and parliament would do more work. If parliament is to sit
on Fridays—and all of our speakers have said we are happy to sit on Fridays—we do not want a clayton’s sitting day; there has to be a real sitting day with all the mechanisms of parliamentary accountability. The four on the government side who have spoken to this motion have for years defended question time. On the rare occasion that the previous government had a special sitting day to deal with an important issue and there was not a question time, this House heard from the then opposition about what a travesty of justice it was. What they are proposing is to have a sitting day every Friday without question time. That speaks volumes about their approach.

Of course, it will also be a sitting day where a good deal of the parliament is not here—and by that I mean the minister sitting opposite, the minister sitting at the table; I mean the 25 or 30 ministers and parliamentary secretaries sitting opposite on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. But they will not be here on Friday; they will be out of Canberra on Thursday night. So when the government said parliament would sit on Friday it meant parliament with no government ministers would sit on Friday, because there would be no question time and it would be private members’ business only.

The history of the Labor Party on question time is not good. Currently—and we are yet to have one in this parliament, but as of the last series of question times—there are four times more questions being asked than occurred the last time Labor was in government. As the previous speaker outlined, former Prime Minister Keating introduced a roster; but prior to that the number of questions being asked had reduced to 10 in total per day. And now we have 20 per day. Whether that remains we will see. But for the Leader of the House to say that question time cannot be held on a Friday, that question time is not important, is breathtaking hypocrisy. The now Treasurer, the member for Lilley, has a list of quotes on the parliamentary Hansard. From March 2003: ‘Question time is ... parliament’s most powerful weapon’. Again from March 2003: ‘... why would you compromise the most fundamental cornerstone of parliamentary democracy, the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of accountability, by cancelling question time I do not know. You would only do it if you had something to hide.’

That is the current Treasurer and member for Lilley when he was in opposition.

Question time can easily be held on a Friday. Arguments about parliament rising at two or 2.30 do not obviate the fact that question time could be held at 10 or 11 in the morning, which occurred in this parliament many years ago and has occurred, and probably still does occur, in some of our state jurisdictions. But what we are seeing here is a stunt unravelling. It is in the vein of every single parliamentary procedure, that procedure that has occurred, and the Leader of the House has mucked this up. He knows he has. In the first day of the new government, cancelling question time will speak volumes. Those of us on this side of the House will ensure that we do everything we can to get a question time on a Friday. The government’s first step, in removing a question time on Friday, speaks volumes. (Quorum formed)

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah) (11.28 pm)—We saw the headline before Christmas, that for the first time since Federation the parliament will sit for five days a week. It was a cheap headline but it totally defamed the work ethic of members of parliament. What we are seeing today is an outrage being practised on the parliament to protect the smart alec idea of Hawker Britton which was foolishly adopted by the Prime Minister on training wheels and the Leader of the House with L-plates. I utterly reject any suggestion that
members of parliament only work when they are in this chamber. We work seven days a week, regardless of whether we are in this chamber or not. But, as is becoming typical from this government, this stunt to justify a headline turns out to be a scam anyway because, while the parliament might be sitting for five days a week, ministers will not be here. The idea that we can have a functioning parliament without ministers is simply shameful.

There are two fundamental errors with what the government is doing. The first is that there was not the slightest semblance of due process. This is a very serious change to the procedures of this House. This is a radical usurpation of the ordinary sitting patterns that this House has followed for a long, long time. This should have been done, if it were to be done, either by recommendation of the Procedure Committee or through negotiation with the opposition. All previous changes to the sitting times of this House that I can recall either were recommendations of the Procedure Committee, which the then government accepted, or were carefully negotiated through with the then opposition. Absolutely nothing of that kind has happened here. So not only have we seen no due process but, as a result of this bodgie process, we have changes to the standing orders put to this parliament which are wrong in substance.

Ministers are paid more because they are supposed to work more. In the thinking of members opposite, ministers are going to get paid more for working less. It is a ridiculous situation which this government is putting before the House. Should this motion be carried, we will see degraded accountability, we will see days of parliamentary sitting without the traditional question time accountability of the executive to the parliament but, worse, we will see degraded private members’ business.

I see a whole swag of new private members sitting in front of me. They have come here full of hope, full of expectation and, above all, desperately anxious to impress their senior colleagues, which is why new members opposite, of all people, should not be supporting the motion that the government has put before the House—because, if you vote for this, no minister will ever see you speak. I am saying to you: do not waste your pearly words on mere backbenchers; make sure ministers are there to listen. The only way ministers will be there to listen is if you support the amendments that the opposition has put forward.

This motion that has been put before the House is a very, very bad start by the Rudd government. This was a party which, prior to the election, talked about raising parliamentary standards. It was a party which actually promised to submit to the Australian people at the election a plan for raising parliamentary standards. Perhaps that is one of the plans that are going to be put before the weekend conference of 1,000 people, so that the government might actually be able to come up with something. This is a very bad start from the Rudd government, a government which runs away from question time, a government which is scared of accountability to the parliament. Every day this parliament sits, every question time this Prime Minister faces, he is going to be reminded of this gross act of political cowardice.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (11.33 pm)—Most bad mistakes take a while to develop but, by golly, this government has peaked early with this set of motions today. It took 10 long years for the last federal Labor government to become so arrogant that the PM could routinely excuse himself from scheduled parliamentary sittings. Remember the infamous Keating rostered day off? The Keating rostered day off was 10 years in the making from the last federal Labor govern-
But here, less than 10 hours into the new parliament, the new Labor Prime Minister is so arrogant that he wants to have that same privilege for himself: a Friday RDO—a Friday Rudd day off. There is something fundamentally wrong about this.

The government speakers, one after another, have tried to defend this folly but they have spectacularly failed to justify it in each of those contributions, let alone to defend those empty arguments that have meekly been brought forward by Labor in an attempt to mask what is a horrendously bad idea. Thankfully, the opposition speakers have helped all in this parliament come to terms with just what a rotten idea it is. It has been clearly, concisely, comprehensively evidenced by coalition members; we have illustrated the nonsense of this idea.

I am happy to work on a Friday; I am happy for the parliament to sit on a Friday. But a Labor ‘lite’ parliament on a Friday is not something that anyone in this parliament should subscribe to. Look at the Prime Minister’s words. To the new members I say: cop a load of some of the soaring rhetoric we had from Mr Rudd when he was in opposition. He said on 8 February 2006:

The function of the parliament is to hold the executive accountable. How do we do that? We ask the executive questions.

That sounds like a good idea, but apparently not on a Friday. He then goes further. On 20 September 2007 Mr Rudd again says:

The purpose of the parliament is for the opposition to pose questions to the executive and the purpose of the parliament is to get answers from the executive.

Well, apparently not on a Friday. And it keeps happening: for example, matters of public importance. Those new members should look at the member for Griffith’s contribution on 15 February 2005. It is just magnificent! After being unhappy with the answers he felt he was not getting and then unhappy with the answers he was getting—he said he was not getting any answers that he could feel happy or unhappy about—he launched into a story about how the Howard government had in fact caused the death of Westminster. He said it had caused the death of Westminster, because he was unhappy with the answers he was getting. If there are no questions asked at all, what is that—the cremation of Westminster, achieved by this new government within the first 10 hours that it has been in the parliament? Let me quote what the member for Griffith had to say:

The core element of the Westminster system of government is ministerial accountability to parliament and this House.

Apparently so—just not on a Friday. He said:

The last time I looked, honourable members, the person who answers to this parliament on behalf of the government was called the Prime Minister—not the defence minister, not the foreign minister, but the Prime Minister—and last time I looked he got a pretty big pay cheque. He runs the show; he likes it. He gets the flash house on Sydney Harbour. He is the core of the accountability system that is supposed to operate in this House.

Alas, not on a Friday. Because he was unhappy with the answers that he was getting, he went on to accuse the former Prime Minister of being ‘someone who increasingly resembles Louis XIV’—remarkable stuff. Even today, for those who were uplifted by your election, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, and that of Mr Jenkins and others—a very special moment—we heard the Prime Minister say that scrutiny is a good thing for all of us, for the speakership and for each of us as members of this parliament and that it adds to our modern democracy—except on a Friday.

So this motion contains quite a remarkable proposition. The Prime Minister went on to talk about robust debates being the heart and
soul and the nature of a vibrant Australian democracy—but apparently not on a Friday. I say to those members opposite: what does this mean for you? A grievance debate is an opportunity for you to raise in this parliament something that is burning away in your constituency. The idea is to raise those points in the hope that those with the responsibility and the opportunity to remedy those grievances will do so. What do you do if those responsible are a no-show? What if they are part of the long Labor lunch on a Friday and they are just not here? It is a Labor ‘lite’ parliament on a Friday and no-one is here to hear your eloquent speeches in the grievance debate.

There is some prospect that your private member’s motion might actually be voted upon, but there will be nobody here to take notice of it. To all of you who championed the cause of collective bargaining, where were you when you got ripped off with this proposition? Some of you will have to be here but others will be able to have the long Labor lunch on the Labor ‘lite’ Friday when the parliament is operating with an arm and a leg tied behind its back. Where were you collective bargaining advocates? Our Prime Minister went on to say that ministerial accountability means precisely that: they should be responsible to the parliament for their actions. How you can be responsible and be a no-show on a Friday is beyond me.

I turn to one last point. I know that some members in this House—much to our chagrin—have come a cropper on the ways in which we hold people’s behaviour to account. You can get up to some mischief in here and they will warn you. You can go a little bit further and they may warn you again. But then you might get sin-binned for one hour. The idea behind it is that to be out of this parliament and not representing your constituency for one hour is a great embarrassment to you, as the member. You have diminished the parliament and your constituency by being barred for an hour or, if worse comes to worst and you are named, 24 hours. Where are standards of behaviour going when, before the day even starts on a Friday, you do not have to be here? What does that say about the parliament?

The propositions brought forward by the new Labor government diminish this parliament. Do yourselves a favour: support the opposition’s amendments and restore the interests of the nation, restore the interests of the parliament, look after your own interests and, above all, give collective bargaining a go-on when you are working here.

Mr TUCKEY (O’Connor) (11.40 pm)—There are quite a few new members sitting in the House. We will find over time that they are more frequently absent, but this is a good opportunity to give them a little bit of advice. The first one is: whatever trick you pull on an opposition, they will pull it on you when their turn comes along. So you go ahead: pull all the tricks and toughen up this place in a way that you think is to your advantage, but do not squeal when it is your turn. Let us get that straight.

Let me talk for a moment to the member for Maribyrnong: confected laughter was a job you had to do in opposition but you are now the government, so look like a government. There is another fact that I want to draw to the attention of the member for Maribyrnong. On his first day in this place, I heard him say, ‘Could it cost $1 million to run this place for a day?’ He did not believe it—and he is shaking his head. I wonder if he knows that, on the last count made to me, 4,000 people work in this place on a sitting day. No-one should know better than him, with his constant visits to the arbitration commission, how much that costs.

It is a funny thing that the Hawke government, the Keating government, the Fraser
government and the Howard government all attempted to manage the time of this place to get maximum productivity at minimum cost. I sat here on Fridays under the Hawke government. We used to go from Tuesday through to Friday and then from Monday through to Thursday. We all thought that we would stay over here for the weekend—but that did not work. They backed away from Fridays. Others have sat on Fridays and walked away from doing it. That is fine. We have said clearly that we will sit on Fridays, provided it is a real sitting day, as it used to be in those days. But when it comes to time management—this government preaches to Australians that it is going to be efficient—why have we got these sitting hours? Why do we have private members’ business on a Monday? Why do we have an agreement that private members’ business, which is often not controversial, does not require divisions or quorums? Because the government has its cabinet sitting somewhere trying to organise the future of the country and, typically, the opposition shadow cabinet is doing the same thing. That is maximising the return—private members are in here doing the things that are important to them and their constituents and the senior executives are not having their thoughts disrupted by being called down for divisions.

Also in terms of better management of the House, we always had lunchtime for an hour and a half, and we always had dinnertime for an hour and a half. In this modern environment with TV connections and everything else, someone eventually got smart and said: ‘We can sit through that. But let’s be a bit sensible. If some members are a bit fed up with the food that’s available in this place’—that is an option you will all learn about—‘they might like to go and have a meal out of this House. So let’s be fair. During that meal hour, we will agree between ourselves that we will not call quorums or divisions. In this case we will defer them. If there is a reason for them, we will go on with that procedure when everybody is back in the House.’ That is why we did that. You can count out 1½ hours or three hours a day to the additional productivity delivered in this House, while the lights were on and the airconditioning was at full pelt et cetera. That was smart.

Then we came to the conclusion that maybe we would knock off on Wednesday nights at eight o’clock just to break the pressure a little—we used to go until 11 o’clock, of course. In this place we have always had a four-day sitting week. I stand with the member for Warringah on this: I would not say of one person I have known in this House that they were lazy. You would be very silly to suggest that this is an easy job; it is not. The thing is, we said, ‘The way the flight schedules work, we have to knock off at five o’clock on Thursdays.’ So that is the sitting week. When I look at the proposal before this House and try and apply some efficiency criteria, I find that we are going to work Friday but we are not going to work until nine o’clock on Thursday. The Leader of the National Party has put the right interpretation on that: if you have to work until nine o’clock on Thursday there are no planes after that because of the curfew.

By any measure, if you are fair dinkum about what you are talking about, you should extend the sitting hours on Thursday until nine o’clock. Otherwise, you are perpetrating a fraud. If you want to be efficient and you want to get the hours in, that is how to do it. By the way, while you are about it, if you want to retain private members’ business for the convenience of everybody on Mondays, you could start at nine o’clock not 12 o’clock. No problem. You have the hours and the people should be here. What is more, you could gain an extra two hours on Tuesdays by starting government members’ business at
12 o’clock and running it until question time at two o’clock.

We propose that we will buy Fridays provided they are a full working day. In that case, most people will not get home until Saturday morning—for Western Australians and others we will not get home even then. I can cop that. I have lived that and I know how it works. I know who started it and changed it. The member for Chifley told me all about the committee and said that we opposed the proposal violently. Check the Hansard. You cannot rewrite history in this place. It is all on the record. I made a speech strongly supporting that proposal and I still think it is a good idea. So do not rewrite history in these debates. If you are going to be the government of efficiency, you do not need to turn the air conditioners and heaters up to full strength here on Fridays, because you can get the hours out of the existing sitting week. That would have been smart.

**Mr TUCKEY**—I love these grins! You put a female there on the front bench and she grins about efficiency—and she is still doing it, and the one next to her is. Don’t be silly. What I am telling you is—

**Mr Sidebottom**—Talk about a bloke, then.

**Mr TUCKEY**—I will talk about you, then, Sid. You have been and gone, and you will probably go again.

**Mr Sidebottom**—I am back, and you grow up.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Let me tell you this: don’t be silly when you are in government. It is not funny in this House, that is the point, to promote efficiency—

**Mr Sidebottom**—Don’t pick on gender, mate—just make your point.

**Mr TUCKEY**—I am just talking about confected laughter and grinning coming from a government that says it is going to do things better. To save a bit of time, I want to make one other point.

**Mr Danby**—What’s a female got to do with it?

**Mr TUCKEY**—Listen, when you start to squeal, I know it is hurting. You bought yourself into this thing and you are not travelling too well. You have not thought about it and, as I said, if you had rung up Bob Hawke—one of your better leaders—he would have said, ‘Fellas, we tried Fridays; it did not work for us.’ You have this funny idea. I just cannot imagine people ceasing work here at five o’clock on a Thursday and then all coming back on Friday morning. You could not make that work at a manufacturing plant or at places like that if people knew there was voluntary attendance.

I am saying to you: get some practical answers or if you want a five-day week we will accommodate it provided each day is a working day and it is nine to nine. I would like to see a simple pledge that everybody signs—and a few of us could even swear on the Bible. In the morning in this place, the ministry could simply sign a pledge—and I would suggest they put a month’s wages on it—that they will always be here on Fridays. Do something positive.

It is obvious that the government is using this as a device. You say you want to save some money: you could achieve those hours within the existing framework and you would save money, be it a million, be it $500,000. The member for Maribyrnong probably earnt more money than that in a year. And he married wisely! The fact of life is that this argument is about efficiency and the efficient management of this parliament. You could achieve all those outcomes in a four-day sitting week. But if you want five days, add a 12-hour shift—no more, no less.
Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (11.51 pm)—I do not think that anyone who is being honest in this debate could say anything other than that the Prime Minister has acted here out of the highest of motives. He is a very work oriented sort of person. I am familiar with his work in the state government in Queensland. He is a very, very hard worker and he believes that we should all work harder.

Mr Ciobo—You mustn’t know him very well, Bob.

Mr KATTER—I am quite sincere in these comments. I think the member for O’Connor’s comment that people who work here work very hard is very true. I am not saying that they always work hard for the good of the people—a lot of the time they work pretty hard for themselves to get re-elected.

Let me come back to the effect of this. I cannot speak for everybody in this House, but I can speak for myself. It is a two-hour drive from Charters Towers to Townsville. If I were in Mount Isa or Cairns, or the Mareeba area, it would be a hell of a lot longer, but let us just take the best option: that I am in Charters Towers. It is two hours to the airport, there is half an hour’s wait time at the airport and then it is two hours to Brisbane, effectively, by the time you get off the aeroplane. There is a 1½-hour wait time for a connection and then it is effectively two hours to Canberra, by the time you get your ports and everything off, and then it is the best part of half an hour by the time you drop off your stuff at the motel and get to your office. So we are talking about nine hours of travel, and that would be true for all of the Western Australians, all of the Territorians and all of the North Queenslanders. So, if we finish on Friday afternoon, all of Saturday is gone. If I stayed overnight in Brisbane, it would be much worse, but I am taking the best option: that somehow I can get straight through in nine hours. That means that all of Saturday is gone, but of course I have to get back here by Monday morning, so I have to leave home on Sunday morning to get back here. That goes on for 23 weeks of the year.

There are a lot of new faces here. I have seen new faces come and go for 34 years in parliament, and I will tell you: those of you who will still be here in four years time are those who are seen all over your electorates. Ron Camm, the great leader of the Country Party in Queensland, used to say, ‘There are no votes for you in Brisbane.’ I am telling you: there are no votes for you in Canberra, so you had better get back to your electorates. If you are not back in your electorates, then you will pay a price for that. Just go through who lost their seats and who retained their seats in the last election. For those on this side of the House, you and I both know: those that worked their electorates are still sitting here; those that did not are not. But you people will not be able to work your electorates because you will be down here in Canberra. I will tell you something else: these blokes on this side of the House are not all drongos. They are going to get leave. They are not going to be here on the Fridays and Mondays. They are going to be working in your electorates to win government back off you. Those are the political implications of what is taking place here.

What is profoundly important to me at this stage of my career is that the politicians in this place communicate with the electorate. You could see vividly in the IR reforms that here were a government that did not really know what was going on, what their people were thinking. If they had, they would have picked up much, much quicker the extreme damage that was being done by the IR reforms and moved much earlier to head off what was going to happen to them. But, because they did not have the communication with their electorate—they were not there,
close to the people—they did not understand what was going on. Do not think that you can service your electorate by being there for 20 weeks of the year. Remember that you lose December. Even if you want to work over December, there are no public servants and nobody else wants to work with you over that period. So there is not much left of the year if you go ahead with what you are doing here. I can tell you right now that a lot of you are signing your own death warrants. I have a very good whip in my party. He gives me a lot of leave. So it is not going to worry me particularly, but here is a helpful hint for you blokes: if you want to stay here, you had better think twice about this one.

As far as communication goes, in the state parliament, where I served for 20 years before I came to this place, I could not understand why Canberra was so much out of step with the people. But when I came down here I found that one of the profound effects of that travel time is that you just do not have the time in your electorate that a state member has. The state parliament sat Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, so I had Monday and Friday in my electorate as well as the weekends. In this place, it might be out of step now, out of kilter. If you people in government now think you have some sort of magic wand and that you are going to be able to understand what the people are doing out there when the last mob could not, you are wrong. I can see clearly that there is a fundamental difference between federal government and state government. Federal government is nowhere near as close to the people as state government, and that is why the state governments have tended to survive where federal governments have not tended quite so much to survive.

So I would plead with the House about this. If our job is to listen to the people, to learn their pain or to get their ideas and to implement them in this place, then you have to spend a lot of time with those people. A lot of the time, all those people want from you is a sympathetic ear. They know there is nothing you can do to help them in their plight, whatever their plight might be, but it is really important for them to be able to talk to you. If you deprive them of the right to speak to you, you are not doing the right thing by your country. So I would plead with the government. I do not think you are going to back off, because that would be a sign of weakness, but I would plead with you: over the next few months, when you begin to realise just how badly this is hurting you in your electorates, reverse this decision. I would plead with you to consider that and, if you do not, then all I can say to you is: it’s been nice knowing you. A lot of you will not be here.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (11.58 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, like others, may I take the opportunity to congratulate you, the member for Chisholm and the new Speaker of the House on obtaining your positions, which are very relevant to the topic of this debate. We pay a lot of respect to the positions of Speaker and Deputy Speaker, for the very good reason that you run the House and you make the order of business possible. Everybody knows that, if we wanted to have the House in total disruption all the time, we could do that—but we do not. We respect the fact that the Speaker and the deputy speakers have a job to do and we do not cross a certain line because we know the business of government must happen. I think this is a situation where that line has been crossed.

I can well understand why a new government, after four terms in opposition, would come in and be very hairy chested. I can quite understand why they would be feeling their oats and would want to make life easier for themselves and perhaps, in their eyes, harder for us. But I do not think that is the point. A mistake has been made and I think you have to step back and think about it.
When a person as respected, as learned and as calm as Philip Ruddock—who is not noted for making political points—says you need to look at the legal implications, that says to me there could be a real issue here.

It is also about a new government being seen to do the right thing and give a fair go—and not by the opposition. This is not about doing the right thing by us. No government is ever expected to do that. But it is very much about doing the right thing by the Australian people and giving them their million dollars worth every day that this House sits. Sit it must and, when it does, it must sit properly.

The one thing no-one has explained to us yet is why we would sit without ministers, why we would sit without question time, why we would sit without quorums, why we would sit without MPIs. No-one has answered that question or even attempted to answer it, and I think it is probably a question that needs answering if you really do intend to deny the Australian people their right and to go ahead with this. I simply repeat: I do understand why you would feel as though you want to take control of the parliament in your own way, but this time you have gone too far. You have to step back and do the right thing, not by us but by Australia.

Wednesday, 13 February 2008

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (12.01 am)—Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, I begin, like others have begun their talks tonight, by congratulating you on your appointment. I wish you every success in doing your job to the best of your ability. Of course, this side of the House will always assist you in doing that. It is sad, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you would take your seat on a day when the government is moving to reduce the accountability of the executive to this chamber, accountability that has existed in this House since Federation.

Before I get to this, can I look at the record of this government to date. It goes to a pattern of behaviour. What is it that we know about the government so far? This is a classic example of the way that they operate. There is always a yawning gap between their rhetoric and the reality of the government’s actions. I might give a few examples before I go on to the substance of what we are discussing here tonight.

Exhibit A is community cabinet meetings. It was announced to big fanfare that the cabinet would now go out into the community, meet with real Australians and talk to them about their problems. But of course there is always this gap between what the government says and the reality of what actually happens on the ground. In January, the first of these community cabinet meetings occurred in Western Australia in the seat of Canning, held by my very good friend Don Randall. The cabinet trooped out there to meet with real Australians. They were saying that it gives Australians the opportunity to come in and talk directly to their new government. But what we saw was essentially a meeting of the Canning branch of the Australian Labor Party. People who attended were heavily vetted beforehand to make sure that they were the right kinds of people: ’We did not really want anyone coming in to discuss their problems. We wanted to make sure that they were the right kinds of people: ‘We did not really want anyone coming in to discuss their problems. We wanted to make sure that they were the right kinds of people. ’We did not really want anyone coming in to discuss their problems. We wanted to make sure that they were the right kinds of people.’ So what we saw was a talkfest with ALP members where the people who attended were strictly vetted. There was a yawning reality gap between what was proposed and what actually happened.

Exhibit B is parliament resuming before Christmas. The new Prime Minister made a big show of this when he was opposition leader. He said, ‘If we’re elected, the parliament will resume before Christmas.’ The reality was that it was extraordinarily difficult for that to occur because of the mechan-
ics of an election. When the Prime Minister made this promise he would have been aware of that. What we find instead is that not only did we not resume before Christmas but this is the latest parliamentary start in over a decade. Again, there is a yawning gap between the reality and rhetoric.

Exhibit C came to light today. The government made a big show of the fact that they were going to alter the standing orders to make sure that ministers answered the questions in question time on any given day. They were upset that they felt the ministers in the former government did not take the time to answer the questions in a genuine way. So the Labor Party were going to change that by altering standing orders. Yet today we find another backflip. They are not going to alter the standing orders to require ministers to answer questions—another broken promise and another gap between what is said and what actually happens.

The final exhibit is the earnest words we hear about improving transparency and accountability while the government goes about pulling stunts like this. It is part of a pattern of behaviour, and this proposal conforms to that pattern. A big announcement is made: the parliament is going to work five days a week.

Mr Danby interjecting—

Mr Sidebottom interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Brad- don! The member for Melbourne Ports should not encourage the member for Brad- don.

Mr KEENAN—Thank you, Mr Speaker. Under your protection I will continue. What we see is another grand announcement by the government: the parliament will now work five days a week. But it is only once you look at the detail that you realise what a sham this proposal is. Once you look at the detail you realise that this is another empty gesture from an empty Prime Minister. What is actually proposed is that we will turn up on Fridays but the executive will not bother. The new member for Leichhardt—and I do not recognise him, if he is in the chamber—has already belled the cat. He told the *Australian* on 11 February this year exactly what the government intends to do:

From what I can gather—

he said—

there won’t be any question time on Friday, so we will be able to shoot through ...

We on this side of the House are very happy to work Fridays, but we will not accept a clayton’s parliamentary sitting day. We want a proper sitting day. We want a sitting day like it has existed in this House in the past. So let us have question time. Let us have an MPI. Let us have quorums and divisions. The fact is that the proposed parliamentary sitting schedule is completely unprecedented in that it will omit question time on a sitting day, something that has not happened since the standing orders were altered in 1950. In other words, this is nothing short of another political stunt devoid of accountability and lacking in serious thought.

Since 1987 parliament has only sat on a Friday to deal with urgent matters, including bills and Senate amendments. But Labor’s proposed reforms will seek to change all this. Will the opposition be able to use the parliament to challenge and query decisions of ministers of the Rudd government, as this parliament is supposed to be used, to hold the executive to account? No, we will not. We will not even be allowed to vote on legislation.

We are very happy to turn up on Fridays. We are very happy to work for a full week. But we insist that it is a full week of proper sitting days. This proposal is part of a pattern of behaviour that has been emerging from this government, and sadly it is a pattern of
behaviour that should give all Australians grave cause for concern about the motives and the actions of their new government.

**Mrs Markus** (Greenway) (12.07 am)—Mr Speaker, can I first congratulate you on your appointment today. A statement that we often hear is: 'Actions speak louder than words.' We have had a lot of discussion and debate over the last couple of hours. What are the words that we have heard from the new government? We have heard phrases like ‘the buck stops here’, ‘parliamentary democracy’ and ‘we will listen to the people’—the thousand people that they will listen to. But we have around 100,000 people in each of our electorates. Hopefully, as we do mail-outs, those people will have the opportunity to respond to us on weekends and on Fridays. When we are in our electorates it is an opportunity for us to listen. But do the government want to listen? Another word they use is ‘transparency’. But what I see in what the government are proposing today is the exact opposite: a lack of willingness to listen to the people, a lack of commitment to parliamentary democracy and a system where on a Friday there will be no ministers—and where will the Prime Minister be?—to listen to what the people have to say, through us speaking on their behalf.

Let us look at the cost to the taxpayers. We are here to serve them—is that right? I am sure that many of my colleagues would agree. The cost will be $1 million. I could give the government a list of roads in my electorate alone that need repairing because people are dying on them. One million dollars could fix some roads in one electorate. But spending $1 million to sit every Friday for the rest of the year is taking money away from, and not providing services for or responding to the needs of, the people that we are here to work for.

Let us look at the work ethic. We have all said that we work fairly hard. But there are people in our electorates who are working extremely hard as well. It appears to me that there are two different sets of standards—one for the opposition and one for the government. We are more than willing to work for five days. We have heard what the member for Leichhardt has said; I do not need to reiterate it. He is going to have a day off on Friday. The question is: will the Prime Minister have the day off on Friday? While we are working, who on the government benches will be working? They will have shot through; they will have gone.

I will finish with something that stood out when the member for Berowra was talking tonight. He talked about the possible legal implications. He referred to privilege. What is clear to me—and, I am sure, to my colleagues on this side—is that the government have demonstrated a complete lack of forethought, a complete lack of capacity to think things through. Instead they are making decisions quickly without any thought about the possible consequences. What will the government do with other decisions? That is a question we need to ask.

**Ms Ley** (Farrer) (12.12 am)—Mr Speaker, congratulations on your appointment. As the opposition we are keen to keep the government on the straight and narrow path of honest administration, subjecting everyone’s actions to scrutiny and, where necessary, political argument. The job of an opposition is to hold the government to account, scrutinise its decisions and apply our technical knowledge and experience to the policies it produces and the business of the day. Mainly, our analysis and our valid criticism of the government is concentrated in this place, the House of Representatives, where we compel the government to explain and defend itself. A government is, of course, only as good as its opposition. The Austra-
lian people demand a strong, hardworking opposition. They expect and deserve no less.

It is the Australian people who are being short-changed by this decision. How can we hold the government to account if they do not turn up on Fridays of sitting weeks? There is a popular saying that the world is run by those who turn up. Ministers will not be turning up on Fridays. The Prime Minister will not be turning up. We are happy to sit on Fridays. We are happy to turn up. But our job, as I say, is to hold the government to account, and how can we do that if the executive of government are not here to answer our legitimate questions? What will be happening on Friday? Private members’ business. It will be meaningless if there is no-one there to listen. In my experience of private members’ business, good subjects are raised. We see the work of the parliament at its best; we see a spirit of cooperation and bipartisanship. No-one will be listening. Ministers will have travelled home the day before in comfort, making full use of priority flights, limousine service and all the trappings of executive office. They will be relaxing by the pool, enjoying a drink, catching up with family and recovering after their difficult four-day week.

The ministers in Kevin Rudd’s cabinet are on light duties; their backbench colleagues are doing the heavy lifting. Under this system there are two classes of government members, the executive and the backbench, and there is a world of difference between them. The fact that Kevin Rudd chose to perpetuate the myth with the Australian public that when we are not here we are not at work is a disgrace. We take the work in our electorates very seriously. My electorate has expanded to 200,000 square kilometres and it stretches from Albury to Broken Hill to Tibooburra, which is the New South Wales-Queensland-South Australian border. I am not complaining—I love every inch of it—but, as others who represent large rural electorates have explained, the difficulties of managing that and managing the work of the parliament mean that we are wasting our time, we are wasting our constituents’ time and we are wasting time, money and resources in this place. I am here to represent my constituents. I have to tell you that they are asking: why are we here at midnight on the first day of parliament talking about this stuff when we should have sorted it out in a spirit of cooperation? It is not a good beginning. I urge members of the government to reconsider this rather silly proposal.

Mr SCHULTZ (Hume) (12.16 am)—I compliment you, Mr Speaker, on being elevated to the esteemed position of Speaker of the House. I am wondering if we are attempting to change Australia to a version of George Orwell’s Oceania where newspeak is now called ‘Labor speak’. The government proposes to change the parliamentary order of business under the guise of ‘greater accountability and scrutiny’. This sounds like doubleplusgood. In fact, the results of these proposed amendments would be doubleplusungood—that is, Mr Speaker, if we are now unable to use words like ‘evil’ or ‘bad’.

The central principle of newspeak was that it made it impossible to contemplate rebellion against the state, or even scrutiny of it—and that is precisely what this proposal tries to do. Look at how the newspeak or ‘Labor speak’ unfolds. The first promise is more sitting days, but the number of sitting weeks has been cut. Secondly, by sitting on Fridays, travel back to the electorate to serve constituents over the weekend will be well nigh impossible for rural and regional MPs because of the amount of travelling time involved. Of course, ‘purely coincidentally’, there are more rural and regional seats held by coalition MPs than Labor!
Next is the contention that Friday sittings will ‘provide an opportunity to harness the creativity and intellect and ideas of the members’. The only problem is that it seems only a few will be here to do any harnessing. In the words of the Labor member for Leichhardt just yesterday:

From what I can gather, there won’t be any question time on Friday, so we will be able to shoot through ...

This leads me to proposal 2: no question time on Fridays. If these new provisions are for ‘greater accountability and scrutiny’, why will there be a day every sitting week without a question time? Question time ensures that ministers of the government are held to account for their actions. The proposal is to actually have fewer question times this term than under the previous government—supposedly more scrutiny yet fewer question times. Could this be more Labor speak—doubleplusunquestiontime? If we are to scrutinise the government, they need to be here in the House and we need to vote on issues as they are debated.

Proposal 3 is that there be no quorums or divisions on Fridays. The ability to call a quorum ensures that a minimum number of government MPs are in the House. But in this new version of Orwell’s Oceania the opposition and, more importantly, the public will not be able to tell because you cannot call a quorum on Fridays. So the opposition will be in the House, working diligently on holding the possibly absent government to account. Does anyone really think that this will work? Assuming that there are indeed enough people left in the House on Fridays, no decisions can be taken until another time because there will be no divisions on Fridays. At a division in the House, all members available must attend and the government, to pursue its agenda, must at all times hold the majority. So here we have it. Not only is the government virtually guaranteeing that nobody from their side will be there because they do not have to hold a majority, because there will be no divisions, but also the opposition will not be able to check whether even the minimum number of members are in the House because there will be no quorums.

If this is the true worth of ‘greater scrutiny’ and ‘harnessing creativity’ then the government members are acting like a bunch of prefects working out how to change the rules so they can wag school legitimately and fool everyone else by pretending that they are hard at work. I think we could rename Nineteen Eighty-Four as 2008, with due apologies to Mr Orwell.

Proposal 4 is to move private members’ business from Monday to Friday and consequently have no quorums or divisions during this period. Once again, this is an opportunity for opposition members to speak to no-one and get no decisions—doubleplusnothing. Proposal 5 is to not have any matters of public importance debated on a Friday. This further demonstrates the Orwellian nature of the new government. So on Fridays we cannot debate matters of public importance, we cannot vote on issues, we cannot hold the government to account through questions and we cannot check whether anybody from the other side is even in the House. This reads like the announcement ‘Elvis has left the building’. How do you scrutinise without asking questions? How do you scrutinise without votes? How do you scrutinise a government that just is not there?

Proposal 6 is to increase sitting hours so that MPs can represent their constituency better. The increased hours are for government business—not opportunities for members to represent their constituents and certainly not for the opposition to hold the government accountable for its actions. I hope the public remembers the cynical way in which this government is already treating
their rights. I hope it is the beginning of the end of this government and its doubleplus Labor speak. In the meantime, I will continue to write to my constituents, like I have tonight, telling them that I have to cancel the commitment I gave to attend the function because Mr Kevin Rudd, the Prime Minister of this country, has decided that my constituency is not worth servicing on a Friday.

Mrs GASH (Gilmore) (12.21 am)—My father always said that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who do all the work and those who take all the credit. He said, ‘Jo, always be in the first group for there is far less competition.’ How true that will be—the opposition doing all the work and the government taking all the credit.

Mr Speaker, you have heard it all before, but guess what—I want to say it all again! I want the people of my electorate of Gilmore to hear why I object most emphatically, on a number of grounds, to the government’s proposal to have parliament sit on Fridays. First and foremost, it is now becoming apparent that this arrangement was entered into cynically to create the impression that the Rudd Labor government was putting in more time. When you do the sums, an entirely different picture emerges. Parliament will sit for an extra 14 days but, in terms of accountability, there will be two fewer question times than last year—so 14 days in parliament where the government escapes scrutiny. What next does the Prime Minister intend to excuse himself from? From every second question time, like his party’s predecessor? There is no requirement for members to hang around, because the government has decided there will be no divisions or quorums.

I want to mention that the member for Leichhardt—so the people in my electorate know—is actually a government member. He is quoted in the Australian as saying:

From what I can gather, there won’t be any question time on Friday, so we will be able to shoot through ...

That encapsulates Labor’s attitude to this parliament. This arrangement is simply specious—it is manipulation of appearances, designed to mislead the Australian public and the people of my electorate of Gilmore. What this means, if everyone took the same view as the member for Leichhardt, is that we could all leave here to go back to our electorates to do some meaningful work for our constituents and leave the House to the moths.

I have a large area to cover, as do many members of the opposition whose constituencies are largely in rural and regional areas. We have many small towns and villages to visit, as our constituents cannot come to us because the state Labor government does not provide public transport. So the distances involved are just too much. How can the government reconcile forcing members away from their electorates and into another place just to harness the creativity and intellect and ideas, as was suggested by the Leader of the House on ABC Online on 11 February? How can the government justify wasting members’ valuable time in this way without there being any accountability?

I support my colleague the Leader of Opposition Business in the House, who said in the Financial Review that Australian taxpayers deserve better. How true. If we are to sit in parliament, then parliament must sit as it is intended and not as some contrived piece of showmanship that bolsters the image of the Prime Minister but does nothing else. There has to be real meaning. Allowing members to read onto the record their grievances can be achieved without going to the misuse of resources that this proposal will create. Neither is there an opportunity for matters of public importance. How can a proper debate ensue when all that will hap-
pen is that statements will be read into the record before an empty chamber, without challenge, without scrutiny and, it seems, without the government’s listening?

If this proposal were not such an obvious stunt to make the Prime Minister look good, then I would simply label it as idiotic. The government said that the additional sitting day, as conditional as it has been made, was to promote greater accountability and scrutiny. The very conditions they impose make it quite the opposite. There is no accountability, and there is no scrutiny on the Friday. So what is the point? What does this say about Labor’s grand gesture? This is an abuse of parliamentary process. There should be no strings attached. This idea deserves to go straight to the dump bin, as does the member who dreamed it up.

A member’s responsibility is first and foremost to their constituency. To force me away from my electorate—from those who cannot travel to see me—just to embellish the Prime Minister’s image is irresponsible and unacceptable. This proposal is a waste of time, it is a waste of money and it is a waste of our democratic process. If this is how the government intends to encourage its brand of democracy, then I want my opposition to this motion recorded well and truly. I will not be manipulated.

FRAN BAILEY (McEwen) (12.26 am)—

Mr Speaker, may I place on the record my congratulations to you on being elected as Speaker. The hour is late, so I will very succinctly summarise my key concerns with this motion and why I strongly oppose it. This parliament exists to represent all people in our country. Every single one of us here shares the responsibility of ensuring that those we represent are heard and are well represented in this place. Central to that representation is making sure that the whole of the executive of government and individual ministers are held accountable for their actions. Put simply, that is just not possible if ministers do not turn up when parliament is sitting. And that is the key proposal under this motion: no questions to ministers and no MPI. The former Attorney-General, the member for Berowra, has raised some very significant constitutional and legal issues that I have grave concerns about. The government has not answered these questions, which have been raised now by several of my colleagues. In the Governor-General’s speech today we heard that two key tenets of the new government are accountability and transparency. I have to say that the government has failed this test on day one. This motion denies accountability and it denies the right of every single one of us in this place to ensure that we can do our jobs effectively.

The government certainly has failed the test of transparency on just one issue alone. On numerous occasions tonight, the government has been asked to table the legal advice upon which this motion is based. Why is it that the government will not table that legal advice? For all of these reasons, I oppose this motion. It is fraught with too many difficulties. It has the real potential to stifle the ability of individual members to do their jobs. I strongly oppose the motion. I would urge the government to reconsider its position, and I certainly support the amendments of the opposition.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (12.28 am)—

Mr Speaker, congratulations to you. There is a saying: what is the use of having power if you can’t abuse it? And that is what has happened in this case. The Labor Party have regained power and have decided, at their very first attempt in this House, to abuse the power that has been bestowed on them through this House. As the member for Casey said earlier, this is quite clearly a stunt. We know who the creators of this stunt are:
they are the member for Chifley, who lives in Sydney, and the member for Grayndler, who lives in Sydney too. Those of us who are from the rest of Australia know a little bit about the difference between flying from Sydney—half an hour—and flying from Perth, which is a two-day turnaround.

People ask me why my wife is not seen in Canberra more often to support me. She was here today for the first time in two years. The reason is that she runs a small business and a two-day turnaround is something that she cannot afford. Check the parliamentary record. My wife and my children do not come to Canberra because of the two-day turnaround.

At the end of the day, I am a person who likes to represent my electorate and represent the constituents. The electorate office on a Friday is almost like a doctor’s surgery. I am sure many members who do their job sufficiently have the same experience. People come in every half an hour or every 15 minutes and you have to just bowl over their issues one after the other. The issues are very important to them, such as knee reconstructions and all the other things they come to you about. They think you can help whether you can or not. It is important that you interact with the people. I will go to their houses if I have to.

The fact is that the government are not serious about this. The extra time that they are after can be found in the four days. We know that. The member for O’Connor provides a fair bit of colour and light, but Wilson is quite correct when he constructs the four-day extra time that you are seeking. This is all about tying up people as a stunt, on behalf of the new government, so that they cannot return to their electorates.

It is true that the first community cabinet came to Canning. I had to have a bit of a giggle about it because when I made some inquiries and made a comment in the media about not being invited, as it is my electorate, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s chief of staff eventually rang me and said, ‘Oh, you can come.’ I said, ‘That’s good; I’ll come.’ She said, ‘I’ll get back to you by Wednesday and we’ll organise the details and make sure you are there.’ I never heard from her again. I can understand that. A number of people that came to me from the electorate said, ‘We registered. We wanted to go and we didn’t get a guernsey. We wanted to ask questions.’

Chum Taylor, a former champion speedway rider, went along and asked Mr Rudd about pensions. I heard from those who were there—and I read in the media—that he did not answer the question. It is all smoke and mirrors. It is just spin. At the end of the day, it is about trying to look good on this issue.

The Friday sitting is going to be something that will eventually fail. I predict that this will fail. Look at the people who are here, making up the quorum tonight. They are either the rejected from the past or the brand new. We have ‘Scooter’ from the electorate of Leichhardt over here who wants to have POETS day every Thursday so that he can get back to Cairns in time. Where is Entsch when you need him—a man of substance? At the end of the day, Scooter from Leichhardt has belled the cat on this issue and we know that the government are going to be keeping this place together with the new and the rejected on the back bench. The ministers are probably at home now, sleeping and getting ready for their day tomorrow, and you are being used up on the back bench. You should feel pretty bad about it.

There are only four members of the House of Representatives from the Labor Party in Western Australia and one of them sits in the House now. I congratulate him on his election. But the member for Brand should know as well as anyone that we get special circumstances to turn around from Western Austra-
lia. We can actually break our journey because it is considered so long. This affects the member for Perth, the brand new member for Fremantle, the member for Brand and the member for Hasluck. She is going to need to be back in her electorate. She got away with it this time but she might not get away with it every time. There is going to be a redistribution. Who will know? In some respects, this is a punishment for Western Australia for having done so well at the last election. You are going to do what you can to keep the Western Australian members in Canberra because you have so few of them on your side.

This is an absolute stunt that is going to backfire on the Labor Party. The electorate will wise up to it shortly and realise that the government are determined to keep you here. I object to the fact that people think we are not working if we are not in Canberra. I consider that when I am in my electorate I work much harder for and on behalf of the people who put me there. This insinuation that if you are not in Canberra you are not working is quite fatuous and it should be rejected, expunged and exposed for what it really is—a stunt.

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (12.34 am)—I always thought that hubris took a little while before it set in. Usually, governments have been in power for quite a while before they start getting cocky about government and the hubris sets in. The hubris has not even taken two months with the new Labor government. It is quite incredible. Have a look at the issue with the apology. We got the detailed wording this evening for an apology that is supposed to be made tomorrow that is something that your side has been talking about for months, and yet it is the night before—not even the morning before—that we get the wording of the apology. So much for government accountability and transparency. It sets a good precedent really early.

The problem with the whole idea of having no divisions and no quorums on Fridays brings to mind a title of a movie. I will change it somewhat: ‘What if you held parliament and no-one came?’ That is one of the potential aspects of this and one of the potentially ludicrous situations that you could have when there are no quorums, no divisions, no question times and no MPIs. Sometimes you hear people out in the community saying, ‘Parliament is just like a schoolyard.’ Quite frankly, if you think about this in terms of a school, think about some of the schools that have a Friday free-dress day. In this case the equivalent would be Friday no teacher day, Friday no rollcall day, Friday do whatever you like when you turn up at school day. I say, ‘Do whatever you like,’ because what about bad behaviour? What happens if a member gets up and the behaviour that they display is utterly disgraceful? How is the Speaker supposed to discipline that member if he cannot call a division? It is absolutely ridiculous.

If Friday is supposedly such an important day for parliamentary hearings, why is it that we will have no quorum, no division, no question time and no MPI? Do you know why? It is because the ministers know full well that you need that three-day turnaround so that you can actually go to your constituencies and do other work within your electorate. They know it. They need to get out and do their work. While they are gallivanting around the country, they are hoping that the rest of parliament is going to sit here and dutifully talk, with no quorums, no divisions et cetera.

The member for Canning correctly pointed out that this could almost be inferred as being some sort of revenge on Western Australian people for having dared to have the audacity to vote strongly for the Liberal Party. The fact is that, when you go to Perth, you are effectively going to have a two-week
turnaround. You will leave Perth one week and you will not be able to deal with constituents in the interim. Basically you are condemned to two weeks in Canberra if you choose to stay on the Friday.

The member for Berowra made another important point: what about parliamentary privilege, if you do not have a quorum? What happens if a member just voices the word 'quorum' or says 'I draw your attention to the state of the House'? Will we just hold it over to next time? If the member then makes some statement that would require privilege, there could be a very real problem with it.

Basically, Labor are riding roughshod over the Constitution and, as has been seen with a whole variety of aspects of their behaviour over the last couple of months, they are shooting from the hip and not thinking about the consequences of what they are doing. I urge the government to support the amendments to the legislation so that we can get a realistic footing to this so-called decision.

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (12.39 am)—Madam Deputy Speaker, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment to the high office of Deputy Speaker. I think it is unfortunate that, in this debate, we started with 15 minutes and then it was cut to five minutes and now it has been cut to three minutes. I also think it is unfortunate that here we are at 20 to one in the morning and we are still debating this particular matter.

I respect the fact that the government has been elected. Any government has the right to change the sitting hours and to determine the days on which the parliament sits, but I believe that government also has the responsibility to make sure that our Australian parliamentary democracy survives. I am all about the parliament sitting for a longer period and I am all about the parliament having more opportunity to debate the key issues confronting the Australian people. But what has been suggested in the proposals put forward by the Leader of the House is that we should have a clayton’s Friday. As the Friday will not in fact be a genuine parliamentary sitting day, when we have a question time and a debate on a matter of public importance, it will become, as the honourable member for Leichhardt has suggested, a nick-off day—a day when we can all shoot through; a clayton’s day; a day which in fact will not be a true parliamentary day.

As a member representing a regional electorate, I am somewhat concerned over the fact that the parliament will be sitting for five days—or four days, and on the fifth day you can disappear—when what should happen if the government believes that we need extra days to debate the important issues of the day is that we ought to have more sitting weeks, maybe of three or four days. If the government has a very strong legislative program that it needs to get through in its first six or 12 months of office, then by all means have these extra days but let them be genuine parliamentary days when, as an opposition, we have the opportunity of holding the government to account. I just think it is unfortunate that what we have dressed up as an opportunity for additional debate is in reality an attempt by the government of the day to escape from parliamentary scrutiny.

I am all about additional days. I am all about proper debate. I am all about the government having the time it needs to implement its legislative program. I am all about respecting the fact that the government has a mandate to do certain things. But let us have genuine parliamentary days. Let us not have clayton’s days. Let us not have days when members turn up at nine o’clock and then are able, as the member for Leichhardt tells us, to shoot through. Let us be genuine.
I think the people of Australia deserve more. They elected this government. This government has a mandate. The people of Australia have respect for our Prime Minister. They believe our Prime Minister stands for important principles. I think that this motion currently before the House undermines the confidence and the sense of trust that the Australian people placed in the member for Griffith and his team on 24 November. I appeal to the member for Grayndler, who is the minister opposite, to reconsider this matter. By all means, take your extra day when you need it to start with, but let us go back to a reasonable situation where the parliament does have the opportunity to hold the government to account. Every day we sit we have a question time and we have a debate on a matter of public importance.

For rural members, in particular, sitting five days is not appropriate because it means that rural constituents will be disadvantaged and they will not be able to get to see their members of parliament in the same way as people in the capital cities are able to see their members of parliament. Let us have a fair go. I ask the member for Grayndler to reconsider.

Mr SECKER (Barker) (12.43 am)—Madam Deputy Speaker, I add my congratulations on your rise to the position of Deputy Speaker, although I do understand that it was not your first choice—but so be it.

Mr Slipper—What was her first choice?

Mr SECKER—I think she wanted to be a minister, didn’t she? I think it is very interesting to note that the so-called pep talk to the new ministers and new members of parliament on the government side to try to avoid hubris and arrogance obviously did not work. I have been watching this debate quite closely, both in the chamber and on the closed-circuit TV in our rooms, and it has been very obvious that the ministers have not gotten over their hubris and the members have not taken this very seriously. They think, ‘We’re in government now, so we are just going to treat you like the rubbish that we think the opposition is.’

Unfortunately, I do not think that wears well in the electorate and that has obviously been shown by the response that it has brought about. I listened to the four members of the government who had a view on this and spoke to the motion. It is quite interesting that only four did; they thought it was a fait accompli. They raised the idea that we will still have four question times a week and we will still have three MPIs a week, just as we did in the last parliament. But if we are actually sitting two fewer weeks than we did in the last parliament, in a normal year—not an election year—that is obviously eight fewer question times and six fewer MPIs. When I and many of us here first came in, we were sitting for 20 weeks and we have sat for up to 23 weeks in a period. If we are sitting fewer weeks, then obviously we will have fewer question times and fewer MPIs, and therefore we will have less accountability to the parliament.

This proposal has been trumpeted by the Prime Minister as making politicians work harder by scheduling an extra 15 sitting days. Every member in this House knows that quite often they actually work harder in their electorate than they do here. I actually find being in Canberra a lot easier than being the member for Barker out in the electorate because my electorate is 64,000 square kilometres. I drive about 80,000 kilometres a year. I will obviously be driving less because I will not have those extra Fridays; I will be in the parliament. In fact, the earliest I can get back to my electorate—that is, to the start of my electorate—on present flights is nine o’clock on a Friday night. There is not a lot that you can do at nine o’clock on a Friday night. There would be many members of parlia-
ment who are a lot worse off than I am. In fact, if I were still living where I was until very recently, I would not be able to get home before midnight. There are many members of parliament who will not be able to get back until Saturday because of the flights that we have scheduled here in Australia.

So what is going to happen? Obviously we are going to have a whole lot of people staying here in Canberra. It might be great for the Canberra economy, but it is not going to be great for the constituencies that we were elected to represent and to meet, unless people take the attitude that, as the new member for Leichhardt has said, we will just buzz off, which means we will not actually take the Friday very seriously at all. I can assure you that I take parliament seriously, but obviously this government does not. It is a great shame that this parliament and this new government have taken this attitude. It has been a bit too smart by half. I know we are very limited tonight—for sensible reasons of wanting to get a reasonable night’s sleep—but I just hope that the new government gets over this silly idea. Anyone with any common sense will say to you that this is not going to be in the interests of the constituents. It is not going to be in the interests of members of parliament because now we cannot vote on private members’ business. What you are effectively saying to us is that, as members, we will not be able to vote on private members’ business; we cannot have divisions; we cannot have quorums. Frankly, I think we all know that the legal advice that you have on this is pretty dodgy, because section 39 of the Constitution clearly says that we have to have a quorum in parliament. How can you decide whether there is a quorum if you cannot call one? This parliament, a bit like Gough Whitlam, is trying to override the Constitution as they tried to do in 1975. There is a very strong whiff of that sort of silly ignorance and arrogance over the Australian Constitution, which we all hold quite dear.

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (12.49 am)—If this government understands one thing, it is the power of symbols. In fact, it is expert at creating symbols. For 12 months now, we have heard ad nauseam about the education revolution, broadband, fresh ideas, economic conservatism, a lid on petrol and grocery prices, a federal-state compact, a lid on interest rates, more affordable housing—and the list goes on. For 12 months, it was all care and no responsibility. For 12 months, it was all symbols and no responsibility. So it is not a surprise that, early in its term of government, the Rudd government comes up with more symbols: no holidays for the Prime Minister and ministers and now a harder-working parliament—a five-day parliament—all under the guise of more accessibility, more accountability and more democracy.

Of course, the opposite is true because the Prime Minister will not be here on a Friday. There will be no ministers here on a Friday. The member for Leichhardt will not be here on a Friday. It will be a part-time parliament; it will not be a five-day parliament. It will be a part-time parliament and private members will not be able to suspend standing orders and have a substantive matter debated. The Speaker will have no capacity to protect the public from unwarranted attack. This is like all the other symbols I mentioned: when you look behind the symbols, there is nothing. This government has not done the work. This government has no detailed plans in any of these areas. The government is scrambling to find substance to put behind the symbols and, in the process, mistakes are being made. This proposal in front of us tonight is a classic case in point. It is a stunt. It is ill conceived. It is too clever by half. It is dangerous. It is arrogant. It is a return to the arro-
gence of the Keating years, when prime ministerial attendance at question time was optional.

The government know that this proposal is a dog. You can see it in their eyes tonight. They have not got their hearts in it. They are defending the indefensible. In the interest of accountability, in the interest of accessibility, in the interest of democracy, I urge the government to withdraw this stunt and rethink the proposal.

Mrs VALE (Hughes) (12.52 am) — I take this opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker Burke, to congratulate you on your elevation to the deputy speakership. I wish you every success and satisfaction. This motion puts six proposals to the House while, at the same time, suggesting that these reforms to the standing orders actually allow greater accountability and scrutiny. These proposals suggest more sitting days but will actually create days without question time, without divisions or quorums during private members’ business; extra days without a session for matters of public importance; and, finally, an increase in the number of hours that parliament sits each week. If such proposals actually did increase the accountability and scrutiny of government, none of us on this side of the House would have anything much about which we could complain. But they do no such thing. Indeed, they do exactly the opposite.

Those of us who have worked with the Labor Party over many years and who have come to know its use of illusion and artifice should not be amazed that these changes to the standing orders would result in less scrutiny, less accountability and less transparency for the people of Australia. These traditional procedures of this House go to the heart of parliamentary democracy, and to parliamentary accountability and scrutiny of our democracy. They are what parliament is all about. If a sitting parliament does not include a question time, a session for matters of public importance or dispenses with the requirement to hold divisions or form quorums, we do not need to open parliament that day. We could just hold a meeting in a committee room, because there is no way that we as the people’s opposition can hold the government accountable without those fundamental parliamentary mechanisms. And, as a matter of fact, the Leader of the House well knows why the Main Committee was established in the first place. Even the member for Grayndler—as he then was—in a question to the then Speaker on 8 February 2007, a little over a year ago, actually said:

But, Mr Speaker, House of Representatives Practice is very clear. It says on page 527 that the accountability of the government is demonstrated most clearly and publicly at question time when for a period on most sitting days questions without notice are put to ministers.

For the benefit of my constituents, I would actually like to refer to the Practice, which is not often read in this place, just so they are aware of the particular page to which the now Leader of the House referred. This is what the Practice says:

One of the more important functions of the House is its critical review function. This includes scrutiny of the Executive Government, bringing to light issues and perceived deficiencies or problems, ventilating grievances, exposing, and thereby preventing the Government from exercising, arbitrary power, and pressing the Government to take remedial or other action. Questions are a vital element in this function.

It is fundamental in the concept of responsible government that the Executive Government be accountable to the House. The capacity of the House of Representatives to call the Government to account depends, in large measure, on its knowledge and understanding of the Government’s policies and activities. Questions without
notice and on notice (questions in writing) play an important part in this quest for information.

... ... ...

The accountability of the Government is demonstrated most clearly and publicly at Question Time when, for a period (currently usually over an hour) on most sitting days, questions without notice are put to Ministers. The importance of Question Time is demonstrated by the fact that at no other time in a normal sitting day is the House so well attended. Question Time is usually an occasion of special interest not only to Members themselves but to the news media, the radio and television broadcast audience and visitors to the public galleries.

It is obvious that question time—and this is in the quote referred to by the Leader of the House himself—is a critical review function of this House. Further, the then member for Griffith, the current Prime Minister, as the Leader of the Opposition, said in this place on 29 May 2007, when lecturing on accountability:

The reason this censure motion has been moved goes to the heart of accountability in this parliament.

And on 20 September 2007, he said:

The bare minimum level of accountability is to have, in fact, an answer to these questions.

Those of us who have worked with Labor over many years have come to learn of their deliberate use of symbolism without substance. We have come to know the chest-thumping without real action, and we have come to know of the rhetoric, empty of purpose or strategies for meaningful delivery. The people of Australia will also come to only believe what Labor do, not what they say.

We often hear many a Labor member wax misty-eyed about the light on the hill. Indeed, Madam Deputy Speaker, you actually reflected on this particular image in your speech today in the House. What many of us here in this place have come to know is that, when it suits its purpose, Labor can catch the unwary in a show of blinding glare, of useless political razzle-dazzle. We have seen it before. Labor does symbolism better than the Da Vinci Code, visual effects better than Hollywood and packaging and presentation better than Harrods.

When we see any statements by Labor purporting to bestow a greater largesse, a better bounty or, in this case, more sitting days promoted as greater parliamentary accountability and scrutiny, then alarm bells ring and we know we must take a closer look at that proposal. A closer look at section 39 of the Constitution, which provides for quorums in parliament, raises legal questions as to whether or not quorums can be abolished on a sitting day. The government actually says that it has legal advice on this issue but refuses to show it to us. I would like my constituents to actually note that.

These proposals have not been clearly thought out. Indeed, these proposals are a fraud, another political Labor razzle-dazzle, pretending to do one thing but delivering another, pretending to create an extra day of parliamentary accountability and scrutiny. They will do exactly the opposite. The critical review function of this House, one of its most important functions in our parliamentary democracy, will be denied to the Australian people for those extra sitting days. Indeed, what the Australian people will actually get is a Prime Minister and his executive who will enjoy an RDO on each of those extra 14 Fridays allocated as sitting days. We can believe the flippant comments made by the new member for Leichhardt that he plans to shoot through on Fridays. What a sham! How can the people of Australia be convinced that this government values the privilege that it has so recently been granted by the people of Australia? This government is not serious about greater accountability to the people of Australia; it is only pretending
that it is. This is a cynical exercise. While I have no objection to working in this House on Fridays instead of working in my electorate, I reject the government’s proposals because they will effectively undermine the critical review functions of this House.

**Dr STONE (Murray) (1.00 am)**—This should have been a very proud and happy day for the new Kevin Rudd government. Their families and friends were here and we were all sworn in. It should have been a good day. Unfortunately, it is a day of shame for the new government. The embarrassment is palpable in the people yawning over there on the government benches. The member for Leichhardt is doubtless not looking forward to his local media when it is revealed how little interest he really does have in representing his electorate in this place.

What is being suggested is that 20 per cent of our sitting time in the future be without government scrutiny. We have sat for a century—over 100 years now—in Australia as a democracy. This government should be continuing the tradition of the opposition being able to hold the government of the day accountable and to scrutinise it on every day that the parliament is sitting. Instead, it is trying to get away with a cheap and shabby trick of shutting down scrutiny for 20 per cent of government time. Why would this new Kevin Rudd government be so anxious to shut us down from applying strict and usual scrutiny is that it is already trying to cover the fact that it has targeted some of the most vulnerable Australians—I repeat, rural and regional Australians. Exceptional circumstances funding for drought relief has been slashed, particularly for those who have to be resettled—

**Mr Burke**—What!

**Dr STONE**—Read your own notes. You have already cut down the communications budgets for those on exceptional circumstances. You have cut away the living allowance for apprenticeships, in particular horticultural and agricultural apprenticeships.

**Mr Albanese**—I rise on a point of order—on relevance. This is just a policy matter.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER**—No, the member for Murray will continue.

**Dr STONE**—As we can see, this is why you do not want the scrutiny of the opposi-
tion. This government has a lot to be ashamed of and a lot to hide. I strongly suggest you remember that you were elected by constituents from across Australia; you should serve this democracy in the way that other governments have done before you and allow yourself to be subjected to question time, quorums and MPIs in the usual way. Then we will see the real calibre of this government. Unfortunately, it has already been found wanting on its very first day.

Mr HAASE (Kalgoorlie) (1.04 am)—I rise this evening because I am ashamed to be part of a parliament that may move us to a clayton’s position. We have had prior to Christmas this chest-thumping, supposedly victorious government suggesting to the people of Australia the clear understanding that, instead of working just four days a week, we were all going to be working five days a week. I accuse you of putting forward a clayton’s proposition, because we are not going to be working five days a week; we are going to be allowing your ministers to take an RDO. It is shameful. The suggestion that you put forward is absolutely shameful, if it does not prove to be illegal to boot.

I work seven days a week for my constituency—not five. The suggestion that I work less than five is an insult to all the people who have been in this House today and before. I work seven days a week, and if you put this proposition forward I will finish up working just five days a week, because I will not be able to get home to my electorate and back to Canberra in time for the next week’s sitting. You ought to be collectively ashamed of yourselves. If this is just a proposition put by people of straw, I am not surprised, because that is what it sounds like to me. You have put to this parliament a proposition that is deplorable. You ought to be collectively ashamed of yourselves. There is no question about the hardworking ethics of this opposition, let me tell you. In our place in a previous time, you may not have been committed to your electorates. You tell the people of Australia that you are and that you are going to work harder. Are you going to work harder, or are you putting up a clayton’s Friday—where the process of parliamentary democracy will not occur? There will be no MPI. There will be no quorum. There will be no divisions. There will be no executive present. What sort of institution do you want this democracy to be in the long term? I finish on a simple note: I work seven days a week; you ought to try the same thing. Come and have a wander around my electorate one day and see what work is all about. Be ashamed if you get this motion through. Reconsider. If you have got any brains, if you have got any collective intestinal fortitude, consider what you are going to put to the people of Australia via this parliament.

Question put:
That the amendments (Mr Hockey’s) be agreed to.

The House divided. [1.11 am]
(The Deputy Speaker—Hon. BC Scott)

| Ayes | 59 |
| Noes | 76 |
| Majority | 17 |

**AYES**

Abbott, A.J.  
Bailey, F.E.  
Billson, B.F.  
Bishop, J.I.  
Ciobo, S.M.  
Costello, P.H.  
Dutton, P.C.  
Forrest, J.A.  
Georgiou, P.  
Hartsuyker, L.  
Hawker, D.P.M.  
Hull, K.E.  
Irons, S.J.  
Johnson, M.A.  
Keenan, M.  

Andrews, K.J.  
Baldwin, R.C.  
Bishop, B.K.  
Broadbent, R.  
Cobb, J.K.  
Coulton, M.  
Farmer, P.F.  
Gash, J.  
Haase, B.W.  
Hawke, A.  
Hockey, J.B.  
Hunt, G.A.  
Jensen, D.  
Katter, R.C.  
Laming, A.
Question negatived.

Original question put:

That the motion (Mr Albanese's) be agreed to.

The House divided. [1.23 am]

(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes........... 76

Noes........... 60

Majority........ 16

CHAMBER
Business

Days and Hours of Meeting

Mr Albanese (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.32 am)—I present a chart showing the proposed program of sittings for 2008. Copies of the program have been placed on the table. I ask leave of the House to move a motion that the program be agreed to.

Leave granted.

Mr Albanese—I move:

That the program of sittings for 2008 be agreed to.

Mr Hockey (North Sydney) (1.33 am)—I move:

That the following words be added to the motion: “and the House is of the opinion that Question Time should also be held on each Friday the House is scheduled to sit during the year and that Matters of Public Importance should also be discussed each sitting Monday and Friday”.

Mr Albanese—Mr Speaker, given that question times and MPIs are not actually covered by the motion that I have moved, I wonder whether the amendment is in order.

The Speaker—The amendment is to a motion outlining the business of the House. I call it in order. Is there a seconder?

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

Question put:

That the amendment (Mr Hockey’s) be agreed to.

The House divided. [1.39 am]

(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes............ 60

Noes............ 77

Majority........ 17

AYES

Abbott, A.J. Andrews, K.J.
Bailey, F.E. Baldwin, R.C.

Members sworn

The following honourable member made and subscribed the oath or affirmation of allegiance:

Smith, Stephen Francis, Perth, Western Australia
Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.44 am)—I ask leave of the House to move a motion relating to the proposed special provisions for nursing mothers. Copies of the proposed resolution have been placed on the table.

Leave granted.

Mr ALBANESE—I move:

(1) That the House, recognising that Members who are required to nurse infants may not always be able to attend in the Chamber to vote in divisions:

(a) agrees that, despite the provisions of the standing orders, a Member may give her vote by proxy for any division except that on the third reading of a bill which proposes an alteration of the Constitution if the Member is nursing an infant at the time of the division;

(b) determines that for the purposes of this resolution, a government Member may give her proxy to the Chief Government Whip, and that a non-government Member may give her proxy to the Chief Opposition Whip;
(c) determines that for the purposes of standing orders 129, 130 and 131 any proxy vote given in accordance with this resolution is to be treated as if it was a vote given by the Member present in the Chamber; and

(d) is of the opinion that the special provisions of this resolution should not be extended or adapted to apply to Members who are not able to be present in the Chamber for other reasons; and

(2) That this resolution has effect and continues in force unless and until amended or rescinded by the House in this or a subsequent Parliament.

The Rudd government is proud to introduce this system of ensuring that nursing mothers are not excluded from voting. It is a special provision for members with nursing infants because we are committed to making the parliament more family friendly. Through this change we will allow nursing mothers to proxy off their vote to the party whip on most divisions if they need to look after their children. Unlike pair votes, the proxy vote will be treated as if the member was in the chamber. The sensible exception to this is divisions to amend the Constitution.

This motion broadly reflects an agreement reached by the three chief whips which was referred to the Procedure Committee at the end of the last parliament. The government recognises that the Procedure Committee was not able to reach a unanimous decision on this matter. This was in large part because a number of committee members were concerned that a precedent could be established by introducing proxy voting, even on a limited basis for nursing mothers. To this end I ask honourable members to note paragraph (1)(d) of the motion, that this provision should not be used as a precedent for other situations. The government also understands that the effective operation of the proxy process requires trust in the integrity of the chief whips, but members should have confidence in both of them.

The Rudd government is introducing a series of changes to the House standing orders as part of our intention to modernise the workings of parliament. The fact is that this parliament is changing. Increasingly, it is becoming more reflective of society as a whole. In 1943 Dorothy Tangney became an ALP senator for Western Australia and Enid Lyons entered the House as a Liberal Party MP. It was another 40 years again before the first woman gave birth while being a member of parliament. That was Ros Kelly in 1983. I am happy to say that we have come a long way in Australian politics since 1983. Today we have a record 40 women serving as members of parliament in this House, 27 of whom are members of the Australian Labor Party. And of course there are six women in the Rudd ministry, led by the Deputy Prime Minister—the first woman Deputy Prime Minister, who late last year became the first female Acting Prime Minister of this nation.

It is important to recognise that we need to change the way that we operate as a parliament to reflect the changes that occur in our composition. A number of people in the ministry—Tanya Plibersek, Nicola Roxon and Justine Elliot—perform the tough balancing act of motherhood and work every single day. I do not envy them. The member for Capricornia could certainly indicate how difficult it is to have two children under the age of five and to travel down to Canberra from Rockhampton to represent her electorate.

The fact of the matter is that, by the time their first child has turned three, nearly 70 per cent of mothers are back in the workforce. This parliament needs to recognise this. I understand that there are some reservations from some members of the parlia-
ment, not out of a concern about ensuring that women who are nursing mothers are able to participate in the parliament but a concern about the precedent that could be created. That is why, in moving this motion, I am making it clear on behalf of the government that we do not regard this as a precedent for other situations. I am also making it clear with respect to any concerns that, as with other provisions that are made, we need to continually look at how the standing orders are operating in practice and revisit them if they are not working in practice. The fact is, though, that this change is an important reform. I think it will send a message to the public at large that we indeed recognise that working families are a reality and that working families, particularly working mothers and new mothers, have a critical role in this parliament if we are to truly be a representative parliament of Australia. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (1.49 am)—We support in principle this proposal. We do so in good faith. We also recognise that there are a number of members of this parliament who have grave reservations about this—not because it involves working mothers but because it involves proxies. That is new ground in relation to the voting in this place. Giving proxies to whips is something that has not happened before, and in that regard we are very concerned about the proposal. I would ask the Leader of the House to consider a review of this after 12 months. I think we need to look at it very carefully. As I said, we come in good faith. We look at ways that we can try to improve the lot of everyone in the House. But at the same time we all have individual responsibilities as members of this place to place our own votes. There are issues that need to be addressed. If an independent who is a nursing mother is elected to this place, there is no whip. As the member for Kennedy just reminded us, he is his own whip. Who would that person notify should they be nursing? Again, I emphasise that there are reservations, about the process rather than the outcome, and I would appreciate it if the Leader of the House would help conduct a review after 12 months to see that the proxy matter is addressed properly.

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable members for Reid and Melbourne Ports are not setting a good example to the conscientious new colleagues that they have who are here in the chamber at 10 to two. If you are going to stay in the chamber, could you please take your places.

COMMITTEES

Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity Committee

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.52 am)—by leave—I move:

(1) That, in accordance with sections 213 and 214 of the Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner Act 2006, matters relating to the powers and proceedings of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity shall be as follows:

(a) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any independent Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(b) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives.
(c) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.
(d) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.
(e) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.
(f) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.
(g) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.
(h) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.
(i) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.
(j) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.
(k) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.
(l) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.
(m) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
(n) That the committee may report from time to time.
(o) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on the Australian Law Enforcement Integrity Commission appointed during previous Parliaments.
(p) That, in carrying out its duties, the committee or any subcommittee ensure that the operational methods and results of investigations of law enforcement agencies, as far as possible, be protected from disclosure where that would be against the public interest.
(q) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.
(2) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Copies of the proposed resolution have been placed on the table.

Question agreed to.

Australian Crime Commission Committee

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.52 am)—by leave—I move:

(1) That, in accordance with section 54 of the Australian Crime Commission Act 2002, matters relating to the powers and proceedings of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on
the Australian Crime Commission shall be as follows:

(a) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any independent Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(b) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(c) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(d) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(e) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(f) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(g) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(h) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(i) That 2 members of a subcommittee include a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(j) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(k) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(l) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings in any place it sees fit.

(m) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(n) That the committee may report from time to time.

(o) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on the National Crime Authority and the Australian Crime Commission appointed during previous Parliaments.

(p) That, in carrying out its duties, the committee or any subcommittee, ensure that the operational methods and results of investigations of law enforcement agencies, as far as possible, be protected from disclosure where that would be against the public interest.
(q) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(2) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Copies of the proposed resolution have been placed on the table.

Question agreed to.

Corporations and Financial Services Committee

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.53 am)—by leave—I move:

(1) That, in accordance with section 242 of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001, matters relating to the powers and proceedings of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services shall be as follows:

(a) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any independent Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(b) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(c) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(d) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(e) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(f) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(g) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(h) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only, and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(i) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(j) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(k) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(l) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.
(m) That a subcommittee have power to ad-
jour from time to time and to sit during
any adjournment of the Senate and the
House of Representatives.
(n) That the committee may report from
time to time.
(o) That the committee or any subcommit-
tee have power to consider and make
use of the evidence and records of the
Joint Committees on Corporations and
Financial Services and Corporations and
Securities appointed during previous
Parliaments.
(p) That the provisions of this resolution, so
far as they are inconsistent with the
standing orders, have effect notwith-
sanding anything contained in the
standing orders.
(2) That a message be sent to the Senate ac-
quainting it of this resolution and requesting
that it concur and take action accordingly.

Copies of the proposed resolution have been
placed on the table.

Question agreed to.

Electoral Matters Committee

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of
the House) (1.53 am)—by leave—I move:
(1) That a Joint Standing Committee on Elec-
toral Matters be appointed to inquire into and
report on such matters relating to electoral
laws and practices and their administration as
may be referred to it by either House of the
Parliament or a Minister.
(2) Annual reports of government departments
and authorities tabled in the House shall
stand referred to the committee for any in-
quiry the committee may wish to make. Re-
ports shall stand referred to the committee in
accordance with a schedule tabled by the
Speaker to record the areas of responsibility
of each committee, provided that:
(a) any question concerning responsibility
for a report or a part of a report shall be
determined by the Speaker; and
(b) the period during which an inquiry con-
cerning an annual report may be com-
nenced by a committee shall end on the
day on which the next annual report of
that Department or authority is pre-
sented to the House.
(3) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3
Members of the House of Representatives to
be nominated by the Government Whip or
Whips, 2 Members of the House of Repre-
sentatives to be nominated by the Opposition
Whip or Whips or by any independent Mem-
ber, 2 Senators to be nominated by the
Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2
Senators to be nominated by the Leader of
the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to
be nominated by any minority group or
groups or independent Senator or independ-
ent Senators.
(4) That every nomination of a member of the
committee be notified in writing to the Presi-
dent of the Senate and the Speaker of the
House of Representatives.
(5) That the members of the committee hold
office as a joint standing committee until the
House of Representatives is dissolved or ex-
pires by effluxion of time.
(6) That the committee elect a Government
member as its chair.
(7) That the committee elect a non-Government
member as its deputy chair who shall act as
chair of the committee at any time when the
chair is not present at a meeting of the com-
mittee, and at any time when the chair and
deputy chair are not present at a meeting of
the committee the members present shall
elect another member to act as chair at that
meeting.
(8) That, in the event of an equally divided vote,
the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as
chair, have a casting vote.
(9) That 3 members of the committee constitute
a quorum of the committee, provided that in
a deliberative meeting the quorum shall in-
clude 1 Government member of either House
and 1 non-Government member of either
House.
(10) That the committee have power to appoint
subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its
members and to refer to any subcommittee.
any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time.

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of:

(a) submissions lodged with the Clerk of the Senate in response to public advertisements placed in accordance with the resolution of the Senate of 26 November 1981 relating to a proposed Joint Select Committee on the Electoral System, and

(b) the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on Electoral Reform and Electoral Matters appointed during previous Parliaments.

(19) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(20) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Copies of the proposed resolution have been placed on the table.

Question agreed to.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.53 am)—by leave—I move:

(1) (a) That a Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade be appointed to inquire into and report on such matters relating to foreign affairs, defence and trade as may be referred to it by:

(i) either House of the Parliament;

(ii) the Minister for Foreign Affairs;

(iii) the Minister for Defence; or

(iv) the Minister for Trade.

(b) Annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the House shall stand referred to the committee for any inquiry the committee may wish to make. Reports shall stand referred to the committee in accordance with a schedule tabled by the Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee, provided that:

(i) any question concerning responsibility for a report or a part of a report shall be determined by the Speaker; and

(ii) the period during which an inquiry concerning an annual report may be commenced by a committee shall end on the day on which the next annual report of that Department or authority is presented to the House.

(2) That the committee consist of 32 members, 12 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or
Whips, 8 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any independent Member, 5 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 5 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 2 Senators to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(3) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(4) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint standing committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(5) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(6) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(7) That in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(8) That 6 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(10) That, in addition to the members appointed pursuant to paragraph (9), the chair and deputy chair of the committee be ex officio members of each subcommittee appointed.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only, and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time.

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defence and Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade appointed during previous Parliaments.

(19) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(20) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Copies of the proposed resolution have been placed on the table.

Question agreed to.
Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.54 am)—by leave—I move:

(1) That a Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(a) matters coming within the terms of section 5 of the Parliament Act 1974 as may be referred to it by:
   (i) either House of the Parliament; or
   (ii) the Minister responsible for administering the Parliament Act 1974; or
   (iii) the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(b) such other matters relating to the parliamentary zone as may be referred to it by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(c) such amendments to the National Capital Plan as are referred to it by a Minister responsible for administering the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988;

(d) such other matters relating to the National Capital as may be referred to it by:
   (i) either House of the Parliament; or
   (ii) the Minister responsible for administering the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988;

(e) such matters relating to Australia’s territories as may be referred to it by:
   (i) either House of the Parliament; or
   (ii) the Minister responsible for the administration of the Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands; the Territory of Christmas Island; the Coral Sea Islands Territory; the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands; the Australian Antarctic Territory; and the Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands, and of Commonwealth responsibilities on Norfolk Island.

(2) Annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the House shall stand referred to the committee for any inquiry the committee may wish to make. Reports shall stand referred to the committee in accordance with a schedule tabled by the Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee, provided that:

(a) any question concerning responsibility for a report or a part of a report shall be determined by the Speaker; and

(b) the period during which an inquiry concerning an annual report may be commenced by a committee shall end on the day on which the next annual report of that Department or authority is presented to the House.

(3) That the committee consist of 12 members, the Deputy Speaker, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any independent Member, the Deputy President and Chairman of Committees, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(4) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(5) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint standing committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(6) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(7) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the com-
mittee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(8) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(9) That 3 members of the committee (of whom one is the Deputy President or the Deputy Speaker when matters affecting the parliamentary zone are under consideration) constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(10) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time.

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Standing Committees on the National Capital and External Territories, the Joint Committees on the Australian Capital Territory, the Joint Standing Committees on the New Parliament House, the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Zone and the Joint Committee on the National Capital appointed during previous Parliaments and of the House of Representatives and Senate Standing Committees on Transport, Communications and Infrastructure when sitting as a joint committee on matters relating to the Australian Capital Territory.

(19) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(20) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Copies of the proposed resolution have been placed on the table.

Question agreed to.

Migration Committee

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.54 am)—by leave—I move:

(1) (a) That a Joint Standing Committee on Migration be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(i) regulations made or proposed to be made under the Migration Act 1958;

(ii) proposed changes to the Migration Act 1958 and any related acts; and

(iii) such other matters relating to migration as may be referred to it by the Minister responsible for the administration of the Migration Act 1958.
(b) Annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the House shall stand referred to the committee for any inquiry the committee may wish to make. Reports shall stand referred to the committee in accordance with a schedule tabled by the Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee, provided that:

(i) any question concerning responsibility for a report or a part of a report shall be determined by the Speaker; and

(ii) the period during which an inquiry concerning an annual report may be commenced by a committee shall end on the day on which the next annual report of that Department or authority is presented to the House.

(2) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any independent Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 1 Senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(3) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(4) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint standing committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(5) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(6) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(7) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(8) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(10) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(11) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(12) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(13) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(15) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
(16) That the committee may report from time to
time.
(17) That the committee or any subcommittee
have power to consider and make use of the
evidence and records of the Joint Commit-
tees on Migration Regulations and the Joint
Standing Committees on Migration ap-
pointed during previous Parliaments.
(18) That the provisions of this resolution, so far
as they are inconsistent with the standing or-
ders, have effect notwithstanding anything
contained in the standing orders.
(19) That a message be sent to the Senate ac-
quainting it of this resolution and requesting
that it concur and take action accordingly.
Copies of the proposed resolution have been
placed on the table.
Question agreed to.
Parliamentary Library Committee
Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of
the House) (1.55 am)—by leave—I move:
(1) That a Joint Standing Committee on the Par-
lamentary Library be appointed to:
(a) consider and report to the President of
the Senate and the Speaker of the House
of Representatives on any matters relat-
ing to the Parliamentary Library referred
by the President or the Speaker;
(b) provide advice to the President and the
Speaker on matters relating to the Par-
lamentary Library;
(c) provide advice to the President and the
Speaker on an annual resource agree-
ment between the Parliamentary Librar-
ian and the Secretary of the Department
of Parliamentary Services; and
(d) receive advice and reports, including an
annual report, directly from the Parlia-
mentary Librarian on matters relating to
the Parliamentary Library.
(2) That the Committee consist of 13 members,
4 Members of the House of Representatives
named by the Government whip or
whips, 3 Members of the House of Represen-
tatives nominated by the Opposition whip or
whips or by any independent Member, 3
Senators nominated by the Leader of the
Government in the Senate, 2 Senators nomi-
nated by the Leader of the Opposition in the
Senate and 1 Senator nominated by minority
groups or independent Senators.
(3) That every nomination of a member of the
committee be notified in writing to the Presi-
dent and the Speaker.
(4) That the nomination by the minority groups
and independent Senators shall be deter-
mined by agreement between them, and, in
the absence of agreement duly notified to the
President, any question of the representation
on the committee shall be determined by the
Senate.
(5) That the members of the committee hold
office as a joint standing committee until the
House of Representatives is dissolved or ex-
pires by effluxion of time.
(6) That the committee shall elect 2 of its mem-
bers to be joint chairs, 1 being a Senator or
Member, on an alternating basis each Par-
liament, who is a member of the government
parties and 1 being a Senator or Member, on
an alternating basis each Parliament, who is a
member of the non-government parties, pro-
vided that the joint chairs may not be mem-
bers of the same House. The joint chair
named by the government parties shall
chair meetings of the committee, and the
joint chair nominated by the non-government
parties shall take the chair whenever the
other joint chair is not present.
(7) That each of the joint chairs shall have a
deliberative vote only, regardless of who is
chairing the meeting.
(8) That when votes on a question before the
committee are equally divided, the question
shall be resolved in the negative.
(9) That three members of the committee shall
constitute a quorum of the committee, but in
a deliberative meeting a quorum shall in-
clude 1 member of each House of the gov-
ernment parties and 1 member of either
House of the non-government parties.
(10) That the committee may appoint subcommit-
tees, consisting of 3 or more of its members,
and refer to any such subcommittee any of
the matters which the committee is empow-
ered to consider.

(11) That the quorum of a subcommittee shall be
2 members.

(12) That the committee shall appoint the chair of
each subcommittee, who shall have a delib-
erative vote only, and at any time when the
chair of a subcommittee is not present at a
meeting of the subcommittee the members of
the subcommittee present shall elect another
member of that subcommittee to act as chair
at that meeting.

(13) That members of the committee who are not
members of a subcommittee may participate
in the public proceedings of that subcommit-
tee, but shall not vote, move any motion or
be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee and any subcommittee
shall have power to meet in private or public
session and to report from time to time.

(15) That the President and the Speaker may at-
tend any meeting of the committee or a sub-
committee as they see fit, but shall not be
members of the committee or subcommittee
and may not vote, move any motion or be
counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(16) That the committee or any subcommittee
have power to consider and make use of the
evidence and records of the Joint Committee
on the Parliamentary Library appointed dur-
ing previous Parliaments.

(17) That the provisions of this resolution, so far
as they are inconsistent with the standing or-
ders, have effect notwithstanding anything
contained in the standing orders.

(18) That a message be sent to the Senate ac-
quainting it of this resolution and requesting
that it concur and take action accordingly.

Copies of the proposed resolution have been
placed on the table.

Question agreed to.

Treaties Committee

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of
the House) (1.56 am)—by leave—I move:

(1) That a Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(a) matters arising from treaties and related
National Interest Analyses and proposed
treaty actions and related Explanatory
Statements presented or deemed to be
presented to the Parliament;

(b) any question relating to a treaty or other
international instrument, whether or not
negotiated to completion, referred to the
committee by:

(i) either House of the Parliament, or
(ii) a Minister; and

(c) such other matters as may be referred to
the committee by the Minister for For-

gend Affairs and on such conditions as
the Minister may prescribe.

(2) That the committee consist of 16 members, 6
Members of the House of Representatives to
be nominated by the Government Whip or
Whips, 3 Members of the House of Repre-
sentatives to be nominated by the Opposition
Whip or Whips or by any independent Mem-
ber, 3 Senators to be nominated by the
Leader of the Government in the Senate, 3
Senators to be nominated by the Leader of
3 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of
the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to
be nominated by any minority group or
groups or independent Senator or independ-
ten Senators.

(3) That every nomination of a member of the
committee be notified in writing to the Presi-
dent of the Senate and the Speaker of the
House of Representatives.

(4) That the members of the committee hold
office as a joint standing committee until the
House of Representatives is dissolved or ex-
pires by effluxion of time.

(5) That the committee elect a Government
member as its chair.

(6) That the committee elect a non-Government
member as its deputy chair to act as chair of
the committee at any time when the chair is
not present at a meeting of the committee
and at any time when the chair and deputy
chair are not present at a meeting of the
committee the members present shall elect
another member to act as chair at that meet-
ing.
(7) That in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(8) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint not more than 3 subcommittees each consisting of 3 or more of its members, and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(10) That, in addition to the members appointed pursuant to paragraph (9), the chair and deputy chair of the committee be ex officio members of each subcommittee appointed.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only, and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time.

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Standing Committees on Treaties appointed during previous Parliaments.

(19) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(20) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Copies of the proposed resolution have been placed on the table.

Question agreed to.

ELECTION PETITION
Court of Disputed Returns

The Clerk—I present a copy of a petition, Mitchell v Bailey and Anor, filed in the High Court, sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns, in respect of the election of the member of the House of Representatives for the division of McEwen.

BUSINESS

Days and Hours of Meeting

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—Manager of Opposition Business) (1.57 am)—Briefly, and with the indulgence of the Speaker, I take the opportunity to thank the staff of the House of Representatives for being here until this late hour. I recognise that it is a late hour, being just on two o’clock. But I also recognise that the changing of the standing orders is a strong matter of principle for us. We could not have anticipated that the debate would go on this long, but we do recognise the contribution of staff and I thank them for it.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.57 am)—On the issue that the Manager of Opposition Business raises, I put
on the record that my office raised with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition some four hours ago, and I raised in a point of order in the House here, the fact that I requested the opposition that, if they would not give us the courtesy of letting us know when they would stop debating themselves on these issues, they at least inform the staff of the parliament. I think that that courtesy could have been granted, given that it was requested formally by me as Leader of the House. I certainly indicate on behalf of the government our appreciation of the contribution of the staff both inside and outside the chamber. I know that Hansard had particular difficulties with people who were not rostered on this evening. On behalf of the government, we did try to get some information to you, and it is unfortunate that that was not forthcoming.

House adjourned at 1.59 am (Wednesday)

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Rudd to move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blighted chapter in our nation’s history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

Ms Gillard to present a bill for an act to amend the Workplace Relations Act 1996, and for related purposes. (Workplace Relations Amendment (Transition to Forward with Fairness) Bill 2008)

Ms Gillard to present a bill for an act to establish Skills Australia, and for related purposes. (Skills Australia Bill 2008)
Ms Gillard to present a bill for an act to amend the Higher Education Support Act 2003, and for related purposes. (*Higher Education Support Amendment (Removal of the Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements and National Governance Protocols Requirements and Other Matters) Bill 2008*)

Mr Tanner to present a bill for an act to amend the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997, and for related purposes. (*Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Amendment Bill 2008*)

Mr Tanner to present a bill for an act to amend legislation relating to lands acquisition, and for related purposes. (*Lands Acquisition Legislation Amendment Bill 2008*)

Mr Albanese to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to telecommunications, and for other purposes. (*Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Communications Fund) Bill 2008*)

Mr Albanese to present a bill for an act to amend the Trade Practices Act 1974, and for related purposes. (*Trade Practices Amendment (Access Declarations) Bill 2008*)

Mr Martin Ferguson to present a bill for an act to amend the Offshore Petroleum Act 2006, and for other purposes. (*Offshore Petroleum Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2008*)