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SITTING DAYS—2005

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RADIO BROADCASTS

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

- CANBERRA  1440 AM
- SYDNEY    630 AM
- NEWCASTLE 1458 AM
- GOSFORD   98.1 FM
- BRISBANE  936 AM
- GOLD COAST 95.7 FM
- MELBOURNE 1026 AM
- ADELAIDE  972 AM
- PERTH     585 AM
- HOBART    747 AM
- NORTHERN TASMANIA  92.5 FM
- DARWIN    102.5 FM
FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

Governor-General

His Excellency Major-General Michael Jeffery, Companion in the Order of Australia, Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Military Cross

Senate Officeholders

President—Senator the Hon. Paul Henry Calvert
Deputy President and Chairman of Committees—Senator John Joseph Hogg
Temporary Chairmen of Committees—Senators the Hon. Nick Bolkus, George Henry Brandis, Hedley Grant Pearson Chapman, John Clifford Cherry, Patricia Margaret Crossin, Alan Baird Ferguson, Stephen Patrick Hutchins, Linda Jean Kirk, Susan Christine Knowles, Philip Ross Lightfoot, John Alexander Lindsay (Sandy) Macdonald, Gavin Mark Marshall, Claire Mary Moore and John Odin Wentworth Watson

Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Robert Murray Hill
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Stephen Michael Conroy
Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Joseph William Ludwig

Senate Party Leaders and Whips

Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—Senator the Hon. Robert Murray Hill
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Leader of the National Party of Australia—Senator the Hon. Ronald Leslie Doyle Boswell
Deputy Leader of the National Party of Australia—Senator John Alexander Lindsay (Sandy) Macdonald

Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator Stephen Michael Conroy
Leader of the Australian Democrats—Senator Lynette Fay Allison

Liberal Party of Australia Whips—Senators Jeannie Margaret Ferris and Alan Eggleston
National Party of Australia Whip—Senator Julian John James McGauran
Opposition Whips—Senators George Campbell and Geoffrey Frederick Buckland
Australian Democrats Whip—Senator Andrew John Julian Bartlett

Printed by authority of the Senate
## Members of the Senate

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(1) Term expires at close of day next preceding the polling day for the general election of members of the House of Representatives.

(2) Chosen by the Parliament of Queensland to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Warwick Raymond Parer, resigned.

(3) Chosen by the Parliament of Queensland to fill a casual vacancy vice John Woodley, resigned.

(4) Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy vice John Andrew Quirke, resigned.

(5) Appointed by the Governor of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Brian Francis Gibson AM, resigned.

(6) Chosen by the Parliament of Queensland to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. John Joseph Herron, resigned.

(7) Chosen by the Parliament of Victoria to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Richard Kenneth Robert Alston, resigned.

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AD—Australian Democrats; AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; APA—Australian Progressive Alliance; CLP—Country Labor Party; Ind—Independent; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals; PHON—Pauline Hanson’s One Nation

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—H. Evans
Clerk of the House of Representatives—I.C. Harris
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—H.R. Penfold QC
HOWARD MINISTRY

Prime Minister
The Hon. John Winston Howard MP

Minister for Transport and Regional Services and Deputy Prime Minister
The Hon. John Duncan Anderson MP

Treasurer
The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP

Minister for Trade
The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP

Minister for Defence and Leader of the Government in the Senate
Senator the Hon. Robert Murray Hill

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

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

Attorney-General
The Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP

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

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP

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

Minister for Education, Science and Training
The Hon. Dr Brendan John Nelson MP

Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues
Senator the Hon. Kay Christine Lesley Patterson

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

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

Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Senator the Hon. Helen Lloyd Coonan

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

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

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<td>Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Ian Douglas Macdonald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts and Sport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Charles Roderick Kemp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and Deputy Leader of the House</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Gary Douglas Hardgrave MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business and Tourism</td>
<td>The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads</td>
<td>The Hon. James Eric Lloyd MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Workforce Participation</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources</td>
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<td>The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary (Foreign Affairs and Trade)</td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Fredrick Billson MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Gary Roy Nairn MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher John Pearce MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services</td>
<td>The Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>The Hon. Gregory Andrew Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary (Children and Youth Affairs)</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Penelope Ley MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Patrick Francis Farmer MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
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V
# SHADOW MINISTRY

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<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>The Hon. Kim Christian Beazley MP</td>
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<td>Jennifer Louise Macklin MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Education, Training, Science and Research</td>
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<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow</td>
<td>Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans</td>
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<td>Minister for Social Security</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Manager of Opposition Business in the House</td>
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<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Wayne Maxwell Swan MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Defence and Homeland Security</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Public Administration and Open Government, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>Senator Kim John Carr</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Roads and Shadow Minister for Housing and Urban Development</td>
<td>Kelvin John Thomson MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Finance and Superannuation</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nicholas John Sherry</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Work, Family and Community, Shadow Minister for Youth and Early Childhood Education and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on the Status of Women</td>
<td>Tanya Joan Plibersek MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Participation and Shadow Minister for Corporate Governance and Responsibility</td>
<td>Senator Penelope Ying Yen Wong</td>
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*(The above are shadow cabinet ministers)*
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Shadow Minister for Immigration
Laurence Donald Thomas Ferguson MP
Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries
Gavan Michael O’Connor MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Revenue and Shadow Minister for Banking and Financial Services
Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Shadow Attorney-General
Nicola Louise Roxon MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Local Government and Territories
Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O’Brien
Shadow Minister for Manufacturing and Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs
Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy
Shadow Minister for Defence Planning, Procurement and Personnel and Shadow Minister Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations
The Hon. Archibald Ronald Bevis MP
Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation
Alan Peter Griffin MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs
Senator Thomas Mark Bishop
Shadow Minister for Small Business
Tony Burke MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Carers
Senator Jan Elizabeth McLucas
Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs, Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate
Senator Joseph William Ludwig
Shadow Minister for Pacific Islands
Robert Charles Grant Sercombe MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition
John Paul Murphy MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence
The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education
Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Heritage
Jennie George MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure
Bernard Fernando Ripoll MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health
Ann Kathleen Corcoran MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development (House)
Catherine Fiona King MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development (Senate)
Senator Ursula Mary Stephens
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia and Indigenous Affairs
The Hon. Warren Edward Snowdon MP
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The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. Paul Calvert) took the chair at 12.30 p.m. and read prayers.

POSTAL INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN BILL 2004 [2005]

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 7 March, on motion by Senator Ian Campbell:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator CHERRY (Queensland) (12.31 p.m.)—Yesterday I was talking about the differences between the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s powers and the Postal Industry Ombudsman’s powers proposed in the Postal Industry Ombudsman Bill 2004 [2005]. I thought they were quite significant. The second reading speech for this bill says:

In many respects, the PIO will be provided with similar powers to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. For example, the PIO will be able to require a person to provide information in writing or to attend before the PIO to answer questions. The PIO will also be required to provide procedural fairness to Australia Post, registered PPOs and their employees in the investigation of any actions they have taken.

However, whereas the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s powers are tailored to the investigation of public sector administrative actions, the PIO’s powers will be customised for the investigation of service delivery complaints in relation to both Australia Post and private operators. Moreover, as the PIO will have jurisdiction over non-government entities which have voluntarily registered with the PIO, the PIO will not have certain powers that are considered unnecessary or which would act as a deterrent to PPOs registering with the scheme. For example, it was not considered appropriate to provide the PIO with the power to enter premises or to override a person’s claim to legal professional privilege.

Senator Conroy also referred to the fact that the PIO will not have the powers, which are currently provided to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, to order compensation.

These changes obviously concern me to some extent in that it is also made clear that, in respect of Australia Post, the PIO will be expected to deal with delivery of mail matters whilst the Commonwealth Ombudsman will continue to deal with the administration activities of Australia Post. This does concern me, but we will have to see how it develops in practice—whether this difference of powers will impact on how Australia Post is dealt with by the Ombudsman or the PIO in the future. That is something we will consider later.

What did concern me in that particular section and in the bill is the fact that the government has chosen to give the PIO fewer powers than the Commonwealth Ombudsman to encourage private sector providers to sign up to the PIO and its scheme. I really think that is unnecessary. I think it is an unfortunate approach that the government has adopted. Given that the delivery of post is such an important matter in terms of communications in Australia, the matter of voluntarism should never have come into play.

The government said that the PIO would apply to the private sector as the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman applies to the private sector—that is, to everybody. Not only is this scheme voluntary for private sector providers but, as an incentive to get private sector providers to sign up to the scheme, the powers of the PIO vis-a-vis the Commonwealth Ombudsman have been reduced.

I certainly express the Democrats’ concern with that approach. I notice the ALP are moving amendments on this, and we will certainly support those when we get to the committee stage. There is no benefit to this bill vis-a-vis current arrangements if we do
not get the private sector providers into the PIO scheme. The scheme has been made voluntary and has been pared back to encourage private sector providers to come. This scheme is not going to be working effectively unless we get the benefit of the private sector coming in.

I hope the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Coonan, will address in her concluding comments what measures the government has taken to get private sector providers to sign up to the PIO scheme, whether the minister is confident that the major private sector providers will be signing up to this scheme and, if it ends up being a voluntary scheme, what measures she intends engaging in to get the private sector providers to sign up to it. If they do not sign up, this bill will be of no benefit and we will have wasted the public’s time. The Democrats will not oppose this bill, because it is revenue neutral, but we certainly think it is important that the benefits of this scheme be promoted further to bring the private sector on board and, if need be, that the scheme be based on the telecommunications precedent that requires they join up rather than simply leaving it to be voluntary.

Senator COONAN (New South Wales—Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts) (12.36 p.m.)—I thank the senators who have contributed to the debate on the Postal Industry Ombudsman Bill 2004 [2005]. The bill implements a government election commitment and will establish a dedicated Postal Industry Ombudsman within the office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and provide consumers with a recognisable, dedicated and independent entity to deal with complaints about the provision of postal services. The Postal Industry Ombudsman’s powers will complement the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s existing powers. The Commonwealth Ombudsman, for example, will retain existing powers to investigate actions by Australia Post that do not relate to the provision of postal services, such as employment matters.

Provisions in the bill will mean that most, if not all, service delivery complaints against Australia Post will be dealt with by the Postal Industry Ombudsman in a similar way to those against registered private postal operators. However, complaints against Australia Post can still be dealt with by the Commonwealth Ombudsman where it is more appropriate to do so.

I am heartened to hear senators in their contributions to this debate say that they support the establishment of a postal industry ombudsman. The legislation has been drafted after an extensive process and with historical evidence following consultation with the state and territory offices of fair trading. I have to say that there have only ever been 37 recorded complaints about the delivery of postal services by postal service providers other than Australia Post. I think that that really puts it in perspective.

It is disappointing to see that there are foreshadowed amendments proposing to take what is an almost non-existent problem and create a compliance burden by requiring everyone to participate in the scheme. The opposition have foreshadowed an amendment that in my view is unnecessary for this bill.

In developing the scheme, it is important to balance the rights of consumers—of course, that is always a critical factor—with the level of complaints. We always have to look at the cost and complexity of implementing the scheme for business and, indeed, for government. After an exhaustive consul-
tation process, we do believe—and I must say that I personally believe—that the provisions in the legislation strike the appropriate balance.

During the course of the debate—although unfortunately I was not able to listen to all of it—there was a comparison of the volume of complaints in the postal industry with that of the telecommunications industry, which is entirely a gross exaggeration. To give an example: in 2003-04 the TIO—that is, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman—handled 75,904 complaints, of which it investigated 59,850. The TIO has an annual budget in excess of $6.5 million and has over 1,000 members. In very stark contrast, the Commonwealth Ombudsman handles only 900 to 1,000 complaints every year for Australia Post. As I said earlier, the state and territory offices of fair trading have advised that there have been only 37 recorded complaints about the delivery of postal services by postal service providers other than Australia Post. Quite simply, the reality is that this industry receives an entirely different level and nature of complaints compared to the telecommunications industry.

I can only suspect that homework has not been done on this issue and that serious thought has not been given to what a waste of resources it would be to impose the expensive TIO model on the entire postal industry. Rather, establishing the PIO as a dedicated office within the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s office will ensure that the correct balance is achieved between the protection of the rights of consumers and the cost and complexity of administering the scheme. It will offer many of the same benefits as the TIO but with a lower cost and the advantage of using existing expertise in the field.

In summary, the government believes that this bill, as it is currently being considered, will be beneficial for Australian consumers, small business and private postal operators. It will provide consumers and all postal operators, including Australia Post, with an avenue to more effectively resolve service disputes and difficulties. I commend the bill.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator CONROY (Victoria) (12.42 p.m.)—I move opposition amendment (1) on sheet 4446:

(1) Schedule 1, item 11, page 19 (after line 31), after subsection 19ZA(2), insert:

(2A) Notwithstanding subsection (2), where a PPO meets the conditions specified in this section, it must apply in writing to the Postal Industry Ombudsman to be registered for the purposes of this Part where:

(a) the PPO comprises 20 or more employees; and
(b) the PPO annual financial turnover threshold is greater than $1,000,000.

This is a straightforward amendment. As I indicated in my remarks during the second reading debate, this amendment seeks to expand the jurisdiction of the Postal Industry Ombudsman by requiring significant private postal operators to join the scheme. This contrasts with the government’s approach to the bill, which says that private operators can choose to opt in to the scheme. The amendment inserts a new subsection into section 19ZA of the bill to require private postal operators to register with the PIO if they have more than 20 employees and an annual turnover that exceeds $1 million. This should capture major private operators like DHL and UPS and improve the level of consumer protection offered by the scheme. Mandatory registration should not be a major financial impost for these large private postal operators.
As was noted during the second reading debate, the costs of running the PIO are recovered from postal companies based on the number of complaints that the PIO receives relating to that company. Companies with high service standards are unlikely to have to make major contributions to the PIO. The government has argued that operators who do not join the scheme will still be regulated by state offices of fair trading. Where is John Howard’s centralism when you need it, Senator Cherry!

Labor does not believe that this is a satisfactory justification for limiting the scope of the PIO scheme. The growing significance of the major private postal operators means that users of their services should also be entitled to call on the services of the dedicated Postal Industry Ombudsman. A PIO with a broader jurisdiction also has the potential to raise standards across the entire industry. In addition, Labor believes that it is appropriate that Australia Post’s major competitors are also subject to the scrutiny of the PIO, so I commend this amendment to the chamber.

I again make the point that this is simply about trying to hold the government to its own promise, made in the year 2001. Richard Alston promised to deliver a robust PIO, similar to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. This government, after three years, is trying to crawl away quietly from this commitment. This is a small and simple amendment, which is the minimum needed to make this a reasonable scheme. I urge senators to support this amendment and I even call on Senator Coonan to accept this as a reasonable proposition. Let us move forward and hope this new jurisdiction works successfully on behalf of consumers.

Senator CHERRY (Queensland) (12.45 p.m.)—The Democrats will be supporting the ALP amendment. I note in particular that, because it excludes smaller organisations, the amendment will apply to only the larger organisations, as Senator Conroy pointed out. I note in particular that, according to Ibis World, the courier industry is dominated by small businesses, with nearly 75 per cent of management unit locations employing fewer than 10 people. So we are carving out a very large chunk of the industry. I would hope—in fact, I would expect—that this amendment would make no difference to the government because, as I said in my speech in the second reading debate—which I hope the minister addresses—I would presume that the minister already has the larger companies signed up. I would be disappointed if we were setting up a PIO without having the larger companies already signed up. I do not think this amendment would create compliance problems because I would be very disappointed if these organisations had not already agreed to signed up. They should agree to sign up and, that being the case, it is far better to have them all in rather than all out; otherwise, frankly, there is no benefit in this bill.

Senator COONAN (New South Wales—Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts) (12.46 p.m.)—I will be very brief in responding to the amendment moved by Labor and supported by the Democrats. The government will not be accepting the amendment. The opposition has moved an amendment which, if adopted, would result in membership of the Postal Industry Ombudsman scheme being mandatory for what might be described as ‘large private postal operators’, yet we have evidence that there has been only something like 37 complaints. It seems a very disproportionate reaction to then require everybody over a certain threshold to be subject to the scheme. That brings me to the point that I have not heard very clearly articulated from the opposition in bringing forward this amendment: why the threshold that is being advocated for private postal operator mem-
bership is there. It seems to me to be entirely unsubstantiated. It is certainly an arbitrary threshold and it is unclear just how many operators would be affected. It seems to be, from the point of view of both the Democrats and Labor, ‘big’ as opposed to ‘little’, but it usually has to be a bit more precise than that when you are developing policy. There is no indication of what will happen to operators who do not comply; no thought appears to have been given to the mechanism for prosecuting who would be captured under the amendment; and there does not appear to be any evidence, at least not that I have been able to see, to suggest that there is a greater incidence of complaints against private postal operators comprising 20 or more employees and with an annual turnover of greater than $1 million—that is, the threshold—than any other service provider. It is a clear example of trying to score a point—policy on the run, without any clear policy rationale.

The government believes that the opt-in provisions of the scheme will be attractive to a large number of private postal operators who can use it, obviously if they wish, as some distinguishing marketing aspect of their business. Indeed, it may be a marketing advantage to postal service providers over their competitors. Registering with the scheme may be attractive to all operators as they could present it as a benefit to customers using their services, and it has the advantage that the PIO would also serve as the final arbiter for the resolution of difficult disputes, which obviously would be of benefit to both the postal service providers and their consumers.

Once again, for the policy reasons that I have advanced, we think it is not appropriate to load up businesses with yet more obligations when there is a disproportionate policy need to respond to. As I have previously indicated, there were 37 complaints and that does not warrant the disproportionate burden of requiring all operators over a certain threshold to join it. For those reasons the government will not be supporting the amendment. My view is that, even on reflection and even if we can find out the answers to these questions, there would need to be much more policy work to look at the proposed threshold than is possible with an amendment brought forward at the last minute and, I suspect, for dubious reasons.

Senator CONROY (Victoria) (12.50 p.m.—Senator Cherry, I am very disappointed but not surprised to hear that once again the government has caved in to its large business mates and that it is interested in self-regulation. The fact that anyone who had a complaint with these organisations had nowhere to go seems to be a sufficient reason to say, ‘Well, there were almost no complaints.’ How circular an argument can you get? But, as usual, this government has the soft touch—the light touch approach to regulation. That is what we are seeing again today. I hope that the government, if this amendment passes—and there seems to be a fair chance that it will pass today—will take it away and just think about it. It will not be an impost. If complaints are as few as you say, Senator Coonan, there will be virtually no change to the way it operates. I urge you to reconsider and urge all senators to support this amendment.

Question agreed to.
Bill, as amended, agreed to.
Bill reported with amendment; report adopted.

Third Reading

Senator COONAN (New South Wales—Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts) (12.51 p.m.)—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

NAVIGATION AMENDMENT BILL 2004
Second Reading

Debate resumed from 7 March, on motion by Senator Hill:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator MARK BISHOP (Western Australia) (12.52 p.m.)—The Navigation Amendment Bill 2004 is a minor regulatory bill which makes some technical adjustments to the Navigation Act as it affects the safety of ships at sea. The first two amendments in the bill simply remove an inconsistency within the current law. The bill also removes the uncertainty caused by a lower court decision as to whether offences under the act are indictable or summary. To that extent the bill is not controversial.

Another amendment relates to penalties. Essentially, it will bring penalties in the Navigation Act into line with those set out in the Crimes Act. Instead of specifying financial penalties and jail terms specifically, the formula approach will be adopted. For example, the Crimes Act provides that, if an offence is expressed to be subject to a penalty, no fine is specified. Instead, the maximum fine will be five penalty units multiplied by the maximum prison term in months. In essence, the application of this formula will help to standardise the Navigation Act, although it will effectively increase the penalties as well. This is a practical issue, and we on this side of the chamber support the changes.

There is, however, a matter referred to in the Bills Digest. It concerns the relationship between the principal legislation and the setting of penalties in regulations. The point is well made, and it goes to consistency of approach. As this bill seeks to make all offences under the bill indictable offences, the offences and penalties set out in the regulations ought to be contained in the principal act, not in the regulations, and attention is drawn to this anomaly. The suggestion is that the bill should have provided an opportunity to bring about that consistency. The minister might care to address the reasons for that in his or her response in closing the second reading debate.

It is also opportune today to address some matters on shipping policy. As Australians, we ought to be embarrassed about our either disappearing or disappeared shipping industry. After all, we are almost totally dependent on shipping for our export trade, and perhaps a few facts should be outlined in order to set the context of my remarks. Of the world seaborne trade of 6,000 million gross tonnes, trade to and from Australia comprises almost nine per cent—quite a significant figure. The Australian industry’s part of that nine per cent is only 1.4 per cent—in other words, about 85 per cent of our shipping costs are paid to overseas operators. The cost to Australia, in those same net terms, is over $3.6 billion per year, and growing—almost 14 per cent of the current account deficit. As we all know, the current account deficit is at an all-time high, and is most likely to keep growing. The trend for Australian participation is downwards, with increasing foreign dominance and increasing losses of foreign exchange.

The story is almost the same with insurance. Very little insurance underwriting is done by Australians. It almost seems that we have a fatalistic attitude that these are not native industries for ourselves. The question is exactly the same as in any other industry—essentially in our secondary and tertiary industries. It is interesting, of course, to ponder that riddle, particularly in light of more recent discussion as changes in the economy, the net foreign debt and the current account deficit become more central to our future.
In economic terms, transport cost is invisible—and one makes the obvious point in passing that for this government that is a most appropriate description. In addition to what might be called a cringe mentality, in Australia we have always suffered the dead hand of conservative forces in this area of creation and maintenance of emerging industries. It is a matter of great regret that these forces are strongest in government in the area of primary industry, which has always been dominated by the National Party. It is no accident that for many years the transport portfolio has been captive to the National Party, with few exceptions. Nor is it an accident that trade and industry portfolios have again been dominated in this context over time by the National Party.

Given the huge power of that single vested interest, it is little wonder that trade, industry and transport policy in this country is so skewed. Look at transport policy: whether it be road funding, rail investment or shipping—both international and coastal—the purpose is the same. It is the user who is the sole beneficiary, not the industry providing the services or consumers who pay the costs at the retail end. There is not the slightest interest in transport industries per se; they are simply a crude cost. And if they are only a crude cost, the obvious solution is to reduce the crude cost to the lowest possible point. Yet we see that the cost of this policy direction to our economy in net terms is absolutely enormous.

We therefore have a glaring double standard in that we choose which industries we as a nation support, and that support, obviously, and in another context properly, is determined by those who are elected to government and those who are in power. In terms of consequences it means that effectively we do not have a real transport policy in this country. What we do have is a piece-meal of road funding and, belatedly, early signs of a regenerating rail industry. But the gaps between the two continue to be enormous. We still have massive bottlenecks at our ports, for example. It is not a new problem caused by the huge demand for coal or iron ore, which has been the subject of media reporting over the last three or four months. No amount of buck-passing back to the states can excuse the losses to the Commonwealth and, by definition, to all of us when the losses are national and apply across the board to every citizen living in this country. Getting a container released through Customs is as slow as it has ever been, largely due to the processes put in train by Customs. Of course, Customs is a Commonwealth government agency.

Other Western nations have built new container ports outside metropolitan areas. In Australia, where nearly all mainland cities are growing areas, the main container ports are landlocked by suburbia. The crisis with the bulk loading facilities has now, apparently, caught everybody by surprise—but there should not be surprise. We simply do not have a comprehensive national transport policy. The current government’s response is glib. They say, ‘Gee, yes, we do have a problem, but congestion at our ports is a state problem,’ and they give the state governments a flick in passing. But out on the Pacific Ocean there are hundreds and hundreds of ships sitting at sea awaiting a berth, paying tens of thousands of dollars demurrage every day, and the government say it is not their fault. If it were wheat or meat it would not happen. They are not new problems. They are endemic in Australia simply because of the totally self-interested producer basis upon which transport policy is formed, maintained and implemented. That is the way it has always been. So it is no surprise to anyone that the shipping industry currently is in such a parlous state.
There are some others who are accountable for these appalling circumstances. Here I refer to some of those more influential economists whose thesis has long been based on the theory of natural advantage or natural comparative advantage: you concentrate on what you are best at and you do not allocate funds or resources to develop alternatives over time. Therefore we grow more meat and wheat and we dig more iron and coal—we do whatever comes not necessarily easily but whatever comes naturally. By that attitude, when international shipping is so cheap, we are silly not to take advantage of it, the argument goes. It does not matter if it is a floating hulk of unknown ownership with a crew of virtual slaves travelling up and down our major coasts.

So the theory of natural advantage is very convenient. If it were applied to any other industries we would have very few at all in this country. It also assumes that shipping will always be cheap but, as we are now seeing, that cycle has shifted. Freight rates have gone through the roof and even more export dollars are being lost through the added costs of shipping. Exporters are suddenly complaining as their added transport costs have spoilt their competitiveness. Market forces are wonderful when they run so strongly in your favour, but it is a great excuse not to have a policy. But now, of course, the consequence of the inaction of the last 10 years is that we are at the total mercy of overseas providers, hence the question of why we have no shipping industry of our own.

We in the Labor Party believe that we should have an indigenous shipping industry. We cannot see why shipping should be different from any other industry. But it does need a policy and it does need a fair degree of leadership, and we suggest that they have both been absent over the last 10 years under the current government. Indeed it is ironic that this bill is about some minor regulatory policy on ship safety, and yet one of the big issues is the safety of much of the international fleet which is used to transport Australia's trade. The government's policy means that our coastline is increasingly being serviced by tramps from around the world.

The single-voyage permit system, as it is now administered, is about dumping services against the interests of local industry. It is no wonder then that, since this natural advantage or comparative advantage argument has taken hold, our coastal shipping trade has been decimated to the point where it is virtually non-existent and, if one were a realist, almost impossible or impossible to revive. The scheme of single-voyage and continuous-voyage permits has seen a reduction from 40 per cent to 25 per cent in the number of Australian flag ships plying our coastline. Of course, all the dollars involved in that have gone overseas. And so the story goes on and there is no end in sight.

There are few countries in the world where cabotage is not fiercely protected, and that includes that great bastion of free trade, the United States. That is why we believe that we too should have a competitive shipping industry. Many will know that coastal shipping around Australia carries 30 per cent of the non-urban freight task. Why is that the case? It is because, in the final analysis, it is more efficient than both rail and road. For example, the supply of petroleum products to North Queensland is managed by two ships. For road transport, that is the equivalent of 30,000 B double trips per year. So what can we do to get some policies in place to encourage the growth of our local industries?

Firstly, and obviously, we need to get The Nationals out of the control room or out of their dominance of industry, trade and transport related portfolios. While ever they run those central portfolios we cannot expect a rational or efficient approach in the genuine
national interest. Secondly, we need some changes to attitudes whereby some equivalence is given to the regulatory and financial environment in which an Australian industry can grow, and grow successfully over time. In doing that we need to recognise the reform already implemented in the 1980s by the then Labor government in shaking out a lot of the undesirable featherbedding that was occurring. Given access to modern technology, there is no reason for Australian crews not to be competitive with shipping from other Western countries. But it must be said that there does need to be a level playing field.

As we know, the government continues to stall in its response to the Independent Review of Australian Shipping, which was commissioned by the Australian shipping industry in 2002—over three years ago. That report was presented to government in September 2003, and since that time there has been no comment—only a stony silence—from the government. Clearly, for the reasons I have set out, it is fair to say that there is not the slightest interest. The conclusions of that independent shipping review are quite instructive and worthy of serious consideration.

The review observed that international shipping is obviously a global market in which Australian operators are encumbered by constraints not faced by competitors. Those constraints were described variously as: the inability to choose a ship register of their choice because of the provisions of the Shipping Registration Act; the inability to recruit and retain Australian officers at internationally competitive terms, due to the operation of the tax act; and an in-built prejudice or bias against an indigenous Australian shipping industry. In simple terms, the remedies recommended were the removal of these constraints but stopping short of any policy requiring government grants or subsidies.

For coastal shipping, the review found that domestic operators were at a regulatory disadvantage to overseas operators using the single- and continuous-voyage permit system.

The key element though is that foreign operators are not burdened by the Australian tax system, employment conditions or employee costs. That is, shipping services are effectively being dumped in circumstances that would not be tolerated in any other domestic industry. However, I say again that that should not surprise anyone because none of these reforms, none of these changes and none of this desire to create an indigenous shipping industry is in the least bit palatable to the government. To them, any Australian shipping industry is a threat and, therefore, all other policy is subjugated to that prime need.

One asks the obvious question: what future is there for shipping? It seems to us that the simple answer is that, while ever we have The Nationals in control of these key policy areas—transport, industry and trade—there is little hope. Other industries, like the manufacturing of agricultural chemicals, fertilisers or any other primary industry need, also face that same attitude. That is why the debate on a free trade agreement with major countries such as China all of a sudden becomes so interesting and fascinating—because, again, guess who is in control of policy? The debate that will come with the free trade agreement with China and the current debate that we are having on shipping policy are indeed sad ones—firstly, because it is so vital for our country that we do something other than bend before the self-interested sectional interests that dominate these areas of policy; and, secondly, because we need to grow and get past attitudes, which may have had some strength or relevance one hundred years ago, whereby we deny ourselves opportunities into the future. It is simply time for change
and it is time for the development across-the-board of some serious transport policies that are truly nationally focused and nationally orientated and that give national outcomes as opposed to narrow sectional or purely producer outcomes.

We must say that at this stage there is a serious vacuum, and you would be very generous indeed to suggest that there is any sign at all that change will occur over the next two or three years. The obvious forecast—although not the hope—is that our shipping industry will be allowed to wither and we will continue to pay increasing amounts in both real and normative terms to foreigners to ship out the goods we produce. Unfortunately, that is the bottom line in this debate.

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (1.11 p.m.)—The Navigation Amendment Bill 2004 makes a few minor amendments to the Navigation Act to clarify certain legal points and remove certain anomalies. Schedule 1 of the bill clarifies that certain offences under the regulations shall be indictable offences. This follows a ruling by the Victorian County Court that offences relating to the failure to display lights on a ship in order to avoid a collision should be treated as summary offences. The bill removes references to nautical assessors, which became redundant some 15 years ago. Nautical assessors, as I understand it, were once appointed to advise a court in matters dealing with offences against regulations. The bill also brings penalties into line with the Guide to Framing Commonwealth Offences, Civil Penalties and Enforcement Powers. Section 258 of the Navigation Act sets penalties of up to $10,000 or two years in prison for offences relating to collisions, lighting and signals. However, the details are left to regulations. Under the Guide to Framing Commonwealth Offences, Civil Penalties and Enforcement Powers, serious offences punishable by penalties such as these should be contained in the parent act to enable the parliament to scrutinise the laws being made.

The large numbers of laws made through regulation and disallowable instruments no doubt mean that some will go unnoticed, except perhaps by a few who may or may not have any knowledge in the specific area of law being dealt with. Often we wonder whether that suits government and we wonder whether the government leaves the detail to regulations because it wants that detail to go unnoticed. Our view is that detail should be scrutinised by stakeholders and the parliament wherever possible. As this bill deals with section 258, it would have been a perfect opportunity to tidy up this anomaly, together with some of the other anomalies that might also have been dealt with. We urge the government to do the necessary work—to find those sections where regulations should be brought into the parent act and to take the action required to make that happen. The Democrats will support this bill unamended.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL (Western Australia—Minister for the Environment and Heritage) (1.13 p.m.)—I thank both Senator Bishop and Senator Allison for their contributions. I think Senator Bishop’s contribution ranged a long way wide of the very sensible amendments in the Navigation Amendment Bill 2004 which, from the short briefing I have had in relation to this, seem to seek to address issues raised particularly by the Victorian County Court decision of November 2003 and some related matters. But I cannot let my summing up go by without addressing the issues of transport planning in Australia that were raised by Senator Bishop. Having worked alongside the Minister for Transport and Regional Services and leader of The Nationals, John Anderson, in the development of the AusLink policy that was announced last year, when I was still in that portfolio, I would say that I only agree with Senator Bishop to a certain extent. The
efficiency of the Australian economy and the efficiency with which we can deliver goods to our ports and then goods to the rest of the world, be they bulk goods or manufactures, comes down to having an integrated transport plan.

In fact, under the leadership of John Anderson, AusLink was the first serious attempt at creating a national transport plan that seeks to increase the efficiency of Australia’s transport system. It not only created a very comprehensive and sensible policy framework that sought significant new investments in rail and road infrastructure to make it as efficient as possible, but it also saw a significant increase in the Commonwealth’s investment in that infrastructure and took investment in road and rail on to a new five-year framework, recognising the fact that investments in major infrastructure are not things that naturally fit into a three- or four-year budget cycle. AusLink, for the first time, has put transport planning into a far more sensible and coherent structure but has also put it on a long-term and substantive funding structure. As I recall, the increase in funding for both rail and road projects was in the order of $12 billion over that period.

What you find—and I follow this debate closely because I regard Australia getting more goods out to the market as absolutely pivotal to addressing the current account deficit—is that the people of the world want to buy Australian goods, but a lot of these artificial barriers and constraints on the economy were created by a lack of good integrated transport policy planning in the past. You only need to look in Senator Mark Bishop’s home state of Western Australia and see the transport chaos that is being wreaked on that state by his comrade the minister for transport in Western Australia, Ms Alannah McTiernan, to see just how culpable that state government is. It is indicative of state governments around the country. I am sure you, Mr Acting Deputy President Brandis, as a Queenslander, and Senator Boswell, who is in the chamber, would know the sort of chaos that the Queensland government has put in place, with its lack of long-term planning around the south-east Queensland region and the lack of a plan that allows for the massive growth that is taking place around south-east Queensland and the greater Brisbane area and can see what that is doing to Queensland.

In Western Australia successive federal and state governments have funded a major link between the industrial areas out to the east of the airport and the port, linking the hinterland of Western Australia to the port of Fremantle through a major construction work known as the Roe Highway and the Fremantle Eastern Bypass, to effectively get large trucks out of suburban Fremantle. This project was funded by both political parties at the Commonwealth level, and it has been supported by previous administrations at the state level. It has been a bipartisan plan to build this long-needed link in Western Australia, and it really is emblematic of the problem we have with transport planning in Australia.

Previous state and federal governments put hundreds of millions of dollars into building this long link—some tens of kilometres linking Fremantle with the eastern hinterland—and getting it designed to make sure trucks can get into the port quickly and efficiently. From memory, if the Roe Highway project is completed—and it certainly will not be completed in the next four years, because the state Labor government has halted it—it would get rid of 24 sets of traffic lights for a truck moving from Midland and the east down to Fremantle. Any environmentally minded person would recognise that having a truck starting and stopping 24 times with a full load while heading to a port is an environmental disaster in terms of both
greenhouse gas emissions and all of the other pollutants that get emitted every time a truck puts its brakes on and has to go through a dozen gears to get back to normal speed. That is a disaster. What Western Australia has done after successive governments—

Senator McLucas—They won the election.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—It transcends the politics of an election, it really does. It is something that transcends this debate because it applies right across Australia. One day, when Senator McLucas is an ageing minister in a future Labor government, she will have to contend with this as well. Ultimately, if we do not get that conjunction of federal and state long-term planning right, then Australia will be held back. Queeslanders and Western Australians will be held back and all those other less important people in the rest of the states will also be held back. It is very important we get this right.

I use the example of this particular road in Western Australia because it is very clear in my mind and because it is emblematic of a problem that is replicated from Ipswich to Brisbane and in many areas of south-east Queensland. This road—the Commonwealth and state funded Roe Highway—has gone through stages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, and it is creeping towards Fremantle. It is a magnificent piece of road infrastructure which really would transform the efficiency of that port and create great outcomes for the Australian economy, but for very short-sighted political reasons the state government decided to stop the road as it got to a key marginal seat.

Those of you who have seen The Truman Show, starring that magnificent comedian and actor Jim Carrey—and those of you who have not seen it, please go and see it—will remember Jim Carrey sitting with his mate on the edge of a beautiful piece of road throwing cans off the end of it. I always think of Roe Highway stage 7 as similar to that situation in The Truman Show. You have this road that just stops. If some sensible state government does not complete the link, future generations will always wonder why they have this magnificent road that just stops. To understand, they will have to look back at the politics of Western Australia of the last three or four years and the one marginal seat that got in the way of this great piece of infrastructure.

That is a reality around the country—we are going to have short-term political considerations. AusLink, I have to say, is the best opportunity we have to get past them. I tell Senator Bishop that I watched very closely when the previous opposition spokesman on transport, Martin Ferguson, was chasing me around the country when I was roads minister. He was promising whatever I promised and then adding 10 per cent to it. He kept on promising a national land transport plan and I was genuinely looking forward to it. In fact, I had a bit of trepidation because I thought that Martin Ferguson might actually come up with a land transport policy. We had put our heart and soul into AusLink. We had put a hell of a lot of money into it. Yet all that Mr Ferguson seemed to do was to follow me around. Wherever I promised to spend a bit of money on the Calder or the Ipswich Motorway, he would always come along to the same seat and promise to spend 10 per cent to 15 per cent more. He kept on promising a national land transport plan but it never came out during the election. I kept on asking the people in our campaign headquarters whether Martin Ferguson had released his policy yet, and the answer was always no. Nothing ever came out. It was just a mish-mash of bandaids and electoral promises depending on which marginal seat he was visiting.

So it is slightly hypocritical of Senator Bishop to be talking about the lack of an in-
tegrated transport policy. The reality is that, under the leadership of John Anderson and this government, with AusLink we now have a substantial transport plan. It is not just about building more roads. It is about massively investing in rail infrastructure, catching up on massive underinvestments in both road and rail in past years and investing billions of dollars in links around our ports—and that will benefit shipping by improving the efficiency of shipping in and out of and around Australia.

The other thing AusLink does, as I said, is massively increase investment at the Commonwealth level. One of the simple things the states could do, rather than having a spat about who spends what on infrastructure, is simply agree in the next round of budgets to match the funding increases that the Commonwealth have put in through AusLink. That would be a good compact. I make that challenge today in the context of this speech in the second reading debate on the navigation bill: why don’t the states simply match the funding increases that the Commonwealth are putting into road and rail infrastructure through AusLink in the next five years? That would see a massive increase.

In Queensland, for example, we have increased funding by, from memory, 61 per cent. In Western Australia, we have increased funding by about 76 per cent. In Victoria, from memory, there has been just over a 100 per cent increase in road and rail spending by the Commonwealth. Quite frankly, if the states simply matched those AusLink increases, signed up to AusLink, stopped all their squabbling about the construction code and got some of this money onto the ground as quickly as possible then many of the constraints that are referred to in newspaper articles about the current account deficit could be abolished very quickly. To that extent, Senator Bishop, by raising the debate today, has done the country a service. I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Bill passed through its remaining stages without amendment or debate.

NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT (PROSTHESSES) BILL 2005

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 7 March, on motion by Senator Hill:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (1.25 p.m.)—The National Health Amendment (Prostheses) Bill 2005 amends the National Health Act 1953 to allow the minister to determine prostheses that are going to be covered by health funds with no gap payable and prostheses which are to be covered by health funds but for which a gap will be payable by the health fund contributor, and to determine the minimum and maximum benefit amount listed for each gap permitted prostheses. In making these determinations, the minister may take into account advice from experts in the area of prostheses and in the health insurance industry.

This bill requires that health funds must provide no gap cover for at least one prostheses in relation to every in-hospital procedure for which a Medicare benefit is payable. The stated aim of the bill is to enhance the value of private health insurance and increase choice for consumers—and I will say more about the stated aim at a later point. The estimated savings from this measure are $4.3 million in 2005-06 and $20.6 million in 2006-07, based on an implementation date of 1 April 2005. It is interesting to note that the earlier bill that was introduced prior to the last election proposed savings of $61.9 million over four years based on the same im-
plement date, 1 April 2005. That being said, this measure originally featured in the 2003-04 budget, which identified savings of up to $49.6 million, with an implementation of 1 July 2003. I make that point simply to say that the figures seem to be moving around a little bit.

This bill was first introduced into the parliament on 12 August 2004. However, it lapsed when parliament was prorogued for the election. The bill varies from the original bill only in some relatively minor technical aspects, although some of these may, in Labor’s view, impact on patient costs. From the beginning, the Labor Party has expressed real concerns about this legislation. We have expressed concerns for a very transparent reason: that the premise of this bill, ostensibly, is about saving money for the government and for the health insurance industry. Doctors groups, including the AMA, have been consulted and so has the hospital sector, both public and private. However, it is obvious that the major impact of this legislation will be felt by patients because they very well may have less choice and certainty and face more out-of-pocket costs. But it is not an issue that consumers have been made aware of. I acknowledge the difficulty in doing this. It is not until we face having to access prostheses that we, as an individual or a community, truly understand what the cost of that might be. It is only when you have to have a hip replacement or a new heart valve or a stent to clear your arteries after a heart attack that you truly understand the cost of prostheses.

Patients are being ignored by this legislation—which, unfortunately, is typical of this government. There is nothing in the bill that ensures that a patient is informed about their out-of-pocket costs, and there is nothing in the bill that ensures that any savings that may be made by the health insurance funds will be passed on to consumers. We clearly need some changes in this area, and we acknowledge that. The system that we have needs an overhaul. But there are many questions regarding the capacity of the legislation that we have in front of us to bring about the required change. In April 2003 the Howard government announced the introduction of a range of reforms to:

… make private health insurance more efficient, competitive and deliver better value for money for members.

They claimed that this set of reforms would tackle supply costs, with their subsequent pressure on premiums, by seeking to rein in the costs of prostheses and eliminating the second tier default benefit—which ensures that there is a reasonable private health reimbursement level, even when a fund does not have an agreement with a hospital—for all but a few small rural and remote private hospitals.

In the 2003-04 budget the government estimated savings from these proposals at $49.6 million over four years. But the department unfortunately could not provide us a further breakdown of how those savings would eventuate. It was clear to us then, as it is now, that these initiatives are being driven by the private health insurance sector, not by consumers. As a result of questioning from Labor on these issues and a push from the private hospitals and the doctors’ groups on the licence given to the private health insurance industry in the proposal, the government finally rescinded the decision to abolish the second tier default benefit. Therefore, the bill in front of us is dealing with only the remaining prostheses commitment, first announced in the 2003-04 budget.

In terms of how private health insurance currently covers the cost of prostheses, as it stands, there is a list of items—known as ‘schedule 5: benefits payable in respect of surgically implanted prostheses, human tis-
sue items and other medical devices list’—that health funds must fund for privately insured patients. Manufacturers or suppliers of prostheses must apply to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing for the prostheses that they supply to be included on the list. The department subsequently assess the application against specific criteria. If a prosthesis is listed in schedule 5, private health insurance will cover the full cost of the prosthesis and there is no gap.

An expert committee, the Private Health Industry Medical Devices Expert Committee, oversees the listing of prostheses in schedule 5. The committee comprises representatives of consumers, the medical profession, private hospitals, private health funds, prostheses manufacturers and the government. A frequent and quite justified complaint about the system is that each fund is required to notify each hospital which prostheses they will cover the cost of. The choice of prostheses, as we know, is generally made by the doctor—hopefully in consultation with the patient. The level of cover, though, is provided by the fund, and either the hospital or the patient is left to fund the gap.

Industry data reveals that in the year to June 2003, prostheses costs to the private health insurance industry were $546 million, up 24 per cent from the previous year, so you can tell this is a growing area of cost. The growth of new technologies makes prostheses the fastest growing sector of private health insurance cover and an area that makes the private health insurance funds keen to reel in. Three factors are driving the increase in prostheses costs for private health insurers. Firstly, the largest factor is the increase in utilisation. More people are using their private health cover to have, for example, cataract surgery or to have the hip replacement that they need. The government’s plan to have more people aged 65 and over take out private health insurance would, if it eventuated, add further pressure on the costs of utilisation. Secondly, many of these new technologies and new devices will generate cost savings because people require less time in hospital recuperating or require fewer replacements. As technology is developing, prosthetic knee devices, for example, have a longer life span so the likelihood of needing a replacement one is limited. Thirdly, but to a far lesser extent, is the increase in supplier costs.

In Labor’s view, the new process for the determination of which prostheses will be listed as ‘no gap’ or ‘gap’ and the pricing structure that will be assigned to each category under this legislation is untested and extremely complicated. There is nothing here that ensures that more than one product is listed in each ‘no gap’ category or that new technologies are considered as they become available. The likely consequence is—and this is the view of some in the sector—that only the oldest and the cheapest products will be listed as ‘no gap’. The current system for regulating prostheses, and particularly for evaluating their cost effectiveness, has been limited, and there is little by way of independent data on which to base decisions in the future. Nor is there anything to ensure that patients are provided with choice or that the savings are passed on to consumers, through a decreasing rate of premium increases, although that is the stated intent of the policy. In fact, the most likely outcome is that patients will have less choice or will pay more out-of-pocket costs for medical procedures involving prostheses.

My colleague Senator Moore will talk about the ‘hopeful’ legislation. I had to use that line; it is a beautiful line. This is very hopeful legislation, and during the inquiry we heard from many witnesses that they hoped that this would be the outcome that we would achieve. I spoke in the chamber last night about needing good data and good
modelling on which to make decisions that are expensive and that impact on both public and private costs. I expressed a view about the legislation we were debating last night that making public policy requires good research and good data. This bill is in the same bucket as the aged care bill that we looked at last night that did not have very much data to support it.

I am afraid to say that, while the Howard government seemingly has a policy intent, the fact is that this legislation may very well not be able to deliver that policy intent. On the one hand, the government is championing private health insurance as being about choice but, sadly for consumers, this bill will limit choice and, in our view, increase out-of-pocket costs. The government is involving itself in an endless series of contradictions on health policy: it wants more people to take out health insurance but not to use it, it promises more choice and then joins with the private health insurers to limit that potential choice, it talks about the need to address the issues of healthy ageing but wants older Australians to pay more for their cataract surgery or their hip replacements, and it wants the savings from reining in private health insurance costs but does nothing to ensure that these are handed on either to consumers or to the budget through the 30 per cent rebate.

Labor recommended that this bill go to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee to allow for public discussion on the implications of the bill. The report of that committee confirmed Labor’s fears with regard to choice for consumers. While there appear to be some steps in place to establish guidelines, codes of conduct and standard forms for doctors to assist with the provision of appropriate information to patients, Labor is not convinced that these processes are sufficiently established or tested. Given the level of hope that was expressed in that report and that will be expressed in this chamber, and given the level of uncertainty associated with the implementation and the medium-term effect of the bill, Labor moved a second reading amendment which called for a review of the bill after 1 July 2007. This is consistent with the view of a number of submissions to the Senate committee and underlines the department’s statements during the hearing which noted that the government has given a commitment to commence a review two years after full implementation of the new arrangements.

Labor’s amendment also called for the review to report in a timely manner, by 1 October 2007, for this review to be tabled by the minister and for the conduct of the review to not be unduly influenced by the private health insurance sector and to have strong representation from consumers. This amendment ensures that the issues associated with this bill that remain outstanding do remain on the table and that the appropriate checks and balances and evaluations are in place. In other words, we can be sure that we are enacting good health policy for the benefit of all Australians.

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (1.40 p.m.)—The National Health Amendment (Prostheses) Bill 2005 aims to introduce some cost control into private health care and reduce cost pressures on health insurance premiums. The government has argued that the growing costs to health funds of covering prostheses and medical devices over the past 10 years have placed substantial upward pressure on private health insurance premiums. The government has argued that the growing costs to health funds of covering prostheses and medical devices over the past 10 years have placed substantial upward pressure on private health insurance premiums, and it is certainly true that health insurance premiums have risen. They have risen on average by about seven per cent over the past four years—a rate two to three times the consumer price index. In April 2002, they rose by 6.9 per cent; in March 2003, 7.4 per cent; in March 2004, 7.82 per cent; and in March
2005, 7.96 per cent. In fact, health insurance fees have risen 30 per cent since 2001.

One thing that has been constant as far as private health insurance is concerned is the increase in premiums. It is also true that, following the government’s deregulation of prostheses in 2001, the total benefits paid for prostheses have risen rapidly. In 1989-90, 15 years ago, prostheses accounted for 1.7 per cent of total hospital benefits, whereas they now account for 12 per cent of hospital benefits. In the two years from 2001-02 to 2003-04, the growth in prostheses costs has been 29 per cent. Having let the price inflation horse bolt from the stable, as it were, it is certainly not before time that the government has looked at this issue.

This is a reasonably complex bill which has the potential to introduce some cost savings for the health insurance industry and, consequently, for people who pay health insurance premiums. But there are risks for consumers. There is nothing in this bill that will guarantee that any savings made by insurance funds will be handed on to consumers; there is nothing in this bill that will guarantee that a patient is informed about their out-of-pocket costs; and, of course, there is a great chance that the consumers—the patients themselves—will pay more.

It would seem to be that there is general agreement amongst the majority of groups that reform is needed in relation to current arrangements for the provision of private health insurance benefits for prostheses. The bill tackles that issue by essentially proposing the introduction of a system similar to that used by the PBS to address pricing of drugs. With that system, the PBS pays for the least expensive clinically effective drug and, if companies insist on charging more than the benchmark price for a particular drug, the patient has to bear that cost. Similarly, this bill will introduce gap and no gap lists of prostheses. Prosthetic items whose price is considered by an industry committee to fall outside a cost-effective range will end up on the gap list. The idea is that suppliers will be more likely to agree to lower prices than face the possibility that their device may end up on the gap list and become unattractive to patients and their doctors when compared to similar devices that would not carry a gap. These lower prices will mean savings for health insurance funds, and extra costs associated with the devices on the gap permitted list will be met by the patient, not by the health fund, adding to the savings the funds will make.

The question is: will private health insurance premiums stop rising at the phenomenal rates of the last few years? The relationship between private health insurance premium growth and prostheses has clearly been one of the driving forces behind the legislation. It is thought that the growth in prostheses alone is responsible for two per cent growth in private health insurance premiums each year. However, as I said, there is no guarantee that this bill will have any substantial impact on controlling the costs for prostheses or, if it does, that these savings will be passed on.

There are three main drivers for increasing costs. First, there is an overall increase in volume due to advances in surgical techniques and anaesthetics. Prostheses are now put into younger and older people than previously and they are available for more conditions. This is not necessarily a bad thing as the use of prostheses can mean improved quality of life, overall savings in health costs due to shorter hospital stays and reduced recovery time following surgery. Secondly, the cost of prostheses has also been driven up by new technologies, including the development of prostheses for conditions which used not to exist and ‘me too’ technologies that essentially do the same thing as older versions but cost a lot more. Thirdly, price
inflation also has had a role to play in increasing the cost of prostheses.

As I said, this legislation only deals with the latter issues; therefore it may have a limited impact on reducing costs to health funds and subsequently a limited effect on keeping premiums down. The government's own projections of savings to expenditure on the 30 per cent private health insurance rebate from the effects of this bill are a very modest $24.9 million across the two years from 2005-07. The Parliamentary Library Bills Digest for this bill estimates that savings for 2005-06 represent less than one-half of one per cent of current expenditure on the rebate. Of course, there are many factors which impact on the premiums. The cost of prostheses is only one. Other factors are still likely to result in health insurance premium rises in the future.

There is concern about informed consent and out-of-pocket costs for patients. The new arrangements have the potential to substantially increase out-of-pocket costs for prostheses for privately insured individual consumers. I say 'potential' because we do not know how many of the roughly 9,000 items currently listed would end up on the gap permitted list. The more items that go onto the gap permitted list the greater the likelihood that people will face a gap. There is also a risk that allowing the introduction of gap permitted prostheses might lead to a differential quality of care based on ability to pay if prostheses that end up on the gap permitted list are of a higher standard than the non-gap prostheses.

At this point in time it is not known how many frequently used devices which would previously have been provided at no cost to privately insured consumers will attract that gap payment. It is assumed that the vast majority of prostheses will be on the no gap list. The government suggests it will be 80 per cent but, of course, that cannot be guaranteed. It is guaranteed that there will be at least one product with no gap for each procedure related to an MBS item. But, if patients choose to have other medical devices or prostheses, they will pay more.

Like legislative arrangements concerning other potential gaps, such as doctors or hospital costs, there are no legislative requirements to ensure informed financial consent. We are well aware of the many cases of people who believe that having private health insurance will give them cover for the cost of their treatment, only to find that, when they do go for treatment having made that decision, they are faced with substantial bills. The 2004 Private Health Insurance Ombudsman report states that consumers generally do not have a good understanding of how much it costs to be treated in a private hospital. If a health fund member finds they are not fully covered by their health insurance, the amount of money involved can come as an unpleasant surprise.

PHIAC statistics for the June quarter of 2004 showed that around 20 per cent of in-hospital medical services provided to patients involved out-of-pocket costs. That means a substantial minority of people are already facing out-of-pocket costs, and we can assume from the complaints made to the ombudsman that some of these people have not been well informed about these costs. The AMA has made strong statements that it is not the responsibility of doctors to ensure that patients are informed about the costs that flow to them because of the existence of the legislation. But the question is just whose responsibility it is. Hopefully, as part of a clinician's decision-making process they will take into account the cost effectiveness of particular prostheses when deciding which is right for a patient. It is essential that doctors are well informed.
Failure to obtain informed consent can have substantial consequences for consumers and there is clearly good intent among industry stakeholders to ensure that patients are appropriately advised and informed of any potential gaps they may face. Given that there is no legislative requirement for independent monitoring or review of the adequacy of informed financial consent procedures following the introduction of these processes, it would seem important that there is this element in the new arrangements.

Independent review of the extent of out-of-pocket costs faced by consumers for their prostheses would be very valuable, particularly given experience with the PBS system and the high proportion of people facing premium charges for medications. The Democrats will support the Labor amendment that puts in place that review. We will also support the call for this legislation to cover prostheses implanted by a podiatric surgeon. I understand Senator Lees will move that amendment. As we have argued before, there is evidence that treatment outcomes for foot conditions treated by podiatrists and podiatric surgeons are in many cases better than when these conditions are treated by orthopaedic surgeons and other types of physicians. Podiatric surgeons may also provide a more cost-effective service than orthopaedic surgeons. Patients who wish to use the services of a podiatric surgeon should not be forced to use orthopaedic surgeons or pay out-of-pocket costs simply because their health insurance fund does not have coverage for a prosthesis if it is implanted by a podiatric surgeon.

In conclusion, it is encouraging to see the government beginning to address the issue of cost control in the private sector. We hope that this is the first of many such measures along these lines. The 2004 OECD paper examining private health insurance in Australia reported that private funds do not exercise control over the quality, quantity or appropriateness of care provided and private health insurance has led to an overall increase in health utilisation as there are few limits on expenditure growth. If the government is to continue with its obsession with privatisation of health care, despite the plethora of evidence that the greater the degree of privatisation in health, the greater the cost of health care to the population as a whole, it at least has the responsibility to make sure that costs are contained within that sector.

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (1.52 p.m.)—I was fortunate enough to be a member of the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee, which the National Health Amendment (Prostheses) Bill 2005 was referred to earlier this year. Until that time, ‘prostheses’ was but a term to me. I had heard about the legislation and had read up on it, but when I was given the opportunity to sit with this committee I became more aware of not only the number of people for whom this was an interesting point but also the number of members of the Community Affairs Legislation Committee who had prostheses themselves. They self-identified before the committee started, and I found that particularly interesting. I myself do not have any devices currently, so I can speak with openness on this topic.

In terms of the information we have had, my colleagues in the Senate have talked about the technical aspects of this bill. I want to concentrate on a few points which I think we need to consider when we are looking at passing this legislation. As Senator McLucas mentioned, I have referred to the committee as the ‘committee of hope’ because, whilst we had 12 submissions and a number of people gave evidence before the committee, the one common theme that we heard was that everybody really ‘hoped’ that this legislation would work. Everybody really hoped
that there would be some containment of, some acknowledgment of and some improvement in the way this issue was being handled in our community. Reflecting that hope, there was also genuine agreement that what was happening currently was not good. We heard, for instance, from the Australian Private Hospitals Association, which said:

Reform of these existing arrangements is therefore not optional, it is essential.

We heard that it was absolutely critical that we as participants in this government looked effectively at the way legislation would be introduced so that there would be some real understanding of the way the budget would operate and so that the medical profession, the hospitals and all those people who had an interest in this area would be able to cooperate to ensure that we had the best possible system. In the submission from the Department of Health and Ageing—and this was also reflected in the explanatory memorandum to this bill—we heard about the issue of cost. Of course, that is important. The Department of Health and Ageing said:

Prostheses have been identified as one of the major cost drivers of health insurance premiums. Current rates of growth in prostheses costs are estimated to contribute around 2 per cent a year to total premium growth. There was an annual average 29 per cent increase in prostheses benefits paid in 2003-04 compared to 2000-01. Benefits paid in 2003-04 totalled over $647 million.

That is in payment to people who made genuine claims for surgical processes which included devices—and I hope to use that word for the rest of this speech. I only caught that one during the committee hearings. I think I would have used that word much more commonly if I had known that earlier. The expectation is that the new arrangements the changes that are before us are expected to make a significant contribution to reducing the pressure on health insurance premiums by limiting the rapid growth in benefits being paid. The anticipated savings are significant. I believe that they are almost essential in terms of where we are going as a community. But what worries me deeply is that the introduction of the legislation is based on hope. The actual details are not yet clear. In fact, Catholic Health Australia made that comment in their submission, which they followed up with evidence as witnesses to the committee. They said:

Not all of the detail has yet been worked out and we are yet to see what the outcome of the new arrangements will mean in terms of the extent of gap payments that consumers may face.

They went on to say:

Nevertheless we believe that the goodwill displayed by all parties to date and the consultative processes in place should provide comfort to Senate that the Bill should be supported.

I truly hope that the Senate can be comforted by those processes, but it always concerns me as a member of this place when we are asked to agree to legislation when the details are not clear and when we rely on the goodwill of all participants to achieve it. Certainly something that all the people who appeared before our committee shared was goodwill, because there was hope that these processes would operate. Nonetheless, it seems to be a precarious way to move through the process.

Up until now, people in the community having these surgical procedures could have confidence that their costs would be paid for any devices appropriately used in surgical procedures. The change is that there will now be gap payments in some cases. Gap payments are not new to the Australian community. As was submitted to our committee, gap payments are standard in so many parts of our medical system. The real issue here, though, is that up to now there has not been a gap payment for this procedure. Now there will be. We do not know how large the gap will be. That provides a great deal of concern for all those who are part of the industry and
all those who feel that they will probably need a device in the future—and it probably concerns the minister. No-one wishes to make significant changes to legislation, including cost factors, without knowing exactly what the gap payments will be. I think that is something that should be more a reality than a hope.

Debate interrupted.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Women: Government Policies

Senator STEPHENS (2.00 p.m.)—My question is to Senator Patterson, the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues. Is the minister aware that, of the 1.6 million workers whose pay is subject to the minimum wage under state and federal awards, 965,000 or 60 per cent are women? Further, is the minister aware that over the last nine years the Howard government has opposed every single wage claim for an increase in the minimum wage for these women? Minister, do you support the government’s proposal to change the mechanism for setting the minimum wage which protects the income of these low-paid women?

Senator PATTERSON—Despite my feelings sometimes for people on the other side of this chamber, I wish all the women on the other side and my own colleagues a very happy International Women’s Day. It is a special day on which we celebrate the achievements of women. We celebrate the achievements of women in Australia, where we have seen increased participation in the work force and increased their participation in apprenticeships. We have increased the number of apprenticeships significantly—I have forgotten the exact percentage, but it is an enormous increase—and many of the people in apprenticeships are now women. You want to talk about the minimum wage and the increase in wages. When we have a strong economy, businesses employing people and a third of people in small business are women, we are seeing women making economic progress. But Labor do not care tuppence about that.

Senator PATTERSON—I can hear people on the other side shouting, ‘That’s not the question.’ They do not want to hear the good news. They do not want to hear that more women are in education than before. They do not want to hear that more women are participating in the work force. They do not want to hear that there are fewer families with parents out of work. They do not want to hear that, because of strong economic management, we have been able to ensure that more women are in the work force and more women are receiving pay. We have seen, for example, with some of the initiatives we have put forward, particularly the superannuation bonus, that the people who have benefited most have been women. Labor do not want to hear that. They do not care and they do not want to acknowledge the achievements of women in Australia.

Senator Ferris interjecting—

Senator PATTERSON—Senator Ferris asks how many women were unemployed. The vast majority of those unemployed were women. Women have now increased their participation in the work force and increased their participation in apprenticeships. We have increased the number of apprenticeships significantly—I have forgotten the exact percentage, but it is an enormous increase—and many of the people in apprenticeships are now women. You want to talk about the minimum wage and the increase in wages. When we have a strong economy, businesses employing people and a third of people in small business are women, we are seeing women making economic progress. But Labor do not care tuppence about that.

Senator STEPHENS—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Minister, I did ask you whether you supported the government’s proposal to change the mechanism for setting the minimum wage which protects the income of these low-paid women.
Doesn’t the Howard government’s proposal expose these 965,000 women, the country’s poorest working women, to even greater unfairness by threatening their minimum wage? In the face of your colleagues’ attacks on the minimum wage safety net, why have you done nothing to support and protect these women’s interests?

Senator PATTERSON—Senator Stephens is making assumptions about industrial relations changes—and it is a hypothetical question that she is asking me—but she is not interested in the fact that women’s position economically has improved significantly because of our sound economic management. Women’s savings for retirement have increased, women’s participation in the workforce has increased, women’s participation in education has increased and women’s participation in apprenticeships has increased. Why don’t they celebrate that today rather than making hypothetical assumptions about our industrial relations policy, changes that may or may not occur? What they should be doing today is celebrating the achievements of women in Australia and women around the world.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT—Order! Before I call Senator Payne, I note the presence in the President’s gallery of Her Excellency Mrs Anca Roxana Visan, Ambassador of Romania. I warmly welcome the ambassador to the Senate.

Honourable senators—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Women: Government Policies

Senator PAYNE (2.04 p.m.)—My question without notice is to Senator Patterson, the Minister for Family and Community Services and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues. Given that today is indeed International Women’s Day, can the minister advise the Senate of the government’s achievements for women in Australia and how the government’s strong economic management is providing increased opportunities and choice for women? Is the minister aware of any alternative policies?

Senator PATTERSON—I thank Senator Payne for a positive question about women in Australia. As I said before, through strong economic management, opportunities and choice for women have significantly increased under the Howard government. There have been more jobs—and this is something Labor does not want to acknowledge. Since 1996, the Howard government has created more than 1.5 million new jobs and 800,000 of them have gone to women.

Senator Crossin—Tell us how many are permanent.

Senator PATTERSON—Labor does not want to hear this. Female unemployment has fallen to 5.3 per cent from a high under Labor of 10.2 per cent.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator PATTERSON—Shout all you like. You do not want to hear the good news. In 1996 fewer than 50 per cent of Australian women were in employment. This has now risen to a clear majority of almost 54 per cent. Full-time adult ordinary time earnings for women have increased in real terms—that is after inflation—by $152 per week. Under the Howard government, real earnings for women have gone up 2.2 per cent each year. Do you want to know what happened under Labor? The annual rate was only 0.6 per cent, or almost four times lower.

I would like to take this opportunity to expose the fallacy and the misinformation that is being put around in Labor’s claims regarding the difference between men’s and women’s wages. Women’s earnings have increased as a proportion of men’s, rising
from about 83 per cent in February 1996 to almost 85 per cent today—a closing gap. Through this government’s strong economic management, Australian women have now reaped the opportunities and choice and the benefits of work force participation. One other great achievement is that we now see women heading six federal Public Service departments. Eighteen of our diplomatic posts are headed by women, compared with six in 1996. These steady increases over previous years will continue. As I said before, women now account for one-third of Australia’s 1.6 million small business operators.

The Howard government’s super co-contribution scheme has allowed women to grow their retirement savings faster. $244 million has already been paid to the superannuation accounts of 450,000 eligible Australians earning under $40,000, and 63 per cent of recipients have been women. So 63 per cent of the 450,000 eligible for benefits under the superannuation bonus have been women.

I also note Labor’s recent feigned interest in skills for the Australian work force. Improving vocational training has been a high priority for the government and an area of great success. Apprenticeships and traineeships for women have increased by 500 per cent. The Howard government is about choice. Support for families with children has enabled many women to choose to balance work with caring for children. The $3,000 maternity payment has gone to all women, not to nine out of 10, and it does not depend on when you have the baby.

An 83 per cent increase has occurred in the number of child-care places, to over 563,000 places. We have introduced the 30 per cent tax rebate for out-of-pocket child-care expenses for approved facilities. We will spend over $8 billion in this and the next three financial years to support child care—an average of over $2½ thousand per child in child care per annum and double what Labor was spending.

We have increased the family tax benefit part B, which Labor was going to get rid of. In their ramshackle family policy, they were going to have single parents with children losing out. Low-income families would be losing out under their family policy. That is the record of Labor. To sum up the achievements of the Howard government is simple: there are more jobs for women, higher earnings, better support for families and a tax system that allows Australians—men, women and families—to keep more of every tax dollar they earn.

Skills Shortage

Senator CROSSIN (2.09 p.m.)—My question is to Senator Abetz, the Minister representing the Minister for Workforce Participation. Can the minister confirm there is no mandated training requirement in the work for parenting payment scheme, just as there is none in the Work for the Dole scheme? Given that skills development is acknowledged as a key factor in increasing work force participation, how does the minister justify a lack of mandated training in a scheme that purports to improve the employment prospects of sole parents, who are predominantly women? Does the minister expect sole parents to seek work force entry without skills development, be confined to low-wage, low-skill jobs and do nothing to ease the skills shortage crisis?

Senator ABETZ—I thank Senator Crossin for her question because it will give me more time to deal with a topic that will be dealt with in the next question, so I thank her for her assistance in that regard. In relation to work force participation, we encourage the participation of all Australians who can work. That is a priority of this government, and we have been actively seeking to
assist all people in the Australian population to get work. Of course, that includes sole parents and single mums.

The government was returned on 9 October on its record of running a strong economy and building prosperity through employment. However, there are still too many people, and that includes lone parents, missing out on the benefits that employment brings. The number of people on parenting payments, some 624,000, is now greater than the number of people on unemployment benefits.

People on parenting payments are eligible for a range of Job Network services. Those services are designed to take into account the preference of many parents for part-time work to fit in with their caring responsibilities. In our society, it is still largely women who take on that caring responsibility. Therefore, for them to be able to match their caring responsibilities with part-time work is part and parcel of this government’s approach. We can also help parenting payment recipients if they have a part-time job but want to find a full-time job. Those who have been out of the work force for two or more years can access Transition to Work services.

Often women do take time off work for two, three or more years whilst they have children and before those children start school. A lot of women make that choice for the benefit of their children, and then the transition back to work is a very real issue, and we as a government are addressing that as well. The Transition to Work program provides a range of flexible services especially tailored to parents, including training, financial assistance and advice on ways to get into the job market. Transition to Work is highly successful, with 44 per cent of participants getting an employment or education outcome. The government is committed to encouraging the economic participation of all people of working age according to their capacity, and of course that includes lone parents and single mothers.

Senator CROSSIN—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Minister, I actually asked you about the work for parenting payment scheme rather than anything to do with Transition to Work. I think I heard you mention the word ‘training’ once, although that was predominantly what my question was about. Let us have another go. Minister, if the government is serious about improving the employment prospects and outcomes of sole parents, who are predominantly women, how can the minister justify the lack of training opportunities open to them? In particular, how can the minister justify the fact that only two in every 100 sole parents access the JET program, which is supposed to help single parents enter the work force? Isn’t the government simply interested in reducing its welfare bill rather than easing the skills shortage crisis with Australian workers and building the skills and capacity of women and sole parents for successful work force participation?

Senator ABETZ—It is one of the difficulties, isn’t it, when honourable senators opposite have their supplementary question written out before listening to the actual answer given? The honourable senator would have heard my references to sole parents.

Opposition senators—Answer the question!

The PRESIDENT—Order! I remind the senator of the question.

Senator ABETZ—The honourable senator opposite then asks a supplementary question about sole parents and training opportunities—exactly the matters which I canvassed in the original answer. We as a government make no apology for trying to reduce the welfare bill of this country by getting more people into employment—a task
which the Labor government dismally failed in achieving and which we have a great record on. I look forward to detailing some more information about that with the next question.

**Employment: Statistics**

**Senator Barnett** (2.15 p.m.)—My question is to the Special Minister of State, Senator Eric Abetz, representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Will the minister inform the Senate of the current rate of employment growth in Australia? What action is the government taking to ensure that this employment growth continues? Is the minister aware of any alternative policies?

**Senator Abetz**—I thank Senator Barnett for his ongoing interest in job creation in this country—job creation being the most important welfare policy that any government can deliver to its people. More Australians are now in work than ever before in our history and the unemployment rate has been below six per cent since August 2003. In addition, real wages for full-time workers are now a massive 18 per cent higher than when we took office in 1996. I note today—on International Women’s Day—that, contrary to claims by the ACTU and the Labor Party, the gap between men’s and women’s wages is in fact closing under the Howard government.

**Senator Jacinta Collins**—Under which measure? Be specific.

**Senator Abetz**—We hear from one of the ‘quota girls’ opposite, ‘Under which measure?’ I can tell her which measure. Since 1996—

**Senator Robert Ray interjecting**—

**Senator Abetz**—Senator Ray inserts—the man who knocked off Senator Jean Melzer in a preselection. Do not talk about employment opportunities for women, Senator Ray.

**The President**—Order! Minister, ignore the interjections and address your remarks through the chair.

**Senator Abetz**—I will, Mr President. They are very provocative on the other side, but I will try to ignore them. Since 1996, women’s average full-time weekly earnings—

**Opposition senators interjecting**—

**The President**—Order! Senator Ray and others on my left will come to order.

**Senator Abetz**—The important measure that Senator Collins wants to know about is that, since 1996, women’s average full-time weekly earnings have risen by 46.1 per cent compared to us fellas who have had only a 41.5 per cent rise. So there has been a substantial catch-up, as Senator Kay Patterson was indicating in answer to an earlier question. Over the term of the Howard government, average annual jobs growth has been around the 174,000 mark per annum; under Labor it was down to 101,000. For the past year, employment growth in Australia was an impressive 2.7 per cent or, to put it another way, there are 17,000 new jobs being created in Australia each and every month. At this rate, according to the ANZ, the unemployment rate may fall below five per cent by June this year. That is an economic and social indicator that I would have thought even the Labor Party might seek to applaud.

Having said that, we as a government are not resting on our laurels. We accept that more needs to be done. Whilst we might achieve that five per cent level, we should be seeking to drive that statistic down even further. That is why we as a government are pursuing a raft of industrial relations changes to ensure that there are greater employment opportunities in this country, such as getting
rid of the unfair ‘unfair dismissal’ laws. If they were abolished, many commentators believe that we could create between 50,000 to 75,000 new jobs overnight. But, because the Australian Labor Party is so beholden to their trade union masters, they will not allow that legislation through this place—as a result, consigning about 50,000 to 75,000 of their fellow Australians to the unemployment scrap heap. We want to change the laws to stop unions from being able to barge into small business workplaces—something that those opposite in fact support and favour, as was witnessed by the votes of Senator Kerry O’Brien and other Labor senators on these important issues. Employment growth in this country has been a hallmark of the success of the economic management of the Howard-Costello team. We want to drive it even further and we look forward to Labor’s support.

(Time expired)

Skills Shortage

Senator WEBBER (2.20 p.m.)—My question is to Senator Vanstone, representing the Minister for Education, Science and Training. Is the minister aware that the Skills for Work report, prepared by the Department of Education, Science and Training, showed that between 2000 and 2003 the number of people starting a trade apprenticeship actually fell by 2,300? Doesn’t the Skills for Work report show that the government has not just failed to address skills shortages but we are actually going backwards? Hasn’t this directly contributed to the 20-year high in skills shortages, reported by the Reserve Bank, and the delay in important infrastructure projects, such as the Bronzewing gold mine in my home state of Western Australia?

Senator VANSTONE—I thank the senator for the question. I have no doubt at all that what people opposite would like to do is present a scenario where the previous government presided over a skills situation in Australia which was perfect. They would not like to mention that they gave all of their emphasis, both politically and very substantially in a financial sense, to the higher education sector to the exclusion of people who you might have thought were their own constituency. The drop-off in apprenticeships under the previous government was a disgrace. If you want to look at where the drop-off in apprenticeships started, go no further than to look at the term of the previous Labor government. If you want to look at where it started to pick up again, where traineeships were added on so there was more flexibility in the training sector, look to the start of this government and you will see a very big difference. Nonetheless, the Skills for Work report, prepared by my department—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order!

Senator VANSTONE—Thank you, Mr President. I appreciate that those opposite do not like this answer. After all, they had the prime minister who said we had to be a clever country, implying that everyone had to go to university, and, over their time in government, they have consistently run down the integrity and respect which should have been shown to people with a trade.

Senator George Campbell interjecting—

Senator VANSTONE—Senator Campbell would not understand that. Nonetheless, the report to which the senator refers—

Senator Chris Evans—You’ll get on to blaming the states in a minute. That will complete the whole story, won’t it? It is everyone else’s fault.

The PRESIDENT—Order! There is too much noise on my left. I remind senators that shouting across the chamber is disorderly.

Senator VANSTONE—that is very kind of you, Mr President. I do appreciate your support on International Women’s Day. It is a
shame that I need it in response to this bar-
rage of abuse, but nonetheless I think I will
survive. Mr President, you are very kind—
such a gentleman. I do appreciate it.

Senator Webber, the report you referred to
found that the number of completions of new
apprenticeships has increased by 280 per
cent since 1996. Over the 12 months to June
2003, about 120,500 new apprenticeships
were completed. The number of new appren-
tices has grown from an all-time low of
122,700 in 1993 to more than 390,000 today.
The growth in new apprenticeships in new
areas has not been at the expense of appren-
ticeships in the traditional trades. Today 38
per cent of all new apprentices are in trades
and related work; the number of new appren-
tices in these areas has grown by 21 per cent
since 1995. In the last 12 months alone we
have seen a 19 per cent increase in com-
mencements in traditional trades. There has
not been a decline in the absolute number of
people commencing a new apprenticeship in
trades. Tradespersons still saw very healthy
growth from 1996 to 2003—in fact, up 32
per cent or almost 13,000 people. This con-
trasts markedly with the seven per cent
growth in employment over the same period.
There is a seven per cent growth in employ-
ment and a 32 per cent growth in tradesper-
sons. More people are undertaking new appren-
ticeships at higher levels of competency.
The number of new apprenticeships at cer-
tificate 3 and 4 level has increased from 67
per cent to 75 per cent over the period. Since
1996, there has been an enormous increase in
the number of women undertaking a new
apprenticeship—up from 20 per cent of all
new apprentices in 1996 to 36 per cent today.
Seventy-two per cent of people completing a
new apprenticeship reported that their train-
ing had improved their job security; 84 per
cent reported that it had improved their job
prospects.

In conclusion, Senator, you only have to
go back to the recession we had to have, to a
million people unemployed, and ask yourself
whether a better job is being done now or
not. That should allow you to draw a conclu-
sion as to why this government has been re-
elected.

Senator WEBBER—Mr President, I ask
a supplementary question. I remind the min-
ister that the actual number of people starting
trades apprenticeships fell between the years
2000 and 2003. Isn’t it the case that one of
the key reasons for the skill shortage is the
Howard government’s failure to adequately
fund our TAFE system, resulting in nearly
270,000 students having been turned away
since 1998? Isn’t it the case that, if the
Commonwealth had actually matched the
states’ increases in TAFE funding since
1997, there would have been $833 million
more spent by the Howard government on
skills training?

Senator VANSTONE—A lot of the
money the states and territories put in comes
from the Commonwealth, so I am not sure
what figures you are quoting. The single
point that I might make here is that the Aus-
tralian government’s contribution to states
and territories under the VET Funding Act
has grown from $778 million under Labor to
$1.15 billion under the coalition government
in 2005. In real terms, the Australian gov-
ernment has increased funding for training
by 22 per cent since 1995. That is a 22 per
cent increase in real terms. By contrast, in
2004-05, most of the states and territories cut
their training budgets. All states and territo-
ries rejected the Australian government’s
offer of $3.6 billion for the proposed 2004-
06 ANTA agreement, a 12.5 per cent increase
on the 2001-03 agreement. If accepted by the
states and territories, that offer would have
created up to 71,000 new training places.
(Time expired)
Family Payments

Senator STOTT DESPOJA (2.27 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Is the minister aware that adoptive parents with children older than 26 weeks cannot access the government’s maternity payment even though changes have been made recently to ensure that adoptive parents can access—even retrospectively—the baby bonus from the date of the child’s placement? Given these recent efforts by the government in relation to the baby bonus—efforts that the Democrats commend—will the government make similar changes to the maternity payment to ensure that all adoptive parents are able to access this support?

Senator PATTERSON—I have not had the opportunity to welcome Conrad to Parliament House, Senator Stott Despoja. Thank you for the question. It gives me the opportunity to remind people about the Howard government’s contribution to assisting families, particularly with the costs of the birth of a child, with the $3,000 payment, which will increase to $4,000 and then to $5,000 in progressive steps over two-year intervals. This is a benefit to families. I wish I could have come and presented your cheque personally, Senator Stott Despoja, but I was not in a position to do that; I was not in Adelaide. However, I am sure you will have spent it wisely, if you have spent it.

The matter has been brought to my attention. The campaign by the parents of adoptive children must be one of the most concerted campaigns I have seen. It has been brought to my attention, I am reviewing the issue, and I hope to be able to make a statement in due course when that review has been completed. The payment is about the early costs of a newborn child. That was the original intention and that is why the legislation was written in that way, but it is something I have under review.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for her answer and ask if she would perhaps elaborate on the definition of ‘due course’. While I acknowledge that the main aim behind the maternity payment is for newborns, is she aware of the fact that this unfairly discriminates against people who adopt children from overseas? Is she aware that the majority of babies that are adopted from overseas are more than 26 weeks of age? Is the minister also aware that many adoptive agencies in our states and territories actually encourage adoptive parents to take time off—in fact up to 12 months off—so that they can look after their child and thus entail the same level of financial burden as those who have a biological child of their own?

Senator PATTERSON—I am aware of those issues that you raise, Senator Stott Despoja. I have indicated to you that I have the issue under review.

Economy: Foreign Debt

Senator SHERRY (2.30 p.m.)—My question is to Senator Minchin, representing the Treasurer. Is the minister aware that Australia’s net foreign debt increased dramatically to $422 billion in 2004, more than double the level that the Howard Liberal government inherited? Is the minister aware that the credit rating agency Standard and Poor’s cites foreign debt as the main risk to Australia’s credit rating and a key risk to government finances? After nine years in office why doesn’t this Liberal government have any plan to tackle the foreign debt, which now equates to $21,000 for every man, woman and child in Australia?

Senator MINCHIN—I thank Senator Sherry for the question. As I say, we appreciate the fact that the opposition has finally
focused on the economy. We have obviously acknowledged that the current account deficit which Australia is running is something we would rather was not as high as it is, but you have to examine why it is at the level it is at. I note in particular the reference by the International Monetary Fund in its recent report on Australia. It says that the widening current account deficit ‘mainly reflects the sharp appreciation of the Australian dollar and the relatively strong cyclical position of the economy’. These are the fundamental underlying reasons for our running a relatively high current account deficit, which obviously means that foreign debt is increasing.

The Australian dollar has been relatively high, which obviously means that imports are cheap and it is tougher for exporters. We do have an imbalance in that the Australian economy has been running at a stronger and faster growth level than have those of our major trading partners. Therefore there is pressure in relation to our export markets with the Australian economy still running strongly and sucking in imports. So it is an inevitable consequence of having an economy that is strong.

That is what the Labor Party do not quite understand. They ignore all the good things about the economy and, in their desperation, try to find things that they think are not so good. These things are again evidence of growing pains. When you have a fast-growing economy, inevitably demand exceeding supply will spill over into the current account. There are a couple of critical things. The first is to make sure that the economy is as flexible and productive as possible so that you ensure that, to the extent that demand is running strongly, the domestic economy can meet supply demands. That is why we keep bringing to this parliament ideas and proposals to reform the economy and make it more flexible. The hypocrites opposite have spent nine years—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Will the minister withdraw that word; it is unparliamentary.

Senator MINCHIN—I am happy to withdraw it if it offends the poor darlings on the other side who are so sensitive that they cannot stand the slings and arrows of political debate. Those opposite, as I have said, have opposed in this parliament virtually every proposal we have brought forward to make this economy more flexible, more dynamic, more productive and therefore more capable of ensuring that we keep some control over the current account deficit. If they have had a complete change of heart and if they are now going to support the measures that we bring forward to make this economy more flexible, we welcome that. That would be terrific. We would gladly have them on board if they are going to join us in ensuring that we can do that.

The other thing you have to do when the economy is running a current account deficit of this kind—and with growth that is producing that current account deficit—is to ensure that the government’s finances remain in surplus. The great achievement of this government is to reverse the disastrous fiscal situation we inherited, to return the budget to solid surplus and to ensure that the federal government is making its contribution to the economy by net savings. But again we have an opposition which, on virtually every occasion and in every budget, opposes any measures we bring in to constrain government spending, or demands that we spend more. Every shadow minister comes out with a press release saying, ‘This stingy government is not spending enough on X, Y and Z’—fill in the blanks. Again, we would welcome the opposition joining us in ensuring the fiscal discipline that is required in the
situation where we do have a current account deficit.

**Senator SHERRY**—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. My question related to one of the increasing number of bad indicators of the economy, which is the ever-increasing level of foreign debt. Isn’t the minister aware that the OECD has warned the government that high current account deficits put upward pressure on interest rates? Does the minister accept that unless the current account deficit and the resulting foreign debt are reduced, interest rates will have to rise further?

**Senator MINCHIN**—Senator Sherry is missing the point. The responsibility of the government in these circumstances is to ensure that it minimises any pressure on interest rates by ensuring that it is making no contribution to the current account deficit, which it is not because it is saving. We are saving through the strength of our surpluses, which they always attack. Whenever we have a big surplus they say, ‘The surplus is far too big; the government should go and spend it all.’ Then of course they try and turn it around and say that we are spending too much. The opposition has no clarity on this—no form whatsoever. It does not understand the nature of the economy and the nature of the responsibility on the federal government to continue to run high surpluses so that it is not contributing to any pressure on interest rates. The Governor of the Reserve Bank has made it quite clear that he accepts the veracity of the fiscal position of the federal government and that it is not putting any pressure on interest rates.

**Immigration: Detention Centres**

**Senator NETTLE** (2.36 p.m.)—My question is addressed to Senator Vanstone, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. The minister will recall the case 18 months ago of a 14-year-old boy, detained at Port Hedland detention centre, who lost sight in his right eye and almost lost his left eye after he was repeatedly denied specialist assessment and treatment. My question relates to a man I visited in Villawood detention centre last week named Masood, who has recently been diagnosed as a diabetic. Is the minister aware that on January 29 Masood collapsed and was taken to Liverpool hospital? He was told by the doctor that he needed to see a specialist in order to get an urgent assessment of his sight. To this day, Masood has not seen an ophthalmologist or a diabetic specialist. Why has the department prevented Masood from seeing an eye specialist for 38 days now, since his collapse?

**Senator VANSTONE**—Senator Nettle, I am not, at this point, aware of that. You will forgive me for not necessarily taking what you say as being correct. I have had experience in the past, with you specifically, of allegations being put that turned out to be quite baseless. I do not assume for one minute that that is the case here. Where someone’s health is an issue, it should be attended to and attended to promptly by the appropriate people. I will make inquiries as to the allegations you make and I will come back and answer to the Senate for what has or has not happened in relation to the matter.

**Senator NETTLE**—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Is the minister aware that her chief of staff was informed about this issue, in writing, by Masood’s lawyer on 13 February? I understand that, in relation to this issue, the Ombudsman has also been contacted and I faxed the minister’s office to ensure that Masood gets medical treatment? Isn’t this case, following on from the Cornelia Rau case, yet another indication of widespread and chronic problems with mental and physical health care in our immigration detention centres? Can the
minister inform the Senate on what basis—on any basis—her and her department’s handling of this man’s urgent medical condition is not medical negligence?

Senator VANSTONE—Senator Nettle, you may or may not be familiar with the process by which correspondence is handled in most ministers’ offices; that is, it goes to the department for the preparation of a reply. So, generally, I would not be made aware of correspondence until it came back with an appropriate reply. Of course, the tenor of your supplementary question reveals the degree of faith with which you brought your first question to this place. In fact, by the very question you have asked as a supplementary, you have indicated exactly your intent in this matter, which is more political than concern for Mr Masood.

Having said that, Senator, I go back to the answer I originally gave you, which is that, even though I have had experience of your getting things incorrect and putting them out as propositions and finding them to be false, nonetheless I will quite specifically have this matter checked out, because it relates to someone’s health, and then come back to the Senate and answer for what has or has not happened in his case. As for your tying this matter into the Rau matter, that is an exceptional case where someone for eight months has consistently described themselves as an unlawful non-citizen. (Time expired)

Defence: Contracts

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (2.40 p.m.)—My question is addressed to Senator Hill as Minister for Defence. Can the minister confirm that Sir Laurence Street, former Chief Justice of New South Wales, was secretly appointed last month as a probity adviser on a $6 billion navy shipbuilding contract? Can the minister explain why there was no formal announcement of this decision? Can the minister confirm that this decision was taken at the behest of the Prime Minister, following representations from one of the bidders with concerns that the tender process administered by the minister would not be completely open and fair?

Senator HILL—It is normal practice for Defence to have probity advisers in relation to major contracts. Sir Laurence Street was selected and asked to do that job by the Secretary of the Department of Defence, and I am advised that there was no knowledge of the Prime Minister or his office in that appointment.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Minister, are you suggesting that the Prime Minister had no involvement in this decision; or is it true, as suggested, that his office did, which indicates a lack of confidence in your activities?

Senator HILL—I am clearly suggesting that he had no involvement at all and that the article in the paper was therefore wrong.

Crime: Sexual Exploitation of Children

Senator HUMPHRIES (2.42 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Chris Ellison. Will the minister update the Senate on the government’s efforts to combat the sexual exploitation of children?

Senator ELLISON—I thank Senator Humphries for a very important question and one which is of concern to all Australians. The Howard government will not relent in its fight against those people who seek to exploit children. In particular, the fight against the sexual exploitation of children remains a top priority for law enforcement nationally. Across the states and territories of this country, we will not desist in any effort whatsoever to fight the sexual exploitation of children.
Last week we announced the delivery of an election commitment, and that was the launch of the Australian Federal Police Online Child Sex Exploitation Team. I launched it in Robina, Queensland, with the Australian Federal Police Commissioner, Mick Keelty. This will bring to national law enforcement further resources and expertise in the fight against those people who want to sexually exploit children online. It will involve a sector of that team infiltrating the internet to seek out those paedophiles who want to use the internet to abuse children. It also will use its expertise and resources to gain intelligence and work with law enforcement, both domestically and internationally, in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children.

As well as that, we have now seen the introduction of new laws which will provide for up to 15 years jail for those people who groom or attempt to groom children on the internet for their own evil purposes, and also 10 years imprisonment for those people who transmit or download child pornography on the internet. We have also included internet service providers and have cast an obligation on them so that, if they become aware of child pornography being transmitted through their service, they will be obliged to take it down and refer it to the police. Of course, that gives added impetus to complaints from members of the public who come across this material and then raise it with an internet service provider. That adds extra weight to the participation of internet service providers in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children online.

As well as that, last year I launched the Australian National Child Offender Register, a register which is a key weapon in the fight against paedophiles. I noted with interest—and Senator Humphries will be interested to know—that in the Canberra Times last week the ACT government sought to blame others for the delay in extending ANCOR to the ACT. The reason for that delay is the delay by that government in bringing in legislation which would allow it to participate in the Australian National Child Offender Register. Other states have done that, and I applaud them for that. Victoria, Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia have all come on board. This is a very important aspect of the fight against the sexual exploitation of children. It is one which the Commonwealth has led the way in, and in this fight we need a partnership between all governments—state, territory and federal—and also industry and the public at large. As well as that, we have provided funding for public awareness programs through NetAlert and the Australian Federal Police. This is a fight that we are totally committed to and one which we will engage in domestically, nationally and internationally.

Telstra: Privatisation

Senator CONROY (2.46 p.m.)—My question is to Senator Coonan, the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. I refer the minister to her comments last week ruling out the structural separation of Telstra as a possible reform to improve competition in the Australian telecommunications market. Has the minister advised The Nationals of this position? Is the minister aware that only yesterday deputy Nationals leader Mark Vaile stated with respect to structural separation, ‘We can’t rule anything out without having an assessment of proposals.’ Is the minister also aware that this position is supported by The Nationals Senator elect Fiona Nash and The Nationals MPs Paul Neville and Kay Hull? Will the government be reconsidering its position on the structural separation of Telstra in the light of these National Party members’ views that nothing can be ruled out?
Senator COONAN—I thank Senator Conroy for the question. One of the important points might be what the Labor Party thinks about this, and of course Mr Tanner ruled out very comprehensively structural separation. It will be interesting to see, when and if Senator Conroy ever turns his mind to Labor’s policy on Telstra and the future regulation of Telstra, what he recommends to his party as an appropriate way to consider regulation as we move towards the full privatisation of Telstra.

The government is mindful that we do need to keep a careful watch on the regulatory settings so that they are optimal to encourage both innovation and, in particular, the future roll-out of new networks. Obviously the current framework looks very much at providing access to infrastructure that is already there. One of the big challenges in telecommunications is to provide a good regulatory environment that will enable certainty in investment with new roll-outs. So the government’s approach to improving communication services in Australia has been to promote competition between as many service providers as possible, and it is achieved through the regime that is set out in the Trade Practices Act, parts XIB and XIC. Very importantly, the regime is underpinned by a rigorous consumer protection regime that is certainly among the most comprehensive of any in the world, and that regulatory framework has proven to be very effective.

We have recently seen the impact of the competition notice provisions, which have forced Telstra to significantly change its wholesale pricing and to offer a $6.5 million financial settlement to the ACCC. This is evidence of the current regime working effectively.

Senator Conroy—Mr President, I rise on a point of order which goes to relevance. My question was very specifically about whether the government would be reconsidering its position on structural separation. Could you draw the minister’s attention to the question.

The PRESIDENT—The minister has one minute and 51 seconds left to complete her answer, and I am sure she will come back to the question.

Senator COONAN—I was outlining for Senator Conroy’s information and assistance the existing regulatory framework so that I could then address the issues of structural separation. I announced in December last year that I had under consideration looking at the regulatory structure that would best accommodate the new networks and the environment as the government considered whether or not it would proceed with the sale of Telstra. I should emphasise that this does not mean that the government has under consideration any position that would involve the structural separation of the existing structure of Telstra. We do not believe that slicing and dicing Telstra, splitting it into wholesale and retail or hiving off bits of it in a forced structural separation, is something that would suit either the competition regime or the future interests of the regulatory regime if the government did proceed with finally disposing of the remaining investment in Telstra.

We do not think that it has been shown to be in the long-term interests of either investors or consumers that the government should take a role in forcing some slicing and dicing of Telstra—and that includes splitting it into a country arm and a city arm. What delivers benefits for consumers are price controls and the structures that relate to competition. I think a lot of people who make comments about structural separation may not appreciate what particular form of structural separation they are talking about and what in fact delivers benefits for consumers. All commentators have said that it
should only proceed if there are cost benefits to doing so. (Time expired)

Senator CONROY—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the minister to her comments last week that Senator elect Mr Barnaby Joyce would benefit from a briefing from the minister’s office so that he could better understand the Liberal Party’s view on the privatisation of Telstra. In light of Mark Vaile’s comments yesterday, has the minister issued the same invitation to the Deputy Leader of The Nationals, whose extension is 7420?

Senator COONAN—I am very obliged to Senator Conroy for the supplementary. As you will remember, some commentators—in relation to a different issue, admittedly—suggested that Senator Conroy needed to go and have some work experience. I think it is also the case that Senator Conroy should have a briefing on this matter, and my extension is 4780.

Women: Government Policies

Senator ALLISON (2.52 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues. The minister will be aware that on average women working full time are paid 15 per cent less than men in full-time work. Is the minister aware that 26 per cent of women have their terms and conditions of employment governed by awards and that award rates of pay have been vital in narrowing the gender gap for women? Why then is the government now considering scrapping the skill based award rate?

Senator PATTERSON—I thank Senator Allison for the opportunity to answer this question. I will digress a little, if I may, to make a comment I wanted to make on International Women’s Day. Senator Allison has given me the opportunity because she has asked me a question about women. At the Beijing Plus 10 conference in New York last week—and I ask honourable senators to listen to this because it was quite moving—I met with the Iraqi delegation of women. I just wanted to put on the record that all of us congratulate the women of Iraq, who outstripped men in voting at the last election. On International Women’s Day, I wanted to note that. I did not have an opportunity before.

Senator Vanstone—I wonder how they got that opportunity?

Senator PATTERSON—I was not going to go into that on this day. I was just going to celebrate and send the message to the Iraqi delegation that I believe the Senate would support congratulating them on that great achievement of setting the standard for men in voting.

The most important thing that has improved the situation for women in Australia in terms of their opportunity to work and in terms of enabling them to work in an environment where their small businesses can be successful—a third of all small businesses are run by women—is that we have run a strong economy. We have not racked up government debt and we have not borrowed beyond our means. We have had surpluses, we have had low interest rates and we have had low unemployment. And women have been some of the main beneficiaries.

I am not going to discuss what might or might not be in the industrial relations reform. That question is more appropriately directed to the minister representing the minister for industrial relations. But what I can say is that we will be watching very closely any issues that affect women. But when you look at Labor’s record in government, when we saw record unemployment and interest rates sending small businesses to the wall—and many of those were run by women—Labor failed to recognise what their policies were doing to women. What we have seen is
increased participation by women in the work force, an increase in the average weekly earnings of women, increased opportunities in education for women and—through lower interest rates—increased opportunities for women to purchase and own their own homes. We have seen enormous benefits to women through the fact that we have run this economy soundly and strongly and will continue to do so.

Senator ALLISON—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for advising the Senate that she will be watching this matter very closely. But I wonder if the minister’s attention was drawn to the article the other day in the *Weekend Australian* by Elizabeth Wynhausen in which she wrote:

FOR all the glorified tale of 14 years’ growth in Australia’s economy, nothing has grown faster than low-paid crummy jobs for women ... ... one in four members of the workforce is a casual and denied basic benefits such as annual leave and sick pay. There isn’t another country in the world with so many casual workers, and studies suggest the ratio will rise to one in three by the end of the decade.

My question is: did the minister advise the Prime Minister on the impact on women of stripping the AIRC of the power to set the minimum wage? If not, why not?

Senator PATTERSON—Again, what Senator Allison fails to recognise, is what running a sound economy has done for women. I will reiterate what it has done for women: it has improved the participation of women in the work force and it has seen women’s average weekly earnings increase—and last week we saw that the growth in women’s earnings outstripped the increase in men’s earnings. What we have seen is women being able to benefit by increasing their contribution to superannuation. What we have seen is women being able to choose their superannuation fund and not suffer the problem, because often they move from job to job, of having a number of superannuation accounts. When you go through policy by policy, issue by issue, you see the impact that our policies have had on improving the situation for women.

### Budget: Surplus

Senator MACKAY (2.57 p.m.)—My question is to Senator Minchin, representing the Treasurer. Is the minister aware of reports today that the federal budget surplus has climbed to $10 billion? Don’t these reports demonstrate the magnitude of the Howard government’s continuing tax grab from the pockets of every Australian family and give further confirmation to data from the ABS showing that the Howard government is in fact the highest taxing government in Australia’s history? As the Treasurer of the highest taxing government ever in this country, why isn’t Mr Costello focusing on delivering real services like major infrastructure development to the taxpayers he is ripping off in this record way?

Senator MINCHIN—In fact, our proudest boast is that we have stopped the haemorrhaging of the federal budget. We inherited a budget in a disastrous state, one with massive deficits. They lied to us about the deficit going into the 1996 election. They said it was in surplus when it was $10 billion in deficit. They racked up $70 billion of debt in the last five years they were in government. They left us with $96 billion of debts, which was putting pressure on interest rates. One of the biggest expenditure items in the budget was in fact paying interest on the debts they had accumulated. We are in fact very proud of the hard work we have done to get this budget back into surplus and we are envied, as the Governor of the Reserve Bank said, by countries all over the world. The specific question was about a report in the *Sydney*
Morning Herald this morning saying that we would have a surplus of $10 billion in this financial year. They do not say how on earth they arrived at that figure. I am not sure what the basis of the report is at all. I have no idea what they are talking about.

The government’s official position is as reported in MYEFO—the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook—in December last year, just 2½ months ago. Our forecast then for 2004-05 was a surplus of $6.2 billion. Our forecast at that stage for 2005-06 was $4.5 billion. They remain the government’s projections, up until we release our revised figures in the budget itself. So we have no idea what the basis for the $10 billion figure is. We stand by the figures that we have provided, which we think are appropriate and sensible surplus figures. We are doing everything we can to ensure that we contribute to savings and that we minimise the extent to which there is pressure on interest rates, if any, from the fiscal position adopted by the government, and we will continue to deliver surpluses while the economy is growing so strongly.

Senator MACKAY—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Is the minister aware that, while the federal government collects 70 per cent of tax revenue, it accounts for just $6 billion, or 22 per cent, of public investment? As the highest-taxing government in Australia’s history, will the government now accept the OECD’s advice and follow the lead of the Australian states by lifting infrastructure spending?

Senator MINCHIN—The opposition is simply revealing its utter ignorance of the responsibilities of the federal government. Our single biggest expenditure is the age pension. We have responsibilities for the whole social security system and for Medicare, defence and national security. The states have different responsibilities. Their responsibilities are largely in the field of infrastructure. They are the ones who own the ports, the power stations, the gas and electricity systems. The government do not own infrastructure. Our expenditure is around $200 billion a year—which they always say is never enough; they always complain that we are not spending enough. Our expenditure priorities are focused on the national government’s responsibilities for defence and national security, for looking after elderly Australians, for providing Medicare et cetera, and we will continue to provide them, while delivering surplus budgets.

Senator Hill—Mr President, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Women: Government Policies

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (3.02 p.m.)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by the Minister for Family and Community Services (Senator Patterson) to questions without notice asked today relating to women.

I acknowledge, as Senator Patterson and others have today, that today is International Women’s Day, so there was no surprise that many of today’s questions related to the social and economic circumstances of women. My question to the minister today related to the government’s proposal to change the mechanism for setting the minimum wage, which protects the income of low-paid women. We were talking of nearly one million women—965,000—who are protected under state and federal minimum wage awards. What do we know about the pressures that are confronting these women?

First of all, we know the importance of the minimum wage and that a boost to minimum wages is the key to sustaining a decent standard of living for Australia’s growing num-
ber of part-time and casual workers. The majority of low-paid workers are women. Increasing the minimum wage is an important means of reducing the gap between male and female wages. Many figures were thrown around the chamber this afternoon about the bridging of that gap. But the reality is that women’s wages are significantly lower and as such are also a significant disincentive for many women with children to work, who also face high child-care costs and the loss of the family tax benefit as their income increases.

What is the government’s response? First of all, in December the federal government moved to delay the ACTU national wage case, with Mr Andrews arguing that the Industrial Relations Commission would be wiser if it waited until after the May budget before its hearings began. At the time Mr Andrews said, ‘It makes sense for the AIRC to delay its hearings on the national wage case, until it has all the available economic data at its disposal.’ I was very pleased today to hear that we have a $10 billion budget surplus, which means that the ACTU wage case could be considered, in all of its aspects, to be a fair and generous approach to the low-paid wages of Australians.

But Mr Andrews was not prepared to stay there. He also suggested that one of the Howard government’s options was to slash the minimum wage, by removing the AIRC from the process altogether. The AIRC currently complies with the legislative directive to maintain a safety net of minimum wages and conditions, according to living standards that are generally expected by the Australian community. As part of its safety net assessment, the AIRC currently takes into account average weekly earnings, the balance of payments, inflation and productivity. The current system also allows a range of organisations, including the Reserve Bank and the Productivity Commission, to participate in a wage case assessment.

The minimum wage set by the AIRC is designed to protect the wages and entitlements of Australia’s lowest paid workers. It also acts as a mechanism to limit the wage divide between Australia’s highest paid and lowest paid workers. Perhaps Senator Patterson has also decided to adopt the Business Council of Australia’s view that fairness in the relationship between employers and employees is not a public policy priority. That is certainly not what Labor thinks about this issue. Labor believes that the ACTU’s claim for a minimum wage increase of $26.60 a week is a very fair and justifiable claim. The case would lift the federal minimum wage from $12.30 to $13 per hour. It would also increase the federal minimum wage from $467.40 to $494 per week or in fact $24,370 to $25,757 per year. Labor believes that low-paid workers need a decent wage rise and that their needs and their concerns must be protected by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

Senator HUMPHRIES (Australian Capital Territory) (3.07 p.m.)—In taking note of the answers of the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues, the opposition seem to be attempting to suggest that the position of women in Australia would be greatly assisted by some dramatic lift in the minimum wage, and they urge the government to support the ACTU’s position on lifting the minimum wage. The smallest amount of scrutiny and analysis of what Senator Stephens has just had to say will disclose that it is very hard to work out why lifting the minimum wage will necessarily lead to a closing of the gap in the wages between men and women. It would obviously benefit everybody who was on a minimum wage if the minimum wage were lifted. How it would benefit women vis-a-vis men is a little hard to determine. But it is worth mak-
ing this point: the Howard government in the last nine years has specifically targeted the lifting of standards for all Australians as a way of assisting women as well as men. Raising the level of employment in the Australian community has been about lifting the capacity of women to find the work they need to lead independent lives, to be able to support families and to be able to make decisions that affect their own lives. Ensuring that interest rates remain relatively low has been about assisting women and their families to take out mortgages so that their position is improved.

The evidence of those measures is clear for anybody to observe at this point in time. As far as women in the work force are concerned, in January 2005 there were 4,422,200 women in employment. That is a lot of women. It represents a 4½ per cent increase in the number of women in the work force since 1996, when we took office—that is, there has been a 22.7 per cent increase in the number of women in the work force since March 1996. That is a tangible expression of the way that this government’s work has led to an improvement in the position of women.

Those opposite made a very thin case for some sort of change in policy and some kind of adjustment to the minimum wage that would somehow offer more benefits than those that have been delivered by this government. It is a pretty hard case to make. When we came to office the unemployment rate for women was 7.6 per cent; today it is 5.3 per cent. That is the most clear demonstration of how women have benefited under the policies of this government. Of course it will be possible to find some statistical basis on which to suggest there has been some lack of progress or some failure to achieve a target that might be set with respect to the position of women in Australian society. Of course it is always possible to find the dark lining in the silver cloud. Members of the opposition will do their best to find that dark lining, no doubt. But, if you look at the total picture—the support available to women as mothers, the position of women in the work force, the standard of living of Australian women compared with where they were nine years ago—if you look at any of those major indicators, it is perfectly clear that Australian women have benefited from the policies of the Howard government.

The number of women in senior positions in Australia is a further expression of that. We have heard from the minister about the record numbers of women ambassadors, high commissioners and permanent heads of our Public Service departments. That has not been through the application of some quota process; it has been by virtue of women being given the opportunity to demonstrate their talents, and those talents have led them into positions which I am pleased to say have benefited the Australian community.

The support that this government has given to women has been clear. A demonstration of that is available in the statistics which have measured the progress of women in the last nine years. I think it is fair enough for the opposition to try look at areas where they consider the progress has not been fast enough, but they cannot deny that progress has been real and substantial. Looking at the total picture, we see that women today have benefited from the policies implemented by this government over the last nine years.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (Victoria) (3.12 p.m.)—Reflecting on how these issues regarding women were canvassed in question time today, I think the critical issue that needs to be raised is the quality of this debate as a whole. Senator Humphries talks about the need to look at the total picture—that there have been substantial advances. To be frank, reflecting on the indicators that have
been canvassed during this debate and during many of the discussions and reports in recent times, I think they themselves make you seriously concerned about the quality of this debate.

Government senators highlight changes in employment, but we have seen opinion pieces and articles, time after time now, highlighting the fact that it is not just employment itself but also the quality of employment that is very critical to women. If they cannot balance their work and family lives with employment that is suitable and that fits their needs, the problems facing women will continue. Many indicators suggest that, if anything, those problems have been becoming worse. This government’s mantra about flexibility in employment has really been about employer prerogative and flexibility for the employer, rather than women being able to make more appropriate choices about how they combine work and family.

This is why new catchphrases such as ‘baby strike’ have arisen. Why can’t we encourage young women these days to have children? Because our society is not providing them with the wherewithal to be able to do so. This is what is getting worse for the vast majority of Australian women. It is one thing for the government to talk about the number of women ambassadors and women in senior government appointments, but we need to look at the issues that the vast majority of Australian women face. The vast majority of the Australian women who work in the corporations that Senator Patterson highlighted today have made little, if any, progress in the representation of women within their ranks. The vast majority of Australian women do continue to suffer a significant wages gap.

During question time today I asked Senator Patterson and Senator Abetz if they would provide the indicator they were relying on for their claims that the wages gap was improving, because I am very clear and very sure that indicators measuring the deregulated enterprise bargaining that occurred under the Howard government were highlighting that the wages gap was going backwards. Like many commentators in this area, I am aware that there are many indicators of the wages gap. You need to carefully and quite analytically eliminate the factors from those indicators to know exactly what you are talking about. Senator Abetz stumbled for a while and then came up with the indicator he had actually been given so that we could at least trace the source of the particular indicator he was relying on.

His flippant disregard for the issue in referring to me as a ‘quota girl’ amused me significantly. I came into this place as the only female Labor representative from Victoria. I am very pleased that today that situation has changed significantly. But I did not come here as a quota girl. There were no quotas in relation to our parliamentary representation. I think that flippant remarks by Senator Abetz about such things discredit the whole day. Today is the day to celebrate International Women’s Day. It is not the day to have banal arguments about whether quotas are targets or targets are quotas or how we can ensure that appropriate representation of women is achieved in this place.

We are doing much better in parliament. Senator Patterson raised that point today. We are doing much better through a variety of different means and they seem to be working across political parties. I will be pleased to see that, in another generation or two, women will be much better represented, and they will be represented with a solid base and background in political participation within their parties that will make a difference to the policies we make in this place. They are the bases that have been estab-
lished. That is what the work on International Women’s Day has been able to achieve.

Later this year I will be celebrating what I think Senator Faulkner alluded to in his notice of motion as the 30th year of International Women’s Day. Some of us have a careful and close regard for many of the indicators of women’s participation and involvement in society and the community and of their general wellbeing. The quality of the debate that has occurred here today, I must say, is insulting. It would be good to see a clear and frank discussion of valid indicators about women’s progress, not the flippant disregard that occurred in the discussion in question time today.

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales) (3.16 p.m.)—It was interesting to hear comments on the quality of debate from the other side. In fact, the material which Senator Patterson in particular put on the record in question time this afternoon, and to which I will refer in this debate, is relevant to precisely the sorts of people to which Senator Collins was referring. I note in passing that Senator Collins is keen to assure the chamber that she did not enter the parliament under any arrangement concerning quotas or targets or both of the above. I am sure it is important to note that for the record. But it is undeniable that those opposite in the Australian Labor Party do support a quota system that is not supported on this side of the parliament. If senators on the other side want to walk away from that now then perhaps that is an internal party matter they want to pursue. But it is a matter of fact and a matter of record that that is an arrangement in that party’s organisation.

What I want to say this afternoon is that this government, for its entire term since 1996, has supported a policy of both opportunity and choice for women, and for precisely the sorts of women to whom Senator Collins referred. We are committed to providing a range of measures that assist women in all of the roles that they fulfil as they move through their lives. That is part of recognising that there are different needs in relation to education, families, work and retirement, all at different points in their lives and all at different levels of the community. We well know, over the last perhaps 18 months to two years, the extent of the debate in the community about the challenges of balancing work and family life, trying to determine where the balance actually lies, working out it means to be in a partnership trying to do that and all of those sorts of issues. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and particularly the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, have done some exceptional work in this regard. I think a number of members of the Senate have had an opportunity to examine that.

I will now look at some of the fundamentals that people need in order to work through their lives and deal with some of those issues. I will start with child care. In pure financial terms this government has spent and continues to spend more on child care than any of our predecessor Labor governments ever did. In fact, in the six years to 2003-04, that amounted to around $8.8 billion in child care in this country. I remember very early in my role in the Senate participating in a community affairs inquiry into child care, where changes which were proposed by the coalition government were meant to bring an end to child care as we know it. That was clearly not the case.

Clearly there are ongoing challenges. We addressed those in a number of our election policies last year. Those were election policies which the Australian constituency decided they preferred over the election policies presented in this area by the other side. We use the family tax benefit to assist fami-
lies with children. Around two million families in Australia, who have 3.5 million of Australia’s children, benefit from that family tax benefit. Changes introduced in the 2004-05 budget will enhance the level of support that is provided to most of those families. For example, there was the lump sum payment of $600 per child, which has been paid to families who receive or are eligible to receive family tax benefit A. There will be an ongoing $600 increase in the level of family tax benefit A payment per child. Also, from 1 July this year, secondary income earners who return to work after caring for a child will be able to keep the family tax benefit B received prior to their return to the workforce. They are just a couple of examples. The chamber today discussed support for new mothers in the maternity payment of $3,000, which was introduced on 1 July last year. That payment assists with the costs associated with the birth or adoption of a new baby. That rate will increase from 1 July 2008.

Senator Humphries referred comprehensively to the participation of women in the workforce as well. The government also pursues transition to work services particularly for parents, carers and mature aged people—overwhelmingly women, in this case—who want to return to or join the workforce. That gives people guidance on possible career directions as well as help in areas like skill assessments, confidence and self-esteem issues. Whether it is career and training plans, information technology or access to training, it is all fundamental support for women who wish to continue in or return to the workforce. They are baseline, important levels of support for people trying to achieve that family-work-life balance that we talked about. There is also a number of initiatives in relation to leadership. (Time expired)

Senator FORSHAW (New South Wales) (3.22 p.m.)—One of the phrases that often gets thrown around in debates like this is the ‘gender gap’, particularly in relation to issues to do with wage levels. One of the other gaps that is relevant to this debate is the gap between the rhetoric and the reality—the rhetoric of the government, which we have just heard two of the speakers from the government engage in, and the reality of what is facing workers in this country, particularly those who are low paid, those who are under awards and those who are relying on the minimum wage. In many of those cases they are women workers.

Senator Payne rattled off statistics about what this government has supposedly done to assist women to rejoin the workforce as a matter of choice. The reality is that for many women it is not a matter of choice; it has become a matter of absolute necessity. In some cases they have had to return to the workforce earlier than they would otherwise want to because of the economic pressure, the financial pressure, on their families. Clearly, we all support choice, but it should be a choice that is able to be entered into freely, not one that is forced upon families, as we have increasingly seen under this government. The government talks about low interest rates. What it fails to mention is that if you look at the proportion of household income that has to be paid today on a home loan you will see that it has gone up substantially. That is also the case if you look at levels of credit card debt and at the pressures on families right across the board.

Senator Payne referred to what the government has done with the payment of the $600 baby bonus and the other announcements that were made prior to the election last year—the election bribery that it engaged in. What we know is that there are thousands and thousands of families across this country who have been hit with debts from Centrelink for the last two or three years because of the policies followed by this
government. Many cases were drawn to my attention and to the attention of other members of parliament. Mothers were ringing up our offices saying, ‘I’ve just got this bill from Centrelink to repay a large amount of the family allowance.’ Those women were not ringing up to give plaudits to the government for their supposed assistance to them. They were very critical of the extreme financial pressure that they were facing.

I want to turn to one critical aspect of this whole debate, and that is the role of the minimum wage and this government’s approach. We have heard in recent times Minister Andrews, the Prime Minister and others talking up how, once they get control of this chamber, they are going to ram through their industrial relations policies, such as getting rid of the unfair dismissal laws. When you have a workforce in this country, many of them women, who are in low-paid jobs, in casual employment—the vast majority are in casual employment—one of the only protections they have under the industrial relations system in this country is against unfair dismissal. That is going to disappear under this government after July.

One of the other protections they have is the right to an award rate of pay, a minimum rate of pay. I have had some experience of this, as have my colleagues Senator George Campbell and Senator Sherry in previous careers: going before the Industrial Relations Commission, the independent umpire, and arguing for national wage increases, for increases in the minimum wage, for workers under awards. What I recall is that time after time, for year after year, the conservatives, the coalition parties, opposed every single one of those national wage increases. I recall the Treasurer, Mr Costello, then an advocate for the National Farmers Federation, getting up and opposing superannuation for award workers in this country, for many of the women and men on basic award rates of pay. He said that they were not entitled to superannuation, and now we hear this government trying to take the credit for increased superannuation coverage for workers. It was a Labor government that introduced it and it was coalition governments in the states and federally under Malcolm Fraser and subsequently under John Howard that opposed that time and time again. (Time expired)

Senator STOTT DESPOJA (South Australia) (3.27 p.m.)—The matter I wish to raise in the context of this debate is indeed covered by the take note of answers motion that the Labor Party has moved. I wish to refer specifically to the issue of the maternity payment, which has been mentioned by a couple of speakers in this debate, but before I do I want to wish my female colleagues and all women in Australia a happy International Women’s Day.

We have had many debates about the maternity payment in this place. Honourable senators would be aware of the Democrat preference for a system of national, government funded, paid maternity leave, preferably for 14 weeks, as is the ILO standard, and certainly, under the bill that I have proposed, at at least the minimum rate. In the context of today’s debate and a question that I asked the minister—and that is relevant to International Women’s Day—is the fact that adoptive parents are not entitled to access the maternity payment if they adopt children who are older than 26 weeks. I do not mean to reflect upon a decision or a vote of the Senate, because we know that this debate was in full fling last night, but the government—and I commend them, as I did the minister today in question time—have ensured that adoptive parents can now access the baby bonus, albeit retrospectively. The baby bonus has been replaced by the maternity payment, but the same changes have not been made. That means that we still have a situation where adoptive parents are discriminated against
unfairly because they cannot access the maternity payment if their child is more than 26 weeks old.

I asked about this issue today in question time. A number of senators have commented on the issue of the maternity payment, but I want to draw the Senate’s attention to one blatant, discriminatory fact. If you are an adoptive parent in Australia today and you adopt a child of more than 26 weeks you cannot get that vital government financial support to which you should be entitled and, indeed, to which, as of last night, you would have been entitled if it had been the baby bonus. I know it gets confusing, but that is what happens when you are dealing with retrospectivity in legislation and when the government makes poor policy changes even when it has been forewarned of such an issue.

I put on record today the fact that this is discriminatory and the fact that most adoptions that take place, particularly those from overseas, are of children of more than 26 weeks of age. I call again on the government and specifically the Minister for Family and Community Services to rectify this problem with the maternity payment, as they did last night for the baby bonus. I do thank Minister Coonan for her work on this issue.

International Women’s Day generally is a great opportunity for us to acknowledge how far we have come, and I do not deny that. Both major parties in this place talk about the achievements, but we also need to talk about and assess the campaigns that we have left to fight. There are a number of outstanding issues in society today confronting women. Yes, industrial relations reform is one of them. Yes, the gender wage gap, to which Senator Forshaw referred, is another—the inequity in terms of pay rates; the unequal pay rates for men and women for the same work.

Domestic violence is an outstanding issue. Unfortunately, the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program is due to run out in the middle of this year. I have heard no reports that it will be replaced or continued. I have looked at the forward estimates in relation to the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault and I cannot see that funding being anything but halved in future years. We have a range of issues, not the least of which is paternity and maternity leave. Let us not pretend that fobbing Australian women off with a $3,000 one-off payment is actually going to address the systematic disadvantage that women have in the workforce—that is, women wanting to take time off at the birth of a child.

There are many other issues affecting Australian women. They are the ones we should be debating and discussing today in addition to celebrating our goals and achievements. I look forward to the day when we have better and perhaps proportional representation of women not just in this place but in executive power as well. I once again call on the government to end this blatant discrimination against adoptive parents with children over 26 weeks of age.

Question agreed to.

CONDOLENCES

Mr James Corbett

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (3.32 p.m.)—It is with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death on 3 March 2005 of James Corbett, a former member of the House of Representatives for the division of Maranoa, Queensland from 1966 to 1980.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—A petition has been lodged for presentation as follows:

CHAMBER
Workplace Relations: Paid Maternity Leave

To the Honourable the President and Members of the Senate in Parliament assembled. The Petition of the undersigned shows:

- Our concern that Australia is now one of only two OECD countries without a national scheme of paid maternity leave;
- Our concern about the two-thirds of Australian working women who currently lack any paid support on the birth of a child;
- Our strong support for the adoption of a national scheme of paid maternity leave for Australian working women at the earliest opportunity;
- Our belief that paid maternity leave is an employment-related measure that recognises, first and foremost, the benefits of at least 14 weeks paid leave for working mothers, their children and their families, along with its contribution to equal opportunity at work, productivity, and women’s employment security and attachment.

Your Petitioners request that the Senate should at the earliest opportunity pass legislation to provide a national system of paid maternity leave which recognises the principles of ILO Convention 183, and provides at least a 14 week payment for working women at the level of their normal earnings (or at least at the minimum wage), with minimal exclusions of any class of women, and a significant contribution from Government.

by Senator Stott Despoja (from 15 citizens).

Petition received.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Forshaw to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Finance and Public Administration References Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 10 March 2005, from 4 pm to 8 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the Regional Partnerships program.

Senator Conroy to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) on 21 February 2005 the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) reached an agreement with Telstra to deal with issues involved in the competition notice issued to Telstra on 19 March 2004, and

(ii) while the ACCC maintains that Telstra’s conduct was likely to have been in breach of the Trade Practices Act it decided to resolve the matter after obtaining senior legal advice; and

(b) resolves that there be laid on the table, no later than 3.30 pm on Thursday, 17 March 2005, a report by the ACCC containing:

(i) the internal and external legal advice it obtained which caused it to decide to resolve the matters raised in the competition notice without litigation, and

(ii) details of the nature of the evidence received from Telstra’s wholesale customers which influenced its decision to take no further action in relation to the matters raised in the competition notice.

Senator Conroy to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that on 21 February 2005 the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) reached an agreement with Telstra to deal with issues involved in the competition notice issued to Telstra on 19 March 2004; and

(b) resolves that there be laid on the table, no later than 3.30 pm on 10 May 2005, a report by the ACCC containing:

(i) recommendations by the ACCC to:

(A) prevent a similar situation from recurring, and

(B) improve the ACCC’s ability to handle anti-competitive behaviour engaged in by Telstra,
(ii) specific details of the pricing conduct for which Telstra will be rebating its wholesale customers through the settlement including the period of time during which this conduct was undertaken.

(iii) an explanation of how the settlement will act as a deterrent to Telstra engaging in anti-competitive conduct in the future both in the broadband market and in other telecommunications markets,

(iv) an explanation of how the structure of the retail broadband market has been affected by Telstra’s conduct during the period of the competition notice, including the impact of Telstra’s conduct on retail market shares of broadband internet service providers, and

(v) an explanation of how the settlement will rectify any detrimental impacts on the structure of the retail broadband market that have resulted from Telstra’s conduct.

Senator Allison to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review conference commencing on 1 May 2005 in New York and the vital importance of the NPT as an instrument of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation;

(b) expresses its deep concern over:

(i) the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and particularly those with nuclear weapons capabilities, and

(ii) the danger to humanity posed by the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used and at the lack of implementation of binding obligations and agreed steps towards nuclear disarmament;

(c) calls for the full implementation of all relevant articles of the treaty including Articles I and II on non-proliferation and Article VI on the achievement of nuclear disarmament;

(d) affirms the vital importance of the unequivocal undertaking made at the Year 2000 NPT Review conference by the nuclear weapons states, to accomplish the total and unequivocal elimination of their nuclear weapons arsenals, and of the 13 steps agreed to at that meeting;

(e) urges the Government to:

(i) pursue a balanced and integrated approach on both disarmament and non-proliferation fronts at the NTP Review,

(ii) call on nuclear weapons states and nuclear weapons-capable states not to develop new types of nuclear weapons, or new rationalizations for their threat or use, in accordance with their commitment to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies, and

(iii) call for concrete agreed steps by nuclear weapons states and nuclear weapons-capable states to lower the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in their possession, as called for by Australia’s L23 Path to a Nuclear Free World;

(f) welcomes the appeal, signed by 25 Nobel prize-winners, calling on the governments of the United States of America, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea, to support and implement steps to lower the operational status of their nuclear weapon systems in order to reduce the risk of nuclear catastrophe;

(g) notes and strongly affirms continued efforts by the Government to secure universal adherence to, and ratification of, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty; and

(h) requests that this resolution be conveyed to the foreign ministries and United Nations (UN) missions of all participants in the NPT Review conference, the UN Secretary-General, the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Chair of the 2005 NPT Review conference, as well as the governments of India, Pakistan and Israel.
Senator Marshall and also on behalf of Senator Nettle to move 15 sitting days hence:


Senator Brown to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) laws aimed to reduce the amount of synthetic greenhouse gases and establish a licensing system for the import, export and manufacture of synthetic greenhouse gases passed the Senate in November 2003,

(ii) the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Amendment Regulations 2004 were gazetted in December 2004 for commencement on 1 January 2005, and

(iii) the Minister for the Environment and Heritage has failed to appoint the board, specified in these regulations, which would issue industry permits and licences for the use of certain refrigeration and air conditioning greenhouse gases; and

(b) calls on the Minister to make a full explanation to the Senate in which he details:

(i) whether he has abandoned the scheme as outlined in the regulations,

(ii) the level of uncertainty in the industry,

(iii) whether he has succumbed to pressure from the motor vehicle industry in Western Australia which wants a dual system for the regulation of synthetic greenhouse gases rather than the single system outlined in the regulations, and

(iv) the cost already borne by taxpayers in the setting up of the original scheme.

Senator Ferris (South Australia) (3.34 p.m.)—On behalf of Senator Tchen and the Standing Committee on Regulations and Ordinances, I give notice that 15 days hence Senator Tchen will move:


I seek leave to incorporate in Hansard a short summary of the matters raised by the committee.

Leave granted.

The summary read as follows—

Guidelines in relation to the exercise of Compliance Powers in the Building and Construction Industry

These Guidelines specify guidelines to be used by a delegate of the Secretary to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations in exercising powers under Part VA of the Act, such as requiring a person to provide information or documents in relation to a building industry investigation.

Clause 15 of these Guidelines specifies limitations on the use of the power to issue a notice. Paragraph (a) states that a power must only be used for building industry investigations, but must not be used for matters that are minor or petty. This reflects subsection 88AA(3) of the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (as amended). Questions may be raised as to whether a matter is ‘minor or petty’. The Committee has entered into correspondence with the Minister on this matter.

Senator Nettle (New South Wales) (3.35 p.m.)—Pursuant to standing order 78(1), I give notice of my intention, at the giving of notices on the next day of sitting, to withdraw business of the Senate notice of motion numbers 1 to 27 standing in my name for ten sitting days after today for the disallowance of the certain approval notices under the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator Ian Campbell (Western Australia—Minister for the Environment and Heritage) (3.35 p.m.)—I move:
That government business order of the day no. 4 (Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2004) be postponed till the next day of sitting.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Postponement

Items of business were postponed as follows:

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 1 standing in the name of Senator Murray for today, proposing an amendment to the terms of reference for the Legal and Constitutional References Committee inquiry into the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Privacy Act 1988, postponed till 16 March 2005.

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 1 standing in the name of Senator Greig for 10 March 2005, relating to the proposed accreditation of the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fisheries Management Plan, postponed till 16 March 2005.

General business notice of motion no. 80 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Democrats (Senator Allison) for today, relating to decriminalisation of abortion, postponed till 9 March 2005.

COMMITTEES

Mental Health Committee

Establishment

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (3.36 p.m.)—by leave—I, and also on behalf of Senator Tierney and Senator Evans, move the motion as amended:

(1) That a select committee, to be known as the Select Committee on Mental Health, be appointed to inquire into and report by 6 October 2005 on the provision of mental health services in Australia, with particular reference to:

(a) the extent to which the National Mental Health Strategy, the resources committed to it and the division of responsibility for policy and funding between all levels of government have achieved its aims and objectives, and the barriers to progress;

(b) the adequacy of various modes of care for people with a mental illness, in particular, prevention, early intervention, acute care, community care, after hours crisis services and respite care;

(c) opportunities for improving coordination and delivery of funding and services at all levels of government to ensure appropriate and comprehensive care is provided throughout the episode of care;

(d) the appropriate role of the private and non-government sectors;

(e) the extent to which unmet need in supported accommodation, employment, family and social support services, is a barrier to better mental health outcomes;

(f) the special needs of groups such as children, adolescents, the aged, Indigenous Australians, the socially and geographically isolated and of people with complex and co-morbid conditions and drug and alcohol dependence;

(g) the role and adequacy of training and support for primary carers in the treatment, recovery and support of people with a mental illness;

(h) the role of primary health care in promotion, prevention, early detection and chronic care management;

(i) opportunities for reducing the effects of iatrogenesis and promoting recovery-focused care through consumer involvement, peer support and education of the mental health workforce, and for services to be consumer-operated;

(j) the overrepresentation of people with a mental illness in the criminal justice system and in custody, the extent to which these environments give rise to mental illness, the adequacy of legislation and processes in protecting their human rights and the use of diversion programs for such people;
(k) the practice of detention and seclusion within mental health facilities and the extent to which it is compatible with human rights instruments, humane treatment and care standards, and proven practice in promoting engagement and minimising treatment refusal and coercion;

(l) the adequacy of education in destigmatising mental illness and disorders and in providing support service information to people affected by mental illness and their families and carers;

(m) the proficiency and accountability of agencies, such as housing, employment, law enforcement and general health services, in dealing appropriately with people affected by mental illness;

(n) the current state of mental health research, the adequacy of its funding and the extent to which best practice is disseminated;

(o) the adequacy of data collection, outcome measures and quality control for monitoring and evaluating mental health services at all levels of government and opportunities to link funding with compliance with national standards; and

(p) the potential for new modes of delivery of mental health care, including e-technology.

(2) That the committee consist of 7 senators, 3 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 3 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and the Leader of the Australian Democrats.

(3) That the chair of the committee be the Leader of the Australian Democrats.

(4) That the deputy chair of the committee be elected by and from the members of the committee.

(5) That the deputy chair act as chair when there is no chair or the chair is not present at a meeting.

(6) That the quorum of the committee be 3 members.

(7) Where the votes on any question before the committee being equally divided, the chair, or deputy chair when acting as chair, shall have a casting vote.

(8) That the committee and any subcommittee have power to send for and examine persons and documents, to move from place to place, to sit in public or in private, notwithstanding any prorogation of the Parliament or dissolution of the House of Representatives, and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken, and such interim recommendations as it may deem fit.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any such subcommittee any of the matters which the committee is empowered to consider.

(10) That the quorum of a subcommittee be 2 members.

(11) That the committee be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and be empowered to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee with the approval of the President.

(12) That the committee be empowered to print from day to day such documents and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public.

Question agreed to.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
Reference

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL (New South Wales) (3.38 p.m.)—I, and also on behalf of Senators Evans, Brown and Allisson, move:

That the following matters be referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 21 June 2005:
(a) whether any Australian personnel (including employees, contractors and consultants) were present, or had duties which included being present, during any interrogations or interviews (however defined) of persons detained in relation to the war in Iraq, and in particular those persons suspected of having knowledge of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction;

(b) whether any knowledge of, or concerns regarding, the treatment of those Iraqi detainees was provided to Australian Government departments, agencies and ministers, and what actions resulted from the provision of this information;

(c) whether the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) were able to report frankly and fearlessly on what they had found, or whether attempts were made to censor or otherwise distort their findings; and

(d) whether any Australian personnel provided information or concerns to any part of the Australian Government relating to concerns about the functions or reports of the ISG, and what actions resulted from the provision of this information.

Question put.

The Senate divided. [3.43 p.m.]

(The President—Senator the Hon. Paul Calvert)

Ayes………….. 37

Noes………….. 34

Majority……… 3

AYES

Allison, L.F. Bartlett, A.J.J.
Bishop, T.M. Bolkus, N.
Brown, B.J. Buckland, G.
Campbell, G. * Carr, K.J.
Cherry, J.C. Collins, J.M.A.
Conroy, S.M. Crossin, P.M.
Denman, K.J. Evans, C.V.
Faulkner, J.P. Forshaw, M.G.
Greig, B. Greig, J.J.
Kirk, L. Lees, M.H.
Ludwig, J.W. Lundy, K.A.
Mackay, S.M. Marshall, G.

McLaras, J.E. Moore, C.
Murphy, S.M. Murray, A.J.M.
Nettle, K. O’Brion, K.W.K.
Ray, R.F. Ridgeway, A.D.
Sherry, N.J. Stephens, U.
Stott Despoja, N. Webber, R.
Wong, P.

NOES

Abetz, E. Barnett, G.
Boswell, R.L.D. Brandis, G.H.
Calvert, P.H. Campbell, I.G.
Chapman, H.G.P. Colbeck, R.
Coonan, H.L. Eggleson, A.
Ellison, C.M. Ferguson, A.B.
Ferris, J.M. * Fifield, M.P.
Harris, L. Heffernan, W.
Hill, R.M. Humphries, G.
Johnston, D. Kemp, C.R.
Knowles, S.C. Lightfoot, P.R.
Macdonald, J.A.L. Mason, B.J.
Minchin, N.H. Patterson, K.C.
Payne, M.A. Santoro, S.
Scullion, N.G. Tchen, T.
Tierney, J.W. Troeth, J.M.
Vanstone, A.E. Watson, J.O.W.

PAIRS

Cook, P.F.S. Macdonald, I.
Hutchins, S.P. McGauran, J.J.J.

* denotes teller

Question agreed to.

FORESTRY: LOGGING

Senator BROWN (Tasmania) (3.50 p.m.)—I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) on 4 March 2005 Tasmania’s Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal found that there is a prima facie case of environmental harm, including landslips and pollution and diminution of domestic water supplies, if logging proceeds at South Sister near St Marys,

(ii) the tribunal nevertheless denied the resident’s request for a temporary order to halt the logging because the residents are unable to give an undertaking to pay ‘many tens of thousands of dol-
(iii) a separate application for a permanent order has been listed for 6 to 8 June 2005; and

(b) calls on the Minister for the Environment and Heritage to discuss with his Tasmanian counterpart whether it is appropriate that the logging of this coup of forests be delayed until the new application from the claimant is heard by the tribunal and a finding issued.

Question agreed to.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales) (3.51 p.m.)—I move:

That the Senate notes that:

(a) 8 March 2005 is the 30th anniversary of the United Nations officially celebrating International Women’s Day;

(b) 8 March 2005 is also the 30th anniversary of Mr Gough Whitlam becoming the first Australian Prime Minister to launch International Women’s Day, which had first been celebrated by Australian women in 1928; and

(c) the Whitlam Government, as well as becoming the first Australian Government to officially support International Women’s Day, took a number of steps to end discrimination against women in Australian society, including re-opening the equal pay case, mandating equal opportunities for women in federal government employment and appointing women to judicial and administrative positions.

Question agreed to.

INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT: AWARDS

Senator RIDGEWAY (New South Wales) (3.51 p.m.)—I move:

That the Senate—

(a) congratulates the 2005 Community Development Employment Projects/Indigenous Employment Centres (CDEP/IEC) Award winners:

   Employment and Training Award: Bungala Aboriginal Corporation, Port Augusta
   Community and Cultural Benefit Award: Broome Aboriginal Media Association
   Business Development Award: Wunan Foundation, Kununurra
   IEC Outstanding Achievement Award: Western Queensland Regional CDEP, Mount Isa
   CDEP Outstanding Individual Achievement Award (Female): Linda Williams, Angurugu CDEP, Groote Eylandt
   CDEP Outstanding Individual Achievement Award (Male): Jay Daley, Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation, Canberra
   IEC Outstanding Individual Achievement Award (Female): Libby Morgan, Cairns Regional CDEP
   IEC Outstanding Individual Achievement Award (Male): James Davies, Bungala Aboriginal Corporation, Port Augusta;

(b) recognises that unemployment is an inter-generational problem in most Indigenous communities and that CDEP projects play a key role in restoring pride in Indigenous communities and individuals as they see the tangible results and benefits of their work;

(c) notes that the Government is currently restructuring CDEP and expresses its concern that the important community development functions of CDEP will be discarded when the program is subsumed into the Job Network; and

(d) calls on the Government to guarantee that in its restructure of CDEP:

(i) community and cultural development CDEP activities will not be downgraded,
(ii) both CDEP positions and funding are increased,
(iii) communities will still be able to set their own goals for their CDEP, and
(iv) the role of CDEP in any future shared responsibility agreements is clarified.

Question agreed to.

‘BLACKOUT VIOLENCE’ CAMPAIGN

Senator RIDGEWAY (New South Wales) (3.52 p.m.)—I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 82 by deleting the words ‘and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs’ and ‘favourably and’. The amendment is a clarification to make the reading of the motion much clearer.

Leave granted.

Senator RIDGEWAY—I move the motion as amended:

That the Senate—

(a) congratulates the organisers of the Inner Sydney ‘Blackout Violence’ campaign against family violence and sexual assault against women in Aboriginal communities for receiving the 2004 Violence Against Women Prevention Award at New South Wales (NSW) Parliament on 25 November 2004 for ‘outstanding contribution to the prevention and reduction of violence against women in NSW’, earned through their sustained campaign which was launched in September 2004 with Aboriginal footballers wearing purple arm-bands at the NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout;

(b) notes that:

(i) the ‘Blackout Violence’ campaign is a local community initiative which has been successful through the hard work of Dixie Gordon, Redfern Legal Centre, Rob Welsh, Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council and the Inner City Domestic Violence Action Group, and that they are still working to keep up the momentum of the struggle against all forms of violence against women and children in Aboriginal communities, and
(ii) numerous communities in Western Australia, Victoria and Queensland have been inspired by the ‘Blackout Violence’ campaign and have requested the assistance of the NSW organisers to apply the campaign as a national model to counter family violence;

(c) encourages the NSW Government to expeditiously approve the application for funding to formally draft the ‘Blackout Violence’ model for use by other Indigenous communities; and

(d) calls on the Commonwealth Government to work with the NSW Government and in partnership with Indigenous communities and community organisations, to ensure that such community initiatives are recognised and appropriately resourced in the Governments’ Indigenous Affairs policies and programs.

Question negatived.

Senator Ridgeway—Might I seek clarification on that vote? I understood that the government was supporting the motion as amended.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—I can only go on the voices, and the voices as represented by the government I called ‘no’.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

Senator STOTT DESPOJA (South Australia) (3.54 p.m.)—I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) 8 March is International Women’s Day,
(ii) the Women’s Rights Action Network Australia recently gave Australian governments a D-minus for their handling of women’s human rights,

(b) notes that:

(i) 8 March is International Women’s Day,
(ii) the Women’s Rights Action Network Australia recently gave Australian governments a D-minus for their handling of women’s human rights,

(iii) the Government intends to discontinue funding to the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program, including the Australian Domestic and Family
Violence Clearinghouse, after 30 June 2005,

(iv) the Government is likely to halve funding in the 2005-06 financial year to the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault program, which may result in the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault being forced to close after 30 June 2005,

(v) according to forward estimates contained in the 2004-05 Budget, the Government plans to spend just $3.4 million in the 2005-06 financial year on women’s programs, compared to an estimated $11.6 million in the 2004-05 financial year and $25 million in the 2003-04 financial year,

(vi) Australia remains one of only two Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries without a national scheme of paid maternity leave, and two-thirds of working women (mostly those in lower paid positions) do not have access to paid leave on the birth of a child,

(vii) Australia continues to have one of the lowest female workforce participation rates in the OECD,

(viii) women’s full-time, ordinary time earnings are still only 85 per cent of men’s while women’s total earnings, including part-time and casual employees, are only 66 per cent of men’s, and these rates have changed little since the Howard Government was first elected in 1996, and

(ix) women hold only 10.2 per cent of executive management positions and only 3.2 per cent of the top executive positions in Australia, and women who are in senior management positions are paid around 90 per cent of their male counterparts; and

(b) calls on the Government to do more for women and, in particular, to continue to fund the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault after 30 June 2005.

Question agreed to.

ABORTION

Senator STOTT DESPOJA (South Australia) (3.54 p.m.)—I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, no later than the conclusion of question time on 17 March 2005, the following documents:

(a) any instructions given by the Minister for Health and Ageing to the Department of Health and Ageing to prepare advice regarding the abortion issue within the past 12 months; and

(b) any responses from the Department of Health and Ageing received by the Minister in relation to those instructions within the past 12 months.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

Meeting

Senator FERRIS (South Australia) (3.55 p.m.)—At the request of Senator Heffernan, I move:

That the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Wednesday, 9 March 2005, from 10.30 am to 11.30 am, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry under standing order 25(2)(b) into the implementation of a recommendation in its report concerning the Australian meat quota consultative structure.

Question agreed to.

Corporations and Financial Services Committee: Joint Meeting

Senator FERRIS (South Australia) (3.56 p.m.)—At the request of Senator Chapman, I move:
That the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Tuesday, 15 March 2005, from 5 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the statutory oversight of the operations of ASIC.

Question agreed to.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Howard Government: Policy

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—The President has received a letter from Senator Lundy proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the Senate for discussion, namely:

The need for the Federal Government to:

(1) redress the decline in women’s wages compared with men’s over the life of the Howard Government;

(2) develop a solution to punishing effective marginal tax rates which act as a barrier to increasing the participation of women and sole parents in particular in paid work; and

(3) increase access to affordable childcare, and ensure that the supply and cost of childcare makes childcare available and affordable for sole parents entering the workforce.

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

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

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—I understand that informal arrangements have been made to allocate specific times to each of the speakers in today’s debate. With the concurrence of the Senate, I shall ask the clerks to set the clock accordingly.

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (3.57 p.m.)—It is International Women’s Day today. Many women are wearing the colours of green, white and violet to symbolise the achievements of women and to send a message to governments—not just here in Australia, but everywhere—that women’s issues matter. Today I would like to focus my comments on the lack of respect accorded to Australian women by this government which has been demonstrated in many ways, not least by its failure to address the needs of working women.

At present, women are paid over $16,000 less per year than men. That is the difference when we compare the total average wage of men and women. On average, women working full time are paid 15 per cent less than men working full time—earning an average of $150 less. Only about 12 per cent of women workers were able to benefit from the tax cuts which went to those earning over $52,000. Women form the majority of low paid and casual workers. Nearly 1.2 million women workers are in casual work, which means that they have no access to paid leave to look after families and no security of employment to offer as collateral—for example, for a housing loan.

The Howard government’s proposed industrial relations measures which it will force through the parliament after the July Senate changes are of enormous concern to women. We have already been given warning of the government’s punitive and merciless approach to low paid workers, most of them women, in its proposed—and I have to say cynically titled—Workplace Relations Amendment (Protecting the Low Paid) Bill 2003. Now the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and its role in setting minimum wages is under attack by the government. We know that the Howard government has done woefully little to support working women and working parents. The government has signalled its disdain for the needs of working families and of the importance of family friendly workplaces.
At the recent federal election, the government did not even bother to put forward a work and family policy. Work and family issues appear to be beyond the comprehension of this government, despite the degree of lip-service that they endlessly repeat in defence of their poor policies. The evidence is certainly there: the Howard government have systematically white-anted the child-care programs that were built up under Labor, thereby reducing access to and the availability of quality child care. Working parents are meant to be accorded a higher priority for child-care places than nonworking parents but the Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that the parents of 174,500 children cannot find the child-care services that they require—that they need. So the government have chosen consistently to ignore the needs of working parents for quality community-based care.

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, is presently highlighting the pressures posed by the modern reality of paid work and family commitments and has warned that these pressures may well be the reason that fertility rates in Australia are at risk. These are very real issues and they are always ignored by the largely male right-wing lobby group which likes to periodically raise the issue of abortion and suggest various methods of ‘punishment’ such as the abolition of Medicare funding, prolonged counselling and other penalties which might serve to deter or prevent women from having legal abortions. Don’t they realise that they are tackling the problem at the wrong end? Instead of applying financial penalties to women after an abortion, this government should in the first instance acknowledge women’s choice and seek actively to recognise the very real concerns, financial and other, that can force women to the decision to have an abortion.

Two years ago the issue of maternity leave in Australia received a great deal of attention, although not a lot of it by this government. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner then pointed out:

The absence of a national scheme [of paid maternity leave] means that Australian women will continue to return to work early and leave their children early, hardly in step with a so-called family-focused nation such as ours. Meanwhile women in all other OECD countries, except the United States, are able to remain at home for at least those first ... months.

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner said that it is the responsibility of the government to provide a comparable maternity leave scheme to those in other OECD countries, and urged this country ‘to commit to a national scheme of paid maternity leave as soon as possible’. Yet, despite the government’s alternative scheme of the maternity allowance to be phased in over some years, Australia’s embarrassing reservation to the maternity leave provision of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, remains.

The government’s disdain of women’s issues has been demonstrated by its downgrading of the Office of the Status of Women—relegated to another department from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and renamed the Office for Women—and by its cavalier approach to the funding of women’s organisations and programs. A prime example has been the campaign to combat violence against women, which has had a sorry history under the Howard government. Delays and lack of commitment have been displayed by the ‘borrowing’ of domestic violence program funding for the terrorism fridge magnets; the last-minute pulling out of the No Respect, No Relationship campaign and its substitution six months later by a watered-down campaign which was more palatable to the Prime Min-
ister’s male advisers; and now the lack of ongoing funding after July 2005, or the failure to date to announce ongoing funding for the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program.

Indigenous women have been particularly badly served by this government, perhaps especially in its lack of commitment to initiatives to combat Indigenous family violence and to Indigenous health measures. Life expectancy for Indigenous women has actually decreased since 1996 and is now 62.8 years.

In education as well as in employment this government has disadvantaged women. In the science and mathematics fields women continue to battle against systems which traditionally enrol or employ far more males than females. In New South Wales a 2002 discussion paper on the placement process for selective high schools revealed that, of the students who applied, girls had a far lower acceptance rate than boys—19 per cent of the girls who applied were accepted as opposed to 24 per cent of the boys who applied. In Victoria selective high schools cater for about 32 per cent more boys than girls. Insufficient TAFE places have meant that about 20,000 women miss out on TAFE courses each year. We are desperately short of nurses and teachers, traditionally professions which have attracted women, yet thousands of students have failed to gain places in nursing and teacher training courses.

It is not surprising then that the research report on women’s lives, which was released today by the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues finds that women in general have become increasingly unhappy, lonely and unhealthy. Helen Keller, convenor of the Australian Women’s Health Network, pointed to the demands made on women, especially those who are sole parents. These women, she said, have ‘many, many things on their minds in terms of raising children and juggling custody issues, managing paid work and perhaps trying to further their education’.

Many of the gains which were made in the status of women’s issues to 1996 have been eroded by the coalition government since that time. The Howard government will not be able to continue to try to camouflage or talk around the deterioration of the living standards of women and families. Whilst I am yet to read the report which was released today entitled Women in Australia 2004, it is very clear that the numbers expressed in that document show a very disturbing picture of the trend. From my perspective, from having talked to my constituents and women around the country, that is their experience. Life is getting more difficult to handle, particularly with respect to the balance of work and family. Those pressures are getting greater. Certainly the prospect of relieving some of that pressure under the Howard government is nonexistent.

On a more personal note, I would like to dedicate today’s International Women’s Day to grandmothers. I would like to acknowledge the care that they have provided to their families, their children and their grandchildren for all their lives. I would also like to acknowledge those who continue to provide care for grandmothers as well. They are very special people in my heart, and my thoughts are with both of my grandmothers today.

Senator TROETH (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) (4.07 p.m.)—I am very pleased to rise today to speak on this matter of public importance largely because I consider that for women, in the continuum of time since their opportunities really began to open up—after, let us say, the mid-1950s—the present eight or nine years of the Howard government have been a time of opportunity and choice, which con-
tinues to expand. No-one denies that women play many roles as they move through their life span. They have different needs at different times of their lives, according to education, family, work and retirement. Certainly government policies, insofar as they can, under this government have endeavoured to provide help to women and families at various stages.

Addressing point (a), the decline in women’s wages compared with men’s wages, I would point out that under the coalition, since 1996, full-time adult ordinary time earnings for women have increased in real terms—that is, after taking account of inflation—by $152 per week. This is a 21 per cent real increase and represents an annual rate of growth in real earnings of 2.2 per cent. Over this period, average weekly earnings for females have grown by more than 35 per cent compared with 34 per cent for men. While it is correct that the absolute gap between male and female earnings over this period has increased, the relativity of female earnings to male earnings has improved. It is important that these figures be viewed in the context of the prevalence of part-time working arrangements for women. Many women prefer part-time employment as it suits their domestic arrangements and they are able to fit in with their partner, their children and any other commitments they have, such as caring for elderly parents. Forty five per cent of female employment is part time compared to 15 per cent for men.

Contrasting that with the situation under the previous Labor government, women’s real earnings grew at an annual rate of just 0.6 per cent. The claim made by Senator Lundy that women’s earnings grew annually by 5.9 per cent under Labor and 4.6 per cent under the coalition are not about the rate of earnings; they are claims about the rate of inflation. In contrast to these claims, we need to consider the very real gains that have been made by women under this government.

Effective marginal tax rates may act as a barrier to increasing the participation of women and sole parents. The level of tax rates is not the only barrier to participation. But, if we are to consider tax rates, it would be well known to every Australian voter that prior to the A New Tax System, introduced by this government in 1998, many families were facing a marginal tax rate of 34c in the dollar and family payment withdrawal rates of 50c in the dollar. This government has significantly cut taxes through three stages of personal income tax cuts, which have benefited women along with everybody else.

On 1 July 2000, we introduced A New Tax System, which represented a major restructuring of the Australian tax system. It continued in the 2003-04 budget, with tax thresholds being further adjusted. The 2004-05 budget tax cuts are the third element of our tax reform. We will continue our reform of the income tax scales through increases in the income thresholds at which the top two tax rates start to apply. Over this time, this has meant that around 80 per cent of taxpayers will pay a marginal rate of tax no higher than 30 per cent. We also reduced the taper rate between the maximum and base rate of the family tax benefit to 20 per cent, which reduced effective marginal tax rates for low- to middle-income families. Compared with 1999, effective marginal tax rates for families have fallen from 84 per cent to 50 per cent—a real decrease in anyone’s terms.

As I said, the level of tax rates is not the only barrier to participation. When we look at the help that has been provided for sole parents and the help that we provide with the cost of raising children, around two million families with 3.5 million children have been assisted through the family tax benefit and the vast majority of Australian families with
dependent children are now eligible to receive the family tax benefit. Not only is there a lump sum payment of $600 per child to parents eligible to receive it, but there will be an ongoing $600 increase in the level of family tax benefit part A payment per child. Returns from working have increased for many families with a reduction in the taper rate in part A and part B from 30 per cent to 20 per cent from 1 July 2004. From 1 July 2005, secondary income earners who return to work after caring for a child will be able to keep the family tax benefit part B that was received prior to their return to the work force. If that is not helping to increase participation rates, I would like to know what is—because more families will be able to keep more of their assistance as their family earnings increase, more families have become eligible for family tax benefit, and the family tax benefit part B income threshold has been increased so that secondary earners are now able to earn more income before their income affects their family tax benefit entitlement and they lose their family tax benefit part B entitlement. We are committed to increasing the maximum rate of family tax benefit part B by $300 from July 2005.

Tax rates are nondiscriminatory and it is important that women’s participation in the work force is increasing. In 1996, 49.6 per cent of Australian women were in employment. That figure has now risen to 53.6 per cent, with the strong growth of our economy. Since 1996, 479,300 jobs have been created, of which 339,000 are full-time, which reflects the diversity of the aspirations of Australian women. That equates to more than half the total number of created jobs. Not only that, but there has been remarkable growth in the employment of older women.

The proportion of 55- to 59-year-old women in paid work has risen from around 39 per cent to over 52 per cent in just over eight years, and even stronger growth has been achieved by women aged 60 to 64 years. With the ageing of the population, it is very important that older workers who want to stay in their jobs can do so to boost their retirement savings, and it is very gratifying to see that employers are accepting that older workers are able to stay on at their jobs. Transition to Work services have also helped those women who want to go back to work after raising their family to go back to work, and participants receive help and guidance on possible career directions.

So we have more jobs, higher earnings, better support for families and a tax system that allows Australians to retain more of the fruits of their labour. Surely this is about achieving a better balance between work and family. I do not have time to cover it in any great detail, but I do assure the Senate that access to and the affordability of child care has increased remarkably since the coalition came to office. Not only have we provided a better child-care rebate, we have provided extra help, such as extra outside school hours care places, more family day care places and generally increased child-care services—from 7,932 to 10,126, up 28 per cent.

I am delighted to say that the position of women has improved remarkably in that 50 year continuum that I spoke about, and many women these days are delighted at the choice they have, not only of occupation but also of the way they structure their family and work responsibilities. That has been provided by their own very hard-working endeavours and, to some extent, the far-sighted policies of this government, which has continued to give women a very fair go.

Senator WONG (South Australia) (4.17 p.m.)—I am very pleased on this International Women’s Day to speak on the matter of public importance put before the Senate by Senator Lundy. It gives us the opportunity to address some of the important issues and
barriers facing Australian women at this time. International Women’s Day is obviously a day on which we celebrate the achievements of women in Australia and around the world and also recognise what is yet to be done both in Australia and around the world. I want to talk very briefly today about the issue of the government’s broader economic agenda across a range of portfolio areas and the way it has a differential gender impact. I want to talk about the government’s economic agenda and show, in some areas particularly, how it negatively impacts on women. The first point is in the area of their industrial relations reform.

We had, one might say, a rare moment of honesty from Senator Troeth, who acknowledged that in absolute terms there had been an increase in the differential between men’s and women’s pay. That is the case. It is the case in this country—where men have been better paid than women, and in particular, better paid than women in low-paid areas where women remain vastly over-represented in low-paid jobs and part-time and casual employment, and that is one of the reasons why women’s earnings are not as good relative to men’s.

Of course, for women in those low-paid areas one of the main ways, and often the primary and only way, in which they get wage increases is through adjustments to award minimum wages. That is one of the primary ways in which the women of this country in low-paid work actually get better wages and conditions. So when this government talks about stripping away awards, when it starts to question the basis of the minimum wage, we should understand that it is talking about removing one of the mechanisms which has improved gender equity in this country. We should understand it is talking about removing institutions, laws and a regulatory framework which has advantaged women in Australia—particularly low-paid women and women with little economic clout. That is the effect of many of the government’s industrial relations reforms.

I also want to talk briefly in the time that I have allotted about the issue of workforce participation, but first I will mention the issue of effective marginal tax rates. This is a particular issue for women. Women on various welfare benefits who move from the benefit into work often face very punishing effective marginal tax rates. These EMTRs sap the incentive to work, punish people for earning and clearly act as a barrier to the move from welfare to work, and this has particular relevance to women. This is not a new discussion. This is a discussion that has been had for many years. It is well documented that when you move off a benefit into part-time work you face very high effective marginal tax rates and in some situations it is in fact financially—in the short term, at least—less beneficial to move into work than to stay on your benefit. This is an issue the government has talked about for a long time. It has done very little to address these issues.

I note that when Minister Dutton, who is the Minister for Workforce Participation, gave a rather discursive interview on the priorities in his area in December last year he said that he was “keen to boost training opportunities for mothers returning to work”—
and I will come to that later, given what has been recently announced and what Minister Abetz said to the Senate in question time.

Minister Dutton also said:

We’ve got disincentives for middle-income earners in terms of childcare costs and effective tax rates ... We want to make sure we have a system that provides choices for parents—to stay at home and a choice to make it financially rewarding to return to work.

In other words, let us address the issue of the child-care supply problem, let us address the issue of child-care affordability and let us also address the effective marginal tax rates, which act as a barrier for the move from welfare to work.

As the Reserve Bank outlined earlier this month, welfare and tax reform have to be high on the economic agenda. The Governor of the Reserve Bank indicated that they are having an effect on labour force participation and, in his words, ‘they are holding our levels of participation down’. We say that is absolutely obvious to anybody who looks at those tax rates. That has a particular impact on women. This issue of the EMTRs has been so well documented over the nine years of this government as to have become notorious.

Unfortunately, although reform has been floated and promised and discussed we have had very little action. We have had very little reform. In fact, even with all the welfare to work policy leaks that the government engaged in prior to their cabinet strategy meeting where they discussed the work and welfare issues, it was clear that the government is again going to squib on trying to reform our tax and welfare system so as to move these marginal tax rates which act as a barrier to moving into the work force. I could be wrong. Minister Dutton or Minister Andrews may in fact announce a proper welfare reform policy that actually deals with some of these disincentives. But from what we have seen in the paper in the leaks that have come from the government it does not appear that this is high on the agenda.

We can say what is high on the agenda: coercion—the stick without much carrot. That is demonstrated across a range of areas but most relevantly today it is demonstrated in the area of sole parents. I said earlier that Minister Dutton said that training opportunities were one thing that he wanted to ensure were provided. That was a priority for him. What is the government’s plan so far for sole parents, the majority of whom are women? What is the government doing to actually support and encourage sole parents back into the work force? What are they doing to invest in the capacity of these sole parents—most of whom are women, although some are men—to engage in the work force? What we have so far is a program along the lines of Work for the Dole that has no mandated training component and which would require participation. People would participate in it but would not necessarily get trained.

If you recall, when Senator Abetz was asked about this issue today in question time he barely knew what was being discussed. He represents the Minister for Workforce Participation and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. This is a pilot that is being run out of that portfolio. I do not recall the minister in his answer mentioning any training that was going to be provided to sole parents who were prepared to participate in that pilot. Yet again, we see the government not being prepared to invest in sole parents. As I said, many of these people are women. If we are going to be serious about giving lone parents, the majority of whom are women, the skills and the capacity to move off welfare into work so that their futures and the futures of their families are better, we have to invest in supporting them. We have to invest in skills development, training and child care so as to ensure that
women who want to engage in training or work and who are sole parents have access to affordable child care. Frankly, it is ludicrous to think that the position of many of these women will be improved simply by making it more difficult for them to continue to access the sole parent benefit without also investing in what they require in order to move from welfare to work.

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (4.27 p.m.)—I apologise for not being here for the call earlier. I was outside at the women’s afternoon tea. The government have argued here in the chamber today that they have done great things for women since 1996, citing increased employment and a slight increase in average weekly earnings. Yet we all know that there remains a significant wage gap between men and women in Australia.

We still have one of the lowest female workplace participation rates in the OECD. Discrimination in the workplace based on pregnancy has increased. Australia is one of only two OECD countries without government funded paid maternity leave. Women continue to be underrepresented in senior positions, on boards and in politics and women as single parents and mature age women face very high levels of poverty. Australia has one of the lowest female work force participation rates in the OECD. A recent OECD report found that full-time participation for women aged between 25 and 54 in Australia was 20 per cent below the OECD average. That report also found that Australia has some of the least family friendly policies for working mothers in the developed world.

Improving women’s wages to close the gender pay gap is fundamental to women’s equality, since it increases women’s labour market attachment, financial independence and life choices. When we compare the full-time ordinary time earnings—which excludes overtime—on average women are paid 15 per cent less than men. Taking into account inflation, this gap has been reduced by a measly two per cent since 1996. The government has recently signalled changes to the industrial relations system, which we say could threaten the small closure of the gender pay gap and perhaps do worse. Both the Victorian and Western Australian state governments have undertaken a review of the gender pay gap. It is imperative that the federal government also initiates an inquiry into the gender pay gap which should consider closely their proposed workplace relations changes.

High effective tax rates also act as a disincentive to women entering the work force. Returning to work or taking on additional work results in some benefits being withdrawn and, together with the loss of health benefits and other concessions, the high effective marginal tax rate actually presents a disincentive to work, particularly when accompanied by high child-care costs. It impacts on single women but the highest proportion of income is lost by second earners in low-wage families—typically partnered women returning to work after having a child.

The impact of high effective marginal tax rates is that sole parents lose about 40 per cent of their earned income in taxes and benefits, and low-wage families lose almost 70 per cent—more than twice the amount of a high wage-earning family. The solution lies in not only welfare reform but also tax and labour market reform. On the one hand, the tax-free threshold, currently set at $6,000, is far too low. The Democrats argue there is a good case for raising it to $10,000 in order to boost low wage earners’ take-home pay. At the same time, the labour market needs to be overhauled to improve employment prospects for women.
Lack of child care is also a barrier to work force participation. In March 2004, more than 160,000 women were interested in working but had not looked for work because of a lack of access to affordable child care. The crises in child care are fourfold: shortage of places, funding, cost and wages. Child-care costs have increased 32 per cent over the past two years—more than six times the rate of inflation and around six times the rate of increase in government child-care benefits. The government’s lack of action in providing affordable and accessible child care is very obvious, with the demand for child care still running at unprecedented levels of unmet need.

Trying to find child care for babies aged two years and younger can be a nightmare for many parents who find themselves on long waiting lists. Of course, even if a spot does become available it may not suit the parents’ work hours, or it may require additional travel, meaning that children have to stay in child care longer to take into account additional travel time. In my home state, I recently met with a local group in the Port Phillip area who are campaigning for more child-care places. There, 1,600 children are waiting for places, and centres have closed down in inner Melbourne because of real estate values. There is much more profit in housing development than there is in child care. Affordable, quality child care is vital for women when making work and family choices. Instead of paying baby bonuses to wealthy stay-at-home mothers, we say that this government should invest in affordable and available out-of-school-hours care and vacation care for Australian children to enable women to participate equally.

In addition to the issues I have already mentioned, the government should also legislate for family friendly workplace practices, like enabling women to convert full-time jobs to part time once they return to the workplace after having children; introducing government-funded paid maternity leave at 14 weeks, paid at the minimum wage; and eliminating violence against women. All of these things impact on women’s workplace participation, financial independence and life choices.

Senator FERRIS (South Australia) (4.33 p.m.)—I remember what I was doing on the first International Women’s Day. I lived in Sydney, I had an outdoor toilet that had no light and lots of spiders, and my children were frightened by the spiders. So I fumigated the toilet, painted it and set up a new candleholder in it. That is how I spent my first International Women’s Day, but I do remember thinking at the time: this is my choice and isn’t it great that I have the choice? So, on this very significant day for women throughout the world, the question has to be asked: why are the Labor opposition refusing to look at the facts that are important to Australian women, whatever they are doing today or any other day? Our government have a policy of opportunity and, importantly, of choice for Australian women, and we remain strongly committed to policies that assist women in the myriad of roles that they fulfil throughout their lives.

Contrary to Senator Lundy’s suggestion of a decline in women’s wages compared with those of men, there has in fact been a real increase. Why does Senator Lundy continue to perpetrate untruths? Since our election in 1996, female total average weekly earnings have risen from around $450 to around $610, as at December 2004. Over this period, average weekly earnings for women have grown by more than 35 per cent. This compares to around 34 per cent for males. Senator Lundy, why don’t you want to celebrate these achievements on International Women’s Day today?
There has also been a dramatic increase in the number of women who choose to work part time—a choice that I was making on International Women’s Day 30 years ago. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of women who choose to work part time. They go to work when their children go to school, and they are home when the children come home. What a choice they make—and what a choice they are able to make. In fact, around 45 per cent of female employment is part time, compared with only 15 per cent of male employment. For many of those women, it is a choice that they are making. They do not want to work full time.

In addition, women’s earnings have increased as a proportion of men’s earnings, rising from about 83 per cent in February 1996 to almost 85 per cent today. This gap continues to close under this government. The claim that Senator Lundy has made, that women’s earnings grew annually by 5.9 per cent under Labor and 4.6 per cent under the coalition, is not a claim about the rate of earnings. On the contrary, it is a claim about the rate of inflation in Australia. Once Labor’s record on inflation and escalating prices is taken into account, the figure of 5.9 per cent which is claimed by the opposition shrinks to an amazing 0.6 per cent. What a disgraceful record for women in the Labor Party.

The recent unemployment figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal even more good news for women on this very special day. In my home state of South Australia, the Labor Minister for the Status of Women, the Hon. Stephanie Key, trumpedet the fact that the trend in the unemployment rate for women in South Australia fell below five per cent to 4.9 per cent in January 2005, and this put the unemployment rate for women in South Australia below the national average of 5.2 per cent. Of course, this figure, which is very good news for South Australian women, is in no way due to anything but the strong economy that the Howard government has presided over since its election. It is something that Senator Lundy’s state colleagues are only too happy to claim the credit for in South Australia. Perhaps Stephanie Key should pick up the phone and celebrate South Australia’s great record in employment with Senator Lundy.

But wait, there is even more good news for women today. Women’s participation in the work force has also risen with the Howard government’s election in 1996, when 49.6 per cent of Australian women were employed. With the strong growth in the Australian economy, this has risen to a clear majority of Australian women at work, with the figure currently standing at 53.6 per cent. That represents thousands of women re-entering the work force. Importantly, there has been significant growth in the employment of older women. According to the latest figures, the proportion of women in the 55- to 59-year-old age bracket in paid work has risen from 39 per cent to over 52 per cent in just over eight years during the term of the John Howard led government. Even stronger growth has been achieved by women aged 60 to 64 years, where the employment to population ratio for those women has grown from around 18 per cent to over 30 per cent. These figures are particularly pleasing because they show that older women are beginning to achieve financial independence, something that we are all pleased to see.

This government has significantly increased family benefits. Why is this important? Let me tell you. The $19.2 billion More Help for Families package follows upon substantial increases in assistance as part of the new tax system. The reduced family tax benefit, the FTB, and the taper rates applying from 1 July 2004 now allow many families to keep more of their assistance when their
incomes increase. Prior to changes under that new tax system, many families faced marginal tax rates of 34c in the dollar and the family tax withdrawal rate stood at 50c in the dollar. This government, our government, the John Howard led government, has significantly cut taxes and in particular significant relief has been provided to all Australians—men, women and families—through the three stages of personal income tax cuts. The 2004-05 budget tax cuts are a third element of tax reform under this government.

Senator Lundy’s criticisms of child care are even more incredible. They would be laughable if they were not tragic.

Senator Lundy—Tell that to my constituents who cannot get their kids into child care.

Senator FERRIS—Just have a listen, Senator Lundy, to the tragedy of what your government left. This government spends more on child care than any former Labor government ever did. In fact, $8.8 billion is now spent on child care.

Senator Coonan interjecting—

Senator FERRIS—Yes, $8.8 billion, Senator Coonan—an extraordinary amount of money and the largest amount of money ever spent by any federal government on child care. In actual dollar terms, in its first six years this government spent more than double, Senator Lundy, on child care than the former Labor government spent in its entire last six years in office. Senator Lundy, you should hang your head in shame. What is Senator Lundy on about? Let us get it straight. The number of government funded child-care places has risen from 306,500 to 561,900, an increase of 83 per cent. That is an extraordinary figure on this important day.

(Time expired)

Senator NETTLE (New South Wales) (4.41 p.m.)—International Women’s Day is a time to celebrate the achievements of women and there have been many achievements of women, but they have not been achievements of this government. This government has failed to provide a national paid parental leave scheme, leaving Australia as one of only two OECD countries not to have such a scheme. This government has failed to address critical issues in child care: proper planning, affordable care, and decent wages for child-care workers. Instead, it wants to squander public funds on a tax rebate that will give the most funds to those who need it least.

This government has also undermined the Office of the Status of Women and ceased the production of a women’s budget statement. The government has promoted an industrial relations system that under the guise of flexibility has expanded casual work as a substitute for secure work with basic entitlements, prospects for advancement and decent wages. And it is women who are getting these insecure jobs with reduced entitlements. This government believes that those sole parents who are raising young children—as if the struggle to raise young children by themselves is not enough—should have new obligations enforced upon them whilst raising children alone and whilst they are caring for their young children.

Women do the bulk of the unpaid caring work in our society, whether it be looking after ill parents, children or those who are mentally ill or have a mental or physical disability, but we fail as a society to give the kind of support that we should and to recognise the contributions that these women make. The government has underfunded and cut services to public health, education and training, all vital services to women and their families. More and more people on low and middle incomes are being required to pay large payments for services that once were publicly funded. This puts pressure on women trying to manage weekly budgets and restricts their further choices.
We now also have an attack from conservative politicians on one of the most fundamental rights of every woman—that is, the right to control her own fertility. This right is critical to a woman’s health and her ability to control her life. The Prime Minister has failed to discourage this divisive public debate, which can serve no useful purpose other than to encourage those who would deny a woman the right to control her fertility, including the right to terminate a pregnancy. It is an absolutely absurd argument to try to force a woman to continue with a pregnancy she cannot or does not want to continue.

If only there was more to celebrate in this government’s actions. Instead, we are left to celebrate the work of many other millions of women across this country who continue to advocate for these changes, who continue to advocate for the rights of women and who continue to advocate for the government to take seriously their concerns and the issues that impact on their capacity to engage in public life, to engage in the work force and civil society. These issues should and can be addressed. (Time expired)

Senator CROSSIN (Northern Territory) (4.44 p.m.)—International Women’s Day does provide us with an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women in this country. There are certainly many individuals who have achieved great things in this country, particularly women, no doubt and no less—for example, the women from Alice Springs who in the last fortnight won national awards for the outstanding work and contribution they have made to their community. But I think it is also a time for us to reflect on and look at the scorecard for the status of women in this country.

Just a couple of days ago, Minister Patterson tabled in New York a statement on the Beijing Commission on the Status of Women for the 49th session, or, as it is now commonly being called, Beijing Plus 10. It is a three-page document. What I want to do is make some comments about what is not in the document. There are a lot of statements in there that may look and sound fine in print, but if you look at what is not said and peel away some of the rhetoric then we really get to the truth. In the statement that was tabled in New York, this government says:

In Australia, we have made significant inroads across the Beijing Platform for Action’s 12 critical areas. … women have the same or better outcomes … in … education and health, and continue to make steady progress …

That is not the case. With regard to education, since 1996 the Howard government have slashed $5 billion from universities, and HECS fees have nearly doubled. Women now attending university will be paying an increase in their HECS debt, and of course, from this year, most of those women will incur a 25 per cent increase in their HECS payments. In last year’s budget there was no increase in funding above indexation for the 2.5 million children in government schools. There were no extra university places and there were no new TAFE places. So there are not enough TAFE or university places for women. In fact, over 20,000 women wanting to undertake further study are turned away each year.

With regard to health, this government has destroyed Medicare and bulk-billing. We know that women use Medicare services 50 per cent more than men, particularly during the years in which they opt to have children. Every year, 600,000 families, a third of them receiving payments from this government, also receive an average debt of $900. If everything was in fact bright and rosy in the garden in terms of women achieving the same or better outcomes in health, why is it then that, since 1996, the life expectancy of
Indigenous women in this country has decreased significantly and is now 62.8 years?

This government also says that women’s participation in full-time and part-time employment has increased. Since 1996, the gap between men’s and women’s total average wage has grown by $91 a week. Australia lags behind all other OECD countries by not supporting maternity or paternity leave. The number of women in casual work has increased to 1.2 million, with no access to paid leave to look after their families while they are doing that work. Women’s earnings have significant implications for their immediate and long-term financial security which have not been addressed by this government. We know that 27 per cent of women aged between 25 and 54—the key child-bearing and child-rearing years, as I said—are in casual jobs and that women’s growing participation in the work force has contributed to massive increases in the tax revenue collected by this government. However, only around 12 per cent of women earn more than $52,000, leaving the tax cuts that were promised in last year’s budget out of reach for 90 per cent of working women. That was not said in the Beijing statement.

The statement by this government also says:

Australia attaches a high priority to combating domestic violence and sexual assault …

and:

Targeting family violence and child protection in Indigenous communities is a key priority.

What a joke! What an absolute joke! This statement does not talk about the $10 million last year that was taken out of money to prevent domestic violence—to pay for the security fridge magnets. This statement does not talk about the botched Partnerships Against Domestic Violence campaign or the No Respect, No Relationship program that was cancelled, rebadged, redesigned and then finally run in a less significant way. (Time expired)

Senator KNOWLES (Western Australia) (4.50 p.m.)—The Labor Party really know no shame. To come in here today and play fast and loose with the truth yet again, on International Women’s Day, is nothing but shameful. But it does not seem to matter to them; as long as I have been here, it has not mattered to them. I want to come back to the actual subjects that were raised by Senator Lundy in this MPI.

First of all, they claim that the federal government needs to ‘redress the decline in women’s wages compared with men’s over the life of the Howard government’. Just look at the facts, Senator Lundy; it would be a great start, I would put to you. Wages have increased by 21 per cent, at an annual growth rate of 2.2 per cent. Under the Labor Party it was 0.6 per cent. So why on earth would the Labor Party want to come in here and claim that there has been a decline in women’s wages compared with men’s? Women’s earnings as a proportion of men’s earnings have gone up from 83.2 per cent to 84.8 per cent. So, it does not matter which way you look at it: women’s earnings have actually gone up. But the Labor Party will come in here or go outside and say the reverse. It is simply untrue.

Part (2) of Senator Lundy’s MPI is:

(2) develop a solution to punishing effective marginal tax rates which act as a barrier to increasing the participation of women and sole parents in particular in paid work …

What a joke for the Labor Party to come in here and have the gall to talk about tax! They are the people who have taxed the living daylights out of every earner. Here we go once again: the facts do not substantiate the claim—

Senator Lundy interjecting—

Senator Crossin interjecting—
Senator KNOWLES—and they scream like a bunch of banshees over there because they do not like the fact that prior to the new tax changes many families were facing a marginal tax rate of 34c in the dollar and a family payment withdrawal rate of 50c in the dollar. The government has significantly cut taxes. In particular, the government has provided significant tax relief to all Australians in three stages of personal income tax cuts. It is not one, not two but three stages, and the Labor Party come in here and ignore that today. How can they possibly be so blind? Is it any wonder no-one voted for them? But the fact of the matter is that the effective marginal tax rates have gone down, not up.

The third issue that Senator Lundy raised was that the federal government should increase access to affordable child care, and ensure that the supply and cost of child care makes child care available et cetera. Once again, they completely and utterly ignore the facts. The number of Australian government funded child-care places and services has increased, not declined. Child-care places have increased from 306,500 to 561,000, up 83 per cent—a mere 83 per cent—but, as Senator Ferris said a moment ago, the most important statistic that they carefully ignore is that in the six years to 2003-04 around $8.8 billion was spent on child care and that equates to more than double Labor’s spending in the last six years of office. But they come in here and completely ignore the truth. It happens day in and day out.

Let us have a look at women in the work force, for example. Since 1996 full-time adult ordinary time earnings for women have increased in real terms. That is after taking account of inflation. They have increased by $153 a week. The Labor Party would have one think otherwise, but that is a 21 per cent real increase, as I said before, and that represents an annual increase of 2.2 per cent. Looking at women in jobs, since 1996—

Senator Crossin interjecting—
Senator Lundy interjecting—

Senator KNOWLES—It is worth noting that they have not stopped screeching like a bunch of banshees since I started, because they simply cannot tell fact from fiction. They want to come in here and completely misrepresent the facts. Since 1996 women have benefited from the creation of 819,200 new jobs—53 per cent of the total of more than 1.5 million new jobs that have been created by this government. One would think that on International Women’s Day they could actually come in here and say, ‘Isn’t that fantastic to think that—

Senator Crossin—But they’re casuals.

Senator KNOWLES—Here we go. We have Senator Crossin over there once again whingeing, ‘But they’re casuals.’ The Labor Party just does not get it. There are a lot of women out there who have children and family responsibilities who actually want casual work, and the Labor Party cannot understand that. It cannot comprehend it. This additional employment for women is composed of 339,000 full-time jobs—and do you want to go out there and repeat that, Senator Crossin?—and 479,300 part-time jobs because that in many cases is exactly what women want. It would be a really pleasant change for the Labor Party to come in here and actually tell the truth about what is happening with women in the work force, what is happening with child care and what is happening with tax rates instead of coming in here with this little litany of fibs.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Brandis)—Order! The discussion of matters of public importance is concluded.
Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales) (4.57 p.m.)—I present the 120th report of the Committee of Privileges, entitled Possible unauthorised disclosure of private deliberations or draft report of Select Committee on the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United States.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Senator FAULKNER—I was very worried that that motion may not have found favour with the Senate. I seek leave to move a motion relating to the report.

Leave granted.

Senator FAULKNER—I move:

That the Senate endorse the finding at paragraph 1.25 of the 120th report of the Committee of Privileges.

On 5 August 2004, the Committee on Privileges received a reference which involved unauthorised disclosure of private deliberations and the draft report of the Select Committee on the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United States. On the weekend of 31 July to 1 August 2004, the media gave what purported to be accounts of a discussion at a meeting held on Friday evening, 30 July, and the content of the committee’s draft report. Furthermore, at a press conference given the following Monday, three members of the committee distributed a document which included references to the draft chair’s report. For the reasons outlined in this report, summarised at paragraph 1.24, the Committee on Privileges has concluded that it should not find that contempt have occurred. These conclusions are reflected in the finding for which the committee now seeks Senate endorsement. I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.
cation References Committee for matters relating to education.

Question agreed to.

ASIO, ASIS and DSD Committee

Membership

Message received from the House of Representatives notifying the Senate of the appointment of Mr Byrne to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD in place of Mr Beazley.

Administration of Indigenous Affairs Committee

Report

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (5.02 p.m.)—I present the report of the Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs entitled After ATSIC—Life in the mainstream? together with the Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Senator MOORE—I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the report.

Leave granted.

Senator MOORE—I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

This report comes from a committee that has actually operated in two parts, as a result of the October 2004 election. On 16 July 2004 the Senate resolved to appoint a Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs to report by 31 October 2004. The committee naturally ceased activities upon the end of the 40th Parliament in September 2004 and was reconstituted on 17 November with the terms of references unchanged and a new reporting date of today. There were some amendments to the membership of the committee and we duly continued the work.

This committee is most honoured to have had the opportunity to meet with people across most of Australia to hear their views about what is going to happen or is proposed to happen with changes to Aboriginal affairs in our country. We received over 250 submissions from people who truly cared about these issues and were able to meet with them in public meetings across four states. I want to say this afternoon that, on behalf of the committee, I apologise to those states which we were unable to visit to listen to their concerns because of the tight time frame. However, your voices have been heard. Indeed, a message from our committee must be that the voices must be heard. No longer can Indigenous people in our country feel that when we are talking about the administration of Indigenous affairs they are silent or invisible—a complaint that was made often to our committee.

In terms of the structure of the report, it is in five chapters with a preface. Firstly, we do a background to the whole inquiry—why it was called and how it is going to operate. Chapter 2 is about the evolution of ATSIC and the history of the review and also contains some indication of the disadvantage which everybody agrees Indigenous people live through in our country. There is no disagreement that there is disadvantage and there probably is little disagreement about the need for change, but there is disagreement about how the voices should be heard.

Chapter 3 talks about what is actually happening—the effects of the legislation. In this chapter we make very clear as a committee that in many ways our work has been done. We have legislation coming before this place soon talking about legalities of ATSIC. In reality, the government has already put in place a range of administrative changes which have taken the resources, tasks and projects of ATSIC and mainstreamed them into other government departments. They have also taken the people of ATSIC and spread them out to other government de-
partments and in some cases out of the system altogether. So a real issue is exactly what effects the legislation will have on the community, the government and the way Indigenous affairs are seen across Australia.

Chapter 4 looks at the absolutely key issue of how representation is achieved by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our country. This caused significant comment and debate across all our submissions and our hearings. There is no right answer, but there is one key point: the Aboriginal people must be part of this process. It is their representation and really should not be imposed in any way by other people who think they know best. Chapter 5 looks at the issue of mainstreaming, which is the core element of the government’s approach to how services will be delivered in the future. We heard from people about the difference between the new mainstreaming and the old mainstreaming. But it is a core issue for everybody to have that leap of trust to ensure that people will have their voices heard, will be part of the delivery of services and will have faith in what is going on. There are 12 recommendations in the report. Not all are agreed.

However, at this stage, I really want to thank the members of the committee, who have been so supportive, so patient and cooperative. I particularly want to thank the secretariat, some of whom are sitting in the gallery this evening. I want to thank Jonathan, Alison, Tim and Ian. Thank you for your help and support. Maybe now we will be able to achieve what Alison Anderson, ATSIC commissioner, hoped for, which was to have real representation. But her real concern was that, ‘Once again, we may be experimented on and that in another five to 10 years we will come back and discuss exactly what went wrong.’

**Senator JOHNSTON** (Western Australia) (5.07 p.m.)—Briefly, in the five minutes that I have been allotted, I want to address some of the misconceptions that are bound up in the majority report. I found it very much a disturbing event to some extent to be swept up in the political charade of the clayton’s report that has been put before the Senate on this occasion. Indeed, the minority report sets out all of the shortcomings. Before I get into the report, may I congratulate the chair on a very fine job. I believe it is the first select committee Senator Moore has chaired, and I thought she did a magnificent job. It is a pity that those around her and supporting her have taken the report and used it for crass political purposes, because I believe that the matter of Indigenous affairs should always be above politics. We should strive as hard and as long as is necessary to have a bipartisan approach to what are some of the most crucially difficult issues confronting public policy and governance in Australia today.

This report contains a broad number of complete misconceptions. What we found when we went out to Alice Springs, Queensland and New South Wales—in all of the places that I attended—was a lethargy, a complete lack of upset and lack of passion with respect to the decline and the abolition of ATSIC as is proposed by the government’s legislation. I was expecting that there would be outrage or some degree of aggression towards the legislation, but, no, the opposite was the case. The constituency of ATSIC has been let down and indeed it has lain dormant for much longer than I now understand it should have.

This Labor framework of 1989 has, in fact, been one of the most monumental public policy failures this country has ever seen. It has delivered a system of representation to Aboriginal people on a maximum of 20 per cent of the vote. That is how representative ATSIC was at the end. When I found out the
salaries and wages of ATSIC commissioners, I thought to myself, gee, I know a lot of people out in the bush in Western Australia who could really use some good water, a bit of good medicine, some transportation and some telecommunications on the sort of money that those people are receiving. At the end of the day, when we went to Alice Springs, there was simply a sense of relief that ATSIC had gone. I was in fact surprised and, I must say, the sense I came away with after listening to these people was that the government should have done this a lot sooner than it did.

ATSIC was dilatory, unrepresentative, unsuccessful and, in short, a failure. There were very few apologists for ATSIC. Indeed, when Chairman Clark came before us I put to him this question: how is it, if things are so outrageously bad and you have been so badly treated and your natural justice has been so abused, that you do not have a friend in the world? The fact is this: the Labor Party support the abolition of ATSIC. That is the crucial thing that every Aboriginal person in Australia needs to understand. The Labor Party support the fundamental tenet of the great, bold initiative of this legislation. To some great extent that is why it is there.

The other great mystical hypocrisy in all of this is that they have gone through this charade pretending to pander to those people who have some sense of outrage whilst all the time saying, ‘Yes, we’re going to abolish it,’ and not having a policy on the table. There is no policy on the table. What is the Labor Party proposing in terms of representation for Aboriginal people to replace ATSIC? It is a round number before one: a great big zero. Of course, they will say, ‘This is terrible. The minister is doing the wrong thing. The minister hasn’t listened and hasn’t taken advice broadly from Aboriginal people and from people who are interested and from stakeholders.’ Of course that is utterly incor-
rect. Indeed the committee heard from people who had had long suffering and had periods of time when ATSIC simply gave them nothing.

Let us turn to this report and to the political nature of it. At one stage it talks about the shame of this legislation. The real shame is that all the while for the last six months while this has been proposed the ALP have stood on the hose and these changes could not be undertaken because they sought to indicate to their so-called constituents that they have concern. But, at the end of the day, the fact is the legislation is going to be passed and, in whatever form, the legislation will deliver the abolition of ATSIC. This is a classic example of crocodile tears.

I turn to the inquiry. What sort of credibility can the inquiry have? The most amazing fact about this inquiry—and this certainly does not reflect on the chair because I think she was most earnest in everything she did in this inquiry—is that it never went to Western Australia. The fact is senators from the eastern states never want to go across the country to Western Australia. They never want to go across the country to Western Australia. So how much credibility can a report have when about 60 per cent of the population of Indigenous people is in Western Australia and the committee does not go there?

Let us talk about ATSIC and the budget. The annual budget for ATSIC in 2002-03 was $1.1 billion. That was only half of what the government pays in terms of managing Aboriginal affairs and Indigenous matters in Australia. (Time expired)

Senator RIDGEWAY (New South Wales) (5.15 p.m.)—I also want to speak, on behalf of the Australian Democrats, to this report of the Select Committee on the Administration
of Indigenous Affairs and to support the majority findings of the committee. I want to commend the chair of the committee, Senator Claire Moore. She did a wonderful job. Given the difficulty of the issues that the committee has had to deal with, it is often a hard task to keep people committed to dealing with the issues that come to the table but, most of all, to produce some sort of result.

Some of the comments that Senator Johnston has made are adequate in the sense that there has not been enough consultation. I would agree with that entirely. But the agenda that has been set has been one of the government’s making, particularly given that it decided to bring on the bill to deal with the abolition of ATSIC. So, under those circumstances and time constraints, it makes it difficult to get across the country and be comprehensive in the consultation. One thing I would say, though, is: let us not forget that the government initiated its own consultation. It was called an ATSIC review report and was done by the likes of Hannaford, Collins and Huggins. Consultation in that sense was extensive and comprehensive, and it occurred right across the country. So the committee was there to supplement and echo much of what had already been said by Indigenous people across the country.

The report is fairly clear and comprehensive in its condemnation of the Howard government and the failed practical reconciliation agenda. The recommendations, while, in my view, are okay, do not go far enough. I would have preferred stronger recommendations. Certainly they have been put forward in the Democrats’ supplementary report. I want to make a couple of brief comments on those.

The rhetoric about this government’s mainstream approach being a bottom-up approach is, quite frankly, both deceptive and manipulative, because clever language cannot hide the fact that the government is committed to assimilation and opposed to self-determination, as it has unashamedly stated on many occasions. Why won’t it admit that right now? Why won’t it just say what the Prime Minister said when he was in opposition back in 1986—that is, that he does not believe in what he regards as separate development, separate programs and separate laws? As Mick Dodson said, if you listen to the way the government is dealing with this you would swear that it has not got out there and spoken to anyone because, again, it is dealing with Indigenous people as if we are invisible on this continent, let alone on the entire planet.

The committee found that ATSIC was not the failure that this government would have the country believe. In fact, it was extremely successful given the hurdles it was up against. Now that we are post ATSIC and ATSIS, utter chaos does reign as a result of a hasty distribution of many of ATSIC’s functions to government departments. Even the new policy dealing with mutual obligation through shared responsibility is unclear. No minister or public servant has been able to say what SRAs actually are, produce guidelines on how departments and communities should go about making them or even confirm that they are legal, enforceable contracts. There have been no comments to this effect. In the meantime it is Indigenous people who suffer while this government mucks around with our lives. The government says it is about giving power back to the communities but the reality is that the government is reneging on legitimate decisions taken by ATSIC. I am not talking about the recent debacle being reported in the media; I am talking about decisions that have been taken previously to divest itself of assets, deal with the question of transfer of properties and deal with the question of remaining funds that are being held in trust, which many communities...
and community organisations are still waiting for.

I have raised on a number of occasions through the Senate select committee the issue of the MiiMi Mothers Aboriginal Corporation. It is there in the supplementary report as a case study. I think people ought to look at that. The government keeps talking about how it wants to deal with things on the ground as a result of a partnership. Here we have Aboriginal mothers in a community on the North Coast of New South Wales. A decision has been taken to transfer property to them. Of course, the government stepped in and changed its mind because it assessed it on new criteria. So much for these practical examples of following through, not just with the intent of a previous decision but with regard to looking after the interests of mothers and children in this case. They are in shared accommodation. Quite frankly, it was an opportunity for the government to deal with the matter. *(Time expired)*

**Senator Nettle** (New South Wales) *(5.21 p.m.)*—The report of the Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs exposes the myriad problems and shortcomings with the Howard government’s approach to the administration of Indigenous affairs. I participated in the inquiry and travelled around the country listening to Indigenous communities, and it has become clear to me that the government’s approach lacks any legitimacy. The government has failed to consult the very people affected by its decisions—that is, Indigenous Australians. The government has forged ahead with its plans to abolish the national representative Indigenous body, ATSIC, without regard to the views of Indigenous communities and before parliament has even begun to consider the matter. The government has failed to propose a suitable alternative to ATSIC, giving the communities instead a hand-picked council of advisers who, whilst they are all decent and concerned people, have no legitimacy to speak on behalf of Indigenous people.

There are varying views about ATSIC and some legitimate criticisms of its structure, the functions it was tasked with and the tensions of a body designed along Western guidelines working in a different cultural context. But the committee did not hear from any Indigenous representative that appeared before the committee that they wanted to have their national voice abolished. The government has been gunning for ATSIC since it came to office in 1996. It has forced upon it audits at the same time as cutting ATSIC’s budget for training courses to improve the management skills of Indigenous administrators.

ATSIC has never had full responsibility for delivering services to Indigenous people and communities but it has always been blamed for the failure of other agencies and of government. The deeply entrenched disadvantage that Indigenous people endure that manifests itself in poverty, discrimination, overcrowded housing, poor health and low participation in education and training all point to systemic, long-term failures. To imagine that a body such as ATSIC could redress all of these failures was always plainly ridiculous.

The government has failed to explain in its new model involving consultation at local and regional levels who it will consult with once ATSIC regional councils are abolished, as proposed in the bill. It has not committed to fund new representative bodies at a national, regional or community level and it plans to deny Indigenous input to important forums and processes dealing with the protection of Indigenous heritage, health and medical issues, and human rights. For these reasons, the Greens do not support the government’s proposed abolition of ATSIC. We
will continue to call, as we do in our additional comments to the report, for a new national representative Indigenous body—one supported by communities and funded by the government. Such a body is critical to self-determination, to redress Indigenous disadvantage in Australia and to advocate for Indigenous people in international forums.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, in November 2004 raised concerns that others have also raised about shared responsibility agreements. He said that the proposed introduction of coercive measures to achieve improvements in the circumstances of Indigenous peoples will not work and may, in fact, exacerbate the extent of poverty, marginalisation and powerlessness. We have already witnessed a shared responsibility agreement which linked two essential requirements that have nothing to do with each other. The much-publicised Mulan agreement ties essential health services and parental behaviour to fuel for transportation, which is not a luxury in a remote area. These agreements have about them a tenor of paternalism which has no place in the management of Indigenous affairs in this nation.

The Greens are also concerned about the government’s proposals for mainstreaming. The 2003 review of ATSIC rejected mainstreaming as an option, and international experience shows us that the best outcomes for Indigenous people occur when they exercise control over their own decisions in their own lives through culturally appropriate institutions. The government’s model of mainstreaming would create more difficulties of coordination. The committee heard evidence about the difficulties for the proposed Indigenous coordination centres in creating a cohesive and common vision, because each lead agency involved in the centres had a different purpose and function. The government needs to acknowledge the failure of mainstreaming in Australia and overseas, and commit to a genuine process of self-determination whereby Indigenous Australians are the primary decision makers in the decisions that affect their lives, particularly the delivery of services.

I want to add to the comments that others have made in thanking the people who supported the committee. I particularly want to thank Hansard, who had difficult jobs in places and unusual circumstances that they dealt with, and also the person who began chairing the committee, Senator Crossin.

Senator CROSSIN (Northern Territory) (5.26 p.m.)—I rise to speak to the report of the Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs. Unlike Senator Johnston, I believe Indigenous affairs in this country is highly political and has become even more so under this government. If for one minute Senator Johnston believes that Indigenous affairs in this country should be apolitical, his very speech is testament to the fact that that is not the case.

ATSIC has been used as a whipping horse by this government since it was elected in 1996. It has been blamed for nearly every failure in terms of Indigenous statistics that the government can grasp its hands on. Yet, as soon as this government came to power, it stripped ATSIC of its funds and ensured that ATSIC embarked on a process that was set up to fail.

Senator McGauran—Do you want to keep it?

Senator CROSSIN—In fact, ATSIC has been successful in ensuring that Indigenous people were empowered, that Indigenous people had a place in the Public Service and that they were trained and had jobs in implementing Indigenous programs. It also ensured that Indigenous voices were heard in some form.
If you read this report, you will see that this report does not suggest that ATSIC be maintained. There is no recommendation in this report to suggest that. Senator McGauran, it may well pay you to read it. For Senator Johnston to suggest that we did not go to Western Australia is a lie. We did go to Western Australia. He cannot stand in this chamber and say we did not go to that state. We went to Broome and we had witnesses from Western Australia come to Canberra and present evidence to us. Senator Ridge-way is right: we should have gone to Melbourne, we should have gone to South Australia, and we most probably should have gone to Perth and Kalgoorlie, but we were under pressure from this government to get this report tabled so that we could get on with debating the bill. We do not get any thanks from those on the other side of the chamber for curtailing the work that we wanted to do. We do not get any recognition that we feel that some of us have sold Indigenous people short in this consultation, but we met this time line.

I think it is most appropriate that I pay homage to the Indigenous people that we met on our travels. I particularly want to thank the committee secretariat—Jonathan, Alison, Ian and Tim. I also thank Hansard and sound and vision because, when I chaired that committee in Alice Springs, we had quite a momentous day there. We heard from Indigenous women in one room and we sent some of the committee members outside and heard from Indigenous men. It is probably unprecedented in the history of the Senate that that was done. Why did we do that? Because we wanted Indigenous people to feel comfortable and we wanted them to know that they were being listened to.

There are three areas of the report that Indigenous people presented to this committee. I ask this government to take this on board very seriously. Senator Johnston is right: we did not hear overwhelming evidence to retain ATSIC. The report does not reflect that. The report reflects that we heard from Indigenous people that they wanted a national representative body that they chose themselves—not a national Indigenous council. If the Indigenous council were going to exist and it were to be hand-appointed by the Prime Minister, Indigenous people said that that would be fine: it would be one means of getting advice. But they strongly said to us: ‘We want a national representative body—maybe elected, maybe not. You tell us what you want and we will deliver it to you.’ They certainly wanted support for some form of regional council, regional body or regional assembly. There are some very sophisticated models out there that Indigenous people have designed because they fear that, in the new world of Indigenous policy under this government, they will not be heard, that there will be no conduit between what is happening in the community and the new Indigenous coordination centres. They want a body that gathers their thoughts together and presents them to the government in a collective way. That is no longer there, but that is what they are after.

Finally, of course, they want to ensure that mainstreaming works. They are not convinced that it works. It has not in the past, and they do not believe that it will in the future. They see nowhere where they can turn to get an independent, arms-length evaluation of what is going on. What is happening in the COAG trials? What is happening with the SRAs? Senator Ridgeway is right. We have no evidence about the legality of SRAs or how they can be implemented. They said to us that at least a Senate committee of some form to oversee the government’s implementation of these policies would be welcome. (Time expired)

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory) (5.31 p.m.)—I have to say that it is with

CHAMBER
some sadness that I rise today. I was hoping to stand in this place and with some enthusiasm support a bipartisan approach to what are probably some of the most significant changes that have been made to the management of Aboriginal affairs in over 30 years. Many of the government members have probably shared the view that these reforms were well overdue, but we had to wait until that white gold wielder Mr Latham appeared with what is now seen as completely conventional wisdom. He shared our views. He said that ATSIC should be abolished. He said:

ATSIC is no longer capable of addressing endemic problems in Indigenous communities. It has lost the confidence of much of its own constituency and the wider community.

I think that makes it absolutely clear. Of course, the majority report does not reflect the leader of the Labor Party’s commitment at that time—an election commitment—nor does it reflect the sentiment of the government members. How could we possibly support a majority report that is so blatantly hostile and so blatantly political? I would have loved to have stood in this place and supported a bipartisan approach to this very important issue for first Australians. In fact, if you looked at the report, you could mistakenly think that ATSIC is absolutely fantastic, outcomes are great and it could carry on with a steady hand on the tiller. We know that demonstrates that the Labor Party is not only out of step with Indigenous Australians but out of step with the wider community.

I am actually very proud of the federal government’s contribution to Indigenous affairs. Since 1996, we have increased our financial contribution by about 39 per cent. I know you would agree, Madam Acting Deputy President Crossin, that that is not the only benchmark. There is a whole range of other real improvements that I think we need to look at.

Labor has dragged us through this inquiry. I am not sure of the exact cost but you can measure it in millions. The wages and the cost of running the regional councils and in fact ATSIC itself are measured in the millions. Luckily, we had the administrative capacity to simply get on with the job. That is what this government is about: getting on with the job. We got the reforms under way. Indigenous programs have been embargoed—they have been cocooned—protecting the essential staff and the cultural knowledge that went with those programs. They are being maintained, they have been improved and they are now being delivered by mainstream Commonwealth agencies.

We are not just doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome, because we know that is madness; it never happens. We have to change how we go about it. We are going about it in a much more coordinated way. There are the Indigenous coordination centres. All the agencies come under one roof. Under one roof we can have a much more coordinated approach to Indigenous Australians and the way they approach their particular agencies. The heads of department meet every month to say: ‘How do we ensure the coordination of policy happens? How do we make sure that we actually measure the outcomes of the changes that are made? We’re not going to measure them every five years or even every couple of years; we are going to measure them every month. We are going to meet and measure them.’ In fact, a public report each year will report on those outcomes. We have a ministerial task force, chaired by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs herself, who will oversee it to ensure we have complementarity of process and policy.

This report is completely misleading. The only people who are confused are those who sit opposite. The states and territories—that is, Labor states and territories—have had a
bipartisan approach to this. We are already going down the line of bilateral agreements. They are part of the COAG trials. They are part of the way forward. They are not a part of doing the same thing and continuing to politicise this issue. They are getting on with the job. After nine months, this committee is eventually going to honour its commitment, which is effectively Labor’s commitment to abolish ATSIC. There are a couple of conditions, of course—unacceptable conditions, as far as I am concerned—such as, ‘Let’s keep the regional councils.’ They gave them another 12 months to sort things out. Another six months is not going to make any difference at all.

Of course, there is the shining light in the policy. ‘Let’s have another committee,’ said the Labor Party. ‘Let’s have a Senate standing committee. That will fix Indigenous affairs.’ We have made a recommendation in that area that clearly indicates that we need a coordinated government approach, a whole-of-government approach. We are recommending that both houses and both sides of parliament join together in a joint committee to deal with Indigenous affairs. If those opposite are absolutely fair dinkum about positively changing the lot of Indigenous Australians, they should get behind this bill and support it in its current form. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

Legal and Constitutional References Committee

Report

Senator BOLKUS (South Australia) (5.36 p.m.)—I present the report of the Legal and Constitutional References Committee entitled They still call Australia home: inquiry into Australian expatriates together with the Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Senator BOLKUS—I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the report.

Leave granted.

Senator BOLKUS—I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I am pleased to present the report of the Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee entitled They still call Australia home: inquiry into Australian expatriates. The report is the result of an inquiry lasting over 18 months during which the committee received evidence on a whole range of issues relating to Australians living overseas. The response to the inquiry was considerable. The committee received submissions from over 650 individuals and organisations, many of them overseas. The committee examined the demographics of Australians living overseas and the needs and concerns of those Australians. The committee also considered the role the Australian government plays in relation to expatriates and ways in which expatriates contribute to the Australian community.

The committee learnt that a significant proportion of the Australian population is currently living overseas on a permanent or long-term basis. Current estimates are that almost a million Australians are living abroad. The committee also heard that many of these expatriate Australians are young, highly skilled, highly motivated and well educated. This has led some to fear that Australia is experiencing a brain drain of its best and brightest workers with potentially damaging consequences for the Australian economy and Australian society. In fact, the committee received evidence during its inquiry that Australia actually experiences a net brain gain of skilled workers. Most importantly, the committee received much evidence to show that these Australians living abroad are great ambassadors for Australia,
creating valuable bridges for Australia across the world.

The factors driving more Australians to live overseas are many and varied. At a broad level the expatriates phenomenon is a reflection of an increasingly mobile and globalised world. Some of the key influences on the phenomenon include the rise of global labour markets, more accessible and economical international transport and increasingly more sophisticated communication technologies. At the same time, the improved technology, particularly the internet, has made it much easier for expatriates to stay in touch with Australia. As a result, the committee discovered that many expatriate Australians still feel very strong cultural links with their homeland despite being physically located outside Australia. As the title of the report suggests, they still call Australia home and they still participate in the day-to-day events of Australian society, although remotely.

In the same way that most expat Australians still embrace Australia as their home, the majority of the committee considers that we should do more as a society to embrace our expat community as part of the Australian nation. As a recent report on Australian expatriates by the Lowy Institute for International Policy remarked, Australian expatriates represent ‘a market, a constituency, a sales force and an ambassadorial corps’.

The committee found during this inquiry that Australian expatriates present many potential benefits, opportunities and new considerations for Australian policy makers. In particular, we heard that many of the needs and concerns of expatriate Australians are not being adequately dealt with by the Australian government and its structures. Many expats expressed particular frustration at their dealings—or indeed their attempts to deal—with Australian government agencies.

The majority of the committee found that Australian expatriates could be better recognised and included in the Australian democratic system.

To achieve these aims, some of the key recommendations that the majority of the committee has made in this report are: the establishment of a policy unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to facilitate the coordination of policies relating to Australian expatriates; the establishment by the Australian government of a web portal devoted to the provision of information and services for expatriate Australians—a web portal that would be used for interactive activities both broadly across the globe as well as in particular locations—the revision of the consular role for Australian missions overseas to require posts to extend their engagement with the local expat community; and greater inclusion of expatriates in the Australian democratic system, including proposed amendments to the Australian Citizenship Act and the Commonwealth Electoral Act. I urge the government to heed the recommendations of the committee’s report and to make greater effort to connect with this most important resource of the Australian people.

In closing, I would like to thank all those people who took the time to make submissions and to give evidence to the committee, including expatriate network organisations and many overseas based chambers of commerce and alumni associations. I would particularly like to thank the Southern Cross Group for its assistance in distributing information about the inquiry and for supplying a steady stream of comprehensive submissions and useful background information. I would also like to thank the people involved with the Lowy Institute for International Policy. I think the institute and study set the framework and directions for government to follow, many of which were shared by this particular committee and the
members of it. I would like to thank my committee colleagues, including the deputy chair, Senator Payne, and current and former staff of the committee secretariat for their work on the inquiry—that includes Phillip Bailey, Louise Gell, Barbara Allen, Kelly Paxman, Sophie Power, Julie Dennett, Marina Seminara and other secretariat staff. I commend the report to the Senate.

Senator TIERNEY (New South Wales) (5.43 p.m.)—I also rise to speak on the report entitled They still call Australia home: inquiry into Australian expatriates. Although I was not a member of the committee, I did lead a parliamentary delegation to the United Nations last year. Through the work of the office of Australian consul general, Ken Allen, and a division of that office called Advance, led by its CEO, Elena Douglas, I came across this issue and had the chance to meet with quite a lot of former Australian citizens and Australians who are working in the United States. It is a very large group of Australians that are overseas. In terms of government policy, I think we perhaps need to grapple with better ways of interacting with this group that has left Australia, sometimes permanently, sometimes temporarily. The size of the group is about a million people—we have a million Australians overseas. That is about Adelaide in size, but they are living and working across the world. About 200,000 of them are in the United States. It is a very large group of Australians that are overseas. In terms of government policy, I think we perhaps need to grapple with better ways of interacting with this group that has left Australia, sometimes permanently, sometimes temporarily. The size of the group is about a million people—we have a million Australians overseas. That is about Adelaide in size, but they are living and working across the world. About 200,000 of them are in the United States. These people are often referred to as part of the brain drain, but they are a group that may come back. They are a group for which we should perhaps set up mechanisms to assist them in coming back. A lot of them have gone overseas following opportunities and sometimes they lose the links and cannot get back, even if they want to. They have not got the networks to do that.

They are developing their skills tremendously and if they decided to come back they would add greatly to the Australian economy. So we must really address this matter. Obviously, we are not going to force people to come back, but in the context of the current debate on skills—which is No. 1 on the agenda at the moment—if we could encourage the one million people to return quickly it would fix our skills shortage problem overnight. They will not do that, but we should set up the mechanisms to assist those who may want to. It would really enhance the skills base of our country. We have people with enormous skills who after developing those skills further could come back and with their overseas experience really enrich the skill base of Australian society.

I was therefore delighted to work with the consul general in his work with Advance. Advance is an organisation which focuses mainly on professionals overseas and tries to work them into networks and associations and build links back to Australia. The first of these I came across was the Advance research network, which was in New England. I went with the consul general to Boston and we had dinner at Harvard. I had the opportunity during the day at MIT to meet with a very large group of world-class Australian researchers who are leading research institutes in areas like robotics. I met a robot which thought like a two-year-old and could act like a 12-year-old. It is the most advanced robot in the world and it was developed by an Australian at MIT who is leading this field.

One of the most delightful aspects of the afternoon was meeting with Australian research students studying at MIT. I spent an hour or two with them and they talked excitedly about the research that they were doing. It is great that they are at one of the world’s leading universities like MIT, but I would hope that in five to 10 years time they might take that expertise, return to Australia and enrich us with what they have learnt and their experiences. Another group that I met...
with was a business community in New York. They were expat Australians who came along to listen to two Australian delegates speak on the topic, ‘What are democracy and politics going to be like in Australia after the Senate changes on 1 July?’ So it was a bit of crystal-ball gazing.

Senator Moore—What did you say?

Senator TIERNEY—You would have to read my speech, which you can find on my web site. It was an engaging discussion, with Australian politicians and diplomats engaging with Australian businessmen in New York. They are the sorts of links that we hope will help return those people to Australia at some point in the future. At another function in New York, again organised by the consul general, Ken Allen, we met with Professor Harry Messel. Professor Messel, of course, is an icon of Australian science. Through his science foundation he has spawned large numbers of brilliant scientists, many of them in the United States. Quite a number attended this dinner—all there in response to the expertise and skills of Australian science which are assisting American science and the American economy. Again, by building these links, we hope that these people come back. It is not just professionals or academics; it is a wide-ranging group of people. There are 200,000 in the United States. Through the work of Advance, links are being built so that these people may be given the opportunity to link back to Australia and possibly return in the future.

This has been a very timely report in terms of what is now occurring in the skills debate in Australia and the way in which we should link back. The recommendation to set up a web site is excellent because obviously a lot of these people are very IT savvy. If we had such a web site then we could help facilitate those links back to Australia. A policy unit in Foreign Affairs is an excellent idea, just so that we focus on this diaspora of Australians—the one million who are overseas. Certainly, I have not looked at the details of the amendments to the electoral and citizenship acts—Senator Bolkus was a little bit cryptic in his comments—but I am sure those reforms will be very worthwhile as well. I too commend this report to the Senate. It is an interesting area of policy development and something we should focus on. We should really try to develop better links to those Australians who are no longer in our country but may return and enrich us all with the skills and knowledge that they have gained overseas.

Senator BARTLETT (Queensland) (5.51 p.m.)—I also want to speak on the report entitled They still call Australia home: inquiry into Australian expatriates. I agree with Senator Tierney that it is very timely. The Senate committee process once again demonstrates how valuable this area is. I note that the 16 recommendations were widely accepted by all senators, including government senators, in the vast majority of cases. I urge the government and senior ministers—including Senator Vanstone, seeing as she is in the chamber and has responsibility for some of the issues covered in this report, and Minister McGauran, the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs—to treat the Senate committee report and its recommendations seriously. These areas are important and are part of what is desperately needed, which is to really change our thinking about what it is to be Australian in the modern world of the 21st century and to migrate and be part of what is widely recognised as a rapidly shrinking global community.

It is a little-recognised fact that if you ask the simple question, ‘How many Australians are there?’ you cannot get a precise answer. Firstly, how do you define what is an Australian? Even taking a simple definition and
asking how many Australian citizens there are on the planet is problematic. In terms of getting a clear piece of information about how many Australians are dual citizens—citizens of Australia and another country—which I have tried to do a number of times, it is very hard to get anything other than a very general estimation. As this report shows, trying to estimate how many Australians there are overseas is also very difficult. How long do you keep counting them as Australian? If you are talking about what is in Australia’s interests, I would argue that it is in our interests and in almost all cases in the individual’s interest to continue to try and count them as Australian for as long as possible and to do what we can to maintain links.

We have been debating in recent times whether we should be getting short-term skilled workers into this country to undertake various tasks. We often do not think nearly as much about how many Australians are going overseas as skilled workers, as working holiday visa holders, as visitor visa holders or as family reunion people—all of whom are doing a similar thing but are retaining their links with Australia. We have had too narrow a focus over many years by simply thinking about people when they are standing within Australian boundaries; when they are outside of Australian boundaries they are out of the picture. We need to change that thinking in the same way that we need to change our thinking about what constitutes a migrant to Australia. People are flowing in and out of Australia and in and out of other countries much more regularly and frequently, for periods of time—for three years, for five years, for 10 years. I think that is healthy; it is certainly happening anyway. We need to make sure that we keep those connections with people who have contact with Australia much more skilfully and consciously than we have done.

I am disappointed that I was not able to participate much in this committee inquiry. I attempted to do so as a participating member a couple of times but was not able to because of other commitments. However, I did read some of the submissions. I note that there were over 650 submissions, which is an indication of the level of interest and the number of people that are not only touched by this issue but touched by it sufficiently significantly for them to want to put a submission in to a Senate committee.

To anybody that is further interested in this issue, I very much recommend a look at the work of Professor Graeme Hugo in particular. He has been looking at the changed nature of migration to Australia—the much more temporary nature of it—as well as the nature of emigration, of people moving out of Australia for short-term and long-term periods. I also recommend looking at the work of the Southern Cross Group, which has developed in recent times to give a voice to that very large expat community of around one million people, at reasonable estimates.

We would all know people from our own families or experience who have moved overseas for short or long periods of time. I have an aunt who I think departed Australia in the 1960s and has lived in a large number of countries and gained a lot of experience. She has lived in the US, the UK, Hong Kong, the Maldives and Cyprus and will probably end up moving back here—she is already spending a lot of time here—and contributing to the Australian economy and community with all her skills and experience. It is because of the links she has maintained with Australia that we are able to make use of that individual.

We have perhaps one of our most famous expats in Australia at the moment. I offer a big strong Aussie welcome to good old Princess Mary, who is in Canberra at present. Of
course it is Princess Mary of Denmark I am speaking of, who until recently was an Australian but, I believe, had to give up her citizenship—I guess giving it up for love is an admirable thing. But clearly a lot of Australians still believe that Princess Mary retains a lot of Australianess about her even though she is no longer a citizen and believe that she is an ambassador for our country in another part of the world. Indeed, government ministers have spoken of what a great contribution she is making as an ambassador for Australia in another part of the world and of how she is doing a good job of it. That is perhaps an unusual example, but it is one example of how an Australian or an ex-Australian can still make a positive contribution to our country. It obviously benefits us to keep those links alive.

In more practical terms, beyond changing the way we think about these issues, there are legislative changes that we need to consider. We also need to improve information flows, particularly in the areas of the Australian Citizenship Act and the Commonwealth Electoral Act. This is a group of people, as is said right at the start of this report, who are a market, a constituency, a sales force and an ambassadorial corps. But in many ways they do not have a voice. Most of them are disenfranchised. Obviously there are issues about how long people retain the right to vote when they are no longer living in the country, but we should be aware of some of the approaches taken in other countries.

People may remember—I am sure Acting Deputy President Bolkus remembers—the story of the Melbourne based Greek-born man who went all the way back to Athens to vote in the recent Greek elections even though he had lived in Australia for a long period of time. Indeed there is a growing community of Greeks who migrated to Australia decades and decades ago and are now returning to Greece, to the place where they were born. But they are returning very much as Greek Australians, not as Greeks. That is a reverse linkage, if you like: they are leaving Australia and going back to Greece but they are still retaining that linkage to Australia.

There are things we need to change with the Commonwealth Electoral Act, and also with the Australian Citizenship Act, and there are recommendations about this. Recommendations 6 and 7 say that the Citizenship Act should be amended to ensure that children of people who renounced their citizenship under section 18 of the Citizenship Act, or children of people who previously lost their citizenship under section 17, should be eligible for Australian citizenship by descent. The committee also expressed concern that Australians living overseas may continue to be forced to renounce their citizenship while section 18 remains in the Citizenship Act—

Senator Sherry—I had to do that.

Senator BARTLETT—Senator Sherry had to do that, and obviously it would have been a massive loss to the country if that had continued. I am sure he has sorted it out since and has not just given himself away. We should not be disenfranchising people. I have written to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Mr McGauran, and said that I would support those changes to the Citizenship Act.

I would also say that it is long overdue that we amend our Constitution. I know that is a lot more difficult. We have more and more dual citizens, but every one of them is disenfranchised in that none of them can run for parliament. I think that is an anachronism that must be removed as soon as possible. I know it requires a referendum but it is something that all parties would support, and need to support, because that is a massive and growing pool of talent. Perhaps 20 per cent to 25 per cent of Australians are dual citi-
zens, and they are missing out on potentially being part of the federal parliament.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT (PROSTHESSES) BILL 2005

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (6.01 p.m.)—The proposed agenda that we have before us in this legislation has not suddenly appeared; there has been significant consultation over a long period with all the relevant stakeholders. The government has instituted a range of advisory groups that are linked to this legislation: clinical advisory groups, a prostheses and devices committee, a policy advisory group, and also people who are involved directly in the negotiations. These groups will play an intricate role in the development of good policy in the area. However, once again I am concerned about the fact that these things are still in train and we are yet to see the whole process actually working as we are looking at making changes to legislation.

One of the key things to come out in this debate—as well as in so many others in this field—is the need for accurate, relevant data. The hope is that, with the development of these various advisory bodies, there will be available data on which people can make budget decisions, on which they can make planning decisions and on which the community can be informed on this ever growing area; because people do agree that the use of prostheses is growing, the technology is developing, and there is a greater expectation that people will have good health and effective surgical procedures. The Department of Health and Ageing made a statement in their submission and when they were witnesses, and we quoted it in the committee report, but I think it deserves restatement. It focuses on the need for this data. It reads:

One of the things that will happen with this process is that we will have data that we have not had before. For a start we will have the data that the CAGs, the clinical advisory groups, have put together and their assessments of the actual products. Similarly, the benefit negotiators will actually be reaching benefit negotiating positions that will go as recommendations to the Prostheses and Devices Committee and then on to the minister. So we will be able to see the benefits being settled, and that will be publicly available. That data will become part of the publicly listed determination.

That particular process gives us confidence, because the idea that these processes will now be public and will be able to be debated is one of the really hopeful elements of the legislation.

One of the other issues that I wish to put on record—and I am sure my colleagues will be making more statements on this—is the core issue of informed financial consent. The government has acknowledged that this is a central part of the whole process, because with any procedure where people have to make decisions about payment, it is essential that everyone knows what is going on, what costs they will be liable for and who pays for what. It is of greatest concern, when you are talking about payment, that people do not know that they are liable for payment. Something has happened, they have no control, and suddenly they are landed with bills for which they were not prepared.

The government has acknowledged that this is a key issue, and another committee has been formed. I heard this afternoon that it is the Labor Party that is fond of forming committees. I think many people are fond of forming committees that actually work and cooperate. The informed financial consent committee has been established, and it includes all the stakeholders in this issue. The
committee will work on how to best achieve a system—of course there will be times when things fall over; no system is perfect—so that we can have confidence that we are actually instituting a payment agenda where people are aware of their responsibilities.

During evidence to the committee, this issue was raised on numerous occasions—particularly by the AMA, who were strongly of the view that it should not be solely a doctor’s responsibility. I agree with that, and the AMA have gone a fair way down the track with advising their members about their responsibilities and the best way to talk with patients about financial responsibility. They have developed templates which they very proudly showed us on their web site; but, in terms of the bottom line, everybody involved in making decisions about health—particularly decisions about which bills will need to be paid—must know what is happening, where it is happening, who is paying and when it must be paid. I am quite hopeful that the informed financial consent committee will be able to come up with guidelines that people can accept and implement.

Any change of this nature must be subject to an effective review mechanism, and that has been discussed. The people on this side of the chamber were hoping for an early review so that the ongoing process could be established; nonetheless there has been acceptance by the government that there need to be significant review processes. Again, when you are implementing change, the best way to ensure that you are going to get it right and pick up things that may go wrong early—so that they do not become entrenched, so that hours of debate in this place are not wasted on something that could have been picked up early and agreement reached—is to implement an effective review process. We are calling for open review in the legislation that can be regularly seen so that change can be made quickly.

We know that this particular legislation is diving into the area of trust because the details have not been clearly defined as yet. However, we do know that all the key stakeholders who gave submissions—who came to our committee and talked about their desire to try to get this right—want to see this legislation implemented. They have already stated, as I said before, that what we had is not good enough and will not benefit the consumers of our country who need medical support. We believe that, provided the advisory groups are effectively implemented, provided the review process is put in place and provided there is genuine cooperation, we can move forward in this process.

As most people agree, there needs to be formal trust between doctor and patient. That must be the core area for decisions about what medical practice is implemented, what device is used or implanted. A patient requiring support must have the trust that their doctor will give them the best possible service. That is the best possible result for all of us. But, given that we are looking at a procedure where there will be some form of gap payment in the system, once there is informed financial consent, once people know what they are doing, once the stakeholders take their responsibilities and once the various advisory groups that the minister has implemented perform their role, this particular legislation, as we have been told by the people who came before our committee, should be given a go.

Senator DENMAN (Tasmania) (6.09 p.m.)—As Senator Moore commented at the commencement of her speech, a number of committee members in the inquiry had a very definite interest in this area. They had prostheses. I must confess that I am one of those people—I have two hips and a knee. I have no concerns whatsoever about the procedures I had. I have no complaints about the surgeon. But I am unsure about whether this
legislation will be effective. If one looks closely at the evidence given to the recent Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry, one would see I am not alone in this. However, we on this side are supporting the legislation because clearly something needs to be done. The present situation is untenable.

The difficulty has been to find a system that will work more economically and more efficiently than the current one whilst also providing Australians with the capacity to choose the prostheses they need. I found the committee process in this instance to be most interesting. The more evidence I read or heard, the more convinced I became that the bill as drafted would not make the situation any better. It is for this reason that I join with colleagues on this side of the chamber in seeking an amendment to provide for an appropriate review of the process. I think that is very important.

The government is to be commended for agreeing to our recommendation. I was pleased to note that in the third reading of the bill in the other place it provided accordingly. The present requirements require health funds to cover the full cost of all surgically implanted prostheses and other medical devices on the government schedule. The funds are not permitted to apply a co-payment or gap for such prostheses items. This is, of course, good for the consumer. They pay no gap and generally they are able to access the prostheses of their choice. But costs to the health system in respect of prostheses are spiralling. We are told that benefit payments for prostheses are now 12 per cent of total hospital benefits. In 1990, they were less than two per cent. It is said that payments for prostheses by health funds under the current arrangements are now contributing in a significant way to increases in premiums.

I am a strong believer that patient choice must be maintained. It will be unacceptable if the changes initiated by this legislation lead to a removal of the capacity for each patient to choose the most suitable prostheses for their particular procedure. This will entirely depend on the surgeon they have and the recommendation he makes to them. But it is also clear that some reform must occur. Without attention it seems that the cost of provision of prostheses will continue to rise at unacceptable rates. We did not take oral evidence from consumer groups during the committee hearings but the points they made in their written submissions on the legislation reinforced my own concerns. One of the most potent points made by the Consumers’ Health Forum of Australia related to the very reason why many Australians maintain private health insurance. The simple fact is that they do so in order to ensure that they have choice—choice about where they are hospitalised and when they can access elective surgery and so forth. In particular I refer to a paragraph from the CHF submission:

Most health consumers do not have a good understanding of whether their private health insurance is adequate for their needs until it is put to the test, often by a hospitalisation or surgery, where too often they find out that large gaps are payable for the treatment recommended by their health care providers.

This is very much the case with prostheses. Not many of us think about providing for their cost until we reach the stage where our doctor tells us we need one. I have no doubt that there would be few young Australians who would, when taking out private insurance, consider whether they should adequately provide for prosthetic implantations at some stage of their lives.

Until now, of course, it has not mattered because private health funds have been obliged to fully fund the provision of the prosthesis of choice. But, after the passage of
this bill, the issue will be a very real one. Yes, there will be at least one no gap pros-
thesis available for each procedure but, unlike now, it may not necessarily be the
most appropriate one for a particular con-
sumer. Here again, the consumer must be
guided by their orthopaedic surgeon. Hope-
fully, that orthopaedic surgeon will recom-
end the most suitable prosthesis for the
procedure they are about to have. As the
Consumers Health Forum of Australia said:

The average health consumer would not be taking
into consideration the contribution of the cost of
prostheses to hospitalisations when making deci-
sions about their private health insurance cover.

I share the fears expressed by the CHF. Con-
sequently, we must ensure that these reforms
do not result in the privately insured realising
that they do not have cover for a required
prosthesis only when the surgery is around
the corner. Equally, we must not allow a
situation to develop where the most clini-
cally appropriate prosthesis is available to
them only if they can afford a substantial gap
payment—and that was the point that I was
making earlier. That is absolutely vital.

The real risk here is that we are creating
the possibility of an environment which is inconsis-
tent with the concept we have come to
know as ‘lifetime cover’. As soon as we
create the option for an individual to leave
out, for example, cover for prostheses, such
an option will be taken up, especially by the
young and healthy. So we must explain to the
young and healthy, particularly young sportspeople probably, that having coverage
for prostheses is vital. They will have much
difficulty in relating to the concept that they
might one day need such cover. The young
who are lured into private health insurance
through the advantages of lifetime cover can
conceive that they might need to be hospital-
ised, might need physiotherapy and will need
dental care, but an option of coverage for
prostheses is quite a different thought proc-
ess. This is most definitely a situation where
those who opt for private health insurance
should be able to adjust their coverage op-
tions without any significant penalty.

As I considered this bill, the more I read
and the more I heard, the more I became
concerned about the consequences. Only too
often during the committee inquiry it was
very much the case that those we heard from
simply did not know. This is why an approp-
riate and effective review mechanism is
such a critical part of this legislation. With-
out it, there are simply too many unknowns
and we would not be providing appropriate
protection for our constituents.

The stated objectives of the new arrange-
ments are threefold: (1) to reduce pressure on
premiums by limiting growth in payments
made for prostheses; (2) to reduce the admin-
istrative burden on the industry; and (3) to
provide contributors with more choice. There
was little evidence supplied to us that any of
these three aims would be achieved, except
perhaps the reduction of the administrative
burden, although I suspect an even larger
burden may well be transferred elsewhere.

I refer to the evidence given to the com-
mittee inquiry by the Australian Private Hos-
pitals Association in which they said:

… it is not completely clear how, or whether, the
new arrangements will work to limit the rate of
increase in health fund benefits in the near and
medium term.

They also said they did not know ‘the degree
to which utilisation, technology or price have
led to the increasing benefit costs to health
insurers’. Catholic Health Australia was of
the view that there were other factors which
might limit the impact which any downward
pressure on the cost of prostheses arising
from this legislation might have. The Medi-
cal Industry Association of Australia is far
from convinced. In his evidence to the com-
committee, their Director, Healthcare Access, Mr David Ross, said:

We believe that the outcomes of the reforms are uncertain. Like the Australian Consumers Association, we are sceptical of the capacity of these changes to bring about a long-term slowdown in premium increases. While we agree that these reforms are likely to place pressure on prosthesis prices, we believe that the real driver of expenditure is utilisation, which is not addressed by these measures.

I am also concerned about this proposition advanced by the MIAA in their submission:

High technology prostheses that cannot be commercially sustained are unlikely to remain available in the Australian healthcare environment.

That is another concern of mine—that some of these new prostheses are so expensive that they may not be available. They are being developed all the time and becoming more sophisticated. The MIAA say that Australians may be denied access to higher technology devices in circumstances where the gap payment which may be imposed will be larger than the market can bear, which is the point I just made. They are of the belief that this could be an unintended consequence of these reforms and therefore one that should be monitored. The MIAA were also of the belief that the reforms have the potential to impact on patient choice, both because some will not be able to afford the gap for the prosthesis they want and because some products may disappear from the marketplace. That is the concern I have with the cost of these prostheses.

I was somewhat surprised by the number and breadth of the doubts and concerns held by the APHA about the legislation. The APHA expressed concerns about the success or otherwise of the benefits negotiation process, the number of devices that will be affected by the gap, the magnitude of the gaps, the role to be played by private hospitals where informed consent has not been obtained, and, finally, the unhealthy practice of exclusionary policies offered by the funds.

Whilst the association was of the view that the current situation was even worse, their level of doubt about the proposed arrangements is a further cause for concern. The issue of exclusionary practices is not only a concern for the APHA. The Australian Consumers Association has a similar view and, I must say, so do I. The APHA is, in my view, correct in asserting:

… consumers do not have any objective means of assessing their risk of developing a particular condition and/or sustaining an injury and therefore cannot make an informed choice whether to sign up to a policy that excludes hospital treatment for a particular condition.

Again, that is a point I have made because it is vital that people have that information. Whilst this has been an issue in other areas prior to now, it has not been so in the case of prostheses, since all insurers have been required to provide no gap coverage for them. Under these new arrangements they will not be required to do so, if a member has elected not to be covered for the hospital procedure.

In summary: the submissions made and evidence given to the committee revealed some degree of hope but a much greater level of uncertainty about whether these reforms will be effective. The question must be asked whether in the long term there will be benefits to the system whilst keeping premiums under control and retaining patient choice of prostheses, and to me that is absolutely vital. The review mechanism and process is thus essential for a whole variety of reasons. It must ensure that the legislation does not create a roadblock for technological innovation of prostheses. Another of my fears is that that may well happen. It must ensure that Australians can access the most clinically appropriate prosthesis they need at the time. It should ensure that outdated technologies do not clog up the no gap list, espe-
cially at the expense of newer and more effective ones. An appropriate process must be put in place for removals from the list. As the CHF pointed out in their submission:

Without such a review, these obsolete prostheses may become the lowest cost sub-group of prostheses for a particular MBS item number and create a perverse cost incentive to use older technology, rather than relatively safer devices which require a gap payment.

That was the point I was making earlier: we must ensure that this does not happen. The review process must be rigorous in ensuring that the new arrangements are not abused to the detriment of the Australian consumer. It must ensure that adequate choice remains and that the impact on premiums is a positive one or, at the very least, one of containment.

At all times, we must ensure that the most widely used prostheses, together with those which incorporate advances on such technologies, are included as no gap items on the schedule.

Senator LEES (South Australia) (6.26 p.m.)—I rise to speak on the National Health Amendment (Prostheses) Bill 2004 and I would like to go back to the stated objectives of this piece of legislation. In the explanatory memorandum there are three dot points:

• reduce the pressure on the level of private health insurance premiums by limiting the growth in benefits for prostheses;
• reduce the administrative burden on the industry; and
• provide contributors with more choice in the provision of prostheses.

I will make some more comments on that last point as we get into committee because it is on the choice issue that I want to talk about podiatry and podiatric surgeons. First I will look generally at the aims of this piece of legislation. Some of the earlier speakers have also raised issues of proof of whether or not this is really going to happen or if we are going to have to wait and see what the process is. This is why I am pleased to see that the Labor Party’s amendment is already enshrined in the bill. It has come across from the House of Representatives. It will keep us looking at and reviewing this process and seeing whether or not we have results.

While private health insurance premiums may generally go down—we are not going to have a full range of options, a full suite of possibilities, for various prostheses; we are only going to have the basic model—across the board there might at least be some holding of increases. I cannot see private health insurance premiums coming down, but there might be some levelling. We have seen some significant increases and apparently some of that is due to this area. But for the individual whose medical specialist perhaps recommends an alternative or who wants the latest technology, the best available model of whatever the particular item is, they are going to have to pay and probably pay quite substantially. So the first aim—to reduce the pressure on the level of private health insurance premiums—is going to be achieved across the board at least in the very short term, but that is not going to do anything for those who are going to need an up-to-date or simply a different model or option if they ever need this kind of support.

On the issue of choice I think the ultimate way to ensure that we have choice is to make sure that all of those who are qualified in this area to perform procedures are actually able to do that. On this issue my primary concern is that we enhance choice if we include podiatric surgeons in the provision of prostheses and professional services. Surely we have to recognise the role of all health professionals. We went through this debate with the Medicare legislation a year or so ago when four of us on this side of the chamber were able to negotiate into Medicare, for those able to access enhanced primary care programs, the opportunity to access allied health profes-
sionals. This is often not just the very best outcome for the patient but it is also cost-effective and it helps us in Australia to cope with a growing problem—the shortage of specialists and the shortage of doctors generally, particularly those who specialised as GPs. Why don’t we include all of those people who are able to do the particular procedure or process or give whatever advice it is that we are looking for?

If the legislation were to go ahead as it is originally written, because of the way that the public hospital system in particular operates, it would simply not be possible to have the option of seeing a podiatrist and going through the processes that might ultimately be necessary by way of an operation and potentially the use of a prosthesis. Apparently in the public hospital system there is a set of guidelines or rules that generally discriminate and limit access. Through these amendments—and I will speak to them on an individual, one-by-one basis when we get to them—we want to reinforce both choice and the issue of cost. If we keep focusing on a few very scarce surgical resources and expect people to simply do more and more, cost will often become an issue, as will delays and waiting. If we are able to make sure that all of those who are able to perform these operations do so, then it will be better for all concerned.

Podiatric surgeons provide specific professional services and perform minor, mostly straightforward, surgical procedures on feet and toes. As I have stated, this really is a fairly simple set of amendments to make sure we enshrine, for private health insurance funds, the ability to provide benefits for in-hospital foot surgery performed by podiatric surgeons. The issue was raised with the Community Affairs Legislation Committee and, as we saw from the evidence there, it is simply not enough to just encourage, because it will not happen. If we just ask the private health funds to do it out of the goodness of their hearts, I do not think we will ever get there. I quote from page 5, paragraph 1.21 of the Community Affairs Legislation Committee’s report:

The Private Health Insurance Ombudsman commented that ‘many consumers might see the introduction of a patient gap for prostheses that would otherwise have been available with no gap, as a reduction in patient choice’.

In paragraph 1.36 it goes on to say:

Private insurance companies have indicated that they will not pay for these [prostheses] unless podiatric surgeons are specifically allowed for in the legislation … The ACPS applauds the intent of the Government in this matter but is nonetheless concerned that without specific legislative amendment to the Act the insurance industry will not comply with the intent of the Government.

The amendments simply cement in place what the government has indicated. As the ombudsman said in relation to patient choice, we cement this choice if we make sure that this is catered for. Indeed, one of the recommendations of the Senate committee is:

... that the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman monitor the implementation of the new podiatric surgical cover provisions and report on progress in the Ombudsman’s annual State of the Health Funds report.

The committee also recommends in 1.45:

... that future reviews of private health insurance cover should consider whether benefits should be paid for the professional services of podiatric surgeons ...

I argue that we cannot leave it to the future intent but that, as we have such people already qualified, we should immediately give this opportunity. In relation to podiatric surgeons and prostheses, the committee report states on page 7:

Podiatric surgeons provide a specific professional service. They perform minor and mostly relatively straightforward surgical procedures on
the feet and toes. Podiatric surgeons generally are qualified podiatrists, but they are licensed to provide their specialist and highly-skilled services on the basis of extensive relevant further experience and postgraduate training.

For those who are concerned that perhaps those that we are recommending be involved in this legislation are not qualified, that was one of the issues looked at by the committee and they found that most certainly these people are qualified in this area. The committee also notes:

As podiatric surgeons are not qualified medical practitioners, services provided by them are not eligible for Medicare benefits. In 2004, however, the Government amended the National Health Act to allow podiatric surgeons to receive private health insurance benefits notwithstanding their lack of Medicare eligibility.

The committee report goes on to quote the Minister for Health and Ageing’s second reading speech, in which he said:

There have been recent changes to health insurance legislation that enable members to access basic hospital accommodation and nursing care costs for services performed by accredited podiatrists. In those circumstances, I encourage health funds to cover the prostheses implanted by podiatric surgeons.

As we see from the committee evidence, the fact is that if it is only encouragement then it simply is not going to happen. In summary, I believe that we need to look at the two issues of choice and cost. Again, I suppose the proof will be in the results in years to come, but I believe that consumers will be facing lower, if not no, gap payments with podiatric surgeons and they will be given the additional opportunity and benefit of accessing other trained professionals.

Senator PATTERSON (Victoria—Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues) (6.37 p.m.)—I want to thank all honourable senators for their contribution in the debate on the National Health Amendment (Prostheses) Bill 2004. I do have an interest in this bill since I think some of the initiatives were commenced when I was health minister, and I had a concern about the cost of private health insurance. One of the drivers of that was the use of very expensive prostheses without any consideration by those people who were using the prostheses. I will not go into the detail. The explanatory memorandum and the second reading speech clearly outline the goal and aim of this bill. I want to acknowledge the contribution of all stakeholders over a very long time who have contributed to the development of the new arrangements for the coverage of prostheses for consumers with private health insurance. I commend the bill to the Senate and hope that we will have some time to discuss Senator Allison’s amendment. I believe that tomorrow we will be discussing Senator Lees’s amendment when she has had time to consult with Minister Abbott. I commend the bill to the chamber.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

In Committee
Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (6.39 p.m.)—I move Democrats amendment (1), the only amendment on sheet 4524:

(1) Schedule 1, item 12, page 10 (after line 6), after subitem (1), insert:

(1A) The review must include:

(a) an assessment of the adequacy of informed financial consent arrangements; and

(b) an examination of the extent of out-of-pocket costs experienced by patients for clinically appropriate prostheses.
This amendment goes to the question of the review. Senator McLucas may wish to add to my comments. It was our understanding that the amendment to put in place a review had not actually been accepted in the lower house, but I now understand that the government has done so. Therefore, the Democrats amendment will be to the bill as presented in the chamber today.

As I said in my contribution during the second reading debate, we felt it necessary for the review to look in particular at the adequacy of informed financial consent arrangements and to also examine the extent of out-of-pocket costs experienced by patients for clinically appropriate prostheses. Those informed financial consent arrangements to which I am referring are for prostheses. If patients choose to have a medical device or prosthesis they will pay more under this arrangement, which is outside the no gap arrangement. Of course, like legislative arrangements concerning other potential gaps, such as with doctor or hospital costs, there are no legislative requirements to ensure informed financial consent.

We are all very well aware of the many cases of people who believe that, having held private health insurance, they will be covered for the costs of their treatment. It is only when they go for treatment, often after they make a decision or perhaps even have the treatment, that they discover they will be faced with substantial bills. In fact, the 2004 Private Health Insurance Ombudsman report said:

Consumers generally do not have a good understanding of how much it costs to be treated in a private hospital. If a health fund member finds they are not fully covered by their health insurance … the amount of money involved can come as an unpleasant surprise.

PHIAC statistics for the June quarter of 2004 indicate that around 20 per cent of in-hospital medical services provided to patients involved out-of-pocket costs. That means that a substantial minority of people are already facing out-of-pocket costs. We can assume from the complaints made to the ombudsman that some of these people were have not been well informed about it. The AMA has said that it is not the responsibility of doctors to ensure patients are informed about the costs that may flow to them because of the existence of this legislation. As I said earlier today, we need to pin down just whose responsibility this is. Hopefully, as part of the clinicians’ decision-making process they will take into account the cost-effectiveness of a particular prosthesis when deciding which prosthesis is right for a patient. It will be essential that doctors are well informed as to which prostheses attract gaps and which do not. As I said, failure to obtain informed financial consent can have substantial consequences for consumers.

We put this amendment forward. I understand the government is not going to oppose the amendment and that the ALP will also support it, although I leave Senator McLucas to say that for herself. I think it will make a real difference to the review if we spell out the need for informed financial consent to be part of that review so that we look at how well it is working, at whether doctors are able to work with their patients to make sure that they understand what the financial commitments are that are being entered into and also at the extent of out-of-pocket costs that patients experience for clinically appropriate prosthesis. We look forward to seeing that review and suggest that this will be an important part of that.

At this stage, I say again that this just relates to prostheses, although the Democrats would like to see a broader application of this informed financial consent arrangement and, indeed, an examination right across the spectrum of what informed financial consent means when it comes to private health and
private health insurance. In fact, it may result in quite a substantial saving to private health insurance if patients were across those arrangements.

Senator LEES (South Australia) (6.44 p.m.)—I fully support these amendments. Indeed, I agree with Senator Allison’s sentiments that they should be more widely lodged or put into the legislation. One of the factors that limits people’s interest in private health insurance is that they are still often out of pocket and do not know that extra charges are going to be incurred. This is a very sensible amendment. I hope that the government sees fit to support it.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (6.45 p.m.)—The Labor Party thinks that the amendment proposed by the Democrats actually adds to the amendment that Labor moved in the House of Representatives, which was agreed to by the House of Representatives. It goes to the question of the review of the operation of the schedule. The House of Representatives have agreed with Labor’s proposal that an independent review of the operation of the amendments made by this schedule be undertaken as soon as practicable after 1 July 2007 and that a report of that review be provided by the minister no later than 1 October 2007.

Senator McLUCAS moved this amendment because, as I said in my speech in the second reading debate and as Senator Moore has said a little more eloquently than me, this is a bill of hope. This is a bill for which there is reason- able goodwill across the sector—from providers, consumers, health professionals and hospitals in particular, and from the political parties. This is an improvement on our existing arrangements, but it is based on hope, not data. It is a hope that it will improve existing arrangements. It is a hope shared by all those stakeholders that the gaps that will now appear—the gaps that will have to be paid for by consumers for certain prostheses—will be kept to a minimum.

It is a hope that the no-gap devices that will sit on the schedule as those required to be provided by the health insurance providers will be of the quality that consumers need and will also be appropriately prescribed. It would be abhorrent if people were making decisions about a prosthesis based on price rather than on the appropriateness of the device for the service that they require. It is also a hope that costs will be kept to a minimum. Surely we should be focusing on keeping the out-of-pocket costs to the consumers to a minimum. We are surely hoping that the costs to government through the 30 per cent rebate to the private health insurance companies will be kept to a minimum. The other issue of costs that we are interested in is that any savings that the private health insurance providers may make will be passed on to consumers through a decrease in their private health insurance premiums.

Senator ELLISON (Western Australia—Minister for Justice and Customs) (6.49 p.m.)—For the record, the government supports this amendment.

Progress reported.

COMMITTEES

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

Membership

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Order! I have received a letter from a party leader seeking a variation to the membership of a committee.

Senator ELLISON (Western Australia—Minister for Justice and Customs) (6.49 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That Senators Evans and Faulkner replace Senators Hutchins and Mackay on the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for the committee’s inquiry into duties of Australian personnel in Iraq.
Question agreed to.

**DOCUMENTS**

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Order! It being 6.50 p.m., the Senate will proceed to the consideration of government documents.

Wet Tropics Management Authority

Senator BARTLETT (Queensland) (6.50 p.m.)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

The annual report of the Wet Tropics Management Authority concerns an incredibly important and unique area in my home state of Queensland that is best known for the Daintree rainforest but also covers areas further south of Cairns, right down to Townsville. This area is very significant in terms of its environmental value and is unique in a whole range of extraordinarily important ways. It is a particularly outstanding example of one of the major stages of earth’s evolutionary history. It also has significant cultural heritage values, although it is not listed for that reason as yet under the World Heritage Convention. Certainly I would support the proper listing in consultation with the many different groups of Indigenous people who still live in the World Heritage area.

Many times I have spoken in this chamber about the threat in particular to the Daintree rainforest and especially those areas that are not within the World Heritage area but are in the middle of it and surrounded by it—areas that were subdivided during the not particularly lamented Bjelke-Petersen era. Incrdbily valuable ecological areas of rainforest were basically subdivided into suburban blocks. Many of those are still covered with rainforest but are still at risk of being cleared. I know the local shire council in particular and also the state government, and lately and belatedly the federal government, have been trying to ensure that those areas are protected.

This report talks about another environmentally significant region that was voluntarily acquired: 98 undeveloped lots of freehold land to the north of Russell Heads, located 45 kilometres south of Cairns. That is an area that was voluntarily acquired. It guaranteed the protection of freshwater swamp, and the complex sand dune system in the coastal lowlands of the World Heritage area has now been transferred into the Queensland national park. It is unfortunate that the ongoing battle over securing incredibly valuable areas in the Daintree has not been resolved. These are areas where literally the last remaining examples of species of plants in particular survive. Areas containing species that were thought to be extinct until being rediscovered recently are still at risk of being cleared just to put houses on them. It is ridiculous that that risk is still there. I am pleased that there has been some progress but, until it is absolutely locked in and guaranteed that those areas can no longer be cleared, I will certainly continue to raise concerns.

This report also mentions an application that is currently in place for a proposed construction by the Department of Main Roads in Queensland of a four-lane highway from Smithfield to Kuranda. This proposal has the potential to have a very significant impact on the World Heritage area, and it certainly causes me a lot of concern. I hope the authority does ensure that a proper look is given to that proposal. I mention also my concern about the ability of the authority in general to fulfil its tasks properly. It has an incredibly important role, not just in protecting the unique environmental assets of this area; let us not forget the incredibly important economic benefit it brings to Far North Queensland.

There are an immense number of threats that continue to apply to the wet tropics area, in part because of its popularity. It is a diffi-
cult balancing act, but we certainly do not want the authority underresourced, with uncertainty about funding or with uncertainty about how it is going to be able to operate in the future. That needs to be addressed. It is something I am watching closely. I also notice the seven-year review of the management plan is about to commence. That is also an issue that I believe is very important. It involves the local community—the local Indigenous people in particular—and also the wider Queensland and Australian community because it is an area, as its name implies, that is of world value and must be protected.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (6.55 p.m.)—I also wish to take note of the Wet Tropics Management Authority’s annual report. In doing so, I pay tribute to Lieutenant General John Grey, the chair of the authority, for his leadership in some difficult times. I also want to pay tribute to Russell Watkinson, the former CEO of the Wet Tropics Management Authority, for his stewardship of the authority over a number of years and the leadership that he showed in bringing the community together around the preservation of this environmental, economic and social asset that is important not only to the people of Far North Queensland but to all of us in Australia and, as Senator Bartlett has said, across the world, given its World Heritage status.

In my few comments tonight I want to focus on one particular area of the wet tropics that gets a lot of attention. In saying this, I want to be very clear that the wet tropics are not the Daintree. The wet tropics traverse an area from Paluma, just north of Townsville, almost to Cooktown. Whilst the national focus is always very much on the area north of the Daintree River, between the Daintree and the Bloomfield rivers, we must remember it is a much larger resource than the area that we focus on. The reason we focus on the area called the Daintree is what Senator Bartlett alluded to: the fact that, under the National Party government in the 1980s, under the stewardship of Russ Hinze, it was agreed to freehold a large tract of land, much of which had never been logged. This is incredibly significant lowland wetlands. It is an ecosystem not replicated anywhere in Australia, and very few places in the world have this type of ecosystem. But the Bjelke-Petersen government agreed to sell it off to Mr Quaid.

When Labor came into government subsequently, we started what we call the Daintree buyback process. I have to say that, irrespective of your politics, as soon as you get to this area you realise and you agree that that is the appropriate thing to do. Unfortunately, the policy adopted under the Hawke-Keating years has not been adopted by this government, although there is some sort of piecemeal or platitudinous acceptance that something has to happen. Everyone understands that you cannot have housing blocks of one hectare in a rainforest where a house and then the garage and then the dog and the cat will go. They do not live very well with the cassowary, I am afraid.

Unfortunately, during the election campaign of last year, the difference between the coalition and the Labor Party was very clearly defined. Labor committed to reinvesting $7 million, along with the state and with commitment from the Douglas Shire Council, to continue the program, to finish the job of buyback and to make sure that our contribution in a financial sense sat well with the planning instruments that the Douglas Shire Council had developed. Senator Meg Lees was involved in those discussions with the government at the same time.

I have to report to the Senate the disturbing events at a very large rally held in Port Douglas a couple of weeks before election day, when various parties put their position.
Unfortunately, the local Liberal member could not be there. They sent somebody to videotape the event, which I thought was quite interesting. The Mayor of the Douglas Shire Council read out a letter that was sent to Senator Lees by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, which made a commitment that funds that were allocated to the buyback would not go through the Australian Rainforest Foundation. Unfortunately, at that same rally, a letter from Mr Entsch was read out that said that of course the money would go through the Australian Rainforest Foundation. I do not know what this government thinks about people in Far North Queensland, but to send two separate messages and to think we do not talk to each other is a bit silly. There was a lot of confusion and a lot of anger at that rally. It was a reflection on the duplicity of this government in its treatment of people in more far-flung areas. I commend the Queensland government for what they have done.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sandy Macdonald)—Order, Senator McLucas, your time has expired.

Senator McLucas—I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Commonwealth Grants Commission

Senator Brandis (Queensland) (7.01 p.m.)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

In April 1999 the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments entered into an intergovernmental agreement called the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Reform of Commonwealth-State Financial Relations. The purpose of that agreement was to base all future state and territorial revenue from Commonwealth sources on an entirely new footing funded by the goods and services tax. Every state and territory government in the

land signed off on that agreement, as did the Commonwealth. The essence of the agreement was to give the state and territory governments, unconditionally, 100 per cent of the GST revenue in place of the pre-existing system of Commonwealth grants. The purpose of it was to enable the state and territory governments to retire a whole raft of state and territory taxes.

In order to ensure that the state and territory governments were not worse off in the event that the GST revenues were lower than projected, the agreement provided for what was in effect a no-disadvantage test. The no-disadvantage test can be put this way: each state and territory was to receive a guaranteed minimum amount so that its budget was no worse off than it would have been had the tax reforms not been implemented. But, in the event that the GST revenue collections were greater than expected, 100 per cent of that surplus revenue would also go to the state and territory governments. The Grants Commission established the relativities between the states and the territories.

As we know, the GST has been a huge success. Collections of GST revenue have in every year been larger than expected and, as a result, all of the states have achieved a windfall. Not only have they got 100 per cent of what they would have got under the pre-existing Commonwealth-state relations; they have got a windfall surplus. Nowhere in the Commonwealth Grants Commission report has that windfall surplus been greater than in my state of Queensland. In 2004-05, according to the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook published last December, the surplus on top of the ordinary GST payments to the state of Queensland is $760.6 million. That is on top of the $7.3 billion GST payment by the Commonwealth to the state of Queensland. The 1999 agreement prescribes a series of state taxes which it was the purpose of the agreement to retire in the event
that the GST revenues were greater than expected.

In 2004-05, Queensland gets $760 million of windfall not budgeted for by the state treasury. To put that in context, that represents one-third of the total revenue raised by Queensland from all stamp duties. It represents more than half the total revenue raised by the state of Queensland from stamp duty on conveyancing transactions alone. In represents 94 per cent—almost all—of the revenue raised by Queensland from gambling taxes. It represents twice—more than 200 per cent of—the aggregate revenue represented from land tax. There is this windfall gain. The deal in 1999 was that the states, if they got a windfall gain, were to spend it retiring state taxes. What has the Queensland government done? It has not retired any of those state taxes. It has not retired the land tax. There has been no relief on conveyancing duties. There has been no relief on payroll tax and no relief on gambling taxes. The Queensland government is flush with GST surplus revenue, but Queensland taxpayers have seen no relief whatsoever.

Senator BARTLETT (Queensland) (7.06 p.m.)—First I would like to note the contribution of Senator Brandis, who is also from my state of Queensland, and agree that the Queensland government has certainly done far better than any other state or territory government in terms of profiting from the GST revenue. I note Senator Brandis’s description of the GST as a ‘huge success’ because it has brought in more money than expected. It is an interesting definition of success from a Liberal Party senator that a tax is successful because Australians are paying even more tax than we thought they would. From my point of view, as a member of a party that has never been shy about recognising the importance of ensuring that we have a sufficient amount of revenue to fund social services, perhaps that would not be so surprising. But a Liberal senator boasting about exactly how enormous the tax take now is is worth noting.

I should emphasise that in some ways we unfortunately still have echoes of the GST debate—Labor versus Liberal—playing out in the current debate about whether the states should be getting rid of more taxes or funding more services as opposed to the federal government funding them. People are taking up some of the same lines because of their position on the GST. Senators would probably be aware that I was one of the Democrats who voted against the GST, not because of the amount of revenue it might raise but because of concerns about it being raised in a less than equitable way. I think if you make those sorts of assessments you might come up with different criteria in determining whether or not it has been successful.

It is about time for us to have a good examination, five years down the track, of how that whole tax shake-up is operating and whether there are ways to make it fairer, stepping back from everybody’s individual views about whether or not it was a good idea in the first place. Obviously, the GST has happened and is now well entrenched, but I am disappointed that the Labor Party have stepped back from their position of a couple of elections ago—not that I necessarily supported everything about roll-back but the principle of continuing to look at improving the fairness of the way the tax operates is appropriate, particularly now that it has been in place for some five years now.

There is a good case to be made for state governments to consider removing some of those economically unproductive taxes—those that whilst they might raise revenue have a negative side effect as well—and to counterbalance, whether in terms of economic activity or social equity. Some of the taxes that are still in place are exceptionally
regressive, as were some of those that were abolished. If we are talking about what is appropriate for tax reform, one issue is how much revenue a tax raises—not just what it is spent on but whether it is raised fairly. My concerns are on the record about the GST not being fair. My colleagues did a lot to try to make it fairer—by exempting food, for example. Let us not forget that some of the state taxes that are still in place are also incredibly regressive, not least the gambling tax. That is an area all state governments should focus on, not just because they now have GST revenue to replace it but because of the real problem of their being tied to that gambling tax revenue.

As with many cases where you have state and federal governments pointing fingers at each other and saying, ‘The other mob’s to blame’—whether it is expenditure on social services, regressive taxes or addressing issues like housing affordability—I think that both state and federal governments can do more. I get really tired of them spending more energy on pointing the finger at each other than on focusing on what they are capable of doing. We need an approach where there is less finger pointing, name-calling and shouting at each other across the divide and more getting together and looking at where we can go forward, five years down the track, regardless of whether you supported the GST or, like me, opposed it. We need to look at where we go from here, whether there are changes we could make at a federal level and what states can do in terms of changing their remaining taxes or what they spend their money on. Some of them are doing better than others. This report does not go into that so much but it is an ongoing debate that we do need to have. There is clearly still a problem with adequate expenditure on social services—in particular, in Queensland—but it is something the federal government should take a constructive approach on rather than just more of the finger pointing, political point scoring and posturing.

Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sandy Macdonald)—Order! There being no further consideration of government documents, I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Wool Industry: Mulesing

Senator BARTLETT (Queensland) (7.12 p.m.)—I am actually about 10th on the list, Mr Acting Deputy President, but if no-one else is here I will jump up. I would not want others to miss out on their chance to speak.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sandy Macdonald)—You’ve saved the day, Senator Bartlett.

Senator BARTLETT—And I am sure Senator Conroy wants to hear me speak some more anyway.

Senator Conroy—There is a serious misrepresentation taking place in this chamber. I think you should make him withdraw that defamatory remark, Mr Acting Deputy President.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—There is no point of order, Senator Conroy.

Senator BARTLETT—I would like to speak on an issue that is probably of interest to you, Mr Acting Deputy President Macdonald. It concerns the wool industry and particularly the debate and controversy at the moment about mulesing and the live export trade. Senators would be well aware, I expect, of my longstanding interest in animal welfare and animal rights issues. I have certainly spoken a lot about the live export trade for sheep, cattle and other livestock. But I have stayed out of publicly contributing to the mulesing debate for some time, even
though I have a personal view, which would not surprise people, of being concerned with that practice. I felt that it was something I would leave up to public debate and the court of public opinion, if you like, in terms of the differing views expressed by animal welfare advocates versus some from the industry—and of course there are some in the industry who have moved away from mulesing already.

What has finally driven me to speak out in support of those people in a much more public sense, even though I have supported them privately, has been the very aggressive action taken by Australian Wool Innovation and, in recent times, the Australian government against People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which is a US based animal rights organisation—particularly their decision to also undertake court action against Australian animal rights activists from Animal Liberation NSW. I should declare, although it is reasonably widely known, that I am a former office-bearer of Animal Liberation Queensland, which is a completely separate organisation. Nonetheless, I have an awareness of the people involved in Animal Liberation NSW, so I do not hide from that fact. I think it is totally unacceptable that people are being targeted deliberately by court action—by a body that gets a significant amount of government funds—just because they are expressing their views, views they have expressed for a long time, about the unacceptability of the practice of mulesing.

It is utterly counterproductive for parts of the wool industry—and I acknowledge that it is not all of the wool industry—to be spending money specifically targeting Australian activists who are simply expressing and have consistently expressed concern about this practice. The wool industry has publicly stated that it has agreed to phase out mulesing by the year 2010, which is in five years time. It is undertaking research into alternatives. The practice is sufficiently problematic that the industry itself has said it is going to stop it within five years, yet it is using the courts to try to silence people who are campaigning for it to stop now or are encouraging others to be aware of their concerns and not buy the product until it stops. I might add that that applies to the live export trade as well. I can understand why some wool growers are concerned about that—people’s livelihoods are involved. Naturally, some people react negatively to that.

Australian Wool Innovation were funded by government contributions of over $14 million in the last financial year, according to their annual report. They received over $42 million from the wool levy, which comes directly from wool growers themselves, as I understand it. That would be about 99 per cent of their income—a very small amount comes from royalties and sales of goods and services. So we have a body that receives over $14 million in government funding—I am not saying they are using that $14 million; I do not know where they are drawing money from or if they are getting donations for this purpose—using money specifically to conduct court action to try to silence people who are expressing concern. It is a very dangerous practice, and it is a misuse of the Trade Practices Act to try to sue people as has been done here. I have noted some statements by Mr McLachlan from Australian Wool Innovation which I have interpreted as him saying that he is doing this because he knows it will cost those organisations money and he wants them to chew up their money having to defend these things. I may have misinterpreted what I saw him reported to have said, but that is what it looked like to me—that much of his agenda was to try to silence and intimidate people and make them chew up their resources on legal action rather than on campaigning.
Last week, we had the extraordinary statement by Minister Truss suggesting that PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—which is a very large organisation in the United States—gives aid and comfort to terrorists. I know that people get worked up about this debate, as they do with many other issues. People can say strong things occasionally. But for a government minister to specifically come out and accuse animal rights activists, particularly this organisation and by association Australians who are campaigning on this issue, of being tied to people who are giving aid and comfort to terrorists is totally unacceptable. A spokesperson for Minister Truss, according to one report that I have seen, has said: ‘The minister is comfortable with his position. We are not saying that there are deliberate links with terrorist related activities, but they are allegedly providing financial support, according to evidence before a US Senate committee, to one group, the Animal Liberation Front, that has been accused of so-called domestic terrorist threats.’

To use one allegation about one organisation before a Senate committee in the United States that has not been tested and then just throw in the blanket description of ‘aiding, abetting and comforting terrorists’ is taking the debate into the realm of the surreal. It really is getting utterly ridiculous when we get those sorts of over-the-top smear allegations—that they are in some way linked to terrorists—by a minister of the Australian government against an organisation like PETA and others that have been tied to them via the court action by the wool industry. It is the sort of smear by association that we have seen in other areas of this government but that I have not seen from Minister Truss in the past. He certainly makes strong statements sometimes about areas that he has views on, as we all do, but to make that sort of over-the-top smear is a new low for that particular minister. It is completely unacceptable.

I express my support for the people involved in animal liberation in New South Wales, some of whom I have known for quite a long period of time. They are people with very strong views and passions of their own. I do not necessarily agree with every view of theirs, but I certainly strongly support their right to express their views and put information on the public record about a practice which is controversial. It is sufficiently problematic that the wool industry itself has said that it will phase it out and some wool growers have already abandoned it and found alternatives. When it gets to the stage of government funded organisations misusing, in my view, the Trade Practices Act and of government ministers using unfounded smear by association with over-the-top labels like ‘terrorist’ against people that raise these concerns, it really is going too far. It is in those circumstances that I feel obliged to speak out in defence of people expressing these concerns.

There is no doubt a lot of suffering involved in mulesing, which for those that do not know involves cutting the skin away from the rear end of sheep to try to prevent flystrike. As has been rightly said, a sheep that is subject to blowfly strike is going to suffer a lot more than one that has been mulesed. The key is whether there are alternatives. I support the industry in funding research to find alternatives, I support those growers who have already shifted to other approaches and I support the overall decision to phase out mulesing. But I do not support using the courts, particularly if you are a taxpayer funded organisation, and I do not support Australians in particular but animal rights organisations in general being smeared in such a lazy and crude way by absurd allegations of links with terrorists when they are simply expressing concern about an action
which quite clearly involves suffering for a large number of animals.

**Family Planning**

Senator FERRIS (South Australia) (7.22 p.m.)—Now that International Women’s Day is 30 years old it is understandable that many women might take for granted the achievements that have been made over those years. Not least of these is the right to family planning—the opportunity to make an informed choice about whether to have a baby, when to add to the family and when to choose not to proceed with a pregnancy. This is a choice young women now take for granted, and so they should, but it was a long time coming.

In fact, 30 years ago, when we were all celebrating the first International Women’s Day, family planning was still very much a whispered choice, discussed in hushed tones behind closed doors and with little or no help from other family members. A sense of shame often pervaded this issue. There was certainly limited choice. Pregnant unmarried girls had little option: the search for a cooperative doctor, a risky backyarder, the public shame of a few months in the basement of a public hospital and the inevitable adoption, or a hurried visit interstate for a few months. They were the days of high-risk decisions, little choice and public shame.

I had some experience of those bleak days when a young flatmate of mine became pregnant to the local stock agent, a deeply religious father of six, who walked away from her only minutes after she broke the news to him. She was devastated, not surprisingly, and her first thought as an only daughter, a churchgoer, was to end the pregnancy with as little disruption to her professional life as possible. Sadly, her choices were limited and we found ourselves one wet Friday night driving a couple of hours to a town where the local pharmacist had agreed to help in a less than salubrious back room in his shop. For this service he wanted in cash more than each of us earned in a month. I can still remember that old man and his dingy back room. After a couple of minutes my flatmate decided it was an unsafe choice that she was not prepared to make. He, of course, facing not only the loss of cash but also the compromise of an illegal service offered but not accepted, tried to block our path, shouting, threatening and bullying two very frightened young women.

My friend then found herself making a series of other less palatable choices, telling her parents and disappearing to the shame of a cold hospital basement where this talented young woman washed laundry until the child was born and adopted. Sadly there was to be no happy reunion for her and her daughter—she was killed in a single car accident just months later. Australia must never return to those shameful days. Our women must always have the chance to make an informed choice with their medical adviser, their families, their partner, their support network—whomever they choose. And they must be free to make that choice without coercion and without compulsion.

A few days ago I stumbled upon a *Weekend Australian Magazine* article that I had torn out and diligently filed away. It was called ‘The body politic’ and was written in 1998. The article outlined the extraordinarily sad story of a devoted mother of three’s decision to pursue an abortion, and the bitter public debate that ensued. Why, some seven years later on a day set aside to celebrate women’s achievements, has this debate yet again been politically torched? Surely our job here is to ensure that we remain a nation where people are free to make their own choices within a legal framework that makes sure these choices are safe, accessible and of a high quality. And surely the framework should also seek to overcome the barriers caused by language, culture, ethnicity, relig-
ion, disability, sex, age and even geographical location.

I am pleased to say that in my home state of South Australia, the only state in Australia with a fully publicly funded abortion facility, there have been vast improvements. Last week I visited a facility in Adelaide which offers the only publicly funded family planning services in Australia, where women and their families or partners can make informed choices about how they can best deal with an unplanned pregnancy. Each year this centre provides about 3,000 of South Australia’s 5,000 abortion services, with about 48 per cent of referrals coming from doctors and 18 per cent from family and friends.

The caring and highly skilled staff explained to me that the only theme that applied at every stage was the emphasis placed on providing informed and safe choices. The choice to pursue an appointment is the woman’s alone, and the one-week delay that applies between her call and the appointment could be considered a cooling-off period. During the appointment, women are offered an opportunity to discuss and access information about a range of issues, including continuing with the pregnancy and adoption, again with the emphasis on informed choice. However, only 10 per cent of women do not immediately proceed to end their pregnancy. In fact, a large number want to ensure the procedure can be carried out immediately so they can be at home when their other children come home from school. Many of these women are also coping with the demands of work, a country lifestyle and difficult personal circumstances including domestic violence and substance abuse.

An ultrasound scan is a prerequisite part of the procedure, but again it is the woman’s choice to view the scan. Some do, some do not; some ask for a copy of the image and some come back later to ask for a copy of the image after they have thought about it. After-care services in the centre, including a telephone counselling hotline and post-operative follow-up, are again provided as options. Appointments are then made at the woman’s request. Importantly, follow-up counselling is available for all women, but only about 10 per cent of women choose to access this counselling.

This was a very sad place. It was quite crowded. There were many people sitting in the waiting room. Sadly they did not have a great deal of privacy. The facilities in this centre could be improved, but the money that is given by the South Australian government for the service is not generous and the staff there have decided to use the funds available to increase the options for women rather than to modernise the waiting room. However, it was one of the few places I have been to where people chose not to establish eye contact with one another. I would hope that no member of my family would ever find themselves needing to go there. But, if they did, it would be a very safe choice for them, and that is the way I think all thinking people want that choice to be provided.

I do not promote abortion in any sense at all, and I do not believe that I am likely to meet anyone who does. But in passionately supporting informed choice I am neither pro-life nor anti-life. I describe myself not as a feminist but as a commonsense woman who wants, on the 30th anniversary of International Women’s Day, the choices for Australian women to be free from compulsion and free from coercion. I simply want to offer other Australian women the choices that they now have and not to return to the shameful, secret and unsafe days of the past.

Indigenous Affairs: Redfern

Senator RIDGEWAY (New South Wales) (7.30 p.m.)—I want to speak tonight about an issue that should be important to all Aus-
ustralians, and I would hope that it receives a lot more debate—certainly in Sydney. I think it goes to the question of a prevailing attitude in relation to Indigenous affairs in this country and that there is an injustice waiting to happen. It is not a popular issue but one that people cringe at and tend to walk away from, and this is the question of Redfern. I raise this because there is no other neighbourhood in this nation that carries as much weight with the mere mention of its name. Even though there are large Indigenous populations in areas of Western Sydney, it is Redfern that is seen as Sydney’s black heart—specifically the area known as the Block, which is bounded by Eveleigh, Louis, Caroline and Vine Streets.

I was alarmed—I would hope like many other Sydneysiders—when I woke up at home in Sydney on Saturday morning to read the news on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald that the new minister responsible for Redfern, Frank Sartor, had told the local Aboriginal housing company in Redfern that he wants no Aboriginal housing on the Block. Frank Sartor has already revealed that the heritage laws will no longer apply to four sites around Redfern: the Australian Technology Park, Eveleigh railway workshop, the 23-hectare public housing estate and the Block. It is almost stating the obvious to say that Aboriginal people have lived in Redfern for 60,000 years; but, to be more specific, it has been the main area in Sydney where Aboriginal people have lived since the 1930s—attracted mostly by the work at the nearby Eveleigh railway yards. Indeed, when my family first came to Sydney from the North Coast, we stayed first in Caroline Street and then lived around Redfern, Alexandria and Waterloo, because that was where Aboriginal people stayed when they came to Sydney.

The Redfern Indigenous community have been involved in the conception and development of Indigenous community control services since the 1970s and were amongst the first to look at the establishment of legal services, medical services and the housing company, to name a few. I think that they provided the models for a way forward, but there have been some difficulties along the way. One issue was the lack of affordable housing for Redfern’s increasing population, and it resulted in an extreme housing crisis, with people living in the Black Theatre, then the Catholic church hall and then eventually squatting in houses in Louis Street on the Block. In 1973, after much publicity and despite protests from non-Indigenous residents and the South Sydney Council, the houses within the Block were bought by the Commonwealth government and given to the Aboriginal housing company. The aim at that time was to provide a communal living environment run by Indigenous people, for Indigenous residents, with affordable rent.

As the housing company have promised to deliver some 62 new houses on the Block, the new minister, sadly, announced that in the brave new world of Redfern there will be hardly a black face on the Block. After the Redfern riot of February last year, the New South Wales government’s response of 54 extra police and the Redfern-Waterloo Authority does not take into account or appreciate the nature of the long relationship between Indigenous people in Redfern—especially the Block—that goes back over a significant period of time.

The New South Wales government’s response is a tired and lazy solution that says that the only way forward is to open up Redfern to the free market. I read Frank Sartor’s letter in the Sydney Morning Herald today, about accusations about the government’s response being racist, but if it does not come close to it I do not know what does. It is the likes of which we have not heard for a long time: the targeting of one race of people for
exclusion. As many letters in yesterday’s Sydney Morning Herald pointed out, would Mr Sartor call for the removal of Jewish people from Bondi? Would he call for the removal of Italians from Leichhardt? Would they remove the Chinese from Haymarket if the developers needed that particular land? Nowhere in Mr Sartor’s grand whitewashing plan for Redfern can Indigenous people on low incomes buy affordable housing. It is shameful that there is no talk about the people in Redfern and in the Block having aspirations to own their own home.

This is something that the government has been going on about for some time: moving from communal to individual ownership, yet we do not talk about and apply that same concept in places like Redfern. I think in this respect we have to ask the question: why can’t Indigenous people hold prime real estate in this country and why can’t they make something from it? In this plan there is still only talk about making the local residents just tenants; or, worse still, attempting to relocate them completely—probably to some far-off place like Macquarie Fields. We saw what happened there and we know it is going to happen again in the future.

It is no accident that the Block itself is in the state it is. It is the result of decisions and policies that have maintained both poverty and crime—and, yes, we do need to tackle those issues, but doing it this way is not the best way forward. I think there is a lot of credence in looking at what happened in Harlem with redevelopment there. Certainly the problems were far worse than they are in Redfern—and probably will ever be—and it is now back on the tourist map. People have not had to relocate. In the process, even former US President Bill Clinton relocated his office to Harlem. I see no reason why we ought not venture down a similar path and be brave enough to do the right thing—the morally correct thing. Redfern is, in my mind at least, the best example of a remote community in the biggest and wealthiest city, where local people cannot attract local jobs, they are not working in the local retail outlet centres, and they do not have all of life’s opportunities at their fingertips. They are not unlike everyone here. In that respect it makes it harder to understand why it is that these people do not get the same life choice to be able to own their own home.

Fingers are being pointed at the housing company, and people are saying that it has to deal with every problem on the Block—just because it has title to the land. The point I make here is that it is a housing company; it is set up to deal with the provision of housing. How does a housing company also deal with the issues of law and order, drugs, alcohol abuse, the abuse of women and children and so on? It simply cannot. That solution is the wrong way forward. It also raises a question. The housing company holds title to land that is held privately. How can a government, even using some notion of just terms compensation, all of a sudden decide to single out one group as against the rest and say that they are going to relocate them? It is an absolute travesty; it is a miscarriage of justice waiting to happen. That is why this issue needs to be raised.

Most of all, I accept the weight of public opinion: the range of problems that have existed in the Redfern community and in communities right across the country hardly garners support from the broader community to be able to recognise what is there. The sad thing about the whole debate is that even when you speak to local people they have somehow become immune or conditioned to accepting that this is pretty normal—there is no need to kick up a fuss or resist what the government proposes and it is okay that on privately held land, irrespective of whom it is held by, the minister can step forward and dictate what is going to happen in respect of
that land. It seems to me that, if the new authority goes ahead with its plans, its 'us and them' mentality will perpetuate and entrench inequality in this country. Whether we talk about it in terms of reconciliation or practical outcomes, we have to recognise that the whole approach is one that entrenches the wrong outcomes and entrenches a perceived inequality that sometimes we fail to see.

To me it was a perfect opportunity for both black and white leaders to show leadership to create a relationship between the Redfern community and the business community. We have to realise that you cannot just draw this artificial line around the Block to the exclusion of what is happening beyond that. There are the non-Indigenous residents and the business community. If we expect to fix the problems in Redfern we also have to include those people as stakeholders—as people who have an interest—and make sure that they are involved in finding the solutions. We are not doing any of that. We are focusing on a geographical area and treating it very differently from what any person in this place would expect, irrespective of where they live in the country.

Whilst there is a unique opportunity and whilst I have read Mr Sawyer’s very public admission that English teachers Australia wide have failed. They have failed not as one might think because literacy standards have not been reached, or because the younger generation is not so familiar with the classics of English literature. No—not according to Mr Sawyer. English teachers have failed in their task because the Howard government was re-elected. After romping through a veritable laundry list of left wing grievances, from industrial relations to refugees, and from GST to WMDs, Mr Sawyer laments that, despite the supposed Dickensian state of modern Australia, people, including young students, still voted for the Howard government. Mr Sawyer asked the question: 'What does it mean for us'—that is, English teachers—and our ability to create questioning, critical citizens?

A cynic might answer that perhaps it means it is time to abandon political activism in the classroom for the sake of teaching our children to read and write. But, alas, I doubt that is going to happen. You see, Mr Sawyer writes:

English for the last ten years ... has trumpeted the cause of critical literacy. Critical literacy holds as its central premise the education of the student to be able to 'suss' out—
good use of English—
how they are being worked over—by advertisers, by politicians, by the media.

An activist’s usual response is not to admit defeat but to redouble one’s efforts. Still, perhaps critical literacy, far from being a failure, was actually very successful and the students were able to 'suss' out how they
were being worked over by their English teachers, and thus re-elected the Howard government. Be that as it may, I am sure that most parents, regardless of their political views, are asking themselves at the moment: is that why we are sending our children to school, or indeed to university, as the problem of academic bias and indoctrination is in many ways even more pronounced in our institutions of higher learning?

So, what is the role of education? Should education socialise the young within an existing culture and offer them the basic means to succeed in that culture? Or should education give to the young the means to challenge and overthrow the existing culture, presumably in order to achieve a better life? Professor Roger Shattuck, the former president of the American Association of Literary Scholars and Critics, is far from being a conservative, but he answers the question thus:

We are overloading education when we ask it to reform society, to redesign culture, and to incorporate the avant-garde and bohemia in its precincts. In a free society, original and disaffected minds will always find a platform. The university need not provide the principal home for political, social, and artistic dissidents. The primary mission of a University is the transmission of a precious heritage.

Of a fellow academic who uses his English class for ‘unashamed advocacy’ of social reform, Professor Shattuck asks: ‘Shouldn’t he be looking for a slot in political science? Or perhaps he should be running for office?’ We could ask the same questions of Mr Sawyer.

From that point of view, I welcome the decision by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Nelson, to set up an inquiry into teacher training in Australia. The inquiry will investigate all aspects of how we teach those who will teach our children, but it hopefully will also focus on some less technical aspects of the matter. As the minister himself recently said, ‘In far too many instances I’ve had teacher education faculties described to me as quasi-sociology departments.’

Our secondary schools are, of course, only one aspect of the general problem. Universities, if anything—and I can speak from some experience—generate even more opportunities for the politicisation and indoctrination of students. If I had 10c for every story I have heard over the years of lecturers preaching to their captive audience on political subjects unrelated to the course at hand, or of students being marked up or down depending on whether their political views agreed with those of their lecturers, I personally would be able to fund several scholarships to our top universities. It is time to do something about this problem.

In America, thanks to the initiative and efforts of Mr David Horowitz and an organisation called Students for Academic Freedom, the proposal for a bill of rights for university students is now before 20 state legislatures throughout the United States. The driving idea behind the student bill of rights is that institutions of higher learning should provide their students with ‘a learning environment in which the students have access to a broad range of serious scholarly opinion pertaining to the subjects they study’ and that their education should be free from political or religious indoctrination by faculty members.

One of the provisions of this student bill of rights proposed by Mr Horowitz is that curricula and reading lists should provide students with a broad range of viewpoints—not the current trendy ideas of the post-modernist, left wing, irrelevant diatribe that colours much of the university scholarship in this country. Most of the world has given up on this French post-modernism, but, of course, in universities in Australia—the bastions of lost causes—it remains. Other provi-
isions are that students should be graded solely on the basis of the quality of their work and not on their political or indeed religious beliefs, and that lecturers should not use their positions for political, ideological, religious or anti-religious indoctrination and in particular should refrain from introducing into classrooms matters which have no relation to the subject of study. Finally, in addition, lecturers themselves should be hired, fired, promoted or granted tenure only on the basis of their competence and expertise, not because of their personal beliefs—trendy, fashionable or otherwise.

Needless to say, American academics have cried censorship and McCarthyism, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the bill of rights does not deny them the right to hold their own views or to teach what they want. The bill of rights is about ensuring that students are not taught from narrow perspectives that ignore all others with whom the lecturers disagree, and that lecturers do not misuse their privileged position as a bully pulpit to propagate their narrow views. As Professor Shattuck writes, ‘Constant appeal to academic freedom, treated as a special privilege for professors to speak their minds, neglects the accompanying principle of academic responsibility.’ We entrust teachers and academics with the education, not the indoctrination, of our children. (Time expired)

Immigration: Detention Centres

Senator NETTLE (New South Wales) (7.51 p.m.)—Nearly two years ago the SBS current affairs show Insight reported on the tragic story of a 14-year-old boy who was going blind in an immigration detention centre in Port Hedland. The case of Shahin Agdar was a case of extreme negligence on the part of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and the then operators of our immigration detention centres, ACM. Shahin was suffering from an auto-immune condition that attacks the eyes. Although an eye test in November 2001 revealed that Shahin was almost blind, he did not receive an urgent medical assessment. In fact, it was four months until he saw a specialist—a delay that ophthalmologist William Ward said cost him his sight in his right eye.

I am very concerned that a similar case of negligence is happening right now. I am concerned that another detainee in one of Australia’s immigration detention centres is currently going blind because of the department of immigration’s negligence. Masood Nirroomand-Hooseni has been held in immigration detention for four years. In January this year Masood began to feel unwell, suffering cramps, dizziness, headaches, a loss of appetite and constant thirst. Masood reports that the medical centre at Villawood detention centre failed to test his blood despite his repeated requests and symptoms that would suggest a blood test was necessary.

In mid-January Masood collapsed during the night and was taken to hospital. The doctor at the hospital found his blood sugar level was very high and, as a result, prescribed medication. Later on Masood received an injection of insulin to reduce his blood sugar levels from dangerous levels. On Saturday, 29 January, Masood was found on the floor of his cell almost unconscious. He could hear but could not see anything. He was dizzy with a terrible headache. At eight o’clock he was taken to Liverpool hospital. The doctor at Liverpool hospital dilated Masood’s pupils and examined his eyes. She said that he had blood at the back of his right eye and needed to see a specialist ‘first thing Monday morning’.

That was over a month ago, but Masood has still not seen a specialist. Masood is very concerned that he will lose his sight entirely.
He has a new wife and baby outside the detention centre and wants to be able to see his son grow up. Masood has repeatedly requested that he get an ophthalmologist to assess his eyes. He has even offered to pay for the specialist himself. But detention centre management and the department of immigration have not allowed him to see a specialist. Nor, to this date, has Masood had an appointment with a specialist in the management of his now diagnosed diabetes. During this time Masood has complained that his eyes are watering a lot and are red and that his vision has got worse. I understand that, if he has bleeding in his eye and the blood clots, then that clot will block his vision and it cannot be removed. Masood has had his eyes measured for glasses by an optometrist, who correctly told him, ‘I cannot help you; I can only measure your eyes for glasses. You need a specialist.’

In his 2001 report on immigration detention centres, the Commonwealth Ombudsman said that the department of immigration’s duty of care is not able to be delegated. In other words, despite a private company being contracted to run immigration detention centres, the department and the minister still bear ultimate responsibility for the health and safety of all detainees. There are many questions to be asked and answered about the competence of Global Solutions Limited to run Australia’s immigration detention centres. Last week the BBC exposed racism and brutality in Britain’s immigration detention centres run by the same company.

The department of immigration cannot claim ignorance in the case of Masood. On 4 February, Masood’s solicitor left phone messages for Richard Battersby, the department of immigration’s manager at Villawood detention centre, and sent a fax outlining his concerns. Nor can the minister claim ignorance. Francis Milne, a church worker who regularly visits detainees at Villawood, was so concerned about Masood’s condition that she faxed the minister’s chief of staff on 13 February this year. When I visited Masood at Villawood last week, on 28 February, he had still not had his eyes assessed by a specialist. By phone with him again today, I have confirmed that he has still not had his eyes assessed by a specialist. I sent a letter to the minister after my visit last week requesting urgent action.

Masood’s case is yet another example of systematic failure by the department of immigration to take its duty of care to detainees seriously. I have spoken previously about the numerous studies that have found immigration detention centres to be seriously damaging people’s health. The quality of health care for people in immigration detention centres, from Shahin Agdar to Cornelia Rau and Masood Hooseni, has been repeatedly exposed as negligent and culpable. Why does the department wait until its negligence is exposed in the media? Why does it have to be embarrassed into action? Why is it necessary for my office to badger the minister into getting this man with a potentially serious medical condition a proper medical assessment? How many tragic cases of medical negligence behind the razor wire go unreported?

It is becoming increasingly clear that the treatment of Cornelia Rau was not a one-off mistake but endemic in a system that is failing to respect human dignity and basic human rights. Mr Dick Smith, after his recent visit to Baxter detention centre, said it was ‘one of the most oppressive places I’ve ever been to.’ Retired Air Marshall Ray Funnell, who is a member of the government’s Immigration Detention Advisory Group, said the government had ignored repeated requests to properly research the mental health of detainees.
Immigration detention is supposed to be for administrative not punitive purposes. It is becoming increasingly clear that immigration detention is being used to punish people who have not committed a crime. Last Friday I was present at a dinner where Julian Burnside QC revealed that Andrew Kirk, the minister’s former chief of staff, had admitted to him at the dinner that aspects of immigration detention were indeed being used as punishment. Julian Burnside outlined Mr Kirk’s comments that punishment without the order of a court breaches the constitutional separation of powers and that the use of solitary confinement as punishment is unlawful but that the government would keep doing it until a court told them to stop. I believe that this is a further indication that the department of immigration is a department out of control, risking and damaging people’s health.

Too many questions from too many quarters have been raised about the conditions in immigration detention centres for the government to brush away these concerns. There must be a public judicial inquiry into Australia’s immigration detention centres. If nothing else, the unease on the government backbench should signal to the government that enough is enough. The government should heed the call coming from its own backbench to offer an amnesty to all those currently locked behind the razor wire. But it is not because the continued cruelties of our immigration detention centres are fast becoming a political liability that the minister should be announcing an end to the immigration detention centre regime; this regime should be closed down because it is manifestly illegal, immoral and inhumane. While this government continues to rob the lives of these young families, men, and women, and while they continue to allow neglect, mismanagement and even abuse, they bring shame on themselves and this country—a shame that Australians ill deserve.

**International Women’s Day**

**Senator MOORE** (Queensland) (7.59 p.m.)—Today, on International Women’s Day, I want to talk briefly about a centenary celebration that we are having this year in Senator Santoro’s and my state of Queensland—the centenary of women achieving the right to vote at the state level. In January 1905 legislation was passed in Queensland to extend the right to vote to women. To our communal shame, that did not include all women. Indigenous women, as with all Indigenous people, did not receive the right to vote and be full citizens until the 1960s.

That achievement in 1905 is one of which we are very proud and which we must remember today, International Women’s Day. But it was not graciously given. The myth that somehow people woke up on that morning and said, ‘Now is the right time to give women the vote,’ is just that—a myth; it is not factual. Before 1905 there were years of struggle, debate and negotiation across the whole state. Women and men understood that the right to vote was an intrinsic part of being a citizen, but they were not all the same kind of people.

I think that one of the things this celebration year should bring home to all of us is that the people who were struggling for the right to vote were just like you and me. They lived in their community and gathered around a cause. Very often the people who were seeking the vote were the same people who were fighting the other issues of the day. Industrial rights were really important in Queensland at the time. Emma Miller was a trade union woman who was strongly involved in looking at equity of wages, working conditions for women and also the issues at that time around peace. Emma was a long-term peace activist. Other women in the
struggle, like Leontine Cooper, looked at women’s right to have a safe home and at issues of education. There was no such thing as a typical woman activist. At least two groups were formed because they did not agree on many things.

One of the real shames is that we have not kept our history, so it is very difficult to find the records of the meetings that occurred across Queensland from about 1890 through to the success in 1905. It would be wonderful to see what was recorded, what kinds of debates occurred and the kinds of people who came to those meetings all across the state. At the time, Queensland, as now, was a deeply decentralised state. There were large towns all across the north and to the west because of the pastoral and gold rush periods. The people who were seeking the right to vote travelled across the state, not with the ease and comfort of today, but by dray and by train. They talked to communities on the back of the drays and in public places and agitated for things as important as the right to vote.

Those women and their male supporters at the time must look from wherever they are now at what is happening in our parliaments in the state and across the whole country. Women have had the right to vote for 100 years and, at the state level in Queensland, they have had the right to stand for parliament since 1915. The question now is not whether we have the right to be here but what we are doing now that we are here. At this time I want to make a couple of brief comments and applaud the speech we heard earlier this afternoon by Senator Ferris. Now we have many of the same issues around education, industrial rights and pay equity.

But I want to talk about health and choice, because one of the issues that is getting more currency at the moment than it has for a while—it is always there waiting for the debate; it never goes away—is the open medical right of women to choose. In 2005 one would have thought that there would be open acceptance that fair, achievable and accessible medical choices should be available to all citizens—men and women. Certainly one of the issues that we have supported in the long term has been that of strong family planning and women’s health centres being available across all parts of our country.

I want to talk particularly about Queensland tonight because, as I said earlier, it is such a wide, decentralised state. If we are going to be talking about effective women’s health centres which provide appropriate advice about reproductive health, sexual health and the different things that families and women need to know, we should be making sure that they are not just available down the east coast or in the capital city but that they are resourced and effectively placed all through the state. It does not matter where you live, you should be able with privacy, importantly, and open choice to attend doctors and medical support practitioners who can talk with you in a sensitive, informed way so that all kinds of choices are open to you.

Way too often this debate becomes focused on the issue of terminations of pregnancy, but it is much wider than that. We should not run away from the debate about abortion, because that agenda is there and we need to ensure that women’s voices are strongly heard. But not all people think the same way. In the same way that in 1905 people had strongly different opinions on a whole range of issues, now in 2005 we have the same range of opinions in all kinds of movements. What really concerns me and makes me frustrated is that, when we get to the discussion of women’s right to choose, mutual respect is lost. It is seemingly impossible, from my experience, for people to sit down and have a reasonable discussion about
different positions on this issue. Emotions, religious backgrounds and cultural positions intrude on the debate and people are targeted, marginalised and not treated with respect. I would have hoped that by 2005 we would have learned the ability to debate and to consider the feelings of others without degenerating into the kind of passionate attack which seems to particularly colour issues around termination of pregnancy.

My hope would be that in 2005, with the legacy of the people who struggled to achieve the vote and the right of people to be in places like this, we would be able to understand people’s values, to talk and listen and to have appropriate debates. In 2005 I would expect any woman in this country to be given the respect to make up her own mind on all issues to do with her own medical health. Effective and professional health services always have to be provided. But by now I would have hoped that we would be able to have this discussion in a medical context rather than having a personal debate in which things often end up being said that attack people and not their beliefs.

As we celebrate in 2005 and as we celebrate on International Women’s Day, I think that we can look at the achievements across our history. We have had people who have been able to effectively operate in parliament, take on professional careers, access education and in many ways feel confident in their lives. But somehow, when it comes down to this issue of personal choice on medical issues, we lose that freedom and we lose that respect.

In 1905, I do not think they openly talked about the issue of women’s medical health. They certainly did not have women’s medical centres. Unfortunately, as we heard earlier from Senator Ferris, in the 1960s that option was not available either. I would expect that in 2005 we would have the maturity, the understanding and the professionalism to accept that women have the right to choose—the right to choose the doctors who will give them the support they need—and that they would expect that their fellow citizens accept that they have that right and not limit themselves to personal, vicious and hurtful attack. I also defend people’s rights to make that choice without being labelled publicly and without having their privacy compromised by people checking on what appropriate mechanisms they had taken before making the decision with their doctor.

In 2005, we have earned that right and we have earned that respect. When I think back to the women who were working across Queensland leading up to the 1905 decision about the vote, I believe that they would expect that the sisters in 2005 would have that right and freedom and would not have to keep up this battle as we lead into the second century of the right to vote and stand for parliament.

National Sea Change Task Force

Senator SANTORO (Queensland) (8.09 p.m.)—Tonight I wish to speak about a very serious challenge that faces Australia. It is the challenge of the so-called sea change phenomenon. This is something that is creating tremendous difficulties for local governments in coastal areas—the areas we all like to visit on day trips, spend time in on holidays and some of us look towards as retirement homes.

Late in February, I attended a lunch organised by the Property Council at Mooloolaba in Queensland. The Sunshine Coast in my home state is a typical sea change community. Like other places in Queensland and in other states, it is clearly under very great pressure from the influx of people—visitors and settlers alike. New settlers place tremendous pressure on the infrastructure and services, and of course short-term visitors do
not directly pay towards that infrastructure’s maintenance and development. The Gold Coast, another Queensland icon of tourism, faces similar problems, about which I have spoken in this place before and about which I will speak again in the future.

Tonight in the parliamentary precinct are some of the Gold Coast’s leading citizens, and I would like to acknowledge their presence in this place. We welcome scrutiny of the representative democracy in action and I say to the Senate tonight that the Gold Coast deserves your interest and close attention in relation to the sea change challenges which also confront that wonderful part of Queensland.

At the lunch to which I just referred, the speaker was the Mayor of Maroochy Shire, Councillor Joe Natoli, spokesman for the National Sea Change Task Force that has been set up by coastal councils around Australia. Mayor Natoli is an able advocate not only for his own region—his shire is one of a group of three local government areas that is home to 265,800 people—but also for the urgent need to find some way to cope with the sea change issue. Thirty per cent of the Sunshine Coast’s population lives within only one kilometre of the coastline and 60 per cent lives within five kilometres. In the year ending June 2003, population growth was more than 10,160 people—that is 3.8 per cent. Some idea of the pressures on the Sunshine Coast can be seen from the statistics on land supply: 1.2 per cent is considered suitable and potentially available for urban residential development; 1.6 per cent is considered suitable and potentially available for lower density development; 2.2 per cent is already developed; 8.3 per cent is allocated to road casements, railways and water-courses; and 86.7 per cent is considered not suitable and/or not available for residential development. These statistics would be very broadly duplicated in many, if not most, sea change communities.

Last October, Mayor Natoli spoke at a conference in Western Australia that was attended by none other than you, Mr Acting Deputy President Lightfoot, my friend and colleague. Mayor Natoli made an eloquent plea for national action to protect coastal communities, to provide them with adequate funds to meet growing infrastructure needs, and to plan properly on a regional basis for population growth that is sustainable both economically and in terms of the environment. In many ways, confronting this problem and dealing effectively with it is a true test of Australian federalism, both in terms of its capacity to reflect regional realities and meet the separate needs of diverse and widely scattered communities and in terms of its ability to react within the heavily structured three-tiered system of government.

Federalism itself, as an element of how we govern ourselves, is another matter on which I intend to speak out at another time. In relation to the sea change phenomenon, we have got to find an answer. There is a lot of argument in our political system over responsibilities. But there is one clear responsibility in this case, and that is that the states must make and pay for the infrastructure commitments that are vitally needed in sea change communities. The states encourage tourism and population shift and their local economies benefit from this through the GST on consumption spending by tourists—estimated at $60 billion in 2003-04—and by new residents and from land and other state taxes. It is their responsibility to help create workable communities.

The federal Treasurer is absolutely right when he says that the states are not spending their GST funds in a responsible manner. As honourable senators know, this is the very point that I have been making in this cham-
ber ever since I entered the Senate in 2002. The Commonwealth has its own responsibilities aside from that of ensuring the states have access to a growth source of discretionary spending.

In relation to transport infrastructure, it rests in the AusLink program that is spending $11.8 billion—a $3.6 billion increase—on land transport nationally, including a massive upgrade of Australia’s east coast road and rail systems. The Roads to Recovery and Black Spot programs directly fund local government. This year under Roads to Recovery local councils will get $253.1 million to spend on local road priorities alone. In the four years from 2005-06 to 2008-09, a further $1.2 billion will be provided—$800 million directly to local councils for local road priorities and $400 million available to councils on a competitive basis for projects of regional strategic significance. These are projects which will strengthen regional economic and social opportunities but are beyond the boundaries or financial capabilities of individual councils.

The states must pull their weight too instead of just passing the buck to the Commonwealth and undermining their own constitutional validity in the process. Local government should not be the poor cousin, especially when it has to deal with the effects of regional and national population movement. Local governments are subordinate authorities to state governments. That is as it should be. But local governments should have the most powerful voice possible within their states and, as the essential third tier of government, local governments deserve to have direct advocacy access to the Commonwealth.

The Australian Local Government Association is a very able advocate and a powerful voice, and quite correctly it is represented on the Council of Australian Governments. The National Sea Change Task Force has published a paper that makes very interesting reading and also some very good points. These are supported by studies being undertaken by a team at the University of Sydney, which has also produced an interesting paper. I commend both of these documents to honourable senators and I seek leave to table a copy of each of them.

Leave granted.

Senator SANTORO—One of the arguments put forward by the National Sea Change Task Force is that the sea change phenomenon is so important that it really requires special advocacy within government. I agree, and I intend to pursue with colleagues the matter of having a specific reference to sea change within the Commonwealth and state ministerial portfolios covering local government. How we meet the challenge of sea change as a national community is something that I believe requires concentrated effort at all levels of government and in the communities most affected.

Coastal area growth has clear national implications. It impacts on the environment and must be managed with that in mind. That is primarily a Commonwealth responsibility. It impacts on transport infrastructure and in the provision of services that are within the remit of the states. It heavily impacts on local traffic and utility services that are local government responsibilities. We need to address these difficulties with a single agreed outcome in mind. As environmental technology advances, as it inevitably will, we can expect that it will become possible to cope with larger populations in all but the most fragile of our environments. That is, in essence, the whole story of human advance since the Mesopotamians began farming and, despite the efforts of the Greens to argue otherwise, the clock only moves forward. We must
work out financial and governmental mechanisms that actually put the money that is needed into the hands of those who actually have to do the job. That may mean that we need to experience a sea change of a different sort: one that will deliver us from the interminable arguments over cost shifting—invariably downwards—and the resulting disputes over political responsibility.

When I attended that Property Council lunch at Mooloolaba last month, I did so, I frankly admit, not fully realising the urgency of dealing with a phenomenon that, when I thought about it afterwards, I had myself experienced over many years of holidaying on the Sunshine Coast. It focused my mind. There is a lot more to be said about sea change communities and how they deal with the problem that the Australian community as a whole has presented them with. There is the issue of effective funding for works that must be done. There is the issue of lifestyle and change—often rendered in shorthand as developers versus greens. There is the urgent issue of funding and implementing a national strategy to protect assets for the future. These and other matters will benefit from being raised at the ministerial council to be held in June and at a workshop planned by the task force in July on the Sunshine Coast. The National Sea Change Task Force has put a weighty agenda in front of the people of Australia. I would suggest that it deserves our deepest consideration.

**Australian Defence Force: Personnel**

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory) (8.18 p.m.)—Without diminishing the role of the Defence Force personnel from other parts of Australia, I rise tonight to highlight the key role being played by Northern Territory based soldiers in Australia’s defence commitments on foreign shores. The soldiers from the Top End have travelled to a number of countries to act on Australia’s behalf in strategic operations overseas. We have 114 Territory based soldiers of the 1st Brigade serving in Malaysia as part of Rifle Company Butterworth. We also have 67 soldiers in Iraq taking part in Operation Catalyst.

Closer to home, I would like to specially welcome back from Banda Aceh 100 combat engineers from the Darwin based 1st Combat Engineering Regiment, who have been providing humanitarian assistance in Banda Aceh. I understand they are due to return home today from tsunami relief efforts in that heavily impacted area. By all accounts, the soldiers involved in Operation Sumatra Assist have performed their duty in an exemplary fashion. I am sure the way they have performed their duties will make both previous and future generations of Australian diggers proud. In fact, all Australians should be very proud of the task they have performed.

This was not a task that was performed in normal circumstances. You can imagine the horror these young men and women walked into. We have seen some evidence on the television, and we have read about and seen photos in the media of the sorts of circumstances they would have been working in. Coming from Darwin, I am used to working in the hot tropics. They would have worked in very difficult circumstances. There were huge amounts of debris. Communities that they were assisting effectively would have had no access to sewerage, septic facilities or fresh water. Fresh water was one of the most important aspects. Because they are a combat engineering division, they would have had the capacity to put in place water purification plants and the like to alleviate some of the most important concerns. Having purified water when there is no other water available
is a critical issue. The temptation to drink from other sources of water can lead to the spread of diseases, such as cholera, and those sorts of issues. Some 4.7 million litres of clean water was created over the period of time that the engineering regiment was in Banda Aceh.

There was 9,000 cubic metres of debris. Some quick maths will tell you that that is about 3,000 tonnes of debris. Much of this debris was not shifted with bulldozers. When these people first went there, this was pick and shovel work, carried out in the sun and in the most horrific conditions. These men and women have done an absolutely outstanding job. The efforts of the Territory based Army engineers embody the spirit—born of Anzac—of pushing on in the face of adversity. It did not matter how bad the conditions got; these brave men and women put their shoulders to the wheel. They should make every single Australian proud. I welcome the diggers home and congratulate them on a job well done.

I have had some concerns recently about those who have questioned the readiness of 1st Brigade—again, from the Northern Territory—to deploy a 450-strong task force to Al Muthanna in Iraq. Those questions are clearly misinformed. I have some concerns about the source of some of that information. I know Kim Beazley said something on this today. This man has form. As I recall, he had a fair bit to do with defence in previous iterations. He was the Minister for Defence for a large number of years. One would think that he would understand very clearly the capacity of 1st Brigade and their capacity in an operational area. He should not be making the sorts of outrageous comments that were attributed to him.

Mr Beazley said this morning that he has a real concern about the way in which troops are being equipped and supported to undertake the mission that they have been asked to undertake. I would like to put the Leader of the Opposition’s mind at ease. Before he made these derogatory comments about our brave young men and women who go to service Australia’s concerns overseas, he should have made the effort to travel to Robertson Barracks to talk to the brigadier, to meet these men and women, to have a look at the sorts of circumstances in which they operate and to then consider their state of readiness. If a journey to the most beautiful place in the world, the Northern Territory, is a bit much for him, he could simply seek a brief from the minister’s office, because that is readily available to both sides of parliament.

When I visited 2RAR, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, I watched these soldiers train. I have spoken to them about their state of readiness. I have spoken to the officers that are leading the task force. Not only is the task force well on track and ready to deploy; their training is the very best in the world. I am absolutely certain that they will make all Australians extremely proud with the wonderful job that they are going to do and the wonderful contribution that they are going to make. In a matter of weeks now, 1st Brigade will be leaving for the Al Muthanna region and is going to be as well prepared as any military unit can be.

The soldiers I spoke to told me: ‘I have come back from Iraq. I have some language skills; I have some good cultural connectivity.’ Most importantly, they are about to go into a cycle at the combat training centre. I have participated as part of the Australian Defence Force parliamentary program in that excellent process. They are put on country. There are no surprises for these people. When they go into the cycle of the combat training centre, the expectations are that people will speak English, that people will not steal their gear and that the centre will provide opportunities for experiential learning.
that they would not get anywhere else except in an operational sphere. The soldiers that come out of that process are second to none. There is no higher state of readiness.

Reading what was said by the Leader of the Opposition, I am supposed to assume that we are ill equipped. Perhaps he is referring to the 40-odd ASLAVs that will go with those men in the deployment. They have shown their metal on the battlefield in action in recent times and have been shown to be the very finest. We continue to work at upgrading those systems. We now have turret-down, cap-down services whereby the .50 calibre or the 20 millimetre gun can be brought to bear and activated without having someone’s scone sticking out of the top of the ASLAV. These are great innovations. We are continuing to improve that. We have ballistic vests around the inside of all the ASLAVs. They are being fitted prior to being deployed. We are providing them with the very best. I think it is an absolute shame that the Leader of the Opposition should have so little concern for the men, women and soldiers that are going over there and their families as to make such an outrageous, misinformed statement about the process.

The Australian government do not send the sons of this nation into potential harm unless we are absolutely sure that they have the very best equipment and the very best training. We are in a position to help, and it is our responsibility to lend a hand. I, like every other Australian, was absolutely thrilled to bits to see the birth of the world’s youngest democracy. I am so proud of the role that Australian soldiers played in that. Can you imagine going to the election when 30 of your mates get shot on the way there? Sixty per cent of Iraq turned out, under fire, to go and create that democracy.

It is difficult in Iraq. Nobody resiles from that. But, just because it gets tough, we are not going to cut and run—despite the suggestions of those on the other side. We have a responsibility at this critical time—and the Prime Minister referred to it as the tipping point—to provide the assistance. It is not just helping someone out. It is not a handout; it is a hand up. We are helping people with critical training so that they can take their affairs in hand. That is the sort of help we are providing. I say to the newest democracy: ‘When you’re mates with Australians, you’re mates whether the going gets tough or otherwise. We’ll be there through thick and thin, as we have been since the formation of Anzac. We are not going to back off on this, despite the criticism from others.’

This deployment is particularly important because it looks after one of our key allies in the Asian region. Looking after the Japanese and looking after that region is an investment in developing that regional partnership. I am very proud to have fine young people living in the Northern Territory and I want them to know that their families have my full support and that of this government for the duration of this deployment and beyond.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Lightfoot)—Thank you for your words. I was the only politician in Iraq during the momentous occasion of the election.

Abortion

Senator CROSSIN (Northern Territory) (8.28 p.m.)—I rise tonight to provide a contribution to a debate that has been going on not only for the last 12 months but for many decades in this country. It has been rehighlighted in the last few months. I have chosen International Women’s Day to put on the public record my views about the matter of abortion. I want to begin by saying that I come from a family of very strong women—I had two very strong grandmothers and a very strong mother—who certainly do not resile from their principles and who have
always upheld strong beliefs in a range of matters. I have to say we are never shy petals in putting forward these beliefs. I have bred three wonderful women in Melinda, Amanda and Kate, who I know will follow in the footsteps of my grandmothers. They, too, have never been too backward in saying what they think about a particular issue. I am very proud of that and could probably at times be accused of encouraging it.

I think it is the strength of your family inheritance and a sense of purpose which brings particular people to this parliament. For me, one of the issues in coming to this parliament was that there was a need to raise the issues associated with the legislation and the deliberations in the federal parliament that affect women. The issue of abortion is an issue central to women and highlights why quite a number of us are here.

I know that Senator Moore spoke earlier about Senator Ferris’s speech in the chamber this afternoon. She spoke about International Women’s Day. Senator Ferris started that speech by making a comment about spiders and the fact that there was a matter of choice. In this country there is choice for a whole range of citizens. It is a signal of our freedom and of the opportunity that we have in this country. We have choice in a whole range of areas. We can choose whether to smoke or not to smoke and whether to take drugs or not to take drugs. We can choose what school we want to go to and what school we do not want to go to. We can choose what doctor we go to and what doctor we do not go to. But women, particularly, have a very special choice: whether or not they have a child.

The status report on women which was tabled today, which Senator Patterson launched at lunchtime, outlined some of the choices and responses that people have about these areas. Of course, it was a report about women. We have choices about body image, choices about our sex lives and choices about reproductive health. I think the recent debate about abortion hides behind the concern that more information is needed. We have had people in this parliament tabling questions on notice, as they are quite right to do. We have had people suggesting that more statistics ought to be kept. But what I believe really seeks to push the agenda is a sense of others trying to impose their morality on women’s rights—including the concerns to move women’s rights and their right to choose off the agenda. It is an attempt to limit the choices that women have and to take control over what a woman should decide: what is best for her, both mentally and physically. To suggest that a man should tell me, as a woman, what I should and should not do when it comes to how I regulate my body in terms of its physical or mental wellbeing is something I find offensive, and I do not agree with it. I know that 81 per cent of Australians actually support the right of women to have that choice and in fact support the right of women to choose to have an abortion if they want to.

Let me spend some time putting some facts on the table. Abortions can be performed in public hospitals, private hospitals, day clinics or doctors’ surgeries—in other words, in private clinics. We know that, if an abortion is performed on a public patient in a public hospital, there is no Medicare rebate payable and the data on the total number of abortions performed will only be available if the public hospital or state government releases it. If an abortion is performed on an admitted patient in a private hospital or on an admitted private patient in a public hospital then the patient may be eligible for a Medicare rebate equal to 75 per cent of the schedule fee. There are two Medicare item numbers which relate to procedures that can be used for abortion. Procedures to which these two items relate are also used for other pur-
poses, such as dealing with the consequences of a spontaneous miscarriage. There is no way of telling from the Medicare data what the purpose of the procedure was.

According to Parliamentary Library research, from information received from the Department of Health and Ageing, private health insurance legislation and regulations do not make specific reference to pregnancy terminations. It is a condition of registration that private health insurance funds must provide coverage for all items on the schedule of Medicare benefits as long as they are performed in registered hospitals or day centres. The federal government does assist with the funding of abortion in four ways: it pays Medicare rebates, it funds the Medicare safety net, it funds the private health insurance 30 per cent rebate and it makes a Commonwealth contribution to the funding of public hospitals.

How many abortions are there? As far as we know, only South Australia collects comprehensive data. We do know, however, that the number of Medicare rebates for the two procedures that can be used for abortion is often used publicly as if it is the number of abortions. However, this number gives an inaccurate picture. The procedures are used for purposes other than abortion. The Medicare rebates do not apply to public patients in public hospitals. One study has indicated that up to 10 per cent of women who would be eligible for a Medicare rebate for an abortion do not claim—presumably because of an extreme sensitivity about confidentiality. Also, these Medicare items are not used for third trimester abortions because the procedures are not suitable. In 1996, the NHMRC stated that around one in every four known pregnancies in Australia is terminated. That is down from one in every three pregnancies in the 1930s. Of course, that was when contraception was not readily available.

But I think we ought to look at who has an abortion these days, and why. What we can tell from the statistics, surprisingly enough, is that most abortions are performed on the 25 to 34 age group. The past decade has seen a dramatic ageing of the average abortion patient. The proportion of Medicare funded abortions done for teenagers has actually fallen by 12 per cent. The proportion of patients over 35 rose by 37 per cent. In every year since 1995, abortion patients have been more likely to be over 35 than under 20. In other words, what we are seeing is a trend towards older women, rather than teenagers, having an abortion. Data from Sydney, for example, shows that the number of abortions for women over 40 increased 250 per cent between 1992 and 2002 and that an abortion patient was 40 per cent more likely to be married or in a de facto relationship in 2002 than in 1992. I think they are some interesting statistics that, if I have time, I will come back to.

We also know that in all states and territories, except the ACT, the practise of abortion is regulated through the relevant criminal code. Of course, in the ACT it is in the health code. The procedure is not regarded as illegal if it is undertaken to protect physical or mental health. We know that access to safe abortion has reduced the high rates of women suffering negative outcomes. Before 1971 abortion was a major cause of maternal deaths in Australia. The World Health Organisation reports the risk of maternal death from unsafe abortion is 100 to 500 times greater than the risk under safe conditions. The impact of limited access to abortion through Medicare will have major implications. Fewer women will be able to afford the procedure and statistics show us that that will lead to more maternal complications.

We have a responsibility to ensure that there is equal access for women to all procedures in our health system. We should not
provide a gateway of morality. Women have a right to control their body and we, as a parliament and as legislators, should support and respect this. Women make decisions about their fertility, planned or unplanned pregnancies, regardless of their situations, their views and their beliefs. They know their situation, they know their beliefs and sometimes the decision is not an easy one. But we should ensure that what we are doing is actually supporting those women who choose to make that decision. We should have a look at the current debate. We should question whether or not we provide enough sex education in our schools, whether we fund family planning clinics adequately and whether or not we should all be pushing an agenda that removes the abortion procedure from the Criminal Code and moves it into the health code, where it really belongs. *(Time expired)*

**Lieutenant Colonel Lance Collins**

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) *(8.39 p.m.)*—Both sides of politics support and applaud the contribution and sacrifice that our defence personnel make towards Australia’s security. Our people are of critical importance to our defence efforts, and every endeavour should be made to ensure the highest of standards in the management of our defence people. Labor expects that, when there is a breakdown in management practices, the Minister for Defence will take timely and remedial action to fix the problem. When no corrective action is undertaken, Labor will unreservedly pursue the government and the minister to remedy the situation. Our national security demands no less.

That is why the circumstances surrounding the two official investigations by successive inspectors-general of intelligence and security into an allegation by Lieutenant Colonel Lance Collins remain bewildering and confusing. The Howard government and successive ministers for defence, including Minister Hill, have plainly failed to carry out their responsibilities to remedy what was an unacceptable and unauthorised action by DIO officials. I refer specifically to Lieutenant Colonel Collins’s original allegation, which has now been proved to be correct by the current Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, Mr Ian Carnell, that in 1999 DIO officials deliberately withdrew access by Australian Defence Force staff in East Timor to a DIO intelligence database.

This action was taken without proper authorisation. Apparently neither the secretary of Defence nor the Chief of the Defence Force were consulted. The DIO action was taken without reference to our deployed forces and without reference to Headquarters Australian Theatre, the headquarters responsible to administer our deployed forces overseas. The cut-off was sudden and without warning. In short, the action was approved, initiated, monitored and restored by DIO officials. Sanity eventually prevailed. Let there be no doubt, this was a significant disruption with the potential to damage ongoing operations in East Timor and to hamper planning for future operations, particularly along the border between East and West Timor.

In 1999 tensions between Indonesian armed forces and INTERFET forces in Timor were real, not imaginary, and Australian lives were at risk daily along the border. These were warlike operations necessitating the fullest support the nation could provide. The safety of our troops was at threat. The loss of access to crucial intelligence information was without precedence. Fortunately a tragedy did not eventuate, but access to that database was deliberately denied to our military forces for some 26 hours. An incident was hidden from the Australian people until last year, nearly five years after it occurred,
when documents relating to Lieutenant Colonel Collins’s redress of grievance were published in the *Bulletin*.

Lieutenant Colonel Collins has been wrongly pilloried for his actions and derided for the allegations in his redress of grievance. His career has no doubt been adversely affected. He was, nonetheless, finally proved correct on the deliberate nature of the loss of access, but it took courage and perseverance to continue to raise the incident within a bureaucracy that was far from sympathetic. Lieutenant Colonel Collins, of course, was the senior intelligence officer in East Timor. He had been personally involved in the incident. Some might say his actions as an intelligence officer were the cause of what happened, but for five years his allegation was mocked and scorned for reasons that still remain hidden.

In December 2000 he wrote to the then Minister for Defence, John Moore, on a number of matters, one of which was to seek ministerial action to remedy the deliberate blocking of access to intelligence data. The minister referred the matter in the same month to Mr Bill Blick, the then Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security. Time passed. In the absence of a response, Lieutenant Colonel Collins wrote again in 2001 to the Minister for Defence, then Peter Reith, who requested an update from Mr Blick. A year passed and in despair he submitted his redress of grievance, which became bogged down in a complicated system of additional investigations and administration.

These notorious administrative shortcomings have generated a Senate inquiry into the effectiveness of the military justice system, and I hope that the committee’s report will be completed soon. Eventually, Lieutenant Colonel Collins received an edited version of Mr Blick’s report in July 2003, which stated that the loss of access to the database resulted ‘from technical problems rather than a deliberate decision’. Lieutenant Colonel Collins knew this was wrong. During the period of no access, he had received an email from the Canberra based DIO project office managing this particular database stating that the loss of access was ‘not a technical matter but a DIO policy decision’. Therefore others knew Mr Blick’s conclusion was wrong.

Alarm bells should have been ringing in the highest echelons of the Department of Defence, within Army headquarters and, most importantly, in the offices of successive ministers for defence that something had gone terribly wrong. To remedy this appalling wrong, Lieutenant Colonel Collins now had only one course of action available to him: to write to the Prime Minister, which he did in 2004. His letter was also published in the *Bulletin*. It said:

During those five years, we saw the Prime Minister, Minister Hill, the Secretary of Defence and CDF Cosgrove publicly declare at different times that the loss of access was from technical reasons and was not deliberate.

But it took additional inquiries for Mr Carnell to discover that that was plainly not the case. Indeed, through questioning Mr Carnell during the recent Senate estimates hearings, he indicated that he found it necessary to interview some 15 witnesses, three of whom were important DIO officials who had not previously been interviewed, and to arrange for technical checks of the relevant DIO service and communications links to confirm the new information from the additional witnesses.

As a result of these initiatives, Mr Carnell was able to establish that the loss of access was a deliberate act undertaken within DIO. Mr Carnell also confirmed that he was able to ‘ascertain who did the transactions and who gave that person the direction to do it’. I appreciate that Mr Smith, the Secretary of the Department of Defence, is presently
overseeing disciplinary and administrative actions in respect of Mr Carnell’s conclusions. Once Mr Smith has satisfied natural justice requirements for those so named in the report, Minister Hill has indicated that he will then be in a position to consider the release of Mr Carnell’s report. It is comforting to note that Mr Carnell has made the task easier for the minister because he drafted the report with a public release in mind.

The release of the report is important because it satisfies the notion of natural justice and fair play for Lieutenant Colonel Collins. He has wrongly suffered for five years. It also satisfies the requirement to correct bad management practices in DIO that permitted this mess to occur. DIO has, as its publicised task, to provide all-source intelligence assessments in support of ‘the planning and conduct of Australian Defence Force operations’. The task is unambiguous—the provision of intelligence assessments for the ADF. So how could DIO officials withdraw that support without proper authorisation?

I have heard a number of officials state that the loss of access did not place our troops in danger because access to other databases was still available. What tripe! Does this government condone the concept of handicapping our troops in the field, or is the behaviour of this government about making sure our forces overseas have the very best that the nation can provide? Our forces should be given every support to carry out their mission and not be hampered by decisions taken in Canberra within DIO by officials not authorised to do so.

One might have therefore expected that remedial action would have been speedily undertaken once knowledge of the loss of access became known. One might have expected at least one of the three ministers for defence involved in this fiasco to demand explanations, to seek corrective action, to punish those responsible and to ensure that similar actions were not possible without the necessary authority, checks and balances. One might have expected departmental officials to be immediately involved in all those actions, not only to discover who authorised denial of access but also to discover under what circumstances access was restored.

What is so disturbing about the incident is the difference in the conclusions between the two IGIS investigations. Such a profound difference begs the questions: why was this the case and was there a cover-up? These are legitimate questions. Clearly, Mr Carnell and the minister are in a position to identify who authorised the cut-off and who undertook the actions within DIO to limit access. The public has a right to know how these actions were authorised without reference to the minister, the CDF and the secretary of the department.

At least one would have expected that the CDF, who is the commander of the ADF, should have been involved in the decision making to withdraw access to the database. What is even more disturbing is the role of the director of DIO in this episode. The director has apparently been found not to have authorised the cut-off, but he was found to have been implicated in the resumption of access. The public has a right to know why the director imposed new conditions on the Australian intelligence staff in East Timor in using the information from the database before access was restored. What right did the director have in imposing these new conditions? How long did this take and was the removal of access a means to impose these new conditions?

It is now widely understood in the defence community that action was taken to deny access after a meeting in the director’s office—a meeting which involved the director and the same three DIO officials who were
not previously interviewed. (Extension of time granted) Mr Carnell has already confirmed that the context of that meeting is addressed in his report, but there is more that is hard to comprehend. If the director, on hearing of the loss of access, did not take immediate action to correct the situation then his lack of action was in essence condoning the cut-off. If the director undertook no disciplinary action against the DIO officials who were responsible for the cut-off, either during or after the event, one can only conclude that those actions had been condoned. Knowledge of the cut-off without corrective action is by its nature an indication of complicity. That is why the role of the director in this matter needs to be exposed to scrutiny.

Mr Carnell indicated during Senate estimates hearings that he was obliged under section 21 of the IGIS Act to circulate his draft report to the director because he was the relevant intelligence agency head. This process involved interactions with the director, which resulted in some refinement of the draft report. In fairness to all, Mr Carnell added that the interactions did not substantially alter the draft report. This process, however, did expose a weakness in the IGIS Act where the head of an intelligence agency involved in the investigation receives the draft IGIS report. Nevertheless, Minister Hill must be satisfied by the actions of the director; otherwise, why would he have endorsed Mr Lewincamp’s departure from DIO to a position in the Defence Materiel Organisation at the same level of seniority and pay? In fact, he endorsed him publicly.

Was there something rotten in the state of DIO in 1999? It certainly was not the best of years—1999 was the year of embarrassing revelations of sex, spying, Simon Lappas and Jean-Philippe Wispelaere; 1999 was the year of damming leaks of DIO assessments on the role of the Indonesian armed forces in militia activities in East Timor. These leaks embarrassed the Howard government. The leaks were so extensive that an AFP search warrant was later issued to seek out those responsible and to close down the leaks. Lieutenant Colonel Collins’s name featured so prominently as a dissenter in the DIO world that his name appeared—wrongly, I might add—on that warrant. His home and office were never searched, but his name was splashed across the pages of the major dailies.

Also, 1999 was the year that the late Mervyn Jenkins, a DIO official serving in Washington, committed suicide. The circumstances surrounding the suicide remain unclear. There were two investigations into this matter. The first involved a two-person interview of Mr Jenkins in Washington over the sharing of classified documents with Australia’s allies. Some of these assessments were about East Timor. Two days after the interview, he committed suicide. The second investigation was initiated to report upon the alleged security breaches by Mr Jenkins, but the terms of reference for the second investigation did not include the requirement to establish the reasons for his suicide.

An unclassified report which was finally released in October 2000 concluded that there were no suggestions of espionage or personal gain in Mr Jenkins’s actions. It would be inappropriate for me to go further on this matter now, because I understand that Mrs Jenkins’s claim against the Department of Defence is still unresolved even though her claim was lodged in the ACT Supreme Court in November 2000, over four years ago. It beggars belief that this matter too remains unresolved, and I urge the minister to do his best to ensure a speedy settlement. Mervyn Jenkins and Lieutenant Colonel Collins were friends, and the circumstances of the investigation into the suicide were also a cause of concern in Lieutenant Colonel Collins’s redress of grievance and his letters
to the Prime Minister, Minister Moore and Minister Reith.

East Timor binds the actions of both men. East Timor was the political story in 1999. East Timor caused relations with Indonesia to fracture, unsettled relations with the United States and found the Howard government wanting. East Timor embarrassed the Howard government, because its ministers ignored DIO warnings that Indonesian armed forces were assisting the militias in East Timor before the plebiscite on independence. The Howard government downplayed DIO warnings that violence would break out if the East Timorese voted for independence. It was many of these DIO assessments that were leaked in Australia and allegedly given to our allies by Mr Jenkins.

In the context of Lieutenant Colonel Collins’s allegations, Mr Jenkins’s suicide should be seen as another indicator of a DIO culture of malaise. That malaise involved inadequate training, poor instructions to and preparation of overseas liaison officers, unsatisfactory instructions on sharing AUSTEO intelligence with allies, and superficial investigations on security breaches—in summary, poor administration and management of personnel in working toward the core tasks of a defence intelligence collection, analysis and reporting agency. It was therefore not surprising that Philip Flood found it necessary to make recommendations on DIO’s processes when tasked to report on the performance of Australia’s intelligence agencies in 2004.

Mr Flood recommended that DIO should review its work force management structures, including a possible introduction of agency-specific work force arrangements, and undertake an integrated review of its business systems, including those for information, collection and liaison management. He noted that DIO ‘needs to develop more robust management processes and systems to underpin its efforts’. The management environment in DIO has been far from healthy. The simple act of pretending that something is other than what it is, the heightened level of cynicism that occurs through falsification of facts, the observed political flights to safety, or the devaluing of a person’s commitment—all of these in their particular fashion have undermined the health of DIO. Only the release of an unabridged Carnell report can clear the air. That is why Labor is pressing for a total disclosure of the Carnell report.

The Howard government has failed the test of a first-class government: the practice of ministerial responsibility. Ministerial responsibility is about generating an environment in which professionalism, integrity, courage, innovation and teamwork can be fostered—caring for the people in that organisation. It is also about setting the culture for the department that one manages and taking responsibility for that. Wherever I look, I do not see that commitment from the government or from Minister Hill. It should not be forgotten that in the nine years of the Howard government we have seen four ministers for defence, four departmental secretaries and three CDFs, not to mention a range of assistant ministers.

Lieutenant Colonel Collins should have been treated differently. His allegation in the first instance should have demanded the respect and attention of an alert minister. What has occurred in DIO is another Defence example in the government’s litany of deficient outcomes. But an opportunity now exists to correct at least one past mistake. If this minister cares and if the Howard government is concerned about the valuable contribution and sacrifice that defence personnel make on behalf of the nation then the Carnell report will be made available in full.
As I stated before, Mr Carnell indicated on 16 February during Senate estimates hearings that the main report, less attachments, had been written to permit its full disclosure. This matter—the deliberate denial of access to an intelligence database—is so important that I call upon the Minister for Defence to release the Carnell report in full as soon as possible, and detail: who was responsible, why did the cut-off occur, was there a cover-up, what disciplinary actions have been undertaken, and what corrective actions are now in place to prevent a similar incident occurring? Anything less would be to totally devalue the contribution of Australia's defence personnel.

Australian Arabic Council

Senator TCHEN (Victoria) (8.58 p.m.)—Tonight I wish to speak about the Australian Arabic Council and some of its activities. According to its website, the formation of the Australian Arabic Council was prompted by racism experienced by the Australian Arabic community during the first Gulf War. As a proactive response, the AAC was formed in 1992 to focus on the relationship between the Australian Arabic community and the wider Australian community. The purpose of the AAC is, therefore, in common with many other community groups representing Australia's diverse migrant communities, to raise awareness about issues of concern to them—in this case Arabic issues—and to foster better recognition of the contributions made by people of Arabic origin to the cultural, economic and social fabric of Australia.

Perhaps at this point I should add that it seems to me that, for the majority of Australians, the terms 'Arabic' and 'Muslim' are largely interchangeable—quite incorrectly. One describes a group of people who share a common ethnic, linguistic and cultural tradition; the other describes various groups of people united by one religious faith. Although Islam gave foundation to and shaped the greatness of the Arabic civilisation that dominated the Western world between the seventh and the 13th centuries, and Arabic is still a common language for all Muslims for the study of the Koran, the majority of today's followers of the teaching of the prophet Mohammed are not of Arabic origin. In fact, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria are the most populous Muslim nations. Conversely, not all people of Arabic origin are Muslim—the Christian Lebanese, for example. This interchangeability is, of course, one of the problems of perception that the AAC must overcome.

To achieve this purpose, in addition to the more general efforts to promote a better understanding of Arabic history and culture by other Australians, and to engage in a common campaign against racism by addressing its causes, symptoms and solutions, the AAC sees that one of its main tasks is to campaign for more accurate media representation of Arabic issues. Thus, the AAC established the AAC Media Award with the aim—to quote from the chairman's message from the 2004 award—to raise awareness of the role the media plays in shaping public perception and the effects of media stereotyping on the fabric of a multicultural Australia. The annual award was inaugurated in 1995, and the 2004 award was celebrated at the Sidney Myer Asia Centre in Melbourne on 26 November 2004. I was pleased to be invited to attend, and certainly found it an interesting experience, not least because of the number of small surprises that kept coming up—perhaps not what the AAC would have intended but nevertheless thought-provoking.

I want to congratulate the Chair of the AAC, Roland Jabbour, and other members of the council; award coordinator Nabil Sulaiman and other committee members; the judges of the award—Dr Ray Jureidini, Ms
Farah Farouque, Mr Peter Manning and Ms Mary Kostakidis; the award winner and the other short-listed journalists. It was an event of thoughtful concept and high-quality presentation, and it was well executed and generously supported by sponsors. I should also inform the Senate that the AAC’s work on public education continues apace. Tomorrow night at 6.30 p.m., it will be hosting a free public lecture in the Sidney Myer Asia Centre, to be presented by Professor Peter Manning, Adjunct Professor of Journalism at the University of Technology Sydney, entitled ‘The war on terror: Australian media representations of Arabs and Muslims’. I have no doubt it will be another informative occasion.

Let me now return to the 2004 AAC Media Award. The guest of honour and keynote speaker was Mr Jon Faine, a Melbourne based ABC radio presenter of some note. Mr Faine was an unusual but outstanding choice by the AAC for this role. Firstly, he is Jewish. Secondly, he is all but unique amongst ABC political presenters in that, if you switch on his program and do not know who he is interviewing, you would not be able to tell from his manner and his comments what political party his subject represents—notwithstanding the fact that he is, or was, a self-acknowledged Labor Party member. Either of these attributes would have set Mr Faine apart from his ABC colleagues, and it is certainly to his credit that he carries off both.

None of these were the surprises that I spoke of earlier. For me, the first surprise came in the subject of Mr Faine’s speech. He spoke of his recent experience attending an international conference overseas—in the UK, I think—where he made acquaintance with the representatives of the independent Arabic television service al-Jazeera, who were ostracised by the BBC because of al-Jazeera’s controversial airing of the beheading of a number of hostages. That was the first surprise—not that Mr Faine would befriend the members of the Arabic network, but that the BBC would take offence at al-Jazeera’s coverage, considering that its own reporters were reportedly on the verge of being banned by the British forces, who were angered by what they considered to be biased reporting.

Mr Faine recounted that he found the professionalism of the al-Jazeera journalists above reproach. He later had the opportunity to visit the network’s operations centre in the Gulf, and again was impressed by their professionalism and integrity. So, after he returned to Australia, he undertook the task of canvassing opportunities for contact between Australian media and al-Jazeera, in the interest of fair reporting. To Mr Faine’s surprise—though not to mine—the reaction he had ranged from total apathy to outright hostility, including amongst his colleagues in the ABC. I think he thought the Australian media were immune from the mob mentality and biased values. I too was surprised, not by what he found but that he was surprised by what he found. So what Mr Faine offered was a salutary lesson on media behaviour and a cautionary tale that a harmonious multicultural society is something that requires constant nurturing for it to flourish, with a touch of holier-than-thou-ness, which unfortunately he then proceeded to discard.

A few weeks earlier, an Islamic school, the Ilim College in the Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows, was burnt down by an unknown arsonist. In his conclusion to the award evening, Mr Faine alluded to this as an example of the malice and intolerance which we must guard against. A reasonable line to take, one would have thought, except that, the weekend before, I attended the Festival of Eid ul-Fitr in Broadmeadows—also attended by Maria Vamvakiniou, the member for Calwell, and Commissioner Mick Keelty...
of the Federal Police—at which the principal of Ilim College, Mr Ibrahim Dellal, with great enthusiasm and thanksgiving told the gathering about the planned rebuilding of the school and referred with forgiveness to the perpetrator of the fire, who was drunk at the time and who had already been arrested. There was no racial overtone. But there might have been, and Mr Faine could not resist the temptation of an easy conclusion. Et tu, Brute? Indeed!

We then went on to the announcement of the 2004 AAC Media Award. There were nine short-listed news reports. These ranged in content from reports of life in the suburbs of Sydney to the analysis of Middle East politics and diplomacy. And here was the real surprise of the evening. Madam Acting Deputy President, I have something like five or six more minutes of my speech and I see I have only one minute of time left. Instead of detaining the Senate, I will merge the remainder of my speech into a speech tomorrow night on a similar subject.

Senate adjourned at 9.07 p.m.

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following government documents were tabled:

Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency—Quarterly reports for the periods—
1 April to 30 June 2004.
1 July to 30 September 2004.
Commonwealth Grants Commission—Report—State revenue sharing relati-
ties—2005 update.
Department of Defence—Special purpose flights—Schedule for the period January to June 2004—Errata.
Superannuation (Government Co-contribution for Low Income Earners) Act 2003—Quarterly report on the Govern-
ment co-contribution scheme for the period 1 October to 31 December 2004.
Telecommunications Act 1997—
Funding of research and consumer repre-
sentation in relation to telecommuni-
Telecommunications carrier industry development plans—Progress report for 2003-04.
United Nations—Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—Human Rights Committee—Communications—
No. 1014/2001—Views.
No. 1324/2004—Outline.

Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:
Made prior to the commencement of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 on 1 January 2005:


Made following the commencement of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 on 1 January 2005 [Legislative instruments are identified by a Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) number]:

Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act—Amendments—
44—Office Employment Location Policies [F2005L00580]*.
48—Signs Policies—Flexibility Provisions and Sponsorship Signs in the Parliamentary Zone [F2005L00505]*.
49—Civic Principles and Policies [F2005L00542]*.

Australian National University Act—
Academic and Ceremonial Dress Statute 2005 [F2005L00548]*.

Broadcasting Services Act—Variations to Licence Area Plans for—
Rockhampton—Gladstone Radio—No. 1 of 2005 [F2005L00552]*.
Wagga Wagga Radio—No. 1 of 2005 [F2005L00553]*.

Civil Aviation Act—Civil Aviation Safety Regulations—Airworthiness Directives—Part 105—
AD/AMD 10/25—Wing Anti-Ice Hoses [F2005L00537]*.
AD/GENERAL/84—Thermal/Acoustic Insulation Materials [F2005L00488]*.

Financial Management and Accountability Act—
Financial Management and Accountability Determinations—
2005/02 —Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development (Grants) Special Account Determination 2005 [F2005L00550]*.
2005/03 —Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development (Loans) Special Account Determination 2005 [F2005L00553]*.

Net Appropriation Agreements for the—
Australia-Japan Foundation [F2005L00514]*.
Australian Electoral Commission [F2005L00509]*.
Australian Office of Financial Management [F2005L00520]*.
Department of the House of Representatives [F2005L00522]*.
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet [F2005L00513]*.
National Competition Council [F2005L00521]*.
Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman [F2005L00510]*.
Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General [F2005L00515]*.
Productivity Commission [F2005L00519]*.

Higher Education Support Act—List of maximum amounts of all grants paid in 2005 for each purpose of grant specified in section 41-10 [F2005L00518]*.

Explanatory statement tabled with legislative instrument.

Departmental and Agency Contracts

The following document was tabled pursuant to the order of the Senate of 20 June 2001, as amended:

Indexed Lists of Files

The following document was tabled pursuant to the order of the Senate of 30 May 1996, as amended:

Indexed lists of departmental and agency files for the period 1 July to 31 December 2004—Statement of compliance—Human Services portfolio.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following answers to questions were circulated:

**Gambling**

*(Question No. 33)*

**Senator Allison** asked the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, upon notice, on 17 November 2004:

1. Is the company Betfair registered for the goods and services tax (GST) in Australia; if so, when did it register.
2. Is it correct that GST was payable by Betfair on revenues received from Australian residents using this wagering platform; if so: (a) was the GST paid; and (b) if the GST was not paid, what action has been taken in respect of that non-payment.

**Senator Coonan**—As the question deals with matters administered by the Australian Taxation Office, I have asked the Commissioner of Taxation for advice. The advice in relation to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

1. Information on entities that are registered with an Australian Business Number as well as their Goods and Services Tax status is publicly available on the Australian Business Register site ABR-Public.
2. The Commissioner advises that it is inconsistent with his responsibilities under the secrecy provisions of the tax law to provide specific taxpayer details.

**Superannuation: Small Business**

*(Question No. 75)*

**Senator Brown** asked the Minister representing the Treasurer, upon notice, on 17 November 2004:

With reference to the Australian Taxation Office and the non-payment of superannuation contributions by small business: Why is the system structured in such a way that small business are able to avoid paying superannuation contributions by using such strategies as changing their corporate identities every few years.

**Senator Minchin**—The Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

All employers should make sufficient superannuation contributions to a complying superannuation fund for their eligible employees on a quarterly basis. Where an employer fails to pay the required amount of superannuation by the due date they become liable to pay the superannuation guarantee (SG) charge to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Employers are responsible for self-assessing their liability to pay the SG charge. The ATO has in place a comprehensive compliance program with a view to ensuring employers meet their SG obligations.

The ATO is unable to disclose specific information about its actions in trying to secure employer superannuation support as it relates to the affairs of another taxpayer. While this is frustrating to employees who may not have received their correct superannuation entitlements, it is essential that the ATO protect the rights of all parties.

I wish to emphasise that the ATO contacts all employers who are the subject of complaint and requests that they provide the name of the fund into which the contributions have been paid. The ATO will then
check with the fund and make further contact with the employer in the event that the fund does not have a record of contributions having been made. Employers who refuse to co-operate with the ATO or provide misleading information risk prosecution and substantial penalties.

Consistent with the Government’s 2001 election commitment, employers have been required to make at least quarterly superannuation contributions on behalf of their employees since 1 July 2003 or incur the SG charge. These arrangements are designed to ensure fairness between employees and to encourage employers to make regular superannuation contributions. Quarterly contributions will benefit employees in a number of ways, including lower employee exposure to the loss of superannuation benefits in the event of employer bankruptcy or insolvency.

The Government is committed to preventing persons and companies abusing the corporate form by using phoenix-like strategies (such as changing corporate identity) to avoid debts, including tax and superannuation contributions. Both the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and the ATO are actively pursuing companies and individuals that engage in phoenix company activity.

The Government has implemented a number of initiatives to greater combat phoenix activity. Recently it implemented recommendations of the Cole Royal Commission by:

- increasing from 10 to 20 years the maximum period of disqualification of persons from managing corporations for insolvency and non-payment of debts; and
- forming a Working Party consisting of representatives from ASIC, ATO, State and Territory revenue agencies and the Privacy Commissioner to improve information sharing between agencies, which will facilitate greater identification of phoenix offenders.

Additionally, the Government has provided additional funding for ASIC of $12.3 million over four years for a program directed at targeted surveillance of insolvency-related misconduct by company officers, including phoenix company activity.

**Workers’ Entitlements**

*(Question No. 100)*

**Senator Webber** asked the Minister representing the Treasurer, upon notice, on 18 November 2004:

1. When will legislation be introduced that will allow for workers to be paid their entitlements ahead of banks and other creditors.
2. Will that legislation apply to any current liquidations.
3. In the case of Computerised Holdings Pty Ltd, did the liquidator identify the cause of liquidation as being insolvent trading; if so, why did the Australian Securities and Investment Commission not prosecute.
4. What are the criteria being used for making claims against the liquidator in the case of Computerised Holdings.
5. Is it intended that legal advice be sought on any distribution of assets ahead of the payment of workers’ entitlements.

**Senator Minchin**—The Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

1. The Government has undertaken consultations with peak industry bodies representing employers, employees, banks and other finance providers about its proposal to allow secured assets to be used to pay employee entitlements before the holder of the security.

The Government is analysing the results of these consultations and any possible adverse impacts of the proposal on stakeholder groups, particularly small business. This analysis includes consideration of the findings of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Ser-

(2) See answer to question 1.

(3) The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) has previously advised that the liquidator attributed the failure of the company to a serious absence of equity or working capital with the result that the company was unable to endure short-term losses. Insolvent trading was not identified as the cause for the liquidation.

(5) ASIC has previously advised that there was one complaint against the liquidator which concerned the conduct of the administration. After consideration of the complaint and the issues involved, ASIC concluded that there was no substantive evidence to support the complaint being referred to the Companies Auditors and Liquidators Disciplinary Board (CALDB).

(6). No.

**Family and Community Services: Advertising Campaign**

(question No. 106 amended)

Senator Faulkner asked the Minister for Family and Community Services, upon notice, on 19 November 2004:

With reference to the More Help For Families advertising campaign:

(1) For each of the financial years, 2003-04 and 2004-05: (a) what is the cost of this advertising campaign; and (b) what is the breakdown of these advertising costs for: (a) television (TV) placements; (b) radio placements; (c) newspaper placements; (d) printing and mail outs; and (e) research.

(2) What: (a) creative agency or agencies; and (b) research agency or agencies; have been engaged for the campaign.

(3) When did TV advertising screening begin, and when is it planned to end.

(4) If there is a mail out planned, what database will be used to select addresses – the Australian Taxation Office database, the electoral database or other.

(5) (a) What appropriations will the department use to authorise any of the payments either committed to be made or proposed to be made as part of this advertising campaign; (b) will those appropriations be made in the 2003-04 or 2004-05 financial year; (c) will the appropriations relate to a departmental or administered item or the Advance to the Minister for Finance and Administration; and (d) if an appropriation relates to a departmental or administered item, what is the relevant line item in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statement for that item.

(6) Has a request been made of the Minister for Finance and Administration to issue a drawing right to pay out moneys for any part of the advertising campaign; if so: (a) what are the details of that request; and (b) against which particular appropriation is it requested that the money be paid.

(7) Has the Minister for Finance and Administration issued a drawing right as referred to in paragraph (6) above; if so, what are the details of that drawing right.

(8) Has an official or minister made a payment of public money or debited an amount against an appropriation in accordance with a drawing right issued by the Minister for Finance and Administration for any part of the advertising campaign.

Senator Patterson—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) The cost of the campaign for 2003-04 was $4.4 million. For 2004-05, $3.2 million has been expended. Allocations of the remaining funds are currently being considered by Government.

(b) Breakdown of advertising costs:
For 2003-04:
(a) television placements, $Nil;
(b) radio placements, $1.5 million;
(c) newspaper placements, $1.2 million;
(d) printing and mailing costs, $Nil;
(e) research costs, $107,000.

For 2004-05, the current expenditure is:
(a) television placements, $Nil;
(b) radio placements, $1 million;
(c) newspaper placements, $462,000;
(d) printing and mailing costs, $751,000;
(e) research costs, $285,000.

(2) The creative agency engaged for the campaign is Whybin TBWA and Partners Pty Ltd. The Research Agency engaged for the campaign is Open Mind Research Group.

(3) No television advertisements have been aired.

(4) No mail-outs requiring the use of databases have been used.

(5) (a) The department will use the departmental appropriation Bill 1 to authorise any of the payments made as part of this advertising campaign;
(b) departmental appropriation was available in 2003-04 for expenditure of the 2003-04 funds, and the appropriation for the 2004-05 expenditure was included in the 2004-05 appropriation;
(c) The appropriations will relate to a departmental item; and
(d) There is no specific line item in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statement for the appropriation, but reference is made to the appropriation. The appropriation is contained in the Statement of Financial Performance table.

(6) No request has been made.

(7) No.

(8) No.

1 All costs for 2004-05 are actual costs and commitments as at 11 February 2005.

Treasury: Advertising Campaign
(Question No. 112)

Senator Faulkner asked the Minister representing the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, upon notice, on 19 November 2004:

With reference to the Grants to States advertising campaign:
(1) For each of the financial years, 2003-04 and 2004-05: (a) what is the cost of this advertising campaign; and (b) what is the breakdown of these advertising costs for: (a) television (TV) placements; (b) radio placements; (c) newspaper placements; (d) printing and mail outs; and (e) research.
(2) What: (a) creative agency or agencies; and (b) research agency or agencies; have been engaged for the campaign.
(3) When will the campaign begin, and when is it planned to end.
(4) If there is a mail out planned, to whom will it be targeted and what database will be used to select addresses – the Australian Taxation Office database, the electoral database or other.

(5) (a) What appropriations will the department use to authorise any of the payments either committed to be made or proposed to be made as part of this advertising campaign; (b) will those appropriations be made in the 2003-04 or 2004-05 financial year; (c) will the appropriations relate to a departmental or administered item or the Advance to the Minister for Finance and Administration; and (d) if an appropriation relates to a departmental or administered item, what is the relevant line item in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statement for that item.

(6) Has a request been made of the Minister for Finance and Administration to issue a drawing right to pay out moneys for any part of the advertising campaign; if so: (a) what are the details of that request; and (b) against which particular appropriation is it requested that the money be paid.

(7) Has the Minister for Finance and Administration issued a drawing right as referred to in paragraph (6) above; if so, what are the details of that drawing right.

(8) Has an official or minister made a payment of public money or debited an amount against an appropriation in accordance with a drawing right issued by the Minister for Finance and Administration for any part of the advertising campaign.

Senator Coonan—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) The Government has provided $3 million to the Department of the Treasury to deliver a communications package which will provide the public with information on Australian Government payments to the states and territories. The Government spent $1,000,016.23 of this funding in 2003-04. A breakdown of estimated expenditure in 2004-05 has not been determined.

(b) (a) Whybin TBWA produced the television advertisements at a cost of $62,000.00.

(b) (b) Universal McCann placed the television advertisements at a cost of $490,292.67.

(b) (c) HMA Blaze placed the newspaper advertisements at a cost of $438,923.55.

(b) (d) There has been no expenditure on printing and mail outs.

(b) (e) Worthington Di Marzio researched the advertisements at a cost of $8,800.00.

(2) HMA Blaze, Universal McCann, Whybin TBWA and Worthington Di Marzio have been engaged for the campaign.

(3) The first advertisement under the campaign was placed on 27 March 2004. The end date for the campaign has not yet been determined.

(4) A mail out is not currently planned.

(5) (a) Treasury was appropriated funding for the advertising campaign as part of previous years’ outputs in Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2004-05.

(b) 2004-05.

(c) Departmental.

(d) Previous years’ outputs appear in Treasury’s Capital Budget Statement on page 43 of Treasury’s 2004-05 Portfolio Budget Statements.

(6) No.

(7) N/a (as referred to in 6 above).
Yes, Treasury officials have made payments of public money for the advertising campaign and debited the amounts against an appropriation in accordance with a drawing right issued by the Minister for Finance and Administration. (Under the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 s34AB(c), actions performed by the Chief Financial Officer, as the sub-delegate of the Minister for Finance and Administration under section 27(1) of the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 are deemed to have been performed by the Minister for Finance and Administration.)

**Attorney-General's: Advertising Campaign**

(Question No. 113)

Senator Faulkner asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 19 November 2004:

With reference to the proposed National Security advertising campaign:

(1) For each of the financial years, 2003-04 and 2004-05:
   
   (a) What is the cost of this advertising campaign; and
   
   (b) What is the breakdown of these advertising costs for:
       
       (a) Television (TV) placements;
       
       (b) Radio placements;
       
       (c) Newspaper placements;
       
       (d) Printing and mail outs; and
       
       (e) Research.

(2) What:
   
   (a) Creative agency or agencies; and
   
   (b) Research agency or agencies; have been engaged for the campaign.

(3) When will the campaign begin, and when is it planned to end.

(4) If there is a mail out planned, to whom will it be targeted what database will be used to select addresses – the Australian Taxation Office database, the electoral database or other.

(5) (a) What appropriations will the department use to authorise any of the payments either committed to be made or proposed to be made as part of this advertising campaign;
   
   (b) Will those appropriations be made in the 2003-04 or 2004-05 financial year;
   
   (c) Will the appropriations relate to a departmental or administered item or the Advance to the Minister for Finance and Administration; and
   
   (d) If an appropriation relates to a departmental or administered item, what is the relevant line item in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statement for that item.

(6) Has a request been made of the Minister for Finance and Administration to issue a drawing right to pay out moneys for any part of the advertising campaign; if so:
   
   (a) What are the details of that request; and
   
   (b) Against which particular appropriation is it requested that the money be paid.

(7) Has the Minister for Finance and Administration issued a drawing right as referred to in paragraph (6) above; if so, what are the details of that drawing right.

(8) Has an official or minister made a payment of public money or debited an amount against an appropriation in accordance with a drawing right issued by the Minister for Finance and Administration for any part of the advertising campaign.
Senator Ellison—The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) 2003-04 - $612,000; 2004-05 estimated at $7,655,000
    (b) 2003-04 Nil; 2004-05 estimated at $2,610,000
    (b) 2003-04 Nil; 2004-05 estimated at $184,000
    (c) 2003-04 Nil; 2004-05 estimated at $2,497,000
    (d) 2003-04 $1490; 2004-05 estimated at $10,000
    (e) 2003-04 $338,146; 2004-05 estimated at $255,000.

(2) (a) BMF Advertising Pty Ltd
    (b) Worthington Di Marzio

(3) The campaign began on 25 September 2004. The campaign is scheduled to end in June 2005.

(4) No mail out planned.

(5) (a) Attorney-General’s Department departmental outputs appropriations.
    (b) Appropriations made in both years.
    (c) The appropriations for the campaign are included in the departmental outputs appropriation for output 2.4 in the Attorney-General’s Department.
    (d) See response to 5 (c).

(6) No.
    (a) Not applicable.
    (b) Not applicable.

(7) No.

(8) No.

Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs: Advertising Campaign

(Question No. 121)

Senator Faulkner asked the Minister representing the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, upon notice, on 19 November 2004:

With reference to the current tranche of the Citizenship advertising campaign:

(1) For each of the financial years, 2003-04 and 2004-05: (a) what is the cost of this advertising campaign; and (b) what is the breakdown of these advertising costs for: (a) television (TV) placements; (b) radio placements; (c) newspaper placements; (d) printing and mail outs; and (e) research.

(2) What: (a) creative agency or agencies; and (b) research agency or agencies; have been engaged for the campaign.

(3) When will the campaign begin, and when is it planned to end.

(4) If there is a mail out planned, to whom will it be targeted and what database will be used to select addresses – the Australian Taxation Office database, the electoral database or other.

(5) (a) What appropriations will the department use to authorise any of the payments either committed to be made or proposed to be made as part of this advertising campaign; (b) will those appropriations be made in the 2003-04 or 2004-05 financial year; (c) will the appropriations relate to a departmental or administered item or the Advance to the Minister for Finance and Administration;
and (d) if an appropriation relates to a departmental or administered item, what is the relevant line item in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statement for that item.

(6) Has a request been made of the Minister for Finance and Administration to issue a drawing right to pay out moneys for any part of the advertising campaign; if so: (a) what are the details of that request; and (b) against which particular appropriation is it requested that the money be paid.

(7) Has the Minister for Finance and Administration issued a drawing right as referred to in paragraph (6) above; if so, what are the details of that drawing right.

(8) Has an official or minister made a payment of public money or debited an amount against an appropriation in accordance with a drawing right issued by the Minister for Finance and Administration for any part of the advertising campaign.

Senator Vanstone—The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) For the current tranche of citizenship advertising:

(a) The costs are $0.880m in 2003-04 and $0.968m in 2004-05.

(b) The breakdown of these advertising costs (excl GST) is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003-04</th>
<th>2004-05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) television placements</td>
<td>$738,712</td>
<td>$736,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) radio (and internet) placements</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$42,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) newspaper (and magazine) placements</td>
<td>$141,684</td>
<td>$116,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) printing and mailouts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) research</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$72,760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) (a) The campaign uses creative developed in 2000-01 by the Brisbane agency Coo’ee and used in subsequent years. The agency’s three year contract has been extended for a fourth year for the 2004-05 campaign.

(b) The research agency, The Research Forum, engaged for three years from 2000-01 was engaged for a further year in 2004.

(3) The current tranche of the citizenship advertising campaign commenced on 16 May 2004 and ceased on 30 August 2004. The advertising commenced earlier than in previous years following research conducted as part of the evaluation of Australian Citizenship Day 2003 promotion. The research indicated that promotion of citizenship should continue throughout the year to maintain momentum, as frequent exposure of the target groups to the campaign is more likely to achieve the desired result than concentrated promotion two or three times a year.

(4) There was no national mail out as part of the current tranche of citizenship advertising. Citizenship information packs were, however, sent to all primary schools in the country as part of the ongoing promotion of the value of Australian citizenship.

(5) (a) to (c) The Department is using existing departmental funding appropriated in 2003-04. (d) Australian Citizenship promotion is covered by Output Group 2.3.2 - Promotion of the Value of Australian Citizenship, at page 115 of the Portfolio Budget Statements 2004-05.

(6) The Minister for Finance and Administration (Finance Minister) has delegated his powers to issue drawing rights to Secretaries of Departments under the Financial Management and Accountability (Finance Minister to Chief Executive) Delegations 2002, Schedule 1. The Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) has sub-delegated these powers to certain senior officials. All officers who drawdown public money for public expenditure, including advertising, have been issued with drawing rights, in accordance with the Finance Minister’s Directions.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(7) Not applicable.

(8) All payments of public moneys in DIMIA, including those for advertising, have been made in accordance with the drawing rights issued by the delegates.

Finance and Administration: Advertising Campaign
(Question No. 130)

Senator Faulkner asked the Minister for Finance and Administration, upon notice, on 19 November 2004:

(1) Not including any advertising campaigns contained in questions on notice nos 105 to 121, for each of the financial years, 2003-04 and 2004-05 to date: (a) what is the cost of any current or proposed advertising campaign in the department; (b) what are the details of the campaign, including: (a) creative agency or agencies engaged; (b) research agency or agencies engaged; (c) the cost of television advertising; (d) the cost and nature of any mail out; and (e) the full cost of advertising placement.

(2) When will the campaign begin, and when is it planned to end.

(3) (a) What appropriations will the department use to authorise any of the payments either committed to be made or proposed to be made as part of this advertising campaign; (b) will those appropriations be made in the 2003-04 or 2004-05 financial year; (c) will the appropriations relate to a departmental or administered item or the Advance to the Minister for Finance and Administration; and (d) if an appropriation relates to a departmental or administered item, what is the relevant line item in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statement for that item.

(4) Has a request been made of the Minister for Finance and Administration to issue a drawing right to pay out moneys for any part of the advertising campaign; if so: (a) what are the details of that request; and (b) against which particular appropriation is it requested that the money be paid.

(5) Has the Minister for Finance and Administration issued a drawing right as referred to in paragraph (4) above; if so, what are the details of that drawing right.

(6) Has an official or minister made a payment of public money or debited an amount against an appropriation in accordance with a drawing right issued by the Minister for Finance and Administration for any part of the advertising campaign.

Senator Minchin—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

Please refer to the answer to question number 139, provided by the Special Minister of State.

Finance and Administration: Advertising Campaign
(Question No. 139)

Senator Faulkner asked the Special Minister of State, upon notice, on 19 November 2004:

(1) Not including any advertising campaigns contained in questions on notice nos 105 to 121, for each of the financial years, 2003-04 and 2004-05 to date: (a) what is the cost of any current or proposed advertising campaign in the department; (b) what are the details of the campaign, including: (a) creative agency or agencies engaged; (b) research agency or agencies engaged; (c) the cost of television advertising; (d) the cost and nature of any mail out; and (e) the full cost of advertising placement.

(2) When will the campaign begin, and when is it planned to end.

(3) (a) What appropriations will the department use to authorise any of the payments either committed to be made or proposed to be made as part of this advertising campaign; (b) will those appropriations be made in the 2003-04 or 2004-05 financial year; (c) will the appropriations relate to a de-
Departmental or administered item or the Advance to the Minister for Finance and Administration; and (d) if an appropriation relates to a departmental or administered item, what is the relevant line item in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statement for that item.

(4) Has a request been made of the Minister for Finance and Administration to issue a drawing right to pay out moneys for any part of the advertising campaign; if so: (a) what are the details of that request; and (b) against which particular appropriation is it requested that the money be paid.

(5) Has the Minister for Finance and Administration issued a drawing right as referred to in paragraph (4) above; if so, what are the details of that drawing right.

(6) Has an official or minister made a payment of public money or debited an amount against an appropriation in accordance with a drawing right issued by the Minister for Finance and Administration for any part of the advertising campaign.

**Senator Abetz**—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

1. The only advertising campaign conducted by the Finance portfolio during this period was the federal election public awareness campaign conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).
   a. The advertising campaign is estimated at $8.5 million (all costs GST exclusive), of which television advertising placement comprised $4.8 million.
   b. The 2004 election public awareness campaign was targeted to all eligible electors and divided into three phases of advertising over the course of the campaign, firstly focusing on enrolment, followed by voter services and formality (how to cast a formal ballot).
      a. The creative advertising agency engaged was WhybinTBWA Pty Ltd;
      b. The market research agency was Eureka Pty Ltd;
      c. The total cost of television advertising placement is estimated at $4.8 million;
      d. Production and national mailout of an AEC Household Elector Leaflet to all Australian households was conducted at a cost $1.6 million; and
      e. The full cost of advertising placement is estimated at $7.5 million.
2. This campaign commenced on the day the 2004 federal election was announced and ceased on election day, 9 October 2004.
3. (a) Funding for the campaign is provided for in the AEC’s 2004-05 Budget (Appropriation Bill No 1).
   b. Appropriations made in both years.
   c. A departmental item.
   d. Supplies.
4. No.
5. Not applicable.
6. No.

**Human Cloning**

(Question No. 175)

**Senator Stott Despoja** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 9 December:

1. Will the Minister provide copies of any recommendations, advice or comments received in the past 18 months regarding, or in response to, a proposal put forward by Belgium to the United Nations
(UN) on the issue of ‘reproductive’ cloning of people and/or ‘therapeutic’ cloning of human embryos for research into cures for serious diseases.

(2) When was the department made aware of the Cabinet decisions to support the Belgian proposal on human cloning and consequently the Costa Rican proposal on human cloning at the UN.

**Senator Hill**—The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) No.

(2) Australia’s position on the issue of human cloning has been to achieve an outcome consistent with its domestic legislation. At an early stage this looked to be achievable through the Belgian proposal. Australia has never sponsored the Belgian proposal but an indication that Australia might support it was made in 2003. It became clear that the Belgian proposal would not achieve consensus. A decision to support the Costa Rican proposal was made in late 2003 and a decision to co-sponsor it in 2004.

On 18 February 2005, the Sixth Committee of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a political declaration on human cloning. Australia voted in favour of the declaration which was consistent with our domestic policy. No decision of the UNGA has any necessary effect on Australian law or policy.

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**Natural Disasters Mitigation Program**

**(Question No. 188)**

**Senator Mark Bishop** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 17 December 2004:

(1) By electorate, what projects were funded under the Natural Disasters Mitigation Program in 2004 to date.

(2) How many have been completed.

(3) (a) What was the purpose of each; and (b) who was the key proponent.

(4) What are the timelines for applications and approvals.

(5) (a) Which projects were funded by loans and/or grants; and (b) in what proportion.

(6) By electorate, which project applications were rejected.

**Senator Ian Campbell**—The Minister for Transport and Regional Services has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) and (3) Attachments A and B provide details of projects funded under the Natural Disaster Mitigation Programme in 2003-04 and 2004-05 including the purpose of each project and key proponent.

(2) 11 projects have been completed.

(4) Applications for funding under the programme in 2005-06 opened on 20 November 2004 and close on 25 February 2005. Successful projects are expected to be announced early in the new financial year.

(5) All projects were funded as grants.

(6) No projects were rejected by the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Electorate</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Key Proponent</th>
<th>Approved Funding</th>
<th>Completed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory (territory wide)</td>
<td>Community Fire Units</td>
<td>Establishment and support of Community Fire Units in high bushfire risk areas to enable community preparedness and response to bushfires.</td>
<td>Emergency Services Bureau</td>
<td>$59,667</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonython</td>
<td>Smith Creek Rectification Stage 5 - Coventry Road to Peachey Road</td>
<td>Channel improvements to Smith Creek from Coventry Road to Peachey Road. These works are the final stage of a scheme to upgrade the entire Smith Creek system protecting approx 60 properties in Smithfield. $200,000 was approved under the Regional Flood Mitigation Programme in 2002/03 for Stage 4 of this scheme.</td>
<td>City of Playford</td>
<td>$132,333</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonython</td>
<td>Little Para River Overflow - Port Wakefield Road Culverts</td>
<td>Construction of road culverts under Port Wakefield Road at Paralowie. These culverts will complete an overflow channel protecting residential and commercial properties on the Little Para Floodplain.</td>
<td>City of Salisbury</td>
<td>$252,667</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>Cotter Bridge improvement</td>
<td>Rebuilding of Cotter Bridge with improvements to enhance resistance to fire damage ensuring access to at risk areas in future events.</td>
<td>Department of Urban Services</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Electorate</th>
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<th>Key Proponent</th>
<th>Approved Funding</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>Removal of Pines and Casurinas</td>
<td>Removal of pines and casuarinas in areas adjacent to Duffy and along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor to mitigate the threats of future bushfires.</td>
<td>Department of Urban Services</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Yamba Coastline Management Plan - groundwater monitoring</td>
<td>Collection of groundwater data in the Pilot Hill area to determine landslide risk. The data will be used to refine the risk assessment and develop future management strategies.</td>
<td>Clarence Valley Council</td>
<td>$53,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>Ayr and Lilliesmere flood mitigation works</td>
<td>Culvert and floodway upgrades for Lilliesmere and Kalamia Creek dams and lower Little Oyster Creek dam.</td>
<td>Burdekin Shire Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eden-Monaro/Riverina/Hume/Farre/New England/Cunningham</td>
<td>FloodSafe’ Guides</td>
<td>Production of locally-customised FloodSafe guides for flood affected communities in the Murrumbidgee Valley and elsewhere (Queanbeyan, Wagga Wagga, Narrandera, Darlington Point, Hay, Bowral, Jingellic, Tumut, Inverell and Wollongong).</td>
<td>NSW State Emergency Service</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler</td>
<td>Laser survey of the Liverpool area for floodplain risk management study</td>
<td>Laser survey of catchments and waterways in the Liverpool local government area to assist in determining flood levels and risk.</td>
<td>Liverpool City Council</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Fowler</td>
<td>Telemetry system for prescribed dams</td>
<td>Installation of telemetered rainfall and water level gauges at three prescribed dams to provide an effective warning system in the event of overtopping or failure.</td>
<td>Liverpool City Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Temporary flood protection barriers for Brewarrina</td>
<td>Purchase of 900 meters of temporary flood protection barriers (Pallet Barrier System) to strengthen the existing deficient earthen levee system at Brewarrina.</td>
<td>NSW State Emergency Service</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindmarsh</td>
<td>Adelaide Airport drain upgrade</td>
<td>Enlargement of the Adelaide Airport drain from May Terrace to West Beach Road to cater for increased flows in the drain. These works will protect houses on the north side of Sir Donald Bradman Drive in Brooklyn Park.</td>
<td>City of West Torrens</td>
<td>$320,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>Natural disaster planning and mitigation project</td>
<td>Identification and collection of natural hazard data within the Upper Lachlan local government area for inclusion in Council’s GIS and spatial information systems. This will improve strategic planning and enable a faster response to combat agencies when required.</td>
<td>Upper Lachlan Council</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Upgrade of the Trans Access Road</td>
<td>Improvements to the Trans Access Road to provide all weather access to the Coonana Aboriginal community.</td>
<td>City of Kalgoorlie Boulder</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Flood audit of roads and bridges in the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions</td>
<td>Flood audit of roads and bridges servicing the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley. The results of the audit will enable the development of suitable disaster mitigation strategies.</td>
<td>Main Roads Western Australia</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>North West Coastal Highway mitigation works</td>
<td>Road and bridge upgrades on the North West Coastal Highway between Onslow and Karratha to improve access and reduce damages in future flood events.</td>
<td>Main Roads Western Australia</td>
<td>$373,278</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Sealing of Onslow Airport runway</td>
<td>Bitumen sealing of Onslow Airport main runway to provide an all weather surface for emergency air access during wet periods.</td>
<td>Shire of Ashburton</td>
<td>$174,240</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Mt Anderson Road improvements</td>
<td>Improvements to Mt Anderson Road to provide all weather access to a number of Aboriginal communities.</td>
<td>Shire of Derby-West Kimberley</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Halls Creek town boundary fire break</td>
<td>Establishment of a permanent fire break next to the Halls Creek town boundary fence.</td>
<td>Shire of Halls Creek</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Great Central Road flood proof causeway</td>
<td>Raising of three sections of the Great Central Road to provide all weather access to several outlying Aboriginal communities.</td>
<td>Shire of Laverton</td>
<td>$144,965</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<td><strong>Kennedy</strong></td>
<td>Diamantina Develop-</td>
<td>Bedourie has no sealed road access. Funding will enable progressive sealing of the Diamantina Developmental Road from Bedourie to Boulia improving all-weather access on the only north south route between these two towns.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$275,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>mental Road (Bedourie</td>
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<td>- Boulia) at chainage</td>
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<td><strong>Kennedy</strong></td>
<td>Blair Gully - Russian</td>
<td>Improvements to the Russian Gully crossing on the Kennedy Highway west of Ravenshoe to reduce damages and the risk to road users in future flood events.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$245,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gully flood immunity</td>
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<td><strong>Leichhardt</strong></td>
<td>Peninsula Development-</td>
<td>The Peninsula Developmental Road is the sole road access to Weipa. Funding will upgrade the existing floodway at Big Coleman Creek and improve access in times of flooding to the remote communities of Musgrave, Coen and Weipa.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$159,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>tal Road (Laura - Coen)</td>
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<td>at Big Coleman River</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leichhardt</strong></td>
<td>Peninsula Developmen-</td>
<td>The Peninsula Developmental Road is the sole road access to Weipa. Funding will upgrade the existing floodway at 5 Mile Creek and improve access in times of flooding to the remote communities of Musgrave, Coen and Weipa.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$160,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>tal Road (Laura - Coen)</td>
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<td>at 5 Mile Creek</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mackellar</strong></td>
<td>Natural Hazard Com-</td>
<td>Development of a community education program about natural disasters to raise awareness and risk preparedness amongst residents and landowners.</td>
<td>Pittwater Council</td>
<td>$3,547</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>munity Awareness Pro-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mackellar</td>
<td>Creation of strategic fire advantage zones in the Pittwater area</td>
<td>Creation of strategic fire protection zones between residential dwellings and high fire risk bushland areas to reduce the impact of bushfires.</td>
<td>Pittwater Council</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackellar</td>
<td>Collection of landslide data in the Pittwater area</td>
<td>Collection of data to determine landslide likelihood in the Pittwater local government area. The data will assist in the future development of risk management techniques for landslides.</td>
<td>Pittwater Council/Australian Geomechanics Society</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macquarie</td>
<td>SES community education trailer for the Blue Mountains</td>
<td>Mobile education trailer providing Blue Mountains residents with information about severe storms and how to prepare for them.</td>
<td>Blue Mountains City Council</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maranoa</td>
<td>Jackson - Wandoan Road (Clark Creek Section)</td>
<td>This section of the Jackson – Wandoan Road is unsealed. Proposed road works will reduce damages and the risk to road users in future flood events.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McPherson</td>
<td>Decision support tool for the provision of emergency flood information</td>
<td>Development of an automated tool together with appropriate modelling to improve identification of properties and lives at risk during a storm surge or flood.</td>
<td>Gold Coast City Council</td>
<td>$26,667</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>McPherson</td>
<td>Research into storm surge, riverine flooding and the Greenhouse effect</td>
<td>Studies into the joint occurrence of storm surge and riverine flooding, and the Greenhouse effect on rainfall patterns. These studies will provide a more accurate understanding of present and future risk levels.</td>
<td>Gold Coast City Council</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McPherson</td>
<td>Flood improvements of Tallebudgera and Currumbin Creeks</td>
<td>Research into the build up of sand at the mouths of Tallebudgera and Currumbin Creeks, and dredging of sandbars along the creeks to improve the flow of floodwaters and reduce inundation during severe floods.</td>
<td>Gold Coast City Council</td>
<td>$18,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Community services announcements - ‘Help at Hand’</td>
<td>Production of community service announcements for radio and television and other promotional material informing the community of services available in the event of a disaster.</td>
<td>Department of Community Services</td>
<td>$4,700</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Horse emergency contact database</td>
<td>Contact database for conveying information to horse owners in the event of an emergency especially bushfires.</td>
<td>NSW Agriculture</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Property information for disaster mitigation and management</td>
<td>Development of a client resource information system to store data about rural properties and their owner/occupiers for improved mitigation, preparedness and warning measures in the event of a disaster.</td>
<td>NSW Agriculture</td>
<td>$310,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Community Fire Unit Program</td>
<td>Establishment of 28 additional Community Fire Units to promote community safety and awareness and enable communities to deal with bushfire risk at the local level.</td>
<td>NSW Fire Brigades</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Fire Investigation Management Plan</td>
<td>Development of a Fire Investigation Management Program to more efficiently investigate and record the cause of fires.</td>
<td>NSW Rural Fire Service</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Bushfire Risk Information Management System - on-line mapping</td>
<td>Expansion of the Bushfire Risk Information Management System to include on-line mapping functionality. This will enhance the management of bushfire risk and hazard reduction in NSW through a coordinated multi-agency approach.</td>
<td>NSW Rural Fire Service</td>
<td>$116,667</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Business continuity guides</td>
<td>Creation of a business continuity toolkit for businesses in flood prone areas.</td>
<td>NSW State Emergency Service</td>
<td>$31,724</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Improvement of flood warning effectiveness</td>
<td>Development of an enhanced flood intelligence system to improve the understanding and effectiveness of flood warning predictions. Residents of the Georges River Valley will be used in a pilot program.</td>
<td>NSW State Emergency Service</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Oxley</td>
<td>Enhancement of Ipswich City Council’s GIS for natural disaster management</td>
<td>Enhancement of Council’s GIS system to include natural disaster management data from the Counter Disaster Committee and Local Disaster Management Group. This will allow improved access to disaster management information by emergency response personnel.</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxley</td>
<td>Local disaster management plan for Ipswich</td>
<td>Preparation of a local disaster management plan to improve preparation, response and recovery from natural disasters affecting the Ipswich community.</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxley</td>
<td>Gravel road upgrade</td>
<td>Trial of different treatment options to protect gravel roads from flooding. The trial on select roads in the Haigslea, Walloon, Ironbark and Mount Mort areas will determine the most cost effective option for broader application throughout the rest of the city.</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parramatta</td>
<td>Toongabbie Creek flood mitigation works (Briens Road Culvert)</td>
<td>Culvert modifications to improve the waterway capacity of Toongabbie Creek at Briens Road.</td>
<td>Parramatta City Council</td>
<td>$430,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paterson</td>
<td>Dungog aerial photographs and GIS mapping</td>
<td>Aerial photographs of the Dungog local government area for inclusion into the GIS systems of Dungog Shire Council and NSW Rural Fire Service to assist in the future management of natural disasters particularly bushfires.</td>
<td>Dungog Shire Council</td>
<td>$1,613</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paterson</td>
<td>Creation of asset protection zones in the Corlette, Salamander Bay, Lakeside and Raymond Terrace areas</td>
<td>Creation of fire protection zones between bushland reserves and residential properties in the Corlette, Salamander Bay, Lakeside and Raymond Terrace areas for fire mitigation.</td>
<td>Port Stephens City Council</td>
<td>$37,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearce/Forrest/ O’Connor</td>
<td>Emergency Services directories for the Peel East, Avon South, South West Corner and Albany regions</td>
<td>Creation of Emergency Services directories for the Peel East, Avon South, South West Corner and Albany regions of WA. Information includes topographic, cadastral and hydrographic data, power transmission lines, water and gas pipelines, roads and transmission towers, etc.</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
<td>$133,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland (state wide)</td>
<td>Scoping study for a cyclone shelter programme</td>
<td>Identification of suitable buildings in cyclone prone areas of Queensland that could be used to temporarily house people during cyclonic conditions.</td>
<td>Department of Public Works</td>
<td>$3,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland (statewide)</td>
<td>Bushfire building materials research</td>
<td>Research into factors affecting vulnerability of residential dwellings in high fire risk areas (eg. siting, terrain, building materials and design issues). A key outcome of this research is the development of a Fire Risk Mitigation Guide for use by consumers and the housing industry.</td>
<td>Department of Public Works</td>
<td>$3,333</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland (statewide)</td>
<td>Disaster management capability development and implementation project</td>
<td>State wide project aimed at broadening the capacity of local government in disaster management. In particular, supporting a cultural change from disaster response to mitigation including strategic planning and risk assessment. Includes the development of appropriate tools, frameworks and initiatives and improved collaboration between state and local governments.</td>
<td>Local Government Association of Queensland</td>
<td>$63,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reid</td>
<td>Enhancement of Holroyd City Council’s flood hazard mapping</td>
<td>Further development of Council’s flood hazard data to provide more complete and up to date flood hazard maps.</td>
<td>Holroyd City Council</td>
<td>$8,658</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reid</td>
<td>Hampden Road Reserve - flood detention basins</td>
<td>Construction of two flood detention basins to provide protection up to the 1 in 100 year flood event for nearby properties.</td>
<td>Holroyd City Council</td>
<td>$43,800</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortland</td>
<td>Enhancement of Lake Macquarie City Council’s GIS based hazard and flood data</td>
<td>Transfer of existing flood data into Council’s GIS system for improved accessibility by Council and combat agencies such as the State Emergency Service.</td>
<td>Lake Macquarie City Council</td>
<td>$3,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throsby</td>
<td>Shellharbour bushfire prevention and preparedness project</td>
<td>Education program targeted to local residents living near bushland reserves to raise awareness about bushfire prevention and preparedness.</td>
<td>Shellharbour City Council</td>
<td>$30,982</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throsby</td>
<td>Shellharbour bushfire management project</td>
<td>Development of bushfire management plans for reserves in Albion Park, Blackbutt, Croom, and Mount Warrigal.</td>
<td>Shellharbour City Council</td>
<td>$18,252</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria (state-wide)</td>
<td>Living in the Bush project</td>
<td>This project consists of an integrated suite of communication tools (publication, multimedia display and CD ROM) to improve community awareness and readiness measures for residents living in high bushfire risk areas. It will enable such residents to better prepare them and their homes for a bushfire.</td>
<td>Country Fire Authority</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia (statewide)</td>
<td>Real-time burnt area and flood mapping</td>
<td>Satellite mapping of flooded or burnt areas across Australia for improved emergency management.</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia (statewide)</td>
<td>Community layout planning for remote Aboriginal communities</td>
<td>Development of guidelines for the inclusion of emergency mitigation requirements into community layout planning for remote Aboriginal communities.</td>
<td>Fire and Emergency Services Authority of WA</td>
<td>$16,575</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide Bay</td>
<td>Eidsvold to Theodore Road (Mt Steel area)</td>
<td>Eidsvold to Theodore Road is predominantly unsealed. Road works along two sections of this road will improve access in times of flooding for the townships of Cra-cow and Cloncose.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$149,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>Kelso levee augmentation</td>
<td>Augmentation of two low points in the Kelso levee to provide protection for up to 275 homes in the Panania area from Georges River flooding.</td>
<td>Bankstown City Council</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barker</td>
<td>Rural Property Addressing System</td>
<td>Undertake a pilot project in the Riverland to develop an implementation strategy for standardised addressing of all rural properties in South Australia.</td>
<td>Department of Administrative and Information Services</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barker/Grey/Mayo/Wakefield</td>
<td>SafeSA Risk Assessment</td>
<td>Conduct a disaster risk assessment and treatment study of all 15 local councils within the Central Local Government Region.</td>
<td>Central Local Government Region of South Australia</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>North Esk River flood warning and data acquisition system</td>
<td>Installation of telemetered river gauges on the North Esk River at Launceston.</td>
<td>Launceston City Council</td>
<td>$35,400</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaxland</td>
<td>Deerall Park detention basin</td>
<td>Construction of a detention basin at Deerall Park to reduce flooding in the surrounding area near Milperra Road.</td>
<td>Bankstown City Council</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boothby</td>
<td>Mitcham Council Bushfire Risk Assessment Study</td>
<td>Conduct a bushfire risk assessment study and develop a community education strategy and works program for the Mitcham Fire Prone Area.</td>
<td>City of Mitcham</td>
<td>$27,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Braddon</td>
<td>Lower Forth flood evacuation plan implementation measures</td>
<td>Identification of a 1:100 AEP for the Lower Forth Valley (including Forth, Leith, Turners Beach and Ulverstone) and accompanying education programme and evacuation plan.</td>
<td>Central Coast Council</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>Kwinana Beach erosion protection works</td>
<td>Construct rock armoured headlands and undertake sand nourishment to address beach erosion at Kwinana Beach.</td>
<td>City of Rockingham</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand/Canning/ Cowan/ remanlte/ Hasluck/Pearce</td>
<td>Capturing Small Landholdings Information for Disaster Mitigation and Management</td>
<td>Integrate the Client and Resource Information System and the Rural Street Addressing databases for small landholdings in 12 council areas on Perth’s fringe to improve their quality and effectiveness, so as to facilitate their use in disaster disaster mitigation, response and recovery.</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture WA</td>
<td>$68,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane/Blair/ Oxley</td>
<td>Brisbane Valley Flood Drainage Minimisation Study</td>
<td>Collaborative regional project that will involve undertaking a flood study of the Brisbane River catchment area. This study provides an ideal opportunity for Federal, State and Local Governments and SEQ Water to work together to optimise the operations of dams so that the significant damage that can occur from flood events is minimised.</td>
<td>Brisbane City Council</td>
<td>$98,500</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bruce/Issacs</td>
<td>Greater Dandenong flood study</td>
<td>Flood study of the Greater Dandenong municipality.</td>
<td>City of Greater Dandenong</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calare/Parkes</td>
<td>Disaster risk management plans</td>
<td>Preparation of disaster risk management plans for each local government area within CENTROC (Bathurst Regional, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Lachlan, Lithgow, Forbes, Mid Western, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Weddin, Wellington).</td>
<td>Parkes Shire Council</td>
<td>$85,500</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricornia</td>
<td>Dawson Highway - Kianga Creek Bridge</td>
<td>Replacement of the existing lower level timber bridge at Kianga Creek with a 130 metre long concrete bridge providing two traffic lanes and associated approach roadworks. This will mean that the Moura community will not be isolated except in extreme flooding events significantly beyond a once in 50 year flood event.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricornia</td>
<td>Alpha Town Flood Mitigation Study</td>
<td>Identify, analyse and evaluate the impact of flood events on the township of Alpha and will investigate the costs and benefits of various mitigation options.</td>
<td>Jericho Shire Council</td>
<td>$23,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricornia/Kennedy</td>
<td>Flinders Highway - Southern Cross Floodway</td>
<td>Resurface the existing crossing at Southern Cross Floodway to increase the crossings resilience to water inundation from flooding.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$95,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Capricornia/</td>
<td>Clermont-Alpha Road - May Creek Approaches</td>
<td>Construct earth levees upstream to channel floodwaters to the creek and to culverts to allow the road at May Creek to withstand scouring by floodwaters and still remain passable.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$123,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maranoa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cowan</td>
<td>Community and Fire Safety education days</td>
<td>Conduct Community and Fire Safety education days in Emerald Valley, Carabooda and Seatrees Estate, Two Rocks to raise community awareness about bushfires.</td>
<td>City of Wanneroo</td>
<td>$3,040</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Upper Kalang River flood study</td>
<td>Flood study of the Upper Kalang River including Brierfield, Sunny Corner, Scotchman, Kooroowli and Kalang.</td>
<td>Bellingen Shire Council</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Dorrigo flood study</td>
<td>Flood hazard and risk study for Dorrigo township.</td>
<td>Bellingen Shire Council</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Bushfire asset protection zones</td>
<td>Establishment of asset protection zones along the urban - bushland interface of the Wollongong local government area.</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>$360,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Towradgi Creek - footbridge at Coolong Crescent</td>
<td>Raising of the Coolong Crescent footbridge in Wollongong to increase the waterway capacity and reduce flood levels upstream.</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>$83,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Hewitts Creek - sediment basin at Hobart Street</td>
<td>Construction of a sediment basin at Hobart Street, Wollongong to prevent culverts and bridges becoming blocked with debris during floods.</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Hewitts Creek - flow path at the Esplanade</td>
<td>Construction of an overland flow path to relieve trapped floodwaters that collect in a low point in the Esplanade, Wollongong.</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham/Lyne/Calare/Farrer</td>
<td>Floodsafe guides for NSW communities</td>
<td>Production of locally-customised FloodSafe guides for 6 flood affected NSW communities (Wollongong, Taree, Wingham, Harrington/Coopernook, Georges River (Sydney), Bathurst, Corowa).</td>
<td>NSW State Emergency Service</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>Molongle Creek Drainage Catchment Flood Study</td>
<td>Study to identify, analyse and evaluate the effects of flooding on the Molongle Creek catchment and will involve the development of mitigation options.</td>
<td>Bowen Shire Council</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denison</td>
<td>Hobart major rivulets flood warning and action plan</td>
<td>Installation of new flood warning system instrumentation and development of flood action plans for Sandy Bay Rivulet, Hobart Rivulet and New Town Rivulet.</td>
<td>Hobart City Council</td>
<td>$26,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denison/Bass/Braddon</td>
<td>Urban landslide hazard maps</td>
<td>Landslide hazard maps of Hobart, Launceston and the northwest coast area between Burnie and Devonport.</td>
<td>Mineral Resources Tasmania</td>
<td>$81,992</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Bushfire AGRECON</td>
<td>Purchase pilot subscription to AGRECON internet-based satellite remote sensing site which will allow Council to determine soil moisture vegetation type and dryness of vegetation, and assist Council to allocate fire mitigation resources. The use of AGRECON forms part of the Council’s Bushfire safe project which is a holistic approach to bushfire mitigation.</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Shire Council</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Pine Rivers - Bushfire Resource Mapping</td>
<td>Purchase hardware, software and training for the set up of a GIS/GPS system capable of mapping fire related geo-spatial information. This equipment will allow the mapping of asset protection zones on managed land, accessible fire fighting water supplies on managed land, fire trails on public and private land, possible helicopter landing areas as well as the creation of registers for water points, fire trails and asset protection zones on crown and council public land.</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Terrors Creek Flood Mitigation Project</td>
<td>Identify, analyse and evaluate flood mitigation options for Terrors Creek to find a preferred scheme to reduce the impact of flooding in Dayboro.</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Shire Council</td>
<td>$13,333</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Extreme Flood Event Modelling of the Pine River and Hays Inlet Catchment</td>
<td>Investigate, analyse and assess the effects of extreme flood events on the Pine River and Hays Inlet catchment. Develop flood inundation and risk hazard maps, development controls, emergency planning and flood mitigation strategies as part of this study.</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Shire Council</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Pine Rivers - Bushfire Breaks</td>
<td>Provide fire trails and asset protection zones in bushland reserves identified as being high and medium hazard. The project will involve identifying hazard bushland reserves, developing reserve fire management plans and creating an asset protection zone register.</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Shire Council</td>
<td>$33,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Pine Rivers - Bushfire Smart</td>
<td>Training for Rural Fire Service personnel to deliver and facilitate bushfire community education by each brigade undertaking 2 to 3 street meetings a year at locations identified in the Bush Fire Management Plan.</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Pine Rivers - Bushfire Signage</td>
<td>Provide clear signage for all fire trails and water points on public land areas to increase the safety and efficiency of fire fighting operations and maximise the response of emergency services to fires.</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Shire Council</td>
<td>$666</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Mt Nebo Evacuation Area and Warning Siren</td>
<td>Investigate the feasibility of providing an evacuation area and siren warning system in Mt Nebo village.</td>
<td>Pine Rivers Shire Council</td>
<td>$3,333</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Eden-Monaro</td>
<td>Bushfire asset protection zones</td>
<td>Construction of asset protection zones in high risk areas including the eastern escarpment of Queanbeyan and Mount Jerrabomberra to enhance the safety of residents in these areas.</td>
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<td>Greater Queanbeyan City Council</td>
<td>$44,166</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eden-Monaro</td>
<td>Community vulnerability study</td>
<td>Detailed community vulnerability assessment of the urban and semi rural areas surrounding Queanbeyan, rural villages of Bungendore, Captain’s Flat and Braidwood and surrounding rural areas.</td>
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<td>Greater Queanbeyan City Council</td>
<td>$3,333</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>Fire Management Plans in Noosa Shire Council coastal bushland reserves</td>
<td>Develop site specific fire management plans for 10 coastal bushland reserves under Council management having the highest bushfire hazard rating.</td>
<td>Noosa Shire Council</td>
<td>$21,667</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax/Fisher</td>
<td>Maroochy Flood Mitigation Study</td>
<td>Produce a database of flood damage curves and link to GIS systems to derive potential flood damage costs for the Shire. This information would contribute to prioritising flood mitigation strategies across the Shire.</td>
<td>Maroochy Shire Council</td>
<td>$13,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax/Fisher</td>
<td>Maroochy Flood Mitigation Software</td>
<td>Purchase two-dimensional hydraulic modelling software (Water Ride), installation costs, training and data population to undertake analyses arising in the previously approved Maroochy River Flood Study.</td>
<td>Maroochy Shire Council</td>
<td>$8,333</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Fairfax/Fisher</td>
<td>Maroochy Flood Mitigation Warning System</td>
<td>Identify locations and install additional rainfall and stream gauges. A central recording system backup for the flood emergency centre which houses the flood monitoring central computer system will also be purchased.</td>
<td>Maroochy Shire Council</td>
<td>$62,500</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Edward-Wakool Rivers (Deniliquin to Liewah) floodplain risk management study and plan</td>
<td>Floodplain risk management study and plan of the Edward-Wakool Rivers floodplain from Deniliquin to Liewah Station. Includes the towns of Deniliquin, Wakool, Moulamein and Barham.</td>
<td>Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources</td>
<td>$140,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Implementation of rural addressing</td>
<td>Standardised addressing of rural properties in the Jerilderie local government area.</td>
<td>Jerilderie Shire Council</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>UHF repeater upgrade - Mt Youngal</td>
<td>Upgrading of the UHF Repeater at Mt Youngal to improve reliability and performance. The UHF Repeater is the only form of common contact in this isolated area of Kosciusko National Park.</td>
<td>Tumbarumba Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flinders</td>
<td>Acquisition of residential land in the Mornington Peninsula National Park</td>
<td>Acquisition of four privately owned lots of land in the Mornington Peninsula National Park that are susceptible to significant wildfire threat.</td>
<td>Department of Sustainability and Environment</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forrest</td>
<td>Bunbury Emergency Risk Management, Planning and Recovery Management Project</td>
<td>Further develop a working Emergency Risk Management planning document to include a wider range of risks and treatment options. A second stage will develop and introduce effective recovery management planning. The project will also have some applicability to neighbouring councils in the Greater Bunbury Area.</td>
<td>City of Bunbury</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler</td>
<td>Lower Prospect Creek voluntary house raising scheme</td>
<td>Demolition and re-building of two properties in Canley Vale (4 Fraser Road and 11 Mooore Street) subject to flooding from Prospect Creek.</td>
<td>Fairfield City Council</td>
<td>$54,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler</td>
<td>Canley Heights overland flood study</td>
<td>Detailed overland flood hazard and risk study for the suburbs of Canley Vale and Canley Heights.</td>
<td>Fairfield City Council</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Meehan Range bushfire study</td>
<td>Bushfire management study of the Meehan Range region including the towns of Risdon Vale and Cambridge.</td>
<td>Clarence City Council</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Geeveston floodplain mapping</td>
<td>Floodplain mapping of the Kermandie River at Geeveston.</td>
<td>Huon Valley Council</td>
<td>$17,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmore</td>
<td>Shoalhaven coastal hazard studies and management plan</td>
<td>Preparation of detailed coastal hazard studies and management plan for the Shoalhaven coastline.</td>
<td>Shoalhaven City Council</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gilmore</td>
<td>Emergency risk management plan</td>
<td>Development of an emergency risk management plan for the Shoalhaven local government area.</td>
<td>Shoalhaven City Council</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmore</td>
<td>Flood alert system - St Georges Basin</td>
<td>Extension of the Shoalhaven River flood alert system to include St Georges Basin (installation of additional rainfall and river recorders).</td>
<td>Shoalhaven City Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Perth and South West Corner electorates</td>
<td>Visual determination of fuel loads</td>
<td>Develop a manual to identify the fuel load of various vegetation types in the northern jarrah forest rural / urban interface, Swan Coastal Plain, Geraldton Sand Plain and the Leuwin Ridge.</td>
<td>Fire and Emergency Services Authority of WA</td>
<td>$11,760</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Perth electorates</td>
<td>Disaster mitigation support data - building footprints dataset</td>
<td>Update and validate the Greater Perth buildings footprints dataset.</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
<td>$49,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Sydney electorates</td>
<td>Community Fire Unit Program</td>
<td>Establishment of 15 community fire units in Sydney and surrounds to promote community safety and awareness and enable communities to deal with bushfire risk at the local level.</td>
<td>NSW Fire Brigades</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>Oodnadatta Airport Upgrade</td>
<td>Upgrade the Oodnadatta airport for 24-hour all-weather access (repair runway, seal apron and taxiways, and replace lighting).</td>
<td>Outback Areas Community Development Trust</td>
<td>$92,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groom</td>
<td>Toowoomba Escarpment Bushfire Risk Mitigation Project</td>
<td>Acquisition of land and the construction of fire trails to substantially reduce the threat of wildfire in escarpment bushland parks and adjoining land to provide increased capacity for fire mitigation and containment.</td>
<td>Toowoomba City Council</td>
<td>$240,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study of natural hazards in the Castlereagh River Catchment centred on Coonamble.</td>
<td>Coonamble Shire Council</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Coonamble levee bank audit</td>
<td>Audit to confirm both the height and structural adequacy of the Coonamble levee bank.</td>
<td>Coonamble Shire Council</td>
<td>$36,666</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Rural addressing of Coonamble Shire</td>
<td>Addressing of rural properties in Coonamble Shire consistent with Australian standards and the rest of NSW.</td>
<td>Coonamble Shire Council</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Narrabri-Wee Waa floodplain management remedial works investigation</td>
<td>Investigation of works and modifications required for the management of floodwaters in and around Wee Waa.</td>
<td>Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study of natural hazards in the Namoi River Catchment centred on Gunnedah.</td>
<td>Gunnedah Shire Council</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Rural addressing and geocoding in Wellington</td>
<td>Standardised addressing and geocoding of rural properties in the Wellington local government area.</td>
<td>Wellington Council</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir/New England/Parkes</td>
<td>FloodSafe guides - central and north west NSW</td>
<td>Production of locally-customised FloodSafe guides for 11 flood affected communities of central and north west NSW (Narrabri, Wee Waa, Wellington, Warren, Dubbo, Gundiah, Quirindi, Manilla, Moree/Pallamallowa, Mungindi and Tamworth).</td>
<td>NSW State Emergency Service</td>
<td>$20,800</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert</td>
<td>Upgrade of Special Needs Evacuation Centre for Townsville and Thuringowa</td>
<td>Upgrading of the Assembly Hall of Ignatius Park Christian Brother Secondary College which has been identified as the evacuation centre for residents and staff that may need to be evacuated in a natural disaster event from their beachside Aged Peoples Nursing Home. The works required to the building include the upgrade of the switchboard and other ancillary electrical work so that power can be supplied by a generator, the installation of supermesh screens to windows and the upgrading of power to the kitchen.</td>
<td>Townsville City Council</td>
<td>$30,070</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindmarsh</td>
<td>Adelaide Airport Drain Upgrade</td>
<td>Enlarge the Adelaide Airport Drain from May Terrace to West Beach Road and undertake associated works to cater for increased flows in the drain. These works will improve drainage and reduce flood risk to both upstream and downstream suburbs, and to Adelaide Airport.</td>
<td>City of West Torrens</td>
<td>$752,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes/Cunningham</td>
<td>Landslide and flood risk and hazard management along the South Coast rail corridor</td>
<td>Improve landslide hazard and risk assessment and management along the South Coast rail corridor through enhanced monitoring and prediction methods.</td>
<td>RailCorp NSW</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>Wollondilly River and Mulwaree Chain of Ponds flood mitigation measures</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of flood prone properties in Goulburn.</td>
<td>Greater Argyle Council</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Building community capacity for flood safety in Maitland and the Hunter Valley</td>
<td>Development of a community education strategy and campaign for Maitland and other flood-affected towns in the Hunter Valley to increase community awareness and understanding of flood risk.</td>
<td>Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority</td>
<td>$53,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunter/ Paterson</td>
<td>Emergency risk management plan</td>
<td>Development of a combined emergency risk management plan for the Cessnock, Dungog, Maitland and Port Stephens local government areas.</td>
<td>Lower Hunter Emergency Management Committee</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter/ Paterson Gywdir/New England/ Newcastle</td>
<td>FloodSafe guides for the NSW Hunter Valley</td>
<td>Production of locally-customised FloodSafe guides for 11 flood affected communities in the NSW Hunter Valley (Maitland, Raymond Terrace, Singleton, Denman, Murru-rundi, Scone, Muswellbrook, Dungog, Aberdeen, Hexham, Goulburn River).</td>
<td>NSW State Emergency Service</td>
<td>$12,300</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indi</td>
<td>Fifteen Mile Creek Floodplain Management and Avulsion Management Study (Stage 2)</td>
<td>Floodplain and avulsion management study of Fifteen Mile Creek from Glenrowan to Wangaratta.</td>
<td>North East Catchment Management Authority</td>
<td>$48,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Ponton Creek Causeway, Trans Access Road (design only)</td>
<td>Upgrading of the Ponton Creek causeway on the Trans Access Road to minimise future damages and improve access to numerous pastoral stations in the Rawlinna area and the Tjuntjuntjarra Aboriginal Community.</td>
<td>City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>FESA Indigenous Community Risk Management Officer</td>
<td>Establish a Community Risk Management position to implement the Indigenous Emergency Risk Management Training Package, which will deliver training and complete risk assessments within high risk remote Indigenous communities in the Pilbara and Kimberley.</td>
<td>Fire and Emergency Services Authority of WA</td>
<td>$63,970</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>North West Coastal Highway - Robe River flood mitigation works</td>
<td>Reinstall and improve the North West Coastal Highway at Robe River which was severely damaged in March 2004 as a result of tropical cyclone Monty and subsequent flooding. Works include floodway upgrades and road protection works, bridge widening and strengthening.</td>
<td>Main Roads Western Australia</td>
<td>$800,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Nanutarra - Munjina Road, Floodway and bridge damage mitigation works (Gascoyne Region)</td>
<td>The Nanutarra-Munjina Road was damaged by extensive flooding as a result of tropical cyclone Monty in March 2004. Reinstallation works have been completed but improvements are required to prevent similar damage in future events. Works include floodway upgrades and road protection works, reconstruction and upgrading of the Duck Creek and Beasley River bridges.</td>
<td>Main Roads Western Australia</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Onslow evacuation centre</td>
<td>Construct a purpose built evacuation centre in Onslow.</td>
<td>Shire of Ashburton</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Atherton Tablelands Wildfire Mitigation Project</td>
<td>Fire hazard mapping, mapping of fire tracks and fire breaks, development of a mobile solution for controlled burns and responses to incidents, and the establishment of a central data warehouse for the Atherton Tablelands.</td>
<td>Atherton Shire Council</td>
<td>$55,457</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Burke Developmental Road - Trimbles Crossing to Whip Handle</td>
<td>Upgrading of the existing floodway from Whip Handle grid to Trimble’s Crossing (109km west of Chillagoe) which will improve all weather access and reduce the time of closure on the access route into this region during flood events.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Burke Developmental Road - Gilbert River Culverts</td>
<td>Install culverts on a skewed alignment to prevent damage that is currently being caused during flood events.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy/Herbert</td>
<td>Western Road Condition Signage</td>
<td>Supply and install 4 road condition signs at key locations (3 at Charters Towers and 1 at Townsville). These signs will provide information to motorists so they can make informed decisions with regard to travel plans. Information displayed will include road closures and load restrictions.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$151,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leichhardt</td>
<td>North Qld Strategy Report into a Natural Disaster Mitigation Program</td>
<td>Study major Gulf and Peninsula roads to identify low lying sections subject to frequent inundation, and to develop, cost and prioritise cost effective remedial works.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leichhardt</td>
<td>Peninsula Developmental Road - Carroll Creek crossing</td>
<td>Replace the existing bed level crossing and steep approaches at Carroll Creek (16kms south of Musgrave) with a higher level drainage structure. This will improve all weather access and reduce the time of closure on the only road access route into this Queensland region.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leichhardt</td>
<td>Peninsula Developmental Road - Unnamed Creek crossing (Ch149.6 km)</td>
<td>Replace the existing bed level crossing and steep approaches at Unnamed Creek (10.7kms south of Musgrave) with a higher level drainage structure. This will improve all weather access and reduce the time of closure on the only road access route into this Queensland region.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leichhardt</td>
<td>Peninsula Developmental Road - Red Blanket Creek crossing</td>
<td>Replace the existing bed level crossing and steep approaches at Red Blanket Creek (12.1kms south of Musgrave) with a higher level drainage structure. This will improve all weather access and reduce the time of closure on the only road access route into this Queensland region.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$62,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leichhardt</td>
<td>Peninsula Developmental Road - 10 Mile Creek crossing</td>
<td>Replace the existing bed level crossing and steep approaches at 10 Mile Creek (16kms north of Musgrave) with a higher level drainage structure. This will improve all weather access and reduce the time of closure on the only road access route into this Queensland region.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyne</td>
<td>Floodplain terrain modelling</td>
<td>Floodplain terrain modelling of the Greater Taree area using airborne laser scanning.</td>
<td>Greater Taree City Council</td>
<td>$33,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyne</td>
<td>Wrights Creek flood study and management plan</td>
<td>Detailed flood study and management plan for Wrights Creek, Port Macquarie.</td>
<td>Hastings Council</td>
<td>$22,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyne</td>
<td>Improved flood access for Dunbogan - feasibility study</td>
<td>Feasibility study, preliminary design and analysis of two options to improve road access to and from Dunbogan during flooding (ie. raise existing road or construct an alternate access route).</td>
<td>Hastings Council</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyne/Richmond</td>
<td>Camden Haven flood markers</td>
<td>Establishment of flood markers in Camden Haven to raise community awareness and improve flood warning.</td>
<td>Hastings Council</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>Lower George flood mitigation project</td>
<td>Rock armouring protection works on a bend of the George River north of St Helens.</td>
<td>Break O’Day Council</td>
<td>$98,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>Styx River slip road study</td>
<td>Feasibility study to consider options for an alternative access route to the Bushy Park community during times of water inundation of the Styx River Bridge and its approach roads.</td>
<td>Derwent Valley Council</td>
<td>$3,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackellar</td>
<td>Avalon detention basin</td>
<td>Construction of a detention basin at Avalon Golf Course near The Crescent to reduce effects of Careel Creek flooding on Avalon shops and downstream residences.</td>
<td>Pittwater Council</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackellar</td>
<td>Howell Close detention basin and North Arm flood bypass</td>
<td>Investigation and feasibility of flood protection works within the Newport Beach catchment. Works include a detention basin near Howell Close, flood bypass tunnel and improvements to flowpaths along North Arm.</td>
<td>Pittwater Council</td>
<td>$53,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackellar</td>
<td>Urban disaster-ready awareness programme</td>
<td>Flood education and awareness programme for the Pittwater local government area focussing on the Newport Beach catchment.</td>
<td>Pittwater Council</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackellar</td>
<td>South Creek flood plain risk management study and plan</td>
<td>Preparation of a floodplain risk management study and plan for South Creek, Cromer.</td>
<td>Warringah Council</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mackellar</td>
<td>Fire regime management plans</td>
<td>Preparation of fire regime management plans for 7 bushland reserves (Allenby Park, Beacon Hill; Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge; Jamieson Park, Narrabeen; Manly Dam, Manly Vale; JJ Melbourne Hills Memorial Reserve; Forestville Park, Forestville; Anembo Reserve, Duffys Forest).</td>
<td>Warringah Council</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maranoa</td>
<td>Erosion of Burke River Bank (Bedourie-Boulia Road)</td>
<td>Study into the river system and methods of management for the prevention and control of erosion and the construction of erosion control structures.</td>
<td>Boulia Shire Council</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maranoa</td>
<td>Diamantina Developmental Road - Quilpie-Windorah Flood Mitigation</td>
<td>Installation of concrete margins on the downstream side of the road on flood prone sections and on the upstream and downstream sides of floodways, bridges and culverts which are more prone to higher velocity and quantities of water near the major waterways.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maranoa/Kennedy</td>
<td>Diamantina Developmental Road - Lower Limestone Creek culverts</td>
<td>Add additional culvert cells and raise the road embankment level by approximately one metre, 8.1-8.8 km north of Boulia, to improve flood immunity and trafficability.</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads (in conjunction with Boulia Shire)</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>Upper Onkaparinga Flood Risk Assessment and Strategic Options Study</td>
<td>Following on from the Upper Onkaparinga Floodplain Mapping Study, undertake detailed flood risk assessments, and develop strategic treatment options.</td>
<td>Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell/ Parramatta</td>
<td>Bushfire incident control lines</td>
<td>Creation of bushfire incident control lines in Excelsior Reserve (Bidjigal), Fred Caterson Reserve, Hunts Creek Reserve, Glenhaven corridors and Toongabbie Creek corridors to offer protection to homes, community facilities and infrastructure bordering on these reserves.</td>
<td>Baulkham Hills Shire Council</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell/ Parramatta</td>
<td>Flood Safe: Building Support of the Local Council and Community</td>
<td>Flood awareness programme for residents of central western Sydney including Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Holroyd and Parramatta.</td>
<td>Upper Parramatta Catchment Trust</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>Lower Goulburn Floodplain Rehabilitation project</td>
<td>Relocation of levees that are causing hydraulic constriction and/or are too close to the river banks.</td>
<td>Department of Sustainability and Environment</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>Numurkah floodplain management study</td>
<td>Floodplain management study of Numurkah township.</td>
<td>Moira Shire Council</td>
<td>$27,500</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>Torrumbarry Gunbower floodplain risk management study</td>
<td>Floodplain risk management study of the River Murray between Torrumbarry and Gunbower.</td>
<td>North Central Catchment Management Authority</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Peel River floodplain remodelling</td>
<td>Remodelling of the Peel River floodplain to provide a more accurate picture of the floodplain following the construction of several mitigation measures.</td>
<td>Tamworth Regional Council</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Tamworth flood warning system - ALERT upgrade</td>
<td>Upgrade of the Tamworth flood warning system to an ALERT system (installation of software and radio telemetry).</td>
<td>Tamworth Regional Council</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Kootingal flood station</td>
<td>Installation of an additional river station on the Cockburn River at Kootingal.</td>
<td>Tamworth Regional Council</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Nundle flood and floodplain risk management study</td>
<td>Preparation of a flood and floodplain risk management study of Nundle for the future development of a floodplain risk management plan.</td>
<td>Tamworth Regional Council</td>
<td>$13,333</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Woolomin village flood and floodplain risk management study</td>
<td>Preparation of a flood and floodplain risk management study of Woolomin village for the future development of a floodplain risk management plan.</td>
<td>Tamworth Regional Council</td>
<td>$11,666</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>NSW Flood Database (Stage 1 - feasibility and scoping study)</td>
<td>Feasibility and scoping study to determine the most appropriate and cost effective GIS based flood database system for NSW.</td>
<td>Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>NSW Coastal Hazard Definition Database (Stage 1 - archive and preparation of electronic database)</td>
<td>Development of a consolidated electronic database containing coastal hazard data for NSW.</td>
<td>Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Many Languages - disaster recovery information for culturally and linguistically diverse communities</td>
<td>Translation of existing English language brochures detailing disaster recovery services in NSW into Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Macedonian, Turkish and Vietnamese.</td>
<td>NSW Department of Community Services</td>
<td>$14,195</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Emergency management defensive and evacuation planning for animal holding establishments</td>
<td>Production of a guide to assist animal holding establishments such as veterinary clinics, horse studs, boarding kennels and catteries develop defensive and evacuation plans.</td>
<td>NSW Department of Primary Industries</td>
<td>$13,750</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Fire trail register</td>
<td>Enhancement of the Bushfire Risk Information Management System (BRIMS) to include a fire trail register.</td>
<td>NSW Rural Fire Service</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Bushfire hazard and risk assessment methodology study</td>
<td>Research and development of an enhanced methodology for bushfire hazard and risk assessment.</td>
<td>NSW Rural Fire Service</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>Improvement of flood warning effectiveness</td>
<td>Further development of an enhanced flood intelligence system to improve the understanding and effectiveness of flood warning predictions - Statewide extension of a pilot programme conducted in the Georges River Valley.</td>
<td>NSW State Emergency Service</td>
<td>$11,666</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>AGS Landslide Task-force guidelines</td>
<td>Development of guidelines for landslide hazard zoning and management and maintenance of properties subject to landslide hazard.</td>
<td>Sydney Coastal Councils Group</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (state-wide)</td>
<td>AGS Landslide Risk Management Practice Note</td>
<td>Development of guidelines (practice note) for landslide risk assessment and management of proposed development in landslide prone areas.</td>
<td>Sydney Coastal Councils Group</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW Eastern Seaboard Electorates</td>
<td>Emergency response plans for hobby farmers and rural residential landholders</td>
<td>Development of local emergency response plans for communities of hobby farmers and rural residential landholders (pilot programme in the North Coast, South Coast, Hunter, Western Sydney and Southern Sydney/Southern Highlands regions).</td>
<td>NSW Department of Primary Industries</td>
<td>$29,753</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Connor</td>
<td>Wagin floodplain management study</td>
<td>Identify, analyse and evaluate the risks to the community associated with flooding in Wagin township, and develop a Flood Management Plan.</td>
<td>Department of Environment</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Connor</td>
<td>Bushfire Build Safe Seminar 2004</td>
<td>Conduct the 2004 Bushfire Build Safe Seminar in Denmark. The seminar is intended to increase knowledge about building requirements and standards in bushfire prone areas and encourage better building design and location.</td>
<td>Shire of Denmark</td>
<td>$2,700</td>
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### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Electorate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oxley/Blair</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council - Enhancement of GIS for Natural Disaster Management</td>
<td>Expansion of the Council’s GIS to include disaster management issues. This will involve adding records of the current Counter Disaster Committee and the new Local Disaster Management Group to the GIS. These will include the locations and capability of all emergency response resources, community resources and records of jobs undertaken in response to natural disaster events.</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxley/Blair</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council - Preparation of Local Disaster Management Plan</td>
<td>Prepare the Ipswich Disaster Mitigation Plan, incorporating a number of the disaster mitigation and preparedness treatment strategies contained within the Ipswich Natural Disaster Mitigation Plan, as well as reviewing the operational components of the current Ipswich Counter Disaster Plan.</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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<td>Oxley/Blair</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council - Gravel Road Upgrade</td>
<td>Upgrade two sections of gravel road which have suffered significant damage on a recurring basis as trial projects. The proposed treatments will comprise various forms of protection to the downstream face of road embankment and other ancillary works to reduce overtopping impacts. The two locations will enable subsequent decisions to be made about the most cost effective treatment and its wider application throughout the City.</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council</td>
<td>$180,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Flood forecasting system for Ipswich</td>
<td>Purchase of hardware and software to capture information from the Bureau of Meteorology’s (BOM) ALERT warning stations together with real time data verification, and develop a flood forecasting model based on the existing RAFTS hydrological model. This information will allow more detailed and earlier information regarding flood forecasting than is possible from the BOM warnings alone in order to assist with decisions as to activation of the Local Disaster Plan.</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Page</td>
<td>Coastal zone management study and plan</td>
<td>Preparation of a management plan to address the threat of coastal erosion caused by severe storms and cyclones to communities at Lennox Head and Patches Beach.</td>
<td>Ballina Shire Council</td>
<td>$53,300</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Ardent Street drain outlet rehabilitation</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of the Ardent Street drain outlet to ensure the integrity of the South Grafton levee system.</td>
<td>Clarence Valley Council</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Emergency risk management plan</td>
<td>Development of an emergency risk management plan for the Lismore local government area (including villages, urban areas and rural land sharing communities).</td>
<td>Lismore City Council</td>
<td>$20,413</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Richmond River floodplain study</td>
<td>Identification and mapping of high risk flood affected rural areas in the Richmond River floodplain. Includes incorporation of data into a GIS system.</td>
<td>Richmond River County Council</td>
<td>$31,333</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Emergency risk management plan</td>
<td>Development of an emergency risk management plan for the Richmond Valley local government area.</td>
<td>Richmond Valley Council</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project Description</td>
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<td>Flood emergency management project</td>
<td>Implementation of mitigation measures identified in the Casino and Mid Richmond floodplain risk management study and plans. Includes flood warning, emergency planning and community awareness programmes for Casino, Coraki, Woodburn, Rileys Hill and Broadwater.</td>
<td>Richmond Valley Council</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study of natural hazards in the Central Darling local government area. Includes the towns of Wilcannia, Menindee, Ivanhoe and White Cliffs.</td>
<td>Central Darling Shire Council</td>
<td>$8,325</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study of natural hazards in the Macquarie River Catchment centred on Dubbo.</td>
<td>Dubbo City Council</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>Aerial photographs and GIS mapping</td>
<td>Aerial photographs of the Forbes local government area for inclusion into Council’s GIS mapping system improving the management of future flood events.</td>
<td>Forbes Shire Council</td>
<td>$26,366</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>Rural flood study of the Lachlan River at Condobolin</td>
<td>Detailed flood study of the rural areas surrounding Condobolin affected by flooding from the Lachlan River.</td>
<td>Lachlan Shire Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study of natural hazards in the Macquarie River Catchment centred on Narromine.</td>
<td>Narromine Shire Council</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parramatta</td>
<td>Toongabbie Creek flood mitigation works (Briens Road Culvert)</td>
<td>Culvert modifications to improve the waterway capacity of Toongabbie Creek at Briens Road.</td>
<td>Parramatta City Council</td>
<td>$138,333</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Parramatta</td>
<td>Wentworthville voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 2 properties in Wentworthville subject to flooding from Toongabbie Creek.</td>
<td>Parramatta City Council</td>
<td>$280,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paterson</td>
<td>Bulahdelah flood warning system</td>
<td>Installation of a new ALERT river station on the Myall River upstream from Bulahdelah.</td>
<td>Great Lakes Council</td>
<td>$6,075</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paterson</td>
<td>Wallis Lake flood warning system</td>
<td>Installation of an additional water level recorder on Wallis Lake to obtain true representation of wind/wave climate on lake.</td>
<td>Great Lakes Council</td>
<td>$6,075</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patterson</td>
<td>Emergency risk management study and disaster mitigation strategy</td>
<td>Comprehensive emergency risk management study and disaster mitigation strategy for the Great Lakes, Greater Taree and Gloucester region.</td>
<td>Gloucester Shire Council</td>
<td>$39,999</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pearce/Forrest/O’Connor</td>
<td>Emergency Services directories for the Peel East, Avon South, South West Corner and Albany regions</td>
<td>Create Emergency Services directories for the Peel East, Avon South, South West Corner and Albany regions of WA. Information includes topographic, cadastral and hydrographic data, power transmission lines, water and gas pipelines, roads and transmission towers, etc.</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
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<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>Le Fevre Peninsula Risk Study</td>
<td>Undertake a multi-hazard risk assessment of the LeFevre Peninsula.</td>
<td>City of Port Adelaide Enfield</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>Little Para River Overflow Channel</td>
<td>Construct an off-take weir and associated works to complete the Little Para River overflow channel.</td>
<td>City of Salisbury</td>
<td>$86,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>Parafield Airport West Drain</td>
<td>Enlarge and upgrade the Parafield Airport west drain to improve flow capacity and reduce flooding in the surrounding area.</td>
<td>City of Salisbury</td>
<td>$72,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Bushfire Building Materials Research</td>
<td>Evaluate issues impacting on residential dwellings in high fire risk areas. A Fire Risk Mitigation Guide will be developed as a result of this research and will be supplied to the Housing Industry and consumers in a Web format to direct the building orientation and construction of the dwelling giving consideration to local site characteristics to minimise bushfire impacts.</td>
<td>Department of Public Works</td>
<td>$43,333</td>
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<td>Queensland (statewide)</td>
<td>Scoping Study for a Cyclone Shelter Program</td>
<td>Identify public and private buildings in all areas prone to cyclonic weather which are suitable and code compliant (or can be upgraded) to be used to temporarily house community members during cyclonic conditions. The project will also include investigating the costs associated with the potential construction of new buildings and the development of a strategy and implementation plan for the provision of cyclone shelters.</td>
<td>Department of Public Works</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland (statewide)</td>
<td>LGAQ Disaster Management, Capability Development and Implementation Project</td>
<td>Conduct a study as a means to increase the capacity of Local Government to respond to corporate planning, risk assessment and disaster mitigation. The project will focus on the development of resources and tools shifting the paradigm from response to include strategic planning for disasters and the development of frameworks for ensuring priority risks are assessed and funded for the best social and economic outcomes.</td>
<td>Local Government Association Queensland</td>
<td>$63,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland Eastern Sea-</td>
<td>Local Government Storm Tide Mapping Project</td>
<td>Produce purpose designed storm tide emergency management maps to a common standard for all Queensland coastal communities with a storm tide risk. These maps are essential to effectively prepare communities for, and manage, evacuations.</td>
<td>Department of Emergency Services</td>
<td>$47,750</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>board Electorates</td>
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<td>Queensland South East</td>
<td>South East Queensland Disaster Communications Project:</td>
<td>Develop and implement a strategic framework to support regionally consistent educational and early warning strategies for disaster-prone communities. It will include the incorporation of the needs of all key providers and spheres of government and will address all phases of a disaster from planning and preparation to response and recovery.</td>
<td>Brisbane City Council</td>
<td>$69,000</td>
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<td>Corner Electorates</td>
<td>Promoting Safe, Sustainable Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Cape Byron Sand Lobe - sand extraction feasibility study</td>
<td>Scoping study to assess the feasibility of extracting sand from the Cape Byron Sand Lobe to protect beachfront property, private dwellings and public infrastructure at Byron Bay-Belongil and New Brighton from coastal erosion caused by storm events.</td>
<td>Byron Shire Council</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Tweed Valley community flood awareness programme</td>
<td>Flood awareness programme for residents of the Tweed Valley. Includes a media campaign, installation of flood markers and preparation of pamphlets and web site.</td>
<td>Tweed Shire Council</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
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<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Key Proponent</td>
<td>Approved Funding</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riverina</td>
<td>Hillston levee (design)</td>
<td>Design of a levee system to protect Hillston from flooding of the Lachlan River.</td>
<td>Carrathool Shire Council</td>
<td>$16,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverina</td>
<td>Ardlethan flood study</td>
<td>Flood study of Ardlethan township and surrounding areas.</td>
<td>Coolamon Shire Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverina</td>
<td>Wagga Wagga levee and river bank rehabilitation works</td>
<td>Levee and river bank rehabilitation works along the Murrumbidgee River between Small Street and the Wagga Wagga Tourist Information Centre to stabilise the levee and prevent failure or collapse.</td>
<td>Wagga Wagga City Council</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverina</td>
<td>Eastern Industrial levee - feasibility and environmental assessment</td>
<td>Study to assess the feasibility and environmental impact of the construction of Eastern Industrial levee.</td>
<td>Wagga Wagga City Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Rainfall data collection system</td>
<td>Installation of up to 14 automatic rainfall stations throughout the Gosford City area from Wamberal in the north to Patonga in the south.</td>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
<td>$23,225</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Terrigal Grassland Avenue Catchment flood mitigation works</td>
<td>Flood mitigation works to improve flood protection for 18 residential dwellings in Grassland Avenue and surrounding streets.</td>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
<td>$166,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Showground Road voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase and demolition of 1 property in Gosford (162 Showground Road) subject to flooding from Narara Creek.</td>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
<td>$220,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Key Proponent</td>
<td>Approved Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Australia (statewide)</td>
<td>Digital Elevation Model for South Australia</td>
<td>Develop a state wide high resolution Digital Elevation Model to assist in identifying and modelling risks to communities.</td>
<td>CSIRO Land and Water</td>
<td>$87,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia (statewide)</td>
<td>Mobile Post-Disaster Livestock Carcass Cre- matorium</td>
<td>Undertake a feasibility study to investigate options for a mobile stock disposal system that can be employed at any site in the State after a natural disaster.</td>
<td>Primary Industries and Resources South Australia</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia (statewide)</td>
<td>Community Safety Facilitators Leadership Forum</td>
<td>Conduct a one-day seminar in Adelaide involving a broad cross section of community safety facilitators in South Australia to develop community facilitation and engagement techniques.</td>
<td>SA Fire and Emergency Services Commission</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia (statewide)</td>
<td>Flood Awareness, Flood Warning and Response in South Australia</td>
<td>Review and update the 5-Year Flood Warning Development Plan and prioritise required improvements.</td>
<td>South Australian Flood Warning Consultative Committee</td>
<td>$32,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania (statewide)</td>
<td>Bailey Bridge stock upgrade</td>
<td>Upgrading of existing Bailey Bridge stock and purchase of additional components to provide temporary crossings when permanent bridges are lost due to flood or bushfire.</td>
<td>Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania (statewide)</td>
<td>Disaster Alert - community warning and information web site</td>
<td>Development of a natural disaster hazard website providing Tasmanian’s with up to date information about current events (nature, severity, geographical location, road closures, etc).</td>
<td>Department of Police and Public Safety</td>
<td>$33,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tasmania (statewide)</td>
<td>Engaging the Community - Floods and You</td>
<td>Statewide strategy to improve community awareness and preparedness for floods. Focuses on high flood risk areas of the State.</td>
<td>Tasmanian Flood Warning Consultative Committee</td>
<td>$6,667</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania (statewide)</td>
<td>Forging Links - Emergency Management and Local Government</td>
<td>Printing and distribution of the Forging Links - Emergency Management and Local Government information kit to all local governments in the State.</td>
<td>Tasmanian State Emergency Service and Local Govt Assoc of Tasmania</td>
<td>$5,560</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria (statewide)</td>
<td>Victorian Flood Data dataset infill project</td>
<td>Updating of the Victorian Flood Data dataset to include details of recently completed flood related studies.</td>
<td>Department of Sustainability and Environment</td>
<td>$28,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria (statewide)</td>
<td>Fire mitigation through community partnerships</td>
<td>Development of a community education and engagement strategy for bushfire management.</td>
<td>Department of Sustainability and Environment</td>
<td>$420,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria (statewide)</td>
<td>Fire access roads</td>
<td>Three-year project to upgrade some 4,800 kms of critical roads and tracks in parks and forests for use in fire prevention and fire management activities. The project will target roads in the State’s highest bushfire risk areas - Otways, Dandenongs and Macedon area.</td>
<td>Department of Sustainability and Environment</td>
<td>$373,300</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria (state-wide)</td>
<td>Flood risk review for Victorian caravan parks</td>
<td>Study to identify all caravan/camping parks at risk from flooding in Victoria and develop approaches, including appropriate planning controls, to mitigate the effects of flooding in such areas.</td>
<td>North East Catchment Management Authority</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakefield</td>
<td>Adams Creek/Edinburgh Parks Flood Mitigation Dams</td>
<td>Construct flood mitigation dams in Adams Creek adjacent to Gooronga Drive and Turner Drive, Edinburgh Parks.</td>
<td>City of Playford</td>
<td>$168,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakefield</td>
<td>Flood and Fire Mitigation in Goyder</td>
<td>Conduct one bushfire and two flood risk assessment studies (Council-wide and at Burra), develop a flood data base to identify vulnerable properties, and undertake channel improvement works in Eudunda.</td>
<td>Goyder Regional Council</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wannon</td>
<td>Floodplain management plan for Russel Creek and Merri River</td>
<td>Preparation of a floodplain management plan for Russel Creek and the Merri River at North Warrnambool.</td>
<td>Warrnambool City Council</td>
<td>$27,500</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warringah</td>
<td>Mitigation measures addressing coastal hazards</td>
<td>Implementation of high priority mitigation measures addressing coastal hazards in the Manly local government area.</td>
<td>Manly Council</td>
<td>$33,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warringah</td>
<td>Geotechnical survey of public lands affected by coastal hazards</td>
<td>Detailed geotechnical assessment of coastal hazards in the Manly local government area to determine suitable management strategies.</td>
<td>Manly Council</td>
<td>$6,500</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia (state-wide)</td>
<td>Real-time burnt area and flood mapping</td>
<td>Undertake satellite mapping of flooded or burnt areas across Australia for improved emergency management.</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Australia (state-wide)</td>
<td>Remote sensing technologies for flood risk management</td>
<td>Undertake scoping study to examine and prototype the application of remote sensing technologies to complement existing flood monitoring and warning systems.</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia (state-wide)</td>
<td>Spatial information for emergency management</td>
<td>Establish direct access to key spatial information in a readily accessible form from various sources across government for emergency mitigation.</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
<td>$133,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia (state-wide)</td>
<td>Towards a National Bushfire Warning and Management System</td>
<td>Undertake scoping and costing for the establishment of a national system to access digital spatial information data to facilitate bushfire mitigation and response. The project will initially provide a single point of access to the currently available different operational systems but ultimately unify these systems to create a more robust, national-scale operational system able to deal with large, national emergencies and associated high demand for information based on near real-time satellite observations.</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<td>Approved Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Australia (state-wide)</td>
<td>Profiling of bushfire arsonists in Western Australia</td>
<td>Research into the profile of bushfire arsonists to improve community targeted arson reduction activities.</td>
<td>Fire and Emergency Services Authority of WA</td>
<td>$20,750</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia (state-wide)</td>
<td>Planning for Bushfire Protection</td>
<td>Enhance the ‘Planning for Bushfire Protection’ land development and bushfire protection guide, and identification of building protection zone dimensions.</td>
<td>Fire and Emergency Services Authority of WA</td>
<td>$33,100</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aeronautical Training
(Question No. 191)

Senator Mark Bishop asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 17 December 2004:

(1) (a) What is the current annual budget of the Tamworth Aeronautical College; and (b) from what sources are funds provided.
(2) What is the current level of cost recovery by way of fees and other contributions from industry.
(3) Do any industry participants provide funds, scholarships or make other contributions in cash or in kind; if so, what are they.
(4) How many students are currently enrolled at the end of 2004.
(5) What is the current drop-out rate for 2004.
(6) What capital contributions were made to establish the school by the Commonwealth and others.
(7) (a) How was Tamworth chosen as the site; (b) what other sites were considered; (c) why were other sites deemed to be unsuitable; and (d) who made the final decision and when.
(8) What other qualifications beyond courses completed at the school are required to obtain a licensed aircraft engineer’s certificate.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Transport and Regional Services has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) to (3) The Australian Pacific Aeronautical College Incorporated (APAC) is an incorporated association registered with the New South Wales Department of Fair Trading that has been established as a non-profit organisation. APAC have indicated that the detailed financial information sought is commercially sensitive, however I can advise that, in addition to fees paid,
- The Australian Government contribution is $4,100,000 over 4 years;
- Eastern Australia Airlines and BAE Systems contributed around $500,000 in cash and/or kind in the first year (2001), and around $250,000 in total in subsequent years;
- Tamworth City Council contributed $1,000,000 in cash and/or kind in the first year and around $100,000 per year thereafter.

(4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>ENROLMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1265 AEROSKILLS</td>
<td>61</td>
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<tr>
<td>1290 AVIATION - AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7122 AEROSKILLS (MECHANICAL)</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>7123 AEROSKILLS (AVIONICS)</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>7125 AEROSKILLS (STRUCTURES)</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>7131 AEROSKILLS (AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE ENGINEERING - ME)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
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</table>


(6) Besides the answers noted in the answers to questions 1-3, the New England Institute of Technical and Further Education contributed in excess of $50,000 in cash for the feasibility/research into
APAC, and the New England and North West Regional Development Board (NSW State Government) contributed $10,000 into the APAC feasibility study and business plan.

(7) (a) to (c) In 2000, representatives from Eastern Australia Airlines (EAA) and BAE SYSTEMS’ Flying College discussed the concept of an Aeronautical college due to the shortage of qualified Aeronautical and Mechanical Engineers and Licensed Aeronautical and Mechanical Engineers. This shortage was hindering the expansion of their engineering operations in Sydney and Tamworth. Discussions were then held with various Government bodies as to alternatives and apprenticeships in Tamworth. This led to meetings with the New England Institute of TAFE and regional development personnel that produced a grant application to fund equipment, aircraft and renovations.

Tamworth was the only site proposed as Tamworth Airport is the home of EAA’s major engineering and administrative operations and BAE SYSTEMS’ Flying College, which provides commercial licence pilot training for domestic and international airlines as well as the Australian Defence Force and Defence Forces from overseas. The airport also has a number of other general aviation-engineering firms who will require trained engineers. There are 30 aviation-engineering firms located in the New England and NorthWest regions of NSW.

(d) The decision to support the proposal was announced by the Hon. John Anderson MP in a media release dated 24 August 2001.

(8) To become a Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (LAME) students must pass exams set by Civil Aviation Safety Authority on basic aircraft systems, and have completed at least four years’ relevant aviation maintenance experience.

APAC currently offers the Certificate IV Aeroskills in Mechanical, Avionics or Structures streams. It is necessary that one of these streams be completed (along with four years practical aviation maintenance experience) prior to sitting the CASA exams for LAME.

An Aeroskills Diploma is now being developed to be delivered by APAC by June 2005. APAC plan that the Diploma in Aeroskills will cover all licensing requirements to become a LAME and will be recognised by CASA.

Regional Flood Mitigation Program
(Question No. 193)

Senator Mark Bishop asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 17 December 2004:

(1) By electorate, what projects were approved in each of the past 2 years under the Regional Flood Mitigation Program; and (b) what was the cost of each project.

(2) Which approved projects have not yet been completed.

(3) What was the purpose of each approved project.

(4) What are the program’s timelines for applications and approvals.

(5) By electorate, which project applications were rejected.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (2) and (3) Attachments A and B provide details of projects funded under the Regional Flood Mitigation Programme in 2003-04 and 2004-05 including those completed and the purpose of each.

(4) Applications for funding under the programme in 2005-06 opened on 20 November 2004 and close on 25 February 2005. Successful projects are expected to be announced early in the new financial year.

(5) No projects were rejected by the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads.
### Attachment A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Electorate</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Key Proponent</th>
<th>Approved Funding</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blair</td>
<td>Marburg - Black Snake Creek detention basin and channel upgrade</td>
<td>Construction of the Black Snake Creek detention basin and channel upgrade at Marburg.</td>
<td>Ipswich City Council</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braddon</td>
<td>Latrobe flood mitigation project (detention basin)</td>
<td>Construction of a detention basin on Kings Creek to reduce flooding in Latrobe township.</td>
<td>Latrobe Council</td>
<td>$54,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calare</td>
<td>Kelso voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of some 30 residential properties on the Kelso floodplain in Bathurst outside of levee protected areas.</td>
<td>Bathurst City Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calare</td>
<td>Bathurst - Macquarie River levees, bridge widening and channel improvement</td>
<td>Construction of multiple levees, bridge widening and channel improvements on the Macquarie River at Bathurst.</td>
<td>Bathurst City Council</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calare</td>
<td>Eugowra voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of at least 4 residential properties located in high hazard floodway areas of Eugowra.</td>
<td>Cabonne Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calare</td>
<td>Molong voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 2 houses in Molong</td>
<td>Cabonne Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calare</td>
<td>Lithgow - Farmers Creek flood flow improvements &amp; voluntary purchase / house raising</td>
<td>Improving the flood flow capacity of Farmers Creek in Lithgow.</td>
<td>Lithgow City Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Division</td>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Key Proponent</td>
<td>Approved Funding</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capricornia</td>
<td>Jericho levee</td>
<td>Detailed design of the Jericho levee.</td>
<td>Jericho Shire Council</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlton</td>
<td>Bakers Road Detention Basin</td>
<td>Construction of the Bakers Road detention basin to temporarily store flood waters and reduce flood discharges and heights downstream.</td>
<td>Coffs Harbour City Council</td>
<td>$140,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Palmers Island voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 9 dwellings at Palmers Island village on the Lower Clarence River.</td>
<td>Clarence River County Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Ulmarra - Clarence River levee and voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Rock protection to the existing river bank levee, and voluntary purchase of properties at risk along the Clarence River at Ulmarra.</td>
<td>Clarence River County Council</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Dora Creek voluntary house raising</td>
<td>Voluntary house raising of at least 3 properties in the flood prone Dora Creek area.</td>
<td>Lake Macquarie City Council</td>
<td>$33,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Lake Macquarie voluntary house raising</td>
<td>Voluntary house raising of at 3 properties in the catchment area of Lake Macquarie.</td>
<td>Lake Macquarie City Council</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Anama Street voluntary purchase (Cabbage Tree voluntary purchase)</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 16 residential buildings in the Cabbage Tree Creek floodway of Fairy Meadow.</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>Horseshoe Lagoon - channel improvements</td>
<td>Channel improvements and easement acquisition at Horseshoe Lagoon.</td>
<td>Burdekin Shire Council</td>
<td>$38,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Electorate</th>
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<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Key Proponent</th>
<th>Approved Funding</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>Ayr, Brandon, Lilliesmere Lagoon flood mitigation works (dam and channel improvements)</td>
<td>Channel improvements and installation of an automatic control gate at Ayr, Brandon and Lilliesmere Lagoon.</td>
<td>Burdekin Shire Council</td>
<td>$31,400</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>Queens Beach - Don River bank stabilisation works</td>
<td>Don River bank stabilisation works to protect Queens Beach from inundation.</td>
<td>Don River Improvement Trust</td>
<td>$164,115</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>Finch Hatton levee and overflow project</td>
<td>Construction of a levee and overflow path in Finch Hatton.</td>
<td>Mirani Shire Council</td>
<td>$170,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>Mackay - North Mackay and South Bank levee</td>
<td>Construction of the North Mackay levee and upgrading of the South Bank levee in Mackay.</td>
<td>Pioneer River Improvement Trust</td>
<td>$221,025</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>Grasstree Beach - upgrading of Grasstree Road</td>
<td>Upgrading of Grasstree Road to provide a flood evacuation route for the township of Grasstree Beach.</td>
<td>Sarina Shire Council</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dobell</td>
<td>Killarney Vale - Wyong Road retarding basin upgrade</td>
<td>Raising the embankment height of an existing retarding basin adjacent to Wyong Road and Killarney Vale Athletics Field to increase storage capacity to help reduce flooding of downstream areas.</td>
<td>Wyong Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eden-Monaro</td>
<td>Cooma Creek channel improvements, levee</td>
<td>Levee construction and channel improvements along the Cooma Creek at Cooma.</td>
<td>Cooma-Monaro Shire Council</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Key Proponent</td>
<td>Approved Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eden-Monaro</td>
<td>Reedy Creek voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 3 properties in Malua Bay under the Reedy Creek Voluntary Purchase Scheme.</td>
<td>Eurobodalla Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Balranald - Murrumbidgee River levee and bank rehabilitation</td>
<td>Structural measures such as levee bank rehabilitation and augmentation and infrastructure for overland flooding control.</td>
<td>Balranald Shire Council</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Euston levee</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of the existing levee system at Euston.</td>
<td>Balranald Shire Council</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Tocumwal - Murray River levee reconstruction</td>
<td>Reconstruction and upgrading of the levee on the Murray River at Tocumwal.</td>
<td>Berrigan Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Deniliquin levee</td>
<td>Upgrading and reconstruction of the North Deniliquin and South Deniliquin levees.</td>
<td>Deniliquin City Council</td>
<td>$333,334</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Moama - Murray River levee</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of a levee bank and related works on the Murray River in Moama.</td>
<td>Murray Shire Council</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Moulamein levee</td>
<td>Raising and strengthening of the existing Moulamein levee system.</td>
<td>Wakool Shire Council</td>
<td>$167,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forde</td>
<td>Logan River community flood watch and flood awareness program</td>
<td>Logan River community flood watch and flood awareness program.</td>
<td>Logan City Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<td>Key Proponent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forrest</td>
<td>Busselton - upgrading of flood protection (detention basin network)</td>
<td>This project aims to increase the level of flood protection for Busselton by retaining floodwaters in the upper catchment through a network of detention basins.</td>
<td>Water Corporation</td>
<td>$360,115</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gilmore</td>
<td>Terara levee restoration</td>
<td>Reconstruction and upgrading of the levee on the lower Shoalhaven River at the village of Terara.</td>
<td>Shoalhaven City Council</td>
<td>$73,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>Wirrabara flood mitigation works</td>
<td>Construction of three small detention dams and associated works to protect 21 properties in Wirrabara.</td>
<td>District Council of Mount Remarkable</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>Koonibba flood mitigation project</td>
<td>Construction of levee banks to protect approximately 20 properties in the low-lying areas of Koonibba.</td>
<td>Koonibba Aboriginal Community Council</td>
<td>$108,200</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>Yalata flood mitigation works</td>
<td>Construction of levee banks to the west and south of Yalata to protect residential properties and infrastructure in the township.</td>
<td>Yalata Community Incorporated</td>
<td>$70,700</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groom</td>
<td>Cambooya - upgrading of Alfred Street low level floodway</td>
<td>Upgrading of the Alfred Street low level floodway in Cambooya to improve access and evacuation along the Toowoomba-Karara Road during flooding.</td>
<td>Cambooya Shire Council</td>
<td>$46,667</td>
<td>No</td>
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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Electorate</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Groom</td>
<td>Toowoomba - West Creek flood mitigation project</td>
<td>West Creek Flood Mitigation Scheme – channel improvements from Margaret to Russell Streets in Toowoomba.</td>
<td>Toowoomba City Council</td>
<td>$34,710</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>North Bourke voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 2 properties located in the flood prone area of North Bourke village.</td>
<td>Bourke Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Coonamble levee repair</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of a section of the Coonamble Levee, in the vicinity of Castlereagh and Macquarie Streets, at risk of failure in future floods.</td>
<td>Coonamble Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Gunnedah and Carroll - Namoi River voluntary purchase and house raising</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 25 houses and voluntary house raising of 184 houses in Gunnedah and Carroll along the Namoi River.</td>
<td>Gunnedah Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Mungindi levee upgrade</td>
<td>Reconstruction and upgrading of the levee on the Barwon River at Mungindi.</td>
<td>Moree Plains Shire Council</td>
<td>$115,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Murrurundi levee</td>
<td>Provision of a levee (Adelaide Street Levee) and voluntary purchase of two flood prone properties.</td>
<td>Murrurundi Shire Council</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Narrabri voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of approximately 91 residential properties located in high hazard floodways of the Namoi waterway in Narrabri.</td>
<td>Narrabri Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Scone voluntary house raising</td>
<td>Up to 10 residences identified for voluntary house raising in Scone on the Parson’s Gully catchment.</td>
<td>Scone Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Herbert</td>
<td>Kelso flood diversion scheme</td>
<td>Kelso Flood Diversion Scheme Stage 1A (open drain widening and culvert upgrade at Shetland Place) and Stage 2 (construction of an underground drainage system along Ross River Road).</td>
<td>Thuringowa City Council</td>
<td>$1,266,667</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herbert</td>
<td>Townsville West - flood mitigation project (Woolcock Canal)</td>
<td>Townsville West Flood Mitigation Project Stage 1 (completion of various works along Woolcock Canal, including channel widening, to increase flow rates).</td>
<td>Townsville City Council</td>
<td>$140,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>Stonequarry Creek Bank Stabilisation Works at Picton</td>
<td>Improving flow characteristics of the main channel of the Stonequarry Creek at Picton by clearing vegetation and bank reshaping.</td>
<td>Wollondilly Shire Council</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Maitland voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 152 properties in central Maitland and Lorn outside of levee protected areas.</td>
<td>Hunter Catchment Management Trust</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Maitland levee rehabilitation</td>
<td>Rehabilitation and strengthening of the main town levee at Maitland.</td>
<td>Hunter Catchment Management Trust</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Muswellbrook voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 54 properties in high hazard zones of Muswellbrook.</td>
<td>Muswellbrook Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Federal electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indi</td>
<td>Benalla flood mitigation scheme</td>
<td>The Benalla Flood Mitigation Scheme consists of various works including vegetation clearance and reduction, culvert widening and installation of additional culverts.</td>
<td>Benalla Rural City Council</td>
<td>$280,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indi</td>
<td>Wangaratta flood mitigation works</td>
<td>The Wangaratta Flood Mitigation Scheme comprises a number of elements. Funding will complete the following outstanding works – Whitfield Road culvert, Sunset Drive/Three Mile Creek levee, and protection of isolated dwellings in the Ovens River valley.</td>
<td>Rural City of Wangaratta</td>
<td>$88,394</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Carnarvon - flood mitigation works</td>
<td>This project is aimed at implementing the mitigation measures recommended in the Lower Gascoyne River - Carnarvon Floodplain Management Strategy. Major elements include flood detention embankments, a leved floodway channel and levees.</td>
<td>Shire of Carnarvon</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Trebonne - flood warning system</td>
<td>Installation of flood warning Alert Station at Trebonne.</td>
<td>Herbert River Improvement Trust</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Halifax levee</td>
<td>Extension of the riverbank levee at Halifax to provide protection to the southern side of the town.</td>
<td>Herbert River Improvement Trust</td>
<td>$33,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Lower Herbert River Catchment - voluntary house raising</td>
<td>Voluntary house raising program for flood prone properties in the Lower Herbert River Catchment.</td>
<td>Hinchinbrook Shire Council</td>
<td>$140,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyne</td>
<td>Settlement Point Bank Protection</td>
<td>Bank protection of the western side (upstream) of Settlement Point to protect adjoining public infrastructure and private property.</td>
<td>Hastings Council</td>
<td>$73,333</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyne</td>
<td>Kempsey voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of up to 10 properties located in a high hazard floodway of Kempsey.</td>
<td>Kempsey Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>Longford - South Esk River levee</td>
<td>Construction of a levee at Longford across the Back Creek catchment with a culvert and gate structure installed over the creek.</td>
<td>Northern Midlands Council</td>
<td>$116,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macarthur</td>
<td>Camden voluntary purchase / house raising / flood proofing</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 43 properties, house raising of 62 properties and flood proofing of 56 properties in Camden on the Upper Nepean River.</td>
<td>Camden Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maranoa</td>
<td>Charleville and Augathella levees (Warrego River)</td>
<td>Construction of the Charleville and Augathella levees.</td>
<td>Murweh Shire Council</td>
<td>$561,750</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>Baulkham Hills voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 6 properties as part of the South Baulkham Hills Flood Mitigation Project.</td>
<td>Baulkham Hills Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>Shepparton-Mooroopna flood warning system</td>
<td>Establishment of a flood warning system for Shepparton-Mooroopna including upgrading of stations and community awareness measures.</td>
<td>Greater Shepparton City Council</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Armidale - Dumaresq Creek flood proofing and voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase and flood proofing of properties in Armidale along the Dumaresq Creek and tributaries.</td>
<td>Armidale Dumaresq Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>King George V and Peel River voluntary purchase and house raising</td>
<td>18 residences to be considered for either voluntary purchase or house raising in Tamworth.</td>
<td>Tamworth Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Central Tamworth voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 2 residential properties in a high hazard flood way of central Tamworth.</td>
<td>Tamworth Shire Council</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Taminda levee</td>
<td>Construction of a levee to protect Tamworth’s main industrial area of Taminda and some residential properties from flooding.</td>
<td>Tamworth Shire Council</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Grafton Bowling Club levee</td>
<td>Rehabilitation works on the levee near the Grafton Bowling Club to provide protection to the city of Grafton.</td>
<td>Clarence River County Council</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Lismore voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 26 houses in North Lismore and Central Lismore outside of levee protected areas.</td>
<td>Richmond River County Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lismore levee</td>
<td>Construction of new levees and the modification of existing levees to protect Central Lismore (including CBD) and South Lismore.</td>
<td>Richmond River County Council</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Casino floodplain voluntary purchase / voluntary house raising</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 12 properties and house raising of a further 26 properties in Casino.</td>
<td>Richmond Valley Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parramatta</td>
<td>North Wentworthville voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 3 homes as identified in the North Wentworthville Floodplain Management Plan.</td>
<td>Parramatta City Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paterson</td>
<td>Gloucester voluntary purchase and house raising</td>
<td>Voluntary raising of 18 flood affected houses and purchase of 5 isolated residences in Gloucester's high hazard floodplain.</td>
<td>Gloucester Shire Council</td>
<td>$13,334</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Murwillumbah voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 15 houses in South Murwillumbah in a high hazard floodway.</td>
<td>Tweed Shire Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Riverina</td>
<td>Hay levee</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of existing levee to protect the town of Hay.</td>
<td>Hay Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Narara - Narara Creek, Hanlan Street voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 1 property on the Narara Creek, west of Hanlan Street in Narara.</td>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Narara - Hanlan Street South culvert upgrade</td>
<td>Upgrade of the existing culvert in Hanlan Street, Narara.</td>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
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<td>Federal Electorate</td>
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<td>Throsby</td>
<td>Dapto voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of 9 houses in the Burringbar Street area of Dapto.</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Wakefield</td>
<td>Gawler River flood mitigation scheme</td>
<td>The Gawler River Flood Mitigation Scheme consists of a number of elements including the construction of a flood control dam on the North Para River.</td>
<td>Gawler River Floodplain Management Authority</td>
<td>$350,000</td>
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<td>Wakefield</td>
<td>Kapunda flood mitigation works</td>
<td>Flood mitigation works to formalise and realign flows from Kapunda Creek to protect eight properties between Mildred and Nash Streets, Kapunda.</td>
<td>Light Regional Council</td>
<td>$24,100</td>
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<td>Wide Bay</td>
<td>Gayndah - relocation of a flood prone house</td>
<td>Relocation of a flood prone house in Gayndah.</td>
<td>Gayndah Shire Council</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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Note: Included in a NSW state wide voluntary purchase allocation of $1,035,000

Attachment B

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Braddon</td>
<td>Latrobe flood mitigation project (detention basin)</td>
<td>Construction of a detention basin on Kings Creek to reduce flooding in Latrobe township.</td>
<td>Latrobe Council</td>
<td>$4,500</td>
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<td>Calare</td>
<td>Bathurst - Macquarie River levees, bridge widening and channel improvement</td>
<td>Construction of multiple levees, bridge widening and channel improvements on the Macquarie River at Bathurst.</td>
<td>Bathurst City Council</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
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<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>Decision</th>
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<tr>
<td>Calare</td>
<td>Lithgow - Farmers Creek flood flow improvements &amp; voluntary purchase/ house raising</td>
<td>Lithgow City Council</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
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<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Ulmarra - Clarence River levee and voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Clarence River County Council</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
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<td>Cowper</td>
<td>Bakers Road Detention Basin</td>
<td>Coffs Harbour City Council</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
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<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Gwynneville - Fairy Creek flood mitigation (Crawford Ave channel widening)</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>$166,667</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Hewitts Creek voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Towradgi voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Black Diamond Place detention basin</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cunningham</td>
<td>Lemrac Ave culvert reconstruction</td>
<td>Wollongong City Council</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dobell</td>
<td>Killarney Vale - Wyong Road retarding basin upgrade</td>
<td>Raising the embankment height of an existing retarding basin adjacent to Wyong Road and Killarney Vale Athletics Field to increase storage capacity to help reduce flooding of downstream areas.</td>
<td>Wyong Shire Council</td>
<td>$17,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>South Albury levee rehabilitation</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of a 50m section the of the South Albury levee.</td>
<td>Albury City Council</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Balranald - Murrumbidgee River levee and bank rehabilitation</td>
<td>Structural measures such as levee bank rehabilitation and augmentation and infrastructure for overland flooding control.</td>
<td>Balranald Shire Council</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Euston levee</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of the existing levee system at Euston.</td>
<td>Balranald Shire Council</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Deniliquin levee</td>
<td>Upgrading and reconstruction of the North Deniliquin and South Deniliquin levees.</td>
<td>Deniliquin City Council</td>
<td>$333,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrer</td>
<td>Moulamein levee</td>
<td>Raising and strengthening the existing Moulamein Levee system.</td>
<td>Wakool Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forrest</td>
<td>Busselton - upgrading of flood protection (detention basin network)</td>
<td>Increase the level of flood protection for Busselton by retaining floodwaters in the upper catchment through a network of detention basins.</td>
<td>Water Corporation</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>Authorizing Council</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmore</td>
<td>Terara levee restoration. Reconstruction and upgrading of the levee on the lower Shoalhaven River at the village of Terara.</td>
<td>Shoalhaven City Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Coonamble levee repair. Rehabilitation of a section of the Coonamble levee, in the vicinity of Castlereagh and Macquarie Streets, at risk of failure in future floods.</td>
<td>Coonamble Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Mungindi levee upgrade. Reconstruction and upgrading of the levee on the Barwon River at Mungindi.</td>
<td>Moree Plains Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Murrurundi levee. Construction of the Adelaide Street levee.</td>
<td>Murrurundi Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydir</td>
<td>Walgett levee rehabilitation. Rehabilitation of the existing levee surrounding Walgett.</td>
<td>Walgett Shire</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>Stonequarry Creek Bank Stabilisation Works at Picton. Improving flow characteristics of the main channel of the Stonequarry Creek at Picton by clearing vegetation and bank reshaping.</td>
<td>Wollondilly Shire Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indi</td>
<td>Myrtleford flood mitigation scheme. Flood mitigation works to improve flood protection for residents of Myrtleford.</td>
<td>Alpine Shire</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indi</td>
<td>Benalla flood mitigation scheme. Flood mitigation scheme including vegetation clearance and reduction, culvert widening and installation of additional culverts.</td>
<td>Benalla Rural City Council</td>
<td>$133,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>Responsible Body</td>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>Enlarge drainage channels to mitigate seasonal flooding effects on houses and facilities on the western side of Nulleywah community.</td>
<td>Department of Housing and Works</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyne</td>
<td>Bank protection of the western side (upstream) of Settlement Point to protect adjoining public infrastructure and private property.</td>
<td>Hastings Council</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>Levee system to protect Longford from flood waters on the Macquarie/South Esk River on the eastern side of Longford and Back Creek to the west.</td>
<td>Northern Midlands Council</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>Establishment of a flood warning system for Shepparton-Mooroopa including upgrading of stations and community awareness measures.</td>
<td>Greater Shepparton City Council</td>
<td>$43,750</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Construction of a levee to protect Tamworth’s main industrial area of Taminda and some residential properties from flooding.</td>
<td>Tamworth Regional Shire Council</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Rehabilitation works on the levee near the Grafton Bowling Club to provide protection to the city of Grafton.</td>
<td>Clarence River County Council</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Construction of new levees and modification of existing levees to protect Central Lismore (including CBD) and South Lismore.</td>
<td>Richmond River County Council</td>
<td>$320,000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Location/Project</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Responsible Body</td>
<td>Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverina</td>
<td>Hay levee</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of existing levee to protect the town of Hay.</td>
<td>Hay Shire Council</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Narara - Hanlan Street South culvert upgrade</td>
<td>Upgrade of the existing culvert in Hanlan Street, Narara.</td>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Green Point voluntary purchase</td>
<td>Voluntary purchase of one property to reduce flood risk.</td>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
<td>See note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakefield</td>
<td>Gawler River flood mitigation scheme</td>
<td>Construct a flood control dam on the North Para River at Turretfield near Gawler, modify the South Para Reservoir to provide flood attenuation storage and undertake environmentally sensitive channel maintenance and provision of controlled, alternate flow paths along the lower reaches of the Gawler River.</td>
<td>Gawler River Floodplain Management Authority</td>
<td>$384,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Included in a NSW state wide voluntary purchase allocation of $230,000.
Primary Energy Ltd  
(Question No. 195 amended)  

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 20 December 2004: Has Primary Energy Limited sought funding or other assistance from any department or agency for which the Minister is responsible in connection with the company’s ethanol project at Gunnedah; if so, will the Minister provide details including: (a) date; (b) amount of funding or other assistance sought; (c) relevant departmental or agency program from which funding or other assistance was sought; and (d) funding or other assistance provided or currently under consideration.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Transport and Regional Services has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

Yes.

(a) The application was received by the Namoi Valley Structural Adjustment Package’s Executive Officer in the period between 4 June and 24 June 2003.

(b) $1,100,000 (GST ex)

(c) Namoi Valley Structural Adjustment Package, subsequently rolled into Regional Partnerships programme in July 2003.

(d) $1,100,000 (GST ex).

Regional Development Policy Advice  
(Question No. 245)  

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 22 December 2004: With reference to the cost of regional development policy advice for the 2003-04 financial year as reported on page 103 of the department’s annual report for 2003-04: why did the actual cost exceed the budget estimate by 70.5 per cent.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Transport and Regional Services has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The departmental budget and actual expenditure for Output 2.1: Regional Development Policy Advice was allocated on the basis of a notional attribution of expenses incurred by branches (including a pro-rated attribution of corporate expenses on the basis of full time equivalent staff). The attribution is based on estimates of the contribution of departmental expenses to outputs.

The actual expenses attributed to Output 2.1 included expenses of $5.5 million incurred in the Territories Branch, which may have been more appropriately attributed to Output 2.3: Services to Territories. The remaining $8.8 million of actual expenses attributed to Output 2.1 is in line with the revised budget of $8.4 million.

Regional Flood Mitigation Program  
(Question No. 247)  

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 22 December 2004: Why did expenditure on regional flood mitigation in the 2003-04 financial year fall 52.1 per cent short of the budget estimate, as reported on page 103 of the department’s annual report for 2003-04.
Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
The Minister approved projects to the full value of the Regional Flood Mitigation Programme’s allocation in 2003-04 however payment of the funds is based on progress of works. Insufficient progress on these projects in 2003-04 resulted in unspent funds being rolled over into 2004-05 and 2005-06.

Territories: Services
(Question No. 266)

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 December 2004:

(1) What are the terms of reference for the department’s 2004-05 review of fees and charges associated with delivering services to Australia’s territories.

(2) Who will undertake the review.

(3) What is the review timetable.

(4) Will the current fees and charges regime remain in place until the review is concluded.

(5) How will the department consult with stakeholders.

(6) Which stakeholders will be consulted.

(7) (a) By year and territory, what revenue associated with services to Australia’s territories has the department derived in the financial years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 to date; and (b) by territory, what total revenue does the department expect to derive in the 2004-05 financial year.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) Services to the Indian Ocean Territories are outside the scope of the Cost Recovery Review. This has been agreed to by the Department of Finance and Administration.

(2) See (1) above.

(3) See (1) above.

(4) See (1) above.

(5) See (1) above.

(6) See (1) above.

(7) (a) Actual revenues to 31 December 2004 for the territories are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>Jervis Bay Territory</td>
<td>$764,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Norfolk Island</td>
<td>$4,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indian Ocean</td>
<td>$11,119,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>Jervis Bay Territory</td>
<td>$1,097,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Norfolk Island</td>
<td>$3,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indian Ocean</td>
<td>$13,295,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>Jervis Bay Territory</td>
<td>$470,456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Norfolk Island Territory $2,698
Indian Ocean Territories $5,505,644

(b) Projected total revenues for 2004-05 financial year:
Jervis Bay Territory $803,000
Norfolk Island Territory $7,000
Indian Ocean Territories $8,845,000

Note: figures for 2002-03 and 2003-04 financial years include revenue from the sale of infrastructure assets. The department will derive no revenue from infrastructure asset sales in the 2004-05 financial year.

**Immigration: Christmas Island Reception and Processing Centre**

(Question No. 269)

**Senator O’Brien** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, upon notice, on 23 December 2005:

With reference to the proposed new Immigration Reception and Processing Centre (IRPC) on Christmas Island:

1. (a) What is the current estimated total cost of construction including related costs; and (b) will the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the cost.
2. (a) What funds have been expended so far; and (b) will the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the cost by financial year.
3. Will the Minister provide a list of all contracts let for the construction phase of the project, including the successful tenderer.
4. On what date will: (a) the early works phase of the project be completed; (b) the main works phase of the contract commence; (c) the main works phase of the contract be completed; and (d) the IRPC be operational.
5. (a) What compensation was paid to Phosphate Resources Limited for the resumption of land for the IRPC; (b) on what date was this compensation paid; (c) who undertook the negotiations on behalf of the Commonwealth; (d) which Minister approved the compensation; and (e) what program was the source of the compensation funds.
6. (a) What consultants have been engaged in relation to the IRPC project; and (b) in each case, what was the nature of the consultancy, the term of the consultancy and the associated financial value.
7. (a) On what date did the Department of Finance and Administration assume responsibility for the project; (b) why did the Department of Finance and Administration assume responsibility for the project; and (c) what other IRPC construction projects did the Department of Finance and Administration manage prior to the transfer of responsibility for the IRPC project.
8. What role does the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs perform in relation to the project during planning and construction.
9. What role does the Department of Transport and Regional Services perform in relation to the project during planning and construction.
10. Have all contracts let for the construction phase of the project included local training and local business content; if so, will the Minister provide details; if not, why not.
11. Has the local training and local business involvement which formed part of the assessment criteria for the major works contract been consistent with evidence given by the Department of Finance
and Administration to the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works on 31 October 2003; if so, will the Minister provide details; if not, why not.

(12) Will local training and employment and local business involvement form part of the assessment criteria for the service contract for the operation of the IRPC; if not, why not.

(13) Will the Christmas Island community have access to recreational and other facilities at the IRPC, subject to operational needs.

Senator Ian Campbell — The Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) I note that this question has also been directed to the Minister for Finance and Administration and it is more appropriate that he provide a response.

(b) The Department of Transport and Regional Services has been appropriated $45.4m to meet costs incurred in constructing public infrastructure and housing associated with the project. This figure excludes:

- funding to resume the mining lease for the IRPC site (refer Question (5) below); and
- ongoing expenses, for example, associated with repairs, maintenance and depreciation of the infrastructure.

The $45.4m was originally estimated on the basis of:

- $19.8 million to supplement the Christmas Island water supply; to supply water, power and communications to the construction camp and IRPC site; and to improve island road and port infrastructure, including to reduce environmental impacts from increased traffic during crab migrations; and
- $25.6 million for housing associated with the facility.

(2) (a) Project expenditure by DOTARS totals $40.2m million to 31 December 2004.

(b) Expenditure by Financial Year (in $millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure Type</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
<th>2003-04</th>
<th>2004-05 (to 31/12/04)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>$0.4m</td>
<td>$9.5m</td>
<td>$3.8m</td>
<td>$0.0m</td>
<td>$13.7m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>$5.9m</td>
<td>$19.8m</td>
<td>$0.8m</td>
<td>$0.0m</td>
<td>$26.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$6.3m</td>
<td>$29.3m</td>
<td>$4.6m</td>
<td>$0.0m</td>
<td>$40.2m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) The following are the construction contracts related to the provision of services to the Immigration Reception and Processing Centre and construction camp sites and of staff housing for the Immigration Reception and Processing Centre:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Description</th>
<th>Name of Contractor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Management and Design Services</td>
<td>GHD Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, power and communication provision to IRPC site</td>
<td>Electrical Contracting &amp; Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of Water storage infrastructure adjacent to IRPC site</td>
<td>Electrical Contracting &amp; Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wharf Pavement reconstruction</td>
<td>DECMIL/Consolidated Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of a crane pedestal at Flying fish cove</td>
<td>Christmas Island Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bore Hole Drilling flying fish cove</td>
<td>Drilling and Grouting Services Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions on Notice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Description</th>
<th>Name of Contractor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Install pre-cast and supply and install insitu crab crossings</td>
<td>Gregorys plumbing and Pipeline Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LB4 Road Improvements</td>
<td>Shire of Christmas Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of 160 accommodation units</td>
<td>DECMIL/Consolidated Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of 10 houses</td>
<td>DUWAL Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of 3 houses</td>
<td>C&amp;B Murdoch Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Camp high voltage reticulation</td>
<td>Electrical Contracting &amp; Maintenance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) I note that this question has also been directed to the Ministers for Finance and Administration and Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and it is more appropriate that they provide a response.

(5) (a) $3.2 million was paid to Phosphate Resources Limited in compensation for the resumption of the mining lease over the IRPC site.

(b) 30 July 2004.

(c) The Department of Transport and Regional Services undertook negotiations on behalf of the Commonwealth, with advice from the Australian Government Solicitor and Geoscience Australia.

(d) The Government approved an upper limit for compensation for the resumption of land for the IRPC and the Australian Government Solicitor approved the final determination as being in accordance with compensation legal principle and practice.

(e) The Services to the Indian Ocean Territories Programme has been supplemented $3.2 million in the 2004-05 Additional Estimates.

(6)

Table of Consultants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>(b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of consultant</td>
<td>Nature of consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoscience Australia</td>
<td>An assessment of the volume and quality of phosphate on the mine lease resumed for the IRPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minval Associates Pty Ltd</td>
<td>Audit of methodology used by Geoscience Australia to determine the volume and quantity of phosphate on the resumed lease and valuation of that phosphate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(7) This question has also been directed to the Minister for Finance and Administration and it is more appropriate that he provide a response.

(8) This question has also been directed to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and it is more appropriate that she provide a response.

(9) The Department of Transport and Regional Services is responsible for the provision of land for the IRPC and associated infrastructure, to supply staff housing for the centre and to provide infrastructure (such as power, water etc) to the IRPC and construction camp boundaries.

(10) No. Department of Transport and Regional Services tenders relating to the Indian Ocean Territories encourage contractors to use local contractors where possible to maximise the benefits to the local economy. The manner by which this translates to contracts varies from project to project.
(11) This question has also been directed to the Minister for Finance and Administration and it is more appropriate that he provide a response.

(12) This question has also been directed to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and it is more appropriate that she provide a response.

(13) This question has also been directed to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and it is more appropriate that she provide a response.

Indian Ocean Territories: Economic Development
(Question No. 271)

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 December 2004:

(1) By financial year, what funds have been provided to the Administrator of the Indian Ocean Territories for the development of an economic development strategy for Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

(2) What outcomes can be attributed to the funding.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) No funds have been provided for the Strategic Plan for Economic Development in the Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs) to date. When funds are expended, they will not be provided to the Administrator of the Indian Ocean Territories who, in his economic development role, is leading the project on-island. These funds will be provided to the contractor directly from the IOT Services Programme.

(2) No funds have been expended from the Programme to date.

Norfolk Island: Administrator
(Question No. 272)

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 December 2004:

By financial year, and disaggregated to include salary, other remuneration, personal staff, accommodation, entertainment, travel and other costs, what are the costs associated with maintaining the Administrator of Norfolk Island in 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 to date.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The costs associated with maintaining the Administrator of Norfolk Island are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002-03 ($)</th>
<th>2003-04 ($)</th>
<th>2004-05* ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary (including allowances)</td>
<td>136,600</td>
<td>140,700</td>
<td>84,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal staff</td>
<td>122,533</td>
<td>118,512</td>
<td>55,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>40,632</td>
<td>25,047</td>
<td>14,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>24,362</td>
<td>16,322</td>
<td>4,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4,034</td>
<td>29,641</td>
<td>32,368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Year to date as at 20 January 2005.
Indian Ocean Territories: Administrator
(Question No. 273)

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 December 2004:

By financial year, and disaggregated to include salary, other remuneration, personal staff, accommodation, entertainment, travel and other costs, what costs are associated with maintaining the Administrator of the Indian Ocean Territories in 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 to date.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The costs associated with maintaining the Administrator of the Indian Ocean Territories in 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 to date are as set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>2002-03 $</th>
<th>2003-04 $</th>
<th>2004-05 $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>121,311</td>
<td>96,106</td>
<td>82,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other remuneration</td>
<td>19,871</td>
<td>34,507</td>
<td>40,987*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal staff</td>
<td>72,350</td>
<td>59,136</td>
<td>22,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>17,319</td>
<td>13,311</td>
<td>13,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>20,687</td>
<td>20,592</td>
<td>974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>39,084</td>
<td>6,742</td>
<td>2,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6,413*</td>
<td>13,718*</td>
<td>47,732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

^ Includes some payments from 2003-04 that were paid in arrears.

* The category ‘Other’ includes costs for office expenses. However, figures for office expenses were not available in 2002-03 and 2003-04.

Christmas Island Casino Surveillance Authority
(Question No. 276)

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 December 2004:

(1) What are the names and terms of appointment of the members of the Christmas Island Casino Surveillance Authority.

(2) What costs have been associated with the authority in each of the financial years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 to date.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) The Christmas Island Casino Surveillance Authority is currently non-operational with all positions vacant.

(2) No costs were incurred for the Casino Surveillance Authority during the 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 financial years.

Transport and Regional Services: Workplace Diversity Program
(Question No. 284)

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 December 2004:

(1) Does the department’s workplace diversity program seek to ensure the department attracts and retains a diverse range of people with a focus on Indigenous employment.
(2) In what year was this diversity program launched.

(3) How many Indigenous staff did the department employ in the financial years 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 in the following classifications: (a) Senior Executive Service Level (SES) 3; (b) SES 2; (c) SES 1; (d) Executive Level (EL) 2; (e) EL 1; (f) Australian Public Service Level (APS) 6; (g) APS 5; (h) APS 4; (i) APS 3; (j) Graduate; (k) APS 2; (l) APS 1; (m) Trainee; and (n) other.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Transport and Regional Services has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) The department’s workplace diversity program has a number of desired outcomes including making DOTARS staff more aware of the impact of its policies and programmes on indigenous people. However, it should be noted that the focus of the programme also encompasses diversity through gender, disability, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

(2) The current workplace diversity programme was launched in 2001.

(3) The table below shows the number of indigenous full-time employees (FTE) for the time periods specified. However, as diversity data are voluntarily reported upon commencement of employment, and a considerable proportion of staff choose not to provide this information, these data may not represent the actual number of indigenous employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>2001/02</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES 2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SES 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EL 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL 1</td>
<td>0.03 FTE</td>
<td>0.35 FTE</td>
<td>1.00 FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 5</td>
<td>0.77 FTE</td>
<td>1.00 FTE</td>
<td>1.45 FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 4</td>
<td>0.07 FTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate APS</td>
<td>0.29 FTE</td>
<td>0.42 FTE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.15 FTE</td>
<td>1.77 FTE</td>
<td>2.45 FTE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transport and Regional Services: Indigenous Employment

(Question No. 285)

Senator O’Brien asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, upon notice, on 23 December 2004:

(1) Which of the following measures has the department adopted to ensure it attracts and retains a diverse range of people with a focus on Indigenous Employment: (a) an Indigenous employment strategy; (b) special employment measures limiting employment opportunities only to Indigenous applicants; (c) identified positions for Indigenous staff; (d) participation in the National Indigenous Cadetship Program; (e) providing opportunities for Indigenous people to gain skills and experience under an agency-based Indigenous employment scheme; and (f) advertising employment opportunities in Indigenous media.
(2) For each applicable measure: (a) what is the date of implementation; and (b) what outcomes can be attributed to the measure.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Minister for Transport and Regional Services has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) In respect of 1(d) the department has agreed to offer up to five cadetships under the National Indigenous Cadetship Program. We are currently in the process of determining the precise arrangements for implementing the Program to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place to maximise the benefits of the Program. Following the recruitment of the Cadets, we anticipate their first work placement to commence in the 2005 mid-year semester break.

The department does not have arrangements in place in respect of the other measures referred to.

The department also intends participating in the APSC Indigenous Graduate Programme which is expected to commence in 2006.

(2) Given that the department will only be offering the National Indigenous Cadetship Program in 2005, we are not yet in a position to measure the outcomes of the Programme.

Transport Services
(Question No. 318)

Senator Hutchins asked the Minister for Finance and Administration, upon notice, on 21 January 2005:

Can the Minister provide: (a) the directives, guidelines or other instructions issued or developed by the department regarding the procurement of transport services by the Commonwealth for either the department or issued to other Commonwealth departments or agencies; (b) the date on which such contracts were agreed; (c) the entity which the Commonwealth has contracted with; and (d) the total costs of these contracts for the 2003-04 financial year.

Senator Minchin—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:


(b) to (d) In January 1998, my Department engaged Outsource Australia to provide general office services including courier/freight delivery services. A total of $51,540 was spent on local courier services under this contract in 2003-04. In addition to this, during 2003-04, my Department spent $45,266 on ad-hoc office relocation services provided by Mervyn Oldfield Removals Pty Ltd.

Bananas
(Question No. 327)

Senator Brown asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 3 February 2005:

In relation to restrictions on non-commercial growing of bananas in Queensland and potential impacts on flying foxes:

(1) Are non-commercial banana-growers limited to 30 stems; if so, why.

(2) Is there any evidence linking the restriction on non-commercial banana-growing with population levels of fruit-eating native species, in particular, is there any suggestion that flying fox populations are in decline and that limitations on banana-growing may be part of the cause.

(3) What work is being done to reduce the dependence of commercial banana crops on chemicals, for example, by encouraging more diversity in the varieties of bananas grown.

Senator Ian Campbell—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Environnent: River Red Gums

(Question No. 328)

Senator Brown asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 3 February 2005:

(1) What assistance and input is the Commonwealth providing for the Victorian Government’s study of river red gums and wetlands along parts of the Murray and Goulburn Rivers.

(2) How does this work relate to the Regional Forest Agreements and the exemptions under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

(3) What action will the Minister take to ensure that other red gum forests along the Murray, including the Nyah State Forest and Vinifera River Murray Reserve, are included in the Victorian study.

Senator Ian Campbell—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) The Riverine Red Gum Forests Investigation is a Victorian Government investigation to be undertaken by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC). The Australian Government is a member of the Barmah-Millewa Forum and has provided input on the Riverine Red Gum Forests Investigation “Draft Terms of Reference” through this Forum.

(2) The boundaries of the Riverine Red Gum Forests Investigation detailed in the Draft Terms of Reference are outside areas covered by the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements and therefore, if these boundaries are confirmed, exemptions under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 would not apply.

(3) Determining the boundaries of the Riverine Red Gum Forests Investigation is a matter for the Victorian Government to resolve.

Environment: Recherche Bay

(Question No. 329)

Senator Brown asked the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, upon notice, on 3 February 2005:

With reference to the heritage listing and protection of the north-east Peninsula of Recherche Bay, Tasmania, and the Minister’s media release of 28 January 2005:

(1) Can the Minister provide a copy of the assurances given by the Tasmanian Government in relation to the protection of the north-east peninsula of Recherche Bay which led to the refusal of emergency listing.

(2) Can the Minister provide a schedule and copies of any other correspondence or communications between the Federal Government and the Tasmanian Government relating to the decision as to whether or not Recherche Bay should receive emergency listing.
(3) (a) What does ‘selective logging with a high retention of existing trees’ mean; (b) how many trees per hectare will be logged; (c) in what pattern; and (d) what level of disturbance will occur to other vegetation, soil and water.

(4) Can the Minister provide a table itemising: (a) the ‘potential National Heritage values’ so far identified for Recherche Bay; (b) each specific threat posed by logging (selective or otherwise); and (c) the way in which each threat is fully averted by the application of ‘protective measures’.

(5) In relation to the list of threats in (4) above, can the Minister include both direct damage, such as from destruction of native vegetation or sites of potential archaeological significance, and indirect damage such as from four-wheel drive access.

Senator Ian Campbell—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) The assurances given by the Tasmanian Government in relation to the protection of the north-east peninsula of Recherche Bay, on which I based my decision not to make an emergency listing, are described in my statement of reasons which is publicly available on my department’s internet site.

(2) The evidence or other material on which my findings were based is listed in the statement of reasons for my decision.

(3) The information available to me regarding logging is discussed in my statement of reasons, especially paragraphs 81 – 91.

(4) With regard to (a), the ‘potential National Heritage values’ are described in my statement of reasons. For (b) and (c), see answer to (3).

(5) See answer to (3).