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SITTING DAYS—2008

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RADIO BROADCASTS
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   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-SECOND 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 Hon. Alan Baird Ferguson
Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator John Joseph Hogg
Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. Stephen Michael Conroy
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator Hon. Joseph William Ludwig
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison

Senate Party Leaders and Whips
Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator Hon. Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator Hon. Stephen Michael Conroy
Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—Senator Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Leader of the Nationals—Senator Hon. Nigel Gregory Scullion
Deputy Leader of the Nationals—Senator Hon. Ronald Leslie Doyle Boswell
Leader of the Australian Democrats—Senator Lynette Fay Allison
Leader of the Australian Greens—Senator Robert James Brown
Leader of the Family First Party—Senator Steve Fielding

Government Whips—Senators Kerry Williams Kelso O’Brien, Ruth Stephanie Webber and Dana Wortley
Liberal Party of Australia Whips—Senators Stephen Parry and Judith Adams
The Nationals Whip—Senator Fiona Joy Nash
Australian Democrats Whip—Senator Andrew John Julian Bartlett
Australian Greens Whip—Senator Rachel Siewert
Family First Party Whip—Senator Steve Fielding

Printed by authority of the Senate
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(1) Chosen by the Parliament of Queensland to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Santo Santoro, resigned.
(2) Chosen by the Parliament of Victoria to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Richard Kenneth Robert Alston, resigned.
(3) Term expires at close of day next preceding the polling day for the general election of members of the House of Representatives.
(4) Chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy vice Susan Mary Mackay, resigned.
(5) Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Robert Murray Hill, resigned.
(6) Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy vice Jeannie Margaret Ferris, died in office.
(7) Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Amanda Eloise Vanstone, resigned.
(8) Chosen by the Parliament of Western Australia to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Ian Gordon Campbell, resigned.
(9) Chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Paul Henry Calvert, resigned.
(10) Chosen by the Parliament of Victoria to fill a casual vacancy vice Hon. Robert Francis Ray, resigned.

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

AD—Australian Democrats; AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CLP—Country Liberal Party; FF—Family First Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

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

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<td>Prime Minister</td>
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<td>Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for</td>
<td>Hon. Julia Gillard, MP</td>
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<td>Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon. Wayne Swan MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and Leader of the</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Chris Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State, Cabinet Secretary and Vice President of</td>
<td>Senator Hon. John Faulkner</td>
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<td>Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>Hon. Nicola Roxon MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous</td>
<td>Hon. Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Finance and Deregulation</td>
<td>Hon. Lindsay Tanner MP</td>
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<td>Hon. Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Government and Leader of the House</td>
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<td>Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy</td>
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<td>Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
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<td>Minister for Climate Change and Water</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Penny Wong</td>
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<td>Hon. Robert McClelland MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Human Services and Manager of Government in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig</td>
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<td>Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism</td>
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[The above ministers constitute the cabinet]
Rudd Ministry—continued

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<td>Minister for Home Affairs</td>
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<td>Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and</td>
<td>Hon. Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<td>Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Employment Participation</td>
<td>Hon. Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
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<td>Minister for Youth and Minister for Sport</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children’s Services</td>
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<td>and Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social</td>
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<tr>
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SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition
Hon. Brendan Nelson MP

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

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

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

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

Shadow Treasurer
Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP

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

Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
Hon. Andrew Robb MP

Shadow Minister for Trade
Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP

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

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

Shadow Minister for Human Services
Senator Hon. Helen Coonan

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

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

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

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

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

Shadow Attorney-General
Senator Hon. George Brandis

Shadow Minister for Resources and Energy and Shadow Minister for Tourism
Senator Hon. David Johnston

Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Water Security
Hon. John Cobb MP

[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]
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Tuesday, 13 May 2008

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. Alan Ferguson) took the chair at 12.30 pm and read prayers.

REPRESENTATION OF VICTORIA

The PRESIDENT (12.30 pm)—I inform the Senate that Senator Robert Ray resigned his place as a senator for the state of Victoria on 5 May 2008. Pursuant to the provisions of section 21 of the Constitution, the Governor of Victoria was notified of the vacancy in the representation of that state caused by the resignation. I table the letter of resignation and a copy of the letter to the Governor of Victoria.

I have received, through His Excellency the Governor-General, from the Governor of Victoria, a copy of the certificate of the choice by the houses of parliament of Victoria of Jacinta Mary Ann Collins to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Senator Robert Ray. I table the document.

SENATORS SWORN

Senator Jacinta Collins made and subscribed the oath of allegiance.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland—Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12.35 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the hours of meeting for Tuesday, 13 May 2008 be from 12.30 pm to 6.30 pm and 8 pm to adjournment, and for Thursday, 15 May 2008 be from 9.30 am to 6 pm and 8 pm to adjournment, and that:

(a) the routine of business from 8 pm on Tuesday, 13 May 2008 shall be:

(i) Budget statement and documents 2008-09, and

(ii) adjournment; and

(b) the routine of business from 8 pm on Thursday, 15 May 2008 shall be:

(i) Budget statement and documents—party leaders and independent senators to make responses to the statement and documents for not more than 30 minutes each, and

(ii) adjournment.

Question agreed to.

Rearrangement

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Leader of the Government in the Senate) (12.36 pm)—by leave—I move:

That senators may make statements relating to the retirement of Senator Ray, till not later than 2 pm.

Question agreed to.

SENATOR ROBERT RAY: RETIREMENT

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (12.36 pm)—Before I commence I would like to acknowledge the return of Senator Jacinta Collins. It is very good to see her back, and I congratulate her on her election to the Senate. Jacinta Collins was a senator for 10 years up until 2005, then took an extended long service leave break and has now returned. Jacinta was a frontbencher for the Labor Party in opposition and made a huge contribution to the Labor cause during her term. We look forward to her renewing that contribution. It is good to have her back, although I presume her boys are now too old to ride their tricycles around the corridors.

Senator Jacinta Collins interjecting—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I will have to explore that later. I want to make a few remarks about Senator Ray, who announced his retirement from the Senate a week or so ago. I do so knowing that he will hate it and that whatever I say will be held against me by him; nevertheless, I thought it was important that the Senate mark the retirement of Senator Ray after a 27-year career in federal
politics. I think that, after Senator Watson, he was the longest serving senator. Senator Watson still holds the title of ‘father of the Senate’ but Senator Ray served a very long time in this Senate. Robert Ray left slightly early and that is why Senator Collins was sworn in today. As always, Senator Ray left at a time of his own choosing, in control of the procedures and of his replacement’s selection. He had it all planned and organised. We are grateful that he ensured as always that the best interests of the Labor Party were served by ensuring that there was no loss of representation, even for a day, with the swearing in of Senator Collins.

Senator Ray indicated in retiring that the timing was driven by the fact that he wanted to be in government for one day more than he had served in opposition. I am assured that it bore no relationship to the Australian cricket side’s tour of the West Indies and that that was just a happy coincidence. But he was very pleased to have served one day more in government than in opposition.

I have to be very clear: this is not a condolence motion. Senator Ray is very much alive and kicking and, as I said, he will take this acknowledgement of his contribution very badly. It is fair to say, though, that Robert Ray was one of the most significant parliamentarians of his era—certainly one of the most significant senators—and I think he would be regarded inside the Labor Party as one of the most—if not the most—influential and important party figures of his era. Robert made a huge contribution not only as a minister and as a parliamentarian but also as a senior figure of the organisation of the Australian Labor Party. Robert was a minister in the Hawke and Keating Labor governments. He was Minister for Home Affairs and the Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport and Communications. From 1988 to 1990 he was Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs. He was very much a reforming immigration minister who sought to achieve a rules-based administration to provide certainty in decision making and to remove, as someone quoted, ‘the sleaze from immigration’. Robert was very principled about the way he approached his role and wanted to be assured that the administration of the immigration portfolio was principled, accountable, coherent and transparent. His approach is one that I very much intend to follow in my role now as Minister for Immigration and Citizenship because I think we have moved too far from the sorts of principles that he established when minister.

Senator Robert Ray was also well known for his role as defence minister from 1990 to 1996, where he was a very effective minister and is well remembered for extending and developing Australia’s role in regional cooperation, for working more closely with countries in our region to secure our defence needs and for building relationships that allowed us to ensure the security of Australia through better cooperation with our neighbouring countries.

Senator Robert Ray was also very committed to the parliament and to the Senate. He took the role of a parliamentarian very seriously. He was probably one of the best debaters in this parliament over a number of years. I know that a lot of opposition members would have suffered at his hands and would have realised how effective he was. He also made a huge contribution to the committee roles of the parliament. He chaired the Privileges Committee and other committees.

The thing that I most want to acknowledge with respect to Robert’s view about the parliament was his commitment to ensuring that the Labor Party took the same view to procedures and the role of the Senate whether in opposition or government. His
demand that we maintain our consistency in our attitude to our role and the role of the Senate was a defining feature of his contribution—that one should not take advantage of where the numbers were on any particular day, but one should have a consistent approach to the role of the Senate and the accountability functions that it serves. It might be a lesson that the current Liberal opposition learned at the last election—that taking advantage of one’s numbers in the Senate can bring about unintended consequences, as they found out with the industrial relations legislation and the community’s reaction to that. But in terms of the probity issues, the accountability functions, Robert Ray was very much committed to ensuring a consistent view—a view that allowed the parliament to do its job. In opposition he became famous for his role of holding the then Howard government to account in Senate estimates hearings. He put enormous effort into that and he and Senator Faulkner became famous, or notorious, as a tag team in those endeavours. He played a really important role in ensuring the Howard government was held to account during its long period in office.

What is not widely understood is the role that Robert Ray played in opposition inside the Labor Party. Robert stood down from the frontbench when we lost, and people would often suggest that maybe he ought to have retired because he was no longer serving on the frontbench. But Robert was actually a key contributor to the Labor Party’s performance in opposition. He was central to maintaining our effectiveness and keeping us competitive at the elections through the Howard government era, and he made an enormous contribution to the role of the party and its role in the Senate. He served on the tactics committee of the Labor opposition for a number of years, continued his role in estimates and continued his role inside the party. He played a huge role in mentoring new Labor senators, providing advice and supporting the leadership of the parliamentary Labor Party. I know that Senator Faulkner relied on his advice and support a great deal when he was leader, as I have subsequently.

I will not try to cover all of Robert’s career or all the issues. A lot has been said in the press about his hard-man image, and I want to make it clear that that is not undeserved in terms of his activity inside the Labor Party. Robert took a keen interest in internal party matters and he did play the game hard, but he always played it in an honourable and principled way. If Robert Ray said he was coming after you, he was, and he would get you. You could rely on all aspects of that commitment. He is an unusual character in that he is probably feared on both sides of politics, but the other side of him is not broadly understood. He brought a very keen intellect to politics, a very principled approach to issues, and I found him very honourable and straightforward to deal with.

__Senator Patterson interjecting__—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—As Senator Patterson interjected, there is a softer side to Senator Ray. For instance, when one of our senators was hospitalised in Melbourne—not her home state—he made considerable efforts to support her while she was in hospital. He visited regularly and provided real support to her during her illness while she was away from home. So there is another side to Senator Ray. He will hate me mentioning this, but I think people do have to understand that he is a much more rounded character than is presented in the press.

One cannot do justice to a career in the short time allowed other than to record the appreciation of the Labor Party, the Rudd Labor government and all senators for the contribution that Robert Ray made to the...
Senate and to politics in this country. This is not a condolence motion; he is very much alive and kicking and I am sure he will continue to contribute by providing advice and support to the Labor Party and the Labor leadership.

I would also like to mention the role that Koula Alexiadis has played in supporting Robert in his office. She is actually staying on with the Labor government, which is great to know. Obviously she has been well known as a key support for Robert during his career, as has his family. I want to place on record my personal appreciation for the contribution Senator Ray has made to the parliament and to the Labor Party. No doubt we will get an opportunity in coming months in a less formal setting to properly acknowledge his role in Australian politics over the last 30 years.

 Senator MINCHIN (South Australia) (12.48 pm)—I rise to support Senator Evans’s motion. First, I join Senator Evans in welcoming Senator Jacinta Collins back to this chamber. It is good to have you back, Senator Collins. Those of us of a socially conservative disposition are particularly welcoming of your presence here.

On behalf of the federal coalition senators, I want to record our congratulations to former Senator Robert Ray on a magnificent career in the Senate. As Senator Evans said, 27 years is a very long time to spend in this chamber. It is half of my life currently, and it is almost half of Robert’s. As Senator Evans said, of current senators, Senator Watson is the only one who has served a longer term and, regrettably, we are also losing Senator Watson in six weeks time.

Obviously, Robert gained an extraordinary wealth of knowledge and experience during his long service in the Senate and therefore his retirement represents a huge loss to this chamber, and one that is felt across the chamber. He was a great asset to our political opponents, the Australian Labor Party. As Senator Evans said, he is obviously a real party man and not someone who was just on the coat-tails of a political party as a way of getting his bottom on a Senate seat. Robert was and remains, I am sure, a very loyal, dedicated servant of his political cause, and for that we respect him.

Senator Ray was, in his Senate career, respected and admired across the political spectrum, and most particularly on our side. He was, as has been said, feared on his own side, but we regarded him as a formidable political opponent. As a minister for some 10 years in the former government, I actually looked forward to my clashes with Senator Ray in Senate estimates. I knew I had a day in which the adrenaline would run, I would be stimulated and there would be no risk of falling asleep. I am not sure that all my former ministerial colleagues looked forward to their clashes with Senator Ray quite as much, but we certainly knew we had to be on our toes to face Senator Ray at Senate estimates. I think he has shown all of us the way in which Senate estimates can be used properly and effectively. One thing I did respect about him in relation to Senate estimates was that, unlike some of his Labor colleagues, he had great respect for and showed civility towards public servants. The thing I did dislike as a minister was that—rarely, fortunately, but occasionally—some senators were quite intemperate with public servants. Robert was never guilty of that and treated all public servants with the respect which I think is a model for the rest of us.

As Senator Evans said, while Robert was a formidable politician, he was a man of integrity. You did know that, with Robert, his word was his bond. I certainly experienced that. Tony Harris, the former New South Wales Auditor-General, noted in the Finan-
cial Review today in referring to former Senator Ray:

... those who have worked closely with him commend him for his impeccable, principled and ethical behaviour.

I would certainly second that reference to, and acknowledgement of, his character. As Senator Evans said, he had a very distinguished ministerial career. We regarded him, and continue to regard him, as one of the real strengths of the Hawke and Keating governments. We readily acknowledge that the Hawke and Keating governments, while weak in some areas, certainly did happen to assemble quite a formidable array of Senate ministers. Indeed, we will be referring in due course this afternoon to another great Labor Senate minister. Unfortunately, in that context it will be a condolence. I refer of course to John Button. Fortunately, Robert Ray, I am sure, has many healthy years ahead of him. He was one of the real strengths of the former Hawke and Keating governments.

Knowing Robert a little, it is not surprising to me that he has chosen to leave in the manner that he has, without any fuss or fanfare. Not for him the long, drawn-out departure but up and off. I hope he really enjoys the West Indies tour.

Senator Faulkner—He certainly enjoyed the last one.

Senator MINCHIN—Tell us more! We are all ears, Senator Faulkner. On a more serious note, I note his parting message to the Labor Party, which I think applies across the board. I particularly note his message to the Labor Party about the importance of widening the ALP gene pool beyond union and party officials. I say as a former party official that party officials are a very important part of the political process and all parties should have a quota of party officials—

Senator Chris Evans—Those who do not have access to blog sites.
of July this year—a period of three years—half the Senate will have changed over. There is the unique instance of Senator Jacinta Collins, whom I welcome back to the chamber; she is the only one returning. We have had a changeover of basically half the Senate in the space of three years. An enormous amount of corporate knowledge will be lost—some of it deeper than others, I readily admit, but it is quite a lot over a long period of time.

In that intervening three years we had a period that was unusual, where the government of the day controlled the Senate. A loss of corporate knowledge of what things were like prior to that period could be problematic. If there was anyone who had corporate knowledge in enormous amounts it was Senator Ray—with the possible exception of Senator Faulkner, who we do still have here for the time being. I think that wider point needs to be made. We saw that repeatedly, particularly in debates about procedure and proposals with regard to sitting hours, committee inquiries or make-up or length of time to report—all of those sorts of issues. You would get the usual convenient spin of the day from the government minister and sometimes also from the opposition spokesperson, putting the political points. Senator Ray invariably would come in and cut straight to the chase and talk about the simple facts of the history of the matter. He would be quite open in acknowledging, where it was relevant, any failings or the short-term political advantage that his own side perhaps sought to gain at particular times. He would simply tell it like it was. That is important.

I think I have read that it was said about Senator Ray—and it certainly sounds accurate to me—that he was somebody who, if he was going to use the strength of numbers to shaft you, would not put a lot of pretty justifications around it. He would simply say, ‘We’ve got it and we’re going to do it and that is that.’ Putting things as they are, without trying to put a veneer of spin and rubbish over the top, is a very valuable attribute, not just because it saves a lot of us a lot of frustration and a lot of time, frankly, but also because it means that you are making decisions on the basis of a much more honest and intellectually robust set of facts. That is something that we need to strive for much more often than we do.

I saw a quote from Senator Ray in the last week or so, in one of those pieces where his retirement was announced, where he spoke about the fact that he was quite a strong supporter of the notion of adversarial politics. He said that, even though it could occasionally be quite brutal, it was a far better way of getting results from your political system. I am not totally convinced about that, but I do think he was a good example of how, even though adversarial politics is often portrayed in a negative way, you could be a practitioner of adversarial politics without being a liar and without being a perpetually offensive, obnoxious person out to win through smear and that sort of thing. He could certainly be very aggressive and accusatory when he felt like it, but the comments that others of us have already made I would very much concur with. He is someone with significant integrity with regard to his word. He would be straight up and would not beat around the bush in what he was putting forward. His is a clear example that you can have an adversarial approach that is still quite honest, frank and up-front and achieves results.

In this context there was one example where he repeatedly made a number of allegations with regard to the operations of the Democrats in Victoria which, whilst I could understand why he might have had suspicions, were ill-founded, and I think it would have been much more desirable if he had not kept making those allegations. Even though I believe he was occasionally unfair in some
of his accusations against other people, he nonetheless was very up-front about them and at least you could tackle the allegation head-on and put your version of the story on the record.

I think his contribution in policy areas also needs to be acknowledged. I did not necessarily agree with his policy approach in a lot of areas, particularly in defence and security areas, but he would be much more clear-cut about the reasoning behind the decisions he took. He resorted much less to just rhetorical flourish or setting up straw men or shooting the messenger; he was much more intellectually honest. In the approach he put forward he would often simply acknowledge that there was an alternative view and simply say that he did not agree with it and thought it was wrong. I think that is a much better approach than simply seeing if you can win debates by either attacking each other’s credibility or putting forward a lot of dishonest and misleading spin. So I think the general approach that he took was an honest one, particularly with regard to the use of guillotines and the like, about whether or not to send things to various committees and about trying to be fair in respect of giving meaningful participation to people across all sides in this chamber, taking into account the different size of our makeup and political support.

Frankly, he was quite often very blunt in putting forward the need for a balanced approach to question time and the structure of committees and would take an approach that was not in the short-term self-interest of his own side. The reason for that was not that he was being nice and sweet and cuddly—which I do not think is a phrase anybody would use with regard to him—but because he was thinking of the long term. He knew that any time you used the short-term advantage you had to stick it to somebody else, some time down the track the wheel would turn and you would be just as likely—more likely—to cop it back in the neck yourself if you did things that were blatantly unfair. So that long-term view of being up-front but fair about how you go about things is something that I thought was very consistent with regard to his approach.

I also want to indicate and acknowledge his contribution in the area of immigration, which is a particular area of interest of mine, and the attempt that he made, with some very major reforms to the Migration Act, to make it more transparent. Regardless of your views about desirable policy approaches to immigration, making it more transparent is something that is very important. It is unfortunate that things have degraded again so badly since that time.

As well as a significant intellect, he is also someone with a very significant sense of humour. That is also something we could do with more of in this chamber and political debate in general. My colleague Senator Stott Despoja remembers being labelled as Princess Leia in debate in this chamber—in combat with another senator known as Jabba the Hutt. Beneath that reputation of a ferocious hard man—from all reports quite a deserved reputation—there was nonetheless a real humanness and I think that side of things needs to be brought out and acknowledged as well.

I pay tribute to the solid work and the very strong legacy of Senator Ray. Serving a long time in this chamber does not necessarily equate to making a strong contribution in this chamber. Without being churlish, I could think of others who have served for very long periods of time but whose contributions, frankly, have not been particularly noteworthy. Senator Ray certainly stands out as one of those whose contribution is a very significant one—a historically significant one from
the context of the Senate itself, over and above whatever his contribution may have been both as a minister and within the Labor Party. Others are more qualified than I to comment on this.

The President (1.05 pm)—It is a mark of the respect in which Robert Ray was held in this Senate that practically everybody who speaks to this debate will have almost the same notes down as to what was his contribution to this place. I think of Senator Minchin, who said, ‘He left without fanfare.’ That is true and that was Robert Ray’s style. I distinctly remember, when I first came to this place, former Senator Brian Archer saying to me one night, ‘I won’t be here in the morning,’—and I knew he was not contemplating suicide—and I asked why. He said: ‘I am retiring and people can judge me on what I have done. I have no wish to make a valedictory speech.’ Probably former Senator Robert Ray is of the same ilk—he will be judged for his contributions in this chamber because of what he did and said in this place, not because of any particular speech he might make at the end of his career.

We have heard phrases like ‘the loss of corporate knowledge’ used in relation to Robert Ray’s retirement. We will certainly miss his wise counsel. Strange as it may seem, I think people on the coalition side of politics will miss Robert Ray just as much as those on the government side of politics, because he was a person whose advice was often sought. He had the knowledge of what had happened before. He managed to make sure that he was on the committees that actually dealt with the institution of the Senate. Robert Ray had a genuine concern for the institution of parliament, and particularly the institution of the Senate. That is why we saw Robert Ray serving on the Senate Standing Committee on Procedure for so many years and why we saw him serving on the Senate Standing Committee of Privileges. He had dealings with all of the committees which dealt with the running of this place and maintained the conventions and procedures of this place that were so important to him—but he was not afraid to make changes where he thought change was necessary. I will certainly miss him. I know that many people in the Senate will miss Robert Ray’s contribution to this place, to the running of the Senate and to making sure that the Senate as an institution in the future is an institution which we can all be proud of.

I, along with Senator Faulkner, served with Senator Ray on the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security. Of all the committees that I have served on in my time here, I enjoyed that committee almost as much as any because it comprised of people who had been in this place for a long time and because, in most instances, partisan politics was almost put to one side. It was a committee that worked together with the knowledge of what had gone on in the past. Of course, having been a minister of defence and having dealt with security organisations, Robert Ray’s knowledge was absolutely imperative to that committee. I know that he will be sorely missed on that committee, which has had an almost complete change of personnel from 12 months ago.

I listened while Senator Evans said that opposition senators may have suffered because of Senator Ray’s debating skills and the speeches he made in this place. That is true, but I can say that one of his former colleagues suffered much more than any of us on the coalition side of politics. There is one particular thing I would note about Senator Ray’s time in this place, and that is that, if you were in your office or close by and he stood to speak, you always stopped and listened. A number of people can be speaking in the chamber and I can continue quite comfortably with whatever I am doing but, in the case of Robert Ray, I always stopped and
listened because he only spoke when he thought it was absolutely necessary. He did not speak just for the sake of making some statements in the *Hansard*. He will be remembered for that.

I, like many others, am well aware of Senator Ray’s great love of cricket and of Collingwood. I think that he is likely to have more success with cricket than with Collingwood. Senator Ray will now have the opportunity, in retirement from the Senate, to pursue other interests, which I am sure he will. I am sure that his concern and love for the Labor Party will continue—but maybe he will express those in a different role. He will have time to spend on those pastimes which, for him, are great loves. He was a good companion to speak to about things. His knowledge of cricket and of football, in particular, meant that he was genuinely good company in whatever place you found the time to talk to him.

I want to pass on my respects to Robert in his retirement. The contribution that he has made to this place is an enormous one. He will be sorely missed. You cannot say that about every senator that leaves this place, because they will not all leave the impact on this chamber that Robert Ray has left. He is one who will be missed, and I certainly wish him well in his retirement.

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales—Special Minister of State and Cabinet Secretary) (1.11 pm)—I have been fortunate to serve in the Senate with Robert Ray for some 19 years. When I became a senator, Robert had already been in parliament for eight years, and a minister for two of them. He was an exceptionally capable minister, and whether in agreement or disagreement with him, members of cabinet and caucus respected his judgement and knew that his opinions and decisions were scrupulously determined by his understanding of the national interest.

I want to talk most particularly today about the years after Labor was no longer in government. Many former ministers find they cannot face time on the back bench after an election defeat. With 15 years in parliament behind him, his reputation ensured and his future secure, Robert Ray could easily have chosen to be one of those. But, just as his decision to join the Australian Labor Party and to become involved in politics was never motivated by the idea of personal gain, his decision after Labor was defeated in 1996 was not motivated by the pursuit of personal comfort.

Robert stayed on. He did not want the limelight. He did not seek a position on Labor’s front bench, which would have been his for the asking—the leadership in this place would have been his for the asking. Instead, steadily and doggedly, he set about using the mechanisms of the Senate, most particularly the Senate’s committee system, to hold the government accountable, to expose waste and mismanagement and to attack rorting and, where necessary, rorters. The role suited him well. Robert has a justly deserved reputation as a factional number cruncher. But, contrary to the picture that some like to paint of factional players being willing to do whatever it takes, Robert Ray is scrupulously honest and scrupulous in his adherence to the principle of putting the party first. He has a reputation as an honest broker—a reputation also justly deserved.

Robert’s disdain for those who were purely self-interested, and his contempt for anyone who saw the public service of parliament as an opportunity for self-enrichment, found its most apposite target in the former Senator Mal Colston. Not only was Colston a rorter; he was a rat. Parlia-
mentary invective is often measured against the standards set by Paul Keating. Robert’s memorable characterisation of Colston as ‘the quisling Quasimodo from Queensland’ raised the bar even higher. Robert’s quick wit and way with words made him a gallery favourite—such as when he referred to Bronwyn Bishop not as ‘the Minister for Aged Care’ but as ‘the Minister for Caged Hair’. But the pointed jokes had a very serious purpose. For example, when Senator Minchin attempted to justify $8,000 for a prime ministerial wine consultant by referring to Australia’s wine export industry, Robert wittily pointed out that fish had overtaken wine as an export industry and said:

We do not have a fish consultant that I know of. It is true to say that Robert Ray has been known throughout his career as one of Labor’s toughest figures. He is tough, but I can say that I saw him hurt. Every day the coalition was in government hurt him. While it galled him to see the coalition in government, it incensed him to see the coalition—or, for that matter, anyone—governing badly. So he applied his considerable intelligence and determination to transforming the Senate committee system into an instrument of penetrating investigation. For example, in 2000, it was a Senate estimates committee with Robert Ray as chief inquisitor—and I was junior counsel in that episode—that forced the Howard government to admit that the plan to use the electoral roll to send a personally addressed letter from John Howard to every voter on the roll was illegal. The plan was stopped; the letter was pulped.

So closely did Robert become associated with the estimates committees and their most telling exposes of poor governance that on several occasions when I was quoted but it was in fact Senator Ray who had been responsible for the pearls of wisdom.

Over the years that I have worked with Robert I have also benefited from the support of his staff in this place. All of his loyal and hardworking staff members have done great service not only to Robert but to Robert’s colleagues and to the Australian Labor Party. In particular, Koula Alexiadis, who worked with Robert from the early days of his parliamentary career, has been an absolute mainstay of our parliamentary operation here in Canberra. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge her contribution and thank her for it.

As my leader, Senator Evans, said, I am sure Robert Ray would probably prefer that these speeches were not being made today. But, as they are being made, I am sure he is very pleased that he is no longer a senator and thus under no obligation at all to listen to what any of us have to say. Robert Ray was in this parliament for 27 years. He managed to make sure that Labor was in government for the majority of that time—if only by two days. If anyone deserves to choose the timing and manner of their departure from the Senate it is Robert Ray. His contribution has been tremendous. I said publicly at the time of his retirement that I think he is simply irreplaceable in this chamber. We will miss him. I will certainly miss him. I think I can say that we all wish Robert and his wife, Jane, well as they enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

Senator PATTERSON (Victoria) (1.20 pm)—I rise to support the motion put forward by Senator Evans. It is ‘not quite cricket’ that Robert is not here to hear what we have to say, but that was his style. I was not surprised when I woke to hear the news that he had decided to leave and not wait around with the rest of us who will be leav-
Robert was seen as the hard man of politics, and I know that many ministers were in fear and trepidation when he used to appear at estimates. But he was also a fair parliamentarian. There are not many people who can blend the requirement in this place to be a tough politician and a fair parliamentarian. Some people go too far on the side of the tough politician. But, as some people have said today, in his role as a parliamentarian and on the procedures and privileges committees, Robert respected this place. He did not have regard for people who did not respect the Senate. He railed against hypocrisy, he railed against hubris and he railed against people who abused the system. Anybody who abused the system, either by having their snouts in the trough or by misusing the system, rightly attracted the ire of Robert Ray.

As was said earlier by Senator Evans, Robert Ray might have been the hard man of politics and he might have played it hard, but he also played it fair. I remember when my mother was terminally ill. I drove to Tuross Head, where she lived, to look after her for a weekend. It was one of those middle weekends. My mother became acutely ill and I could not get back. At that stage I had two Comcars: one in my home state and one which I had for the weekend. Then senator Sue Knowles contacted the responsible minister to see if there was a way that we could overcome this, and got no joy at all. She went to Robert and he organised for the car in Melbourne to be put back into the pool and the car in Tuross became my Commonwealth car until my mother died. On the day my secretary drove the car from Melbourne up to Tuross, I signed a statutory declaration to say that the car in Tuross would not be used. This was all orchestrated by Robert Ray to ensure that I was not in breach of my entitlements by having two cars. Robert went out of his way to do that and I never forgot it.

Robert’s guiding principle was trust. It is something I remembered when I was in government and a minister. He always used to say this when I thanked him profusely for what he had done to get me out of the situation, because I was in a bit of a pickle and the then minister did not seem to be of a mind to assist me. During estimates one day he asked a question as to whether I had done something and I said no. He did not persist because he knew that he could trust my word. I trusted Robert as well and I think somebody else has talked about that today. If Robert made an agreement, then he would stand by it.

The other advice Robert gave when he was in government was, ‘One day you will be in opposition.’ It is the best piece of advice anybody in government can take because sometimes something you think is very smart does not look so good from opposition. He also used to have the quid pro pro view that what is good in opposition is also good for the new opposition. I remember that we did not let parliamentary secretaries answer questions. Robert made us sit in estimates committees as ministers for hours on end because we could not have a parliamentary secretary. He made us wait for as long as we had made the Labor Party wait. As I said, what was good for the goose was good for the gander, both in opposition and in government. I think it is a lesson we should all remember and learn from.

I saw Robert as a tough politician but a very fair parliamentarian. As I said, when I was in a bit of strife, he found a legitimate way out of that for me as a government minister. He took the time to help me and I will never forget that. He also gave me some advice when the planes ran late on a Friday. Everybody ran around like chooks with their heads cut off, saying, ‘I’m late for a meeting. I’m late for a meeting.’ He used to say, ‘Kay, it’s better to say you can’t come than to get
there late.’ He said, ‘If you’re not at this function, I won’t be there either so we’ll pair each other off.’ That was his advice to me when we used to sit till late on Friday nights.

I have respected Robert as a person on the other side and I also respect him as an individual and a human being. He showed his humanity in the situation that I was stuck in. I want to wish him and Jane all the best for the future. I am sure it will be full of lots of films, cricket and football, and I am sure he will find a niche for himself as well in doing something in the community. I am sorry I cannot say this to Robert firsthand, but hopefully he might have time at some later stage to actually read the Hansard, if he can be bothered, and know that he was respected on both sides of this house. His going is a great loss in lots of ways to the process of this Senate and the process of parliament.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Forshaw)—Senator Collins, congratulations on your election and your appointment.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (1.27 pm)—This is not my second first speech but I could not miss the opportunity, probably unwanted by Robert Ray, to add a few comments of acknowledgement of his distinguished service as a fellow Victorian Labor senator. I would first like to thank Senator Evans and others for their comments of welcome to me this afternoon. I, like other senators, over the last several days have reflected on much of the commentary on Robert’s contribution and the accurate descriptions of him as a factional operative and back room heavy, or on his being one of Labor’s most effective or aggressive parliamentary performers. I noted that certainly his style has been very direct, strong and, I would say, ‘assertive’ rather than ‘aggressive’, and I think some of the comments from other senators here today have reflected on that. Robert would be strong, direct and assertive but not aggressive in a way which compromised public servants in estimates and not aggressive in a way which unfairly compromised the position of an adversary. When we say ‘aggressive’ I think often people mean ‘strong’, and certainly Robert was that. As has been noted, his style was such that he would avoid undesired attention but certainly when he wanted attention, he would get it.

There is another aspect, one which Senator Evans touched on, which I would like to acknowledge today. Robert also performed a pastoral role but without the religious connotations. I could not think of other words that described pastoral interest or care for others without those connotations. His support and guidance was important when I first arrived in this place as the only female Labor representative from Victoria. I was impressed that, whilst Robert was a highly effective Minister for Defence, he could also anticipate the needs—and I stress ‘anticipate the needs’—of a new senator and her new baby. More broadly, his role in building and maintaining party cohesion and discipline has been critical—and I highlight ‘critical’—in Labor achieving government at both state and federal levels. There are many stories about him, some of them touched on today and some that will never see the public record, but I believe this aspect of Robert’s work should be acknowledged.

As Senator Faulkner highlighted, Robert’s staff of many years—in particular Koula Alexiadis—have made a significant contribution. They were a key part of Robert’s influence and support. This influence and support will be greatly missed here, but I am sure it will continue within the Labor Party. I conclude these brief remarks by wishing Robert and Jane all the very best in the future.
Senator FIELDING (Victoria—Leader of the Family First Party) (1.30 pm)—On behalf of Family First, I would like to wish Senator Robert Ray well in his retirement and also welcome Jacinta Collins back to the Senate. Twenty-seven years in parliament is no mean feat. I do not have stories of funny interactions with Robert Ray, but I do remember fondly the Australian Financial Review giving me some advice. It was at a time that I was throwing up my hands at Senate estimates and saying I thought Senate estimates was a place to find out what departments were actually doing with their budgets, where their work was going, what the issues were and what they were up to. They quickly told me that there were no simple questions and no simple answers and that in actual fact I should take a leaf out of Senator Ray’s book and look at the work that he had been doing in Senate estimates for many years. So I think that is to his credit, as is his work around the chamber and in estimates. As Senator Collins was saying, his assertiveness and the way he went about his business were certainly a credit to him, his party and also all Australians, because he held the Senate in such high regard as a place to make sure that the government of the day was held to account. I want to say to Robert Ray that his was certainly a real example to show how to be a senator serious about getting to the bottom of issues and that I wish him well in his retirement.

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (1.32 pm)—I will firstly take this opportunity to congratulate Senator Jacinta Collins on her return to the chamber. Senator Robert Ray was a proud defender of the great Labor traditions. He served his party professionally for the better part of 42 years. In this chamber we all carry private images of ourselves which do not always bear a close relationship to reality. In my mind’s eye, I am a man with a 90-centimetre waistline. In Robert Ray’s mind’s eye, he was a noble and chivalrous contestant. In some media circles his hands were unsoiled by the grubby stuff of base factional politics.

Robert Ray, as I think all would agree, was a great senator, a great colleague and a great Labor man. He was also a man who loved a political stoush, and I think it is equally fair to say that he was more than accomplished in the dark arts. It would be a bit of a stretch to say that Robert Ray and I were soul mates, but we did have a surprising amount in common. We both started our professional lives as teachers in Victorian technical schools, and we both set out to make a difference in the Australian Labor Party from a pretty fragile base. We were not lawyers and we were not union officials. We started working in our professional lives in unashionable schools—he at Baxter tech and I at Glenroy. We found ourselves in different camps of the Victoria branch of the Labor Party, yet we were able to establish a very good working relationship based mostly on mutual respect and occasionally on mutual forgiveness.

Robert was misjudged when he arrived in this place and the superficiality of the press analysis of politics was quickly revealed. He was pigeonholed as a factional operator. He was sometimes seen as a bovver boy with no real interest in policy or ideas. In fact, he was a very well-rounded politician. It was no surprise that he was so successful as a minister. In my judgement the training ground of internal party politics in the Labor Party—and I am sure this applies more widely than just to the Labor Party—can be a very good training ground for politicians. In fact, there are not too many others that are available, especially for those that do not have access to the great institutional connections. Anyone who can survive and thrive in the political boiler room of the Victorian branch of the
Labor Party is likely to have a great deal of determination and a thick hide—a hide, I might say, supplemented by a substantial layer of scar tissue.

Whatever Robert Ray’s detractors might have thought, he was a substantial thinker. He had a deep interest in policy issues and in the strategic directions of the labour movement. Robert Ray himself sometimes played up the bovver boy image and played down his interest in policy. He used that often to distinguish himself from some of my colleagues, but I do not think he fooled all that many. It was a surprise to me, however, that an ex-schoolteacher could take so little interest in education. Whatever Robert Ray did in terms of training his intellect on policy questions, you could always count on his thoughtfulness and his imaginative responses.

His enthusiasm for the defence portfolio struck me as heartfelt and genuine and was actually quite inspirational. He is forthright, even brusque. As he said himself, he would never make a good diplomat because he saw them as professional crawlers, which gives the lie to the story that appeared earlier this year that he had accepted a diplomatic posting. I always found him to be courteous and professional in his dealings. Despite the fact that we might have disagreements, he never personalised things, at least not to me and not face-to-face.

Robert Ray had considerable courage in his political professional career and he was always prepared to face down those whom he thought he needed to, even if they were in the highest of offices, including the office of the Prime Minister. In fact, he was ready to face down anybody who opposed him when he thought the need arose. My colleague Senator Conroy and I in recent times have been described by him as ‘factional Daleks’ whose intention was apparently to exterminate in the best of Doctor Who traditions. I did receive an emissary on this issue, and it was pointed out to me that in fact I was collateral damage in that arrangement. I think Robert Ray made the point himself. We have been forgiving each other for many years. In recent years Robert Ray has in fact withdrawn from factional politics and he has become quite a critic of aspects of the ALP factional system. He has always remained a consummate numbers man. He remained a person who had a very deep understanding of the fact that political numeracy was not just a question of being able to add up columns of names—that it was more a branch of the behavioural sciences, and a good numbers person was one who could actually understand what people thought and why. It is often misunderstood what function that has within political organisations.

He was a pleasure to work with and, in his time here in the Senate, I have found him to be a great mentor to Labor senators. I do not think I would be the only one to say that he offered advice which was considerate and incisive. He was a plain dealer and a man of integrity. As long as he practised it he gave factionalism, in my judgement, a good name. He gave Labor a good name. He gave politics a good name. I wish him well in his retirement and I trust that his life at home with Jane will be rewarding.

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (1.40 pm)—I would like to associate myself and my National Party colleagues with the remarks of many people in the chamber today about Robert Ray. He has long been the father of the chamber and, with the influx of new senators, I probably knew him for longer than almost anyone here. I suppose if you could describe Robert Ray you would say he was a hard man. He played it very tough and he played it hard but he played it fair. He was an inspiration to many people and certainly he would have been an inspira-
tion to the Labor Party. When I came here, there were people like John Button, who we will honour later today, and Peter Walsh and quite a number of hard-hitting members of parliament who were not from the ranks of the unions or the Labor Party but who did have a wide coverage—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Troeth)—Senator Boswell, I do not like to interrupt your speech, but it would aid us in hearing your speech if you could move to your seat so that you are speaking into the right microphone.

Senator BOSWELL—I apologise, Madam Acting Deputy President. As I was saying, Robert Ray was an inspiration to the Labor Party and he held it together through some pretty difficult times. When I came here, Robert Ray was a member of a government that had some pretty strong people in it—Senator Button, who we will honour this afternoon, Peter Walsh and a number of other people. He sat there for a number of years—a very small number of years—on the backbench but eventually he was made Minister for Defence, a portfolio that he very strongly enjoyed and took a great deal of interest in. He was a man of humour and he was a man of honesty. He was a very hard player. We got involved in his accusations that I had eight telephones. It was quite untrue; I had one telephone. I went wrong by not mentioning that the Leader of the Opposition at that time had 55 telephones. I tried to quieten it down, and he went on the attack. That was a mistake on my part.

He is going to cast a big shadow over those who come after him. You do not get players like Robert Ray coming into this place now. He must have held the Labor Party together in Victoria, just as he played a very significant role in the Senate for the Labor Party.

Could I take the opportunity to welcome back Jacinta Collins. Jacinta, we missed you very badly in some of the debates on more social conservative issues that we had over the last three years when you were missing. We look forward to your contribution again on some of those issues, which will no doubt come forward.

I would like to wish Robert Ray a great retirement. He has retired on top of his game. He is probably the last hard man of the Hawke-Keating years left. He leaves us, and we pay our respects to him. In closing, if I were to describe him I would say: Robert, it was a fair bump, but play on.

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (1.44 pm)—I would like to make a few short comments about Senator Robert Ray and the time that I knew him in the Senate. Senator Ray was obviously a very distinguished Labor Party senator who made a very major contribution to the Senate over the years that he was here. As Senator Boswell said, he was a former minister who, I gather, was a very good defence minister. That was prior to my arrival in the Senate in 1996. My dealings with Senator Robert Ray were very largely in committees—I served on two committees with him: the Senate Standing Committee of Privileges and the Senate Standing Committee on Procedure. Of course, he was a frequent visitor to estimates committees that I chaired.

I was always impressed by Robert Ray’s intelligence when dealing with issues. In the privileges and procedure committees I found he could cut to the core of an issue very quickly, and he understood the broad principles. I found that, after Robert Ray had spoken on some issue in either the privileges or the procedure committee, that tended to end the debate because his comments encapsulated the core of the issue under discussion and usually provided the correct solution to
the issue or the problem. He certainly was an extraordinarily adept committee man. He understood the procedural rules of the Senate very well and I often thought his suggestions on Senate procedure were very good.

In estimates Robert Ray used to work with Senator John Faulkner. The two worked as a team, like forensic barristers cutting down to the core of an issue. I must say that, as chair of a Senate estimates committee, when these two walked into the room I always knew that the hearings that followed would be interesting because, as I said, they worked together like forensic barristers, opening up with very wide questions and narrowing down all the time to ever more focused questions. That was a skill which I admired, and Robert Ray was a very exceptional senator in the way he handled those estimates inquiries. Of course, I know nothing of Robert Ray’s role in the ALP but I simply wish to put on record my respect for him as a great committee man and somebody who respected the institution of the Senate. I wish him well in his retirement.

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (1.47 pm)—Before joining this debate I also want to welcome Senator Jacinta Collins back to the Senate. I am sure she will fit in very quickly where she left off a few years ago.

Robert Ray and I have some things in common—not a lot, but some things. We are both Victorian senators. I have not spent anywhere nearly as long in the chamber as Senator Ray—former Senator Ray as of today—but I, like everybody else who has spoken here today, admire him enormously for his great skills, his intellect and his contribution to the Senate. Thank you, Senator Carr, for pointing out that he was a technical school teacher. I did not know that, so I have that in common with him also—as well as our age, which I understand to be the same. He will be missed in this place, there is no question about it. He was an erudite, very articulate man and he was also very funny. A lot of people in the rest of the chamber would not have been able to enjoy some of the comments he yelled across the chamber at the government back before Labor came to office, but it kept those of us on the cross-bench amused on numerous occasions. Senator Abetz, I am afraid, came in for much of this banter. It is true that, when he spoke, we listened because he did not waste words. He did not get up for no reason at all. When he had something to say, everybody knew that it was going to be important and so we did exactly that: listen.

I must say that since I have been here I have not felt a great closeness with Robert Ray in political terms. I do not know that he had a lot of time for the Australian Democrats. He certainly targeted me on occasions, suggesting that because my office was in the same building as the party’s that there must be some skulduggery going on. But it was done in an open way, and I think he accepted my arguments as to why he was wrong and he desisted in that effort. He was clearly a very tough and a very principled man. He did not suffer fools gladly and he expected a high level of engagement in this chamber, just as he gave. It does not surprise me that he would be a good mentor to new senators in this place. He was deeply loyal to the Australian Labor Party—no-one has suggested otherwise and I have no reason to think that would not be the case. It was pretty obvious from the way he spoke that the Labor Party is deeply important to him and that he was at all times interested in its wellbeing and in its being in office.

He was an interesting man to observe whether it was in committee work or in estimates, which is where I spent most time observing him. As others have said, when the duo of Senator Faulkner and Senator Ray
came into the room you would know that there was an issue being pursued. It might have been trivial—it might have been the Prime Minister’s couch or it might have been something more significant than that—but there was always a story in it. There was always something in the media that would follow that was of great interest to people.

To some extent, I think it is a pity that Robert Ray did not do more media work. He used to come in downstairs to avoid the media doorstop interviews out the front and I think that is a pity. I think that as a commentator he was insightful and, as others said earlier, cut to the core on so many issues. It is also probably characteristic that he is not here today to listen to us speak about him. It is probably not something that he would have enjoyed. He struck me as not being a very sentimental individual. As I said, he was tough and not someone who would necessarily indulge in the sentimentality that necessarily comes at the end of a 27-year career in politics.

I hope that he pursues whatever he wishes to. It does not surprise me at all that he would not wish to be in the diplomatic corps or get a plum posting somewhere. He will do what takes his interest rather than do what might be expected of him. I hope he is successful in that and that his retirement is enjoyable for him.

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (1.53 pm)—I am grateful for this opportunity to say a few words about Senator Robert Ray. I was elected in 1996 when Labor lost office, so my first experience of working with him was in the early days of opposition. It was a particularly challenging time for many of my colleagues but, as a new senator at that time, I can say it was quite an extraordinary and exciting time, albeit a tough political environment. My early recollections of Senator Robert Ray were on the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration during estimates hearings, which of course back then went from 9 am to about six the following morning. So 18-hour stretches were not unusual for Senate committees at the time. We had the habit of sitting right through the night if issues were pressing. This habit, fortunately, changed after the first term. Spending many a long night around the estimates table, I got an insight into the forensic mind of Senator Robert Ray—and indeed that of Senator Faulkner—on that finance and public administration committee, which I think set a benchmark for performance in Senate committees for Labor’s whole period in opposition.

I would like to make particular comment about Senator Ray’s commitment to this place—to the standing orders, protocols and traditions of the Australian Senate. It is a tough job, but to pay some mind and consistently pay some mind to those protocols, traditions and standing orders takes quite a special commitment. He certainly did that and in the argy-bargy of the political debate often brought a moral dimension to bear on discussions taking place at any one time. He certainly brought his wrath down upon those who sought to exploit the traditions and protocols of this place and was unrelenting in his criticism if he felt they had crossed the line. What the line is in this place is unwritten, but Senator Ray was a good measure of where the line was and, if you ever crossed it, look out!

From a personal perspective, I would like to thank him for the mentoring and support he gave to me as a senator, particularly early on but consistently through that time. His deep understanding of the operations of this place, of not just the Senate committees but also the procedure and standing committees that sustain the institution of the Australian Senate, has placed us in good stead. I know
that this compliment that I want to pay to Senator Ray for his commitment and work in those places will be agreed to by all Senate colleagues. His contribution was often unseen in the public mind but it is something that all of us in the Senate are extremely aware of and grateful for.

Finally, I wish to personally thank Senator Robert Ray and wish him and Jane all the best in their retirement. I hope that he is able to watch many a game of test cricket in great comfort and enjoyment, without the interfering question times that he would no doubt be obligated to attend. I wish that they have all the pleasure that is so justly deserved after such an extraordinary and successful parliamentary career.

Senator Ludwig (Queensland—Minister for Human Services) (1.57 pm)—I want to talk briefly about Senator Ray. He is in fact going on to enjoy another career, a career in retirement, but I am sure his advice and assistance will still be forthcoming if one should be game to ring up and ask for it or see him in the street and similarly inquire. I want to personally thank him for what Senator Lundy has described as mentoring but also for the advice and assistance that he has given, not only to me personally but to others, on the type of work that we undertake in the Senate.

The work Senator Ray has done in supporting other senators in this place, by and large, goes unseen. This is an opportunity for commenting on the work he has done consistently and for a long time behind the scenes, not only in supporting new senators but in supporting those senators who are at the skinny end of their contribution to this place with respect to how they will fare when they leave. He also supported senators in opposition when times were a little bleak, if I could use that expression, post 2001. Of course, with every intake of new senators, Senator Robert Ray would be there to assist in providing support, assistance and help and to lend an ear to those people who wanted assistance.

Senator Ray would not suffer very easily those who would ask a question when the answer was clearly obvious. In those instances, before I would approach Senator Ray and ask him for advice, I would ponder long and hard the question that I was going to ask and whether I had explored all the possible avenues, because if I had missed the obvious then I would clearly suffer his wrath and very sharp humour and wit. The other work he did in this place included parliamentary work on a range of committees to support not only the Senate but Labor, along with the advice and assistance he gave to the whole of the chamber. With those short words, I wish him well in retirement and from a personal perspective thank him for the assistance he has provided me.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE
Burma

Senator Payne (2.00 pm)—My question is to Senator Faulkner, representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Given the devastating events in Burma which have left over 1.5 million Burmese homeless and resulted in a death toll likely to exceed 100,000, can the minister inform the Senate as to how Australia’s initial commitment of $3 million of funding support was assessed and then the subsequent commitment of $25 million in total was arrived at to assist the victims of Cyclone Nargis? Can the minister also advise whether it is expected that that funding figure will increase?

Senator Faulkner—I thank Senator Payne for her question about this very tragic circumstance of Cyclone Nargis. Of course, all senators are very deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life and the great deal of suffering and enormous devastation caused by Cy-
clone Nargis. Of course, Australia and the international community stand by the Burmese people at this time. Reports of casualties are still coming in but it is clear that the toll there will be very high. Burmese official figures put the death toll at over 23,000, with over 37,000 missing, and the number of homeless at around 1½ million, but these figures are almost certainly understated. The cyclone has also caused massive damage to property and vital infrastructure and has disrupted communications.

I can say specifically in response to the questions that Senator Payne asks me that Australia is providing $25 million in humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma following Cyclone Nargis. This consists of the initial $3 million the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced on 7 May plus a further $22 million that was announced on 11 May. Of that $22 million, a total of $12.5 million will be made to the United Nations’ flash appeal. That appeal will help address the most urgent of the life saving needs in Burma. The remaining $12.5 million is being provided directly to international agencies and non-government organisations with the ability to deliver assistance quickly and effectively on the ground in the worst affected areas. Australia’s already extensive involvement on the ground in Burma has made us well placed to deliver this assistance quickly to those in need.

AusAID is ensuring that Australian assistance is reaching affected populations through UN disaster response mechanisms. This assistance is in the form of food, water, water purification, sanitation, health kits and tarpaulins. I can also say to the Senate that, separate from the flash appeal, Australia is one of the largest donors to the UN’s Central Emergency Response Fund. Ten million dollars has been provided in this financial year, and the UN has announced that part of that particular fund will also be used to respond to the needs that have arisen as a result of Cyclone Nargis.

In answer to the other element of Senator Payne’s question—she asked me about further consideration by the government—options for further assistance over the medium to long term do remain under close consideration as UN assessments of the situation in Burma are made.

Senator PAYNE—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for his assurance of the Australian government and community standing by the people of Burma in this tragic situation. Given the significant reports of barriers to the delivery of assistance and aid, can the minister please advise the Senate in the context of his response how AusAID is actually going about ensuring that aid is delivered? What guarantees and assurances do we have that the significant funding that the minister has referred to there is actually meeting its target?

Senator FAULKNER—There is no doubt, in response to Senator Payne’s supplementary question, that access into Burma for aid workers really remains the greatest challenge in relation to relief efforts for Cyclone Nargis. While the international community is, I think, responding generously to what the immense needs are there, if the Burmese government were prepared to fully open its doors there would be a massive increase in delivery of humanitarian assistance. That would certainly be possible. I think senators would be aware that the Australian government, led by the Prime Minister, have expressed very deep concern and dismay at the attitude of the Burmese regime, and I can assure the Senate that we are using every diplomatic channel available to urge the Burmese regime to allow access for humanitarian assistance to the affected areas.
Economy

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL (2.07 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Conroy. Can the minister outline for the Senate the major economic challenges facing Australia and what role fiscal policy will play in addressing these challenges?

Senator CONROY—I thank Senator Campbell for his question. These are challenging times in which to frame a budget, given the conflicting economic forces that Australia confronts. The coalition left this country with a serious inflation problem. We now have the highest inflation in 16 years. Headline inflation recently hit 4.2 per cent, and underlying inflation is running at a similar pace. The Reserve Bank is forecasting both headline and underlying inflation to remain at or above three per cent for the next two years. Underlying inflationary pressures have been building since the start of 2006. They were exacerbated by the previous government’s irresponsible approach to spending. Treasury advice provided to the former government and released last week shows that they were warned about the impact of rising inflation.

Senator Abetz—False.

Senator CONROY—‘False,’ says Senator Abetz. Let me quote from the Treasury documents. Treasury told them:

... as the economy is running close to capacity there is a real risk that significant spending will add to inflationary pressures.

Yet they continued to spend, and spend, and spend, seeking a short-term political fix. The Leader of the Opposition has described inflationary pressures as a ‘charade’, and the shadow Treasurer refers to them as a ‘fairy-tale’. These statements reveal that they simply do not understand the inflation challenge that we face. We understand that inflation is a cancer eating away at the living standards of working families. Inflationary pressures have contributed to the 12 rate rises in a row despite the former government promising in 2004 to keep interest rates at record lows. In addition to the inflation problem, we are also impacted by international turbulence—

Senator Heffernan—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. I wondered whether he could continue if you pulled the plug on his computer.

The PRESIDENT—Senator Heffernan, that is no point of order; that is a frivolous point of order.

Senator CONROY—as I was saying, we are also impacted by international turbulence and a rapidly slowing US economy. Our job in the budget is to put maximum downward pressure on inflation and interest rates to win the war on inflation that we began upon taking office. This budget will represent a new era of responsible economic management. The government will deliver a budget tonight which addresses Australia’s long-term interests. The first priority is to fight inflation, withstand international turbulence and keep the economy strong. The second priority is to reprioritise our spending so that we can begin building better roads, better communications infrastructure, better ports, better railways, better universities and better hospitals, and train young Australians. The third priority is to engage in long-term, productive spending. (Time expired)

Medicare

Senator CORMANN (2.11 pm)—My question is to Senator Ludwig, the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing. Minister, when exactly before the election did the Labor Party advise the Australian people that they would be making changes to the Medicare levy surcharge policy?

Senator LUDWIG—On 10 May 2008 the federal Treasurer, Hon. Wayne Swan MP,
announced that as part of the budget the Commonwealth government will increase the Medicare levy surcharge thresholds to $100,000 for individuals and $150,000 for families from 1 July 2008. This announcement—

Senator Cormann—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. I asked the minister a very specific question: when exactly before the election did the Labor Party advise the Australian people about making changes to the Medicare levy surcharge policy? I would ask that you direct the minister to answer the question.

The President—I cannot direct the minister as to how he will answer the question. He has been going for 30 seconds, so we will see what transpires.

Senator Ludwig—As I was saying, this announcement has attracted a lot of media interest and clearly interest from the opposition, including our press articles on 13 May 2008. It is estimated to result in published savings of around $299 million over the first four years. This measure was squarely targeted at bringing relief to working families, and it will offer welcome relief for over two million Australians. When the policy was introduced by the former government, they said:

High income earners will be asked to pay a Medicare levy surcharge if they do not have private health insurance ... These are the people who can afford to purchase health insurance, and this measure will relieve some of the pressure on the public hospital system.

That is what was said. These thresholds, originally targeted at high-income earners, have not been moved in a decade. This was a dirty trick played by the previous Liberal government on hundreds of thousands of Australians. That is what it was. I would like to challenge the Liberal Party to find someone who is earning $51,000 who thinks that they are a high-income earner.

We promised in opposition to review this measure, and we have. As a result of this change, individuals will be up to $1,000 a year better off—and up to $1,500 for a couple. The Commonwealth government strongly believes that a mixed model of private and public health services is essential to the provision of universal access to high-quality, affordable healthcare services for all Australians, unlike, it seems from the interruptions from the other side, the current opposition. We are strong supporters of private health insurance and have delivered on all of our election promises in this area. We will retain the full package of private health insurance rebates, a policy which ends the previous government’s practice—

Senator Cormann—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. We are now quite far into the answer, and 10 May is not before the election, as far as I can tell. I would ask you to remind the minister of the question about when before the election Labor told the Australian people that they would make those changes.

Senator Chris Evans—Mr President, on the point of order: on the question of relevance, it is very clear that Senator Ludwig is right on topic. The question that has been asked of him has been addressed by him throughout his answer, and I suggest that this is another attempt at a frivolous point of order. Senator Ludwig is directly on the topic about which he was asked.

Senator Ian Macdonald—Mr President, on the point of order: this makes a complete farce of question time.

The President—What is your point of order?

Senator Ian Macdonald—I am responding in this series of points of order and answering Senator Evans. This makes a com-
plete farce of question time if a question is asked specifically about when an announce-
ment was made and we have a four-minute diatribe about how terrible the previous gov-
ernment was.

The PRESIDENT—Order! You are starting to debate the question.

Senator Ian Macdonald—But Mr President, we have to get him to answer the ques-
tion.

The PRESIDENT—Order! I do not intend to allow senators to debate the point of
order. Senator Evans, it is not a frivolous point of order. As I said earlier to Senator
Cormann, I cannot direct the minister as to how he will answer the question. During his
answer he has referred to the Medicare levy surcharge on numerous occasions. So he is
not out of order.

Senator LUDWIG—What the Medicare levy surcharge will do is take some pressure
off working families who were already struggling to pay for the rising cost of health
care under the previous Liberal government. It is estimated that 11 per cent of privately-
insured patients who are treated at a public hospital opt to be treated as public patients.
If the previous government really cared about making sure all Australians had access
to quality health care, they would have done this long ago. The Department of Health and
Ageing will communicate the changes to the private health insurance industry and con-
sumers. Looking at comments that were made prior to the election, it was reported in
the Daily Telegraph on 10 January that:

Labor health spokeswoman Nicola Roxon yesterday attacked the Government for not indexing the surcharge but would not commit a Labor govern-
ment to indexation. “We now see that because the Government has failed to index the levy that people who are earning average incomes are now being hit with an extra charge,” Ms Roxon said.

She went on to say:

“We think this is an outrage and the Government should be looking at ways it can appropriately adjust that threshold,” she said.

On 5 November 2007, it was reported that Ms Roxon described the failure to index the levy—(Time expired)

Senator CORMANN—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I note that Labor did not advise the Australian people before the election about changes to the Medicare levy surcharge policy. My supple-
mentary question is: isn’t it the case that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, representing the minister in Senate additional estimates earlier this
year, committed that there would be no changes to the Medicare levy surcharge pol-
icy? Doesn’t this prove the point made by Mr Garrett: ‘Once we get in, we’ll just change it all’?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! We will not continue until the Senate comes to order.

Senator LUDWIG—It is worth putting on the record, in answering the supplemen-
tary question, that the Daily Telegraph article was dated 10 January 2007. As I was going
to say—and I now say in answer to the sup-
plementary question—the Daily Telegraph on 5 November 2007 stated:

Earlier this year Ms Roxon described the failure to index the levy, which has raised almost $1 bil-
lion, as an “outrage”. “It is one of those measures we would consider looking at in government,” her office told the Daily Telegraph.

This matter was clearly on the record prior to the election. It was a matter that we were going to look at in government. With respect
to the impact on private health insurance and premiums, what we will do from 1 July
2008—(Time expired)

Water

Senator McEWEN (2.20 pm)—My ques-
tion is to the Minister for Climate Change
and Water, Senator Wong. Can the minister outline to the Senate the details of the government’s Water for the Future plan? Can the minister also outline the benefits of the agreement reached at COAG for the long-term future of the Murray-Darling Basin? Is the minister aware of any other views?

Senator WONG—I thank Senator McEwen for the question, as a South Australian senator who has a long interest in ensuring South Australia, particularly Adelaide, has a secure water supply. Recently I announced the details of Water for the Future, the Rudd government’s $12.9 billion plan to secure the water supply of all Australians. Unlike those opposite, the Rudd government understands that climate change means that we need to manage our water supplies better. We as a government are committed to developing new supplies of water that do not rely entirely on rainfall, and we are investing to make the best use of the water we do have. Water for the Future includes our election commitments of $1 billion for the National Urban Water and Desalination Plan, $250 million for the National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns, and $250 million for the National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative. It also includes at least $3 billion for purchasing water to improve the health of our rivers and $5.8 billion to support infrastructure improvements and better use of water in rural areas.

But, on top of buying water and investing in water-saving infrastructure, we on this side know that the Murray-Darling Basin needs a better long-term approach. The chamber will be aware that at the last COAG meeting the Prime Minister and the premiers reached a historic long-term agreement on the future management of the Murray-Darling Basin which will ensure that critical human needs are met and that there will be a sustainable cap across the basin, for the first time in the history of the basin, on how much water can be extracted. We will also ensure that there will be an independent umpire, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. This was a historic agreement, one that the previous government was unable to secure.

I am asked about other views. It is quite clear that the opposition continue to be intent on playing the same political games on water that they did when they were in government. On the one hand, the shadow minister for climate change, environment and urban water described the agreement as ‘a once-in-a-century massive plan to come to the rescue of the ailing river system’. But it appears he failed to tell his leader that, because Dr Nelson slammed the deal, saying it rewarded petulant behaviour. He said:

... the Victorian Government seems to have been rewarded for its petulant behaviour in staying out of the agreement.

On the other hand, Dr Stone, the shadow minister for the environment, heritage, the arts and Indigenous affairs, released a statement with the headline ‘Victoria left short-changed with Murray-Darling Basin deal’. So Dr Nelson thinks Victoria has been rewarded and Dr Stone thinks Victoria has been left short-changed. But this is the real corker—Dr Stone, the shadow minister, also said:

There is further worry when Mr Rudd declared that human consumption of the Murray system water is to take precedence over all other water uses. Does this mean that when Adelaide squeaks, irrigation systems shudder?

I want to know if Senator Minchin shares this view. Is that the view of the opposition, Senator Minchin? And what about Senator Birmingham, who professes to care about Adelaide’s water supply? You should get up in this place, Senator Birmingham, and denounce what your colleague in the House of Representatives has said.
The PRESIDENT—Order, Senator Wong! You should address the chair.

Senator WONG—Through you, Mr President, Senator Birmingham, if he cares about Adelaide’s water supply, should be getting up and saying that he does not agree with Dr Stone, that he does not agree with her statement:

Does this mean that when Adelaide squeaks, irrigation systems shudder?

I would like to know—through you, Mr President—is that view of the opposition or Senator Minchin?

Senator Bernardi interjecting—

Senator WONG—Senator Bernardi, is that the view of the opposition?

Senator Ian Macdonald—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. Could you explain to the minister, please, that question time is for us to ask her questions, not for the minister to ask the opposition questions.

Senator Ludwig interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—I remind Senator Ludwig that you cannot get to your feet when another senator is on their feet speaking. There is no point of order, Senator Macdonald. Minister, your time has expired.

Senator McEWEN—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister expand on how Water for the Future will help urban areas secure long-term water supplies?

Senator WONG—In my original answer I referred to the election commitments that we have delivered through Water for the Future, which include the $1 billion National Urban Water and Desalination Plan, which will be available to cities with a population of 50,000 people or more. Senators might recall that under the previous government—now the opposition—the then Treasurer made it clear that the Howard government did not believe that the federal government had any role to play in securing urban water supplies. People in South Australia were very interested to hear that.

We do not share that view on this side of the chamber. We as a government are prepared to put our shoulders to the wheel. When it comes to the issue of urban water supplies, we will deliver on a $1 billion election commitment to assist state governments and the private sector in delivering urban water supplies. We do not agree with Mr Costello’s statement—and I do not know if it is still opposition policy—that the federal government has no role in urban water. (Time expired)

Budget

Senator COLBECK (2.26 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Ludwig. Will the minister guarantee that no Australian will have to wait even longer for public hospital treatment as a result of Labor’s changes to the Medicare surcharge levy policy?

Senator LUDWIG—The 2008-09 budget will increase the Medicare levy surcharge thresholds, which will provide significant relief for those on average incomes. That is what it will do. The government maintains support for a strong and sustainable private health insurance industry. For the benefit of the opposition, from 1 July 2008, the thresholds for the Medicare levy surcharge will increase from $50,000 to $100,000 for singles and from $100,000 to $150,000 for families. The opposition argue that $50,000 is somehow a high-income wage. I defy anyone to support the contention that it is in fact a high-income wage.

As for the impact on private health insurance membership and premiums, it is anticipated that some people who may have taken out private health insurance to avoid paying the surcharge will cease their coverage.
Should private health insurance companies seek to increase their premiums, they will be closely scrutinised by the government to ensure that premium adjustments are the minimum needed to maintain solvency requirements and that the funds can meet their obligations to members. The government is focused on ensuring that Australians have a choice of healthcare services and continues to have policies in place that encourage individuals to purchase private health insurance, such as private health insurance rebates and Lifetime Health Cover.

The other issue is: will there be increased pressure on public hospitals? As part of its Health and Hospital Reform Plan, this government is making substantial investments to bolster hospitals. There was $1 billion announced at COAG for public hospital services in 2008-09—$600 million over four years to reduce elective surgery waiting lists. Look at the record of the opposition when they were in government. You talk about public hospitals—it is about giving people choice. When somebody takes out a private health insurance policy just to avoid getting hit with a tax slug, that is not a real choice. There are people out there who pay for a $500 policy not because they want it but because it means paying less than they would in tax. There are people who, we expect, will stop taking out insurance. We are strong supporters of a mixed health system, both public and private.

I cannot believe the opposition is suggesting that people earning—and I mentioned this earlier—a below-average wage should be paying this tax slug. Let me throw out a challenge to the Liberal Party to find anyone earning $51,000 who would call themselves a high-income earner. What really has put pressure on public hospitals is the previous Liberal government’s cutting $1 billion from public hospitals and failing to tackle the GP shortage. That is the position that they left this government with. They know clearly that is what the position is. And quite clearly federal Labor will also maintain Lifetime Health Cover and the Medicare levy surcharge. The Prime Minister has kept his word on this. We said we would keep the Medicare levy surcharge and we have. (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT—Order! I draw the attention of honourable senators to the presence in the President’s gallery of a delegation from the Australian Political Exchange Council from New Zealand, led by Ms Louisa Wall MP. On behalf of all senators, I wish you a very warm welcome to Australia and to the Senate.

Honourable senators—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Senator COLBECK (2.31 pm)—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I note for the record that the minister did not give a commitment that no-one would have to wait longer for public hospital treatment, which is probably just as well given that the Tasmanian health minister said yesterday that she would be expecting even more money, an increase in federal funding, to deal with the likely increase in demand. Aren’t we just seeing the Garrett prophecy come true: ‘Once we get in, we’ll just change it all’?

Senator LUDWIG—When the opposition were in government, they cut a billion from public hospitals and failed to tackle GP shortages. What we will do, and what we said we would do, is keep the Medicare levy surcharge. And we have. We said we would keep the 30 per cent private health insurance rebate, and we will. The Australian Health Insurance Association should show more faith—and perhaps the opposition should
show more faith—in the ability of private health policies to meet the needs of consumers. If people are getting value for money, they will stick with the system. In six months in government we have announced $1 billion in extra funding for public hospitals over the next year, beginning to reverse the 11 years of neglect of our public hospital system by the opposition—by the Liberals—and we are providing $600 million to slash elective surgery and waiting lists. (Time expired)

Internet Filtering

Senator ALLISON (2.33 pm)—Mr President, my question is to you. I refer to the decision made last month to filter websites used by senators and their staff. Is the occurrence of the problem with senators looking up pornography on websites? If so, will you name them? Is the aim of this filter to protect the laurels of senators and their staff? If so, doesn’t it strike you as odd that we can make laws for the country but are not adult enough or competent enough to make our own decisions about what is an appropriate website?

The PRESIDENT—The decision to put filters on senators’ websites was a decision of the Senate Standing Committee on Procedure after much discussion. There were a variety of reasons for that happening. Because staff members in this place who are employed by DPS and others have filters on their computers, it was considered by their committee that it should apply to all senators and members as well. If senators choose to have the filter removed from their computers, they are entitled to request that and it can happen.

Senator ALLISON—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Who decides what sites are deemed inappropriate? What are the grounds for refusal in those cases? What is the reason for filtering out websites that refer to illegal drugs or illegal weapons? Is there a problem of senators and their staff dealing with either of those? And why was it that the views of senators were not canvassed before making this decision?

The PRESIDENT—When you say that the views of senators were not canvassed, the Procedure Committee does have a variety of senators on that committee. So it was taken into account when the decision was made. I will look at the details of your question and I will provide you and the Senate with a detailed answer.

Budget

Senator ADAMS (2.35 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health, Senator Ludwig. In light of the recent statement about changes to the Medicare surcharge policy, can the minister inform the Senate whether any modelling has been undertaken on the impact on the cost for private health insurance policyholders as a result?

Senator LUDWIG—In terms of the Medicare surcharge threshold, on 10 May 2008 the federal Treasurer, the Hon. Wayne Swan, announced that, as part of the budget, the Commonwealth government will increase the Medicare levy surcharge threshold to $100,000 for individuals and $150,000 for families from 1 July 2008. So that the opposition can fully appreciate what the question is, if you look at the issue of whether or not pressure will be put on public hospitals, it is about giving people choice. When somebody takes out a private health insurance policy just to avoid getting hit with the tax slug, that is not a real choice.

This government has quite clearly kept its promise in respect of the Medicare levy surcharge and it has kept its promise to keep the 30 per cent private health insurance rebate. In the first six months in government, this government announced $1 billion in extra funding for hospitals, beginning to reverse
the 11 years of neglect by the Howard government—$600 million to slash elective surgery waiting lists, something that the opposition did not do; and incentives of up to $6,000 to deliver 10,000 nurses into our health and aged-care system, something that the opposition did not do when they were in government. The government also announced the establishment of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, to develop a long-term plan—

Senator Abetz—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. Could I, with respect, suggest to Senator Ludwig that he follow your example in relation to answering questions. Specifically my point of order is: the question was very specific as to whether or not any modelling had been done in relation to the impact on the cost for private health insurance policyholders. Our being told about the number of nurses et cetera is very interesting but completely and utterly unresponsive to the question that was actually asked.

The President—Senator Abetz, as I have said a number of times today, I cannot direct the minister on how to answer a question. As long as he is being relevant—and, in this case, I do believe he is being relevant—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator Abetz—On the point of order—

The President—Order! Senator Abetz, I believe the minister is still being relevant. We have allowed a lot of latitude in the past when ministers were answering questions. I will listen carefully to what Senator Ludwig says, but at this stage I believe he is still being relevant.

Senator Ludwig—Thank you, Mr President. In relation to the Medicare levy surcharge threshold, the government strongly believe that a mixed model of private and public health services is essential. We have also invested in primary care to help take pressure off our public hospital system. We know that there are 500,000 preventable hospital admissions each year, including 50,000 admissions for preventable dental conditions. Unlike the opposition when they were in government, we have said that we will invest in GP super clinics in areas that need them, invest $290 million for a Commonwealth dental health program and invest $360 million for a teen dental plan, and name obesity a national health priority area. What the previous government had to say—

Senator Abetz—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. We have now had nurses canvassed and we have now had obesity canvassed. Is it allowable for the minister to canvass anything that might happen to appear in the health portfolio when a specific question is asked in relation to modelling on the cost of private health insurance? With great respect, Mr President, I believe he has now strayed well and truly out of the province of the question.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The President—Order! It is a rather all-encompassing answer, as was interjected from the government benches. Senator Ludwig, I would remind you of the question relating to modelling and ask you to continue with your answer, unless you have finished.

Senator Ludwig—in respect of the particular modelling question that was also raised, those costs and savings will of course be in the budget tonight. I am sure the opposition will be keen to be here to look at the budget tonight, to examine those issues in detail and to see for themselves what is there.

Senator Adams—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. When before the election did Labor say that they would force private health insurance policyholders to pay more for private cover? Did Mr Garrett know that Labor would sting private health policyholders even more when, before the election,
he said, ‘Once we get in, we’ll just change it all’?

Senator LUDWIG—It may be worth going back to what Dr Michael Wooldridge, the then health minister, said in his media release on 20 August 1996:

High income earners will be asked to pay a Medicare Levy surcharge if they do not have private health insurance.

For this initiative, high income earners are defined as single people earning more than $50,000 or couples and families earning more than $100,000.

These are the people who can afford to purchase health insurance, and this measure will relieve some of the pressure on the public hospital system.

That is what the then health minister said in 1996. But he did not leave it there. In 1997 he said in a media release:

High income earners who still haven’t joined a fund need to understand that the extra 1 per cent Medicare tax surcharge will start to be levied on their income from the 1st of July. (Time expired)

Budget

Senator CROSSIN (2.43 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law, Senator Sherry. Could the minister please update the Senate on the approach the government is taking to the formation of today’s budget? Could he also inform the Senate of any alternative views on the need for a fiscally responsible approach?

Senator SHERRY—I thank Senator Crossin for her particularly timely question, given the budget tonight, and for her ongoing interest in the economic health of our country. Tonight’s budget will be the first for the Rudd Labor government, and it will be based on sound principles of fiscal discipline. During the election campaign and in the period leading up to election of the Labor government, the Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, said time and time again that he was an economic conservative and fiscal discipline—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator SHERRY—Those opposite can laugh. But the proof will be presented to the Australian people tonight. The Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, meant what he said. When the government delivers the budget tonight, through the Treasurer, Mr Swan, it will be delivering on this promise.

But tonight’s budget will not be delivered in an environment without some challenges. We have the legacy left to us by those opposite, the Liberal-National Party, now on the opposition benches. We had government spending that was out of control and we have a cost of living legacy that is hitting hard-working families in this country. We have had massive under investment in education, health and infrastructure and we have had a complete rejection by those opposite of climate change. We also face a very difficult international financial environment, with the consequence of the US subprime meltdown.

None of this is good enough for a modern, efficient Australian economy. These issues cannot be ignored, and we do intend to tackle them in tonight’s budget. Tonight the Rudd Labor government will show the people of Australia and the Liberal-National Party opposite just how it can be done.

Fighting inflation is a central challenge facing our economy today. Headline inflation rose by 1.3 per cent in the March quarter of 2008 to be 4.2 per cent higher throughout the year. That, of course, is well above the Reserve Bank’s medium-term target band of two to three per cent. The higher inflation that was occurring under the previous Liberal-National government is slowly increasing and it has put upward pressure on interest rates. This government inherited the highest inflation in 16 years, and higher inflation has led to higher interest rates. The Labor gov-
ernment recognise the hurt that higher inflation directly causes to hardworking Australian families. We have the right monetary policy framework to deal with inflationary pressures. We have an independent central bank. But this has to be matched by an equally disciplined fiscal policy framework. We cannot rely on increasing budget revenues to deliver a higher budget surplus. The Labor government has indicated that it will be delivering a minimum budget surplus of at least 1.5 per cent of GDP. In January the Prime Minister announced his five-point plan to fight inflation, and we will be delivering on that tonight. It is very important to tackle inflation head-on with a tight budget framework and a significant budget surplus. This will put downward pressure on inflation and result in downward pressure on interest rates.

Of course, the shadow Treasurer, Mr Turnbull—soon to be elected as the Leader of the Opposition—does not believe we have an inflation problem. He recently described it as a fairytale. I have a list of the inflation rates of some 30 OECD countries, which unfortunately shows that Mr Turnbull’s description of inflation as a fairytale—(Time expired)

Budget

Senator HUMPHRIES (2.47 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Ludwig. In a triumph of hope over experience, I would like to ask the minister about modelling. Has the minister undertaken any modelling on the impact on alcohol consumption of the government’s new $2 billion tax on premixed drinks? If so, would the minister share with the Senate what that study revealed? If not, why not?

Senator LUDWIG—It is recognised that alcohol plays a significant role in Australian society. Many Australians drink alcohol and most do so responsibly. Despite this, there is still a major problem that centres on the 35 per cent of people who drink at a level that places them at a significant risk of harm in the short term and the 10 per cent of people who drink at a level that places them at a high risk of harm in the long term. The government supports the measure to reduce alcohol related harm in the Australian community and change Australia’s unhealthy drinking culture. This government is committed to developing a preventive health strategy and has established a preventive health task force. When one hears the questions and interjections from the opposition, one wonders whether they do in fact support the measures that are being taken to reduce the level of alcohol consumption amongst young people.

The government has announced a national strategy to address binge-drinking and has increased the excise on ready-to-drink products. On 10 March 2008 the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, announced a national strategy worth $53 million to address the binge drinking epidemic among young Australians. The national strategy will begin with three new practical measures to help reduce the misuse of alcohol and binge drinking among young Australians. I would encourage the opposition to support that position. The strategy includes $14.4 million to invest in community-level initiatives to confront the culture of binge drinking, particularly in sporting organisations; $19.1 million to intervene earlier to assist young people and ensure that they assume personal responsibility for their binge drinking; and $20 million to fund advertising that confronts young people with the costs and consequences of binge drinking. A key part of this strategy is to engage sporting organisations from the elite level down to the community level. I would encourage the Liberals to engage in this as well and undertake support and assistance to ensure that the youth of today do not suffer the conse-
quences of binge drinking. A key part of this strategy also includes Nicola Roxon meeting—

**Senator Humphries**—Mr President, on a point of order: I think lecturing the Senate on the evils of alcohol is somewhat redundant. My question was about modelling. What modelling has the government done before deciding to impose this $2 billion tax on Australian drinkers?

**The President**—Senator Ludwig, I would remind you of the question.

**Senator Ludwig**—Thank you, Mr President. I am concerned about the impact of binge drinking on Australia’s young people, but I am also concerned about the impact of alcohol on our wider society. On 26 April the government announced that it would restore the excise on ready-to-drink alcoholic beverages to the spirit levels that previously applied. The government’s decision to lift the excise on RTD products will help tackle binge drinking, as research shows that price is an effective measure in reducing alcohol consumption, especially by young people.

When we look at the opposition’s engagement in this, they are not serious about assisting in how you tackle binge drinking in youth and how you ensure that the youth of today will not suffer health problems in later years. What the opposition is concerned about seems to be a mile away from where the young people are at now. The strategy that the Rudd government has announced will provide assistance not only at the community level but also at the advertisement level to ensure that they would— *(Time expired)*

**Senator Humphries**—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I take it from the minister’s answer that there was no study conducted, and I assume therefore that Labor decided before this recent election that it intended to impose this new tax. How does the minister rebut the charge that the Labor Party were cowardly in formulating a decision to have a new $2 billion tax on drinkers to pay for their unfunded election promises but were not prepared to take the electors of Australia into their confidence before the election last year?

**Senator Ludwig**—In rebutting the charge that the opposition makes, what they did not do in their 11 long years in government is deal with these significant health issues around ready-to-drink products and around alcohol. The Australian government is committed to a comprehensive strategy to address binge drinking among young Australians. More than $53 million will provide support to the strategy which will be implemented by the Department of Health and Ageing. In rebutting your charge, you have done nothing to assist in this area. You, in fact, ensured that you neglected the youth of today in this area. You, in fact, did not assist. In addition, the National Health and Medical Research Council is currently— *(Time expired)*

**Senator Bob Brown** (2.54 pm)—My question goes to Senator Evans, representing the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister in government give consideration to establishing a global disaster coordination centre in Australia to deal with horrific circumstances like those now in China following the earthquake and Burma following the cyclone, to tap in to the enormous potential in
Australia, both civil and military, for rapid aid to our region, and indeed our own country, in terms of disaster and, in particular, to get that aid targeted and available within hours so that we know it will be there as soon as humanly possible and is ready to go before the disaster strikes?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thank Senator Brown for an important question. I am not aware of whether we are currently considering a global disaster coordination centre, as you describe it. I will take that part of the question on notice. I have not been briefed on that. What we do know is that Australia in the past has shown a great deal of capability in responding rapidly to the need for aid and emergency assistance. We saw that in the South Pacific and Asia, and we saw that very much in Bali in terms of the response there. I think our Australian defence forces, our medical teams and our charities have shown quite a deal of capability in this regard. That has been unfortunately developed in recent years as a result of having to deal with a large number of incidents, both terrorist related and climatic, which have caused a great loss of life and damage.

I think the role that Australia played in the aid to Aceh et cetera was exemplary and was a great credit to those involved. Obviously our contribution in a disaster such as has recently occurred in Burma and seems to have occurred overnight in China can only play a small but significant role. Clearly, we need coordination across countries in terms of any response. I think Australia has always been generous. Our capacities will be limited but significant. We have developed specialist skills in a range of areas inside the ADF and elsewhere, and inside the AFP. Senator Ellison knows about the work the AFP did in a whole range of areas, including the forensic area.

I think these two events have highlighted the need for quick response and for international response. Of course the great concern in Burma is the failure of their government to embrace that response and allow people to contribute more fully to help deal with what is an extraordinary disaster. I will take up the specific question you raised, Senator Brown. There may well be more work going on in that area that I am not aware of. I will take up your specific suggestion, Senator Brown, and get an answer from the Prime Minister. I think you identify what is a very important need which has again been highlighted, and I am sure we would be willing to participate in anything that gets a better and quicker response to those who are suffering in the sorts of disasters that we have seen in Burma and now in China.

Senator BOB BROWN—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for that constructive response. I point to the news that the Czech Republic has supplied sniffer dogs, which I think, if not on the ground, are about to be on the ground in China, and will obviously be of assistance in finding people buried by the recent earthquake. It was a very rapid response which was ready to go before the earthquake happened, effectively. It demonstrates how a centre might be able to have its finger on every option that Australia could give to the great variety of disasters which can befall our region. Like Senator Evans, I know of an enormous amount of good work being done. But I ask if he would see if the government can look at preparedness and work out what can be done for a disaster scenario so that you are ready beforehand to get aid from one of the wealthiest countries on the planet to disaster areas more expeditiously. (Time expired)

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thank Senator Brown for the supplementary question. It expands on the original question and I am
happy, as I have said, to take it on notice and see what information I can get about how we can better prepare our capacity to respond. I am sure the whole parliament would be supportive of such an approach. As I have said, I have not got a brief on the level of current preparedness, so I will get a comprehensive answer as soon as I can. Mr President, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:
ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Internet Filtering

The PRESIDENT (3.00 pm)—I have further information in response to Senator Allison’s question but I must firstly say that I did say during my answer that it was the Procedure Committee when it was the Appropriations and Staffing Committee, which was my mistake. In March 2008 the Senate Appropriations and Staffing Committee—not the Procedure Committee, as I stated previously—considered the matter of the parliamentary computer network and internet filtering. The committee noted that the parliamentary network computers of departmental staff—that is, for the Department of the Senate, the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of Parliamentary Services, but not for the Parliamentary Library—are filtered for inappropriate internet content, including pornography, illegal drug references, gambling, games, racist or hate sites, violence, illegal weapons of manufacture or procurement, but the computers of senators and members and their staff are not. The committee also noted that the current filtering mechanism is a black list supplied by the vendor but the Department of Parliamentary Services is currently engaged in identifying a replacement filtering system.

Members of the committee expressed the view that senators should not be treated differently from others who use the parliamentary computing network and therefore their computers should be filtered. I note that the Australian Democrats were represented on that committee.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! I am on my feet. I suggest you look at the standing orders. Having sought further advice from the Department of Parliamentary Services on the filtering system and consulted with the Speaker on the matter, I made the decision that, in accordance with the view of the committee, the same filtering should be applied to senators and their offices. I remind senators that this filtering provides a message to users that the site they are seeking to access has been blocked because it falls within one of the areas on the black list of subject matters used by the software. It is open for any senator or staffer who needs to pursue access to a particular site for work related matters to have that access provided by contacting 2020.

Unparliamentary Language

The PRESIDENT (3.03 pm)—On 20 March 2008 Senator Abetz asked that I consider whether remarks allegedly made by Senator Carr, before he began to answer the question asked of him by Senator Lightfoot during question time, were unparliamentary, and whether a statement by Senator Evans to the effect that Senator Kemp’s description of those remarks was untrue should also be withdrawn. I had earlier ruled that there was no point of order when Senator Kemp raised Senator Carr’s remarks by way of a point of order.

The Hansard audiovisual recording of that part of question time indicates that some words were uttered by Senator Carr before he began his answer as recorded in Hansard.

Honourable senators interjecting—
The President—Order! I remind senators of the standing orders. The words are indistinct in part and it is not clear to whom or what they were directed. The words in question appear to have been an aside of the kind which senators occasionally make to colleagues, which, if heard, are not recorded by Hansard as part of the proceedings, and which are also not normally taken note of by the chair. Such asides are distinct from interjections, which are subject to the rules of the Senate. In all the circumstances, I do not consider that anything unparliamentary occurred or that the chair ought to take any note of the words in question. I would suggest, however, if senators make remarks which they do not intend to be part of the proceedings, that they ensure such remarks are heard only by the intended recipients.

Personal Explanations

Senator Murray (Western Australia) (3.05 pm)—Mr President, I seek leave to make a short personal explanation with respect to your statement concerning the Appropriations and Staffing Committee.

Leave granted.

Senator Murray—I thank the President and the Senate. I just wish to make it clear that I sat and considered the material before me on the Appropriations and Staffing Committee on my own account and not as a representative of the Australian Democrats party room. I did not convey their views at that meeting.

Questions Without Notice: Take Note of Answers

Budget

Senator Colbeck (Tasmania) (3.05 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by the Minister for Human Services (Senator Ludwig) to questions without notice asked today.

Today we have seen what I think could only be described as a reversion to the past by Labor where the decisions that they have been making with respect to health are more about ideology than they are about addressing the real health issues that we have here in this country. They are nothing to do with good policy. In fact, if they had been to do with good policy Labor would have actually used some of the processes that they have put in place to actually implement and study good policy. As Senator Ludwig said, the government has set up the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, which at this point in time has only had the opportunity to make one interim statement, just one communiqué. The major report in respect of state and Commonwealth health funding will be in November this year, with a full report in July next year.

What we are seeing now are decisions that will have a significant impact on the delivery of health services in this country being made completely outside that context, with no consultation with industry and no consultation with its own health and hospitals reform commission. You can only wonder whether this particular body is being relegated by this government to being just another voice, as we have seen so many times before.

With respect to consultation with industry, Dr Michael Armitage has said that the Prime Minister used ‘weasel words’ before the election to give the health insurance industry the clear impression that the surcharge would not be changed. The AMA President, Dr Capolingua, has said that this decision by the government will tell Australians that they should drop their health insurance or not take out policies in the first place.

In the late nineties we saw a significant fall in the number of Australians who had private health insurance and at that point in time we were legitimately concerned about
the issues that surrounded that, the sustainability of the health system. There was universal concern, so the then government brought in first the 30 per cent rebate and then lifetime cover. That increased the rate of private health insurance from where it was, at close to 30 per cent, to 44 to 45 per cent—a significant change—and it has remained there ever since. It made a real difference.

This tells younger people that they no longer need to stay within the private health system and it potentially provides the scope for a collapse of the system. What we risk with this decision is a return to the downward spiral that we saw in private health insurance during the 1990s, when Labor were, again, part of the decision-making process and had this philosophical opposition to providing private health insurance. The industry itself projects that 400,000 policies will drop out of the system.

We know that families are under stress. We have seen that all around the country. I have spent the last few weeks on the Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia. We know that families are under stress and we know that they are looking for ways to support their budgets, but this is not a way to do that because it is going to have detrimental effects at the end of the road. Also, as I have said before, it is not in concert with the overall health strategy that the government has put in place. Why would you be making these decisions completely outside the Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, when its task is to address the overall delivery of health services across the country? It is just ludicrous. The government has even put back its state and Commonwealth healthcare agreements for the funding of hospitals because it wants to wait to get a report from the Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. That is a sensible decision and it is a decision that the opposition supports. Yet here we have two ad hoc decisions that have been made, supposedly in the interests of health policy, that are completely remote from the process.

The government committed to ending the blame game and has put in place a process to deal with it. Yet what it has done is completely ignore that process. It would be legitimate to expect that, having put that process in place, the government would actually go through the process and take note of its work. We note that the government today refused to say that there was any modelling in respect of either of the two decisions it has made—(Time expired)

Senator McEWEN (South Australia) (3.11 pm)—It is a great privilege to be able to participate in this debate on the day that the Rudd Labor government and Treasurer Wayne Swan will deliver the first budget of the Rudd government. It is a budget that will go a long way to address the reckless spending of the former government, reckless spending that has meant that working Australians and their families are in a situation where they are facing interest rate rises—12 interest rate rises in a row—and an inflation rate of 4.2 per cent, and where the cost of living is outpacing their wage increases. Every senator in this place, I am sure, would have heard from their constituents about how difficult it is, if you are on an average wage, to make ends meet. We are looking forward to the budget tonight. For once, after more than a decade of the now opposition being in government, working Australian families will have a budget that addresses their issues.

It was very interesting to hear today the opposition finally taking some interest in healthcare issues. Of course, healthcare issues are always of interest on budget day. The neglect of health care by the opposition when they were in government has meant that the Rudd government now has an opportunity to deal with healthcare issues. The
increase in the income levels for the Medicare surcharge will be a very welcome initiative for working Australian families. As we have heard, from 1 July 2008 the thresholds for the Medicare levy surcharge will increase from $50,000 to $100,000 per annum income for singles and from $100,000 to $150,000 for families.

During question time I heard government senators ask opposition senators many times which one of them was going to stand up and say that somebody who earns $51,000 is a high-income earner. Of course they are not. People on those sorts of incomes are desperate for some kind of income relief, particularly when they are attempting to pay interest rate rises. A constituent who is a single-income earner and is about to come off a three-year fixed term interest rate on her mortgage said to me just yesterday that she expects that the increase for her will be in the order of $100 to $150 a week because of the interest rate rises that have occurred in that period. She is desperate as to how she is going to find that money. I can tell you that working Australians like that woman, my constituent, will welcome this initiative to ensure they have more money in their pockets.

The Rudd government have already made numerous commitments to improving the healthcare situations of Australians. The former government failed to address GP shortages and struck more than $1 billion from the hospital system, so the Rudd government are coming from a long way back to try and address those situations, but address them we will. We have already committed some $600 million to reducing waiting lists and elective surgery lists. We have a range of initiatives to try and improve healthcare services for Australians who desperately need them. We made announcements about GP super clinics that have been very well received in areas that are going to get them. We are going to improve funding to our healthcare workforce to provide training to around 24,000 mental health professionals, and we are going to encourage more mental health nurses to stay in the workforce. We have committed to bowel cancer screening for all over 50 years of age as we know that bowel cancer is one of the biggest killers in Australia. The initiatives that we are taking in the healthcare industry are going to be very welcome. I was also surprised to hear the criticism from opposition senators about the Rudd government’s initiative to try and stop binge drinking amongst young people. What a disgraceful response it was from them to criticise an initiative which is intended to ensure that our young people do not become hospital statistics because they have too ready access— (Time expired)

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia) (3.16 pm)—Today is the moment of truth. It is the moment of truth for Labor and sadly it is a moment of truth for the Australian people, because today is the day when the Australian people will find out that Peter Garrett was right when he said, ‘Once we get in, we’ll just change it all.’ Before the election Labor was desperate to make sure that private health insurance would not become a political issue. It was the time of the ‘me too’ policy approach. We support all of the positive initiatives of the Howard government. We support the 30 per cent health insurance rebate. We support Lifetime Health Cover. The minister today confirmed that Labor did not tell the Australian people before the election that they would be making those changes which are about to be announced in the budget to increase the threshold of the Medicare levy surcharge.

Earlier this year in Senate additional estimates, I was somewhat suspicious in the light of Peter Garrett’s comments as to what the new government’s approach would be to private health insurance because when we
last came into government after an extended period of Labor government the Australian health system was totally out of balance. Private health insurance membership levels were down at 33 per cent of the population and they went down to 30 per cent before we were able to turn the ship around. So I thought I would ask some questions. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing was representing the minister for health during Senate estimates. I asked her specifically, ‘Would you be concerned if membership levels started to drop as a proportion of the population?’ She said, ‘Of course we would be.’

I followed on and I went through the series of positive policy initiatives of the Howard government which led to bringing the Australian health system back into balance, and I asked her to confirm the government’s ongoing commitment to those measures specifically in relation to the Medicare levy surcharge. I asked:

Senator CORMANN—The Medicare levy surcharge policy will remain in its current form?

Senator McLucas—Correct.

Senator CORMANN—There is no suggestion to increase the thresholds that you are aware of?

Senator McLucas—Not that I am aware of.

That was not a totally clear answer so I went back to it later. I said:

Senator CORMANN—I would like on the record, though, to get specific information whether there are no plans to change the Medicare levy surcharge from the current levels.

Senator McLucas—We have answered that question.

Senator CORMANN—So no change?

Senator McLucas—That is correct.

So Senator McLucas, representing the Minister for Health and Ageing in Senate estimates earlier this year was very clear when it came to this point. She gave an indication to the Australian people that there would be no change.

But what have we heard today? What have we heard widely canvassed in the media? The Medicare levy surcharge threshold is going to double. That is bad public policy, because that is exactly the sort of policy that will lead us to the disastrous circumstance that we found ourselves in in 1996 when the Australian health system was out of balance. Membership levels will go down, and the minister in one of his answers today actually said, ‘Yes, some people will leave’. He did not tell us how many people. What is the definition of ‘some’? How many people will leave? Minister, you have not answered that question today at all. The minister says: ‘Some people will leave. The membership levels will go down and we all agree.’ This will have a further impact in accelerating future increases to health insurance premiums. People will leave private health insurance. This will put pressure on public hospitals, which are already under pressure—public hospitals that are being mismanaged by Labor state governments across Australia, with people not being able to access the services they need.

If you look at what has happened over the last 10 years with significant increases in the membership levels in the private health insurance system, private hospitals around Australia have taken responsibility for a dramatically increased share of healthcare services necessary to service the Australian people. What is going to happen now? Australians will leave private health insurance because Labor went back on its commitment prior to the last election. This is back to the future stuff. As I have said, the Howard government had to restore the balance in the Australian health system when it got into government. Peter Garrett was right, as I said in my introduction: ‘Once we get in, we’ll change it all.’ Tonight, when the Treasurer
puts out the budget, we will all be able to see that that is exactly what will be happening from here on in.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Before I call Senator Brown, I remind senators that if you refer to people in the other place they should be referred to by their correct title.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (3.20 pm)—I have to say that I am not surprised about the opposition opposing the Medicare levy surcharge initiative because the opposition has shown over a long period of time that they are completely out of touch with the community. The Medicare levy surcharge initiative is a welcome relief to working families. They have been unfairly hit by the surcharge. The surcharge has not been adjusted since it was introduced in 1997, so the announcement by the Treasurer tonight will be a welcome one which will see the Medicare levy surcharge threshold rise from $50,000 to $100,000 for a single person and from $100,000 to $150,000 for families.

Mr Deputy President, there has been no increase in the Medicare levy surcharge threshold since 1 July 1997, resulting in an unfair targeting of many families earning average incomes. The revised thresholds will now ensure that the surcharge is applied to those who are high-income earners. If the Liberal opposition think that a wage of $50,000 for a single person is the wage of a wealthy person then it is no wonder the Australian people have lost faith in them. The whole point of the Medicare levy surcharge was to encourage people who could most afford it to take out private health insurance. However, the previous government, as usual, failed to plan for the long term and it did not provide for indexing the threshold. Now we are seeing hardworking Australians being slugged a surcharge that was meant to target high-income earners.

The Labor government initiative will be a welcome relief for many families. I have to concur with my colleague Senator McEwen’s amazement at the Liberal opposition raising the issue of health, because they have a record they should be ashamed of. We have seen a drastic cutting of the health budget over the 11 years the previous government was in power and a failure to tackle the GP shortage. That is in stark contrast to what the Labor government is doing. Since Kevin Rudd and Labor have come to power, two health ministers conferences have been held in the spirit of cooperation that now exists between Canberra and the state and territory governments. Much has been achieved.

The first conference in February concluded with an agreement on the need for immediate reform of the national health and hospital system and the need for public performance reporting. These sentiments reflect what Kevin Rudd has been saying since prior to the election—that the health and hospital system in this country is not working as it should and that there is a pressing need for reform. This is why the Rudd Labor government has made reforming and improving our nation’s health system a national priority. Our government is committed to building a modern health and hospital system, equipped to meet the health challenges of the future, including an ageing population, the rising burden of chronic disease and the ever-increasing costs associated with medical technologies. That is why, prior to the election, the government announced a comprehensive, long-term plan for health reform in this country, including a $2.5 billion commitment to improving health and hospital systems for all Australians. As is the case with many other public resources, hospitals were constantly underfunded and ignored by the Howard government. Now, as a result of 11 years of neglect, the health and hospital
system is in desperate need of a complete overhaul.

Before I finish, I would like to take up the point about tax on alcopops. The Labor government makes no apology for this tax, and the federal opposition should be ashamed of its attacks on this initiative. Binge drinking is a community-wide problem that demands a community-wide response. This government is determined to take a strong, comprehensive approach to tackling binge drinking in our community. We know that young people are particularly at risk and we know that alcopops are used to hook them on drinking when they are young. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—I just make the comment, once again, that people should refer to people in the other place by their correct title. It is quite appropriate to mention ‘the Rudd government’ or ‘the former Howard government’, but individuals should be given their correct title, as in ‘the member for’, ‘the Prime Minister’, ‘Mr Peter Garrett’ or whatever. I make that clear.

Senator ADAMS (Western Australia) (3.26 pm)—I rise to take note of the motion moved by Senator Colbeck. What is on the agenda? Tonight’s budget will double the income threshold for the Medicare surcharge from $50,000 to $100,000 for singles and from $100,000 to $150,000 for couples. This again proves that Labor is still ideologically uncomfortable with the private sector and has a heavy preference for the public system.

What are the consequences for the taxpayers? The Rudd government is trumpeting that it has saved 2.4 million people from paying a Medicare surcharge. In fact, only 465,000 people have paid the surcharge and each one of them could have avoided it by taking out private health insurance.

A large number of sick people are already waiting unacceptable hours in public hospital emergency departments. People, especially our elderly, are waiting months for elective surgery. With the Rudd government changes to Medicare, they will now have to wait even longer. With the ludicrous threshold increases for singles, younger people will avoid taking out private health insurance. After all the work that has been done to encourage them to take out private health insurance, once again, they will abandon it and more pressure will be placed on public hospitals. This will force up premiums for those people who stay in private funds. Older Australians will also be affected due to these changes and possibly will not be able to continue to choose their level of private health cover which, at their age, is very important. For the two million uninsured people, there will be a tax break of up to $20 a week, straight into their pockets, but no further encouragement for them to get private health insurance.

The Australian Health Insurance Association expects that 400,000 young Australians will drop out of private health insurance. In today’s press, doctors and insurers warned that, as a consequence of this government’s changes, public hospital waiting lists will blow out as hundreds and thousands of young Australians ditch their private health insurance. Dr Michael Armitage, Chief Executive of the Australian Health Insurance Association, is convinced:

If people choose not to remain privately insured—and our modelling—at least the Health Insurance Association could do some modelling but, unfortunately, the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing today could not answer my question concerning the modelling of the Rudd Labor government—shows that up to 400,000 people will not do so—that is, continue in private health—
they will rely on the public system, which means the states will need to badger the Federal Government for more revenue.

The consequences for the states are quite amazing. Health ministers from WA, Queensland and Tasmania have already called for compensation from the Commonwealth if these changes are to be introduced. In the West Australian this morning, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, who is the national President of the Australian Medical Association, said:

You’d have to wonder if you’re setting up the states to fail as far as them being able to deliver across the public health care sector.

Professor Geoffrey Dobb, WA President of the Australian Medical Association, said the changes would cause elective surgery waiting lists to blow out and private health cover premiums to skyrocket. Unless the federal government is ready to provide extra funding to support Western Australia’s hospitals, they will be under siege if thousands of patients opt out of the private health system to be treated under the public system. I am a former member of the metropolitan hospital board, and we put into the system the Central Wait List Bureau. It was quite amazing, in the four years that that board existed, just how well we did with trying to get through the waiting lists. But, unfortunately, because of the hidden costs, there is a need for an interim long-term health reform plan to be put in place by the end of this year.

I just do not think this has helped the health system. In my home state of Western Australia it is going to be very difficult, and I am speaking about those rural Western Australians who have taken out private health insurance and are hoping that somehow they will be able to use it. It looks as if most of them will be forced to go back to the public system. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

Internet Filtering

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (3.31 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the President to a question without notice asked by Senator Allison today relating to the parliamentary computer network and Internet filtering.

This may seem like a small thing, but it seems to me to be a form of censorship which has absolutely no purpose. I object to the fact that someone else is deciding what is and what is not a morally appropriate website for me to observe. We are not clear on the rules here. We do not know what sorts of sites are going to be banned. We know pornographic sites are one of them.

I was looking up information on the web on the debate a couple of weeks ago about clean coal and the split in conservation groups on this issue, and the Herald Sun report on this matter was denied me because it was ‘malicious’. So, apart from the fact that the filter is unlikely to filter out those things which are truly dangerous and offensive to us, I think this is the thin end of the wedge in terms of determining what senators and their staff can and cannot see. As we know, there is an exemption for the library. Why? Because they do research. What do we do on the web? Research. Instead of that, we have this lame excuse by the Appropriations and Staffing Committee that the department has this filter and so should we—what is fair for one is fair for all. Well, it does not seem to me to be self-evident. There need to be cogent reasons why we have this filter.

The President says: ‘Look, it’s all all right. If you find you’ve been blocked on a site and you really need to get to it, ring up 2020.’ I do not know about you, Mr Deputy President, but I am often looking up websites at 11 o’clock at night, and certainly on the
weekends, and, if you have tried ringing 2020 at that time, you will know that there is no response.

I do not object to illegal sites being banned. I think it is perfectly appropriate that, if someone is doing something illegal on a website, in the same way as on the road or anywhere else, they should be properly penalised for it. There is the capacity to interrogate the website access actions of senators and their staff. My question to the President was: where is the problem? Show us. Are there people around this chamber who are accessing pornography which is not related to their parliamentary duties? I do not think so. Are there members and senators who are looking up illicit drugs for the purposes of trading in drugs or using drugs themselves? I do not know. Is it a big problem? Let’s find out. Instead of that, we have a filter imposed on our access to websites which affects us all.

Since I have raised this issue a number of senators have come to me and told me stories about the sorts of harmless, morally sound information that they have been searching for on the web and has been filtered out. So I think this is a ridiculous concept. With the health portfolio, I look up many sites to do with sexual and reproductive health. It is pretty obvious that a lot of those will fall foul of this filter. Illegal arms is apparently one of the categories which will also trigger the filter. Will it also mean North Korea and its nuclear weapons? Will it also mean the small arms trade, the illegal transfer of guns to developing countries? These are things I am interested in, and I do not want somebody else telling me: ‘That’s not your job. You’re not to do that.’ I do not mind if there is a filter on things which are not for use in our parliamentary activities. Let’s put the filter on footy tipping; let’s put the filter on booking theatre tickets. That is fine by me. But what we have is a controlling act of censorship which is about morals.

We know that Senator Fielding was the one that raised this with the committee. We know that he, the moral protector of all of us in this place, went to them. I do not need that moral protection. I have been in the parliament for 12 years. We are elected to make laws and decisions for this country that affect the lives of humans in this country, but apparently we are not entitled to make decisions for ourselves about what we can and cannot see on the web. We are being treated like children. We are adults, we are fully human, and it is not up to somebody else to say this is or is not appropriate. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS
Lobbying Code of Conduct and Register of Lobbyists

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales—Special Minister of State and Cabinet Secretary) (3.37 pm)—I seek leave to make a statement relating to the Lobbying Code of Conduct and Register of Lobbyists.

Leave granted.

Senator FAULKNER—On 6 December 2007, when the Prime Minister released the ‘Standards of Ministerial Ethics’, he confirmed that the government would establish a Register of Lobbyists. The government is now delivering on that commitment.

Today, I am tabling the Lobbying Code of Conduct and announcing the establishment of the Register of Lobbyists.

The government recognises that lobbying is a legitimate activity and part of the democratic process. Lobbyists can help individuals and organisations communicate their views on matters of public interest to the government and, in doing so, improve outcomes for the individual and community as a whole.
However, there is a legitimate concern that ministers, their staff and officials who are the target of lobbying activities are not always fully informed as to the identity of the people who have engaged a lobbyist to speak on their behalf. The government believes that this information can be fundamental to the integrity of its decisions and should be freely available to those who are lobbied and to the wider public.

The public is also right to be concerned about politicians and others who leave office and immediately begin a career lobbying their former colleagues using contacts they developed and information they obtained while in office.

Respect for the institutions of government depends to a large extent on public confidence in the integrity of ministers, their staff and senior officials.

The Lobbying Code of Conduct is intended to promote trust in the integrity of government processes and ensure that contacts between lobbyists and government representatives are conducted in accordance with public expectations of transparency, integrity and honesty.

The Standards of Ministerial Ethics prohibit, for a period of 18 months, former ministers having business dealings with government representatives on matters with which they had official dealings as minister. The combination of these standards and the lobbying code, means the public can be confident that ministers will not be able to use the experience and contacts they have gained in office to enhance their value to the private sector, either as lobbyists or as senior executives in business with the government.

The code requires a 12-month cooling off period for ministerial staff, senior public servants or defence personnel who have resigned or retired, who may want to work as lobbyists. They are prohibited from engaging in lobbying activities with government for a year in relation to any matter that they had official dealings with in the last year of their employment.

Honourable senators may be aware that I released an exposure draft of the Lobbying Code of Conduct for public comment on 2 April 2008. Twenty-eight submissions were received from companies involved in lobbying as well as from members of the public, and I thank all who put thought and effort into ways of enhancing the code. Suggestions have been taken into account and a number of changes have been made to the exposure draft of the code as a result.

As I have said, lobbying is a legitimate part of the democratic process. The revised code represents an appropriate balance, I believe, between the right of ministers, officials and the public to know who stands to benefit from the efforts of lobbyists, and the ability of business to be able to make views known to government. It will not impose unreasonable demands on the lobbying industry, business or ministers and officials.

Although there was a lobbyists register in place from 1984 to 1996, it was not a public register, and did not include a code of conduct to regulate lobbying practice. The new Lobbying Code of Conduct and Register brings our integrity checks on third-party lobbyists up to international standards. The European Parliament is moving to establish a mandatory public register of lobbyists and a code of conduct. Canada and the United States also have registers.

The Lobbying Code of Conduct will apply to third-party or consultant lobbyists—that is, those lobbyists who represent third parties including lawyers, accountants and business advisers who are employed in government relations roles in professional services firms, and professionals such as lawyers who may lobby on a regular basis.
It does not apply to government relations staff employed in major companies or peak industry organisations as the very nature of their employment means that it will be clear to ministers and others whose interests they will be representing.

The objective of the code is not to make every company whose staff or executives visit a minister sign a register; rather, it is to ensure ministers and other government representatives know whose interests are being represented by lobbyists before them and to enshrine a code of principles and conduct for the professional lobbying industry.

There are a number of other exemptions to the code. For example, it will not apply to individuals who make representations to the government on behalf of family members or friends. It will not include statements made in a public forum or to foreign trade delegations visiting Australia or to registered tax agents, customs brokers and other persons who are registered under an Australian government scheme regulating members of that profession, provided that their dealings with government are part of the normal day-to-day work of people in that profession.

These are sensible exclusions that will ensure that the register does not impede day-to-day communications with government.

The code makes clear this government’s determination that, from 1 July 2008, ministers, parliamentary secretaries, ministerial staff and other government representatives do not grant access to lobbyists who are not on the register. Transparency will be further enhanced by requiring registered lobbyists who wish to make representations to ministers or their staff to declare who they are acting for and the nature of the matter that they wish to discuss before access is granted. This is the key strength of both the register and the code.

Through these requirements, the Register of Lobbyists will allow ministers and their staff to know who is engaged in lobbying and whose interests are being promoted. It is aimed at ensuring openness, transparency and accountability in government, rather than control.

And let us be clear—registration will not give automatic access to ministers, their staff and officials but, for those who are properly registered, the register will not impede free and open access to government.

The Register of Lobbyists will, for the first time, be available for public inspection. It will be administered by the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Lobbyists will be required to update their details as soon as practicable in the event of any changes and confirm that they are up to date on a quarterly basis, failing which their registration will lapse. The department has undertaken to update the information on the register on a same-day basis in the event that a lobbyist needs to make urgent representations to government on behalf of a new client.

Lobbyists will also need to comply with the principles of engagement with government representatives set out in the Lobbying Code of Conduct. These principles describe a standard of conduct for lobbyists that will encourage a culture of ethical behaviour and integrity in their activities. Lobbyists who do not comply with the principles will be removed from the register.

To reinforce the importance that the government attaches to the need for lobbyists to be persons in whose integrity ministers and other government representatives can have confidence, any person who has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of longer than 30 months or who has been convicted as an adult of an offence involving dishonesty in the last 10 years will be refused registra-
tion. Lobbyists will need to provide statutory declarations to the secretary of the Prime Minister’s department confirming these matters before they are registered.

In addition, the Cabinet Secretary will be able to direct the secretary of the Prime Minister’s department to refuse to register an individual as a lobbyist, or remove an individual from the register. I expect that this power will only be used in exceptional circumstances.

A number of the submissions that were received in response to the exposure draft suggested that the power to remove lobbyists from the register, or refuse them registration, should be exercised only after the individual concerned had been given an opportunity to be heard. While that was always intended, the government has now included a clear statement to that effect in the revised code.

A further change as a result of the consultation process relates to the problem of lobbyists publicly disclosing a relationship with a client on the register which might result in market speculation about a pending transaction involving the client, when that transaction had not previously been disclosed by the client, or body corporate, in accordance with its continuous disclosure obligations under chapter 6CA of the Corporations Act 2001.

While the code will require the lobbyist to advise the minister of their client on a confidential basis in advance of any lobbying activity, the lobbyist will be required to include the client on the register as soon as the sensitivity has passed—otherwise the code of conduct will have been breached.

The registration requirements will apply from 1 July 2008. From that date, lobbyists must be on the register if they wish to make representations to government on behalf of their clients. In the meantime lobbyists can apply to the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to be included on the register. Further information about the process for applying for registration should be available later today on the department’s website.

The registration of lobbyists should be seen as part of the government’s determination to restore respect for the institutions of government and improved governance across the public sector.

To that end, the Public Service Commissioner and the Chief of the Defence Force have decided that the Lobbying Code of Conduct should also apply to the Australian Public Service and the Australian Defence Force. I understand that they will shortly be issuing guidance to the Australian Public Service and the Australian Defence Force on lobbying activities as they relate to members of the APS and the ADF.

The Prime Minister promised from day one of this government that a code of conduct for lobbyists would be part of the transparency and integrity provisions being established by the Rudd government. It was flagged in the ‘Standards of Ministerial Ethics’, along with the provisions which prevent ministers from working in their field of cabinet knowledge for 18 months after leaving office.

I am pleased to say that today we have another integrity provision in place to help restore public confidence in government and governance.

I table a copy of the statement I have just made, together with a copy of the Lobbying Code of Conduct, and seek leave to move a motion in relation to the documents.

Leave granted.

Senator FAULKNER—I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

The PRESIDENT—Before I call any senators, I draw the attention of the Senate to
the fact that, under standing order 169(2), the
time limit on this debate is 30 minutes.

Senator BOB BROWN (Tasmania—
Leader of the Australian Greens) (3.49
pm)—While the Greens welcome the Regis-
ter of Lobbyists and the Lobbying Code of
Conduct, this is way short of what is required
to protect the interests of the public and the
interests of democracy in our country in an
age when vested interests put enormous
pressure onto the elected representatives of
office and, in particular, onto parliaments.

I give the example of the Sydney Morning
Herald article on Saturday which mooted the
line-up of coal industry executives who are
currently lobbying the minister for matters
related to climate change, Senator Penny
Wong. The fact is that there is an open door
to the coal industry but there is not an open
doors to community interests who may be
affected by government policy when it
comes to the huge range of climate change
issues. I think there should be much greater
openness about that, and maybe this will
open the door.

I point to a question that I put to Senator
Wong in estimates. I asked: ‘Since the elec-
tion, on which occasions has the minister
met representatives of the coal industry and
what was discussed?’ I got the answer: ‘The
minister is determined to meet as many indi-
viduals as possible, both formally and infor-
mally, in her portfolio. Generally meetings
have been either held with the expectation of
confidentiality or on the public record.’ In
other words, ‘I am not going to tell you.’ I
will be interested to see what a non-
legislated Register of Lobbyists and a non-
legislated Lobbying Code of Conduct will do
about that.

The problem with Senator Faulkner’s pro-
posals, firstly, is that they are not legislated;
you ought to be. Secondly, they apply to
ministers and perhaps, in some other circum-
stances, backbenchers of the government,
though that is not clear, rather than to all
members of parliament. Thirdly, they apply
to some lobbyists but not all lobbyists. The
minister has just given the example of public
relations groups. The coal industry, the log-
ing industry and the mining industry come
to the fore with their big edifices here in
Canberra, working as public relations offi-
cers—a prodigious lobby, unseen by the pub-
lic in this place—with presumably a loop-
hole a mile wide to escape the requirements
that otherwise might ensure that everybody
knows when they see ministers and when
they do not and whether they are complying
with the code of conduct.

This code should be legislated. This code
should apply to all members of parliament.
This code should apply to all lobbyists who
see members of parliament. Let me give an-
other big loophole. We are moving into a
new balance of power situation in the Senate.
All parties will be able to contribute to the
balance of power. Not just the crossbench
but all members of the opposition will hold
the balance of power in given circumstances.
I know from previously being in the position
that, when it comes down to one or two peo-
ple making a decision, the big end of town
will be queuing up immediately to lobby
them. Are Senator Fielding or Senator elect
Xenophon, when he enters the Senate after
1 July, or indeed any of the five Greens, go-
ning to be under the purview of the register
and the Lobbying Code of Conduct? No,
they are not. We ought to be, and so should
the lobbyists who come to see us. I would
want to know that this Lobbying Code of
Conduct applies not just in this parliament
and in our electoral offices but at business
lunches, fundraising dinners and everywhere
where politicians are approached by lobby-
ists because of a sectional interest that they
want to pursue.
We are here for all the people all of the time and the least we can do is let all the people all of the time know who is seeing us, what their case is and whether they have been successful. Let us be straight about it. There are thousands of lobbyists in all the great democracies. I understand there are 80,000 in Washington. They pervert and corrupt the democratic system because they get opportunities that the rest of the citizens do not. If we believe in a democracy of one person, one vote, one value, we have to go much further than this code of conduct and this register in correcting that imbalance. Senator Faulkner is quite right in that we have to hear from industries, from non-government organisations, from unions and from individuals. We are here in a representative democracy. All of us know that there are powerful interests at work which have huge sway on the body politic which the average citizen suspects but does not know about. And they change outcomes in parliaments. We ought to know about that. All of us who are involved in making decisions ought to be prepared to be totally transparent about those lobbyists who come to see us. This register and this code of conduct go nowhere near satisfying complete transparency of the forceful powers that come to sway not just on government but on all members of parliament and, indeed, as Senator Faulkner said, on the bureaucracy. There is a long way to go here.

I call on the government to legislate this code and this register; otherwise you leave it to the good people to do the right thing and to the crooks, the villains and those who want to get an advantage in the night to slide around the side. If you have not had an approach from somebody wanting an advantage and offering one in return, you have not been in this place very long. We have a long way to go beyond this. It is a very meek, tremulous and unsatisfactory start to really throwing open the power of lobbyists and the perversion that can occur in the political system—and did occur under the last government—being manifest. It is something we should go a lot further towards correcting. I congratulate Senator Faulkner for raising the issue onto the public agenda. I know it has been brought before the Senate on budget day. We have a long, long way to go before we satisfactorily ensure that the public is given total transparency when it comes to lobbyists, who are there either to represent them or to gain an advantage against their interests in the parliamentary system.

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria) (3.58 pm)—While the opposition broadly support the thrust of both the Lobbying Code of Conduct and the register of interests, we are deeply cynical about both the stated reasons for the code and the timing of its release today. I would like to make some general comments about the code and then get to the code specifically. The Lobbying Code of Conduct released today by the government will not stop the Brian Burkes of this world or other Labor identities from breaking the rules. Labor broke the old rules and Labor will break these new rules. The bottom line is this code will not stop the sorts of problems we have seen arise with former Western Australian Premier Brian Burke or the types of abuses we have read about in the media regarding Labor Party figures and the Wollongong council sex and bribe scandal. Let us not forget that we are only having this debate today for one reason: a string of problems involving Labor identities turned lobbyists who have overstepped the mark in their dealings with both local Labor councillors and state and federal Labor MPs.

I would now like to turn to the code. This code, like the draft, still gives the cabinet secretary unfettered power under section 10.3 to exercise absolute discretion to not register or remove a lobbyist from the regis-
The minister now defends this by saying that he expects ‘this power will be used in exceptional circumstances only’. Giving yourself complete and unaccountable power with the caveat that you do not expect to use it very much is to use words that should fill everyone involved in this matter with both fear and trepidation. It is still a case of all roads leading to the Special Minister of State and Prime Minister Rudd.

The Rudd government has somewhat addressed the lack of recourse for those who are struck off or denied joining the register but only after the issue was exposed by the opposition. The process by which the cabinet secretary contacts a lobbyist or individual and discusses a potential breach is done in secret. Our question is: where is the accountability in that change?

Also of great concern to the coalition is that this code does not even once mention unions. Unions are not only aggressive campaigners in federal elections but also the most aggressive lobbyists in politics. Their power and influence over Labor governments is not just confined to visitations in ministerial offices. Last Australia Day, representatives of the MUA enjoyed the hospitality of the Prime Minister at the Lodge. Who knows what was discussed and what was agreed. There certainly would not have been any minutes kept of the discussions that day.

In this code, unions come under part (f) of the description of ‘lobbyist’ in section 3 and, remarkably, are therefore exempted from this code. Everyone agrees that unions have the right to put their case forward on policy issues and be walking the corridors of Parliament House, but this exemption for unions, combined with the tens of millions of dollars they donate to the Labor Party, raises serious questions about how effective this code will be in the real world. The omission of unions from this code is breathtaking but, despite this flaw being pointed out by the coalition to Prime Minister Rudd, he has chosen to ignore this advice and persisted with giving unions special privileges. The community will quite rightly ask the rhetorical question: ‘Why are unions being given special privileges in this matter?’ If this code is to have any credibility it simply must deal with the issue of lobbying by union officials.

Like the draft code, this code provides no penalties for government representatives who breach the code. It also still fails to account for the realities of government. What constitutes an oral communication under section 3? Does a chance meeting at the Parliament House coffee shop ‘Aussie’s’ fall under this definition? What happens if a lobbyist has a chance conversation with a ministerial staffer out of sitting hours who is unaware of their engagement as a lobbyist? The provisions of this code certainly will not stop the sort of clandestine meetings we have read about in the media involving the likes of Brian Burke or the types of activities of those Labor figures on the Wollongong Council.

This code, like its predecessor draft, does not properly deal with conflicts of interest or even mention the conflicts relating to spouses or close relatives. While I am sure it is not its intention, in practical terms this code may exempt Prime Minister Rudd’s chief of staff, whose wife is a senior lobbyist. Another practical flaw with this code which may lead to ministerial personnel problems down the track is the prohibition on ministerial staffers taking jobs in the private sector in an area in which they had official dealings. There is no definition of ‘official dealings’. Who makes that decision? Is it the Prime Minister? Is it the Special Minister of State?

While the provision of section 7.1 for former ministers appears reasonable, the
prohibition under section 7.2 affecting current Labor ministerial staffers does not appear to take into account situations where they may lose their jobs under reshuffles or the like. In practical terms, this provision appears to be totally unfair. To take a practical example, what happens in a situation where, hypothetically, Treasurer Wayne Swan loses the Treasury portfolio in a reshuffle? What happens to his economic advisers? Under this code there are restrictions on what future jobs they can take. Surely this is a disincentive for potential budding ministerial staffers to enter the political fray. This provision can only have long-term consequences for the quality of staff that ministers can recruit.

Another flaw in this code is that, by exempting companies who lobby directly, there is nothing to stop the Brian Burkes of this world working as employees for a company part-time. It exempts companies who put a former politician on their board of directors for lobbying purposes. It encourages companies to hide their lobbying activities by doing it directly—that is, outside the code—and it discourages an open and transparent understanding of lobbying.

The register requires lobbyists to list all the clients they are lobbying on behalf of. Some would say that is fair enough. But what happens in the circumstances where the Hawker Brittons of this world are in Prime Minister Rudd’s office for a political and strategy briefing and they happen to mention one of their clients or an issue affecting one of their clients? The code does not cover that situation.

I am pleased that Senator Faulkner took on board the coalition’s concerns about the draft code effectively giving Labor law firms a special deal. As the coalition argued on the day the draft was released, by giving lawyers a special exemption we would be moving towards the American model, where most lobbyists are registered as law firms, gaining their clients special lawyer-client legal privilege. Fortunately the coalition was successful in forcing that change.

Finally and importantly, why is this very important debate occurring just hours before the Prime Minister’s first budget? Here is a new government, where Prime Minister Rudd cynically talks about openness, accountability and transparency, and they are dropping this controversial code in the afternoon before the budget so that it gets lost in tomorrow’s newspapers. It is a tactic classically out of an episode of the West Wing. The fact is the Prime Minister wants this debate, which is essentially about the cultural problems of the Labor Party, to be buried under an avalanche of media reports about the budget. It may be a smart short-term political tactic but it has all the characteristics of a government that, in its infancy, is already successfully avoiding accountability. There is no justification, as Senator Bob Brown said, for this matter to be raised today. This is an issue that should not be lost in tomorrow’s budget papers. This is an issue that deserved greater transparency, greater discussion and the ability for the media to be commenting on this matter. They will not comment on this because they will be commenting on the budget. This is not openness. This is not transparency. As I said earlier, we broadly support the thrust of this; we are deeply cynical about both its rationale and the timing of its release.

Senator MURRAY (Western Australia) (4.08 pm)—I am going to start with two notes of congratulation. The first is because, for a change—because it has been put aside as a form of courtesy—we have a ministerial statement to which we can actually apply a debate. As the coalition argued on the day the draft was released, by giving lawyers a special exemption we would be moving towards the American model, where most lobbyists are registered as law firms, gaining their clients special lawyer-client legal privilege. Fortunately the coalition was successful in forcing that change.

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Senator MURRAY (Western Australia) (4.08 pm)—I am going to start with two notes of congratulation. The first is because, for a change—because it has been put aside as a form of courtesy—we have a ministerial statement to which we can actually apply a debate. It had become the practice under the previous government to drop them into the Senate with no debate, so I am glad to see a
return to proper Senate consideration of a ministerial statement. Attached to that note of congratulation is of course a congratulation to the government for having put out an exposure draft two months ago, and for there being adequate time for both the media and politicians to examine this and to come forward with their final conclusion at the earliest opportunity, which is the first sitting day of the new session. I thought the previous criticism outlined was both ungracious and inaccurate.

My second note of congratulation is for the introduction of the code itself. This is an advance in accountability and integrity. This is a movement forward. It is a bit like people criticising a situation where there has been no house and a house has then been built which has not got two bathrooms, only one, and has got only one bedroom and should have two. We have got a house; now let’s build on it. That is going to be the thrust of my remarks. I welcome and I am pleased with the initiative of the government. I want to say to you: it is inadequate and it needs further additions.

When I and my party have looked at the business of lobbying and the question of how a lobbying register should be set up, we have had to address the same fundamental questions which I am sure the minister has addressed. In viewing these questions, the great thing the minister has been able to do is to overcome the natural inertia—in fact the very considerable forces that are always against these sorts of moves. It is no accident that in the previous government they did absolutely zip on this, because the powers that were opposed to a lobbyist register were very strong indeed, despite there being members within the Liberal Party who would certainly have thought it a good idea.

The basic questions you need to cover when you are dealing with something like a lobbyists register are, firstly, who should be on it, how the applications should be made, how decisions as to who should be on it are made and whether there is review of decisions. Secondly, there is the question of how it should be administered and whether that is independent or in house. Thirdly is the question of who should be affected by a lobbying register and, fourthly, what should be the means for enforcement and discipline?

Going to the third question of who should be affected by it, obviously this register covers cabinet ministers, junior ministers and parliamentary secretaries, but there is the question of caucus committee chairs and members of those caucus committees, there is the question of Senate and House committee chairs and their members, and there is the question of members and senators themselves and, as Senator Bob Brown rightly said, particularly with respect to senators who may hold the balance of power on particular issues before the Senate. There is the question of who in the public sector should be covered by it, whether it is those covered by the Financial Management and Accountability Act or the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act, and there is the question of whether the register should apply not just to the Commonwealth but to all states and territories. The basic issue of lobbyists is the same whether you are in the Commonwealth or in the states or territories.

When we think about those who lobby, sometimes those who get the most flak for being basically creatures for hire are those who lobby for anyone—in other words, they are firms whose business is lobbying. But they are no different to accountants or lawyers who accept a fee for service. In that sense, they are a business for hire. The second group are those who lobby for a specific sector or group. There are organisations representing for-profits—peak organisations such as those who lobby for miners or farm-
ers or those sorts of people who are making a profit. There are lobby groups who lobby for specific not-for-profit sections of the community such as unions or clubs. There are lobby groups who represent churches, religions or sects.

There are those who lobby for their own corporation or entity, whether for profit or not for profit—that would be people like Telstra or big not-for-profit organisations such as, say, the Catholic health body. There are those who lobby on their own account as individuals— they have a specific problem with a specific law—and those who lobby in the public interest who have no self-interest but are attached to causes such as environmental groups or civil liberties groups.

The criticisms that surround the register that we have been presented with cover many fields. They cover the fields of independence, they cover the fields of enforceability and they cover the fields of exemption. The Australian Democrats have recognised that this is a complex and difficult issue and it is one on which we need the Senate to form a consensus and push the government for a better standard. We do not simply need to hear the sorts of criticisms without solutions that some might offer. Consequently, I have today put down in the Senate a notice of motion, a signed version of which I have submitted, which asks that the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration inquire into and report on this lobbying code of conduct by the first sitting Thursday of August 2008. I should note that, when I put it down, I had an exposure draft before me and it was titled ‘Exposure Draft’. But that of course is now replaced by the documents before us.

I have asked that the committee examine the code of conduct issued by the government and whether the proposed code of conduct is adequate to achieve its aims—in particular, (a) whether a consolidated code applying to members of both houses of the parliament and their staff as well as to ministers and their staff should be adopted by a joint resolution of the two houses; (b) whether the code should be confined to organisations representing clients or should be extended to organisations which will lobby on their own behalf; (c) whether the proposed exemptions are justified; and (d) any other relevant matters. Frankly, I am open to having those terms of reference changed, improved, except for the one which says ‘any other relevant matters’, because I do not want it to be narrowly confined. Having given the minister a lead that he may propose additions to the terms of reference if he wants to accept the notice of motion, I am happy to do that.

In concluding my remarks, I say let us be clear that this is a very significant milestone—a very significant advance. The minister and the government should be congratulated on it, but the Senate should do its work to improve and add to what we have been offered to make us a leader in the world, not just a follower, with respect to this issue.

Question agreed to.

CONDOLENCES

Lance Corporal Jason Marks

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Leader of the Government in the Senate) (4.17 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its deep regret at the death of Lance Corporal Jason Marks while on a combat operation in Afghanistan and places on record its appreciation of his service to his country and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

On behalf of the Australian government and members of the Senate, I extend my deepest condolences to Lance Corporal Marks’s wife, Cassandra, their two children, Connor and Ella, and his parents, Paul and Sharon. Lance Corporal Marks was a loving father,
husband and son. He was also highly respected by his peers and renowned for his dedication and his enthusiasm for his job. He had a distinguished career in the Army, rising to the position of Commando in the 4th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment. He deployed to East Timor and Afghanistan on more than one occasion. He received numerous service medals and was awarded a Unit Citation for Gallantry in 2006.

The sad death of Lance Corporal Marks gives us pause to reflect on the extraordinary strength of character and courage that all our service men and women display. In particular, our soldiers deployed to Afghanistan are making a significant contribution to the region. They are working with coalition partners and the government of Afghanistan to rebuild the country and provide security for its people.

Just over two weeks ago, on Anzac Day, the nation reflected on the Australian traditions of courage and of fighting for freedom and the common good. These traditions are part of who we are as a nation, but tragedies such as this remind us that they come at a terrible cost. As the Prime Minister reminded us a few weeks ago, our commitment to Afghanistan will come at a very high cost. Our successful operations in Iraq, where we suffered a very low level of casualties, created a false sense in the minds of the Australian public of the risks faced by Australian personnel deployed in active combat zones. What we have learnt in Afghanistan is the reality of our commitment to combat and the real costs that our soldiers and other service personnel pay.

The Rudd Labor government and, I think, all members of the Senate take our responsibilities very seriously when we take a decision to send our service personnel into harm’s way by committing them to combat activity. We all carry a heavy burden when we see the cost of our decisions to commit our troops on behalf of Australia. Lance Corporal Marks made a significant contribution to the national interest and to securing peace and nation building in East Timor and Afghanistan. Lance Corporal Marks lost his life serving his nation with courage and honour, and his sacrifice will not be forgotten. It is with great sadness that we pause today as a mark of respect to Lance Corporal Marks and honour his service to the nation.

Senator MINCHIN (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (4.21 pm)—I rise on behalf of the coalition to support the motion moved by Senator Evans. I want to place on record our support for the motion and our very deep regret at the tragic death of Lance Corporal Jason Marks, who was killed while serving with the Special Operations Task Group in Afghanistan. As a member of the government that decided to commit our Special Operations Task Group to Afghanistan, and now as the shadow defence minister, I am particularly saddened by his death. We note and record that Corporal Marks was a loyal and dedicated member of the Australian Defence Force. We on the coalition side join with the government in expressing our sincere condolences to Lance Corporal Marks’s wife, Cassandra, and their children, friends and family for this very sad and tragic loss. I also take this opportunity to express our profound wishes for a speedy recovery for the four soldiers wounded in the fighting that resulted in Lance Corporal Marks’s very sad and untimely death.

Senator BARTLETT (Queensland) (4.22 pm)—I want to add to the record the Democrats’ support for this motion. The important contribution our service personnel make, and the risk that they face everywhere they are in the world, should always be noted. Regardless of people’s views about the merits or otherwise of particular conflicts, we should always ensure that does not spill across into
any loss of support for the importance of the role our armed forces play. I would also, as always, emphasise that needs to include continuing to support their families—those that can also pay a price. In this incident, of course, the family—the children and spouse of this soldier killed in action—should not be forgotten.

Question agreed to, honourable senators standing in their places.

Ms Ruth Nancy Coleman

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Troeth)—It is with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death on 27 March 2008 of Ruth Nancy Coleman, a senator for Western Australia from 1974 to 1987.

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Leader of the Government in the Senate) (4.24 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its deep regret at the death, on 27 March 2008, of Ruth Nancy Coleman, former senator for Western Australia and places on record its appreciation of her long and meritorious public service and tenders its profound sympathy to her family in their bereavement.

I had the pleasure of knowing Ruth Coleman, and growing up in the Western Australian Labor Party while she was a leading, and firebrand, light. She was a woman of great passion, great commitment, and great tenacity, and she took the view that no challenge was too much for her. She was a real inspiration for the participation of many women in the Labor Party, and in politics, and that continued throughout her career in the Senate.

She was born in the coalfield town of Collie in Western Australia on 27 September 1931 and, like so many working-class children of her generation, she left school at 14 and went to work in a variety of jobs before ending up in advertising and public relations. Before entering federal parliament Ruth’s political activism was focused on consumer affairs. She became very well known in the Western Australian community as a very strong advocate for the rights of consumers at a time when such activity was not commonplace.

Ruth became heavily involved as secretary of the Consumer Action Movement, and she was appointed by the Western Australian government as a foundation member of the Consumer Affairs Council of WA. She was also a member of the Retail Trades Advisory and Control Committee. Together with former senator Pat Giles, she brought a whole new aspect to the membership and participation of women in the Western Australian Labor Party.

Ruth was elected as a senator for Western Australia in 1973. She was then only the third woman ever to be elected to the Commonwealth parliament from Western Australia, and one of only four women in the Senate at that time. During those years, the male dominance of the parliament manifested itself in many ways, and Ruth was quick to come up against the male political establishment. She became known for challenging those establishment rules. When she was first elected, there were no bathrooms for women senators, and she started by waging a campaign for more female bathrooms on the Senate side of Parliament House. She insisted on using the male senators’ bathrooms until her demands were met.

Later that same year, Ruth joined in a protest by 30 members of the Women’s Electoral Lobby against the men-only bar of the Canberra Rex Hotel. They had originally been refused service, but a week later—after Ruth led another well-fought publicity campaign—the hotel relented and opened up the bar to women as well.

Ruth was also famous for the controversy she generated in 1975 when she tried to play for the parliamentary cricket XI. Ruth had
volunteered to play on the parliamentary team in the annual politicians versus press gallery cricket match. To the great shame of the Democrats, the then team captain, the late Don Chipp—he might have still been in the Liberals then; that may explain it—refused to have her on his side, telling her that he could not accept the mind-bending prospect of crouching in the slips beside a woman.

Undeterred, the following year Ruth led her own mixed side against the press gallery, which had decided to place a ban on Chipp for male chauvinism. It is worth noting that, despite this incident, the two of them went on to become great friends. Ruth was that sort of character.

Ruth also took on the Taxation Office in 1978, when it refused to grant her deductions for childcare costs. Eventually the Supreme Court of Western Australia ruled in her favour, in what was hailed at the time as a victory for working mothers across Australia. Unfortunately, we are still having the same debates.

Beyond these stories, Ruth was a very active and effective senator during her 13 years in parliament. She fought against discrimination in all areas. She was passionate and outspoken on a range of issues, including consumer affairs, women’s rights, human rights, Indigenous affairs, world peace and disarmament, and she was particularly well known for her anti-uranium views. I know she was unhappy with my role in the ALP changing its policy in that regard last year.

During her time here, Ruth was the co-convenor of the Parliamentary Disarmament Group and was heavily involved in the Australian Parliamentary Group of Amnesty International. Ruth also served on a number of standing, select and joint parliamentary committees. These included the Senate Legislative and General Purpose Standing Committee on National Development and Ownership and Control of Australian Resources Committee, the Senate Select Committee on Foreign Ownership and Control, and the Senate Select Committee on Volatile Substance Fumes. She chaired the Senate Legislative and General Purpose Standing Committee on Industry and Trade and the Senate Legislative and General Purpose Standing Committee on Trade and Commerce. In her valedictory speech, Ruth told the story of her first Senate caucus meeting. Those present were discussing the various committees, and one of her colleagues suggested that she would be best suited to the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare because she was a woman. In response, Ruth made a point of registering her interest in the standing committee on industry and trade. It was typical of her tenacity and talent that she became not only a member of the committee but eventually the committee chair. You didn’t mess with Ruth! In addition she also served as Temporary Chair of Committees from March 1976 to June 1987.

Like all Western Australian politicians, Ruth worked hard at trying to balance her work and family life, given the demands of travel, and no doubt her exhausting workload contributed to the cerebral haemorrhage she suffered in 1984. It was a terrible thing, but she displayed her trademark courage and determination to overcome that event. She returned to the Senate in 1986 but stepped down just before the 1987 federal election. In fact, I was due to replace her at that time but we had a double dissolution and I got done by the Nuclear Disarmament Party—which was a good thing for me! I had some dealings with her when I was seeking to succeed her and she really put up an enormous fight to contribute to politics and community activism despite the very severe health issue she suffered from, which was very debilitat-
As I said, she showed great bravery in dealing with that and great purpose of mind.

Ruth Coleman was a pioneering woman in the Senate and did much to change public perceptions of the role of women in politics. It is a testament to the battles she fought and won that at the time of her retirement in 1987 the number of women in parliament had increased to 25, with 17 of them in the Senate. Of course that number has continued to grow since then. Ruth was known as a crusader for many worthy causes, and throughout her life she showed courage and determination in everything that she applied herself to. Ruth passed away on 27 March. On behalf of the government I offer my condolences to Ruth’s two children, Terry and Brad, and to her grandchildren, Kelly, Shane and Glen. Ruth will be missed.

Senator MINCHIN (South Australia) (4.33 pm)—On behalf of all coalition senators, I want to join with Senator Chris Evans in extending our sympathies to the family for former Senator Ruth Coleman, who passed away on 27 March 2008, aged 76. Senator Evans has more than adequately described the very colourful life that former Senator Coleman lived and the enormous contribution she made. I think it is more than appropriate that we should all join in celebrating most particularly what was obviously a tremendous contribution with the very worthy aim of ensuring the proper representation of women in the Commonwealth parliament. That is something we, particularly we males, should all acknowledge is vital. She obviously made a huge difference to that cause. Certainly as a former party official I have always thought that it is really important that we all work to encourage more women to put their hand up to serve in the Commonwealth parliament in particular and that women do bring a different perspective, and often it is a very civilising and important perspective.

I think Ruth Coleman showed the great virtues of passion and energy and a determination to make a difference, something which I always try to encourage in younger aspiring and actual parliamentarians: ‘Don’t come here and just be a timeserver and enjoy it. If you are going to be here try and make a difference.’ Obviously Ruth Coleman had the tremendous energy and determination to do that and had an extraordinarily colourful life in so doing. Without being unduly sensitive, I am sure Don Chipp’s then membership of the Liberal Party had nothing to do with him thinking that cricket should be played only by men, because I love seeing women play sport and I encourage it—and good on Ruth for making sure that Don got the message. I am pleased to hear that indeed they ended up good mates after that.

I also note, and I am sure Senator Evans sympathises with this, that those of us in the nearer states always have great admiration for those who serve in this place representing electorates in or the state of Western Australia. To represent Western Australia in this place, Western Australia being the biggest and the furthest state, is extraordinarily demanding, particularly for those with families. So we acknowledge that and acknowledge what was obviously the enormous support that Ruth got from her family in undertaking that very difficult role. In fact, that is why I have always thought that the capital of Australia should have been Adelaide, to make it easier for Western Australians to come to parliament. As John Stone said, perhaps placing Canberra here was the nation’s biggest mistake. No doubt Western Australians would agree.

The other interesting thing about Ruth Coleman was this passionate opposition to uranium mining, something we on this side have never quite understood. It is very interesting to reflect on the hysteria that uranium used to cause in the Labor Party. I used to be
the Liberal Party spy at national conferences of the Labor Party and witnessed the extraordinary, passionate debates about whether or not uranium should be dug out of the ground and, of course, Ruth was at the forefront of that. It is remarkable that to this day her state of Western Australia continues to ban uranium mining, much to the great benefit of my state of South Australia, which all the uranium miners are pouring into because they are not allowed to go into Western Australia. So Ruth’s passionate opposition to uranium mining continues to live on in her home state. That is a surprise to us all but that is a reflection of the passion she brought to her public life and to that issue in particular.

So we are pleased to join with Senator Evans and the government in extending to her family our deepest sympathies. Clearly, she had to recover from a very serious illness 20-odd years ago. While we are grateful that her family had another 20-odd years of sharing life with Ruth, nevertheless 76 is too young to leave this life. We are saddened by that and we extend our best wishes to her family.

Senator BARTLETT (Queensland) (4.37 pm)—I wish to associate the Australian Democrats with this condolence motion and debate. I did not have the privilege of knowing former Senator Coleman personally, but clearly she served in this chamber during the time of many Democrat senators. A couple of her experiences with key founding Democrat member Don Chipp have already been mentioned. I do not know if the particular incident that was mentioned was before or after he shifted to the Democrats but, given their similar views on the issues of uranium and nuclear disarmament, I am not surprised that any earlier disagreements with regard to other matters were overcome.

It is also particularly important for us as Democrats to pay tribute to pioneering women, something the Democrats as a party have always given a lot of significance and importance to. I think it is important to make two points. Firstly, for all the progress that has been made, we do need to emphasise that we are certainly well short of equality, even basic equality in numbers in this chamber and in parliament more broadly. Just 30 or so years ago, in 1974, Ruth Coleman first came into the Senate. It is not that long ago, and to think of a Senate that had less than a handful, only two or three, female senators is quite extraordinary. We have made progress since then and, whilst there is still undoubtedly progress to be made, I think it is fair to say that it is a hell of a lot harder being one woman amongst three or four than being one amongst 20 or 30. We particularly have to pay tribute to those who performed that pioneering role, whilst continuing to emphasise the need to make further progress.

In some ways it sounds minor to be singling out Ruth Coleman’s role in the simple matter of having female toilets available for senators, which is mentioned in some of the media commentary about her life. The bizarre situation in Old Parliament House of two toilets being available, one marked ‘senators’ and one marked ‘officials’, outside the Senate chamber sounds laughable now, but I am sure it was not funny at all at the time. Those sorts of basic mechanisms for exclusion might sound minor but are very telling.

Ruth Coleman played a role not just in the anti-uranium debates but in nuclear disarmament and in issues which, in the 1980s in particular, were very fierce. In some ways I wish, particularly in terms of disarmament issues, that the debates were as passionate today as they were back then. She was a key player in those battles. It was interesting to read her final speech to this Senate in June
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1987, in which she mentioned her disappointment with their changing policies on uranium issues, which is obviously no secret to the Labor Party. She also made statements which, sadly, are not out of place with ones many of us would make—in fact, I may well be making a similar one in a month’s time. They were statements about being disappointed with the lack of progress in Indigenous affairs, an area that she was also a strong campaigner on in Western Australia, and in human rights issues. I was interested to read about her role. Indeed, she was sentenced to jail—but ended up not going because her fine was paid—for breaching a Western Australian law of the time, a section of the Police Act which sought to restrict meetings to no more than three people without police permission, which is reminiscent of some of the laws that used to be in place in Queensland in the 1980s.

Senator Boswell interjecting—

Senator BARTLETT—It may well not be severe. We will not have a debate on that now, Senator Boswell. The simple fact is that, at least in how it is described, it was clearly a very severe law with regard to basic civil liberties. It was probably no surprise, given the picture of Ruth Coleman that has been painted. She was at the forefront of challenging that law directly by speaking at a meeting in 1980 and, after making a speech claiming her right to address constituents, being amongst 42 people arrested in Forrest Place. As I said, she faced jail because of her refusal to pay the fine, until it was paid by someone unknown. She was clearly a woman not at all afraid to speak her mind. She spoke out on behalf of other women and of other people. That role of a senator, speaking on behalf of people whose voices would otherwise not be heard, is a very important one.

The tenacity she demonstrated by overcoming the very severe and serious brain haemorrhage that she suffered without warning just before the 1984 election should be noted, as it has been by others. To recuperate from that and come back after a year or so of convalescing shows determination and also, as I think she also said in her speech upon returning, her love of the role of the Senate and the work that she could do there.

It is a bit unfortunate, but totally understandable, that we sometimes have few people speak to condolence motions for people who last served in this place many years ago. In some ways, I guess we all hope that we will live long enough that, when we do die, there will be no-one left serving here who remembers us. That would mean we have managed to survive for a fair while, so it is probably not a bad thing in lots of ways. But it does tend to mean that former senators’ contributions may not be as fully recognised as they might otherwise have been.

Clearly, Ruth Coleman was a pioneering woman in many ways. She has left a legacy not just for the Senate but for public engagement and political debate more broadly. As I think Senator Evans mentioned in his contribution, Ruth Coleman left school at the age of 13 or 14. She is one of a number of people who showed that a lack of formal education was no barrier to contributing incredibly effectively to the wider community, and indeed to political debate. That of course is not an exhortation that people should forget about school and go do something else; it is a reminder that, when people have that tenacity, that determination and that talent, they can overcome a lot of hurdles. Ruth Coleman did that in lots of ways. I am sure that the Senate, her state of Western Australia and the nation are better for her contribution.

I associate the Democrats both with this motion and with condolences for her family.

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (4.46 pm)—Senator Ruth Coleman,
who died on 27 March, served in the parliament from 1974 to 1987 as a senator for Western Australia. When elected she was one of only five women in the federal parliament—four in the Senate and one, Joan Child, in the House of Representatives. A feminist and fighter for many women’s causes, she commented in 1975, soon after being elected:

I think we are not mature enough yet to accept that women can be just as successful in the political field as in any other, and once this maturity arrives, we won’t appear so freakish. It’s unfortunate that we only have five female members out of 187. I’d like to see 25 to 30 women in—I don’t think that is too many out of 187, but I’ll not see it in my lifetime.

Well, she did see it in her lifetime, and she also saw encouraging progress during her time of service in the parliament. When she retired from the Senate in 1987 there were 25 women in the parliament, 17 of them in the Senate. And of course it is due to trailblazers like Ruth Coleman that we now have a total of 68 women—28 senators and 40 members—in the parliament. We owe her and those early women in the parliament a huge debt.

The return of the Whitlam government after the double dissolution in 1974 saw three Labor women elected to parliament: Ruth Coleman and Jean Melzer to the Senate and Joan Child to the House of Representatives, which had been without a woman member since October 1969. By 1984 Senator Coleman was the longest serving Labor woman in the federal parliament. Her background as Secretary of the Consumer Action Movement ensured that consumer protection was one of the issues she pursued here, and one that featured in her maiden speech. She served on many committees, including one on Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory and another on the Family Law Act. Not wanting to be restricted to so-called women’s issues, she chose to serve on, and later chair, the Senate Standing Committee on Industry and Trade rather than the health and welfare committee initially offered to her. She was co-convener of the parliamentary disarmament group and belonged to the Parliamentary Group of Amnesty International and to the ALP Parliamentarians Committee for Peace and Justice.

Senator Ruth Coleman’s maiden speech heralded the arrival in this parliament of a passionate feminist. She spoke of the discrimination faced by women in obtaining finance and of the requirement then for a male guarantor for financial loans and other matters. Soon after her arrival in the Senate she began campaigning for more women’s toilets in the parliament—such practical things—and she joined a protest by 30 members of the Women’s Electoral Lobby who were refused service in a ‘men-only’ bar at the old Canberra Rex Hotel. These issues received comprehensive press coverage. More importantly, perhaps, she highlighted the desperate shortages of women’s refuges, especially in Western Australia, and spoke of systematic police violence towards Aborigines in the north-west of Western Australia, sparking calls for a royal commission into these allegations. Another passionate cause for Senator Coleman was her anti-uranium mining and antinuclear weapons campaigns. She featured at protests at which she, with other Labor politicians, was arrested. She was indignant at one time when her court-imposed fine was paid by an anonymous supporter so that she did not go to jail.

Ruth was respected by, and in turn respected and maintained friendships with, a great number of the parliamentarians of her time including, for example, Liberals Fred Chaney and Peter Baume. On her retirement in 1987 Senator Chaney spoke of the trust and appreciation that had built up, and Senator Coleman spoke of the cross-party friend-
ships, built often through committee work. In her valedictory speech she vowed to continue to apply pressure on questions of human rights, Aboriginal health and land rights, and in the debates on uranium and nuclear issues.

Susan Ryan, who was elected to the Senate in December 1975, commented of Ruth that ‘the constant travel from Perth to Canberra was cruel, but she withstood it stoically’. However, at the end of 1984 she suffered three severe aneurysms on the brain and spent 1985 fighting her way back to health. The Senate welcomed her back at the beginning of 1986, with many comments on her courage. Among her many interests were Scrabble and bowls, and in 1983 she was the first woman to win the parliamentary snooker handicap competition.

Of the senators in this current parliament only three served with Ruth Coleman, the only Labor senator being Senator Robert Ray, who of course has left us. I am very sorry that Senator Ray has left us. Senator Ray would remember the great controversy over the parliamentary cricket team of 1975, when Don Chipp sought to field a Parliamentary XI to play the Australian Cricket Society. Senator Coleman asked to be included in the team. Don Chipp, then on the Liberal opposition front bench, replied, inter alia:

My dear Senator, I am proud that I have never been accused of male chauvinism ... God knows, and all Members of Parliament know, that it is International Women’s Year ...[but] I must draw the line somewhere. To me, cricket is a sacred game, and as one of its many purists ... it is with great reluctance—but equal firmness—that I withdraw the invitation to you to play cricket in the Parliamentary XI ...

Subsequently he was reported as saying:

If she bowled as fast as Thompson, with the guile of Lindwall, the hostility of Lillee, batted with the panache of Ian Chappell and the grace of Greg Chappell, and kept wickets as well as Marsh or Knott, the dear lady still would not play in my cricket team.

Complaining of Mr Chipp’s patronising air, and the fact that he had not bothered to determine whether or not she could play, Ruth set about recruiting a rival parliamentary cricket team to play a mixed team from the press gallery. The two teams played on the same day, with Don Chipp’s team being defeated and Ruth Coleman’s team scoring ‘a disputed win’.

Senator Boswell (Queensland) (4.52 pm)—I would like to associate the National Party with this condolence motion. I was one of the people who served in this parliament with Ruth Coleman. She was going out when I was coming in. Her term was from 1974 to 1987 and mine started in 1983. From memory, I think there was a parliamentary group of Amnesty International that was made up of one person from every party in the Senate, and I believe I was representing the Amnesty International group, or the disarmament group, for the National Party, so I had a fair bit to do with her on occasions.

I acknowledge her pioneering role and her involvement in promoting women into parliament. I can remember that she was totally committed to the anti-uranium movement. She was interested in Aboriginal affairs and I can recall her championing all those causes. She was a pioneer in her day. She broke new ground for women and it sounds as though she was well and truly able to stand up for herself and use whatever she could to promote women. Whether it was gaining a drink at the front bar of the Rex Hotel or playing a mixed cricket match, she used those avenues to promote her cause very cleverly. I give my best wishes to her family in this time of sadness.

Question agreed to, honourable senators standing in their places.
Hon. John Norman Button

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Troeth) (4.55 pm)—It is with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death, on 8 April 2008, of Senator the Hon. John Norman Button, a senator for the state of Victoria from 1974 to 1993. I call the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Leader of the Government in the Senate) (4.55 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its deep regret at the death, on 8 April 2008, of the Honourable John Norman Button, former federal minister and senator for Victoria, and places on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Today we note the passing of a great Australian, Labor Party activist, senator for Victoria for 19 years and one of the most eminent industry ministers in our nation’s history. It has not been a good parliamentary break for the Labor Party, having lost Ruth Coleman and John Button. Although John Button was small of stature, he was a giant of the Labor Party. In tributes to John Button, he has also been described as a rare phenomenon in Australian politics, someone who commanded the affection and respect of people throughout the country and not just in political circles. You certainly got a sense of this at his funeral last month, which I had the honour of attending, along with the Deputy Prime Minister and many other members of the government. The Labor Party generally respects its former leaders and senior figures very well. I think many of the Liberal Party wish that they also did in that regard.

It was a great funeral. I know I should not describe a funeral in that way, but it was a great celebration of a life, a great celebration of John Button’s contribution, his energy and his humour. The church was packed to the brim, with mourners also outside. In this parliament a number of the support staff who worked at Parliament House when John was a minister came and sat in my office to watch coverage of the funeral service on TV. It shows the sort of affection in which he was held, and everyone had a John Button story. As I said, the funeral was a great celebration. The speeches were fantastic and the best was delivered by Bill Hayden, the former Governor-General, former Leader of the Opposition and former leader of the Labor Party. Bill Hayden gave the best speech I have ever heard him give. It was a fantastic speech, full of compassion and humour. It really was a great contribution to the marking of John Button’s life, particularly as their relationship had been remarked upon because of the role John Button played in suggesting to Bill Hayden that he ought to stand down as leader of the Labor Party just prior to the 1983 election. Bill noted in his contribution that, despite the deep hurt and their falling out over that event, they went on to renew their friendship and he was very pleased to speak at the funeral in honour of John Button.

John Button was known for being a straight-talking man. A commentator once gave him the title ‘the Minister for Possum Stirring’. John’s unwavering honesty meant that he never failed to kick up a stir, particularly in government circles. But it meant that he always commanded enormous respect, not just within the ALP but across the political spectrum.

Perhaps what endeared John so much to the Australian people and those who knew him was his complexity. He had a rich and varied life beyond politics, which made him an interesting and lively character to be around. Many of us are accused of being whitebread politicians; no-one ever accused John Button of that. John was a well-respected and very talented writer as well as a lover of literature and theatre—and, of
course, a mad Geelong Cats fan, only equalled, I gather, by Senator Glenn Sterle.

As Leader of the Government in the Senate, John worked out of the office that I now occupy. I am told that, in between pushing through the Hawke and Keating governments’ legislative program, he would sit at this table, mulling over team selections and drafting letters of advice to Geelong’s coaches. Apparently, he would do this regularly. He was quite forthright in his advice to Geelong coaches as well. He was, as I say, a very committed supporter and he tried to organise his affairs so as not to miss a Cats game. It was a terrible irony that, in the year that John’s beloved Cats won the AFL premiership and the ALP was returned to federal government, John was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, which ended his life. But, as John once said, as a lifelong Geelong supporter, he had developed an endless capacity to endure pain.

John grew up in Ballarat, but he left home in 1946 to take up a boarding scholarship at Geelong College. He went on to study combined law-arts degrees at the University of Melbourne, again on academic scholarship. After graduating from university, he spent two years travelling around Europe. He lived in different countries, worked a variety of jobs and even joined the Italian Communist Party at one stage—but, apparently, only so that he could get a free trip to a youth festival in Moscow. He was not regarded as a communist inside the Labor Party in later years. In 1959, John returned to Melbourne and joined the well-known Labor firm of Maurice Blackburn and Co. and, by the time he ran on Labor’s Victorian Senate ticket in 1974, he had become a senior partner.

John first joined the Labor Party in 1952, while he was at university. He said that he was drawn to politics by the Menzies government’s attempt to ban the Communist Party the year before. He lived through the 1950 split of the Victorian Labor Party, an experience that led him to spending the sixties as a party activist, pushing for internal reform. In 1965, John joined with other barristers to form a small independent group called the Participants. I am pretty sure that Barney Cooney was also part of that group. They waged a hard-fought campaign for change and ultimately helped modernise the Victorian branch of the ALP, which was a major factor in making the Labor Party electable in 1972. His role inside the Labor Party, in its reform, was critical and is well appreciated by many of us who have succeeded him.

Despite all these years of political activism, it was not until John was 41 that he stood for election to the Senate. His election marked the beginning of a 19-year parliamentary career. But, after just a brief taste of government, Labor lost power in 1975. John moved across to the opposition benches, where he served as a member of the opposition shadow ministry from 1976, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate from 1977 to 1980 and Leader of the Opposition in the Senate from 1980 to 1983—and, as Senator Minchin is now learning, it is a thankless task.

Much has been written about the influential role that John played in the ALP’s election win in 1983, under the leadership of Bob Hawke. John has spoken about how difficult this was for him, and the Labor Party is indebted to him for the courage, strength of character and honesty he showed in encouraging Bill Hayden to step aside for Bob Hawke. In doing so, he changed the course of Australian political history.

John Button was at the heart of the reformist Hawke and Keating governments. As a commentator noted, the only other people who were as involved as John across all the workings of those governments were Bob
Hawke and Paul Keating themselves. In addition to taking on the role of Leader of the Government in the Senate, John had the opportunity to choose his portfolio and, to the surprise of many, he chose industry. John did not have a background in industry; he was a lawyer, and he had to undergo a steep learning curve when he took up the portfolio at what was industry policy’s most critical juncture in Australian history.

John may not have had industry experience, but he brought fresh eyes, a sharp mind and a reformist energy to the portfolio, with remarkable results. The enormity of John’s role in reforming Australian industry policy cannot be overstated. He modernised Australian industry, driving cultural change and implementing reforms that have since propelled it into the 21st century. In essence, John Button was responsible for rolling back the protectionism that was suffocating Australian industry and for opening it up to global markets. He is best remembered for the Button car plan, which saved Australia’s car manufacturing industry, and the Button steel plan. However, John was also responsible for initiatives across a wide range of other key industries, including telecommunications, uranium, pharmaceuticals and textiles, and he made a huge contribution in the IT area.

Not only did John Button oversee the restructuring of Australian industry but also he changed the nature of the policy debate. He was an independent thinker, and that was reflected in his style as the minister. He sought a contest of ideas on industry policy and, while he remained committed to his core social democratic values, he was known for being flexible and innovative as a policymaker. All up, John served as the Minister for Industry and Commerce and the Minister Assisting the Minister for Communications from 1983 to 1984 and he was Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce from 1984 until his retirement.

John retired from the Senate in 1993, but he never strayed too far from the public’s consciousness. His breadth of interests outside of politics meant that he slid easily into new roles, most famously as a prolific writer. In addition to his three books, John wrote articles and essays for newspapers and magazines about politics, football and the future of the ALP. The Quarterly Essay he wrote in 2002, titled ‘Beyond belief’, was a powerful exposition of the need for reform in the Labor Party, and he won the 2003 Victorian Premier’s Literary Award.

I discovered at the funeral of John Button that he was an even more prolific writer than I had thought. Apparently, he had a very long career producing great correspondence under a pseudonym; and I understand he did not hold back in his critiques of the people to which he sent correspondence. Immediately after retiring, John took up a position as a professorial fellow at Monash, led a number of trade missions and joined several company boards. He also continued to cultivate his passion for the arts, serving as chair of the Melbourne Writers Festival from 1996 to 2001 and even posing nude as Rodin’s ‘Thinker’ for a portrait that was entered for the Archibald Prize.

John passed away on 8 April 2008. He leaves behind his partner, Joan, and his two sons, Jamie and Nick, who did him proud at the funeral. Tragically, his other son, David, died as a teenager. On behalf of the government I offer my deepest condolences for the loss of a great Australian. We are a stronger, better nation because of John Button’s service. We are a better Labor Party as a result of John Button’s contribution. I think that no-one in public life could ask for a greater legacy than that which he provides.
Senator MINCHIN (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (5.08 pm)—I rise on behalf of opposition senators to extend our sincere condolences to the family of John Button, who died on 8 April this year aged a tender 74. His death has saddened many, right across the political spectrum. The numerous public statements of regret are passing testament to the very strong regard in which John Button was widely held by politicians across the spectrum, journalists and, of course, the communities that he represented as a senator and a government minister. On our side, I think we would regard John Button as something of a legend of the Australian Labor Party—a key player in the turning points of modern Labor history and someone who made a very significant contribution in his only portfolio in government, that of industry.

We join with Senator Evans in his tribute to a great career. He was, as Senator Evans noted, elected to represent Victoria as a Labor senator in the double dissolution of 1974 and then had a year and a bit in government before being plunged into opposition where he served as Deputy Leader of the Opposition from 1977 and then as leader of the Labor Party in this place, both in opposition and in government. I must say that I feel some close affinity with John Button because we do have in common our services as government leader and opposition leader in this place and our service as industry minister.

John resigned just three months before I commenced my first term, together with Senator Evans. But of course my good friend and former colleague Fred Chaney, who was opposition leader in the Senate for seven years when John was leader of the government, publicly commented that John was a man who served Australia well, bringing great wit and grace into politics. Though it would have been a great privilege to have served with John Button in this chamber, only a handful of those here today had that privilege. Fred Chaney stated that he held the same high opinion of John Button at the end of their period as opposite numbers as he did at the beginning. It is a sign of John’s character, his performance as leader and the respect in which he was held by all sides of politics that, even after their many years of facing each other at this very table, such a statement could be made.

Senator Evans has reminded us that perhaps John Button is most notorious for his critical role in persuading the hapless Bill Hayden to step aside from the Labor Party leadership and make way for Bob Hawke, which of course coincided with Malcolm Fraser calling the 1983 election some nine months early. It is poignant for me because I was, at that time, the deputy federal director of the Liberal Party and responsible for our market research and I knew better than most how very popular Mr Hawke was. I tried desperately and unsuccessfully to persuade Malcolm Fraser not to call that election early because I thought we needed at least the nine months available to us to try to diminish the popularity of Bob Hawke. That was not to be and we lost that election quite significantly. So, Mr Button certainly played a significant role in ensuring that the Labor Party was very successful in that year by his very tough, very difficult role in persuading Bill Hayden, who is equally admired and respected on our side, to step aside.

It is also interesting, as Senator Evans has mentioned, that as Senate leader John Button had a choice of portfolio. On thinking about it for a day or two, he chose the industry and commerce portfolio—which might not have been an obvious choice, and a difficult one for a Victorian coming from an industrial state. To then spend a decade overseeing that portfolio from 1983 to 1993 was a tough gig. As I said, I was also an industry minister and I can certainly attest to the challenge of
that portfolio, also coming from an industrial state. Indeed, I became industry minister only five years after John had left the job, and the Button legacy was still very strong at that time. Of course, it is an extremely demanding portfolio and he had the challenge of persuading his own side of politics, and the union movement in particular, that the old ways of producing automobiles and of making steel simply could not go on and that the industry in this country had to accept the reality of the need to internationalise and become competitive in their operations. The country and industry, and the people who work in industry in this country, to this day owe John Button a great debt for his courage in ensuring that the Labor movement was mugged by the reality that industry in this country simply had to become competitive or disappear. He was, of course, the longest serving minister in a single portfolio during the Hawke and Keating years and he has left a great legacy. I was privileged as an industry minister to inherit that legacy and continue, in effect, his work.

John Button was also a great parliamentarian and someone who really understood the culture of this place. In his memoirs he spoke fondly of both the Senate and his Senate colleagues, and he talked about the burden of representing both Mr Hawke and Mr Keating in the Senate chamber. As someone who had to represent both Mr Howard and Mr Costello in this chamber, I know exactly what he was talking about. He did understand, I think as most of us do, that this is a different place; it does require a more constructive and conciliatory approach than the more combative approach in the House of Representatives, and he was a master of that.

So, on behalf of our opposition, I express our deep sympathies to John’s family and friends. He was taken early. We regret very much that he has left us prematurely. To his partner, Joan, his sons, James and Nick, and their families, we place on record our appreciation and my own personal appreciation of John’s long and meritorious public service. We tender our profound sympathies to his family in their bereavement.

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (5.15 pm)—The Hon. John Norman Button was a senator in this place from 1974 to 1993. I rise to pay my respects to his life and to express my condolences to his family on behalf of the National Party. I admired John Button tremendously, as a political foe, as an Australian and as a friend and colleague. I read his book, John Button: As It Happened, and appreciated and learnt from it.

I do not recall John Button ever being bested in question time when he was a minister. I recall one particular instance when Bronwyn Bishop, who was very combative, decided to take Senator Button on. She asked a question, and then added, ‘Senator Button, I don’t want you to tap-dance around this one.’ I can recall that his response was: ‘Well, Senator Bishop, if I had to tap-dance I wouldn’t have to dance with you.’ That was off the cuff, spontaneous—it was one of the responses he could come up with. He was generally completely across his portfolio and the machinations of the Labor Party, whose faithful servant he was all his life.

John Button was a rare individual in that he could keep the pressure of politics and government in perspective thanks to a sense of humour and of personal humility. I will never forget the private support he gave me during a difficult time in my family life. We both lost sons. I attended his state funeral out of respect for a man who came into this place for the right reasons and stuck loyally to his motivations. It takes courage and strength to avoid being distracted by the trappings of power and fiefdoms. Australia is a better place because John Button entered this place,
and you cannot say better than that of any senator.

He was one of the characters of the Hawke and Keating governments, given to more candour than most senior government figures. He was confident and droll. He was a great performer in the Senate. John Button was Labor from head to toe, but he held no illusions or delusions about the party, politics or politicians. He was dedicated to Labor Party reform. As the Leader of the Government in the Senate from 1983 to 1993, he earned the respect of this place as few ever have. Add the three years he spent as Leader of the Opposition in the Senate from 1980 to 1983 and you have a personality who ran the Labor side of this house for 13 years—an achievement that will be very hard for anyone to ever repeat.

Much has been written about him since his passing by many groups from different fields, from sports to politics to academia. From this you know you have been privileged to play on the same field as him, even if on a different side. But, after all, we are all playing for the Australian team in the end.

There are several quotes which show better than anything the quintessential character of this man. Of Gough Whitlam, John Button once wrote:

I admired Gough Whitlam, but not as much as he did. I didn’t believe that anybody had all the answers. I was a doubter. But I had a few hopes. I thought politics could at least make a difference in the margins of people’s lives.

And so it can, but John Button was being modest, for his contributions were more than just at the margins. John Norman Button was the centre page in modernising the Australian economy and the Labor Party. In an interview with the Melbourne Herald in 1988, John Button said: ‘I’ve never had any high expectation in life and I have a capacity for suffering.’ In the end, John Button greatly exceeded his expectations of himself. That was perhaps due to his capacity for suffering, which was called upon regularly throughout his life.

When John Button resigned from the Senate, he did it at his press conference and never had an opportunity to give the traditional valedictory speech in the Senate, but he did use the press conference to reflect on farewells. The year John Button resigned, there was also the valedictory of Senator Florence Bjelke-Petersen. I know that former Senator Button and former Senator Florence Bjelke-Petersen had a very great soft spot for each other. They would regularly chat across the chamber. I know that Florence would want very much to be associated with this valedictory for John Button.

So farewell to John Norman Button. If there were a short list of the greatest senators, he would be on it.

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales—Special Minister of State and Cabinet Secretary) (5.21 pm)—John Button was indeed a substantial man. He was a man who thought and wrote crisply, clearly, honestly and independently. He was a generous man, endlessly curious and fearlessly open minded. All his life, he loved and understood the importance of the nation’s cultural and intellectual life as the way in which we come to understand ourselves—that films and literature, history and music are the mirror up to nature. He was passionate about sport and the tribal contest inherent in it. But there was always in him an element of detachment and scepticism. This was part of his humour, his sense of irony. As a member of an Italian delegation to the Sixth World Festival of Youth and Students held in Moscow in 1957, he reflected:

... there was something decidedly Orwellian about 100,000 people fervently chanting the festival slogan ‘peace and friendship, peace and friendship’ with the apparent conviction that it
had something to do with the international situation and the prevention of a third world war.

He added:

I met no Russians who thought everything as wonderful as the average Communist visitor did. I find it difficult to resist the temptation to write a few pages on the subject of Communist double-think.

His loyalty to the Labor Party and to the nation was loyalty in the broadest and best sense of the word—critical and reforming. He held fast to the principles he believed in. He kept his eyes on the prize. As Peter Gebhardt wrote in a poem for John’s funeral, he held fast to the:

… horizon of hope …
never losing sight of it,
or the promise of it.

In the 1960s, on his return from two years abroad, John Button’s analysis of the circumstances of Australia and the Australian Labor Party was that both were a morass of tired and borrowed ideas. He wrote:

I was personally very disturbed by Australia as a nation. I thought, this country is very, very isolated, not taking advantages of the opportunities we’d got. The country’s political leaders exuded the scent of middle-aged grey power. The idea of excellence, where it existed, was narrowly based and shallow rooted. … Australia was easygoing, good natured, sporty and mediocre.

He was nothing if not honest in his judgements—what was dull or outmoded was dull and outmoded; what was ineffective and needed to be changed must be changed. And he had the intellectual capacity to see and understand the trends that were occurring around him. He believed that a man must participate in the life of the nation in ways that worked to the good. And he was a participant, active and practical.

In the 1960s, the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party was undemocratic and exclusionary. As the Scoresby letter of 1965 stated, the party suffered ‘declining membership, appalling electoral outcomes, secretive management and exclusive control by a small band of unions’. Its branches were unable to influence policy or preselections. All was bogged down in the preordained positions dictated by the old disputes of the split and the rigid control of the Victorian central executive. Change was clearly necessary—not just to make the Labor Party electable, but to ensure that more progressive, forward-looking ideas were offered for the better governance of the country. This change, for Button, was a matter of structural and organisational change in the party, and it was grounded in ideas about the kind of Australia that he wanted to see.

John Button belonged to, and helped to revive, the Fabian Society. The Fabian Society was about the contest of ideas. Series of lectures were organised: in 1965 there was ‘Australia Fair: a hard look at our visual environment’; in 1966, ‘The Blurred Image’, which asked, ‘What do Australians stand for?’ These lectures attracted, as Button himself reported, ‘considerable attention and an audience of over 800 on each of three nights’. And he believed the series:

… contributed to the changed climate of ideas, something which the Australian political process, and the Labor Party, seemed to be incapable of doing.

For John Button, debating ideas, in whatever forum could be devised, was never a waste of time. His was a life devoted to independent thinking and idiosyncratic views.

But changing the Labor Party was a tough endeavour. In 1965, four members—Richard McGarvie, Xavier Connor, Barney Williams and John Button; ‘the Participants’—set up a nameless, clandestine organisation:

… a loose alliance—the four just men, as Connor jokingly called it—to promote reform of the Party and progressive policies.
It attracted significant and influential support—John Cain, Race Mathews, Michael Duffy, Barry Jones, Jim Jupp and Jim Beggs. They were academics, lawyers, trade unionists and teachers. They worked for four years, writing, arguing, criticising, persuading and lobbying for change. They were supported by, and then they supported, Gough Whitlam in his efforts to reform the party, particularly its processes for selecting candidates. New policies were pushed through at the party conference. But it was federal intervention in 1970 that finally changed the party in Victoria and removed the greatest impediment to the victory of the Labor Party at a federal election. After the intervention, Button, amongst others, was appointed to a new advisory council set up to develop more democratic party rules and processes. It was a case of new blood, new life and a commitment to excellence. And it worked. Labor came to power after 23 years in the wilderness in December 1972.

John Button was elected to the Senate in the double dissolution election of May 1974 and began a 20-year parliamentary career, first as a backbencher in the Whitlam government, then as an opposition member and shadow minister during the Fraser government and finally as a minister in the Hawke and Keating governments. He was an active backbencher. He saw committee work as a ‘part of the parliament that worked’. As the chair of the Senate privileges committee during the ‘tortuous’ inquiry into the loans affair in 1975, he was described as a respected chair whose management of the inquiry was ‘just marvellous’. When tabling the report, Button announced wryly that there was a majority report, a minority report and four addendums. He added:

I think I can say on behalf of the committee that we felt that we did well to arrive at that position as a conclusion.

As a minister after 1983, Button was courageous in implementing policy that he believed was necessary but knew to be unpopular. He was described in 1984 as ‘the minister in a no-win portfolio’. Again he was about carrying through reform—reform of what he described as ‘industrial museums’ or ‘industrial relations bearpits’. For Button, the old issues of decline, decay and stultification applied. The country was in recession, unemployment was 10 per cent, the steel industry was in a mess, factories were closing down and the European market had closed off traditional markets. Australia lacked an export culture and entrepreneurial skills. It was a technologically deficient nation and it was uncompetitive in industry.

Industry, unions and the party platform all demanded increased protection. Button came to believe there was greater logic in the advice of experts such as the Industries Assistance Commission, which recommended a reduction in tariffs. The pressure not to follow this advice was enormous. The economic summit of 1983 was to be the basis for economic reform, economic recovery and the kind of structural adjustment that has served Australia well over the subsequent quarter of a century. At the summit, Button argued against short-term responses and that protection was not a panacea for industrial reconstruction. He faced what seemed to be insurmountable problems, such as entrenched attitudes, poor management, truculent unions and mutual knee-jerk hostilities. Button’s response was intelligent, analytical and aimed at long-term public goals. In visits to dozens of businesses, he observed practice and listened to argument. He planned, cajoled, negotiated and finally directed fundamental changes to Australian industry. He saw government’s role not as providing tariffs or subsidies but in facilitating research and development, in supporting new technologies, in training and development and
for what Hawke described as the ‘compensating policies designed to spread the burden of change’. He has acknowledged in his autobiography that the government was fortunate that the opposition of the day chose not to oppose them even though they had lacked the courage to pursue such policies.

In two areas of industrial reform the Button approach was known to all: the steel plan and the car plan. These industries were large and significant. On steel, Button negotiated and required obligations and sacrifices from all players: the companies, the unions, the state governments and the federal government. Governments would look to market share and keep government charges low, companies would reduce workforces by voluntary retirements, and unions would abide by dispute settlement procedures and productivity would be improved. The federal government would assist with job creation and structural adjustment. These were signed agreements and commitments, to be valid over five years and for five years only. After nine years, a study by McKinsey reported:

The fundamental long term change that we need to make in manufacturing is starting to happen in a quite spectacular fashion.

John Button felt that his years of hard work were vindicated. Hawke, Keating and Button, through the wages accord, the deregulation of the financial system and industry policy, had modernised the Australian economy and, although painful at times, prepared it for the prosperity it has since enjoyed. John Button’s biographer, Patrick Weller, summed up Button’s career in the following terms:

He seemed to cross difficult terrain and remain unaffected and untouched. He survived as a parliamentary leader for sixteen years without satisfying that pre-condition for a Labor career, a strong factional base. He remained popular with the public, even while introducing unpopular policies.

Reform and regeneration in politics is a constant. In 2002, John Button found himself again arguing for a re-energising of the Labor Party, then six years in opposition and at a low ebb. He likened the condition of the Labor Party to chronic fatigue syndrome. His description in his quarterly essay in that year is reminiscent of the feeling he had in 1965. Through this essay, he was embarking on a similar crusade for party reform with the same affectionate honesty and directness. The Quarterly Essay article ‘Beyond belief’ was a detailed analysis and, as was the case with the participants in 1965, created a huge and, I think, productive debate. On general policy, he said that there was no clear articulation of the position that took account of the real decline in working people’s standard of living. Factions dominated to the detriment of policy development. Members’ discussions were about ‘arithmetic, not philosophy’ and ‘factional allegiances and deals led to mediocrity’. On the Tampa crisis, the party had failed to take a ‘courageous political stand’ in the face of the ‘coalition’s grubby opportunism’.

Button reminded his readers of the basic idealism of the party and its political heroes: ‘integrity and humility’ and ‘a belief in bringing something better to people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of people’. He believed, as he always had, that Labor could maintain its heart and soul but must be contemporary and relevant, that ‘Labor is most electable when it has a strong agenda for change’. He believed in Labor as the party of reform and the party of change. For John Button, power was not an end in itself but a means to a better society.

Finally, in my contribution to the condolence debate, I would like to read a letter that John Button wrote to me on 17 November last year:
Dear John

I watched the policy speech. He did very well. When you came on at the beginning I told one of the nurses here, ‘I know him’, and I felt she was very impressed.

The main purpose of this letter, however, is to thank you for your kind wishes and the get well gift from Kevin and yourself. It was a nice thought at such a busy time.

I think you will win next Saturday. I don’t know what your intentions are, but I hope you will stay on, win a spot in the Ministry, and take on the vexed question of Parliamentary reform, accountability in government, and honesty of Ministers (no snouts in the trough!). I really believe that if the Labor Party makes some serious changes it will benefit greatly, and force ideas back on the political agenda.

Congratulations on your part in the campaign, and best wishes for the ensuing months and beyond.

With warm regards

John

He was a true and a constructive believer to the end. Vale John Button.

Our careers overlapped in the Senate by just three years. There was no doubt, as other speakers have drawn to our attention, that John Button was a consummate parliamentary performer: confident, well briefed, and always ready with wit to deal with some troublesome senators—and I bore my fair share of Button’s wit from time to time. He used to refer to me as coming from ‘that rusty old think tank, the IPA’, and occasionally would refer to me as ‘Old Think Tank’.

Early on, he had worked out that my father’s views on industry policy were somewhat closer to his position than my own, and he would sometimes speak in glowing terms about my father in the hope that this would cause some family annoyance and tension. It certainly did not annoy my dad, and my father kept on telling me that I was far too harsh on John Button. He recalled one time—and this gave John Button great amusement—when he said that if my father could hear my views he would roll over in his grave, and I called out that that would be difficult as my father was not dead yet. John Button rather enjoyed this exchange and repeated it to me years later.

Some years ago, I bumped into John Button in Collins Street and he said that we should have lunch together. We had a number of these lunches and, when I asked curiously why he would want to have lunch with me, he said, rather kindly I thought, that he would rather have lunch with an employed Liberal minister than an unemployed, complaining, Labor ex-minister. He was, as everybody knows, just great company, and we had frank exchanges of political gossip. On one occasion we discussed a new book I had published on historic parliamentary speeches and he asked me to send him a copy. I re-
ceived a very gracious letter in reply, and this is what his letter said:

Dear Rod,

Many thanks for sending me a copy of your book ‘Speaking for Australia’.

You are a strange person. Any politician who keeps his promises can only be so described. And when the promise is made ‘on the wing’ in Collins Street, well what does one say.

The book (on preliminary examination) seems an important collection. Modestly you have omitted some of your own fine speeches and sadly some of mine. In the next edition you should perhaps include a speech of mine on the [sitting] of the new parliament house (I think about 1974) or the speech to the 1984 Economic Summit which chilled the minds of rent-seeking industrialists succoured by protection. Your father would have approved.

As for the inclusion of a speech by your good self, any one would do.

Again, thanks and best wishes.

Yours sincerely

John N. Button

I took John Button’s advice and went to those speeches, and they are well worth reading, so perhaps I was in error not to include them in my book. The speech on Parliament House—others will know his views better than mine, but I was not aware of it—was one that John Button made in the Senate on 24 October 1974. John Button would have preferred that this Parliament House were sited elsewhere and made a very passionate speech about that. Among other things he asked:

What sort of parliament building do we want? Again the question arises: Do we want one which symbolises the aspirations of the people as they are ‘on the level’ of people or do we want one which symbolises the aspirations of politicians? Surely there is no quarrel with the proposition that one cannot make statesmen out of politicians by putting them in a castle or by putting them in a prominent parliament house which dominates the capital city of Australia rather than being sympa-

thetic with it. I remind honourable senators of what happened to the residents of the tower of Babel and many other residents of edifices constructed upon hills in the way in which the symbolic view of Capital Hill is expressed.

It was a very passionate speech. He did not win that debate, but it was clearly one which he felt strongly about, and it was one which he drew to my attention. Witnessing his performances in this place, I never doubted that he thoroughly enjoyed being in this Parliament House, but I was also interested in his comments.

The other speech he said should have been included in my book was the one that I think Senator Faulkner referred to, at the National Economic Summit Conference on 14 April 1983. It was a speech of its time, and it was probably bold at its time—it probably seems less bold today. He said, for example:

In dealing with longer term reconstruction issues however, there should not be too narrow a focus on the issue of protection.

Protection was a very controversial policy. He went on to say:

Protection is only one element in an array of policy instruments which Australian governments have at their disposal to assist the various sectors of industry. It is not in itself a panacea for industrial reconstruction.

He went on and asked a number of questions:

Is Australian management adequately trained and flexible enough to cope with change;

What role should union leaders be playing in persuading their members of the need to adjust to changed circumstances ...

It is, again, a speech which is well worth reading, and I think it is appropriate in this condolence speech today that this be recorded.

My colleague Senator Michael Ronaldson hoped to be able to make a contribution today, but he said to me that he would like me
to record that John Button was one of Ballarat’s favourite sons, a man who enjoyed for a very long period, and still enjoys, an enormous amount of respect and affection in that great city.

During a speech that I made many years ago on a condolence motion for Sir John Kerr, John Button was very upset with what I was saying and—I think probably for the first time in parliamentary history—took a point of order during a debate on a condolence motion. This led to a vigorous exchange between the two of us. I rather hope that John may be happy with the remarks I have made today.

His speeches, of course, always had very interesting and amusing jokes, and one of the reasons that John Button was such good company was his enormous sense of humour. This story comes from one of these speeches which I have just referred to. He tells the story of a patient who goes to a psychiatrist complaining of an inferiority complex:

After a brief examination he is told by the psychiatrist: ‘I’m sorry, I can’t help you. You don’t have a complex, you’re just inferior’.

No-one could say that John Button was not simply a superb senator. No-one could say that he did not make a superb contribution to this country. The affection that is felt for John Button transcends party lines. To his two sons—James and Nick Button, and their families I send my condolences and hope that in their sorrow they recognise, as I am sure they will, that their father was a man who enjoyed enormous community affection.

Senator STERLE (Western Australia) (5.49 pm)—I seek leave to incorporate Senator Carr’s comments to this condolence motion.

Leave granted.

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (5.49 pm)—The incorporated speech read as follows—

In 1993, I had the honour of succeeding John Button as Labor senator for Victoria. John and I were supposed to trade places when his term expired on 30 June, but during the election campaign he took me aside and said, “I’m not going back to Canberra.” He resigned soon after polling day and I was appointed to the casual vacancy in April.

John was tired after a decade as industry minister, and he wanted to get back to his writing. He had written poetry as an adolescent and continued to write short stories into his twenties. He flirted with drama and in the early sixties co-founded the Emerald Hill Theatre.

He thought that in his autumn years he might “have a go at the novel to out-do Dostoevsky” —an interesting choice betraying both the scale of his ambition and the astringency of his vision.

The books he wrote in retirement— including the wonderful memoir As it Happened (1998)—show what a fine writer he was. He often wondered whether he’d chosen the wrong career. Some good literary judges would say he did. Maybe I’m just not literary enough, but I think John chose exactly the right career.

He had a vision for the future of Australian industry, and he pursued that vision—often in the face of entrenched opposition—until it had been substantially realised.

John frequently had to fight on two fronts. On the one side were the more atavistic elements of the union movement and industry, who resisted any change that threatened their vested interests. On the other side were members of the economics club, who opposed any intervention that did not fit their arm-chair theories, no matter how firmly it might be grounded in economic and social reality.

John demanded innovation and a global outlook from Australian business and he practiced what he preached in a series of brilliantly creative industry plans which drew in part on what he had
learned from Sweden, Japan and other international exemplars.
Several of these plans – for steel in 1983, the car industry in 1984, and the textiles, clothing and footwear industries in 1986 – were to some extent exercises in crisis-management.
But though they might have been prompted by the circumstances of the moment, they were anything but ad hoc.
One hallmark of John’s policy style was his willingness and ability to meet short-term problems with long-term solutions.
Because everything he did was strategic, there isn’t really that much to distinguish his salvage plans for steel, cars and TCF from his development plans for shipbuilding in 1984, pharmaceuticals in 1987 and information technology in 1988.
The same could be said about measures he introduced for other industries such as telecommunications and aerospace.
All involved similar solutions – and those solutions invariably included a judicious mixture of carrot and stick.
As industry minister, John was essentially a dealmaker, a horse-trader – applying the skills he had acquired in the backrooms of the labour movement on a much larger stage.
It was all about give and take:
• production bounties in return for keeping factories open
• tariff reductions in return for export facilitation
• productivity improvements and wage restraint from the unions in return for a commitment to protect jobs
• anti-dumping measures in return for investment in modernisation product rationalisation in return for R&D funding
• marketing support in return for employing more apprentices.
And always – always – an emphasis on building resilience by building skills.
That might mean re-training workers who lost their jobs as a result of structural adjustment.
It might mean schooling small-business operators in business planning and management techniques that would help them stay afloat on stormy economic seas.
It might mean cajoling captains of industry to lift their eyes to the horizon and consider their place in the wider world.
John never forgot the lessons he learned on a visit to Sweden in 1984.
As John wrote much later, this was a country where “Government funds were spent on research and development, venture capital for small firms, export incentives, and training and re-training of workers.”
Most of the industry plans had an R&D component. The car and shipbuilding industries received funding for R&D, while pharmaceutical and IT companies had to meet R&D targets to qualify for other forms of assistance.
But the most important fruit of John’s belief in research and development was the R&D tax concession introduced in 1985.
It revolutionised industry attitudes to innovation. Business R&D spending as a share of GDP grew 8.8 per cent a year in the ten years after the concession was introduced.
This momentum was halted in 1996 when the past triumphed over the future and the conservatives reduced the concession from 150 to 125 per cent – this at a time when most other OECD countries were maintaining or increasing their R&D support.
In the following decade, business spending on R&D as a proportion of GDP grew by an average of just 2.5 per cent a year. In several years it actually fell.
By 2005-06 we had tumbled from eighth to fifteenth in the OECD rankings for this measure.
What John understood – and what the Howard government did not – is that industry policy is first and foremost about cultural change.
It is about creating what John called a “culture of innovation”.
This is a phrase I use myself. It’s an ideal I find myself explaining and defending just as John did.
That’s how little progress we have made in the last decade of squandered opportunities.
We need innovation to increase productivity and exports. Innovation has the capacity to transform Australian industry, and with it the Australian economy. It is the only basis on which a country like Australia can compete in the global marketplace.

The OECD tells us that “Most of the rise in material standards of living since the industrial revolution has been the consequence of innovation. New or improved products and services – and new and improved ways of producing them – have for a long time been the main motor of economic growth.”

John understood this better than any politician of his generation – with the possible exception of his colleague and occasional sparring partner Barry Jones.

But he also understood that there was more than one way to innovate.

Innovation may mean wiping the slate clean and starting afresh. But more often it means looking for ways to do things just that little bit better – harnessing creativity to make the most of what you’ve got.

John’s interest in science and technology can be traced back to his work with the Fabian Society in the sixties and culminated in his forward-looking decision to add technology to the industry portfolio in 1984.

But his view of science—like his view of most things—was essentially pragmatic. He firmly believed in the transformative power of science and technology, but he wasn’t going to wait around until they delivered us into utopia.

“Protection offered hope from the past,” he once wrote. “Sunrise industries offered distant hope for the future.” His concern was with the here and now.

He was not about to let the allure of the next big thing blind him to the importance of existing industries – industries that account for the bulk of our output and employment now, and that still have enormous scope for growth and innovation in the future.

John was often accused of being too disengaged, and some thought his detachment bordered on disloyalty.

Yet this detachment was precisely the quality that underpinned his success. It granted him the independence to see and think for himself, and to act as an honest broker. It liberated him from the prevailing orthodoxies and enabled him to develop highly original solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

It allowed him to find ways around entrenched positions without attacking them head-on. It was the source of his candour and directness – qualities that sometimes infuriated his colleagues, but which endeared him to just about everyone else.

In a life otherwise full of purpose, the Geelong Football Club allowed John to express his quixotic side.

As a minister he was besieged by proponents of hare-brained schemes, but that didn’t stop him maintaining a one-sided correspondence with the club setting out his ideas for winning the flag.

He tried to impress Margaret Thatcher by dropping Gary Ablett’s name and Ablett by dropping Thatcher’s, even though he was pretty sure neither knew who the other was. Last year’s premiership came just in time.

We are fortunate that John agreed to be interviewed by the doyen of Australian political psychology, Alan Davies, while the two were in London in 1959. John appears in Davies’ Private Politics (1966) disguised as “Tom Barrow, Union Lawyer”.

Davies noted how class was central to the young Button’s worldview—as a child of the manse and the squattocracy trying to make his way in the labour movement, he was acutely conscious of class differences.

But as far as John was concerned, it was values rather than interests that divided the classes. His account of class relations was entirely free of what Davies called “struggle imagery”.

This may have disappointed old-school leftists, but his refusal to see the interests of employers and employees as eternally and irreconcilably opposed was obviously critical to the design and success of those give-and-take industry plans.

John may have been more interested in the contest of values than class warfare, but there was never any doubt about which side of that contest
he was on. His values were progressive, humane, and unapologetically social democratic.

He recognised that equality of opportunity was a liberal ideal – there is nothing wrong with it, but it’s a long way short of what social democrats should be aspiring to.

He knew it was unrealistic to demand strict equality of outcomes, but he was never afraid to argue for a fairer distribution of wealth and what he called “all those services fundamental to human security and development.”

For social democrats, he argued in 2002, “The emphasis is on rights rather than opportunity.”

It is the duty of social democratic governments to honour those rights, and to address the many problems and fulfill the many needs and aspirations “for which markets provide no answers.”

Alan Davies describes the lonely migrants and pensioners for whom John did pro bono legal work early in his career. Davies suggests that John idealised these outsiders as Forgotten Men, and may have seen himself as one of their number.

John Button was an insider during some phases of his career and an outsider during others.

Either way, he is never likely to be forgotten.

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (5.49 pm)—John Button was elected in 1974 and served as senator for Victoria until 1993. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect upon his career in his capacity as minister for industry and commerce. He is remembered as the architect of Labor’s industry and tariff reforms, as well as for his good humour and wit, which we have heard a little bit about today. Much is being said and written about his great contribution to Australian public life, and I note that the Parliamentary Library has included in its collection of biographical information on John Button a selection of his writings on topics ranging from politics to travel; an Australian republic, which he supported; and the AFL football team Geelong, which we know he strongly supported. I commend this biographical collection to senators. He was a principled politician as well as an entertaining writer.

I would like to pay particular attention to the role that he played with respect to the development of policy that saw the support and growth of Australia’s information technology industry. This might seem a little specific for a condolence motion, but, having paid serious attention to our IT industry over many years, I could not count the times that people from both the private and public sectors have reflected on the contribution of John Button’s policies towards the growth of IT in this country.

There were two major public policy programs; the partnerships for development associated with public procurement and the partnering of local IT companies with multinational companies, and the fixed term arrangements program, which again created relationships between large and small companies and saw the growth of the Australian IT industry through a period of time when it would have been pretty easy to just rest on our laurels. Senator Button did the opposite. He took the opportunity and applied his intellect to some extremely clever policies that gave Australia a greater capacity to create growth from innovation and the applied use of technology. He understood the global market, and we all know so many of his policies were about improving Australia’s engagement with the global economy. Labor’s leading policies in this regard have certainly stood us in great stead with respect to our credentials on industry policy ever since.

I will not speak longer, but I am here on behalf of people and businesses in the IT industry in Australia who I know would like me to acknowledge the contribution that Senator Button made to that particular aspect of industry policy. I take great inspiration
from his work and I would like to convey my condolences to his family at this time.

Senator Watson (Tasmania) (5.52 pm)—I had the honour to call John Button a colleague in the Senate for the first 15 years that I served as a senator. My memories of him will never fade as he was one of those outstanding contributors to the business of this chamber and to the government of Australia. His passing has removed from our presence a character whose wit and repartee was matched by very few, whose dedication and sheer ability stood out amongst his party colleagues and whose positive contribution as a minister will long deserve the praise of those who benefited from his leadership and listened to his speeches. He will be sadly missed.

John Button had a connection with my stamping ground of Northern Tasmania as his mother came from Strathroy near Launceston. His contribution to the stability and the future of one of Launceston’s largest employers—and I refer to the ACL Bearing Company—depended greatly on his ability to guide Australia’s motor industry into a firm future, at least in the middle term. The ACL Bearing Company, as well as many other businesspeople in Launceston, held John Button in very high regard and fondly remembered him for his motor industry plan and the investment regime that it fostered for many years.

Like so many in this parliament, John came from a legal background, but he was also deeply immersed in ensuring that his beloved Labor Party rose again from the troubles of the 1960s. He was an active contributor to its strength during the Hawke-Keating years—as has been demonstrated today—when he was minister for industry for a decade. John Button was instrumental in guiding much of Australian industry into the modern global world economy and ensuring that many of the tariff barriers and artificial protection systems were shed so that Australians could find out where they were competitive and where they were not.

He was not particularly silver tongued or diplomatic at all times and I suspect that he may have told some home truths to his party colleagues and to Australian businessmen in a style they may not have previously heard. However, in his role as industry minister John Button was often required to speak to groups of foreign visitors and to travel overseas promoting Australian interests. His diplomacy was certainly evident on all these occasions. I remember being told by an interpreter that he was particularly aware that his well-developed sense of humour, which served him well amongst Australians, needed great care when applied to audiences from different backgrounds and different languages. He was careful to ensure that the interpreters of his talks fully understood the nuances of his jokes so that there could be no risk of offending his foreign-language-speaking audiences with jokes which might have had a particular Australian bent.

Among his other qualities, John Button was also a practical reformer, not just for reform’s sake but because he could see that it was vital for Australia’s economic future. His genuineness just shone through. He was a politician who also lead a very busy life outside the protected walls of the parliamentary arena and who benefited from regular contact with that we sometimes call the ‘real world’. I include in this his down-to-earth love for his beloved Geelong Football Club.

We will remember John Button not only because he appeared to be honest but also because he was honest and he made no pretence of the issue either in his daily life or in his politics. People believed that what they saw was what they got, and with John Button this was certainly the case. John Button had
unusual titles for many of us in this place. Senator Kemp referred to one—I think it was the ‘rust bucket think tank’, I suppose because he came from Victoria. In my own case, he referred to me as the ‘refugee from the textile industry’ and maybe that was because I had a particular sympathy with certain protection issues that he disagreed with.

John served this parliament as a leader of his party, both in opposition and in government, in this Senate for a period of nearly 13 years and as a minister for 10 years. During his 19 years as a senator, he showed a great strength of will, a uniqueness of character and a determination to make a difference which can be seen in only very few senators who pass through this place. He grasped opportunities as they came and he certainly did make a difference. So, to John Button’s family, I wish to offer my sincere condolences at the loss of a great man and the family’s great loss. My prayers are certainly with them during this period of deep sorrow. Be assured, though, that those who knew him will fondly remember John Button. Vale John Button.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL (New South Wales) (5.58 pm)—I also seek to make a contribution to this condolence motion for John Button, albeit hopefully a brief one. John Button has been described in many forums in the past few weeks as a minister of the Crown, a senator, an industrial barrister, a letter writer, an author, a creative thinker, a Geelong Football Club lover and a Parliament House sunbaker. I am glad I never met him in that role, but I did meet John in the role of a government minister, senator, industrial barrister and certainly a creative thinker.

I first came across John Button some 38 or 40 years ago when we were both active in the Labor Party in Victoria. He worked for the legal firm that did the legal work for the shipwrights union in Victoria, where I spent a period as state secretary. I was quite a young, green union official in the early 1970s and I had a case before the full bench of the industrial commission, seeking a 35-hour week for shipwrights who were working on the Melbourne waterfront, subsequent to the waterside workers winning that condition in the mid-1960s. I went to John for some advice—we could not afford to pay for it, because we did not have that many members—and he sat down with me and painstakingly took me through the processes that I would have to follow in the commission to present the argument and make sure the argument got heard. As a consequence, we actually won the case. So that was a successful contribution that John made to the wages and working conditions of shipwrights in Victoria at that time.

I knew John as a senator during the period of the Whitlam government and in the period of Labor opposition consequent to the election of the Fraser government in 1975. I met him on a couple of occasions when I appeared before Senate committees dealing with industrial relations issues, in particular the amendments to the Industrial Relations Act that were pursued by Ian Viner in the late seventies and early eighties in order to enshrine company unions in the act. It was a forerunner of the type of structure pursued by John Howard in Work Choices. Most importantly, I had a great deal to do with John in the 1980s when he was industry minister.

The nature of the man was shown when, in a television interview with George Negus, he said that politics causes brain damage and that the dosage is worse in opposition. For those of us who have spent 10 years in opposition, we can attest to the truth of that statement. Certainly the period in opposition that John spent in the late seventies did not seem to do much damage to him, as he appeared to be unaffected by that period in opposition.
John was an extremely effective industry minister. It is interesting, as others have said, that he chose his own portfolio when Labor won government in 1983. He chose the role of industry and commerce—a role which surprised many of his friends and supporters, given his strong involvement and keen interest in issues of civil liberties and social justice. At the time, Paul Keating asked John, after his swearing-in as industry minister, ‘What are you going to do with this job?’ John’s response was: ‘I dunno; something! God knows, something needs to done.’ He was immediately thrown into a crisis because, around the time of the election of the Hawke government, BHP had announced publicly its plans to shut down the steel industry, with a loss of some 30,000 jobs in Newcastle, Port Kembla and Whyalla. John set about working through the issues of that industry with the company, the unions and the membership in the industry. As a consequence, the steel plan was born. He played a significant role—a role he was thrust into—and he assiduously worked his way through the process and came up with a plan. The plan certainly cost jobs but it created the foundations of a steel industry in this country that has continued to thrive since 1983.

John did a lot for industry in this country. He was a reformer, both in the Labor Party and as a member of the government. He was instrumental in reforming the Australian economy and the manufacturing industry. He was one of the key ministers in the Hawke government, all through the 1980s, that pursued and put in place the processes of reform that opened up the Australian economy. As we in this place all know, John is perhaps best known for the Button car plan—a legacy that helped the car industry in this country survive for decades. He was also responsible for the TCF industry plan. It is a tribute to his foresightedness that both those industries still exist in this country today, and with significantly less assistance from government than they were receiving in the eighties.

We should not ignore John’s role in putting in place the steel industry plan, which saved that industry at the 11th hour, and we should note that that was an industry on the verge of closing when he became industry minister and was thrown in at the deep end in terms of putting a plan in place. But there are many other industries in this country that survive and prosper today because of John’s support for and revitalisation of the Australian Manufacturing Council, which during the 1980s carried out a massive collaborative effort between capital and labour that renewed and revitalised many industry sectors. The shipbuilding industry is one example. The shipbuilding industry in this country was ‘gone the goings’, for all intents and purposes, in 1976 under Malcolm Fraser and Peter Nixon. When John took over the industry portfolio, the industry was floundering. Most of the big shipyards had shut down. There were a number of small shipyards around the place, but the industry was pretty fragmented. He put in place a shipbuilding consultative group, of which I happened to be a member, that worked assiduously for four years with the industry to redevelop its attitudes and views about its future. It became outward looking and got into the export market, and that was the forerunner of the industry we have today, which is building the fast aluminium ferries that we are exporting all around the world. That industry has been actively surviving in the export market with no assistance and competing effectively and maintaining its levels of employment.

The work that was put in in the eighties through the Australian Manufacturing Council laid the foundations for the significant growth in manufactured exports that occurred during the first half of the nineties and, in fact, for the broadening of our economic base, which was part of the strategy.
adopted by the Hawke government in the eighties. In the early nineties, we saw significant growth in our manufactured exports—elaborately transformed manufactures, or ETMs, as they are more commonly known—from about three per cent to something like 17 to 18 per cent in 1996 when Labor lost office. That position, unfortunately, was squandered under the previous government. The export of manufactured goods is back down to about two to three per cent of our total exports. It has all been squandered. All the activities, efforts and structural change that occurred during the eighties and the early nineties were squandered under the Howard government and we are back effectively to where we were when Labor first came to power in the early eighties.

John Button’s efforts, for example, in revitalising our heavy engineering industry laid the foundation for subsequent government decisions to source defence purchases in Australia and significant projects such as the Collins submarines and the frigates for the Australian and New Zealand navies, and very effective defence shipbuilding industry activity and the consequential subsidiary operations that support that in electronics and equipment and so forth.

While the car plan and the textile, clothing and footwear industries dominate discussion on John’s role as industry minister, we should not see his role in a narrow sense but in the broader sense of the effect he had right across the whole of our manufacturing industry sector, in all its facets, including improvements that were made in that sector during his period as industry minister. I have to say that if those ministers who follow him, particularly Labor ministers, achieve half of what he achieved as manufacturing minister, then the future of manufacturing in this country will be bright indeed.

There was one thing about John Button that you could not help but notice: whilst he was a small man he was born with a huge dose of scepticism. It continually flowed in comments he made from time to time on issues that were going on. I can recall two, which I think are examples of John’s wit. The first one occurred at a meeting in Old Parliament House in the cabinet room, during a discussion between a number of senior ministers and members of the national executive of the party about the direction of the government’s policy in early 1987, prior to the election that was held later that year. There was concern about the direction the government was going in a number of areas. As anyone involved in such discussions would know, they are pretty wide ranging. In the midst of that conversation, Paul Keating, then Treasurer, started to wax lyrical about the fact that he had been named as the world’s greatest treasurer by a meeting of the Socialist International that had occurred just before the meeting. I happened to have been sitting beside John Button and John said, ‘The only thing wrong with this is that they do not get a vote in our elections, otherwise we would not have a worry in the world.’ I said to him, ‘What are you drinking?’ Aussie, as we now know him, kept bringing drinks to the table for the ministers who were there—not for the visitors. John said: ‘It’s whisky. Why? Would you like some?’ True to his word, about 30 seconds later, Aussie turned up with a glass of whisky. I did not know at the time that there was a button under the table that you pressed and they would bring you your favourite beverage—tea, coffee, Coke or whatever. John was enjoying the whisky, and he and I had a very pleasant evening in the corner of the cabinet room listening to the discussion from that point on.

The second example was in relation to a proposal I had worked up in my role as deputy chair of the Manufacturing Council at the
time. It involved putting a package together to promote technology diffusion across our manufacturing sector. A lot of the small companies in this country were not aware of the technologies that were available and being developed by some of the industrial giants around the world. The proposal was for a package of $20 million to fund an office of technology diffusion. You had to be careful about how you used words when you had a discussion with John Button, as many will attest—you used your words very carefully. In the middle of the discussion, I happened to say, or it might have been the person with me, ‘The problem is we don’t have anyone in this country who understands the technology and can promote it, so we need this fund to get it going.’ He said, ‘If I give you $20 million, who will you appoint?’ We said: ‘We don’t know. We’ll have to think about that.’ He said, ‘I’m not giving you $20 million until you come back with someone who you know can actually do the job.’ It was interesting that not long after that when I became a senator, I noticed there was a line in the budget papers in the department of industry for technology diffusion and a budget of $20 million. John adopted the idea, but he was not going to be sold on putting the $20 million on the table before he knew that it was capable of being used in the way in which it was promoted.

One could go on for a long time talking about John Button and his role in the Labor Party, about John Button as a human being and our experiences with him. Suffice to say, I wanted to ensure that the breadth of the role he played was on the record in terms of his support for manufacturing as minister for industry during the Hawke and Keating governments. I think his role in that area will probably remain unsurpassed. I wish to convey my condolences to his partner, Joan, and to his children on John’s passing. Question agreed to, honourable senators standing in their places.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—Petitions have been lodged for presentation as follows:

Ministry for Peace

This petition is addressed to the President of the Senate and Members of the Senate, and to the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representative Australian Parliament assembled.

Petition for an Australian Ministry for Peace

This petition from the undersigned respectfully points out that:

There is an urgent need to peacefully resolve the conflicts that exist among humans today. Your petitioners therefore request that The Senate and The House of Representatives take a lead to establish an Australian MINISTRY FOR PEACE to accomplish the following objectives:

- reduce and eliminate domestic and international violence towards a global culture of non-violence;
- gather and analyse information and recommendations from local and global peace organisations;
- teach violence prevention, creative mediation and conflict resolution methods in schools and universities;
- provide prevention programs addressing domestic, gang, drug, alcohol and gambling related violence;
- develop field-tested educational programs promoting conflict resolution and peer mediation in schools;
- effectively treat and dismantle gang psychology;
- educate and rehabilitate the prison population;
- advertise peace-making knowledge among conflicting cultures both here and abroad;
- administer an Australian Peace Academy to teach world’s best practice and effective techniques for the amelioration of violence...
and conflict among domestic and international populations;
• support the military by providing information, education and technologies for conflict resolution;
• advise the Prime Minister and cabinet and others on the root causes of violence;
• train civilian peacekeepers to participate in nonviolent peace-building activities;
• assist towns, cities and state governments in coordinating programs to eliminate violence;
• support the global movement for every nation to establish a Ministry for Peace; and
• encourage the Australian population to observe and celebrate the endeavors created for peace on a personal, local, national and international level.

by The President (from 16 citizens)

Dampier Archipelago: World Heritage Listing

To the honourable the President and members of the Senate in Parliament assembled:
The petition of the undersigned shows:
The petitioners support for World Heritage Listing on the Dampier Archipelago as shown in the underlying map and oppose the development of any further industrial infrastructure on any of the islands that make up the Dampier Archipelago that may impact on the National and World Heritage values of the place.

It is acknowledged that the Dampier Archipelago contains what is probably the largest assemblage of prehistoric rock engravings (petroglyphs) anywhere in the world and provides one of the few chronologies in the world of environmental and social change through the last ice age to the present.

In light of the above statement your petitioners request that the Senate:
Review all scientific data and expert advice on the scientific, cultural and heritage values of the rock art, standing stones and other components of the archaeology that exists on the islands of the Dampier Archipelago to test its value as a World Heritage nomination.

Investigate what activities the Federal Government has made or may undertake to encourage the State of Western Australia to nominate the area for World Heritage listing and make ensuing recommendations to the Federal Government to pursue such nomination.

Your petitioners therefore request that you give this matter earnest consideration, and your petitioners as in duty bound; will ever pray

by Senator Siewert (from 300 citizens)

Petitions received.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Allison to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Senate—

(a) notes the findings of the Court of Appeal in overturning a decision of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal which had granted approval to the Romsey Hotel to install gaming machines, stating:
‘... if the approval of gaming at particular premises is likely to cause unhappiness or discontent in that community (or any part or parts of it), that consequence is a “social impact of approval” which will be “detrimental to the well-being of the community”. It will be detrimental to well-being because it diminishes the citizens’ sense of happiness with, or contentment in, their community’, and
‘the fact that the … Act allows gaming to occur in approved premises does not mean that any Victorian community is obliged to accept gaming machines’;

(b) recognises that the interests of any community must precede the commercial interests of approved premises and that of governments that derive revenue from the operation of gambling machines; and

(c) calls on the Government to urge all state and territory governments to recognise the right of local communities, through their councils, to reject applications for poker machine venues in their municipalities.
Senator Allison to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—
(a) calls on the Government to work with state and territory governments to close the gap between school sectors on access to music education; and
(b) recognises that:
(i) playing music:
(A) builds or modifies neural pathways related to spatial reasoning tasks, which are crucial for higher brain functions like complex maths, chess and science,
(b) improves concentration, memory and self expression,
(c) increases reasoning capacity, time management and the ability to think in the abstract, and
(d) improves the ability to think,
(ii) learning music helps underperforming students improve, and
(iii) music students learn critical teamwork and social skills.

Senator Allison to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—
(a) notes that:
(i) the Danish Parliament approved in February 2008 a pilot medical scheme to prescribe heroin to 500 of Denmark’s most seriously addicted and marginalised citizens,
(ii) heroin is to be prescribed in combination with methadone with the aim of rehabilitation and to reduce the criminal activity of addicts,
(iii) prescription heroin for treatment of severe cases of addiction exists as a therapeutic option in the United Kingdom, Switzerland and the Netherlands and is being established in Germany, and
(iv) trials of prescribing heroin for the treatment of opiate dependency in Spain and Canada also show favourable results; and
(b) encourages the Government to closely monitor this and other pilot programs and to consider conducting a similar project in Australia.

Senator Allison to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—
(a) notes the Government’s pre-election promise of a $75 million ‘Debt2Health’ swap with Indonesia which would allow Indonesia to benefit from additional funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria; and
(b) urges the Government to significantly increase overseas aid funds for the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis.

Senator Murray to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following matters be referred to the Finance and Public Administration Committee for inquiry and report by the first sitting Thursday of August 2008:
(a) the Lobbying Code of Conduct issued by the Government;
(b) whether the proposed code is adequate to achieve its aims and, in particular, whether:
(i) a consolidated code applying to members of both Houses of the Parliament and their staff, as well as to ministers and their staff, should be adopted by joint resolution of the two Houses,
(ii) the code should be confined to organisations representing clients, or should be extended to organisations which lobby on their own behalf, and
(iii) the proposed exemptions are justified; and
(c) any other relevant matters.

Senator Allison and Senator Murray to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—
(a) notes the report by CHOICE on charities, published online in March 2008, that highlights the wide variability and inconsistency in the way that charities disclose information to the public;

(b) acknowledges that the 27 recommendations from the inquiry into the definition of charities and related organisations, which reported in 2001, have not been implemented; and

(c) calls on the Government to:

   (i) establish a single, appropriate regulator of the charity sector, and

   (ii) work with the regulator to improve reporting and accountability standards in the charitable and not-for-profit sector.

Senator Allison to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

   (i) the recent research done by the Cancer Council of New South Wales indicating that 70 per cent of top box office films contained depictions of smoking, including 75 per cent of the most popular PG-rated films,

   (ii) the research by the American Lung Association showing that more than two-thirds of the top 50 United States of America box office films of 2004-05 classified for children’s viewing depicted smoking, some with as many as 14 depictions of smoking an hour,

   (iii) that positive depictions of smoking in films normalise and promote smoking, particularly for young people, and that on-screen smoking influences children’s attitudes and behaviour to the extent that it can increase a child’s chance of becoming a smoker later in life, and

   (iv) that evidence overseas shows that the tobacco industry has provided inducements for such positive depictions of smoking and that this is not consistent with the objectives of the Tobacco Advertising Prohibition Act 1992; and

(b) urges the Government to heed the latest call by the Australian Medical Association and adopt strategies and regulatory measures to counter the influence of smoking in films, including:

   (i) a film classification system that provides clear warnings about the extent and nature of smoking in films with films attracting an appropriate descriptor such as ‘pervasive smoking’ in the same way that descriptors warn of coarse language, sexual references, nudity and violence,

   (ii) anti-smoking announcements before films that depict smoking, and

   (iii) changes to guidelines to ensure that public funds are not used to support Australian films that glamorise or promote smoking.

Senator Siewert to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that the week beginning 12 May 2008 is National Volunteer Week, which celebrates the contribution of Australia’s 5.4 million volunteers who annually contribute an estimated 700 million hours of unpaid work;

(b) acknowledges the role of volunteers in supporting the Australian economy and enriching Australian society in their work as carers, counsellors, educators, sporting coaches, school canteen workers, and through their participation in a wide range of community organisations; and

(c) calls on Australian governments to:

   (i) ensure that volunteers have legal status and are properly protected by workplace-related legislation, and

   (ii) support volunteers by addressing the barriers to their participation in voluntary activities.

Senator Siewert to move on 15 May 2008:
That—

(1) The Senate:
   (a) notes:
      (i) the inclusion in 2006 of Part 3.18A – Private financial provision for certain people with disabilities – to the Social Security Act 1991 to enable the establishment of special disability trusts, and
      (ii) that since the introduction of Part 3.18A and to 31 December 2007 only 22 trusts have been established;
   (b) recognises the potential benefits that special disability trusts can deliver for those living with a disability, but is concerned that there remain barriers to the establishment of special disability trusts that are limiting their wider beneficial application.

(2) The following matters relating to special disability trusts be referred to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report by 18 September 2008:
   (a) why more families of dependents with disabilities are not making use of the current provisions to establish Special Disability Trusts;
   (b) the effectiveness of Part 3.18A of the Social Security Act 1991;
   (c) barriers in the relevant legislation to the establishment of Special Disability Trusts; and
   (d) possible amendments to the relevant legislation.

Senator Hutchins and Senator Forshaw to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Senate—
   (a) notes with great sadness the passing of ‘supercouch’ Mr Jack Gibson, OAM, one of Australia’s greatest rugby league coaches, on 9 May 2008;
   (b) recognises and applauds the tremendous contribution that he made to Australian sport and his achievements as a rugby league player, coach and commentator;
   (c) notes his success in winning five premierships as a first grade coach – back to back victories with Eastern Suburbs in 1974 and 1975 and three in a row with Parramatta between 1981 and 1983;
   (d) notes his significant and commendable work with charitable organisations; and
   (e) expresses its deep and sincere condolences to his family and the rugby league community.

Senator Siewert to move on 15 May 2008:
That—

(1) The Senate notes the continuing decline and extinction of a significant proportion of Australia’s unique plants and animals, and the likelihood that accelerating climate change will exacerbate challenges faced by Australian species.

(2) The following matter be referred to the Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee for inquiry and report by 27 November 2008:
   The operation of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), with particular reference to:
   (a) the need for legislative reform as a result of the findings of the Australian National Audit Office, Audit report no. 38 of 2002-03, Referrals, Assessments and Approvals under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999;
   (b) the effectiveness of the EPBC Act to protect critical habitats of threatened species and ecological communities, and the potential for measures to improve their recovery;
   (c) the cumulative impacts of EPBC Act approvals on threatened species and ecological communities, for example on Cumberland Plain Woodland, Casowary habitat and Grassy White Box Woodlands;
   (d) the effectiveness of past government responses to key threats identified
within the EPBC Act, including land-clearing, climate change and invasive species, and potential for future measures to build environmental resilience and facilitate adaptation within a changing climate;

(e) lessons learnt from the first 10 years of operation of the EPBC Act; and

(f) the effectiveness of Regional Forest Agreements, in protecting forest species and forest habitats where the EPBC Act does not directly apply.

Senator Minchin to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that 12 May to 6 June 2008 is the 40th anniversary of the battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral in South Vietnam in 1968;

(b) notes the 1st Australian Task Force played a key role in the success of Operation Toan Thang but the battles resulted in heavy casualties including the death of 26 Australian soldiers and 99 wounded; and

(c) remembers and acknowledges the valuable contribution of Australian service personnel during these battles.

Senator Hutchins to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Tuesday, 17 June 2008, from 3.30 pm to 7 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the Australian Crime Commission Amendment Act 2007.

Senator Mark Bishop to move on the next day of sitting:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee on Australia’s involvement in peacekeeping operations be extended to 26 June 2008.

Senator Nettle to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) acknowledges and sympathises with the Palestinian families whose homes were destroyed or seized, and family members killed or injured, 60 years ago at the inception of the State of Israel which the Palestinians call ‘Al Nakba’, the catastrophe;

(b) remembers with shame the failure of the international community to prevent the bloody events that followed the unilateral declaration of independent statehood by the Israeli leaders and the many millions of victims who continue to suffer to this day;

(c) acknowledges the unique relationship which exists between Australia and Palestine, a bond highlighted by our commitment to the rights and liberties of our citizens and encouragement of cultural diversity;

(d) commends the Palestinian authority’s commitment to democracy, the rule of law and pluralism;

(e) reiterates Australia’s commitment to:

(i) Palestine’s right to exist and our on-going support to the peaceful establishment of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and

(ii) the pursuit of peace and stability throughout the Middle East; and

(f) on this, the 60th anniversary of Al Nakba, pledges our friendship, commitment and enduring support to the people of Palestine as we remember this dark chapter in history together.

Senator Bob Brown to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Commonwealth Electoral (Above-the-Line Voting) Amendment Bill 2008 be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters as a particular part of its inquiry into all aspects of the 2007 Federal Election.

Senator Moore to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Community Affairs Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the
sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 15 May 2008, from 3.30 pm to 7.15 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007 [2008].

Postponement

The following items of business were postponed:

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 1 standing in the name of the Leader of The Nationals in the Senate (Senator Scullion) for today, proposing the disallowance of the Road User Charge Determination 2008 (No. 1), postponed till 14 May 2008.


General business notice of motion no. 55 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Democrats (Senator Allison) for today, relating to schools funding, postponed till 14 May 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 64 standing in the name of Senator Milne for today, relating to the 5th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development, postponed till 14 May 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 65 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Greens (Senator Bob Brown) for today, relating to Parliamentary approval before committing Australia to war, postponed till 14 May 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 66 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Greens (Senator Bob Brown) for today, relating to the restoration of the Plastic Bag Levy (Assessment and Collection) Bill 2002 to the Notice Paper, postponed till 14 May 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 67 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Greens (Senator Bob Brown) for today, relating to the death penalty, postponed till 14 May 2008.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Regional Development Australia

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (6.17 pm)—I table a statement by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Mr Albanese, and I seek leave to incorporate the statement in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The statement read as follows—

Today I am announcing one of the Australian government’s initiatives to help drive economic prosperity in regional Australia and deliver on our commitments that we made in the lead-up to the election.

One of our key regional election commitments was that area consultative committees (ACCs) would provide the basis for the creation of Regional Development Australia (RDA).

Consistent with this commitment, today the government announces that area consultative committees will transition to become local Regional Development Australia committees. As a first step, the ACC Chairs Reference Group will become the RDA Interim Board until 31 December 2008. I have spoken to the chair of that reference group today and he has very much welcomed this announcement, as have the ACC representatives who are here in the parliament for this debate.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia, Gary Gray, and I will convene a meeting with the interim board to discuss the transition of the ACC network to RDA, including the development of a charter for Regional Development Australia and its proposed responsibilities. We shall also want to discuss with the interim board ways of ensuring closer ties with the local government sector. Regional Australia’s communities and economy will benefit from a closer relationship between the new Regional Development Australia and the local government sector.

The ACC network was established by the previous Labor government in 1994 under the Employment Services Act 1994. ACCs originally
provided advice and generated support for labour market programs. Over time their role has evolved and recently their primary role has been to promote and identify projects and assist in the development of applications for the Regional Partnerships program.

There are 54 ACCs across Australia, which are not-for-profit, community-based organisations. Hundreds of Australians give their time to serve their communities as members of area consultative committees. Only the chairs and their deputies are appointed by the government. Committee members are volunteers from all walks of life: businesspeople, farmers, retirees, local government representatives and educators. They are united by their commitment to their local communities. They are a valuable source of local knowledge and advice for government. Some have been more effective than others and there is a need to recognise that regional development requires a reform of existing advisory structures.

The new Regional Development Australia network will build on the success of its predecessor, but will take on a much broader role to develop strategic input into national programs to improve the coordination of regional development initiatives and to ensure that there is effective engagement with local communities. The Rudd government is committed to listening to communities and the Regional Development Australia organisations will assist that process.

The actual roles and responsibilities of Regional Development Australia will reflect our consultations. I am confident that the interim board will have ideas to present to the government. The role of individual RDAs and the network as a whole could provide advice to government on a range of issues. These include:

- advise on community infrastructure;
- advise on regional issues and opportunities;
- advise on local implementation of specific Commonwealth initiatives in the region, as requested;
- facilitate economic development planning and investment attraction;
- identify any unique local attributes that would favour the development of new and innovative industries;
- promote initiatives to retain and expand skills and local businesses and industries;
- disseminate information about Commonwealth programs;
- undertake ad hoc consultations on behalf of federal agencies where a regional network is required;
- advise on adequacy of service delivery in regions;
- build networks and relationships with other levels of government and key stakeholders in the region;
- advise government on social inclusion issues; and
- advise on ways to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and coordination of Commonwealth regional initiatives.

I am looking forward to working with Regional Development Australia and receiving valuable advice on the development needs of regional Australia. The time frame will of course conclude this year, which is why we are maintaining the existing interim board, and I am pleased the chair has committed to active participation in this.

To conclude, this government’s new vision for regional Australia is based on building partnerships to ensure the government is responsive to local priorities and needs, but is underpinned by major new investments in the areas of infrastructure, broadband, housing, health care, education, skills development, innovation and water.

The message to regional communities is clear—this government will work with you to make your solutions work. We will bring fresh ideas and a new approach which will harness the potential of our regions and develop them for a better future.

Today’s announcement relating to the establishment of Regional Development Australia is the first in a number of initiatives of the Rudd Labor government that we will make in terms of regional development.

We will strengthen and invest in the future of regional Australia.

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (6.17 pm)—by leave—I move:
That the Senate take note of the document.

I rise to make some comments in regard to the ministerial statement on Regional Development Australia. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government for recognising regional Australia through his statement. I am particularly pleased the government will be continuing with the process of the area consultative committee network, even though I concede it is getting—as with many things when government changes—a name change.

It should be pointed out that the area consultative committee network has done an absolutely outstanding job, particularly in developing a network across all of the areas that it covers. They have made an outstanding contribution to the development of regional Australia, particularly through prioritising. Everybody understands there are never unlimited funds in government, and it is just fantastic to see a process where people will, from a grassroots level, identify those programs and projects that are closest to the hearts of those communities.

I am concerned, as I am sure are many senators, that the area consultative committees not be allowed to go into some sort of hibernation mode while the interim arrangements, consultations and reviews are taking place. I understand that the circumstances at the moment are that the area consultative committees, or parts of them, will remain in place until December 2008. As I said, certainly many senators on this side are concerned that the work that they do continues. It is absolutely vital that their work continues.

The reason that we are a little concerned is that, I understand, no projects have received funding since the government took office. When projects are approved applicants are notified of the success of the proposal. Disturbingly, their actually entering into contractual discussions with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has been put on hold. Communities have an expectation that there is going to some sort of outcome. There are obviously contractors and people within those communities that are putting their best foot forward for some of the work and some of the funding. People have an expectation that proposals they have worked so hard for are in fact going to be funded.

We always look for signs in a new government, and the fact that they have been put on hold is hardly a sign of a committed government—one who stops all progress for nearly six months. Time and effort, and in many cases significant funding, have already been put into getting these proposals up and ready. Again, because of the commitment of the ACCs and all of their staff and the significant effort that has been put in by entire communities, it is simply unfair of the Rudd government to keep these people hanging around for some sort of answer whilst it continues to conduct another review.

The minister has stated that the message to regional communities is clear. This is one of the key statements: ‘This government will work with you to make your solutions work.’ Predictably, Labor’s actions again appear to have fallen well short of their rhetoric—just another example of the government being prepared to say whatever they need to say to get elected. But it seems that when the rubber hits the road there is not a lot of traction. Perhaps we should have taken slightly more seriously the fairly prophetic remarks of the member for Kingsford Smith during the election that once Labor won and got in they were just going to change everything.

Already the Minister for Finance and De-regulation has gutted Regional Partnerships by announcing that the government will be
cutting the coalition’s Growing Regions program by $145 million. The Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia, Gary Gray, has been telling people that the government will be further slashing the Regional Partnerships program tonight, and we will be watching very carefully. It is vital that the new Regional Development Australia network is adequately funded; otherwise it is in danger of becoming nothing else but a rubber stamp.

I notice that regional Australia was a government pre-election commitment, and I remind the house of another pre-election commitment made by the then Leader of the Opposition in Perth on Friday, 16 November, in relation to the approvals process of the Regional Partnerships program. The Prime Minister, then as Leader of the Opposition, was asked in an interview:

Mr Rudd, can you explain your position on how you would administer the Regional Partnerships Program? Surely if you’re really serious about total independence you’d take it right out of the hands of a minister and the minister has no say in it?

And today’s Prime Minister said:

... it must pass through three stages—

he was very clear about this and he is a very articulate individual, and I will commend him for making this so clear—

Number one: for anything to be considered by us under this program, it would need to have the endorsement of either a) the local council; b) the local area consultative committee; or c) the State government.

No problems. He went on to say:

Secondly, it would need to form part of that community’s local economic or community infrastructure ...

Fair enough. He went on to say:

... and thirdly it would then need to pass the departmental seal of approval in order for it to proceed.

The obvious question from the journalist:

So ministers wouldn’t be able to overturn the recommendations of the department, is that what you’re saying?

The Prime Minister said:

According to the three stage process I’ve outlined, absolutely.

So he has ruled that out completely. We there have, prior to the election, the then Leader of the Opposition, now Prime Minister, categorically saying that he will make sure that the department is the final arbiter of Regional Partnerships—in effect, that ministers are not going to interfere in this stuff at all and those processes will be adhered to.

I do not understand how it is then, given the Prime Minister has said the department is the final arbiter of these programs, that the $2.6 million dead tree project at Barcaldine is going to be funded. That is right: the pet project from those on the other side, the Tree of Knowledge, a project which I understand was rejected by the minister’s department, is now going to be funded against departmental advice. That involves the second undertaking of that little tranche of undertakings—that it would be the department only; ministers would not intervene. But I will take you to the second part—and I am not sure about this: perhaps it is for the house to decide—

which is that this dead tree would need to form part of that community’s local, economic or community infrastructure. Perhaps I do not know enough about that particular tree, but I would have thought that was a fairly tenuous grasp of the second aspect.

Senator McLucas—We’ll bump up the Labor vote there!

Senator SCULLION—We have got interjections from the other side: something about bumping up the Labor vote. I will not take that interjection because perhaps I will get the sway of it wrong. Perhaps the other side need to recognise that there are a num-
ber of people who are confused by this matter and perhaps they could explain it to the members of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, who are patiently waiting for notification of whether this government is going to match the $600,000 that they have raised themselves to fit out a medical centre to expand this vital service to rural and regional Australia. So we have got a problem: we have got a Labor Tree of Knowledge and we have got people in the outback. Suddenly, one of these projects manages to push through all the processes and gets through.

It is going to be absolutely pointless, if we have a new Regional Development Australia board and a network, if the ideas and advice are never implemented. It does not matter that we have again had: ‘Core election promises will never be broken’—that has been shattered on a number of issues. But, clearly, we have an evidentiary trail to say that the Prime Minister was not fair dinkum when he said, ‘I’m going to stick to this promise.’ It was some other sort of promise, but let us leave all that aside. This is not going to work if the advice and the ideas are never going to be implemented, simply because we do not recognise the importance of rural and regional Australia. It is the boiler room of the economy of Australia, and we need to ensure that funding is adequate, timely and in response to a whole suite of advice that can only be provided through the area consultative committee network.

It is absolutely essential that the network survives with the new government—I recognise that these things change. This has been an outstanding program that was put in place by the previous government and, over a great deal of time, it has improved the worth of those people in rural and regional Australia. So, despite the duplicity of the Prime Minister and those opposite in terms of the election promise, we support the broad intent of the government’s plans for Regional Development Australia. Whilst not completely endorsing it, we are looking forward very much to some of the details later on.

Question agreed to.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Tabling**

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Troeth)—Pursuant to standing orders 38 and 166, I present documents as listed below which were presented to the President, the Deputy President and Temporary Chairmen of Committees since the Senate last sat. In accordance with the terms of the standing orders, the publication of the documents was authorised.

The list read as follows—

(a) Committee reports

1. Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee—Interim report—Exposure drafts of the Wheat Export Marketing Bill and the Wheat Export Marketing (Repeal and Consequential Amendments) Bill 2008 (received 24 April 2008)

2. Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee—Report, together with submissions received by the committee—Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Communications Fund) Bill 2008 [Provisions] (received 30 April 2008)

3. Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee—Final report, together with Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee—Exposure drafts of the Wheat Export Marketing Bill 2008 and the Wheat Export Marketing (Repeal and Consequential Amendments) Bill 2008 (received 30 April 2008)


5. Economics Committee—Interim report—Australia’s mandatory last resort home war-
ranty insurance schemes (received 1 May 2008)


7. Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee—Final report, together with Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee—Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment Bill 2008 (received 6 May 2008)


(b) Government documents

1. Gene Technology Regulator—Quarterly report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2007 (received 31 March 2008)


4. Civil Aviation Safety Authority—Corporate plan 2007-08 to 2009-10 (received 22 April 2008)

5. Australian Communications and Media Authority—Communications—Report for 2006-07 (received 28 April 2008)


(c) Reports of the Auditor-General

1. Report no. 27 of 2007-08—Performance audit—Emergency management Australia: Attorney-General’s Department (received 16 April 2008)

2. Report no. 28 of 2007-08—Performance audit—Defence’s compliance with the Public Works Committee approval processes: Department of Defence (received 22 April 2008)


5. Report no. 31 of 2007-08—Performance audit—Management of recruitment in the Australian Public Service (received 29 April 2008)


(d) Statements of compliance with Senate orders

1. Statements of compliance with the continuing order of the Senate of 30 May 1996, as amended on 3 December 1998, relating to indexed lists of files:
   - Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio agencies (received 25 March 2008)
   - Innovation, Industry, Science and Research portfolio agencies (received 25 March 2008)
   - Environment, Heritage and the Arts portfolio agencies (received 26 March 2008)
• Department of Climate Change (received 27 March 2008)
• Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio agencies (received 27 March 2008)
• Australian Communications and Media Authority, Special Broadcasting Service and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (received 28 March 2008)
• Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General (received 28 March 2008)

2. Statement of compliance with the continuing order of the Senate of 20 June 2001, as amended on 27 September 2001 and 18 June, 26 June and 4 December 2003, relating to lists of contracts:
• Treasury portfolio agencies (received 30 April 2008)

Ordered that the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, the Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee, the Economics Committee and the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee reports be printed.

COMMITTERS

Economics Committee

Extension of Time

Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (6.28 pm)—by leave—At the request of the Chair of the Economics Committee, Senator Hurley, I move:

That the final report of the Economics Committee on Australia’s mandatory last home warranty insurance schemes, be presented by 16 October 2008.

Question agreed to.

Community Affairs Committee

Extension of Time

Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (6.28 pm)—by leave—At the request of the Chair of the Community Affairs Committee, Senator Moore, I move:

That the final report of the Community Affairs Committee on the provisions of the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Emergency Response Consolidation) Bill 2008, be presented by 15 May 2008.

Question agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 8.00 pm

BUDGET

Statement and Documents

Senator SHERRY (Tasmania—Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law) (8.00 pm)—I table the following documents:

Budget speech 2008-09—Statement by the Treasurer (Mr Swan), dated 13 May 2008.

Budget papers—
No. 1—Budget strategy and outlook 2008-09.
No. 2—Budget measures 2008-09.
No. 3—Australia’s Federal relations 2008-09.
No. 4—Agency resourcing 2008-09.

Ministerial statements—
Australia’s international development assistance program 2008-09
Climate Change, the Economy, the Environment
Closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
Education Revolution
Strengthening Rural and Regional Australia

I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the budget statement and documents.

Leave granted.

Senator SHERRY—I move:

That the Senate take note of the statement and documents.

Debate (on motion by Senator Sherry) adjourned.

Proposed Expenditure

Consideration by Estimates Committees

Senator SHERRY (Tasmania—Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law) (8.00 pm)—I table particulars of proposed expenditure as follows:

CHAMBER
Particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2009.
Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2009.
Particulars of proposed expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2009.
Particulars of proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2009.
Particulars of certain proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2008.

I seek leave to move a motion to refer the documents to standing committees.

Leave granted.

Senator SHERRY—I move:

That the particulars documents be referred to standing committees for consideration of estimates.

Question agreed to.

Portfolio Budget Statements

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Watson) (8.01 pm)—On behalf of the President, I table the portfolio budget statements for 2008-09 for the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services. Copies are available from the Senate Table Office.

Senator SHERRY (Tasmania—Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law) (8.01 pm)—I table portfolio budget statements for 2008-09 and portfolio supplementary additional estimates statements for 2007-08 for portfolios and executive departments in accordance with the list circulated in the chamber.

The list read as follows—

Estimates of proposed expenditure for 2008-09—Portfolio budget statements—Portfolios and executive departments—

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.
Attorney-General’s portfolio.
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy portfolio.
Defence portfolio.
Department of Climate Change.
Department of Veterans’ Affairs.
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio.
Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio.
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio.
Finance and Deregulation portfolio.
Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio.
Health and Ageing portfolio.
Human Services portfolio.
Immigration and Citizenship portfolio.
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government portfolio.
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research portfolio.
Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio.
Resources, Energy and Tourism portfolio.
Treasury portfolio.

Estimates of proposed supplementary expenditure for 2007-08—Portfolio supplementary additional estimates statements—Portfolios and executive departments—

Attorney-General’s portfolio.
Department of Climate Change.
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio.
Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio.
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio.
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Watson)—Order! I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

60th Anniversary of the State of Israel
Senator TROOD (Queensland) (8.02 pm)—As many senators would be aware, this month we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the birth of the state of Israel. This is a special occasion not only for Israel but also for the very close relationship it has established with Australia. Israel is the only state so far to be created by the United Nations. This occurred at a time when an Australian occupied the presidency of the General Assembly, and it gave us a unique opportunity to be one of the first countries to step forward and show our support for the creation of the new Jewish state.

All these decades on, Israel stands as a bulwark of democracy in the Middle East and an enduring symbol of courage and determination in the face of daily security threats and extreme geopolitical adversity. Indeed, Israel’s history has been characterised by challenges, by conflict and by a struggle to survive in a sea of regional turbulence and tension. Upon its establishment in 1948, Israel was soon invaded by surrounding states. It has remained under direct threat from many of its neighbours for much of its history.

Following this inauspicious beginning, the first decades of Israel’s nationhood saw a fragile peace interspersed with conflict. The new state provided a safe haven for Jewish people from around the world, among them the disempowered survivors of the Second World War. To many, Israel represented a place of safety from oppression and exclusion and the opportunity to build a life in a free and enterprising new society. Over the last 60 years, Israel’s population has grown from a mere 200,000 people to almost seven million.

Despite its unsettled beginnings, Israel’s economy grew quickly. In the early days, its unique kibbutz system allowed for the growth of a strong agriculture industry on land that for many years had been considered infertile. As the decades progressed, Israel’s economy developed rapidly, particularly its technology sector and its educational institutions. The result is an economy which has become one of the most technologically intensive and innovative of any around the world.

In relation to demography, the diverse mix of national backgrounds that makes up Israel’s population has led to a rich and diverse cultural life and allowed Israel to boast many world-class writers, composers, playwrights, dance groups and orchestras.

Regrettably, today, as at the time of its birth, Israel sits in the heart of an unstable and uncertain Middle East. While it offers a stable and energetic model of democracy for the region, sadly it is not one that to date has been emulated. Israel is yet to secure an enduring peace with its neighbours behind secure borders. Despite all efforts to resolve the complex issues involved, several factors prevent any meaningful resolution. Not least, the peace process is hampered by divisions among the Palestinians. Fatah is perhaps less corrupt and politically incompetent than was once the case, but it remains ‘a thin reed’ on which to build regional peace. Another major obstacle to peace is the militant and extremist nature of Hamas. Despite having won the
2006 Palestinian elections, this hardline extremist group continues to prosecute the destruction of Israel and, as a result, cannot make any substantive or constructive contributions to the peace process. The contrast between the two sides could not be more obvious. While Israel has strong representative institutions, the Palestinian people do not, and they have been ill-served by those who purport to speak for them.

Australia shares Israel’s earnest desire for a just and secure peace. It is one of the many things that have bound our two countries together over the last 60 years. We have been a close friend and ally of Israel throughout this period and we have developed deep political, economic and cultural relationships. Both countries share a strong belief in the principles of democracy and the rule of law. We also share the experience of welcoming a diverse range of peoples and cultures to our respective countries.

Trade is also an integral part of the Australia-Israel connection. From small beginnings, Australia and Israel have developed a wide-ranging trade relationship. In the early 1970s, trade between the two countries totalled only $10 million. In the last financial year, it reached over $800 million, and it continues to grow. The exchange of ideas is another important aspect of Australia’s relationship with Israel. As a result of strong bilateral business networks, Australia has been able to share in Israel’s advanced technology and IT industries, as well as its education and training services sector. Under Operation Paladin, Australia’s defence forces work closely with Israel and other regional partners as a part of the United Nations’ Truce Supervision Organisation. Australia has supported this operation since 1956.

In 2002, the Howard government established the Australia Israel Cultural Exchange. The exchange fosters cultural links and embraces the full range of the cultural diversity of both countries, promoting Australian culture in Israel and Israeli culture in Australia. Today, Australia is also the home of a strong, active and growing Jewish community of around 120,000 people. This makes Australia the 10th largest Jewish community in the world. Australia continues to foster this connection by encouraging Jewish students to come to Australia through a range of scholarships and the active promotion of our university sector.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Israel all the best for its 60 year anniversary celebrations. I wish Israelis well for their next 60 years, and for many years beyond. I express the hope that the new American peace initiative may bear fruit and lead to a stable peace between Israel and its neighbours. I look forward to the close relationship between Australia and Israel remaining strong and continuing to grow closer as the years go on.

Villers-Bretonneux Dawn Service

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (8.09 pm)—Budgets come and budgets go but today I want to talk about something that is far more important than budgets brought down annually by the Australian government—and that is to recognise the service of Australians in various world wars, in particular the First World War. I raise this at a time immediately following the Anzac Day commemorations in Australia and elsewhere.

This year I had the great opportunity to attend the first dawn service at the Australian War Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. The service was the first dawn service ever held at Villers-Bretonneux and was held along with the traditional dawn service at Anzac Cove at Gallipoli, as well as, of course, the dawn services that are conducted right around Australia in all of the major cities and
in most other regional and village communities throughout our nation.

I was privileged to be involved in the first dawn service at Villers-Bretonneux. The service was attended by, in my estimate, something like 5,000 people. Many of them were Australian and, as I walked through the crowds later on, I was surprised at the number of people I personally knew who made the pilgrimage to that first dawn service on the 90th anniversary of the very significant battle of Villers-Bretonneux.

That battle, 90 years ago on Anzac Day eve, was really the first of the final turning points of the First World War. In 1918 the Germans had undertaken a major offensive which drew the allied lines back towards the west as far as they had ever been. As they approached the town of Villers-Bretonneux, it was Australian troops—for the first time under an Australian commander—that not only confronted the German advance but turned it round, marking the first significant allied advance in that final year of the First World War.

Ever since that particular battle, the people of Villers-Bretonneux have expressed their gratitude to Australians, New Zealanders and other allied troops by conducting a service on the Saturday closest to Anzac Day each year for the last 90 years. This year the dawn service was conducted by the Australians, and I particularly want to congratulate the Department of Veterans’ Affairs for the way they executed the dawn service there and, I know I can say, everywhere else in the world where there were significant dawn services.

Mr Mark Sullivan, the Secretary to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, and his team deserve the utmost congratulations for the work that they did in the first dawn service at Villers-Bretonneux. I want to particularly thank Mr Bruce Billson, the former Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, who put all of these arrangements in place a couple of years ago. I was delighted that the Australian government was represented at the dawn service by the current Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Mr Alan Griffin, who I thought acquitted Australia very well in the way that he led the official government involvement in the dawn service.

I also express congratulations to Mr David Ritchie, the Australian Ambassador to France, for the work he and his team did to facilitate the dawn service. I should also mention Major General Paul Stevens, from the Office of Australian War Graves. He was an integral part of the dawn service. In fact, Major General Stevens was master of ceremonies for the actual dawn service and did that with great aplomb and style.

The minister spoke, and there were a number of other participants at the dawn service. The Australian Federation Guard provided the catafalque party. It was indeed a very moving and very significant ceremony. I want to repeat my congratulations to all of those involved. It was not an easy task arranging such a significant event in a foreign country, and I was so proud of the Australian officials who were able to put together that dawn service and really make a significant commemoration of all of those tens of thousands of Australians who gave their lives in the defence of their country and the empire back in that war of 1914-18. The Australian casualties at Villers-Bretonneux were greater than those at Gallipoli. We do rightly recognise the impact of Gallipoli on Australian nationhood and the numbers involved there. But it was somewhat of a surprise to me to learn that the Australian casualties on the Western Front were indeed far greater than those that we suffered during the months we were at Gallipoli.
The service on the Friday, Anzac Day, was followed on the next day by the community service. This is the service that has been put on by the French, by the Villers-Bretonneux people, every year for the last 90 years. It was a real honour to be involved in that service, which was also at the Villers-Bretonneux Australian memorial.

The master of ceremonies was Ms Elise de Rouville, from the Australian Embassy in France. I particularly mention her because she did an excellent job in MC-ing all of the functions that occurred that day, the Saturday immediately following Anzac Day. Members of the Australian Federation Guard again provided the catafalque party and various Australians contributed to that community service, including Major General David Morrison, the Deputy Chief of Army. That service was followed by a service in the town of Villers-Bretonneux at the French memorial, a very moving service commemorating the Frenchmen who died in the First World War.

Following that, the official party moved to Bullecourt, where again there were wreath-laying ceremonies, first of all at a roadside leading to Bullecourt and later within the town of Bullecourt. It was an interesting exercise. The first service was the Australian service held at the church in Bullecourt. That was a very moving service. Wreaths were laid, and I again had the honour of laying a wreath as I had done the previous day at Villers-Bretonneux. Once the Australian ceremony finished in this small community on one side of the road, you turned around to the French memorial and did practically the same service again, recognising the French who had given their lives in that major conflict in the first part of the 20th century.

All in all, it was a very moving experience for all of us who had the honour and the opportunity to participate in those celebrations and commemorations of all those who gave their lives in the First World War. They were commemorated by the services at Villers-Bretonneux and Bullecourt in that Anzac week of this year. My congratulations go to all those who had a part in them. Those ceremonies and also those conducted right around Australia on Anzac Day this year again showed that we will never forget those who fell.

**Kokoda Campaign**

Senator BARNETT (Tasmania) (8.19 pm)—Tonight I advise the Senate that I had the pleasure and the honour of organising a group of 17 trekkers from Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT who walked the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea from 20 April to 30 April. The trek was organised to honour our diggers who helped save Australia in 1942, while raising funds for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund. The trekkers funded their own expenses to ensure 100 per cent of the money raised goes to the JDRF.

Step by arduous step we followed the path of our Australian soldiers along the Kokoda track in Papua New Guinea, with a special Anzac Day service en route. It was hard physically but just as hard emotionally as we pondered the conditions of our Aussie diggers from July 1942. We did not have to worry about snipers, the odd ambush and booby traps like our diggers did when they took a stand and helped save Australia. Our rations were an improvement on the bully beef and biscuits that were offered to our diggers at the time. Sir William Slim, a former Governor-General, summed up the performance of the Australians in Papua New Guinea when speaking at the opening of the Bomana War Cemetery at Port Moresby. He said:

It was the Australians who broke the spell of Japanese invincibility on land and inflicted on
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that arrogant army its first defeat. Let Australians never forget this. It is, like Anzac, part of their noble tradition—and these men made it.

We had been in serious training since January because the 96-kilometre track is gruelling—an unforgiving walk through dense jungle, across numerous waterways and up and down steep ridges. It was hot and humid, with the largely clay ground very slippery and dangerous in places. But the training worked. All our trekkers made it with only a few blisters and scratches—nothing serious. Interestingly, during our eight days on the track there were five medical evacuations of sick and injured trekkers from other groups. Last year three people died on the track from dehydration, heart attack and other illnesses.

Our trek’s aim was to honour our diggers while raising funds for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and it was supported by the RSL. The Kokoda battles of 1942 were some of the most important, yet least recognised, in Australia’s history. More than 2,000 Australians were killed and over 3,500 were wounded. Casualties due to malaria and sickness were three times these numbers. Historians estimate that 200 Tasmanians were among the casualties. The fighting was some of the most desperate and vicious encountered by Australian troops in the Second World War. The southern end of the track is less than 50 kilometres from Port Moresby, a deepwater port where Japan could have established a southern Asian base. Remember also that this historic battle took place on Australian soil: PNG at this time was Australian territory. At a similar time, over a 22-month period the Japanese undertook 64 bombing raids on Darwin and dropped more bombs there than on Pearl Harbor.

Anzac Day was a highlight for all of our trekkers. The two veterans of our group, Ivan Dean MLC, from Launceston, Bruce Scott, President of the RSL in Scottsdale in north-east Tasmania, and I presented two very elderly PNG nationals, affectionately known as ‘fuzzy wuzzy angels’, with an RSL flag and Senate gifts as a thank you for their service to our Australian diggers. Ovuru Idiki told us he served the Australian Army by carrying supplies and returning injured Australian soldiers on stretchers for medical treatment for four years and six months at £5 a year. In my view, it is shameful that the Australian government has not yet officially acknowledged and thanked these men for their service. I am advised that a key reason is that it would pave the way for compensation. How ridiculous. I will be working with the RSL to argue that the fuzzy wuzzy angels should be officially honoured.

On 14 August 2002, at the address for the dedication of the Isurava Memorial in PNG, the Prime Minister the Hon. John Howard MP said:

And the true significance of what was achieved here at Isurava and in other battles on the Kokoda Track was the courage, the commitment, the professionalism and the raw love of country of the Australians.

The Australian Army inflicted the first defeat on land of the Japanese Imperial Army. To their everlasting honour and credit those defeats injected heart and hope into an Australian population that grew increasingly worried about the likelihood of direct and overwhelming invasion of the Australian mainland.

I note that Arch Bevis MP and Chris Bowen MP, a frontbencher for the current Labor government, have both supported official recognition for these fuzzy wuzzy angels. On 17 August 2005, Chris Bowen MP said:

I think that it is a matter of some regret that this nation has not formally recognised the efforts of the fuzzy wuzzy angels.

I do hope that this government, and indeed all members of the Australian parliament, reconsider our need to recognise these fuzzy wuzzy angels.
Families of Kokoda veterans asked that their beloveds’ ashes be spread on the track. The ashes of Jack Wood, born in Burnie, were spread at Brigade Hill by my brother, Nick Barnett, together with Kila, a local PNG national, and the ashes of Harry Norton of Launceston were spread at Isurava, the site of a bloody four-day and -night, battle. In this past week, I met with Ian and Bev, his son and daughter, and his sister, Leola, and provided photos of the event. The spreading of the ashes was conducted by Ivan Dean MLC, Baradea, a local PNG national, and me. Bruce Scott, President of the RSL of Scottsdale, delivered the ode. Isurava is also the site of the main memorial on the track, displaying four large granite pillars with the following words inscribed: courage, endurance, mateship, sacrifice. Again at Eora Creek we held a memorial service in honour of Sergeant George Rudd, who was killed in battle at that site. Ron Rudd of Burnie, his son, was three years old at the time. I met with Ron Rudd and his wife, Jane, at Latrobe last week, and I had photos of the memorial for them. It was a very special meeting. Understandably, none of us came home without crying. Each day was emotionally challenging, especially for our veteran trekkers.

The climax of our trek was our visit to the Bomana War Cemetery in Port Moresby, where more than 3,000 Australians are buried under beautiful white marble headstones. It was a well-kept, solemn and humbling place. After a few moments there, there was not a dry eye amongst us. Another trekking group found an Australian Bren machine gun at Brigade Hill and asked if I could help return it to the Australian War Memorial. It was quite a find and in remarkably good condition. It remains in Papua New Guinea while we navigate the protocols and regulations regarding such a possibility.

Whilst all 17 team members struggled through the 96 kilometres of intense heat and jungle, fellow trekker Caroline Burridge of Hobart and I experienced a few extra challenges managing our type 1 diabetes. Being in a remote jungle location, we undertook regular—hourly, on average—finger prick checks and snack stops to maintain a healthy blood glucose level despite the difficult conditions. In addition to our once in a lifetime experience, the team are extremely proud to have raised over $150,000 to date for much-needed research into type one diabetes.
Patrick Lindsay on Kokoda and its importance to Australia.

I thank the Senate for the opportunity to share in this story and this trek.

Pilbara Region

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (8.29 pm)—The Pilbara Area Consultative Committee recently held a conference in Karratha entitled ‘Riding the Boom’, designed to find solutions to the local problems created by the so-called China boom in the resources industry in the Pilbara and the towns around there. Whether this objective was achieved is a moot point but overall some interesting discussions occurred. Tom Senti, from the Tweed area of New South Wales, spoke about the success that had been achieved in Tweed Heads in introducing new industry to the area, while Paul Pisasale, the Mayor of Ipswich in Queensland, gave an inspiring speech entitled ‘Leadership, Vision, Passion: Making economic development programmes work and building communities’.

However, the contemporary Pilbara is a different kind of area to any other part of regional Australia. For a start, with the exception of Port Hedland, which was established in 1896, most of the towns are regarded as being new. Considering such places as Karratha and Dampier, and the inland mining towns of Paraburdoo, Tom Price and Newman were established in the 1960s, and so are now around half a century old, ‘new’ is not really an apt description of them. Perhaps their supposed newness should not be used to excuse deficiencies in community facilities.

As John Nicolau, the chief economist of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, pointed out, the small business sector in the Pilbara towns is very small and the local economies of the Pilbara towns are dominated by large mining companies, such as BHP in Port Hedland and Rio and Woodside in Dampier and Karratha. This means that the life of the Pilbara towns very largely revolves around the interests of the big mining companies. Especially since the adoption of 12-hour shifts and a fly-in fly-out workforce, the companies seem to regard the Pilbara towns as mere dormitories for their workers, who are flown in for a two- or three-week period from their home bases scattered around Australia. By contrast, the permanent residents of the Pilbara towns want to see their communities develop into what might be described as ‘normal’ towns in regional Australia.

I lived full-time in Port Hedland from 1974 to 1996. In those years Port Hedland was a very vibrant town with many active sporting and service clubs and community groups. However, today in Port Hedland, along with other Pilbara towns, sporting associations and clubs are in decline. For example, Rotary, which had a membership of over 30 in the 80s and 90s in Port Hedland, now has a membership of fewer than 10. On Anzac Day a St John Ambulance volunteer told me it was very hard to find volunteers for that very important community service.

The same story of community decline is repeated in the other Pilbara towns, and it is largely due to the fact that fly-in fly-out workers on 12-hour shifts do not have the time to devote to local community activities in the Pilbara towns. A commonly heard theme in the Pilbara towns is that, given the huge amount of wealth that is taken from these towns in the form of royalties and taxes, some should be returned to provide better community facilities and amenities. While the argument has some validity, particularly in terms of the provision of community infrastructure such as roads, when one compares the shopping malls, aquatic centres, libraries and day-care centres in the Pilbara towns with those found in some of the small towns found in the wheat belt of
WA such as Pingelly, the Pilbara towns are not too badly off, I have to say. One of the differences is, however, that the residents of the Pilbara towns are mostly displaced suburbanites from the capital cities of Australia and New Zealand rather than real country folk. Accordingly, their aspirations are different—but, nonetheless, should not be lightly dismissed.

Regrettably, the Rudd government representative at the meeting, Gary Gray MP, the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia, who heads the newly established Northern Development Agency, was anything but sensitive when he described the request for extra funding for community amenities and infrastructure as ‘whingeing’—a bad call by Mr Gray, who showed nothing but his lack of understanding of the very real issues facing the communities in the Pilbara in their sincere efforts to develop the region on a long-term, sustainable basis.

In the opening forum of the conference a delegate said that conferences, such as this one on ‘riding the Pilbara boom’, were often mere talkfests that seemed to achieve little in terms of practical outcomes. Regrettably, I have to say that the Pilbara boom conference achieved less than I for one hoped it might, for there was no list of problems and possible solutions drawn up.

Having been associated with the Pilbara from the mid-70s, and having been in local government there for nine years—for three of which I was the Mayor of Port Hedland—and having been on the board of the Pilbara Development Commission, which is a state agency concerned with promoting regional growth, I have some views about the hurdles that need to be overcome to develop sustainable communities in the Pilbara. I would like to put some of those on record in the Senate tonight.

The high price of housing is a major issue in the Pilbara, with rentals reaching $2,000 per week for a house in both Karratha and Port Hedland, and house purchase prices mostly being in excess of $1 million for quite ordinary houses. Ordinary people and small businesses cannot afford housing for their employees or match the terms and conditions offered by the mining companies. As a consequence small businesses are having a very tough time in the Pilbara, and many are closing down and leaving the area. There are a lot of empty shops in the South Hedland Shopping Centre for this reason.

An important part of the solution to the housing problem is speeding up the release of land, which seems a curious problem to have for the Pilbara towns when one considers they are surrounded by millions of hectares of vacant land. However, native title is an issue in some places and development is slow in others. Undoubtedly, some lateral thinking is needed. Rather than developing single homes on single blocks, particularly given the shortage of land, high-rise apartments should be considered as they would provide accommodation for a large number of people. For years there has been such a high-rise development in South Hedland, but more are needed.

FIFO—fly-in fly-out, as it is commonly known—is destroying the sense of community in the Pilbara towns. This is, as I said, because FIFO workers, as they are called, do not regard the Pilbara towns as their home. As detailed already, local clubs and organisations such as Rotary and others, which depend on volunteers, are collapsing. Fly-in fly-out was originally introduced as a cheaper option for the mining companies than building towns for a local residential workforce. However, FIFO has proved to have some serious adverse social consequences, such as a high incidence of stress, marital disharmony, alcoholism and drug
abuse. I was told by a mining company executive in the Pilbara last year that the benefits of FIFO operations were, increasingly, regarded as marginal. Given that, I would like to see the mining companies consider reviewing the overall cost effectiveness of FIFO operations versus returning to a residential workforce, with local FIFO to regional mining operations, say, out of Karratha and Port Hedland, which would do much to contribute to the stabilisation of the established Pilbara towns. Mr Acting Deputy President, I am running out of time, so I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The remainder of the speech read as follows—

Local Government in the Pilbara is chronically short of funding to service the communities largely because the exemption the mining companies were given from paying rates on their tenements under the State Agreement Acts of the 1960s are still in place. However as the Mining Companies operations are now well established and highly profitable there is a case to be made for them to voluntarily make contributions to local councils in lieu of rates. Such contributions I am informed might amount to five or six million dollars per year which is a very small amount by Pilbara standards but which would be very helpful to local government endeavours to improve community facilities.

In the Pilbara there is a strong sentiment that the State and Federal governments should allocate a small percentage of the billions of dollars in royalties and taxes drawn from the Pilbara for infrastructure, services and amenities.

Of course the federal Government can only allocate funding as part of an Australia wide program and the previous government announced a $200 million “growing regions plan” shortly before the last federal election which was designed to provide for regional Australia’s future needs in infrastructure, health and telecommunications.

A program such as that which was targeted at fast growing regions would have provided a vehicle for funding the desires of the local Pilbara residents for improved facilities and infrastructure in those towns.

The Indigenous people of the Pilbara are largely bystanders amidst the wealth of the area and deserve better housing, health and education services. It is encouraging that the Mining Industry is now committed to employing Indigenous people, led by Rio Tinto in its various operations, but there is still a long way to go.

As I have remarked the “new Pilbara” towns and ports were established 50 years ago and perhaps now a psychological shift is required to regard them as a permanent part of regional Australia where increasingly people who grew up there are happy to remain. It is obvious that an overall plan is needed for the Pilbara, however, and one can only hope that the state and Federal governments will have the vision to develop such a plan for the Pilbara region which contributes so much to the Australian economy.

Senate adjourned at 8.40 pm

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following government documents were tabled:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner—Reports for 2007—

Native title.

Social justice.


Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency—Quarterly report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2007.
Fisheries Research and Development Corporation—Report for 2006-07—Correction.
Government response.
Sydney Airport Demand Management Act 1997—Quarterly report on the maximum movement limit for Sydney Airport for the period 1 October to 31 December 2007.
Wheat Export Authority—Report for 1 October 2006 to 30 September 2007 [Final report].

Tabling
The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:

[Legislative instruments are identified by a Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) number]
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act—
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) (Child Care Benefit — Receipts) Rules 2008 [F2008L00954]*.
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) (Child Care Benefit — Record Keeping) Amendment Rules 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00955]*.
Aged Care Act—
Accountability Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00894]*.
Aged Care (Amount of flexible care subsidy — multi-purpose services) Amendment Determination 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00909].
Aged Care (Payroll Tax Supplement) Amendment Determination 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00816]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of accommodation charge top-up supplement) Determination 2008 [F2008L00915]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of accommodation supplement) Determination 2008 [F2008L00906]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of charge exempt resident supplement) Determination 2008 [F2008L00907]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of concessional resident supplement) Determination 2008 [F2008L00908]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of maximum asset threshold) Determination 2008 [F2008L00914]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of pensioner supplement) Determination 2008 [F2008L00913]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of respite supplement) Determination 2008 [F2008L00910]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of transitional accommodation supplement) Determination 2008 [F2008L00911]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — amount of transitional supplement) Determination 2008 [F2008L00912]*.
Aged Care (Residential care subsidy — basic subsidy amount) Determination 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00818]*.
Allocation Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00895]*.
Approval of Care Recipients Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00828]*.
Certification Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00896]*.
Classification Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00830]*.
Community Care Grant Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00897]*.
Extra Service Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00898]*.
Flexible Care Grant Principles 2008 [F2008L00899]*.
Information Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00900]*.
Quality of Care Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00834]*.
Records Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00832]*.
Residential Care Grant Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00902]*.
Residential Care Subsidy Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00833]*.
Residential Care Subsidy Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 2) [F2008L00903]*.
User Rights Amendment Principles 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00905]*.
Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act—
Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Rules Amendment Instrument 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01170]*.
Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Rules Amendment Instrument 2008 (No. 2) [F2008L01285]*.
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2004-2005 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2007-2008—Determination to reduce appropriation upon request—Determination No. 3 of 2007-2008 [F2008L01189]*.
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2007-2008—Advance to the Presiding Officer—No. 1 of 2007-2008 [F2008L01020]*.
AusLink (National Land Transport) Act—Variations of AusLink Roads to Recovery List Instruments Nos—
2008/1 [F2008L00953]*.
2008/2 [F2008L01325]*.
Australian Bureau of Statistics Act—Proposals Nos—
1 of 2008—Survey of Employment and Earnings.
Australian Film, Television and Radio School Act—Determination of Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates No. 2008/1 [F2008L01172]*.
Australian National University Act—
Academic Board and University Policy Committees Statute 2007—Academic Board and University Policy Committees Rules 2008 [F2008L00987]*.

Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Act—Statement under section 7—Disclosure of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation’s interests in company.

Australian Postal Corporation Act—Select Legislative Instruments 2008 Nos—
25—Australian Postal Corporation Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00792]*.
26—Australian Postal Corporation (Performance Standards) Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00793]*.

Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Act—Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (Confidentiality) Determinations Nos—
4 of 2008—Information provided by locally-incorporated banks and foreign ADIs under Reporting Standard ARS 320.0 (2005) [F2008L00946]*.
5 of 2008—Information provided by locally-incorporated banks and foreign ADIs under Reporting Standard ARS 320.0 (2005) [F2008L01092]*.

Australian Research Council Act—
Linkage International Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2009 [F2008L01061]*.
Linkage Projects Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2009—Variation (No. 1) [F2008L01034]*.

Aviation Transport Security Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2008 No. 58—Aviation Transport Security Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01057]*.

Broadcasting Services Act—
National Television Conversion Scheme Variation 2007 (No. 1) [F2008L00981]*.

Variations to Licence Area Plans for—
Innisfail Radio – No. 1 of 2008 [F2008L00957]*.
Lithgow Radio – No. 1 of 2008 [F2008L01314]*.

Charter of the United Nations Act—


Charter of the United Nations (UN Sanction Enforcement Law) Amendment Declaration 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01045]*.


Select Legislative Instruments 2008 Nos—
42—Charter of the United Nations (Sanctions) Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01051]*.
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Northern Territory National Emergency Response (Other Areas) Declaration 2008 (No. 2) [F2008L01162]*.

Northern Territory National Emergency Response (Other Areas) Declaration 2008 (No. 3) [F2008L01193]*.

Privacy Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2008 No. 60—Privacy (Private Sector) Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01050]*.

Private Health Insurance Act—

Private Health Insurance (Benefit Requirements) Rules 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00939]*.

Private Health Insurance (Benefit Requirements) Rules 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00939]*.

Private Health Insurance (Complying Product) Amendment Rules 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01315]*.

Private Health Insurance (Complying Product) Rules 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00940]*.

Private Health Insurance (Health Benefits Fund Administration) Amendment Rules 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01319]*.

Product Stewardship (Oil) Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2008 No. 28—Product Stewardship (Oil) Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00920]*.

Public Lending Right Act—Public Lending Right Scheme 1997 (Modification No. 1 of 2008) [F2008L01136]*.

Public Service Act—

Public Service Commissioner’s Amendment Directions 2008 (No. 1).

Select Legislative Instrument 2008 No. 72—Public Service Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01099]*.

Radiocommunications Act—Radiocommunications Foreign Space Objects) Amendment Determination 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01081]*.

Royal Commissions Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2008 No. 40—Royal Commissions Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01052]*.


Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Levy Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2008 No. 27—Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Levy Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00880]*.
Social Security Act—

Social Security (Deeming Threshold Rates) (DEEWR) Determination 2008 [F2008L00904]*.

Social Security (Deeming Threshold Rates) (FaHCSIA) Determination 2008 [F2008L00847]*.

Social Security Exempt Lump Sum (Redress WA) (DEEWR) Determination 2008 [F2008L01137]*.

Social Security Exempt Lump Sum (Redress WA) (FaHCSIA) Determination 2008 [F2008L01143]*.


Social Security Exempt Lump Sum (Tasmanian Government Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children) (FaHCSIA) Determination 2008 [F2008L01202]*.

Social Security (Special Disability Trust) (DEEWR) Guidelines 2008 [F2008L01173]*.

Social Security (Special Disability Trust) (FaHCSIA) Guidelines 2008 [F2008L01093]*.

Social Security (Administration) Act—

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory area — Mapurru) Determination 2008 [F2008L00974]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory area — Pirlangimpi and Putjamirra) Determination 2008 [F2008L01069]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various No. 4)) Determination 2008 [F2008L00948]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 5)) Determination 2008 [F2008L00951]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 6)) Determination 2008 [F2008L00973]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 7)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01013]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 8)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01014]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 9)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01066]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 10)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01128]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 11)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01129]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 12)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01174]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 13)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01175]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 14)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01176]*.

Social Security (Administration) (Declared relevant Northern Territory areas — Various (No. 15)) Determination 2008 [F2008L01326]*.


Student Assistance Act—Student Assistance (Public Interest Certificate Guidelines) Determination 2008 [F2008L01262]*.
Superannuation Act 2005—
Superannuation (PSSAP) Approved Authority Exclusion Amendment Declaration 2008 [F2008L01088]*.
Superannuation (PSSAP) Membership Eligibility (Inclusion) Amendment Declaration 2008 [F2008L01087]*.
Third Amending Deed to the Public Sector Superannuation Scheme Trust Deed [F2008L01089]*.
Sydney Airport Curfew Act—Dispensation Report 04/08 [14 dispensations].
Telecommunications (Carrier Licence Charges) Act—Determinations under paragraphs—
15(1)(b) No. 1 of 2008 [F2008L01060]*.
15(1)(d) No. 1 of 2008 [F2008L00967]*.
Television Licence Fees Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2008 No. 67—
Television Licence Fees Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01138]*.
Therapeutic Goods Act—
Order—Definition of British Pharmacopoeia, dated 9 April 2008 [F2008L01091]*.
Poisons Standard Amendment No. 1 of 2008 [F2008L01259]*.
Therapeutic Goods (Emergency) Exemption 2008 (No. 2) [F2008L01194]*.
Trade Practices Act—
Direction No. 31, dated 7 April 2008 [F2008L01086]*.
Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act—
Select Legislative Instrument 2008 No. 59—Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L01055]*.
Veterans’ Entitlements Act—
Statements of Principles concerning—
Analgesic Nephropathy No. 29 of 2008 [F2008L01116]*.
Analgesic Nephropathy No. 30 of 2008 [F2008L01117]*.
Benign Neoplasm of the Eye and Adnexa No. 33 of 2008 [F2008L01120]*.
Benign Neoplasm of the Eye and Adnexa No. 34 of 2008 [F2008L01121]*.
Smallpox No. 31 of 2008 [F2008L01118]*.
Smallpox No. 32 of 2008 [F2008L01119]*.
Soft Tissue Sarcoma No. 35 of 2008 [F2008L01122]*.
Soft Tissue Sarcoma No. 36 of 2008 [F2008L01123]*.
Veterans’ Entitlements (Special Disability Trust) Guidelines 2008 [F2008L01110]*.
Workplace Relations Act—Select Legislative Instruments 2008 Nos—
38—Workplace Relations Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 1) [F2008L00960]*.
39—Workplace Relations Amendment Regulations 2008 (No. 2) [F2008L00961]*.

Governor-General’s Proclamation—
Commencement of Provisions of an Act

Workplace Relations Amendment (Transition to Forward with Fairness Act) 2008—
Schedules 1 to 7—28 March 2008
[F2008L00959]*.
Explanatory statement tabled with legislative instrument.

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 2007—Statement of compliance—Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following answers to questions were circulated:

Solar Energy Technology

(Question No. 2)

Senator Allison asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:
In regard to the Minister’s press release of 8 May 2007, ‘$150 million more for solar technology’, can details be provided of the ‘targeted scheme to support the design and installation of solar systems on commercial, industrial and iconic buildings’, including the budget, commencement date and criteria involved.

Senator Wong—The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
The Australian Government’s Solar Homes and Communities Plan expects to deliver solar power to up to 15,000 homes and 2,000 community buildings over the life of the Photovoltaic Rebate Programme (PVRP). Funding of $150 million is available for:
• rebates of $8 per peak watt of installed photovoltaic capacity, up to $8,000 for household installations;
• rebates for community buildings such as churches, scout halls and sports clubs providing half the cost of a maximum 2 kilowatt solar system to be delivered through a competitive grants programme; and
• a community icons programme, promoting examples of sustainable living in neighbourhoods, houses and community centres, funding the full cost of installing 2 kilowatt systems on smaller community buildings.
Development work for the community buildings and community icons component under PVRP is under way.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

(Question No. 3)

Senator Allison asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:
In regard to the approximately 300,000 Australians suffering from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS):
(1) Is the Minister prepared to provide the necessary funds for the establishment of a research facility and centre of excellence for ME/CFS, in order to address the lack of biomedical research into the illness.
(2) (a) Will funds and access to expert resources be provided to improve support services to sufferers and their carers and to raise awareness within the community on management and prevention strategies; and (b) will support and funding be provided to the national association, ME/CFS Australia.

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(1) Australian Government funding for all areas of research relevant to human health and medical research is provided through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The
NHMRC provides research support through a variety of mechanisms, including support for individual research projects, broad programs of research, training awards for scholars and postdoctoral fellows, career research fellowships and special strategic research programs.

The NHMRC administers a program for Centres of Clinical Research Excellence (CCRE). This program is advertised annually and research grants are provided for periods of five years. The aim of the CCRE is to support clinical (human) research with potential to lead to improved health outcomes for the community and to ensure the effective translation of research outcomes into clinical practice.

As with all NHMRC funding schemes, applications for CCRE funding are based on competitive peer review with the most significant research proposals funded on the basis of scientific merit. Recommendations for awarding grants are submitted to the NHMRC Research Committee and Council before approvals by the CEO are forwarded to the Minister for Health and Ageing.

In the last round of this program, which commenced in 2007, a total $12 million was awarded to six CCRE grants. The next call for Expressions of Interest for the CCRE program will be advertised in May 2008.

The NHMRC is currently funding research involving chronic fatigue syndrome which is being undertaken over five years at the University of New South Wales. The grant total is $537,500.

There are currently no separately identified funds for support services for ME/CFS sufferers or their carers or to raise awareness of ME/CFS management and prevention including through funding of the national association. People with ME/CFS however are able to access a range of primary care services under the Medical Benefits Schedule including items intended specifically to enhance primary care of people with chronic diseases. As well, carers can access a range of assistance and supports through the Commonwealth Carelink Centres. These act as a single point for access to information about, and referral to, community care services, which may be of assistance to suffers of ME/CFS or their carers.

**Hexachlorobenzene**

(Question No. 6)

Senator Bob Brown asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to the answer to question on notice no. 3242 (Senate Hansard, 10 September 2007, p. 191): using existing Australian facilities, how long would it take to dispose of the stockpile of hexachlorobenzene waste at Botany Bay, Sydney.

Senator Wong—The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

I am advised that there is no existing facility in Australia capable of treating the stockpile of hexachlorobenzene (HCB) waste currently stored at Botany Bay in Sydney.

**Climate Change Conference**

(Question No. 11)

Senator Bob Brown asked the Minister for Climate Change and Water, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007: (a) which individuals were included in the Australian Government delegation to the conference; and (b) for each of these people, which organisation did she or he represent.
Senator Wong—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
Australian Government delegates who attended the United Nations Climate Change Convention Conference of Parties in Bali in December 2007 are listed at Attachment B.

Attachment B
UNFCCC COP 13 & COP/MOP 3
Bali, 3-14 December 2007
Australian Delegation List

While all individuals listed below were credentialed to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali as members of the Australian delegation, a number attended as part of ministerial support parties or to attend separate meetings held in conjunction with the Bali Climate Change Conference and did not participate in the formal negotiations.

The listed ‘Advisors’ on pages 5-8 comprise nominated representatives of non-federal government organisations, such as state and territory governments, environmental NGOs and industry peak bodies, and did not participate in the formal negotiations.

Head of Delegation

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister of Australia

Alternate Heads of Delegation

Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Climate Change

The Hon Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs

The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP
Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

Jan Adams
Ambassador for the Environment
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Robert Owen-Jones
Special Negotiator Climate Change
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Minister Representing Australia at the Finance Ministers’ Dialogue

The Hon Wayne Swan MP
Treasurer
Minister Representing Australia at the Trade Ministers’ Dialogue

The Hon Simon Crean MP
Minister for Trade
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Bill Farmer AO
Ambassador
Australian Embassy Jakarta

Gillian Bird
Deputy Secretary

Peter Roberts
Director
Climate Change Section

Alison Carrington
Executive Officer
Climate Change Section

Shannon White
Executive Officer
Climate Change Section

Scott Bolitho
Media Liaison Officer
Parliamentary and Media Branch

Laura Kemp
Media Liaison Officer
Parliamentary and Media Branch
Department of Environment and Water Resources

David Borthwick
Secretary

Howard Bamsey
Deputy Secretary

Shayleen Thompson
Assistant Secretary
International Climate Change Branch

Jean-Bernard Carrasco
Director
Global Initiative on Forests and Climate

Greg Picker
Director
Global Climate Change Team

Kristin Tilley
Director
Future Action Policy
Andrew Bozin  
Assistant Director  
Future Action Policy  

Laura Brown  
Assistant Director  
Future Action Policy  

Anthony McGregor  
Assistant Director  
Global Climate Change Team  

Kate Cecys  
Senior Policy Officer  
Global Climate Change Team  

Julianne McIntyre  
Senior Policy Officer  
Global Climate Change Team  

Jahda Swanborough  
Ministerial Communication  
AusAID  

Robin Davies  
Assistant Director-General  
Growth and Resource Management  

Deborah Fulton  
Director  
Global Environment Group  

Roberta Thorburn  
Manager  
Climate Change, Energy, Water & Waste Management, Pacific Environment Team  

Peta Mills  
Policy Manager  
Global Environment Group  
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet  

Martin Parkinson  
Deputy Secretary  

Duncan Lewis  
Deputy Secretary  

Hugh Borrowman  
First Assistant Secretary  
International Division  

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Joanne Evans
Assistant Secretary
Climate Change Policy

Frank Leverett
Assistant Secretary
Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch

Chris Johnston
Director
Climate Change
Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

Bruce Wilson
General Manager
Environment Branch

Grant Kellam
Assistant Manager
Greenhouse Section, Environment Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Allen Grant
Executive Manager
Forestry Division
Bureau of Meteorology

David Walland
Supervising Meteorologist
International Climate Policy
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

John Tanzer
Executive Director
Prime Ministerial advisers

Virginia Dale
Advance Officer
Prime Ministers’ Office

David Epstein
Chief of Staff
Prime Ministers’ Office

Alex Gordon
Senior Policy Advisor
Prime Ministers’ Office
Monday, 19 May 2008

SENATE

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[Contact names and titles]

Lachlan Harris
Media Advisor
Prime Ministers’ Office

Peter Khalil
Senior Policy Advisor
Prime Ministers’ Office

Kate Shaw
Prime Ministers’ Office

Rebecca Christie
Prime Ministers’ Office

Kate Callaghan
Senior Policy Advisor
Prime Minister’s Office

Ministerial advisers

Paul Grigson
Foreign Minister’s Office

John Olenich
Adviser to Ms Wong, Minister for Climate Change

David Williams
Chief of Staff to Mr Garrett, Minister for the Environment

Margot Marshall
Ministerial Communication
Office of the Minister for the Environment

The Hon John Brumby MP
Premier of Victoria

Michael Crutchfield MLA
Parliamentary Secretary for Water and Environment
Victorian Government

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

Paul McLeay MP
Member of the Legislative Assembly for Heathcoate
New South Wales Government

The Hon Andrew McNamara MP
Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation
Queensland Government

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Ralph Ashton  
Climate Change Project Leader  
Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists

Jamie Bayly-Stark  
Director Policy  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
Tasmanian Government

Dr Ron Ben-David  
Deputy Secretary  
Climate Change and Resources  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
Victorian Government

Nicole Buchanski  
Director, Office of Climate Change  
Queensland Government

David Crombie  
President  
National Farmers Federation

Alison Currie  
Adviser  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
Victorian Government

John Daley  
Executive Director  
Australian Industry Greenhouse Network

Sarah Fitzpatrick  
Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union (CFMEU)

Professor Ross Garnaut  
Professor of Economics  
Australian National University

Julia Grant  
Adviser to the Premier  
South Australian Government

Allan Hansard  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tree Plantations Australia  
National Association of Forest Industries

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Dominique La Fontaine
Chief Executive Officer
Clean Energy Council

Anthony Maher
Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union (CFMEU)

Jenny McAllister
Director
Climate Change Policy Branch
New South Wales Government

Cassandra McCarthy
Director, Policy and International
Australian Coal Association

Richard McIndoe
Managing Director
TRUenergy
Clean Energy Council

Amanda McKenzie
National Coordinator
Australian Youth Climate Coalition
Climate Action Network Australia

Richard Merzian
Steering Committee Member,
Australian Youth Climate Coalition
Climate Action Network Australia

Peter Morris
Senior Director, Economics Policy
Minerals Council of Australia

Catherine Murphy
Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Forest Industries

Tim O’Loughlin
Deputy Chief Executive
Sustainability and Workforce Management
Department of Premier and Cabinet
South Australia Government

Brett Parris
Senior Economic Adviser
World Vision Australia
Climate Action Network Australia

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Rene Reinhard
Deputy Director of Protocol
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Victorian Government

Anna Reynolds
World Wide Fund for Nature International

Chris Rodwell
Australian Industry Group

Daniel Rosetto
Senior Policy Analyst
Carbon Markets
South Australia Government

David Shankey
Senior Policy Adviser
Office of Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation
Queensland Government

George Svigos
Principal Media Adviser
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Victorian Government

Maria Tarrant
Director Policy
Business Council of Australia

Piers Verstegen
Senior Policy Advisor
Office of Minister for Environment and Conservation
Western Australia Government

Andrew Wagner
Policy Officer
National Farmers Federation

Terry Wall
Director-General, Environmental Protection Agency
Queensland Government

Steven Waller
Director
Office of Climate Change
Western Australia Government

Timothy Woods
Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union (CFMEU)
Trade Ministers’ Dialogue
Bali, 8-9 December 2007
Australian Delegation List
Representatives
David Garner
Chief of Staff to the Minister for Trade
Peter Grey
Deputy Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Trudy Witbreuk
Assistant Secretary, Environment Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Finance Ministers’ Dialogue
Bali, 10-11 December 2007
Australian Delegation List
Representatives
Chris Barrett
Chief of Staff to the Treasurer
Mathew Coghlán
Press Secretary to the Treasurer
Maryanne Mrakovcic
General Manager
Industry, Environment and Defence Division
The Treasury
David Pearl
General Manager
International Economy Division
The Treasury
David Parker
Executive Director
Macroeconomic Group
The Treasury
Julia Minty
Policy Analyst
International Economy Division
The Treasury
Prime Minister and Cabinet: Media Staff
(Question No. 13)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:
As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:
(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.
(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.
(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(1) I am advised that no employees in the Prime Minister’s portfolio are solely engaged in public affairs, media management and liaison with the media and media monitoring.
The Agencies all have staff who provide responses to media inquiries, media liaison or public affairs type functions as part of their on going functions and duties.
(2) The responsibilities include handling media inquiries, website management, publications, responses to information requests, media liaison and media monitoring.
(3) N/A
(4) I am advised that for all agencies in the Prime Minister’s portfolio there is no specific budget for positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: Media Staff
(Question Nos 14, 15, 16, 42 and 47)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education, the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Minister representing the Minister for Social Inclusion, the Minister representing the Minister for Employment Participation and the Minister representing the Minister for Youth Affairs, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:
As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:
(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.
(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.
(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Minister representing the Minister for Education
Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Minister representing the Minister for Social Inclusion
**Senator Wong**—The Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) As at 4 December 2007, there was a total of 18 employees across the department and eight agencies engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

(2) Media staff are responsible for:
   - answering media enquiries;
   - preparing media releases;
   - liaising with the Minister’s office;
   - managing the department’s media monitoring contract;
   - daily monitoring of the media; and
   - promoting awards and events associated with the portfolio.

(3) The Australian Public Service classifications for these positions are as follows:
   - 3.3 x Executive level 2 (FTE)
   - 7.4 x Executive Level 1 (FTE)
   - 5 x APS level 6 (FTE)
   - 2 x APS level 5 (FTE)
   - 0.3 x APS level 3 (FTE)

(4) The operating budget for the department is $947,584 (salaries, superannuation and general administration for 11 staff) and $578,665 for the eight agencies (salaries, superannuation and general administration for 7 staff).

Information on the out years is not available.

**Foreign Affairs and Trade: Media Staff**

**(Question Nos 20 and 21)**

**Senator Minchin** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.

(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.

(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

**Senator Faulkner**—The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade have provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The information provided below relates to the minister’s portfolio after the machinery of government changes which took place on 3 December 2007.

**DFAT**

(1) The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has 9 staff engaged (in Australia) in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring associ-
ated with the Australian media. In addition, it has 5 staff engaged in similar positions in Australia associated with international media. To provide detailed information relating to all of DFAT’s overseas posts would entail a significant diversion of resources because overseas staff frequently have multiple responsibilities which may encompass public affairs broadly defined. In these circumstances, I do not consider the additional work would be justified.

For Australian Media:

(2) (a) responding to media inquiries and briefing the media  
(b) monitoring media for portfolio-related stories  
(c) producing the Department’s Daily Media round-up and arranging transcripts of media stories  
(d) liaising with Ministers’ offices and geographic/policy desks on media-related issues, including coordinating responses to media inquiries  
(e) editing and distributing media releases (both Ministerial and Departmental)  
(f) preparing and implementing media strategies to promote a better understanding of specific issues and Government policies;  
(g) providing media assistance for Australian journalists attending major international meetings or events (eg ARF, APEC, Ministerial visits);  
(h) operating a 24-hour on-call service for media to obtain official comment on portfolio issues as they arise; and  
(i) administrative support to Media Liaison Section.

(3) SES Band 1 (1) 50% of duties  
Executive Level 2 (1) 100% of duties  
Executive Level 1 (5) 100% of duties  
APS 4 (2) 100% of duties  

(4) FY 2007-2008: $231,168  
FY 2008-2009 yet to be determined by departmental budget process  
FY 2009-10 yet to be determined by departmental budget process  
FY 2010-11 yet to be determined by departmental budget process

For International Media

(2) - Management of International Media Visits (IMV) program  
- Monitoring of international media coverage of Australia  
- Liaison with Foreign Correspondents based in Australia

(3) Senior Executive Band 1: (1) 20 percent of duties  
Executive Level 2: (1) 60 percent of duties  
Executive Level 1: (3) 100 percent of duties

(4) FY 2007-08: $544,000 (100 percent expended on public affairs/media management issues)  
FY 2008-09: to be determined by departmental budget process  
FY 2009-10: to be determined by departmental budget process  
FY 2010-11: to be determined by departmental budget process
AUSTRADE

(1) The Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) has 7 staff engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

(2) The responsibilities of these Austrade staff are as follows:

   (i) Media and public relations activities to raise awareness of:
       (a) the benefits of exporting and international business for the Australian community;
       (b) Government business services and programs delivered through Austrade;
       (c) export strategies and market opportunities; and
       (d) Australia’s business and industry capabilities.
   (ii) develop and distribute media releases and other publicity materials
   (iii) provide responses to media inquiries
   (iv) monitor media coverage of trade issues, Austrade services and programs
   (v) provide media related advice to the Minister and Parliamentary Secretary
   (vi) prepare and implement media strategies
   (viii) co-ordinate media support for major events and visits
   (ix) production of broadcast materials

(3) 1 SES Band 1: 30 per cent of duties
     1 Executive Level 2: 100 per cent of duties
     4 Executive Level 1: 100 per cent of duties
     1 APS Level 6: 100 per cent of duties

(4) Operational expenditure for Austrade’s public affairs and media activities:

   (i) for 2007-08 is projected at $729,218 which represents staff costs of $594,218 and media monitoring and analysis costs of $135,000
   (ii) for 2008-09: yet to be determined by Austrade budget process
   (iii) for 2009-10: yet to be determined by Austrade budget process
   (iv) for 2010-11: yet to be determined by Austrade budget process

AusAID

(1) AusAID had 17 staff engaged in such positions at 3 December 2008

(2) The responsibilities of these AusAID staff are as follows:

   (a) media liaison
   (b) provide responses to media requests
   (c) monitor the media for aid and development related stories
   (d) prepare the daily media clips
   (e) develop and distribute media releases
   (f) provide media related advice to the Minister and Parliamentary Secretaries
   (g) prepare and implement media strategies
   (h) prepare material for aid related speeches
   (i) co-ordinate media support for major events
   (j) assist with official visits
   (k) respond to inquiries from the public
In terms of media management, and aside from all other responsibilities, these employees are responsible for preparing press releases, answering media enquiries, relationship management and public relations strategy development.

Not applicable. EFIC employees are not subject to APS classifications. These positions are professional level roles.

Approximately $165,000 may be attributed in 2007-08 to direct media activities and associated salaries within the wider Marketing budget, with a similar amount (adjusted for inflation) in outer years.

ACIAR

Three employees, at 0.2 of FTE each. There are no individual employees responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring. It is part of the aforementioned officers’ duties.

In relation to question 1, these staff are responsible for:
- Monitoring media about organisation
- Communicating science results and project outcomes to end-users
- Public awareness about agricultural research and the aid program
- Providing media releases to Minister and Parliamentary Secretary

Executive Level 2, Executive Level 1, APS 5.

Indicative costs for 2007-08 are $7,000 (excluding salary costs) and it is expected this amount will be similar for 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Defence: Media Staff

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.

(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.

(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.
**Senator Faulkner**—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1), (2) and (3) The Defence Public Affairs Branch employs 62 civilian employees and 57 military employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>1 x BRIG, 1 x COL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 x EL2, 1 x EL1, 1 x APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Service Newspapers</td>
<td>1 x WO2, 4 x CPL, 1 x LS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 x EL2, 4 x EL1, 4 x APS6, 1x APS5, 1xAPS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Advisors</td>
<td>2 x EL2, 7 x EL1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Public Affairs Training</td>
<td>1 x EL1, 1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Engagement</td>
<td>1 x EL2, 2 x EL1, 3 x APS5/6, 5 x APS4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Internet</td>
<td>1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video and Imagery Library</td>
<td>1 x EL1, 1 x APS4, 1 x APS3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Public Affairs Preparedness and Plans</td>
<td>1 x L TCOL, 1 x MAJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, Planning and Entertainment</td>
<td>1 x EL2, 1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Liaison</td>
<td>6 x EL1, 2 x APS6, 1 x APS3, 3 x APS2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Public Affairs</td>
<td>1 x WGC DR, 1 x L TCOL, 5 x MAJ, 2 x LEUT, 2 x CAPT, 3 x FLTLT, 1 x LT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Headquarters Support</td>
<td>1 x MAJ, 1 x WO, 2 x WO2, 5 x CAPT, 1 x LEUT, 3 x SGT, 11 x CPL, 2 x LS, 2 x LT, 1 x FLTLT, 1 x AB, 1 x AC, 1 x PTE, 1 x APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Public Affairs Unit covering photographers and reporters</td>
<td>1 x APS6, 1 x APS5, 1 x APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Support</td>
<td>1 x EL2, 3 x EL1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondment/ Leave</td>
<td>1 x APS6, 1 x APS3, 1 x APS4, 1 x APS4/5, 1 x APS5, 2 x APS6, 1 x EL1, 1 x LCDR, 2 x LEUT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Outside of the Branch there are a further 34 Defence employees who provide public affairs support as a part of their duties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/Group</th>
<th>Public Affairs Responsibility</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Communications advice</td>
<td>1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Affairs coordination and support.</td>
<td>1 x APS3, 1 x APS4, 1 x APS4/5, 1 x APS5, 2 x APS6, 1 x EL1, 1 x LCDR, 2 x LEUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The staff also provide reputation and event management support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>Public Affairs planning and implementation and media management.</td>
<td>2 x EL1, 1 x SQNLDR, 3 x FLTLT, 3 x FLGOFF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/Group</th>
<th>Public Affairs Responsibility</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People Strategies and Policy Group</td>
<td>Communications advice/management/support to Defence Force Recruiting Branch including public relations support to ADF recruiting marketing activities.</td>
<td>1 x EL1, 1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Information Office</td>
<td>Communication and customer management</td>
<td>1 x EL2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Science and Technology Organisa-</td>
<td>Australia wide coordination of Public Affairs, stakeholder relations, production of media items and online communications</td>
<td>1 x EL2, 4 x EL1, 3 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tion</td>
<td>DMO</td>
<td>DMO Strategic Communication Advice 1 x Acting EL2, 1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Logistics Command</td>
<td>Media monitoring, but majority of position (90 per cent of workload) manages internal publications, branding, conference etc</td>
<td>1 x EL1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: LCDR: Lieutenant Commander, SQNLDR: Squadron Leader, FLGOFF: Flying Officer

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) has no specific staff members responsible for the stated functions. DHA does have a Sales, Promotion and Communication Team, comprised of four staff members. The team is responsible for advertising and marketing campaigns (for DHA’s sales and product promotion); customer and investor liaison and communication; managing DHA’s sales and promotion events; sales and product promotions for example, product and service information, and communicating with stakeholders, customers and investors. There is relatively little day to day media interest in DHA’s activities, so an incidental proportion of the team’s time is involved in responding to media requests.

(4) $3.3 million in 2007-08 and $3.1 million in 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

**Health and Ageing: Media Staff**

(Question No. 23)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

1. How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
2. What are the responsibilities of these staff.
3. What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.
4. For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The information provided below relates to the Health and Ageing portfolio after the machinery of government changes which took place on 3 December 2007.

As the information requested cannot be disaggregated across the portfolio, responses are in relation to the Department of Health and Ageing, including Sport.

1. The number of employees engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring as at 29 February 2008:

| Department | 33.25 FTE |
| Agencies   | 18.88 FTE |
(2) Responsibilities of these staff across the department and agencies cover the following range of activities:

(a) Provide communications advice and services to support the department, its portfolio and agencies and the ministerial team in communicating health and ageing information, policies, issues and programs to the public, including:

- Develop and implement communication strategies to inform consumers and stakeholders about relevant policies and programs, particularly where they are new or changing;
- Prepare information material for consumers and stakeholders;
- Assist with announcements of new initiatives and programs, including writing of media releases and other information material;
- Develop and implement advertising, social marketing, public information and community relations campaigns;
- Commission market research to inform the development of public information messages and activity;
- Assist with coordinating departmental and ministerial public events;
- Undertake internal communications activities;
- Advise the department on branding and copyright issues.

(b) Provide media liaison and issues management support for the department and portfolio agencies, including:

- Coordinate responses to media inquiries across the department;
- Provide media and issues management advice on emerging issues.

(c) Deliver daily monitoring of portfolio issues in media, including:

- Monitor and report on portfolio-related events;
- Manage media monitoring contract.

(3) The APS classifications for these positions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Ranging from APS4 – SES1, Public Affairs Officer Level 1 – Senior Public Affairs Officer Level 1 including staff employed by companies contracted to provide media liaison and issues management, not under APS structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agencies</td>
<td>Ranging from APS2 – SES1, Public Affairs Officer Level 3, including non-APS equivalents employed by external companies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) The operating budgets for financial years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 have not yet been agreed. The operating budgets for December 2007 – June 2008 for the media-related sections within the Department and agencies are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>$2,266,253</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agencies</td>
<td>$2,156,760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs: Media Staff

(Question No. 24)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.
(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.
(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Senator Chris Evans—The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The information provided below relates to the Minister’s portfolio after the machinery of government changes which took place on 3 December 2007.

Following the Machinery of Government changes, the Minister’s portfolio consists of the department as well as the following agencies: Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL), Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC), and the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>On-going employees engaged in public affairs, media management, media liaison and media monitoring (FTE)</th>
<th>Responsibilities of these staff</th>
<th>Australian Public Service classifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| FaHCSIA  | 37                                                                                              | Media liaison, media monitoring, market research, publications development, printing and design management, website management, communication strategy development and implementation, event management, advertising, speech writing, branding, editing, writing, photo library management, corporate stationery. | 2 x Senior Public Affairs Officer Grade 2  
1 x Senior Public Affairs Officer Grade 1  
7 x Public Affairs Officer Grade 3  
10 x Public Affairs Officer Grade 2  
4 x Public Affairs Officer Grade 1  
4 x EL 2  
4 x EL 1  
4 x APS 6  
2 x APS 5  
2 x APS 4  
APS 5  
APS 4  
APS 2 |
| AHL      | 2                                                                                               | Marketing, publications and website management                                                | APS 5  
APS 4  
APS 2 |
| EOWA     | 3.6                                               | Website management, publications, media programs, marketing, branding, research projects, strategic communications. | EL 1  
APS 5  
APS 5  
APS 6 |
| IBA      | 5                                                                                               | Media monitoring, media liaison, publications development, printing and design management, website management, communication strategy development and implementation, advertising, speech writing, branding, editing, writing, photo library management, corporate stationery | IBA staff are not employed under the Australian Public Service Act. |
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Agency | On-going employees engaged in public affairs, media management, media liaison and media monitoring (FTE) | Responsibilities of these staff | Australian Public Service classifications
--- | --- | --- | ---
ILC | 2 | Media liaison, media releases, speech writing, publications, marketing, corporate displays, media monitoring. | ILC staff are not employed under the Australian Public Service Act. APS 6
TSRA | 1 | Media liaison, speech writing, media monitoring, publications, correspondence preparation, website management, marketing and publicity, client surveys, media training. |

The current and future operating budgets (where available) for the department’s Communication and Media Branch and portfolio agencies are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FaHCSIA</td>
<td>$6,941,661</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHL</td>
<td>$364,809.00</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOWA</td>
<td>$490,257</td>
<td>$433,330</td>
<td>$442,800</td>
<td>$452,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBA</td>
<td>$320,500</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
<td>$456,159</td>
<td>$484,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILC</td>
<td>$407,143</td>
<td>$433,200 Estimate only</td>
<td>$456,159 Estimate only</td>
<td>Estimate only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSRA</td>
<td>$119,198</td>
<td>$118,633 Estimate only</td>
<td>$118,070 Estimate only</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy: Media Staff

(Question No. 27)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

1. How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
2. What are the responsibilities of these staff.
3. What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.
4. For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Senator Conroy—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

1) to (4).

The information provided below relates to the Minister’s portfolio as at 4 December 2007, after the machinery of government changes, which took place on 3 December 2007.
### Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>APS Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Manager (SPA02)</td>
<td>EL2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* reduced to EL2 (SPA01) as of 29 January</td>
<td>EL2 (non-ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Campaigns Manager (SPA01)</td>
<td>EL2 (non-ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* position abolished 29 January 2008</td>
<td>EL1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Media Manager (PA03) media monitoring and liaison</td>
<td>EL1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 positions</td>
<td>Account Managers (PA03) public affairs support for divisions (*1)</td>
<td>EL1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Account Manager (PA03) public affairs support for campaigns</td>
<td>EL1 (non-ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 positions</td>
<td>Public Affairs Officers (PA02) public affairs support for divisions (*1)</td>
<td>APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 positions</td>
<td>Public Affairs Officers (PA02) public affairs support for campaigns</td>
<td>APS6 (non-ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Public Affairs Officer (PA01) public affairs support for divisions.</td>
<td>APS5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Operating Budget**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal budgets</td>
<td>$1,402,421.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) One EL1 Account Manager and one APS6 Public affairs Officer were transferred to the Department of Water, Heritage and the Arts on 29 January 2008 as part of the Machinery of Government processes.

### Australian Communications and Media Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>APS Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Manage the Media and External Positioning section.</td>
<td>EL2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Manage media liaison and speech making for the Inputs to Industry Division. Manage Media training contract and program. Manage media monitoring contract.</td>
<td>EL1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Manage media liaison and speech making for the Industry Outputs Division. Manage new speech requests</td>
<td>ACMA 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 position</td>
<td>Manage media liaison and speech making for the Strategy, Analysis and Coordination Division, Legal Division and Corporate Services Division.</td>
<td>ACMA 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
### Operating Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>$576,000</td>
<td>$576,000</td>
<td>$576,000</td>
<td>$576,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>APS Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 full time position</td>
<td>Public Affairs, liaison with media, media monitoring.</td>
<td>N/A – ABC does not use APS classifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Operating Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>$693,453 (includes salaries, salary on-costs and operating expenses)</td>
<td>Budgets for future years are not finalised.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Australia Post

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>APS Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 positions whose duties include some media related work. This equals the equivalent of 6 Full time equivalents based on the time spent on media matters.</td>
<td>Liaising with media who contact the Corporation for information</td>
<td>N/A – Australia Post do not use APS classifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Responding to media enquiries about Australia Post activities
- Researching background internally in order to respond to media enquiries
- Gaining internal approvals to ensure materials provided to the media are accurate
- Internal reporting associated with media coverage
- Generating proactive media stories about Australia Post activities
- Writing and issuing media releases
- Arranging photo opportunities for media outlets
- Media training and preparation for Australia Post spokespersons
- Conducting media interviews
- Informing journalists about matters pertaining to the Corporation
### Operating Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>$420,000 recurrent funding plus staff costs $480,000</td>
<td>Total $900,000</td>
<td>No budgets have been determined for subsequent years but would be expected to increase by no more than 5% per annum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>APS Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 Full time equivalents</td>
<td>Monitoring and analyzing media coverage related to the Corporation</td>
<td>N/A – SBS does not use APS classifications for these positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 positions</td>
<td>Public Affairs – Corporate Managing the corporate and internal communications for SBS.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 positions plus casual switchboard operators</td>
<td>Public Affairs – Audience Reception, switchboard and email interaction with the public.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 positions</td>
<td>Media Management, liaison with media – consumer promotion Promoting content and services, preparing press releases, distributing samples of content, distributing program schedule information, liaison with journalists and media partners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Operating Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>$1,722,253</td>
<td>$1,787,296 estimation</td>
<td>$1,855,914 estimation</td>
<td>$1,926,619 estimation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Innovation, Industry, Science and Research: Media Staff

**Question Nos 28 and 44**

**Senator Minchin** asked the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

1. How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
2. What are the responsibilities of these staff.
3. What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.
4. For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

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**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
Senator Carr—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

This question was also asked of the Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy (question No. 44). The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research will provide a Portfolio response to question 28 and 44.

The information provided below relates to my Portfolio after the Machinery of Government changes on 3 December 2007. The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows.

The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research:

(1) Fifteen. Included in this fifteen are four employees which spend approximately 0.1, 0.1, 0.25 and 0.5 respectively of their time on these duties.

(2) Responsibilities include:

**AusIndustry**
- Ministerial Media Manager - provides a principal contact point for media liaison with the Minister’s office and for directing media enquiries to the relevant delegated AusIndustry spokesperson and drafting media releases on behalf of Ministers for AusIndustry program related announcements.
- Editorial Manager - drafts media releases on behalf of Ministers for AusIndustry program related announcements and also prepares editorial about AusIndustry’s key messages and programs for media placement.

**Biotechnology Australia**
- Manages issues that arise, drafts media statements and is the contact for media releases and enquiries.
- Undertakes media monitoring and provides weekly e-news summaries.

**Corporate Division**
- Public Affairs - Provide strategic communications advice to Divisions in the Department, event management, publication management, stakeholder management and liaise with external suppliers for various communication activities.
- Media Management & Media Liaison - Provide advice and guidance to the Department on the generation of media releases. Responsible for the drafting and distribution of media releases.
- Media Monitoring - manage the media monitoring contracts and the distribution of media clips.

**Global Opportunities**
- Public affairs – Provide strategic direction, develop, monitor and manage global public relations strategies and associated contracts. Provide a high level of support to in-market personnel, including preparation of media releases and communications.
- Media management and liaison – respond to media enquiries, prepare media briefs and facilitate or contribute to international media visit programs. Direct and coordinate media training. Coordinate international media monitoring of proactive coverage.

**Questacon**
- Public Affairs.
- Media activities.
- Media liaison and monitoring.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Classification Number of Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Number of Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPAO2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAO3/EL1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAO2/APS6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) Budgets are unable to be provided beyond 2007-08 as they have not yet been determined. Estimated budgets for 2007-08 have been provided as the financial year has not yet been completed.

- **Expenditure - AusIndustry 2007-08**
  - Operating Budget $4,172,878

- **Expenditure – Innovation Division 2007-08**
  - Operating Budget $1,811,411

- **Expenditure – Corporate Division 2007-08**
  - Operating Budget $1,578,471

- **Expenditure – Global Opportunities 2007-08**
  - Operating Budget $483,346

- **Expenditure – Questacon 2007-08**
  - Operating Budget $80,553

**Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS)**

(1) Two. Each employee spends approximately 0.2 and 0.5 respectively of their time on these duties.

(2) Responsibilities include media management; and liaison with the media and monitoring of data from Media Monitors (an external provider).

(3) AIMS does not employ staff under the Public Service Act 1999 rather AIMS employs staff under the Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972. The classifications of these employees are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Number of Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AOF4.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOF5.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) Budgets are unable to be provided beyond 2007-08 as they have not yet been determined. Estimated budgets for 2007-08 have been provided as the financial year has not yet been completed.

**Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO)**

(1) Sixteen. Included in this total, are a number of staff which spend a proportion of their time on these duties which is equivalent to 11 full time staff.

(2) Responsibilities include:

- education programs for schools;
- community interaction and education, including tours;
- ANSTO publications, including the Annual Report, the Corporate Social Responsibility Report, electronic newsletters and scientific brochures;
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

• external and internal website management;
• media interaction; and
• internal communications.

(3) ANSTO does not employ staff under the Public Service Act 1999, rather ANSTO has its own salary bands specific to the organisation. The classifications of these employees are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Number of Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) Budgets are unable to be provided beyond 2007-08 as they have not yet been determined. Estimated budgets for 2007-08 have been provided as the financial year has not yet been completed.

| Expenditure 2007-08 | Operating Budget $1,203,000 |

Australian Research Council (ARC)

(1) Two.

(2) Responsibilities include providing advice on, planning, developing, implementing and evaluating the ARC’s external communications strategy, which includes media liaison and monitoring, and a range of public relations and marketing activities.

(3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Number of Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APS5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) Budgets are unable to be provided beyond 2007-08 as they have not yet been determined. Estimated budgets for 2007-08 have been provided as the financial year has not yet been completed.

| Expenditure 2007-08 | Operating Budget $382,000 |

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

(1) Four. However, there are a number of officers who are engaged, on occasion, in liaison with the media as part of their broader science communication or other research duties.

(2) Responsibilities include: distribution of CSIRO media releases, podcast and other material; liaison with media; and coordination of media activities.

(3) CSIRO does not employ staff under the Public Service Act 1999, rather CSIRO employs staff under the Science and Industry Research (SIR) Act 1949. The classifications of these employees are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Number of Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSOF3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOF4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOF5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOF6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(4) Budgets are unable to be provided beyond 2007-08 as they have not yet been determined. Estimated budgets for 2007-08 have been provided as the financial year has not yet been completed.

Expenditure 2007-08
Operating Budget $243,000

IP Australia

(1) One. This employee spends approximately 0.2 of their time on these duties.
(2) Responsibilities include: preparation of press releases; and fielding calls from journalists and arranging an appropriate response.
(3) EL2.
(4) Budgets are unable to be provided beyond 2007-08 as they have not yet been determined. Estimated budgets for 2007-08 have been provided as the financial year has not yet been completed.

Expenditure 2007-08
Operating Budget $613,530

*The Operating Budget provided is for the Marketing and Customer Engagement section which engages in range of activities which are broader than those specified in the question.

Attorney-General’s: Media Staff

(Question Nos 31 and 36)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General and the Minister for Home Affairs, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.
(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.
(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Senator Ludwig—The Attorney-General and the Minister for Home Affairs have provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The information provided below relates to the Minister’s Portfolio after the machinery of government changes which took place on 3 December 2007.

Attorney-General’s Department

Public Affairs Branch

(1) At the end of January 2008 there were 28 full-time equivalent (FTE) funded positions in the Attorney General’s Department Public Affairs Branch, two of which were vacant while others were filled by staff in full or part-time capacities.
(2) Public Affairs Branch staff were spread across a range of responsibilities including: media management; strategic co-ordination; campaign management; corporate and internal communications; speech writing and Branch administration.
(3) These positions were classified as SES x 1; EL2 x 4; EL1 x 10; APS6 x 5; APS5 x 5; APS4 x 2; APS3 x 1.
The anticipated total annual employee costs for the Public Affairs Branch (at the end of January 2008) was approximately $2.7 million. The non-staff operating budget varies depending on projects being undertaken at any given time. The budgets for the financial years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 are yet to be determined.

**Classifications Operations Branch**

1. At the end of January 2008, four employees of the Classification Operations Branch were engaged in positions which had some public affairs and media responsibilities. Approximately 5% of each of these employees' positions was devoted to these responsibilities.
2. These Classification Operations Branch staff are responsible for handling the public affairs and media requirements of the Classification Board and the Classification Review Board. All other media responsibilities are directed to the Public Affairs Branch of the Department.
3. The Australian Public Service classifications of these positions in the Classification Operations Branch are SES x 1; EL2 x 1; APS6 x 1 and 1 x APS 3.
4. There is no specific budget for the Classification Operations Branch public affairs and media-related responsibilities. These tasks are accommodated in the existing Branch budget.

**Emergency Management Australia**

1. As at 4 December 2007 there is one public affairs position engaged.
2. The position is responsible for media liaison, media monitoring and advice and assistance with public communication issues.
3. Executive Level 1
4. The current staffing operations budget for the position is $118,354.00.

The budget for the financial years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 are yet to be determined.

**Administrative Appeals Tribunal**

1. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal has no employees solely engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring. All media issues are dealt with by the Registrar and Assistant Registrar.
2), (3) and (4) Not applicable, see answer (1) above

**Australian Crime Commission**

1. The Australian Crime Commission (ACC) currently has two full time staff engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and monitoring.
2. Staff in this area are responsible for:
   - Providing project management of communications projects
   - Performing a range of editorial tasks, including writing, editing and proofing of ACC documents/publications, intelligence products and statutory reports
   - Working closely with the ACC webmaster to maintain the ACC internet site
   - Providing media liaison support and media analysis duties
   - Developing and implementing communication strategies for ACC determinations, operations and projects
   - Promoting the ACC brand and providing information and advice to ACC staff on communication and publication processes, styles and standards
   - Providing media and communications advice to ACC executive and the Minister’s office
   - Providing event management assistance in relation to ACC conferences, events and forums

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(3) Executive Level 1 and Australian Public Service level 5.
(4) The year to date expenditure as at 31 January 2008 is $59,565 and the forecasted expenditure based on the current level of expenditure for the 2007-08 financial year is $102,111 excluding staff expenses. The forecasted budget figures for media management and public affairs are difficult to predict for forward years.

The estimated operating budget for media management and public relations for the ACC is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>$'000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>100,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>92,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>94,405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Australian Customs Service**

(1) As at 4 December 2007, there were 10 employees within the Australian Customs Service engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
(2) These staff are responsible for media liaison, public affairs, crisis and reputation management, and external communication projects.
(3) One Australian Public Service (APS) Executive Level 2 position (Customs Level 5), three APS Executive Level 1 positions (Customs Level 4), four APS Level 6 (Customs Level 3) positions, and two APS Level 4/5 (Customs Level 2) positions.
(4) The current operating budget for this section within the Australian Customs Service in 2007-08 is $1,854,097. Total operating expenditure for the financial years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 for this section has yet to be determined.

**Australian Federal Police (includes Australian Institute of Police Management)**

(1) The AFP has 11 public affairs officers working in the National Media Team based in Canberra.
(2) The National Media Team deals with all media liaison for national operations.
(3) AFP staff are not employed under the Australian Public Service Act 1999. Therefore a direct comparison with Australian Public Service classifications is not possible. AFP classifications for staff in the media team are one Band 9, three Band 8 and seven Band 6 positions.
(4) The 2007-08 budget for AFP National Media is $1,701,446. This comprises $1,291,816 in employee budget and $409,630 in supplier budget. The AFP does not have budget allocations for future financial years for this function.

In addition to the AFP National Media Team, the ACT Policing function undertaken by the AFP under an arrangement with the ACT Government maintains a separate media unit. As the budget for ACT Policing is provided by the ACT Government, it has not been included in response to the honourable senator’s question.

**Australian Institute of Criminology**

(1) 0.3 FTE
(2) Media management and public affairs is undertaken as part of the Institutes requirement to disseminate research findings. Some media monitoring is undertaken to inform research projects in areas such as homicide/deaths in custody, transnational crime, high tech crime and drug use. This is quite separate from our work associated with our dissemination of research material as performed in line with our output 1.1 Policy advice and publications.
(3) Executive Level 1 equivalent
(4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>$29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>$31,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>$32,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Australian Law Reform Commission**

(1) One part-time employee—the Communications Manager—who is employed three days per week.

(2) The ALRC Communications Manager, oversees the Communications Unit, which has responsibility for:
   - maintenance of the ALRC website;
   - design of general ALRC publications;
   - managing the print production process of ALRC consultation papers and reports;
   - editing and production of the ALRC journal, Reform;
   - preparation of the ALRC Annual Report;
   - organisation of events; and
   - media liaison.

(3) The ALRC is not an Australian Public Service agency. The Communications Manager is employed at classification ALRC 3, with a salary range of $58,162 to $73,678 per annum.

(4) The operating budget for the Communications Unit—which has a number of functions in addition to media liaison—is $181,730 in 2007-08. Operating budgets for future years have not yet been set.

**Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)**

(1) & (2) ASIO maintains an all-hours media monitoring capability to help identify emerging issues of national security significance in Australia and globally. ASIO also maintains a limited media liaison function and an all-hours media enquiries line. As a matter of security policy, ASIO does not provide specific details of the number of staff engaged in specific activities, or their responsibilities.

(3) ASIO does not provide a breakdown of its staffing allocations beyond that already provided in its Report to Parliament for reasons of national security.

(4) ASIO does not generally publish financial data beyond that published in its Report to Parliament for reasons of national security.

**Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC)**

(1) There are four employees engaged in such positions: the Senior Manager, Corporate Communications and Manager, Corporate Communications; total time dedicated to media-related tasks amounts to 5% of the Senior Manager’s workload and 20% of the Manager’s overall workload. Two other communications officers provide limited support as required. The agency librarian also provides occasional, limited media monitoring services.

(2) The Senior Manager, Corporate Communications and Manager, Corporate Communications are responsible for oversight of and managing public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring. The Manager, Corporate Communications is also responsible for, among other things, developing and implementing the agency’s media relations strategy, analysing media reportage and managing any issues arising. Other communications officers provide a support role on an as-needed basis to research and develop responses, and to coordinate the external monitoring service.
(3) The Senior Manager Corporate Communications is EL2, Manager Corporate Communications is EL1 and the two communications officers are at the APS5 and APS6 levels.

(4) AUSTRAC has estimated $105,000 will be spent on ‘media related’ activities in the current (2007-08) financial year. AUSTRAC has yet to develop the media section budget for the next and subsequent financial years.

CrimTrac

(1) The Communication and Marketing Team (including parliamentary business, legal and policy coordination) comprised of 3.6 staff as at 4 December 2007.

(2) Of these staff, the manager has sole responsibility for public affairs, media management and liaison with media. One staff member has responsibility for media monitoring and in-house communication. One staff member has responsibility for parliamentary business and legal and one part-time staff member has responsibility for policy creation and coordination.

(3) The manager is an Executive Level 2. The media monitoring and in-house communication position is an APS6. The parliamentary business and legal position is an Executive Level 1. The part-time policy position is an Executive Level 1.

(4) The operating budget for the entire team is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>$768,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>$878,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>$934,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>$976,684</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Court of Australia

(1) As at 4 December 2007, the Family Court of Australia had one employee specifically engaged for media-related communication (Media Advisor). A further two positions have some elements of public affairs and media responsibilities. These positions are:

- Communications Manager (25%)
- Strategic Communication Officer (25%)

(2) The responsibilities of these staff are as follows:

**Media Adviser**

The Media Adviser manages all aspects of communications between the Court and the news media. This includes researching and proactively promoting the Court’s activities; responding to after-hours media calls; managing information provision concerning Missing Children and publication requirements under s.121 of the Family Law Act 1975; and overseeing media monitoring for the Court.

**Communication Manager (25% of the FTE)**

The Communication Manager provides communications leadership that supports the Court’s strategic direction through high level internal and external communication and the provision of public information and education.

**Strategic Communication Officer (25% of the FTE)**

The Strategic Communication Officer has no specific media responsibilities, but does have public affairs duties including developing and implementing communication strategies and liaising with government agencies and other stakeholders.

(3) The Australian Public Service classifications of these positions are:

- Media Advisor – EL1
• Communications Manager – EL2
• Strategic Communications Officer – EL1

(4) The operating budget for media-related sections for the Family Court over the nominated years is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Court of Australia (includes Copyright Tribunal and Defence Force Discipline Appeal Tribunal)</td>
<td>181,922</td>
<td>179,881</td>
<td>181,541</td>
<td>183,036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) One

(2) To deal with media enquiries regarding cases before the Court and to liaise generally with the media on topical issues. Also included is the production of educational and training materials regarding the court’s work.

(3) Executive Level 2

(4) 2007-08 budget $157,000
2008-09 budget Not confirmed
2009-10 budget Not confirmed
2010-11 budget Not confirmed

Federal Magistrates Court of Australia

(1) One full-time employee is engaged in a public affairs capacity.

(2) This staff member is responsible for overseeing all public affairs matters, managing media monitoring, liaising with the media and developing internal public affairs policy.

(3) The position is classified as an Executive Level 1 within the Australian Public Service classification system.

(4) In financial year 2007-08 the operating budget for public affairs is $137,740.00 (which includes salary and related costs of $113,740 and expenses associated with media monitoring, $24,000). The anticipated operating budgets for public affairs for the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia for financial years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 will be approximately $140,000.00.

High Court of Australia

(1) One

(2) Media liaison; preparing judgment summaries; disseminating information to the media about the operations of the High Court; producing the Court’s Annual Report; conducting tours of the High Court building for visiting dignitaries; handling of general inquiries from the public (including students); maintaining and updating Court brochures; and liaising with publishers about the use of Court material in textbooks.

(3) High Court Executive Level 1 (equivalent to APS Executive Level 1).

(4) The annual operating budget for the functions listed in part (2) of the High Court answer to the question is approximately $100,000, including salary, superannuation and supplier expenses.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)

(1) 7

(2) • Director of Public Affairs – management of public affairs unit
• Web Manager – oversee the management of the HREOC website and mailing lists
• Web developer – assist web manager with maintaining HREOC’s website
• Public Affairs admin officer – administration duties for the public affairs unit
• Education Manager – oversee the management of HREOC’s education program
• 2 x media advisors – media advice/support for the President/Commissioners

(3)
• Director of Public Affairs – EL2
• Web Manager – APS6
• Web developer – APS4
• Public Affairs admin officer – APS4
• Education Manager – EL1
• Media advisors – 2 x EL1

(4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2007-08 ($,000)</th>
<th>2008-09 (forecast $,000)</th>
<th>2009-10 (forecast $,000)</th>
<th>2010-11 (forecast $,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee Expense</td>
<td>$128,000*</td>
<td>$40,000†</td>
<td>$42,000†</td>
<td>$44,000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier Expense</td>
<td>$31,000</td>
<td>$32,000</td>
<td>$33,000</td>
<td>$34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expense</td>
<td>$159,000</td>
<td>$72,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$78,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This figure reflects staff transitions associated with the budget savings.
† These figures anticipate an average of two working days per week.

At 4 December 2007, this expense was $170,000.
The actual expense may vary according to workload.

National Capital Authority (NCA)

(1) Two (after implementation of the recent NCA budget savings, this will be reduced to one part time position)
(2) Media relations and the production of internal publications.
(3) Executive Level 1 and APS 4 (after implementation of the recent NCA budget savings, this will be reduced to one part time Executive Level 1 positions).

(4)

National Native Title Tribunal

(1) 7.5FTE
(2) Public affairs and risk management advice and direction; development and delivery of communication programs with stakeholders; publications development and distribution; drafting and publishing to website and intranet; media management and liaison.
(3) 0.5xEL2; 1xEL1; 4xAPSL6; 1XAPSL5; 1xAPSL3
(4) 2007-08: The Public Affairs budget (including media) is $1,011,016. 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 budgets have not been confirmed.

**Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions**

(1) 0.5 FTE.

(2) Responsibilities include:

- Review media clips;
- Disseminate media clips with Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions;
- Prepare media summary for the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions intranet; and
- Media liaison.

(3) The classification of this position is APS Level 6.

(4) The current operating budget for media-related activity within the CDPP is set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>$ ’000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The portfolio agencies listed below do not have any positions that are dedicated to public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring:

- Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity
- Australian Government Solicitor
- Criminology Research Council
- Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia
- Office of Parliamentary Counsel

**Resources, Energy and Tourism: Media Staff**

(Question No. 34)

**Senator Minchin** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Resources and Energy, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.

(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.

(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

**Senator Carr**—The Minister for Resources and Energy has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The information provided below relates to the Minister’s portfolio after the machinery of government changes which took place on 3 December 2007.
Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism:

(1), (2) & (3) As at 4 December 2007, the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism had no employees engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison or media monitoring. Media and public affairs services were being provided by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

(4) As the Department has just been established it has yet to create its internal budget allocations.

National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority (NOPSA)

(1) NOPSA employs one staff member with responsibility for public affairs and management/liaison with the media.

(2) The staff member employed in this role has the following responsibilities, to:
   - facilitate the promotion, by NOPSA, of occupational health and safety to persons engaged in offshore petroleum operations;
   - provides support to Regulatory Operations within NOPSA in the conduct of promotional activities and the development of a major accident event communication plan;
   - coordinates promotional activities including the management of promotional events;
   - prepares external communications and publications, including the Annual Report, the monthly CEO newsletter, and maintains the relevant distribution lists.
   - supports regulatory operations in actively and regularly communicating with industry associations and representatives to foster consistency of promotion and advice to NOPSA stakeholders.

(3) The position is an APS level 6.

(4) The budget for this position is $50,000. Budgets for forward years are as follows;
   - 2008-2009 $103,000
   - 2009-2010 $108,000
   - 2010-2011 $114,000

Geoscience Australia

(1) Geoscience Australia employs four staff members with responsibility for public affairs and management/liaison with the media, with one additional position currently vacant.

(2) The staff members employed in these roles have the responsibilities of science communications, media liaison, management and monitoring, event management, publication editing, web publishing and editing as well as ministerial briefings and correspondence.

(3) The staff members employed are; one Executive Level 2, one Executive Level 1 and 3 APS 6 level positions.

(4) The budget for these positions in 2007-2008 is $346,877. Budgets for forward years have not currently been finalised.

Resources, Energy and Tourism: Media Staff

(Question No. 35)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.
(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.

(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.

(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Senator Sherry—The Minister for Tourism has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The information provided below relates to the Minister’s portfolio after the machinery of government changes which took place on 3 December 2007.

Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism:

(1), (2) & (3) As at 4 December 2007, the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism had no employees engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison or media monitoring. Media and public affairs services were being provided by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

(4) As the Department has just been established it has yet to create its internal budget allocations.

Tourism Australia:

(1) Tourism Australia employs a team of seven people with responsibility for Corporate Communications in the Sydney Office. One of these employees, the Public Affairs Manager, is directly responsible for public affairs, management and liaison with Australian based media.

(2) The Public Affairs Manager is responsible for engaging Australian news and relevant trade media to promote Tourism Australia’s activities and programs to build the organisation’s reputation amongst stakeholders and the broader community, and to position TA as the ‘experts’ in branding Australia and international marketing. Through proactive media relations, the Public Affairs Manager also builds community understanding of the importance of tourism in the Australian economy and the role that Tourism Australia plays in increasing those benefits to the Australian people.

(3) Tourism Australia does not employ staff under the APS, rather Tourism Australia has its own grading structure of 7 bands. The position of Public Affairs Manager is a Band 3 position.

(4) The budget for media relations in 07/08 is $185,000. Budgets for forward years have not currently been finalised.

Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs: Media Staff

(Question Nos 40 and 41)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women, upon notice, on 12 February 2008.

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.

(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.

(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Senator Chris Evans—The Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

Nil.
**Defence: Media Staff**

*(Question No. 43)*

Senator Minchin asked the minister representing the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.

(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.

(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.

Senator Faulkner—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1), (2) and (3) The Defence Public Affairs Branch employs 62 civilian employees and 57 military employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive</strong></td>
<td>1 x BRIG, 1 x COL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 x EL2, 1 x EL1, 1 x APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Service Newspapers</td>
<td>1 x WO2, 4 x CPL, 1 x LS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 x EL2, 4 x EL1, 4 x APS6, 1 x APS5, 1 x APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Advisors</td>
<td>2 x EL2, 7 x EL1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Public Affairs Training</td>
<td>1 x EL1, 1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Engagement</td>
<td>1 x EL2, 2 x EL1, 3 x APS5/6, 5 x APS4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Internet</td>
<td>1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video and Imagery Library</td>
<td>1 x EL1, 1 x APS4, 1 x APS3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Public Affairs Preparedness and Plans</td>
<td>1 x LTCOL, 1 x MAJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, Planning and Entertainment Media Liaison</td>
<td>1 x EL2, 1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Public Affairs</td>
<td>6 x EL1, 2 x APS6, 1 x APS3, 3 x APS2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Headquarters Support</td>
<td>1 x WGCDR, 1 x LTCOL, 5 x MAJ, 2 x LEUT,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 x CAPT, 3 x FLTLT, 1 x LT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Public Affairs Unit covering photographers and reporters</td>
<td>1 x MAJ, 1 x WO, 2 x WO2, 5 x CAPT, 1 x LEUT,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 x SGT, 11 x CPL, 2 x LS, 2 x LT, 1 x FLTLT, 1 x AB, 1 x AC, 1 x PTE, 1 x APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Support</td>
<td>1 x APS6, 1 x APS5, 1 x APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondment/ Leave</td>
<td>1 x EL2, 3 x EL1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Outside of the Branch there are a further 34 Defence employees who provide public affairs support as a part of their duties.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/Group</th>
<th>Public Affairs Responsibility</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Communications advice</td>
<td>1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>Public Affairs coordination and support.</td>
<td>1 x APS3, 1 x APS4, 1 x APS4/5, 1 x APS5, 2 x APS6, 1 x EL1, 1 x LCDR, 2 x LEUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>Public Affairs planning and implementation and media management.</td>
<td>2 x EL1, 1 x SQNLDR, 3 x FLTLT, 3 x FLGOFF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Strategies and Policy Group</td>
<td>Communications advice/management/support to Defence Force Recruiting Branch including public relations support to ADF recruiting marketing activities.</td>
<td>1 x EL1, 1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Information Office</td>
<td>Communication and customer management</td>
<td>1 x EL2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Science and Technology Organisation</td>
<td>Australia wide coordination of Public Affairs, stakeholder relations, production of media items and online communications</td>
<td>1 x EL2, 4 x EL1, 3 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMO</td>
<td>Strategic Communication Advice</td>
<td>1 x Acting EL2, 1 x APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Logistics Command</td>
<td>Media monitoring, but majority of position (90 per cent of workload) manages internal publications, branding, conference etc</td>
<td>1 x EL1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: LCDR: Lieutenant Commander; SQNLDR: Squadron Leader, FLGOFF: Flying Officer

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) has no specific staff members responsible for the stated functions. DHA does have a Sales, Promotion and Communication Team, comprised of four staff members. The team is responsible for advertising and marketing campaigns (for DHA’s sales and product promotion); customer and investor liaison and communication; managing DHA’s sales and promotion events; sales and product promotions for example, product and service information, and communicating with stakeholders, customers and investors. There is relatively little day to day media interest in DHA’s activities, so an incidental proportion of the team’s time is involved in responding to media requests.

(4) $3.3 million in 2007-08 and $3.1 million in 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

**Health and Ageing: Media Staff**

(4) **Senator Minchin** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Sport, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) How many employees are engaged in positions responsible for public affairs, media management, liaison with the media and media monitoring.

(2) What are the responsibilities of these staff.

(3) What are the Australian Public Service classifications of these positions.

(4) For each of the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, what is the current operating budget for these media-related sections within the department or agency.
Senator Chris Evans—The Minister for Sport has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

As the information requested cannot be disaggregated across the portfolio, I would refer Senator Minchin to the response from the Minister for Health and Ageing.

Commonwealth Departments and Agencies: Staffing
(Question Nos 49 to 84)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister and other ministers, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

As at 26 November 2007, with reference to the department and all agencies in the Minister’s portfolio:

(1) What is the total number of permanent staff employed on a: (a) full-time; (b) part time; or (c) part-time, equivalent basis.

(2) How many employees are employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period.

(3) What are the base and top level salaries of: (a) Australian Public Service level 1 to 6 officers; (b) executive level officers; (c) Senior Executive Service (SES) officers; and (d) equivalent officers.

(4) How many officers are employed at executive level and SES level.

Senator Faulkner—As minister for the Public Service I provide the following answer to the honourable senator’s question on behalf of all ministers:

The answer to each part of this question, with the exception of the second part of part 2 (relating to the average length of the employment of staff employed on contract), is available in each agency’s annual report. Information on the number of ongoing and non-ongoing staff in the Australian Public Service (APS) can also be found in the APS Statistical Bulletin which is available on the Australian Public Service Commission website.

While annual reports provide that information as at 30 June 2007, rather than 26 November 2007 as requested by Senator Minchin, I do not consider that the diversion of resources across the public service as a whole that would be necessary to update it to 26 November 2007 is warranted.

Australian International Trade Association
(Question No. 94)

Senator Stott Despoja asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) Has the Minister or the department received any complaints regarding the practices of the Australian International Trade Association (AITA), including the practice of arranging inadequate visas for Australian teachers recruited to teach in China.

(2) Does the practice of facilitating employment in China with inadequate visas breach any Commonwealth laws.

(3) Has the department ever engaged in business with AITA, Mr Michael Guo or Mr Steven Guo (also known as Steven Moon); if so, can details be provided of the nature and extent of any such dealings.

(4) Has the department or any of Australia’s consulates or embassies received any complaints in relation to the conduct of AITA, Mr Michael Guo or Mr Steven Guo; if so, can details be provided of the nature and extent of any such complaint.

(5) Will ministers be required to declare membership of AITA’s ‘honorary board’, pursuant to the Prime Minister’s ‘Standards of Ministerial Ethics’.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Senator Chris Evans—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) My Department has not been in receipt of any complaints regarding the practices of AITA in relation to the arrangement of inadequate visas for Australian nationals in China.

(2) My portfolio is responsible for administration of the Migration Act and associated regulations. This legislation addresses issues associated with the right of people to enter Australia, not other countries. Questions on other Commonwealth laws should be addressed to the relevant Minister or the Attorney-General.

(3) AITA is known to my Department. AITA representatives, including Mr Michael Guo, communicate frequently with the department’s posts in China on specific cases. All three posts in China (Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou) have processed visa applications supported by Mr Guo.

Mr Guo has supported numerous visa applicants by signing invitation letters from AITA as the inviting party. This is a common practice in China where many business visitors utilise Australian business partners to facilitate their travel. In May 2007, Beijing Office staff met with Mr Guo to explain the legislative criteria and the normal evidence required to support a case.

An invitation from The Events Company was made to the Melbourne Office of the Department to participate in an event called Business Week Expo 2008. At the time the invitation was received there was no suggestion that AITA was involved in the event in any way. The Department agreed to participate in the expo on the basis that the event appeared to offer a suitable forum to promote departmental products such as General Skilled Migration and Visa Entitlement Verification Online, at a relatively low cost.

The Department subsequently discovered that the event was being organised by AITA and a number of changes to the nature of the event had been made without consultation with the department. The Department has advised the event organiser that it will not longer support the event.

In addition, my Department has also had dealings with Mr Michael Guo’s brother, Mr Steven Guo (also known as Steven Moon and Xue Wing Guo). His interaction with my Department has been limited to his role as a sponsor on a visa application. The visa applicant was a member of his family unit.

(4) My Department has not received complaints in relation to the conduct of AITA, Michael Guo or Steven Guo (aka Steven Moon).

(5) The Standards of Ministerial Ethics (the Standards) requires all Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries to declare their personal interests, including but not limited to pecuniary interests, as required by the Parliament. A copy of the Standards can be downloaded from the website of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet: www.pmc.gov.au.

Genetically Modified Crops
(Question Nos 96 to 98)

Senator Allison asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) Is the Minister aware of the study by Dr Judy Carman of the Institute of Health and Environmental Research in July 2006, commissioned by the Western Australian Minister for Agriculture and Food, which reviewed abstracts listed on the AgBioWorld website (www.agbioworld.org) and found that they did not demonstrate that genetically-modified (GM) crops were safe for human consumption, as claimed, and that GM crops may be harmful to human health.

(2) Is the Minister aware that: (a) of the nine abstracts remaining at the end of this process, the majority (six abstracts, or 67 per cent) show potentially adverse effects of GM crops on the health of the
experimental animals, while three (33 per cent) found no adverse effects; (b) the six papers showing adverse effects found evidence that GM potatoes could harm the liver and gastrointestinal tract and GM soy could adversely affect the liver and pancreas; (c) one paper found that GM DNA from GM corn was detectable in the intestinal contents of pigs up to 48 hours after eating, making it available for uptake into tissues and gut bacteria; and (d) three papers found no adverse effects: (i) on the development and function of mouse testes from eating GM corn, (ii) on some biochemical measurements from eating GM potatoes, and (iii) on some pathology, haematology, biochemistry and urine measurements from eating GM soy.

(3) In light of this study, will the Minister consider a moratorium on further GM crops in Australia, pending further independent, long-term, peer reviewed, multi-generational animal and human feeding studies, measuring outcomes relevant to human health.

(4) In regard to the Australia New Zealand Food Authority’s approval, in 2003, of the applications of Monsanto Aust Ltd and Bayer Crop Science Pty Ltd for GM canola: (a) which independent, long-term, peer reviewed, multi-generational animal and human feeding studies, measuring outcomes relevant to human health, were relied upon; and (b) which, if any, of these studies was conducted in Australia.

(5) Can the Minister confirm that, of the crop samples so far grown, none has been released for independent, human health-related testing; if so, why?

(6) Is there any requirement for Food Standards Australia New Zealand and the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator to review approvals of GM crops and foods as new information is received; if not: (a) why not; (b) when will the Minister announce such a requirement; and (c) how and when should such new information be reviewed.

(7) (a) If GM canola is introduced into Australia and it is found to have adverse effects on the economy, farming systems, people or the environment, what processes are in place to remove the canola from Australia and/or the food supply; and (b) how effective are these processes likely to be.

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s questions:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes. Notably, the author acknowledged that each paper would need to be reviewed in full to determine the reliability of the conclusions reported. Comprehensive evaluations by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) of the findings in the studies alluded to in Dr Carman’s report have not raised any valid food safety concerns relevant to genetically modified (GM) foods or crops approved for use in Australia.

(3) No, see response to question 2.

FSANZ and other international food regulators undertake a robust assessment of GM food applications. To reach a conclusion about the safety for human consumption of a GM food, each food must be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account a variety of evidence to reach an overall conclusion about the safety of that particular food.

An expert panel, convened by FSANZ in June 2007, noted that while whole-food feeding studies may be informative in some limited circumstances, any potential adverse health effects can be identified by a scientifically-informed, comparative assessment of the GM food against its conventional counterpart with a history of safe use. Health Canada, the United States Food and Drug Administration and the European Food Safety Authority have arrived at similar conclusions.

However, the Government recognises that there continues to be some level of concern in the community and that there should be well informed public debate on the issues surrounding the use of GM food crops.
(4) (a) FSANZ advises that such studies were not conducted.
    (b) N/A.

(5) The release of crop samples is a matter for commercial crop developers not a matter that requires government intervention.

Before a genetically modified crop can be licensed to be grown in Australia it must undergo a rigorous risk analysis by the Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator). If a GM crop is intended for food use it must also undergo a comprehensive safety assessment by FSANZ.

(6) Yes. FSANZ receives information relevant to food safety on an ongoing basis, and evaluates and acts on that information if a risk to public health and safety is identified. New technical information obtained through standard monitoring practices is evaluated through normal risk assessment channels.

The Regulator also has a number of mechanisms to collect new information after a licence has been issued for a GM crop. Licence holders are required to inform the Regulator if they become aware of any additional information indicating a risk to the health and safety of people or the environment, or of any unintended effects associated with the dealings authorised by the licence. Information may also be supplied by other persons covered by a licence or by any other organisation or individual, or be identified through monitoring activities conducted by the Regulator’s office.

The Regulator is required to monitor international practice in the regulation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and reviews relevant scientific literature on an ongoing basis. New information relevant to existing commercial releases may come to the Regulator’s attention during the preparation of risk assessments for subsequent applications for similar GMOs.

(a) N/A
(b) N/A

(c) In relation to GM foods, FSANZ obtains new technical information from time to time on GM crop varieties already approved in the Food Standards Code. This information is scientifically assessed for its potential to impact on any existing regulatory approvals for GM foods. To date, new information has not raised any public health and safety concerns associated with current GM food approvals, and there has been no justification for withdrawing approval for any assessed GM food line.

The Regulator considers any new information relating to human health and safety or the environment to determine if any changes to the conclusions of the initial Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan are required. The Regulator is empowered to vary, suspend or cancel licences in order to be satisfied that risks posed by gene technology are managed so as to protect human health and safety and the environment.

(7) (a) If a licensed GM crop was found to be having adverse effects on human health or the environment, the Regulator could vary a licence in order to be satisfied that risks are managed, and to direct licence holders to take appropriate actions. Emergency powers also exist for inspectors to take steps in order to avoid an imminent serious risk.

I am advised by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry that if a licensed GM crop was found to be having adverse effects on the economy or farming systems, commercial factors would be expected to reduce, or may even eliminate, its production. Whether Australian Government intervention was necessary would depend on the extent and nature of the adverse effects.

(b) Effective mechanisms for recalling foods found to pose an unacceptable safety risk to consumers have been in place in Australia for many years. It is a legal requirement for all food businesses engaged in the wholesale supply, manufacture or importation of food to have an up-
to-date food recall plan. Food recall systems ensure Commonwealth and State and Territory health authorities work with industry to make certain any unsafe food is quickly removed from distribution, sale and consumption.

I am advised by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry that if complete removal of a GMO from Australian farming systems was warranted on the basis of adverse effects on the economy or farming systems, this would require coordinated action by governments and industry and would be managed on a case-by-case basis.

**Contraception**  
(Question No. 99)

**Senator Allison** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

1. Is the Minister aware of plans by the United Kingdom’s Department of Health to pilot a scheme which involves the training of pharmacists to prescribe the contraceptive pill in the same way that a general practitioner would, in order to improve access to contraception and reduce unplanned pregnancies?

2. What data is available on the relationship between contraceptive use and the rate of unintended pregnancy in Australia?

3. Does data available to the Government suggest that the requirement to obtain a prescription for the contraceptive pill and/or limited access to general practitioners is a factor in reducing contraceptive usage rates?

4. What steps, if any, does the Government propose to take to improve knowledge about, and use of, all methods of contraception?

**Senator Ludwig**—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

1. Yes.

2. There is very little data available in this area. Marie Stopes International has recently released a report: Real Choices: Women, contraception and unplanned pregnancy. This document reports on the outcomes of a survey of Australian women aged 18 to 40 years and over who responded to a web-based questionnaire.

3. The available data do not allow any views to be formed in relation to this issue.

4. The delivery of sexual and reproductive health activities including education is primarily undertaken by the states and territories. The Commonwealth supports these activities through the Public Health Outcome Funding Agreements. The Commonwealth also provides funding to six organisations for sexual and reproductive health activities and to the National Pregnancy Support Helpline.

The Commonwealth Government’s commitment to the development of a new women’s health policy will also provide an opportunity to explore the health needs of Australian women.

**Sustainable Cities Program**  
(Question No. 104)

**Senator Allison** asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to the Sustainable Cities program, negotiated by the Australian Democrats with the Howard Government as part of the Measures for a Better Environment package in the 2003-04 Budget:

1. In regard to the built environment, what progress has been made towards: (a) promoting sustainability of the built environment; and (b) developing a comparative study of building standards and
codes, model building specifications and best practice material and guidelines for green buildings, beyond the National Australian Built Environment Rating System.

(2) In regard to the enhancement of environment education in schools: (a) what progress has been made towards assisting primary and secondary school students to understand how to improve the efficiency of resource use and integrating this into the day-to-day running of schools; (b) how many environment management systems have been put in place for demonstration schools; (c) of these demonstration schools, which are in low socioeconomic areas; and (d) to date, what has been the cost of this program.

(3) In regard to the green car rating scheme: (a) what evidence is there that the Green Vehicle Guide (GVG) has influenced vehicle purchasing decisions; (b) will the Government consider making it mandatory to publish GVG ratings on advertising and marketing material for new car sales; if not, why not; and (c) will the Government consider introducing mandatory energy efficiency standards for imported and locally manufactured vehicles; if not, why not.

Senator Wong—The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) During 2006, the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) undertook two major scoping studies on materials and water in the context of sustainability in the Building Code of Australia. In 2007 the AGO funded joint studies with the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) on rating tools and residential hot water.

On 6 February 2008, I wrote to the ABCB (and the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and the Minister for Climate Change and Water) proposing a new MOU on improving sustainability in the built environment. Future work to improve building environmental standards will be managed under the proposed MOU.

Promoting sustainability of the built environment has been progressed through the development of best practice guide materials and associated seminars, workshops and related promotional activities. The Your Building website www.yourbuilding.org, a guide to environmentally sustainable commercial buildings, was launched in 2007. Work on the Your Development website www.yourdevelopment.org, a guide to creating sustainable neighbourhoods, has commenced and is expected to be completed in the second half of 2008.

(2) (a) The Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI) is an initiative of the States and Territories co-ordinated and supported nationally by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA). It is currently operating in approximately 2500 schools nationally. AuSSI provides practical assistance to schools to achieve measurable improvements in their use of resources, grounds and facilities and to equip the whole school community with the attitudes, values, behaviours and capacity to meaningfully engage with complex issues such as sustainability. The initiative operates in both primary and secondary schools.

In 2005, DEWHA published the first ever National Environmental Education Statement for Australian Schools. The Statement provides a nationally agreed description of the nature and purpose of environmental education in schools and calls for the implementation of a whole of school approach. It was released with the endorsement of the Ministerial Council for Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). AuSSI seeks to provide practical support for the implementation of the Statement.

(b) A key element of the AuSSI is the development of a School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) or equivalent. A SEMP would typically include actions for improved management of school resources linked to school curricula to ensure its integration in teaching and learning. All participating AuSSI schools are encouraged to go through the process of developing and implementing a SEMP.
(c) Support for AuSSI in each State and Territory has required the participation of schools in low-socioeconomic areas. However, information on which schools are in such areas has not recently been collected.

(d) $2.2 million has been invested in the AuSSI over the period 2002-03 to 2006-07.

(3) (a) Vehicle purchasing behaviour is influenced by a wide range of factors and it is impossible to isolate any impact that may be due to the introduction of the Green Vehicle Guide. Nevertheless, usage and awareness of the Guide is increasing, with over 600,000 site visits since its launch in mid 2004. The Guide’s ratings are also widely used by the motoring press and are increasingly being adopted by organisations as the basis for setting environmental targets for their fleet purchases.

(b) & (c) The Australian Transport Council and the Environment Protection and Heritage Council have been tasked with developing a range of potential measures to improve the fuel efficiency of Australia’s vehicle fleet. This process will consider a broad sweep of measures, including both regulatory and non-regulatory options.

**Herceptin**

(Question No. 107)

Senator Allison asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) Is the Government aware that, according to clinical trials conducted by the United States of America’s National Cancer Institute, Herceptin has been shown to reduce the risk of recurrence by approximately 30 per cent for people with HER-2 gene amplification in early stage breast cancer.

(2) In the light of these findings, will the Government now consider allowing patients to access Herceptin on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for longer than the current limit of 12 months; if not, why not.

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) Yes.

(2) Items are included in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) on the advice of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC).

At its July 2006 meeting, the PBAC recommended an authority required listing for Herceptin® (trastuzumab) for the treatment of patients with HER-2 positive early breast cancer commencing concurrently with adjuvant chemotherapy following surgery.

The duration of treatment proposed to the PBAC in the July 2006 submission was 52 weeks. The PBAC considered that the optimal duration of therapy with Herceptin based on the evidence presented supported 52 weeks. Specifically, the results of five trials were presented, including those undertaken by the United States of America’s National Cancer Institute. In four of these trials, treatment was given for 52 weeks, and in the remaining trial it was given for 9 weeks. The PBAC has not been provided with any evidence to show that treatment beyond 52 weeks results in any greater benefit.

The PBAC welcomes further submissions from the sponsor, if the sponsor believes there is evidence that a change to the duration of treatment with Herceptin will lead to a cost-effective improvement in benefit.
Energy Rebate Programs

(Question No. 110)

Senator Milne asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) Since the Photovoltaic Rebate Program started: (a) how many applications for the rebate have been received by the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO); and (b) how many rebates have been granted.

(2) Since the Solar Hot Water Rebate Program started: (a) how many applications for the rebate have been received by the AGO; and (b) how many rebates have been granted.

(3) Since the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program started: (a) how many applications under the program have been received by the AGO; and (b) how many applications have been granted.

(4) Why has there been a delay in the processing and funding of the rebates.

Senator Wong—The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) As at 30 January 2008, the Photovoltaic Rebate Program has approved 16,062 rebates of which 11,324 rebates had been paid for completed installations. The difference between these two figures represents systems currently under construction, and stalled and lapsed installations.

A further 1,367 applications are in the registration and assessment process, so the total number of application received by the end of January would have been around 17,429.

The processing time for the rebates, as per the program guidelines, is up to six weeks. Delays beyond this timeframe are not occurring for correctly completed applications.

(2) The Solar Hot Water Rebate Program began receiving applications in September 2007. As at 4 February 2008, a total of 6,250 applications had been received with 3,460 rebates having been paid, 259 applications assessed as ineligible and 2,531 applications being processed.

(3) As at 31 December 2007, the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program (RRPGP) subprograms for renewable energy power systems and water pumping have approved 6,508 pre-purchase applications of which 5,020 rebates have been paid for completed installations. The difference between these figures is due to withdrawn or lapsed pre-purchase applications and installations under construction.

The processing time for the small rebates, as per the RRPGP sub-program guidelines, is up to six weeks. Delays beyond this timeframe are not occurring for applications that have been completed correctly.

As at 29 February 2008, the RRPGP Major Project sub-program had received 33 proposals of which 28 have been approved for funding. There are five applications under assessment.

As at 29 February 2008, the RRPGP Industry Support sub-program had received 39 proposals of which 37 had been approved for funding. There are 2 proposals under assessment.

(4) For the Solar Hot Water Rebate program, administrative issues centred around verifying the installation of eligible solar hot water systems, have delayed processing a number of applications beyond the targeted 8 week timeframe.

The original design of the program required voluntary third parties, known as Registered Agents, to submit information that is used by the Department to verify that a hot water system that has been installed is eligible for the rebate (confirmation of the tank number, the number of RECs attached to the system and the installation address).
Registered Agents are people/companies registered to trade in Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) created under the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target legislation. All solar hot water systems generate RECs and these are usually sold to a Registered Agent at the time of installation, reducing the up front cost of the system to the household.

The Registered Agents participating in the program agreed to submit this information within reasonable timeframes. As a voluntary scheme, however, there is little incentive for the Registered Agents to submit correctly and on time.

In order to reduce processing delays, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts approved interim arrangements that allow departmental staff to use information from the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator (ORER) to verify applicant tank information where possible. The Department has allocated extra resources to processing the backlog of applications and employed extra staff to process applications.

The Minister also instructed the Department to review the original program guidelines and administrative arrangements. This review resulted in revisions to the guidelines which were endorsed by the Minister early in March 2008. In particular, the revised guidelines remove the need for information from Registered Agents to verify hot water system installations. Under the new guidelines, the installing plumber will provide the verification at the time of installation.

These revisions to the guidelines will allow the implementation of improved administrative arrangements that will ensure the timely processing of future applications. The new guidelines and administrative arrangements will be adopted in April 2008.

Media Inquiries
(Question No. 115)

Senator Ellison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to media responses by the Minister, spokespersons and the department: Has the Minister established guidelines on which media enquiries will be responded to by the Minister and his office and which media enquiries will be responded to by the department; if so, what are these guidelines.

Senator Chris Evans—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

The ban imposed by the former Minister on the National Communications branch from responding to the media has been lifted.

The guidelines established by the Minister with the Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in relation to media enquiries reflect arrangements originally in place with former Minister, Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone, former Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon Andrew Robb MP, and former Assistant Minister, the Hon Teresa Gambaro MP.

Those arrangements, that continue to apply, are that media enquiries about operational matters will be handled by the department’s media team within the National Communications Branch, and as appropriate, by its official spokesman. Media enquiries about policy and future legislative directions by the government are referred to my office for response by me or my media adviser, as appropriate. My staff and the public affairs officers of the National Communications Branch maintain regular contact about ongoing media issues.

I have been keen to make sure that the National Communications Branch is proactive. I think the staff have so far responded very positively. They are given the opportunity to promote the department’s work and to help rebuild confidence in the department and its processes, given the difficulties of recent years. They have a very central role to do that.
**Immigration and Citizenship: Overseas Travel**

*(Question No. 116)*

Senator Ellison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to overseas travel by the Minister and/or departmental and agency officers since 3 December 2007:

1. What overseas travel has been undertaken; (b) what was the purpose of the travel; (c) when did the Minister and/or officers depart Australia; (d) who travelled with the Minister and/or officers; and (e) when did the Minister and/or officers return to Australia.

2. (a) Who did the Minister and/or officers meet during the visit; and (b) what was the time and date of each meeting.

3. (a) On how many trips was the Minister and/or officers accompanied by a business delegation; and (b) can details be provided of each of these delegations.

4. Who met the cost of travel and other expenses associated with the trip.

5. What total travel and associated expenses, if any, were met by the department in relation to: (a) the Minister; (b) the Minister’s family; (c) the Minister’s staff; and (d) departmental and/or agency staff.

6. For the Minister, the Minister’s family, the Minister’s staff and for each departmental/agency officer, what were the costs, per expenditure item, including, but not necessarily limited to: (a) fares; (b) allowances; (c) accommodation; (d) hospitality; (e) insurance; and (f) other costs.

7. (a) What was the total cost of air charters used by the Minister or his office or department; and (b) on how many occasions did the Minister or his office or department and associated agencies charter aircraft; and (c) in each case, what was the name of the charter company that provided the service and the respective costs.

Senator Chris Evans—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is:

1. Since 3 December 2007 Senator Evans has made one overseas visit to Jakarta in Indonesia; (b) to meet with the Minister’s Indonesian counterparts and other key stakeholders; (c) 16 January 2008; (d) Mr Tim Friedrich from Senator Evans’s Office and Mr Andrew Metcalfe, Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC); and (e) 19 January 2008.

2. (a) and (b) The program for Senator Evans’s visit was as follows:

   Wednesday 16 January 2008  
   1705 – on arrival meeting with Ambassador Bill Farmer and Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Regional Director Jim O’Callaghan.

   Thursday 17 January 2008  
   1000 - meeting with HE Mr Andi Mattalatta, Minister for Law and Human Rights.
   1300 - hosted a lunch for Indonesian Opinion Makers including members of Commissions I (Foreign Affairs, Defence, Communications and Information) and III (Law, Legislation, Human Rights and Security).
   1500 – meeting with HE Dr Hassan Wirajuda, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
   1630 - meeting with Mr Steve Cook, Chief of Mission, IOM.
   1840 - reception hosted by Ambassador Bill Farmer.

   Friday 18 January 2008  
   0920 - meeting with DIAC staff.
1000 - briefing with representatives from other key agencies at Post.
1100 - visit to the Australian Visa Application Centre.
1200 - host luncheon for members of the Indonesia-Australia Business Council. 1500 - meeting with UNHCR Regional Representative, Mr Robert Ashe.
1630 - meeting with a group of Indonesian Immigration officers who have been recipients of various DIAC sponsored scholarships.

Saturday 19 January 2008
0800 - departure for Australia

(3) None.
(4) - Senator Evans and Mr Friedrich - the Department of Finance and Deregulation.
- Mr Metcalfe - DIAC.
- Defence met the cost of operating the Defence Special Purpose Aircraft (SPA).

(5) See answer to question 6 below.

(6) A breakdown of the costs incurred by the Minister, Mr Friedrich and Mr Metcalfe is attached.

(7) (a) to (c) Air charters were not used. The services of the Defence SPA were used throughout the visit. Defence has advised that the additional cost for the use of Defence SPA is $42,018. Defence reports to Parliament twice annually on the cost of all Defence SPA travel.

ATTACHMENT

COSTS INCURRED DURING THE MINISTERIAL VISIT TO JAKARTA FROM 16 TO 19 JANUARY 2008 (as at 26/2/2008)

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<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong></td>
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Note - the figures above:

- have been rounded to the nearest $50;
- and reflect the exchange rates advised by the post.

Prime Minister and Cabinet: Government Appointments and Grants

(Question No. 117)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to Senator Minchin’s letter to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, dated 1 February 2008, can the following information be provided prior to each round of Estimates and for Additional Estimates by 13 February 2008:

1. (a) What appointments have been made by the Government (through Executive Council, Cabinet and ministers) to statutory authorities, executive agencies and advisory boards within the Minister’s portfolio; and (b) for each appointment, what are the respective appointee’s credentials.

2. How many vacancies remain to be filled by ministerial (including Cabinet and Executive Council) appointments.

3. What grants have been approved by the Minister from within the Minister’s portfolio.

4. What requests have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Deregulation to move funds within the Minister’s portfolio.

Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

1. The following appointments had been made as at 18 February 2008:

   - The Merit Protection Commissioner: Ms Annwyn Godwin, appointed by the Governor-General for a term of 5 years. Ms Godwin was selected for this position through a merit-based selection process. Prior to her appointment she was an Assistant Secretary in the People Services Branch of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, and the National Manager, Staffing, in the Australian Customs Service.

   - The Australian Electoral Officer for Queensland: Ms Anne Bright, re-appointed by the Governor-General for a term of 5 years. Ms Bright was first appointed to this position for a 5 year term in January 2003.

   - The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority: Dr Eva Bennet-Jenkins, appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for a term of 5 years. Dr Bennet-Jenkins was selected for this position through a merit-based selection process. Prior to her appointment she was the Acting CEO (from July 2007), and a Program Manager with the Authority.

   - The Director-General of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS): Mr David Irvine AO, appointed by the Governor-General for a term of 3 years. Mr Irvine has been the Director-General since March 2003. The Government believes that Mr Irvine’s personal qualities, expertise and breadth of experience, as demonstrated by his successful leadership of the Service over the last five years, commend him to continue to exercise his responsibilities as Director-General of ASIS. In accordance with legislative requirements, the Prime Minister consulted the Leader of the Opposition, who fully supported Mr Irvine’s reappointment.

   - The Chairman of the National Curriculum Board: Professor Barry McGaw, appointed by the Minister for Education for a period of 3 years. Professor McGaw is the Director of the University of Melbourne’s new Melbourne Education Research Institute and has held executive positions with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) based in Paris, and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).
The Queensland representative on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority: Mr Ken Smith, appointed by the Governor-General for a term of 3 years. Mr Smith was nominated by the Premier of Queensland, and is the Director-General of the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Government Solicitor: Ms Rayne de Gruchy PSM, re-appointed by the Attorney-General and the Minister for Finance and Deregulation for a term of 2 years. Ms de Gruchy has been the CEO of the AGS since January 1999. She was awarded a Public Service Medal in 2003 for outstanding public service, particularly in managing the transition of the AGS to a government business entity.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Crime Commission: Mr Alastair Milroy, re-appointed by the Governor-General for a term of one year. Mr Milroy has been the CEO of the ACC since March 2003.

The Acting Disability Discrimination Commissioner: Mr Graeme Innes AM, re-appointed by the Attorney-General for a term of 6 months. Mr Innes has performed these duties since his appointment as Human Rights Commissioner in December 2005, and was the Deputy Disability Discrimination Commissioner from 1999 to 2005;

Two members of the National Native Title Tribunal: Dr Gaye Sculthorpe (as a full-time member) and Mrs Ruth Wade (as a part-time member), each re-appointed by the Governor-General for a term of 6 months. Both Dr Sculthorpe and Mrs Wade have been members of the Tribunal since 2000.

(2) Vacancies which remain to be filled by Ministerial appointments within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio, as at 18 February 2008, are as follows:

(i) The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) Advisory Council, which advises the Director (CEO) AIFS, has up to four vacancies.

(ii) The Australian Social Inclusion Board has ten vacancies.

(3) As at 18 February 2008, no grants have been approved by the Prime Minister or other Ministers within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio since 24 November 2007 (excluding the Department of Climate Change and the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator who will respond separately).

(4) Senator the Hon Nick Sherry as Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation in the Senate will respond on my behalf.

The honourable senator is welcome to attend Estimates hearings in future and request the information sought in this Question on Notice.

**Defence: Government Appointments and Grants**

(Question Nos 126 and 147)

**Senator Minchin** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence and the Minister representing the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to Senator Minchin’s letter to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, dated 1 February 2008, can the following information be provided prior to each round of Estimates and for Additional Estimates by 13 February 2008:

(1) (a) What appointments have been made by the Government (through Executive Council, Cabinet and ministers) to statutory authorities, executive agencies and advisory boards within the Minister’s portfolio; and (b) for each appointment, what are the respective appointee’s credentials.

(2) How many vacancies remain to be filled by ministerial (including Cabinet and Executive Council) appointments.

(3) What grants have been approved by the Minister from within the Minister’s portfolio.
(4) What requests have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Deregulation to move funds within the Minister’s portfolio.

**Senator Faulkner**—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s questions:

(1) (a) and (b) Senator the Hon Chris Evans as Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate will respond on my behalf.

(2) Vacancies which remain to be filled by Ministerial appointments within the Defence portfolio, as at 8 April 2008:
   (a) Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) Council – two vacancies remain to be filled.
   (b) Royal Australian Air Force Veterans Residence Trust Fund – a single vacancy remains to be filled.
   (c) Defence Housing Australia (DHA) – the position of DHA Chairperson has not been permanently filled.
   (d) Australian Military Court – all of the part-time (up to eight) Military Judge positions are vacant.

(3) As at 22 April 2008 the following grants have been approved by the Minister for Defence since 24 November 2007:
   (a) The Australian Member Committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.
   (b) The International Institute for Strategic Studies - Asia for its Asia Seminar Series.
   (c) The International Institute for Strategic Studies - Asia for the 2008 Shangri-La Dialogue.
   (d) The International Institute for Strategic Studies - Asia for the 2009 Shangri-La Dialogue.
   (e) Murdoch University for Public Lecture Series on Emerging Security Threats.
   (f) The Royal United Services Institute of Australia.

(4) Senator the Hon Nick Sherry as Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation in the Senate will respond on my behalf.

The honourable Senator is welcome to attend Estimates hearings in future and request the information sought in this Question on Notice.

**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government: Government Appointments and Grants**

*Question No. 130*

**Senator Minchin** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to Senator Minchin’s letter to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, dated 1 February 2008, can the following information be provided prior to each round of Estimates and for Additional Estimates by 13 February 2008:

(1) (a) What appointments have been made by the Government (through Executive Council, Cabinet and ministers) to statutory authorities, executive agencies and advisory boards within the Minister’s portfolio; and (b) for each appointment, what are the respective appointee’s credentials.

(2) How many vacancies remain to be filled by ministerial (including Cabinet and Executive Council) appointments.

(3) What grants have been approved by the Minister from within the Minister’s portfolio.
(4) What requests have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Deregulation to move funds within the Minister’s portfolio.

Senator Conroy—The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) Senator the Hon Chris Evans as Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate will respond on my behalf.

(2) There are 16 vacancies to be filled by Ministerial appointment as outlined below:

**Airservices Australia Board**
- Chairman
- Three Members

**Area Consultative Committee**
- Adelaide Metropolitan Chair
- Greater Brisbane Deputy Chair
- Pilbara Chair
- Torres/NPA Chair
- Outback NSW Chair
- Mackay Region Deputy Chair

**Australian Maritime Safety Authority**
- Member

**Maritime Industry Finance Company Ltd**
- Four Directors
  - The Maritime Industry Finance Company completed its task last year and went into voluntary liquidation in November 2006 to wind up its operations.

**National Transport Commission**
- One Commissioner

(3) Grants approved by the Minister from within the Minister’s portfolio are provided in the following table:

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<th>Approval date</th>
<th>Program name</th>
<th>Grant recipient</th>
<th>Total value of Grant</th>
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Date | Program name | Grant recipient | Total value of Grant
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11-Jan-08 | Remote Aerodrome Safety | King Island Council | $44,805
11-Jan-08 | Remote Aerodrome Safety | Portframe Enterprises Pty Ltd | $38,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | WBL Pty Ltd | $50,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | K.R.Little Pty Ltd | $11,882
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Sunraysia School & Charter Services | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Arica P/L T/as Thomson’s Bus Lines | $15,442
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | BC & EJ Ellis Pty Ltd | $50,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Fallon’s Bus Service Pty. Ltd. | $50,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | BBL Management P/L T/as Berwick Bus Lines | $10,423
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Calows Coaches | $24,320
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | DG & PK SCOTT | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | PJ & J McDermott’s Coaches | $13,176
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | JC & JL O’Riordan | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Rebecca Nolan | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Bus Fox P/L | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | PG MA Stone Pty Ltd | $35,423
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | All Occasion Charter & Tours | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Nortons Coaches | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Willunga Charter Services (Russell James Jenkins) | $104,943
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | D&K Noack | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Forster Bus Services Pty Ltd | $25,000
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Robert and Fay Rees | $68,255
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | KW Baldwin T/as Baldwins Bus Service | $22,550
05-Feb-08 | Seathelts on Regional School Buses Subsidy | Talliumba Bus Service | $5,079
(4) Senator the Hon Nick Sherry as Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation in the Senate will respond on my behalf. The honourable Senator is welcome to attend Estimates hearings in future and request the information sought in this Question on Notice.

**Innovation, Industry, Science and Research: Government Appointments and Grants**

*(Question Nos 132 and 148)*

Senator Minchin asked the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and Minister representing the Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to Senator Minchin’s letter to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, dated 1 February 2008, can the following information be provided prior to each round of Estimates and for Additional Estimates by 13 February 2008:

1. (a) What appointments have been made by the Government (through Executive Council, Cabinet and ministers) to statutory authorities, executive agencies and advisory boards within the Minister’s portfolio; and (b) for each appointment, what are the respective appointee’s credentials.

2. How many vacancies remain to be filled by ministerial (including Cabinet and Executive Council) appointments.

3. What grants have been approved by the Minister from within the Minister’s portfolio.

4. What requests have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Deregulation to move funds within the Minister’s portfolio.

Senator Carr—The answer to the honourable senator’s questions is as follows:

1. Senator the Hon Chris Evans as Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate will respond on my behalf to this question.

2. Vacancies which remain to be filled by Ministerial appointments within the Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio as at 18 February 2008 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Committee/Board</th>
<th>Vacancies Occurring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation Australia</td>
<td>One vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive Committee</td>
<td>One vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology and Telecommunications Committee</td>
<td>One vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venture Capital Committee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Name of Committee/Board | Vacancies Occurring
--- | ---
CSIRO Board | One vacancy
ANSTO Board | One vacancy
National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Committee (NCRIS) | One vacancy
Cooperative Research Centres Committee | One vacancy

(3) The grants below have been approved by the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research as at 18 February 2008. The Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy has not approved any grants.

The following grants were made under the International Science Linkages French-Australian Science and Technology Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The University of Western Australia</td>
<td>Lüders-like Deformation Behaviour of Near-equiatomic NiTi Shape Memory Alloys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Melbourne</td>
<td>Objective risk evaluation and decision making for large systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian National University</td>
<td>Star polyphiles: 3D polycontinuous mesophases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian National University</td>
<td>Control of light in periodic photonic structures: from waveguides to cavities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Tasmania</td>
<td>Integrated simulation tools for the bio-economic assessment of renewable resource systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian National University</td>
<td>Planning Approaches and Software Verification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>Thermal and photopolymerization of thermosets and blends, their nanocomposites and thermoplastic blends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian National University</td>
<td>Transient Stability of Power Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Melbourne</td>
<td>In Situ prevention of bone metastasis by functionalized multilayered capsules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>Collaboration between chemists and physicists to study Van der Waals interactions for analysis of novel nano-materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Adelaide</td>
<td>The evolution and domestication of equids, using ancient DNA analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New South Wales</td>
<td>Microwell production for selective deposition of proteins and cells using honeycomb structured porous films prepared by breathfigures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Newcastle</td>
<td>Networks, graphs and communications (Réseaux, graphes et communications)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) Senator the Hon Nick Sherry as Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation in the Senate will respond on my behalf to this question.

The honourable senator is welcome to attend Estimates hearings in future and request the information sought in this Question on Notice.

**Resources, Energy and Tourism: Government Appointments and Grants**

*Question No. 138*

**Senator Minchin** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Resources and Energy, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to Senator Minchin’s letter to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, dated 1 February 2008, can the following information be provided prior to each round of Estimates and for Additional Estimates by 13 February 2008:

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
(1) (a) What appointment have been made by the Government (through Executive Council, Cabinet and Ministers) to statutory authorities, executive agencies and advisory boards within the Minister’s portfolio; and (b) for each appointment, what are the respective appointee credentials.
(2) How many vacancies remain to be filled by ministerial (including Cabinet and Executive Council) appointments.
(3) What grants have been approved by the Minister from within the Minister’s portfolio.
(4) What requests have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Deregulation to move funds within the Minister’s portfolio.

Senator Carr—The Minister for Resources and Energy has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(1) Senator the Hon Chris Evans as Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate will respond on my behalf.
(2) Nine vacancies remain to be filled by ministerial appointments. One being for a new director of the Snowy Hydro Limited board, another being for a new Chairperson for the Low Emissions Technology Development Fund and the remaining 7 are for the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority (including the chairperson of this board).
(3) No grants have been approved for Resources and Energy.
(4) Senator the Hon Nick Sherry as Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation in the Senate will respond on my behalf. The honourable Senator is welcome to attend Estimates hearings in future and request the information sought in this Question on Notice.

Resources, Energy and Tourism: Government Appointments and Grants
(Question No. 139)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism, on notice, on 12 February 2008:
With reference to Senator Minchin’s letter to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, dated 1 February 2008, can the following information be provided prior to each round of Estimates and for Additional Estimates by 13 February 2008:
(1) (a) What appointment have been made by the Government (through Executive Council, Cabinet and Ministers) to statutory authorities, executive agencies and advisory boards within the Minister’s portfolio; and (b) for each appointment, what are the respective appointee credentials.
(2) How many vacancies remain to be filled by ministerial (including Cabinet and Executive Council) appointments.
(3) What grants have been approved by the Minister from within the Minister’s portfolio.
(4) What requests have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Deregulation to move funds within the Minister’s portfolio.

Senator Sherry—The Minister for Tourism has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(1) Senator the Hon Chris Evans as Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate will respond on my behalf.
(2) No vacancies remain to be filled for Tourism at this time.
(3) Grants have been approved within this portfolio relating to assistance with World Youth Day.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(4) Senator the Hon Nick Sherry as Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation in the Senate will respond on my behalf.

The honourable Senator is welcome to attend Estimates hearings in future and request the information sought in this Question on Notice.

Election Commitments
(Question Nos 153 to 188)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister and other ministers on 12 February 2008:

(a) Can details be provided of each election commitment the administration of which falls within the Minister’s portfolio; and

(b) what is the estimated value of each commitment.

Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s questions:

The election commitments made by Federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record. The Administrative Arrangements Orders issued by the Governor-General on 3 December 2007 and 25 January 2008 list the matters dealt with by each Department of State.

Prime Minister and Cabinet: Western Australia
(Question No. 225)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) nil

(b) N/A

(2) (a) nil

(b) N/A

Immigration and Citizenship: Western Australia
(Question No. 230)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, upon notice, on 13 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.
(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Chris Evans—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) Based on the Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007-08 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, no funding, programs or services to Western Australia have been cut since 24 November 2007.

(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Finance and Deregulation: Western Australia

(Question No. 231)

Senator Cormann asked the Special Minister of State, upon notice, on 13 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) and (b), (2) (a) and (b): Please refer to the response to QON 237 asked of the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation.

Foreign Affairs and Trade: Western Australia

(Question Nos 232 and 233)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Faulkner—The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade to the honourable senator’s question:

DFAT

(1) (a) To achieve the Government’s 2007-08 election savings commitments for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department implemented a range of savings measures across its offices in Australia and posts overseas including reductions in travel and representation expenditure. Reductions in travel and representation expenditure were applied to the Department’s Western Australia State Office. (b) The savings made from the reductions applied to the Western Australia State Office were $1,850 for travel and $1,232 for representation.

(2) (a) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.
Austrade
(1) Since 24 November 2007 Austrade has had no funding cuts that impact on services to Western Australia.
(2) (a) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

AusAID
(1) (a) None (b) not applicable.
(2) (a) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

ACIAR
(1) Nil
(2) (a) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

EFIC
(1) Nil
(2) (a) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Defence: Western Australia

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.
(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Faulkner—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) None.
(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.
Health and Ageing: Western Australia
(Question No. 235)
Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:
(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.
(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(1) There were no cuts at Additional Estimates that were specific to Western Australian funding, programs and services.
(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs: Western Australia
(Question No. 236)
Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:
(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.
(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Chris Evans—The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
There have been no cuts to funding or discontinuance of funding of programs or services in Western Australia since 24 November 2007 by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
As a part of its usual business the Department has changed service providers in a number of instances, suspended funding of some service providers due to non performance, and in some cases the specific funding agreements with providers have expired since 24 November 2007. There have been no savings realised from the usual administration of the Department’s business with service providers.
The attached table shows specific funded organisations where funding has ceased or transferred to another organisation as a part of the normal business of the Department.
Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service provider</th>
<th>FaHCSIA program</th>
<th>Reason for change in funding arrangements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burdekin YOUTH in Action “Supporting Young Parents’ project</td>
<td>Local Answers</td>
<td>Activities ceased in December 2007 in accordance with the funding agreement and a final report was submitted in March 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel Community Development Group “FAST” project</td>
<td>Local Answers</td>
<td>Activities ceased in December 2007 in accordance with the funding agreement and the organisation has acquitted funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin University “Better Living Better Life” project</td>
<td>Local Answers</td>
<td>Activities ceased December 2007 in accordance with funding agreement and grant has been acquitted by organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Claire’s School “St Claire’s Mentor” project</td>
<td>Local Answers</td>
<td>Negotiations underway with organisation to extend period of activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlin Bowa Dumbara “Wamba Nilgee Burru Ngardu Derby Men’s Service”</td>
<td>Local Answers</td>
<td>Project changed auspice to Wamba Nilgee Burru Ngardu Aboriginal Corporation on 1 January 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremantle Education Centre</td>
<td>Local Answers</td>
<td>Organisation has verbally advised that they wish to cease agreement ahead of completing project. This project will now cease on 30th June 2008 in accordance with this arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Midlands Aboriginal Progress Association</td>
<td>Emergency Relief</td>
<td>Third payment not made due to non compliance with funding agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Fremantle</td>
<td>Emergency Relief</td>
<td>Third payment not made due to non compliance with funding agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngaanyatjarra Council</td>
<td>Emergency Relief</td>
<td>Organisation decided to not proceed with Commonwealth ER after signing agreement. The allocation will be transferred to a suitable provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Afrikan Community in WA</td>
<td>Emergency Relief</td>
<td>Third payment not made due to non compliance with an associated funding agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Corporation</td>
<td>Municipal and Essential Service program</td>
<td>Services being provided by a new provider - Essential Services Supplies Pty Ltd.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Finance and Deregulation: Western Australia**  
*(Question No. 237)*

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

1. (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.
(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Sherry—The Minister for Finance and Deregulation has supplied the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance), Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), Australian Reward Investment Alliance (ARIA), National Archives of Australia (NAA), Future Fund Management Agency (FFMA), and ComSuper.

(1) (a) Nil

(b) Nil

(2) (a) and (b) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government: Western Australia

(Question No. 238)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Conroy—The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) The 2007-08 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements for the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government Portfolio do not disclose any measures involving cuts or discontinuation of services to Western Australia.

(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy: Western Australia

(Question No. 239)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.
**Senator Conroy**—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) There have been no cuts to federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia within the Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy portfolio since 24 November 2007.

(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

**Innovation, Industry, Science and Research: Western Australia**
*(Question Nos 240 and 256)*

**Senator Cormann** asked the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and Minister representing the Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

**Senator Carr**—This question was also asked of the Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy (question No. 256). The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research will provide a Portfolio response to questions 240 and 256. The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) No federal funding, programs and/or services specifically delivered to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in the Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio since 4 December 2007.

(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

**Prime Minister and Cabinet: Western Australia**
*(Question No. 241)*

**Senator Cormann** asked the Minister for Climate Change and Water, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

**Senator Wong**—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) Neither the Department of Climate Change nor the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has cut and/or discontinued federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia.
(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts: Western Australia
(Question No. 242)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Wong—The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) Since 24 November 2007 no federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Environment, Heritage and the Arts portfolio agencies.

(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Attorney-General’s: Western Australia
(Question Nos 243 and 248)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General and the Minister for Home Affairs, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Ludwig—The Attorney-General and the Minister for Home Affairs have provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s questions:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007 there have been no cuts in Australian Government funding, programs or services to Western Australia in agencies in the Attorney-General’s portfolio

(b) not applicable.

(2) (a) In the coming period to the end of the current financial year, the Government has no plans to cut funding, programs or services to Western Australia in any agencies in the Attorney-General’s portfolio.

(b) not applicable.
Resources, Energy and Tourism: Western Australia
(Question No. 246)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Resources and Energy, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Carr—The Minister for Resources and Energy has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) and (b) Savings of $10.8 million in 2007/08 from the Ethanol Production Subsidy and $5.0 million in 2007/08 from the Ethanol Distribution Program have been announced by the Hon Lindsay Tanner MP on 6 February 2008 in his Media Release “Government details initial round of savings measures to assist inflation fight”. These savings arise from lower than expected take-up in 2007/08. Both these programs are open to participants from Western Australia and are on-going programs with funding in 2008/09.

(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Resources, Energy and Tourism: Western Australia
(Question No. 247)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Sherry—The Minister for Tourism has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) & (b) Nil.

(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs: Western Australia
(Question Nos 252 and 253)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Housing and the Minister for the Status of Women, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Wong—The Minister for Housing and the Minister for the Status of Women have provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s questions:

There have been no cuts to funding or discontinuance of funding of programs or services in Western Australia since 24 November 2007 by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

As a part of its usual business the department has changed service providers in a number of instances since 24 November 2007, including one organisation providing services in the Kimberley region. The services that were being provided by the Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Corporation at Beagle Bay are now being provided by Essential Services Supplies Pty Ltd. There have been no savings to the department from making this change.

Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Defence: Western Australia
(Question No. 255)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

(2) (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Faulkner—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) None.

(2) Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.
Health and Ageing: Western Australia
(Question No. 258)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Ageing, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

1. (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

2. (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

1. There were no cuts at Additional Estimates that were specific to Western Australian funding, programs and services.

2. Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Health and Ageing: Western Australia
(Question No. 260)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Sport, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

1. (a) Since 24 November 2007, what federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia have been cut and/or discontinued in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies; and (b) what savings have been made from these cuts.

2. (a) What plans does the Government have to cut and/or discontinue federal funding, programs and/or services to Western Australia in any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies in the coming period; and (b) what estimated savings would be made from these cuts.

Senator Chris Evans—The Minister for Sport has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

1. There were no cuts at Additional Estimates that were specific to Western Australian funding, programs and services.

2. Updated program estimates will be announced in the 2008-09 Budget. The Government will also undertake a comprehensive review of expenditure. The Government will release the review’s findings in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions
(Question Nos 261 to 264)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister, the Minister representing the Treasurer, the Minister for Climate Change and Water and the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

With reference to the pre-election commitment that the Government will set a new 20 per cent renewable energy target to be met by 2020 and a further target to reduce Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent by 2050:

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(1) Has any modelling been conducted by any of the Minister’s portfolio agencies to assess the economic impact of either of the targets, specifically on how it would impact on inflation; if not, why not; if so:
   (a) Have findings of that modelling been presented to the Government and/or the Minister;
   (b) What were these findings;
   (c) Has the Minister endorsed these findings; if not, why not.

(2) When will the findings of any economic modelling referred to in paragraph (1) be made public.

   Senator Wong—On behalf of all ministers, I provide the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

   (1) The Government’s economic modelling of the macroeconomic, sectoral and distributional impacts of possible greenhouse emission reduction targets and trajectories on the Australian economy including the 20 per cent renewable energy target and inflation is being undertaken by the Treasury. In response to (a), (b) and (c), the modelling is still underway and no results have been presented to Government.

   (2) The modelling around greenhouse emission reduction targets will feed into the Garnaut review, which is due to release its draft report by 30 June 2008.

Public Interest Disclosure

(Question No. 267)

Senator Stott Despoja asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate, upon notice, on 12 February 2008:

(1) Under what legislation, regulations or codes are ‘public interest disclosure’ and/or whistleblower and like claims processed.

(2) What criteria are used in the Australian Public Service generally to determine the validity of claims under ‘public interest disclosure’ situations, that is, by whistleblowers or people making whistleblower-like claims or allegations.

(3) Does the criterion for assessing the validity of a whistleblower or a whistleblower type claim include any psychiatric or psychological assessment; if so, what is the legislative basis for such an assessment, including specific clauses.

   Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

   I am advised that:

   (1) Section 16 of the Public Service Act 1999 (PS Act) protects federal public servants from discrimination or victimisation where they report breaches of the Australian Public Service (APS) Code of Conduct (‘the Code of Conduct’) to an agency head, the Merit Protection Commissioner or the Public Service Commissioner.

   Although they do not contain specific references to whistleblowers, the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (WR Act) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991 (OHS Act) also provide some protection. Paragraph 659(2)(e) of the WR Act states that employment cannot be terminated for ‘the filing of a complaint, or the participation in proceedings, against an employer involving alleged violation of laws or regulations or recourse to competent administrative authorities’. Under section 76 of the OHS Act, a similar provision is included whereby an employee who complains about a work-related health, safety or welfare matter cannot be dismissed for that reason.

   Members of Parliament are protected under the Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987 in relation to disclosures in the course of, or incidental to, parliamentary business.
Further, the Australian Standard Whistleblower Protection Programs for Entities AS 8004–2003 sets out elements for establishing, implementing and managing an effective whistleblower protection program. It is intended as a practical guide for corporations, government agencies and not-for-profit entities wishing to implement such a program.

(2) It is implicit under section 16 of the Public Service Act that a report can only be made by an APS employee about an APS employee. Each particular case and the issues it raises is considered on its merits. More generally, Public Service Regulation 2.4 requires Agency Heads to establish procedures for dealing with a whistleblowing report made by an APS employee, including the requirement for such procedures to have regard to procedural fairness and comply with the Privacy Act 1988, and the requirement that a report will be investigated unless it is considered to be frivolous or vexatious.

(3) No, see above. However, under Public Service Regulation 3.2 an Agency Head can direct an APS employee to attend a medical examination if there is reason to believe that the state of health of the employee:
- may be affecting the employee’s work performance;
- has caused, or may cause the employee to have an extended absence from work;
- may be a danger to the employee;
- has caused, or may cause, the employee to be a danger to other employees or members of the public; or
- may be affecting the employee’s standard of conduct.

Tasmania: Weld River
(Question No. 272)

Senator Bob Brown asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, upon notice, on 13 February 2008:

With reference to the decision to destroy the ancient forest in Weld River coupe WR15F:

(1) (a) What is the necessity for the planned deforestation; and (b) what alternatives are available.

(2) (a) What buffer will be kept between logging and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area; and (b) how will this be managed.

(3) (a) Does this buffer or lack thereof, accord with World Heritage respect and values; and (b) have World Heritage experts agreed with this; if so: (i) who are the experts, (ii) what is their complete advice, and (iii) when was it given.

(4) (a) What areas of the coupe will not be logged; (b) why; and (c) on whose advice.

(5) Will Gunns Limited be a receiver of wood products from the coupe; if so: what volume and percentage of the commercial wood will go to Gunns Limited.

(6) Has the Minister inspected logging in the World Heritage value forests of the Weld; if so, when; if not, why not.

(7) Will the Minister, as part of his portfolio responsibilities, visit the Weld River coupe WR15F to ensure Tasmania’s World Heritage values are not contravened in any way while the current Minister is in office.

Senator Sherry—The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) There will be no deforestation, the forest is to be harvested and regenerated back to native forest in accordance with the provisions of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement.


(b) As noted in (1)(a), there will be no deforestation. Under the provisions of the Regional Forest Agreement scheduling of harvesting operations in production forests is a matter for the Tasmanian Government.

(2) (a) Harvesting will be separated from the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area boundary by retained forest of at least 100m width.

(b) Logging in this coupe will be managed by Forestry Tasmania in accordance with the approved Forest Practices Plan.

(3) (a) Yes. The nomination document for the 1989 extension of the World Heritage Area explicitly stated “the boundaries of the nominated area have been selected to ensure adequate protection of the integrity of the area”. The World Heritage Committee accepted the 1989 nomination.

(b) Yes. The World Heritage Committee accepted the nomination on the basis of the Technical Evaluation by The World Conservation Union (IUCN) which stated “The September revision fully meets the reservations indicated earlier by IUCN.”

(i) IUCN - one of the official advisory bodies under the World Heritage Convention.

(ii) The complete IUCN Technical Evaluation is available on the World Heritage Centre website: http://whc.unesco.org


(4) (a) The coupe is being harvested in stages to facilitate research on harvesting effects on small streams (the coupe is inside the Warra Long Term Ecological Research Site). The first stage of the harvesting has been completed and this area is planned to be sown for regeneration in autumn 2008. The coupe has an approved Forest Practices Plan.

(b) Under the provisions of the Regional Forest Agreement, coupe specific details of harvesting operations are a matter for the Tasmanian Government.

(c) The Forest Practices Authority approves forest practices plans for individual coupes in Tasmania.

(5) Coupe specific commercial transaction details are a matter for Forestry Tasmania.

(6) In December 2007 as part of a visit to Tasmania, I overflew the Weld valley, including areas within and outside of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

(7) I have no immediate plans to revisit this area of Tasmania. I am confident that the forest management strategies and practices in place will mean that the proposed harvesting operations do not compromise the integrity of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Live Animal Exports

(Question No. 279)

Senator Bartlett asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, upon notice, on 13 February 2008:

With reference to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) ‘MoU on Handling and Slaughtering of Australian Live Animals’ signed on 3 October 2006 by the former Minister and the Egyptian Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, Mr Amin Ahmed Abaza:

(1) Does the MoU relate to all animals exported from Australia to Egypt.

(2) Can the Minister confirm that there is no distinction made in the MoU in regard of agreed terms for the treatment of Australian sheep, for example whether they are sent to abattoirs or sold privately for home slaughter.

(3) (a) Can the Minister confirm that, in Egypt, no enforceable legislation exists to prohibit cruelty to animals, within slaughterhouses or elsewhere, or to ensure that the conditions of the MoU are com-
plied with; and (b) given that there is a lack of animal protection laws and that significant animal welfare issues are documented in Egypt, on what basis did the Minister believe that the conditions of the MoU would be complied with.

(4) Can the Minister confirm that the former Minister and departmental officials were advised by representatives of Animals Australia, prior to the signing of the MoU, that the treatment and handling of sheep in Egypt did not comply with World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) guidelines due to the prevalent practice of on-selling to private buyers and the inept and unregulated handling and slaughter practices that are used, even in major abattoirs, in Egypt.

(5) What assurances about animal welfare standards in Egypt, if any, were made to the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, and to the Australian Government, prior to the granting of an export permit for a consignment of approximately 40,000 sheep from Australia to Egypt in October and November 2006.

(6) Can the Minister confirm that the former Minister was advised, in correspondence from Animals Australia dated 22 November 2006, that the welfare of the first shipment of sheep to Egypt since the signing of the MoU was at risk as the import was specifically for Eid-al-Adha (the ‘Feast of Sacrifice’), the major religious festival during which sheep are sacrificed in the street and in homes; if so: did the former Minister: (a) confirm the information contained in the correspondence; and (b) take action by sending Australian Government representatives to Egypt to monitor the treatment of the sheep that arrived in Egypt in November 2006 in order to assess the adherence to the MoU; if not, why not, given the statement, in the document ‘Frequently asked questions—Live trade export – Egypt on the department’s website, that ‘initial shipments will be closely monitored for compliance with the MoU provisions’.

(7) Prior to the signing of the MoU, was there any assessment conducted by the Australian Government of market places, abattoirs, transport or handling standards in Egypt, and particularly any assessment of likely adherence to OIE animal welfare guidelines, and therefore the MoU, in regard to sheep; if so, can details of these assessments be provided.

(8) What assurances were made, by either Mr Abaza or other representatives of the Government of Egypt, to Australian Government representatives in regard to the enforcement of the animal welfare provisions detailed in that MoU, and in particular the adherence to the OIE guidelines for the humane treatment and slaughter of Australian livestock.

(9) Given that during additional estimates hearings of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee in February 2007, Mr Craig Burns, Executive Manager of the International Division of the department, stated, under questioning about the MoU, that the ‘focus’ is on the way Australian animals are treated in ‘abattoirs and official handling facilities’ (Committee Hansard, 14 February 2007, p. 57P) in Egypt, and that the footage aired on television of the Animals Australia investigation related to ‘leakage from that official system’ (p. 56P), can the Minister confirm that: (a) in Egypt no official slaughter and handling system is in place for sheep; and (b) for each of the years 2004, 2005 and 2006, Australian sheep have only been exported from Australia to Egypt in the lead-up to the Eid-al-Adha religious festival, and that a large proportion of these sheep are likely to be privately transported and slaughtered.

(10) Given the eye witness, video and photographic evidence, gathered by Animals Australia in Cairo in December 2006, that show multiple and consistent breaches of the OIE guidelines, and therefore the MoU, what measures has the Government taken to investigate the documented breaches.

(11) What measures can the Australian Government take to compel compliance with welfare requirements within an MoU, apart from refusing to supply livestock.

(12) (a) What assurances, if any, has Egypt provided that any other shipment of animals from Australia to Egypt will be treated humanely; and (b) if such assurances have been made, does the Minister
believe that the conditions of the MoU will be complied with in future given that the Egyptian Government has no capacity to enforce the conditions of the MoU in slaughterhouses or in private premises.

(13) What further measures will the Australian Government put in place to ensure, and to assure the Australian public, that Australian animals exported to Egypt will be treated in accordance with the OIE guidelines.

(14) Will the Australian Government refrain from issuing any further export permits for animals from Australia to Egypt if no additional and effective measures are in place to protect these animals.

(15) Is the Minister aware that the Egyptian Government Organisation of Veterinary Services Animal Welfare Office has recently renewed its policy and practice of authorising the shooting and use of strychnine on stray dogs in the streets of Cairo.

(16) Given that the Australian Government has, in recent years, negotiated MoUs with Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Eritrea and Jordan on the trade in live animals which relate to the agreed off-loading of animals into the importing country in the event of a suspected disease issue, and were intended to protect against a rejection of Australian livestock similar to the Cormo Express incident and given the breaches of the MoU between Australia and Egypt that have been acknowledged in public statements by the Minister, and the apparent disregard by Egypt of the MoU, what confidence does the Minister have that similar MoUs entered into with the remaining countries will be honoured in the event of a suspected major on-board disease event.

(17) Will the Australian Government report the failure of the Egyptian Government to adhere to the minimum animal handling and slaughter guidelines to the OIE.

Senator Sherry—The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) For the purposes of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Handling and Slaughter of Australian Live Animals between Egypt and Australia, live animals are defined as “cattle, calves, sheep, lambs, goats or other animals prescribed for the purpose” under the Australian Meat and Live-Stock Industry Act 1997.

(2) The MoU requires the handling of all Australian live animals to be consistent with World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) guidelines for animal welfare.

(3) (a) The Government understands that Egyptian Agriculture Law No. 53 of 1966 relates to the protection of animal welfare and related aspects in Egypt. Questions about the enforceability of legislation for animal welfare in Egypt would be better directed to the Egyptian authorities.

(b) Mr Amin Abaza, Egypt’s Minister for Agriculture and Land Reclamation, signed the MoU giving ministerial assurance that Egypt would fulfil its undertakings that were stated in the agreements.

(4) Yes, Animals Australia provided verbal and written comment that indicated their opinion of the capacity of the Egyptian government to comply with the requirements of the MoU prior to its finalisation.

(5) The MoU on handling and slaughter signed in Egypt on 19 September 2006 and in Australia on 3 October 2006 provided assurances that Australian livestock would be handled in accordance with the OIE guidelines for animal welfare.

(6) (a) and (b) The shipment was a one-off shipment that was diverted at short notice due to a capacity constraint in another market. The commitment to closely monitor initial shipments for compliance with the MoU provisions is related to cattle shipments.

(7) Government officials observed transport and handling, markets, abattoirs and feedlots when they visited Egypt for negotiations prior to the signing of the MoUs. Accompanied by representatives of
the Australian export industry, the delegations noted areas for attention and in consultation with the Government are developing a draft work plan to address the infrastructure and operational requirements of the MoU.

(8) Minister Abaza signed the MoU giving ministerial assurance that Egypt would fulfil its undertakings that were stated in the agreements. The Government has been working with Australian industry and Egyptian authorities to address the infrastructure and operational requirements of the MoU.

(9) (a) The Government understands that Egyptian Agriculture Law No. 53 of 1966 relates to the protection of animal welfare and related aspects in Egypt, including the handling and slaughter of livestock.

(b) AQIS certified a single shipment of 52,000 in December 2004, 35,000 in October 2005 and 40,000 sheep in November 2006 for export from Australia to Egypt. In each case, the arrival of the shipments preceded the annual Eid-al-Adha festival that occurred on 1 February 2005, 10 January 2006 and 1 January 2007 respectively.

The Government is not involved in the commercial negotiations between livestock exporters and Egyptian importers and is unable to confirm the arrangements for sale of the livestock. In signing the MoU on handling and slaughter, the Egyptian Government has provided an assurance that all Australian animals would be handled in accordance with the OIE guidelines for animal welfare irrespective of the commercial arrangements affecting the livestock.

(10) The Government has made both formal and informal representations to the Egyptian Minister which includes provision of a copy of Animals Australia’s documentary footage on DVD.

The Egyptian Minister for Agriculture and Land Reclamation, Mr Amin Abaza, restated his assurance that Egypt abides by the OIE guidelines for animal welfare and his willingness to cooperate with Australia. The Government has been working with Australian industry and Egyptian authorities to address the infrastructure and operational requirements of the MoU.

(11) Australia has no jurisdiction on the activities of another country. The Government has reached a bilateral understanding with the Egyptian government, which places an onus on the Egyptian government to apply the OIE guidelines for animal welfare to all Australian livestock. The Government and Australian livestock export industry will continue to work with the Egyptian government to address post arrival animal welfare concerns.

(12) (a) and (b) The Government and Australian industry will continue to work with the Egyptian government to improve the infrastructure and operational procedures to meet the commitments made in the MoU, and in doing so to improve the welfare of livestock exported from Australia.

(13) The Government is working closely with Australian industry and Egyptian officials to implement satisfactory arrangements for the handling and slaughter of Australian livestock in Egypt.

(14) No decision has been made on this matter at this time.

(15) The Minister has had no contact from the Egyptian government on this matter.

(16) The text of the MoUs on trade in live animals provide Government-to-Government assurances that where there is a potential concern with any shipment, all animals will be offloaded into government-approved land-based quarantine facilities where the animals can be further assessed prior to a final decision being made on their clearance.

Since these MoUs were signed we have not had an incident with these countries requiring the application of the procedures to unload animals.

(17) No, the MoU is a bilateral agreement between Australia and Egypt.
Westpoint Corporation Pty Ltd
(Question No. 282)

Senator Webber asked the Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law, upon notice, on 13 February 2008:

(1) What action is the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) taking against the directors of Westpoint Corporation Pty Ltd.

(2) Is the Minister aware of any proposed legislation or amendments that would have prevented the actions of the Westpoint directors.

(3) Is the Minister aware of any representation made by ASIC to have legislation amended that would have prevented mezzanine finance deals similar to those employed by Westpoint.

(4) Did ASIC believe that Westpoint mezzanine funds were regulated products.

(5) On what dates did KPMG sign off on Westpoint’s accounts in the past 6 years.

(6) What action did the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (APRA) and ASIC take when they first discovered that Westpoint was acting as a bank without a licence.

(7) Why did APRA and ASIC take a long time to realise that Westpoint was breaking the law.

(8) Why has APRA not increased the limits for Financial Industry Complaints Service jurisdiction.

Senator Sherry—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) ASIC’s court action relating to the Westpoint collapse is well advanced with a number of ASIC court proceedings having commenced against some of the parties, including the company’s founder, Mr Carey, and two other directors and the banning of a number of financial advisers.

ASIC’s investigations to August 2007 included 62 investigations, 29 proceedings to preserve assets or place travel restrictions on persons of interest, and the winding up of companies to stop misconduct and preserve assets.

ASIC has orders in place freezing the assets of the Westpoint founder, Mr Norman Carey and other associated parties up to March 2008. The court declined to extend travel orders preventing Carey from leaving the country but instead has put limited travel orders in place.

On 13 September 2007, following action by ASIC, Mr Neil Burnard was committed to stand trial in the NSW District Court on charges relating to him making false statements in relation to Kebbel Investment Bank in order to obtain financial advantage for various Westpoint mezzanine finance companies. In December 2007, the Supreme Court of NSW also extended asset preservation orders against Mr Burnard until 11 February 2008.

ASIC’s investigations into the collapse of the Westpoint group of companies is continuing.

ASIC determined late last year that it is in the public interest to commence action under section 50 of the ASIC Act to recover damages on behalf of Westpoint investors. Action commenced so far amounts to potential damages claims of around $98 million for approximately 1500 investors.

(2) No.

(3) In July 2006, ASIC conveyed its view to the Department of Treasury that consideration should be given to lifting the exclusion for promissory notes from $50,000 to a figure of, for example, $500,000. The Government is considering options to implement this recommendation.

(4) Yes, ASIC believed the Westpoint mezzanine funds were regulated products.

(5) In the past six years, KPMG signed the audit reports of Westpoint Corporation Pty Limited on the following dates:

Year ended 30 June 2002, 2 December 2002

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Year ended 30 June 2003, 5 December 2003
Year ended 30 June 2004, 4 March 2005
Year ended 30 June 2005, Not finalised; ASIC sought orders for compliance

(6) ASIC received a complaint about the use of the term ‘Kebbel Investment Bank’ in April 2005. ASIC referred the complaint to the banking regulator, APRA. Subsequently APRA wrote to Kebbel (WA) Pty Limited stating that no appropriate authority to use the term ‘bank’ had been given and that the conduct was to cease.

(7) Westpoint is not an APRA regulated body.
ASIC advises that it became concerned about Westpoint’s fundraising activities after it became clear that Westpoint was deliberately setting out to avoid the disclosure requirements in the law.

(8) APRA has no jurisdiction in relation to the Financial Industry Complaints Service (FICS).

Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct
(Question No. 284)

Senator Webber asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 13 February 2008:
With reference to the World Heritage nomination of Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct:
(1) Who were the consultants that prepared the nomination for the former Government.
(2) Did the consultants identify the Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct as a possible convict settlement site.
(3) Given that the above site is the oldest European heritage precinct settlement in Western Australia, clearly established under convict labour, why was this location not included by the Minister in the nomination.
(4) Given that the Western Australian Government and the city of Albany have already approved icon heritage status to the Albany Anzac [precinct] (with state and federal funding) and the implicit relationship between the Albany Waterfront project and the Residency Museum/Eclipse Museum/Old Gaol Heritage Precinct, was the Western Australian Minister for Housing and Works, Heritage, Indigenous Affairs, Land Information, the Honourable Michelle Roberts MLA, and the city of Albany consulted as to the precinct’s inclusion for nomination.
(5) Is the Minister now prepared to include the Heritage Precinct as an addendum to the nomination.

Senator Wong—The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(1) The nomination was prepared by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and Arts. The nomination was overseen by the Convict Nomination Steering Committee which comprised nominees of the relevant state and territory ministers, including the Western Australian Minister. In preparing the nomination, the Department and the Convict Nomination Steering Committee drew on the expertise of over twenty experts in Australia and overseas.
(2) Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct was not identified in any expert reports as a possible convict site for inclusion in the nomination. A report prepared by Dr Pearson and Mr Marshall in 1995 listed Albany Residency, which is part of the Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct, as one of several hundred significant convict sites around Australia but did not recommend its inclusion in the World Heritage nomination.
(3) While Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct is one of many important convict sites around Australia, it would not meet the rigorous technical requirements of a World Heritage place. In particular, a World Heritage place must ‘demonstrate that it is so exceptional as to transcend national
boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations for all humanity’. The Convict Nomination Steering Committee and Australian and international experts, in the context of the nomination, did not assess Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct to be one of Australia’s outstanding examples of the forced migration of convicts or of global developments in the punishment of crime during the 19th century.

(4) The Western Australian Department of Housing and Works was represented on the Convict Nomination Steering Committee. The Western Australian Minister for Housing and Works, the Hon Michelle Roberts MLA, endorsed the eleven nominated sites in 2006 and supported the submission of the nomination in 2007. Community consultations for the nomination, which were arranged by the Western Australian Government, were conducted at Fremantle in May 2007. The City of Albany did not attend these consultations and has not made any representations to me or, to my department’s knowledge, any former ministers about the Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct.

(5) Albany Old Gaol/Amity Heritage Precinct will not be included in the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage nomination as it does not meet UNESCO’s technical requirements for World Heritage places.

Road and Rail Infrastructure
(Question No. 285)

Senator Milne asked the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, upon notice, on 19 February 2008:

(1) What action is being taken to ensure current and future road and rail infrastructure developments are placed in areas that will not be subject to coastal flooding or inundation due to climate change.

(2) What subsidies currently apply for road freight transport.

(3) What action is being taken to ensure that large freight vehicles pay the full cost of their road use.

(4) Will the transport budget be re-allocated to give a greater share of funding to rail and intermodal freight structure and reduce the share of road transport.

Senator Conroy—The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) Responsibility for local statutory planning approval of road and rail projects rests with state and local governments.

(2) The Commonwealth Government does not provide subsidies for road freight transport [see answer to question 3 also].

(3) It is the policy of the Australian Government that heavy vehicles pay the full cost of their road use. The Australian Transport Council voted to approve the 2007 heavy vehicle charges determination on 29 February 2008. This determination was developed by the National Transport Commission (NTC) to give effect to an April 2007 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) direction to deliver, and continue to deliver, full recovery from heavy vehicle users of their allocated share of road infrastructure costs in aggregate and across heavy vehicle classes.

(4) The Government is committed to a freight transport system that maximises the efficiencies of both rail and road. Funding allocations will be announced in the Budget which will be delivered on 13 May 2008.
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Tasmania: Bushfires  
(Question No. 287)

Senator Milne asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 19 February 2008:

With reference to the series of bushfires that began burning on or about 6 December 2006 on the east coast of Tasmania, seriously damaging a number of areas, especially the Four Mile Creek district:

(1) Given Forestry Tasmania’s statement that the ignition point was a campfire lit by tourists at the Griffin Park picnic site contradicts local community reports that the forest around the Griffin Park picnic site was not burnt during the bushfires, how and where did the fires start.

(2) When were the bushfires declared a national disaster.

(3) What federal, state and local agencies were involved in the management, assessment of damage and recovery from the bushfires.

(4) (a) What were the terms of reference for the Affected Areas Recovery Committee (AARC), established following the bushfires;

(5) (a) Was the AARC established under Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements; and (b) who determined its make-up

(6) (a) When did the AARC first meet; and (b) (i) how often did it meet, (ii) on what dates, and (iii) who attended.

(7) (a) What Government agencies and what private organisations were represented on the AARC; (b) which individuals represented these agencies and organisations on the AARC; and (c) how were these individuals selected.

(8) How did the AARC determine recommendations for funding allocations.

(9) Who appointed the Mayor of Break O’Day Council as chair of the AARC.

(10) Why was the Mayor appointed to chair the AARC, rather than an independent official from outside the municipality.

(11) (a) What was the process for those affected by the 2006 fires to apply for financial assistance; and (b) how was this process communicated.

(12) Can a breakdown be provided of funds expended by the AARC; if not, why not.

(13) With reference to the decision of the AARC to advertise for a coordinator to establish community contact some time after its establishment, why was the position not advertised when the AARC was established.

(14) Why were residents from the worst fire-affected regions (Scamander and Four Mile Creek) restricted to three seats out of ten on the Community Recovery Representative Group (CRRG).

(15) (a) Who determined the make-up of the CRRG; and (b) (i) how often did it meet, (ii) on what dates, and (iii) who attended.

(16) (a) What were the terms of reference for the CRRG; (b) were the terms of reference different from the AARC’s terms of reference; if so, why; and (c) did the AARC release its terms of reference to the CRRG on its establishment; if not, why not.

(17) What was the process of consultation and communication between the CRRG, the AARC, and affected communities.

(18) How often did the CRRG meet with the AARC.

(19) (a) How did the CRRG determine recommendations for funding allocations; and (b) was information regarding funding allocations made by the AARC withheld from the CRRG; if so, why.

Questions

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(20) Why was the Four Mile community’s application to the AARC, through its CRRG representative, for funding in June 2007 to pay for a fire damage and rehabilitation assessment and updated management plans for the Four Mile catchment rejected.

(21) Were the total costs of damaged and destroyed public infrastructure (i.e. telecommunications, roads, bridges etc.) calculated; if not, why not; if so, what was the total cost of repair and replacement of public infrastructure.

(22) Were funds administered by the AARC used, or proposed to be used, for the repair or replacement of public infrastructure; if so, on what justification.

(23) Has the AARC, or relevant federal, state and local agencies, assessed the total environmental damage caused by the fires; if not, why not.

(24) Has the AARC, or relevant federal, state and local agencies, undertaken any environmental rehabilitation of areas damaged by the bushfires; if not, why not.

(25) Has the AARC, or relevant federal, state and local agencies, instituted any new fire management plans or initiatives as a result of their work on the bushfires; if not, why not.

Senator Ludwig—The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) I am not aware of the ignition point of the fires.

(2) The bushfires were never declared a “national disaster”.

(3) I am advised the following organisations were involved in the management, assessment and recovery from the bushfires:
   - Break O’Day Council;
   - Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet;
   - Tasmanian Department of Police and Emergency Management;
   - Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Service;
   - Tasmanian Department of Economic Development;
   - Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries and Water;
   - Tasmanian Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources;
   - the former Australian Government Department of Transport and Regional Services; and
   - the former Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

(4) (a) See Attachment A for Terms of Reference of the Affected Area Recovery Committee (AARC).

(5) (a) The AARC was established by Tasmania, consistent with the Guidelines under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).
   (b) I am advised that the make-up was determined in accordance with Tasmanian legislative requirements for establishment of AARCs.

(6) (a) and (b)(i), (ii), (iii) I am advised details of the meeting dates and attendees is not currently available. Officers in my Department are continuing efforts to obtain that information from Tasmania.

(7) (a), (b) and (c) I am advised members were selected on the basis of their roles within their respective organisations, these included:
   - Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet – Mr Mathew Healey;
   - Tasmanian Department of Police and Emergency Management – Mr Chris Beattie;
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

- Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Service – Mr Kevin O’Loughlin;
- Red Cross Australia (various);
- the former Australian Government Department of Transport and Regional Services (various); and
- the former Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (various).

(8) I am advised the AARC did not determine recommendations for funding allocations. The AARC received advice and recommendations from the Community Recovery Representatives Group (CRRG), and allocated funds based on that advice and recommendations.

(9) I am advised the Mayor of Break O’Day Council was appointed as Chair of the AARC by the State Emergency Management Controller (Commissioner of Police).

(10) I am advised that there is no provision in the Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan, under which an AARC is created, for a person from outside the municipality affected to be appointed as Chair of an AARC.

(11) (a) I am advised Individuals or community groups were invited to prepare submissions for funding under the Community Recovery Fund. These applications were then assessed by the CRRG against pre-established criteria with recommended priorities forwarded to the AARC; (b) I am advised that the application process for the Community Recovery Fund was well advertised via a weekly recovery newsletter, the Council website and media releases. Additionally, Break O’Day Council Staff door knocked affected areas to advise the assistance available. Meeting points were also established in St Marys and Scamander to assist people in making applications.

(12) A full list of projects funded using the Community Recovery Funds will be included in a report expected to be received by the Australian Government from Tasmania in the near future. I will provide that to you when received.

(13) I am advised the appointment of a Disaster Recovery Coordinator is not always a standard response to a natural disaster. In these circumstances, the AARC elected to meet and decide upon Terms of Reference for the AARC, identify community needs and consider options for the delivery of services to the community before deciding whether it was necessary to appoint a Disaster Recovery Coordinator.

(14) The bushfire affected the entire Break O’Day municipality not just a single region. I am advised that the aim of the CRRGs was to represent the entire Break O’Day community and take the community forward by using a collaborative approach that focussed on the needs of the entire community. The number of positions on the CRRG did not reflect the relative impact of the fires.

(15) (a), (b)(i), (ii), and (iii) I am advised the CRRG was established by calling for expressions of interest. Eleven expressions of interest were received. Eight applications were selected to form the CRRG by the AARC. The Australian Government did not participate in this process, hence I am unable to provide you with the dates or frequency of meetings.

(16) (a) The Terms of Reference for the CRRG are at Attachment B; (b) I am advised the terms of reference were different from the AARC because the role of each of the groups was different; and (c) I do not know if the CRRG requested or were provided with the Terms of Reference for the AARC.

(17) I am advised that a Disaster Recovery Coordinator was employed to support the consultative process and engage the community and seek their input as to how to best use the remaining funding. The Disaster Recovery Coordinator was the link between the AARC, CRRG and the broader community.

I am also advised that the Break O’Day Council also actively engaged the local community by providing a regular newsletter to residents. This included information on available grants, counselling
support and other general information. Additionally, the Council worked with individual victims of the bushfires to ensure they were receiving appropriate support and were made aware of the range of assistance available.

(18) The chairperson of the CRRG met once with the AARC on 14 December 2007. The Disaster Recovery Coordinator remained the link between the AARC and CRRG.

(19) (a) and (b) I am advised the CRRG assessed all applications for funding according to agreed criteria and that the CRRG was advised of all decisions made by the AARC.

(20) I am advised the proposal was not rejected; rather other projects received a higher priority.

I am also advised the proposal was considered at the August 2007 meeting of the AARC at which time discussion was deferred until further information had been provided. The proposal was subsequently reconsidered at the December 2007 AARC meeting at which time the AARC agreed that only two parts of the four part proposal, that is, the review and update of the existing Four Mile Creek catchment plan and a fire management plan, met the criteria for funding. The two parts that were not funded related to a settlement strategy and projected sea level rise mapping and risk assessment for the Four Mile Creek beach. The former was not funded because the Council was already preparing one; and the latter because environmental activities such as these are ineligible under the Australian Government’s NDRRA.

(21) I am advised total cost of damaged and destroyed public infrastructure to date, is approximately $3.86 million.

(22) No.

(23) The NDRRA does not provide for broad scale environmental assessment and therefore it is not the role of a Community Recovery Committee to do this sort of assessment.

I am not aware of assessments that may have been undertaken by other agencies.

(24) The NDRRA does not provide for environmental rehabilitation, therefore this activity is outside my portfolio.

(25) I am advised the Disaster Recovery Coordinator, appointed by the AARC, has been working with the Council and Tasmanian Fire Service to ensure that any changes required in fire management plans as a result of these fires will be made.

Attachment A

TERMS OF REFERENCE

AFFECTED AREA RECOVERY COMMITTEE

(EAST COAST BUSHFIRES OF DECEMBER 2006)

Role

To assist Local Government in the long-term recovery of communities impacted by the East Coast Bushfires of December 2006 and to facilitate the effective coordination of recovery through information sharing and collective decision-making.

Functions

• Develop and implement a recovery plan that:
  • takes account of Local Government long-term planning and goals;
  • includes an assessment of the recovery needs and determines which recovery functions are still required;
  • develops a timetable for completing the major functions;
  • allows full community participation and access;

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
• allows for the monitoring of the progress of recovery;
• provides for the public access to information on the proposed programmes and subsequent decisions and actions; and
• allows consultation with all relevant community groups.
• Allocate funding provided by the State and Commonwealth Governments under the Community Recovery Fund to implement the strategic recovery plan.
• Consider the application of funds generated by public appeals.
• Additional functions that will require consideration by the Affected Area Recovery Committee include:
  • assessing individual and community needs;
  • damage assessment;
  • setting priorities for the restoration of infrastructure and basic services;
  • environmental rehabilitation;
  • property restoration (urban/rural);
  • long-term community and personal support; and
  • long-term legal, insurance and financial problems.

Composition
Membership of the Affected Area Recovery Committee will initially comprise:
• Mayor of Break O’Day (chair)
• General Manager, Break O’Day
• State Recovery Coordinator
• State Emergency Service
• Department of Premier and Cabinet
• Commonwealth Representative (tbc)
• Community leaders as nominated by Break O’Day x 3
• Representative of Red Cross

Should additional municipalities suffer significant impact from the Bushfires and additional representation is required, the membership will be augmented with the Mayor(s) and General Manager(s) and additional community members as required with one Mayor elected as Chair.

Reporting
The Affected Area Recovery Committee will report progress to Council(s) and the State Government.

Attachment B
Tasmanian East Coast Fires - Bushfire Recovery
Community Recovery Reference Committee
Terms of Reference
June 2007
1: Introduction:
In December 2006 the Break O’Day Municipality was affected by a significant bushfire resulting in considerable damage and loss of property in several communities across the Municipality.
2: Affected Area Recovery Committee (AARC);
Following the fires an Affected Area Recovery Committee was established to facilitate and support the effective coordination of the community recovery process. The AARC has representation from key agencies with roles in either resourcing and / or delivering recovery services.
The purpose of the AARC is to lead and facilitate the efforts of a ‘whole of government’ response to assist the affected communities to recover from this disaster.
This committee aims to maintain a high level of briefing on current and emerging recovery issues to be able to quickly grasp issues to formulate advice to all levels of government.
A recent key task of the AARC has been a community consultation process to identify the key recovery challenges facing the community now and into the future. The information and ideas gathered through the consultation have been used to inform the development of the East Coast Fires Community Recovery Plan. The AARC will now have the responsibility to make decisions on allocation of East Coast Fires Community Recovery Funding to support the implementation of that Recovery Plan.

3: Definition of Recovery;
As defined within the Recovery Manual, Emergency Management Australia:
‘Recovery is the coordinated process of supporting disaster affected persons in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical well-being.’
In keeping with this definition the AARC accepts the following Recovery Principles; ‘Disaster recovery is most effective when…
• Management arrangements recognise that recovery from disaster is a complex, dynamic and protracted process;
• Agreed plans and management arrangements are well understood by the community and all disaster management agencies;
• Recovery agencies are properly integrated into disaster management arrangements;
• Community service and reconstruction agencies have input to key decision making;
• Conducted with the active participation of the affected community;
• Recovery managers are involved from initial briefings onwards;
• Recovery services are provided in a timely, fair, equitable and flexible manner; and
• Supported by training programs and exercises.
In accordance with those Principles, it is the ARRC’s intention to ensure all community development work undertaken will be done in a manner which empowers individuals and communities in the management of their own recovery from the disaster of the East Coast fires.

4: Role of the Community Recovery Reference Group
To achieve a greater level of community input into the recovery processes the AARC has approved the establishment of a Community Recovery Reference Group.
The Community Recovery Reference Group’s key role will be to support community input into the recovery process by advising the AARC and facilitating community stakeholder engagement in the development and delivery of recovery actions.

5: Membership of the Community Recovery Reference Group
The Community Reference Group will be comprised of community representatives from each of the following areas where there has been a major impact including:
• Scamander
• St Marys/ Cornwall
Community representatives selected to participate in the Community Recovery Reference Group will be required to demonstrate that:

- They are involved in community activities and are prominent members of their community or an established community group; and
- Have the ability to interact with community members and are articulate.

6: Goals of Community Recovery Reference Group

The Community Recovery Reference Group members (with the assistance of the Disaster Recovery Coordinator), will support the recovery process through:

- Providing a robust and open communication channel between the AARC, BODC and their local communities;
- Undertaking to closely engage with their respective communities in order to advocate for their community’s recovery needs to the AARC;
- Assisting their communities to identify emerging recovery needs and plan appropriate recovery actions considering social, economic, environmental, and physical recovery needs in the medium and longer term;
- Close engagement with their communities to develop and prioritise initiatives and resourcing options that achieve the actions as identified in the East Coast Fires Community Recovery Plan;
- Development of recommendations based on the above priorities and submitted through Break O’Day Community Development Officer and the Disaster Recovery Coordinator to the AARC, including where relevant recommendations for allocation of East Coast Fires Community Recovery funds.
- Providing an understanding to the AARC, on the level of support and capacity by the community and BODC to work in partnerships to implement those recommended initiatives;
- Assisting with implementation and coordination of recovery initiatives being undertaken in the community;
- Provision of advice, support and feedback to the AARC, BODC and their respective communities on the progress for the implementation and evaluation of the East Coast Fires Community Recovery Plan;
- Utilisation of local networks to share information with the community about the recovery process, resource allocation and decisions and activities planned; and
- Fostering of community ownership of projects and support for individuals to become involved in local leadership roles.

7: Guidelines for the prioritisation of Community Recovery funding

Initiatives recommended for East Coast Fires Community Recovery funding support should support the achievement of actions contained in the East Coast Fires Community Recovery Plan and be prioritised on the basis of:

- Improving community amenity, well being and harmony
- Having strong support from their respective local communities (through both implementation partnerships and broad endorsement)
- Improving the community development capacity of local communities
- Providing tangible ongoing community benefits

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
• Encouraging community coordination and cooperation

8: Term of the Community Recovery Reference Group
The Community Recovery Reference group will agree to operate for a 12-month term, which is also the term of appointment for the Disaster Recovery Coordinator.

The Community Recovery Reference Group will review their operation at 6 months to ensure they are operating within these Terms of Reference and at that time plan for their completion and finalisation and winding down of recovery initiatives.

9: Community Engagement and Communication Strategy
In conjunction with the Disaster Recovery Coordinator the Community Recovery Reference Group will develop and distribute a Community Engagement Strategy that explains the tools and processes for achieving ongoing open communication between all key stakeholders involved in the recovery process.

The Community Engagement Strategy will also outline the process to be undertaken for the Community Recovery Reference Group members to work with their communities to prioritise initiatives as identified in the East Coast Fires Community Recovery Plan. This process will ensure that recommendations can be made to the AARC for support from East Coast Fires Community Recovery funding.

10: Administrative Support:
The Disaster Recovery Coordinator will provide administrative support to the Community Recovery Reference Group and will:
• Prepare and circulate agendas;
• Prepare and circulate minutes; and
• Arrange meeting venues, including light refreshments.

11: Meetings
Initially the Community Recovery Reference Group have selected to meet fortnightly to enable them to quickly develop activities to support the recovery processes. At a time to be determined by the group, meetings could then be altered to suit progress and the urgency of the recovery process.

Meetings will be kept to less than two hours and a finish time will be determined at the beginning of each meeting.

Meeting venues will move around the region as suits the members to share travel requirements.

Firearms
( Question No. 288)
Senator Bob Brown asked the Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs, upon notice, on 20 February 2008
(1) Between the following years, what total number of handguns were stolen from each jurisdiction:
(a) 1978-83; (b) 1984-89; (c) 1990-95; (d) 1996-2001; and (e) 2002-07.
(2) From what source were the handguns stolen (i.e. individuals, gun shops, security firms etc.).

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Home Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

There is no available data for the specific periods requested. The data available on handgun theft in relation to the senator’s question has been sourced from the Australian Institute of Criminology and is presented in the attached Table. The data relates solely to handgun theft and does not include other firearms theft.
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Indigenous Languages

(Question No. 290)

Senator Bob Brown asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 20 February 2008:

(1) How many Indigenous languages existed in Australia in 1788.
(2) How many of these languages have been lost.
(3) Are any Indigenous languages currently at risk of being lost; if so, which ones.
(4) What strategies are currently in place to ensure the survival of Indigenous languages.
(5) What funding has been committed to ensure the survival of Indigenous languages.

Senator Wong—The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) While exact figures are difficult to assess, the most recent and comprehensive study undertaken, The National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS) Report 2005 estimates an original number of over 250 known Australian Indigenous languages.
(2) The NILS Report 2005 estimates over 100 have been lost.
(3) The NILS Report estimates about 145 Indigenous languages are still spoken, of which about 110 are seriously at risk.
(4) The Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program provides funding to assist the maintenance, revival and recording of Australian Indigenous languages. In 2007-08, the MILR program is supporting 72 projects across Australia incorporating about 160 languages, including languages that are no longer spoken. Projects include the operation of language centres, transmission of languages, development of databases and support of coordination between language organisations.
(5) The budgeted allocations for the MILR program are $8.9m for 2007–08, $9.1m for 2008–09, $9.3m for 2009–10 and $9.4m for 2010–2011.

Electorate Offices: Refurbishment

(Question No. 291)

Senator Bob Brown asked the Special Minister of State, upon notice, on 20 February 2008:

(1) Can a list be provided of all contractors responsible for the refurbishment and establishment of the parliamentarians’ electorate offices between 1998 and 2008.
(2) Can the process by which these contractors were appointed be outlined.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) The preparation of an answer to this question for each year since 1998 would involve a significant diversion of resources and, in the circumstances, I do not consider that the additional work can be justified. The practice of successive governments has been not to authorise the expenditure of time and money involved in assembling such information on a general basis. However, details for the financial years 2005/06 to 2007/08 (to date) are more readily available and have been provided. Set out below by jurisdiction are the companies contracted by the Commonwealth to refurbish and establish electorate offices in the financial years 2005/06 to 2007/08 (to date) – listed in alphabetical order by jurisdiction:
New South Wales
Advantage Constructions and Interiors
CBD Projects
Celect Commercial Interiors
Cyclo Office Interiors
Deskon Interiors
John Green Pty Ltd
Joss Facility Management
MGH Interior Projects
MW & NJ Fletcher Builders

Victoria
Buildtech Commercial Pty Ltd
Dolation Construction Pty Ltd
Schiavello Pty Ltd
Southern Executive Building Services
Timeline Contracting Pty Ltd

Queensland
Alliance Interiors Pty Ltd
Archway Commercial Interiors Pty Ltd
Fergus Builders Pty Ltd
Interior Engineering QLD Pty Ltd
R&J Young (Building Contractors) Pty Ltd
Robley Hall and Dunlop Architects Pty Ltd
Signature Project Pty Ltd
Walton Construction Pty Ltd

Western Australia
DESIGNLINK
WA Partitions 2006 Pty Ltd
South Australia
All Build Commercial Interiors
Inca Constructions
Isis Projects
Mossop Group

Tasmania
Anstie Constructions Pty Ltd
Bertoz Builders and Joiners
Fairbrother Pty Ltd
Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd
Tascon Constructions Pty Ltd
Australian Capital Territory
ISIS Projects Ltd
Schiavello Group Pty Ltd

Northern Territory
Brendan J Meney Architects
Maxcon (NT) Pty Ltd
Randazzo Investments

(2) Consistent with the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines, prior to 1 November 2005 appointment was on the basis of competitive tender with at least three competitive quotes required. After 1 November 2005, the same process has been followed but only compliant contractors under the Australian Government Implementation Guidelines for the National Code of Practice for the Construction Industry are eligible to tender.

Central Gippsland Health Service
(Question No. 292)

Senator Allison asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 21 February 2008:

(1) On what dates did the Central Gippsland Health Service in Sale, Victoria apply for and receive an area of need specialist classification for a paediatrician.

(2) Is the Minister aware that two suitably qualified, locally-based paediatricians applied for a paediatrician’s position in late October and early November 2006 and that the Central Gippsland Health Service subsequently applied for area of need status?

(3) Is the Minister aware that the Central Gippsland Health Service subsequently appointed an overseas-trained doctor (OTD), who had failed the Royal Australasian College of Physicians examination, to fill that position?

(4) Was the appointment consistent with area of need guidelines and processes?

(5) Would the granting of a 457 visa under these circumstances be allowable?

(6) What evidence do local health services have to provide to establish that they have been unable to attract a suitably qualified local applicant in order to qualify for area of need status?

(7) What processes does the Government have in place to monitor the area of need classification process?

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) The Department of Health and Ageing (the Department) received a Preliminary Assessment of District of Workforce Shortage (PADWS) application from Central Gippsland Health Service in Sale, Victoria on 24 April 2007. A PADWS was issued for one paediatrician on 7 May 2007.

(2) The Department was informed via the PADWS application that a locally-based paediatrician had applied for a full time paediatrician position. In the same application the Department was informed that the Victorian Department of Human Services endorsed the position as an Area of Need in December 2006.

(3) State and Territory Medical Registration Boards have a statutory responsibility to determine if a doctor is competent to practice medicine. The Department’s delegate approves a section 19AB exemption for an Overseas Trained Doctor (OTD) based on the merits of the application, which includes a certified copy of a doctor’s current medical registration.
On 18 September 2007, the Department’s delegate approved a section 19AB exemption for an OTD to provide Paediatric services at the Central Gippsland Health Services. The Department was not aware the OTD had failed the Royal Australasian College of Physicians examination.

(4) Yes.

(5) When processing a section 19AB exemption application, granting a 457 visa under these circumstances would be allowable provided there are no conditions placed on their medical registration. Note that all visa applications are approved by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

(6) Rural and remote Australia is considered to be a district of workforce shortage for specialists. Where a PADWS application is received for a location in a particular specialty seeking to work in rural and remote Australia it is approved, however the advice does not guarantee formal approval for a future section 19AB exemption at a particular location. All applications for exemptions under section 19AB will be decided on their individual merits at the time of lodgement.

(7) Overseas trained doctors are subject to Medicare provider number restrictions that generally require the doctor to work in a district of workforce shortage (DWS) in order to access the Medicare Benefits Scheme. A DWS is a geographic area in which the general population need for health care is not met. Population needs for health care are deemed to be unmet if a district has less access to medical services than the national average.

A doctor to population ratio is frequently used to help determine if a specialty type is in shortage in a particular area. This ratio is based on recent Medicare billing statistics. These statistics use a full-time equivalent measure, which takes into account Medicare billing in the area, irrespective of whether or not local doctors are working in a part-time or a full-time capacity. The Medicare billing statistics and the doctor to population ratios are updated on a quarterly basis.

There are over 52 recognised specialities. In determining a district of workforce shortage, only the Medicare billing statistics for that particular specialty are taken into consideration.