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SITTING DAYS—2008

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

- CANBERRA: 103.9 FM
- SYDNEY: 630 AM
- NEWCASTLE: 1458 AM
- GOSFORD: 98.1 FM
- BRISBANE: 936 AM
- GOLD COAST: 95.7 FM
- MELBOURNE: 1026 AM
- ADELAIDE: 972 AM
- PERTH: 585 AM
- HOBART: 747 AM
- NORTHERN TASMANIA: 92.5 FM
- DARWIN: 102.5 FM
FORTY-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
## Members of the Senate

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</table>

(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—A Thompson
RUDD MINISTRY

Prime Minister
Hon. Kevin Rudd, MP
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion
Hon. Julia Gillard, MP
Treasurer
Hon. Wayne Swan MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and Leader of the Government in the Senate
Senator Hon. Chris Evans
Special Minister of State, Cabinet Secretary and Vice President of the Executive Council
Senator Hon. John Faulkner
Minister for Trade
Hon. Simon Crean MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Hon. Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Defence
Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP
Minister for Health and Ageing
Hon. Nicola Roxon MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Hon. Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Finance and Deregulation
Hon. Lindsay Tanner MP
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and Leader of the House
Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate
Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Senator Hon. Kim Carr
Minister for Climate Change and Water
Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts
Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP
Attorney-General
Hon. Robert McClelland MP
Minister for Human Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate
Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism
Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP

[The above ministers constitute the cabinet]
Minister for Home Affairs  
Hon. Bob Debus MP

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

Minister for Veterans’ Affairs  
Hon. Alan Griffin MP

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

Minister for Employment Participation  
Hon. Brendan O’Connor MP

Minister for Defence Science and Personnel  
Hon. Warren Snowdon MP

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

Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law  
Senator Hon. Nick Sherry

Minister for Ageing  
Hon. Justine Elliot MP

Minister for Youth and Minister for Sport  
Hon. Kate Ellis MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Childcare  
Hon. Maxine McKew MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Procurement  
Hon. Greg Combet AM, MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support  
Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia  
Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children’s Services  
Hon. Bill Shorten MP

Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance  
Hon. Bob McMullan MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs  
Hon. Duncan Kerr MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister  
Hon. Anthony Byrne MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion  
Senator Hon. Ursula Stephens

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade  
Hon. John Murphy MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing  
Senator Hon. Jan McLucas

Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services  
Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP
SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition
Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Employment, Business and Workplace Relations
Leader of the Nationals and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Local Government
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Defence
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Shadow Treasurer
Manager of Opposition Business in the House and Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
Shadow Minister for Trade
Shadow Minister for Families, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs and the Voluntary Sector
Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Shadow Minister for Human Services
Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training
Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Urban Water
Shadow Minister for Finance, Competition Policy and Deregulation
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Shadow Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
Shadow Attorney-General
Shadow Minister for Resources and Energy and Shadow Minister for Tourism
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Water Security

[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]
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<td>Shadow Minister for Justice and Border Protection; Assisting</td>
<td>Hon. Chris Pyne MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
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<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
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<td>Hon. Sharman Stone MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Governance</td>
<td>Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Margaret May MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Personnel; Assisting Shadow Minister</td>
<td>Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
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<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House and Shadow Minister</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Business Development, Independent Contractors and</td>
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<td>Consumer Affairs</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Participation and Apprenticeships and</td>
<td>Andrew Southcott MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Shadow Minister for Status of Women</td>
<td>Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
<td>Hon. Pat Farmer MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Don Randall MP</td>
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<td>and Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition in</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald</td>
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<td>the Senate and Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</td>
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Tuesday, 17 June 2008

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

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland—Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12.31 pm)—I move:

That:

(1) On Tuesday, 17 June 2008:
   (a) the hours of meeting shall be 12.30 pm to adjournment; and
   (b) the routine of business from 5 pm shall be:
       (i) valedictory statements, and
       (ii) after the conclusion of valedictory statements or at not later than midnight, whichever is the earlier, the Senate shall adjourn without any question being put.

(2) On Wednesday, 18 June 2008:
   (a) the hours of meeting shall be 9.30 am to adjournment; and
   (b) the routine of business from 5.30 pm shall be:
       (i) valedictory statements, and
       (ii) the Senate shall adjourn without any question being put.

(3) On Thursday, 19 June 2008:
   (a) the hours of meeting shall be 9.30 am to 6.30 pm and 7 pm to 11.40 pm;
   (b) the routine of business from 12.45 pm till not later than 2 pm, and from not later than 3.45 pm shall be government business only;
   (c) consideration of general business and consideration of committee reports, government responses and Auditor-General’s reports under standing order 62(1) and (2) not be proceeded with;
   (d) divisions may take place after 4.30 pm; and
   (e) the question for the adjournment of the Senate shall be proposed at 11 pm.

(4) The Senate shall sit on Friday, 20 June 2008 and that:
   (a) the hours of meeting shall be 9 am to 4.25 pm;
   (b) the routine of business shall be:
       (i) notices of motion, and
       (ii) government business only; and
   (c) the question for the adjournment of the Senate shall be proposed at 3.45 pm.

(5) On Monday, 23 June 2008:
   (a) the hours of meeting shall be 9.30 am to 6.30 pm and 7 pm to 11.40 pm;
   (b) the routine of business from 7 pm shall be government business only; and
   (c) the question for the adjournment of the Senate shall be proposed at 11 pm.

(6) On Tuesday, 24 June 2008:
   (a) the hours of meeting shall be 12.30 pm to 6.30 pm and 7 pm to adjournment;
   (b) the routine of business from approximately 5.30 pm shall be:
       (i) Senator Murray to make a valedictory statement, and
       (ii) government business only; and
   (c) the question for the adjournment of the Senate shall be proposed at 11 pm.

(7) On Wednesday, 25 June 2008:
   (a) the hours of meeting shall be 9 am to 6.30 pm and 7 pm to 11.40 pm;
   (b) the routine of business from 6.50 pm shall be:
       (i) valedictory statements, and
       (ii) the Senate shall adjourn without any question being put.

(8) On Thursday, 26 June 2008:
   (a) the hours of meeting shall be 9.30 am to 6.30 pm and 7 pm to adjournment;
   (b) consideration of general business and consideration of committee reports,
government responses and Auditor-General’s reports under standing order 62(1) and (2) shall not be proceeded with;

(c) the routine of business from not later than 3.45 pm shall be government business only;

(d) divisions may take place after 4.30 pm; and

(e) if the Senate is sitting at 11 pm, the sitting of the Senate shall be suspended till 9 am on Friday, 27 June 2008.

(9) In making valedictory statements in accordance with this order, a senator shall not speak for more than 20 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Consideration of Legislation

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland—Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12.31 pm)—I move:

That the government business order of the day relating to the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Communications Fund) Bill 2008 be discharged from the Notice Paper.

Question agreed to.

WHEAT EXPORT MARKETING BILL 2008

WHEAT EXPORT MARKETING (REPEAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2008

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 June, on motion by Senator Sherry:

That these bills be now read a second time.

Senator FIELDING (Victoria—Leader of the Family First Party) (12.31 pm)—Family First will be opposing the Wheat Export Marketing Bill 2008 and the Wheat Export Marketing (Repeal and Consequential Amendments) Bill 2008 because most wheat growers want a wheat-marketing system that is owned and controlled by the growers. The single desk has served growers well, so why would we throw it out and leave farmers, and especially small family farms, to the mercy of the big grain-marketing companies? The central aim of these big companies is to maximise their profits for their shareholders, not to serve farmers.

I had to be away from the Senate yesterday because my wife was ill, but I was able to listen to a lot of the debate yesterday on my PDA. I must admit that I heard Senator Minchin, for the Liberal Party, wriggle around the issue of the single desk. If I had been up in the gallery, I think I too would have been jeering over the issue and saying, ‘What the heck is going on?’—particularly when you see something like this happening, which is so out of touch with what the wheat farmers across Australia are actually looking for. Family farmers are doing it tough, and the Wheat Export Marketing Bill will devastate a lot of farmers that rely on the single desk.

The Nationals stood here yesterday like Tarzan coming out of the jungle, beating their chests and saying, ‘We’re all for the farmers; we’re all for looking after the little guy.’ Well, where were they when they sold Telstra? When they sold Telstra, they sold the bush. Where in the heck were they when Telstra was going to be sold? Where were they with the Oil Code? The Nationals went missing in action on that one. Then we look at the sale of Medibank Private. They supported that as well. So where were they for the little guy and the bush in those cases? Then we look at Work Choices. Where were they on that one? They were supporting that one as well. And now they say, ‘We’re looking after the small guys; we’re looking after the farmers.’ That is just not true.

And now, all of a sudden, we have the Labor government with the Wheat Export Marketing Bill. I cannot believe it. The single desk is about collective bargaining—and I
thought that that was what Labor was all about. The single desk was put in place in 1948 by the Labor Chifley government. Ben Chifley would not even recognise the party if he could see what you are doing here today. The Labor Party is putting the interests of farmers in the hands of the big wheat-marketing companies. This bill is about market economics. It is about big business. This is about the Prime Minister selling out to big business and not looking after the small farmers.

In November 2006, the Prime Minister, the Hon. Kevin Rudd, wrote about free-market fundamentalism as ‘the ruthless logic of the market rubbing up against a tradition which holds that those with economic power have a moral obligation to protect those without it’—a moral obligation to protect those without. This wheat-marketing bill sells those people out. Where is the moral obligation to protect those who do not have that power? Australian politics is dominated by the ideology of market economics—the free-market mantra. But what about those people who cannot fend for themselves? The old debate about collective bargaining and Work Choices has been thrown out the window with the wheat-marketing board. Both the major parties have sold these people out big time. Family First does support free enterprise, but not unfettered free markets. Too much regulation is no good, but not enough is no good either. Leaving people out on their own without any way of fending for themselves is just not right.

The interests of big business and small business are not always the same; in fact, they are often totally at odds with one another. The Labor government has chosen to side with big business, as it did when the Oil Code came around—when we were looking at petrol service stations and making sure that we had competition. Yes, Family First agrees that it was wrong for the Australian Wheat Board to bribe Saddam Hussein’s regime to buy wheat from Australia, but let us not use that as an excuse to throw out the single-desk system, which has served farmers well for decades.

Question put:
That these bills be now read a second time.
The Senate divided. [12.41 pm]
(The President—Senator the Hon. Alan Ferguson)

Ay es........... 59
Noes........... 5
Majority....... 54

AYES

Abetz, E. Adams, J.
Allison, L.F. Barnett, G.
Bartlett, A.J.J. Bernardi, C.
Birmingham, S. Bishop, T.M.
Boyce, S. Brandis, G.H.
Brown, B.J. Brown, C.L.
Busby, D.C. Campbell, G.
Chapman, H.G.P. Colbeck, R.
Collins, J. Coonan, H.L.
Cormann, M.H.P. Crossin, P.M.
Ellison, C.M. Ferguson, A.B.
Ferravanti-Wells, C. Fisher, M.J.
Forshaw, M.G. Hogg, J.J.
Humphries, G. Hurley, A.
Hutchins, S.P. Johnston, D.
Kemp, C.R. Ludwig, J.W.
Lundy, K.A. Macdonald, I.
Marshall, G. Mason, B.J.
McEwen, A. McGauran, J.J.J.
McLucas, J.E. Milne, C.
Minchin, N.H. Moore, C.
Murray, A.J.M. O’Brien, K.W.K. *
Parry, S. Patterson, K.C.
Payne, M.A. Polley, H.
Ronaldson, M. Sherry, N.J.
Siewert, R. Stephens, U.
Sterle, G. Stott Despoja, N.
Troeth, J.M. Trood, R.B.
Watson, J.O.W. Webber, R.
Wortley, D.

CHAMBER
Senator Scullion—Mr President, as you are aware, Senator Fiona Nash is absent from the Senate this day on bereavement leave and she has asked that her vote against this legislation be registered.

The PRESIDENT—That is included in Hansard now, Senator Scullion.

Bills read a second time.

Ordered that consideration of these bills in Committee of the Whole be made an order of the day for the next day of sitting.

NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT (PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS SCHEME) BILL 2008

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 June, on motion by Senator Faulkner:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania) (12.47 pm)—I am pleased to rise to speak on the National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Bill 2008. This bill makes minor amendments to the National Health Act 1953 which are desirable either to extend the operation of the PBS in certain circumstances or to remove some anomalies. For a relatively young country, Australia has a proud record on schemes which allow equitable public access to medicines and other pharmaceutical items. My colleague the shadow minister for health in the other place, Mr Hockey, detailed some of the history of the PBS in his speech in the second reading debate. I will not repeat that, but it is certainly worth while placing some of it on the record of the Senate.

The original scheme to provide access to pharmaceuticals was the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme established in 1919, in the wake of the Great War, to provide free pharmaceuticals to ex-servicemen and women. At that time, the Hughes Nationalist government brokered agreements with the major drug houses to extend the facility not only to World War I veterans but also to those from the Boer War. The Curtin government tried to introduce a limited free scheme in 1944 but was opposed by the Australian branch of the British Medical Association, the precursor of the AMA, and the legislation was struck down by the High Court. A pharmaceutical benefits regime was successfully established during the term of the Chifley government but it was essentially limited to remote communities. It is a matter of pride to me as a Liberal that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, which underpins the operation of today’s contemporary PBS, was established by the Menzies government in 1953.

Particular mention in this debate must be made of the contribution made in this regard by Sir Earle Page. At the time Page was the Country Party leader and the Minister for Health, having served briefly as Prime Minister during the dark days of World War II. The current Deputy Prime Minister, Ms Gillard, rightly paid tribute to Sir Earle Page as the father of the PBS in an Evatt Foundation lecture in 2006. As a young surgeon, Page had contracted an arm infection while conducting a postmortem. The infection proved almost fatal. In 1942, when Page was Australian minister resident in London attending Churchill’s war cabinet, he succumbed to pneumonia and again was lucky to survive. So in 1953 Australia was fortunate to have as the Minister for Health someone who carried great weight in the cabinet as Country Party leader, who was a surgeon by profession but who also had personal experience in the dan-
gers of infection and the benefits of antibiotics. As a doctor himself, Page was also able to act as a peacemaker with the BMA after their vehement fights with the previous Labor government. With such a happy line-up of the planets, Page established far-reaching public policy. Over five years from 1950, Page successfully piloted through parliament legislation to provide free essential drugs to the community, to maintain free medical services for the poor, to support private health insurance funds and to increase federal government grants to hospitals. All of these have endured through bipartisan support over the last 60 years, though I must say that the Rudd government’s recent budget decisions regarding a Medicare surcharge have severely undermined one part of our health system.

The bill before the Senate today extends pharmaceutical benefits to government officers working outside Australia and their accompanying spouses and dependent children. It also extends pharmaceutical benefits to couples, whether married or in a de facto relationship, who live apart owing to illness or infirmity. Couples in such circumstances will be able to continue to be considered as a family for the purposes of their entitlement to safety net concession and pharmaceutical benefit entitlement cards. I commend the government for making both of these changes. They certainly have the opposition’s wholehearted support.

The bill also widens the criteria used to determine that brands of pharmaceutical items may be co-marketed. The Bills Digest questions what effect this change will have on the industry, and I would be interested to know the answer to that query. There are areas of health policy on which the government and the opposition profoundly disagree. One of those is the constant spectre of the socialisation of medicine, which seems to be the concern of many in the medical profession, through the ill-considered development of GP superclinics. Those who remember the Whitlam government’s ill-fated community health centres will know exactly what I mean. However, with regard to fair and reasonable access to essential and life-saving medicines, there has never been any disagreement. Consistent with the bipartisan nature of the support for the PBS, on behalf of the opposition I commend the bill to the Senate.

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (12.52 pm)—I do not wish to make a long speech but just acknowledge the Australian Democrats’ support of the National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Bill 2008. It is largely technical and non-controversial and we welcome the improved access to the PBS safety net for those who are separated by ill-health or service overseas working for government. I must respond to Senator Colbeck’s remarks about the ‘ill-fated community health centres’, in referring to the socialisation of health in this country, and tell him that in Victoria they are not ill-fated at all; they are thriving and are a very important part of our medical system.

I indicate that I have circulated an amendment which would fix the discrimination against same-sex couples that is inherent in the PBS safety net and which, as we all know, exists in so many other bills. But I will not move that amendment because I have an undertaking from government that this matter of discrimination will be sorted out in the spring sittings of parliament.

I also take this opportunity to condemn the opposition for effectively delaying bills which will fix same-sex discrimination in Commonwealth laws, until 2009. It is unwarranted. HREOC produced a very substantial report which demonstrated the reasons why we need to fix these problems. There is no
good reason, in my view, for the matter to be further delayed. As senators in this chamber will recall, the Democrats have put our standard amendment, as we call it, to many bills for many years in this place, and it is very disappointing that we have to leave the Senate with this bit of business not yet done. I would ask the minister with the carriage of this legislation to just confirm for the public record that this amendment will be dealt with in good time, so there will be no need for me to move the amendment, which I have circulated in the chamber.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (12.55 pm)—The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the PBS, is regarded as one of the best systems of its kind in the world. It provides affordable access to high-quality medicines for all Australians by subsidising the cost of PBS medicines and delivering them through local pharmacies and hospitals in our communities. The PBS safety net insures that families and individuals who require large amounts of medicines are protected from high cumulative costs. The National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Bill 2008 contains amendments to the National Health Act 1953 which, although unrelated, will help to ensure that the PBS remains current and operates effectively for all Australians, whether as PBS users, suppliers or the medicines industry.

One of the amendments improves access to the PBS safety net. This will mean that couples living apart, due to illness or infirmity, will be able to use the safety net jointly. These couples will be able to combine PBS co-payment contributions towards the same safety net threshold. Both persons will be able to be included in the same safety net card and will have access to safety net benefits once the threshold is reached. In effect, the PBS payments required for both members of a couple to reach the safety net will be the equivalent of one safety net threshold, not two. This has the potential to reduce the out-of-pocket costs for PBS medicines for such couples by an amount equal to the relevant safety net threshold. PBS medicines required by either person can then be obtained at the reduced safety net rate for the remainder of the calendar year. This amendment strengthens the ability of the PBS safety net to deliver real benefits in savings to the people who need them. It recognises that when couple members need to live apart, for reasons of ill-health, frailty or dependent care, they do not cease to be part of a family. It provides continuity for joint access to safety net entitlements for these couples, despite their living circumstances having changed permanently. It will improve the affordability of PBS medicines for these people at a time in their lives when they may be most in need of PBS benefits.

The bill also amends the act to extend access to the PBS for government officers working outside Australia. Current PBS eligibility, supply and export restrictions prevent pharmaceutical benefits being provided to government officers when working overseas, despite eligibility for the PBS in Australia. However, accessing medicines outside Australia can be difficult and uncertain. The changes will allow pharmacists to dispense PBS prescriptions for medicines required by these officers, accompanying spouses and dependent children and for those medicines to be sent outside Australia in quantities required for their personal use. This will provide access for these Australians to quality, affordable medicines and PBS safety net entitlements.

The amendment to the criteria for determining co-marketed brands will ensure that the legislation operates as was originally intended. The amendment will allow co-marketed brands to remain co-marketed in
certain circumstances and to continue to have the co-marketing pricing benefits, even if they are brands of more than one pharmaceutical item. In addition, the amendments provide that the minister may, by legislative instrument, determine that co-marketed brands cease to be co-marketed. The ministerial determination will have precedence over the regulations prescribing co-marketed brands. This is an important amendment as it facilitates timely and efficient administration of the PBS co-marketing arrangements. In response to Senator Colbeck’s question as to how the co-marketing provisions affect industry, I am advised, Senator, that this will be positive for industry, because co-marketed items are protected from statutory price reductions. If there is further information that you would like on that, I am happy to provide it.

This bill also contains minor and technical amendments which change the way that two definitions are referred to in the act and removes the requirement for gazettal of certain ministerial determinations. The relevant determinations will be legislative instruments for the purposes of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003. In response to the question posed by you, Senator Allison, I acknowledge that you have indicated that you will withdraw the amendment that your party has consistently applied to lots of legislation, including PBS legislation. I want to put on the record that the Labor Party is committed to a consistent and comprehensive response to the broad suite of legislation that does not recognise same-sex relationships. This will be part of the audit that we do of legislation to ensure that same-sex couples are not discriminated against—a view that is shared by the Labor Party.

Finally, I want to thank Senator Colbeck and Senator Allison for their contributions to the debate and for the support of this bill. The changes in the bills strengthen the PBS and improve access to PBS entitlements. The government will continue to monitor the PBS to ensure that it is operating as intended and to ensure that access to necessary medicines is available when needed by those Australians eligible to receive them. I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

The CHAIRMAN—Senator Allison, I understand there is an amendment circulated in the name of the Australian Democrats. Is that being moved?

Senator Allison—I have indicated that I will not move that amendment.

Bill agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

Third Reading

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (1.03 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2008 MEASURES No. 2) BILL 2008

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 June, on motion by Senator Faulkner:

That this bill be now read a second time.
Senator COONAN (New South Wales) (1.03 pm)—The opposition will support the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 2) Bill 2008 and I want to speak briefly to it. It is almost identical to the coalition’s bill last year that lapsed because of the election, and it has bipartisan support. It has also been amended, as I understand it, in the lower house by also including non-controversial schedules 2 to 6 from Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill. I wish to speak briefly to the bill.

As I said, it contains schedules relating to tax law reform. The first schedule relates to amounts misappropriated by an employee or agent. This measure fills a gap in the existing tax laws. It is a measure that the coalition announced in May 2007 and addresses the inequity of a taxpayer effectively being taxed on an amount that the taxpayer has not received. Typically, the situation could happen where the taxpayer sells an asset that has been depreciated for tax purposes. Under the measure, the taxpayer still includes the excess in their assessable income but, in recognition of the fact that the proceeds have been misappropriated by the employee or agent, a deduction is allowed for the amount of the sale proceeds. Under the measure, the taxpayer still includes the excess in their assessable income but, in recognition of the fact that the proceeds have been misappropriated by the employee or agent, a deduction is allowed for the amount of the sale proceeds. Where the asset is not eligible for depreciation or similar relief but is taxed under the capital gains tax—the CGT rules—a sale would ordinarily result in the proceeds being taken into account in calculating the amount of the gain. Under the measure, the amount of the proceeds will be reduced by the amount that was misappropriated by the taxpayer’s employee or agent. Specific rules are being introduced to cater for the situation where the taxpayer has calculated their tax position as a result of a misappropriation but later recovers all or some of the amount misappropriated.

The second schedule that is supported relates to extending the superannuation guarantee late payment offset. When announcing the change to the superannuation guarantee late payment offset, the Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Governance appears to have made a mistake. He appears not to have been aware of a press release that had been issued by the former Assistant Treasurer, the member for Dickson, that initially announced the decision to change the offset. The measure addresses the situation where an employer is late in paying their compulsory super and thus has a contribution shortfall. The employer who is late in paying a superannuation contribution for an employee must also pay the same amount to the ATO as part of the superannuation guarantee charge. Under this measure, the employer who pays a late superannuation contribution will be able to offset that payment against the liability for the superannuation guarantee charge. Thus the employer pays the amount of the super contribution only once. The employer will still be liable for interest and an administration charge for not making payment of the employee’s super on time.

The third supported schedule in Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 2) Bill 2008 is the capital gains tax market value substitution rule for interests in widely held entities. It is another measure that my colleague the member for Dickson announced last year. It is a sensible measure which we support. It will ensure that shareholders in widely held companies and unit holders in widely held trusts are not disadvantaged when their interests in the entity are cancelled. The current position is that the market value substitution rule will replace the actual market proceeds received, say on a cancellation, with the market value of the equity where the capital proceeds are more or less than the equity’s market value. What the former coalition government wanted to ensure was that the equity owner would be taxed on a capital gain based on the amount agreed to be paid to them, not on some other
value that they did not receive following the cancellation. The measure will also simplify the current legislation that applies to transactions or dealings covered by this type of capital gains tax event.

The fourth schedule supported is the Endeavour Research Fellowships and Executive Awards. Both the research fellowships under the Endeavour Awards and the amounts received under the Endeavour Executive Awards comprised a number of payments. The tax rules resulted in some complexity. I will not go through it all in great detail, but under this measure, which as I said we support, amounts received from research fellowships under the Endeavour Awards or from the Endeavour Executive Awards will be exempt from tax from 2007-08 regardless of whether the recipient is a full-time student.

The fifth schedule deals with early completion bonuses for apprentices. The coalition gave strong support to apprentices and technical education. In government we recognised that a trade or a technical career should be seen as a highly valuable, satisfying and rewarding career. When we came to government back in 1996, there were some 154,800 apprentices in training. By March 2007 the number of apprentices in training had risen to 414,300, an increase of 168 per cent. We had established 21 Australian technical colleges around the country. The Australian technical colleges allowed students to complete their final years of high school while at the same time starting down the track of an apprenticeship that would allow them to work towards a successful and rewarding career. This support for apprenticeships was backed by an increase in investment in vocational and technical education from $1.1 billion to $2.9 billion, an 87 per cent increase in real terms. As further evidence of this support, which I think it is fair to record, the coalition announced in 2007 that the first $1,000 of an early completion bonus paid to an apprentice would be exempt from tax. The measure in schedule 5 of the bill will carry this decision into effect. It was part of the suite of measures we had designed to support technical education.

Early completion bonuses are payable under schemes offered by a state or territory. A bonus serves to reward an apprentice who completes their apprenticeship more quickly than normal and the bonuses should also go some way to reducing skills shortages in the trades. Regulations will prescribe what kinds of occupation are eligible for the early completion bonus tax exemption so that skills shortages are addressed in the relevant time frame. I note that currently an early completion bonus is available only from the Queensland government and I note that the government intends to list the Queensland early completion bonus scheme in regulations as soon as the bill receives royal assent.

The sixth schedule relates to deductible gift recipients. I will not go through each of them, but each of the deductible gift recipients named in the schedule is very worthy of public support and, as I have said, we support this measure.

I now want to turn very briefly to the additional non-controversial elements of the original Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill. They also contain very sensible measures, which we are pleased to support. These measures also had been introduced by the former government last year but had lapsed due to the election. The first one is tax-free super for the terminally ill. I am particularly pleased to support the taxation exemption for superannuation payments to the terminally ill. When the member for Dickson announced this policy last year, he stressed that it is very important for parliament to seek to remove as many stresses and challenges as possible for people who are facing this terrible prospect. In particular, he
mentioned the story of Christina Fiddimore, who unfortunately passed away recently because of breast cancer. She had wanted to ensure that she was not a financial burden on her family during her difficult fight with breast cancer but could not access her superannuation tax free. The government and the opposition were very cooperative and there is strong bipartisan support for this measure. I take this opportunity to extend condolences to Ms Fiddimore’s family. This measure will mean that when someone is faced with a terminal illness they will be able to access their superannuation in the form of a tax-free lump sum.

The next schedule deals with capital expenditure for the establishment of carbon sink forests. We are pleased to support this measure, which provides for the establishment of a deduction for capital costs incurred in establishing carbon sink forests. This will provide an incentive for the planting of trees, which is, I think we all agree, a very welcome development.

The next schedule is a tax offset for those affected by the equine influenza outbreak. It provides for an extension of the beneficiary tax offset to equine workers. The measure will help support those many low-paid workers and sole traders who have lost their jobs and have lost substantial income because of the equine influenza outbreak last year. The purpose of this measure is to add a tax offset to the wage supplement that was given. This will mean that those affected by equine influenza will be able to receive ongoing support.

There are two more schedules. One deals with tax relief for grants issued under the Tobacco Growers Adjustment Assistance Program, which is also very important. Where a tobacco grower undertakes to exit the industry, the grant that they will receive for doing so will be tax free. The grants will be up to $15,000. It is a measure that was introduced earlier but had lapsed because of the election.

Finally, there is the Farm Management Deposits scheme. This is a largely administrative measure that seeks to better realign tax law with other government guidelines as to which geographical areas and which primary producers in those areas are subject to exceptional circumstances. I believe that those clarifications are needed and it is important that they are now made.

These omnibus bills are always quite complex in the way in which they have to be dealt with, put together and thought through. It is very important that the tax law continues to be amended to either address anomalies or to make provision for circumstances such as some of the ones that I have outlined in my brief remarks. I am very pleased to see these bills brought to the Senate, and the opposition wholeheartedly supports them.

Senator MURRAY (Western Australia) (1.15 pm)—The Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 2) Bill 2008 is an amended bill. We have a revised explanatory memorandum and there are some amendments coming through in the committee stage. But it is one of those measures that wrap up a lot of outstanding elements with respect to taxation law. Taxation law is such that it does continually need finetuning and adjustment. These measures are welcome as they update and improve the areas they address.

The schedules that are covered in the bill include amounts misappropriated by an employee or agent, extending the superannuation guarantee late payment offset, capital gains tax market value substitution rule for interests in certain companies and trusts, income tax exemption in the Endeavour executive awards and research fellowships under the Endeavour awards, early completion bo-
nuses for apprentices, the usual update of
deductible gift recipients, payment of a su-
perannuation lump sum to a person with a
terminal medical condition, capital expendi-
ture for the establishment of trees in carbon
sink forests, extension of beneficiary tax off-
set to the equine workers hardship wage sup-
plement payment, tax-free grants for certain
tobacco growers, and farm management de-
posits. That is a list that you can see is very
eclectic. There is not much interrelationship
between each of those; they stand on their
own.

Schedule 1 proposes changes to the In-
come Tax Assessment Act 1997 to correct
the inconsistent treatment of amounts misap-
propriated by an employee or agent follow-
ing the disposal of an asset that has been
dealt with under the uniform capital allow-
ance provision, which, under current law,
fails to recognise the loss of economic bene-
fit experienced by the taxpayer arising from
the misappropriation. These amendments
will effectively enable CGT events and uni-
form capital allowances to be written down
to reflect the misappropriated loss. The ex-
planatory memorandum says the compliance
cost impact will be negligible and the finan-
cial impact is unquantifiable. With that, we
should not be frightened that it is going to
cost a motza; it will not. These measures will
only apply to amounts misappropriated in the
2007-08 and later income years.

Schedule 2 is welcome. It extends the su-
perannuation guarantee late payment offset
to remove the double-payment provision that
currently exists within superannuation law.
Under present conditions, employees who
make late superannuation guarantee pay-
ments are penalised by being required to pay
a superannuation guarantee charge, which
includes a contribution shortfall amount, a
nominal interest component and an admini-
stration charge. However, late payments can-
not presently be used to offset the contribu-
tion shortfall amount included in the super-
annuation guarantee charge, thereby heavily
penalising late paying but well-intentioned
employers. According to the EM, the finan-
cial and compliance costs are expected to be
negligible. This is a fairness and equity
measure.

Schedule 3 proposes amendments to the
Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to exclude
the market value substitution rule from capi-
tal gains tax events involving holdings, in
widely held companies or unit trusts, which
are cancelled, surrendered or brought to an
end in similar ways. This ensures that there
is an equitable taxation outcome for affected
individuals, who would otherwise potentially
face a tax bill larger than the proceeds of the
aforementioned cancellation. Small compli-
ance costs are expected from this amendment
and ongoing compliance costs are forecast to
be minimal. The EM again says that the fi-
nancial implications are unquantifiable.
Again, I would suggest that you not fear that
statement. It does not presage a high cost.
And again I say to you that this is both an
equity and a fairness measure, and it will
simplify the law.

Schedule 4 amends the Income Tax As-
essment Act 1997 to facilitate the income
tax exemption of scholarship funds received
through the Endeavour executive awards,
including research scholarships. This award
is an internationally competitive, merit based
scholarship program, administered by the
Department of Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations, for bringing leading
researchers, executives and students to Aus-
tralia to undertake study and research and
professional development, with reciprocal
arrangements abroad for Australians.

Schedule 5 amends the Income Tax As-
essment Act 1997 to exempt early comple-
tion bonuses paid by state or territory gov-
ernments to apprentices for the early comple-
tion of apprenticeships in skill-shortage occupations. The forecast cost to revenue over the forward estimates is $8.7 million. The logic behind the exemption of an apprenticeship bonus from income tax is questionable in light of the fact that an early completion of a course facilitates the apprentice to work for higher wages. Thus one could argue that there is sufficient financial motivation for early completion, besides the payment of a bonus. The loss of revenue associated with this schedule could arguably be better used in promoting greater uptake of apprenticeship positions, or in the financing of additional apprenticeship places. So, I am lukewarm about this schedule but I am certainly not going to oppose it. I think it is probably unnecessary, but the apprentices will love it because it gives them some extra dough.

Regarding the deductible gift recipients list, the proposals have retrospective application but that is of benefit to those concerned so I have no objection. But I would take this opportunity, while briefly commenting on schedule 6, to recommend to both the government and the opposition that they look carefully at the Democrats notice of motion in my name and in the name of Senator Allinson, which is to be considered later today. It deals with referring the issue of not-for-profits and charities to a Senate inquiry. This area of law to do with the administration and management of not-for-profits and deductible gift recipients, I think, needs reform. The previous government thought it needed reform and failed with its attempts at that time. A Senate review process is a proper one to re-address this issue. I would recommend, particularly to the opposition, since they have the numbers and control of the Senate—and I hope the shadow minister, Senator Coonan, is listening to me carefully—is she?

Senator Coonan—Absolutely.

Senator MURRAY—Good. I recommend they take an active interest in the proposal we have put to the chamber.

Moving on to schedule 7, dealing with superannuation lump sums paid to a person with a terminal medical condition, this is a wonderful initiative and we support it. Schedule 8 deals with capital expenditure for the establishment of trees in carbon sink forests. There is much one can say about these matters, but this is just tidying up existing policy so I am not going to indulge in the topic. Schedule 9, dealing with the extension of the beneficiary tax offset to the equine workers hardship wage supplement payment, merely tidies up an existing problem, and schedule 10 does the same thing. We already have an adjustment assistance program for tobacco growers. It is underway for those who wish to exit all agricultural enterprises, and this is a measure to assist in that matter.

Last is the farm management deposits area, where schedule 11 to the bill amends the Farm Management Deposits scheme to align the laws with the guidelines for declaring either all primary producers in a geographical area or specified classes of primary producers within a geographical area to be in exceptional circumstances. This is actually a very intelligent technical amendment which will be of great assistance to those affected, and we certainly welcome it. I recall that in 1996, when I was first campaigning to go into the Senate, the chief policy officer for Western Australia’s Pastoralists and Graziers Association first outlined to me the proposals for the Farm Management Deposits scheme, which he was promoting. If my memory is accurate, his name was Mr Price. I was taken with the scheme and I was therefore pleased when later on the coalition government embraced and introduced it. I think it has had material benefits in equalising income for a notoriously cyclical industry, the agricultural industry. What is interesting is that I never
foresaw or understood quite how much money would end up in those deposits. Again, if my memory is accurate—and perhaps the shadow minister would remind me, if it is not—I understand there is well over a billion dollars these days. So it was certainly a very significant policy.

With those brief remarks, I indicate to the government that the Australian Democrats will be supporting this bill.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (1.26 pm)—First of all, I thank Senator Coonan and Senator Murray for their contribution to the debate on the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 2) Bill 2008. The bill makes a number of improvements to Australia’s tax and superannuation laws. All the measures in this bill are seen to be relatively uncontroversial.

Schedule 1 addresses a technical inconsistency in the tax law when an amount is misappropriated by an employee or agent after they dispose of an asset on behalf of a taxpayer. Schedule 2 removes an anomaly in the superannuation guarantee system by extending the superannuation guarantee late payment offset. To reduce the incidence of employers having to pay the same superannuation amount twice, once as a penalty and once the actual superannuation payment has been made, the period within which an employer can make a contribution for their employee after the due date for making the payment and still be eligible to use the late payment offset is extended.

Schedule 3 amends the tax law to ensure that the market value substitution rule does not apply to certain CGT events. This will provide consistency with C2 CGT events and result in a fairer treatment of taxpayers who may otherwise end up with a tax bill larger than the proceeds of a cancellation of shares. Schedule 4 provides an income tax exemption for the Endeavour executive award and for all research fellowships under this award. Schedule 5 exempts from income tax the first $1,000 of eligible early completion bonuses paid by state and territory governments to apprentices where certain conditions are met.

Schedule 6 amends the list of deductible gift recipients in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997. They include the AE2 commemorative Foundation Ltd, Ian Thorpe’s Fountain for youth, Wheelchairs for Kids Inc., the Amy Gillett Foundation, the Spirit of Australia Foundation, the World Youth Day 2008 Trust, the Memorials Development Committee Ltd, the Council for Jewish Community Security, Playgroup Australia Inc., the Dunn Lewis Youth Development Foundation, the Finding Sydney Foundation and Australia for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Amendments in the House added five schedules to the bill. These five schedules are identical to schedules 2 to 6 in the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill. These amendments were necessary to ensure that certain measures of benefit to taxpayers that were in TLAB 1 are passed before the end of the income year.

Schedule 7 makes tax free superannuation lump sums paid to persons with a terminal medical condition. This important change assists in relieving financial stress which terminally ill persons and their families may be suffering due to their situation. The amendments will have effect for payments made on or after 1 July 2007.

Schedule 8, which like schedules 10 and 11 was introduced by the former government in Tax Laws Amendment (2007 Measures No. 6) Bill, provides a concession for the costs of establishing a carbon sink forest. This measure will encourage the establishment of carbon sink forests and in turn make
an important contribution to carbon sequestration.

Schedule 9 extends the beneficiary tax offset to the equine workers hardship wage supplement payment. Schedule 10 provides tax-free status to grants under the Tobacco Growers Adjustment Assistance Program 2006 to tobacco growers who undertake to exit all agricultural enterprises for at least five years. The grants are being paid following the loss of a market in Australia for domestically grown tobacco.

Schedule 11 makes minor technical amendments to the early withdrawal provisions to the Farm Management Deposits scheme. This amendment will improve the Farm Management Deposits scheme by ensuring that all primary producers who are eligible for early withdrawal due to exceptional circumstances will retain the tax benefits.

I would again like to thank those who participated in the debate and I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (1.31 pm)—I table a supplementary explanatory memorandum relating to the government amendments to be moved to this bill. The memorandum was circulated in the chamber earlier today. I seek leave to move government amendments (1) to (3) together.

Leave granted.

Senator McLUCAS—I move:

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 7), omit “9 to 11”, substitute “9 to 13”.

(2) Page 38 (after line 20), at the end of the bill, add:

Schedule 12—Austudy rent assistance

Income Tax Assessment Act 1997

1 Section 52-15 (cell at table item 4, column headed “the supplementary amount is the total of:”) Repeal the cell, substitute:

(a) so much of the payment as is included by way of rental assistance; and

(b) so much of the payment as is included by way of remote area allowance; and

(c) so much of the payment as is included by way of pharmaceutical allowance

2 Application The amendment made by this Schedule applies to assessments for the 2007-08 income year and later income years.

(3) Page 38 (after line 20), at the end of the bill, add:

Schedule 13—Carer adjustment payments

Income Tax Assessment Act 1997

1 Section 11-15 (table item headed “social security or like payments”) After:

ABSTUDY scheme, payment under Subdivision 52-E

insert:

Carer adjustment payment

53-10

2 Section 53-10 (table item 1) Repeal the item, substitute:

1 Carer adjustment payment The power of the Commonwealth to make ex-gratia payments None

2 Disability services payment Part III of the Disability Services Act 1986 None
3 Application

The amendments made by this Schedule apply to assessments for the 2007-08 income year and later years. These amendments add new schedules, 12 and 13, to the bill and update the commencement table to reflect these additions. New schedules 12 and 13 are identical to schedules 3 and 4, which were omitted from the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 3) Bill while that bill was in the House of Representatives. The amendments are necessary to ensure that certain measures which are of benefit to taxpayers are passed before the end of the income year. Schedule 12 exempts rent assistance paid to Austudy recipients from income tax. This will ensure consistency with the taxation treatment of rent assistance paid to Newstart allowance, youth allowance and Abstudy recipients. Rent assistance has been payable to Austudy recipients from 1 January 2008. The payment provides assistance with the living costs associated with full-time study and training.

Schedule 13 exempts the carer adjustment payment from income tax. This will ensure consistency with the taxation treatment of other one-off payments made to carers in previous years. The carer adjustment payment provides up to $10,000 in financial assistance to families with a child up to six years of age who has suffered a catastrophic event after 1 January 2007. It is designed to assist families adjust to the increased costs arising from a severe illness, medical condition or major disability as a result of a catastrophic event. I commend the amendments to the chamber.

Senator COONAN (New South Wales) (1.33 pm)—The opposition will be supporting new schedules 12 and 13 to this bill. For those of us who follow these things closely, it appears that these were schedules 3 and 4 of Tax Law Amendment (2008 Measures No. 3) Bill. A couple of those schedules of the bill—schedule 1 on shareholder and unit holder rights and schedule 2 on restriction of GST refunds and time limits for recovery and refund of indirect tax—will be referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics for inquiry. We of course recognise that the government may wish to expedite passage of these schedules, which are supported, and they do have some time critical aspects to them. Therefore they have been put in the No. 2 bill. We think that both of them are very sensible measures. The income tax treatment of rent assistance paid to Austudy recipients and income tax treatment of the carer adjustment payment have our full support.

Senator MURRAY (Western Australia) (1.34 pm)—I concur with the remarks of the shadow minister. These two schedules have been taken by agreement out of the one bill and put into this bill because they are time sensitive relative to the end of this financial year. Therefore, that is a very practical compromise and does not interfere with the coalition’s desire to send the other schedules of TLAB 3 across to the Senate committee for examination and report later on in this calendar year.

Exempting rent assistance paid to Austudy recipients from income tax is obviously very beneficial to those concerned and we support it. As a party we tend to be very sympathetic to students and have a long history of barracking for their needs, so that is welcome. The income tax treatment of the carer adjustment payment also falls into the same category of remarks. The needy group that is getting this assistance will be grateful. I will say though in passing that, in a policy sense, I really do dislike the lump sum payments approach adopted by both the previous government and the present government to carers and pensioners. I think they would be far better off with a permanent adjustment to
their income levels through standard fortnightly or monthly payments, instead of the occasional largesse. But that is another topic for another day. I am really just putting that on the record yet again. The Democrats will support these amendments.

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments; report adopted.

Third Reading

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) (1.37 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

FIRST HOME SAVER ACCOUNTS BILL 2008
INCOME TAX (FIRST HOME SAVER ACCOUNTS MISUSE TAX) BILL 2008
FIRST HOME SAVER ACCOUNTS (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2008

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 June, on motion by Senator Faulkner:

That these bills be now read a second time.

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales) (1.38 pm)—I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on the First Home Saver Accounts Bill 2008 and the First Home Saver Accounts (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2008. It is timely given that yesterday the Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia, which I had the honour and privilege of chairing, tabled its report. It is timely that I have the opportunity to speak in this debate. The housing affordability problems that Australia faces are well documented and are reaffirmed in the documentation tabled by the select committee yesterday. As a committee, we had the opportunity to hold hearings across metropolitan and regional Australia and to hear evidence and receive submissions from across the breadth of the community. The committee heard not just from academics, to whom I know Senator Moore referred yesterday afternoon, particularly from AHURI, but from members of the public, local government, planning experts, the Real Estate Institute and from Commonwealth and state departments—that is, in some cases, those state governments which were inclined to support the committee’s inquiry constructively, which was a distinct minority of state and territory Labor governments, disappointingly.

The evidence that we received in that process, the evidence which the government would say brings about this legislation today, is quite clear. The cost of housing has increased from roughly four times the average wage to seven times the average wage—if I may paraphrase—over the past decade. It is also the case that in evidence provided to the committee both by industry experts and supported by the federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the RBA, we are conservatively estimated to be underbuilding dwellings in Australia by 30,000 a year. When you bear in mind the demand that already exists, the challenges currently on the supply side and perhaps even add to that mix the government’s most recent announcements in relation to increases in immigration numbers, this is a very significant challenge which we face.

Most would say, and many of those who gave evidence to the select committee would say, that many young Australians now face the prospect of not being in a position to own their own home—certainly not in the short to medium term. As my colleague in the other place the member for Farrer has indicated,
the coalition will be supporting the First Home Saver Accounts Bill 2008 primarily because we believe that any measure that encourages a culture of saving, as is intended with this particular product, should be encouraged. We want, however, to place on the record a number of concerns that we have in relation to the legislation and that includes a number of potential disincentives inherent in the legislation and its structure for potential first home buyers who might be considering committing to these accounts. Some of these disincentives, we are concerned, have not been addressed by government.

We also have ongoing concerns that the first home saver accounts do not address a number of the fundamental causes of the decline in housing affordability and we do wish to place on the record our concern that, unless more is done to address the constrictions of the supply of housing, this bill may in fact result in increasing prices, which would be an undesirable outcome from all perspectives. As has been stated before and elsewhere, there are a number of conditions that the initiative presented in this bill is required to satisfy if it is to boost the purchasing power of home buyers relative to the market. Firstly, it needs to be taken up by home buyers. It must be offered by sufficient financial institutions to facilitate competition in the market and to give consumers opportunity and choice. It should not make housing more expensive than it would otherwise be and it should also be cost-effective in both its implementation and its administration.

We examined the question of whether first home buyers will actually be prepared to commit to this particular savings scheme initiative. To satisfy the basic criteria for a government co-contribution, a potential home buyer is required to make a contribution of $1,000 in four financial years. The government is then indicating that they will provide a contribution of 17 per cent of what the first home buyer pays in, up to a maximum of $5,000. That equates to a maximum government contribution in any year of $850. It is important to note that the government contribution is not, in fact, automatic. If you only saved $1,000, you would get $150 from the government and you must wait a minimum of four years before you can access those funds for any deposit on a first home. Realistically, four years is a long time for a first home buyer. Their plans, their circumstances and market conditions can all change very quickly, and in fact we see that every day in Australia at the moment. A minimum four-year commitment does not necessarily allow potential home buyers to respond to changing circumstances.

Potentially, another deterrent for first home buyers to commit to a first home savers account is the lack of flexibility that exists with regard to contributions. As I have said, payments can only be made to purchase that first home if personal contributions of at least $1,000 have been made in respect of the first home saver account holder in each of at least four financial years. So the accounts, as they are designed, do not make any allowance for fluctuating incomes. In what is a particularly dynamic labour market in 2008, and particularly in the economic circumstances that pertain to Australia, that may be an issue. For example, in today’s very flexible job market, a potential first home buyer might be in a position to contribute more in one year and less in another. So there is that inflexibility that surrounds these accounts, particularly from the perspective of some young people who we know might not be inclined to commit to anything that locks them in for a considerable period of time.

I also want to make a couple of observations about the level of complexity associated with the accounts, which could present some concerns or act as a deterrent to potential first home buyers. These issues were
aired both in submissions to Treasury in the development of the policy, as I understand it, and in submissions to the Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia. Complexity is a challenge in the market, as we all know. When you are contemplating the level of financial literacy that exists amongst young Australians, it can often be regarded as relatively low itself. Abacus, the peak organisation representing building societies and credit unions, raised that particular concern in their submission to Treasury. We should not be expecting young first home buyers to commit to a scheme that they might not understand. That was also evidenced in the committee’s report, which I will make some reference to. Abacus, in their submission to the Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia, indicated:

Optimising the FHSA initiative will require FHSA products that are attractive to, and understood by, young people. Each additional layer of complexity and the regulatory framework will reduce returns to savers, dampen competition and choice, and slow the arrival of FHSA products to market.

Because Abacus is the organisation that represents credit unions—and I have a previous professional history with their predecessor—they have, over the years, as credit unions made a great deal of effort in relation to financial literacy to engage their customers and potential customers on these issues. I understand very well the point that they are making: their indication that it would be very unfortunate if the standing of the First Home Saver Accounts policy were tarnished by any evidence that young Australians had in fact made investments in the products without really knowing what they were doing and perhaps, and there is the potential for this, having gone backwards in capital value terms and, therefore, exacerbating for them the very disadvantage that the First Home Saver Accounts policy was designed to address. That might happen if, for example, the potential buyer cannot keep up with the repayment of $1,000 for four years and the account stalls. These are things which we think need to be taken into account.

If the first home saver account is offered by a registrable superannuation entity and the product is investment linked, it is not capital guaranteed. We all know that superannuation can go backwards as an investment; it is a long-term investment. But this is actually a short-term exercise, so these issues need to be taken into consideration. In such events, the first home saver account holder may be left worse off than if they had just used an ordinary savings account or had scraped together the money for a home deposit from day one.

I also note another potential deterrent: the concern expressed by some organisations that the FHSA could be outstripped by housing price rises. A potential first home buyer, who is locked in for four years, might find at the end of the four years that housing prices have risen faster than their savings. As I understand it, and as was reported to the committee and discussed elsewhere, these concerns were raised during the public consultation process for the accounts and have not actually been addressed.

In terms of account providers, I referred in my earlier remarks to the importance of competition in the marketplace for the provision of the accounts. For the accounts to offer a robust product that is competing well in the marketplace and, importantly, giving the best value to first home buyers, there needs to be competition amongst many providers to ensure quality and to allow for portability of the accounts. We need to be very cognisant of the level of support that there is for potential providers to back the government’s scheme.
There are some bureaucratic arrangements attached to the scheme which some potential providers have expressed concerns about. Again, they were reiterated in the select committee’s hearings, particularly in our first hearing in Sydney. That bureaucratic burden, if you like, can be a very heavy disincentive for providers. The whole process of aligning their systems to work with these new requirements is not an easy one. It is not an inexpensive one for them either, and they would need to be assured that the product is going to be one which has significant take-up before they actually work their systems down that line.

Approved deposit-taking institutions and life insurance companies, of course, have to notify APRA, as the regulatory authority, before they can offer first home saver accounts. They have to obtain the licences that are relevant in this area and, in many cases, they have to establish whole separate trusts. Financial institutions themselves, as they should—but nevertheless it needs to be noted—need to keep detailed records because earnings are taxed to the account provider at 15 per cent rather than to the individual account holder. That means more detailed reporting requirements, particularly to the Commissioner of Taxation, who will be administering the government co-contribution. The Commissioner of Taxation is required to undertake the compliance work, which may be considerable given that the requirement in the outline for the account is only to live in the house for six months after it is purchased or constructed.

I want to make a couple of comments about restrictions on supply in the market in Australia. Whether it is state and territory land taxes and levies, whether it is land release policies, or whether it is a lack of investment in a number of key areas in transport and infrastructure, they all combine to artificially restrict the supply of housing. The Senate committee evidence showed us this. They are issues which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Clearly, if the government is going to add to demand with initiatives of this nature then it must also add to supply to avoid those prices escalating. The Housing Industry Association contends that the housing industry should be building at least 175,000 new residential dwellings each year to satisfy the demand which currently exists.

I reiterate the remarks I made at the beginning of my comments today: we are currently under-building in Australia by an estimated 30,000 dwellings a year. The Reserve Bank of Australia says that any efforts to improve housing affordability should focus on policies regarding land use and improving efficiency in the supply of land and housing. Clearly, with this measure, which is a relevant measure in the debate, the government is not yet at the main game in terms of addressing the problem of housing affordability by taking up the issues of supply shortages to make its consequent policies most effective. The supply of land to build entry-level first homes is not keeping up with the demand. By adding more dollars to the demand side of the equation, you end up giving people more money to spend in what is already a very tight housing market. And there is the concern—which has been expressed by a number of commentators and is recorded, as I said, in the committee’s report—that this increased spending and increase in demand has the capacity to inflate housing prices further than they already are. That means that the public benefit of any co-contribution would end up being bid away in higher prices.

As I said, the coalition are not opposing the first home saver account bills and this initiative, because we do appreciate and have long said that any incentive that encourages young people particularly—and, in the first
home buyers market, that is essentially what we are speaking about—to save is an important and positive outcome. But the government’s maximum co-contribution can only be achieved by saving $5,000, a difficult target for a young person who is probably currently renting. There are complexities surrounding the rules that govern these accounts such that a young potential homebuyer may look at them and decide that it is easier to pursue other saving options. They may well recognise that the small advantage they might accrue over the four years for which they held the FHSA could be very quickly outstripped by the rising costs of housing in Australia.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that the debate on these pieces of legislation is very timely with respect to the tabling of the select committee’s report on housing affordability in Australia, which was entitled A good house is hard to find. I do not often commend reports to the Senate—we all have enough to do with our time—but I would commend the detail of this report to the Senate in terms of the breadth of its examination of the issues right across Australia in both regional areas and capital cities and in terms of the opportunities which were presented for witnesses to come forward to the Senate select committee and provide evidence on the challenges not just in relation to homeownership but more broadly than that, as I referred to yesterday. It is a very important resource for us as senators, for us as a parliament and I would hope, in fact, for the government. I hope that the government looks very carefully at the recommendations that the committee has made and responds constructively to those.

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (1.54 pm)—I rise in the Senate today to speak on the First Home Saver Accounts Bill 2008 and related bills. The Rudd Labor government understands that homeownership is vital to the economic and social wellbeing of all Australians. The home is a stable base from which to participate in our society and the primary asset for most families. According to official statistics, it has never been harder for first home buyers to purchase a home in Australia. The average home now costs seven times the average annual wage, up from four times the average annual wage just 10 years ago. Nationally, first home buyers are now spending 31.7 per cent of their total income on mortgage repayments, up from 17.9 per cent in 1996. Many Australian cities are experiencing large increases in rental costs and a shortage of rental stock. This is of particular concern because of the current shortage of housing supply affecting the most disadvantaged people in the Australian community.

The Rudd Labor government also understands that the cost of living is rising more rapidly than it has in more than a decade. Over the past year, food costs have risen 5.7 per cent, mainly due to increases in the prices of a broad range of household groceries. For example, a litre of milk has gone up 11.6 per cent over the past year, and a loaf of bread is now nine per cent more expensive than it was 12 months ago. The Rudd Labor government understands that all Australians are finding it hard to make ends meet, which is why it is tackling the housing affordability crisis head-on with the First Home Saver Accounts Bill.

In essence, the first home saver accounts are a simple, tax-effective way for Australians to save for their first home, through a combination of low taxes and government contributions. The first home saver accounts will bring the dream of homeownership closer to a reality for hundreds of thousands of young Australians. The Rudd Labor government understands that one of the greatest obstacles to buying a first home is saving for a deposit. From 1 July 2008, a couple each
earning average incomes will be able to save a deposit of more than $88,000 after five years of disciplined saving. This is up to $12,600 more than if they were to save using an ordinary deposit account, depending on returns. Ultimately, having a large deposit reduces the tax burden for young homebuyers and can help them avoid incurring costly mortgage insurance.

Federal Labor’s First Home Saver Account scheme forms part of our responsible approach to economic management. First home saver accounts are an important element of the Rudd Labor government’s five-point plan to win the war on inflation, encouraging private savings and helping to put downward pressure on inflation and interest rates. This initiative will help boost national savings, with the accounts anticipated to hold around $4 billion in savings after four years. The government understands that there is no single solution to the crisis in housing affordability, which is why the first home saver accounts will work in conjunction with federal Labor’s existing $1.1 billion worth of commitments to increase the supply of affordable first homes and rental properties. They include the first Housing Affordability Fund, which will increase housing supply by providing money for local infrastructure and giving state and local governments incentives to lower development charges; the National Rental Affordability Scheme, which will provide investors with tax incentives to increase the supply of new affordable rental properties across Australia, saving 50,000 low- to middle-income families 20 per cent on their rental bills; and introducing a better approach to land release, with all surplus Commonwealth land being free for housing development or community infrastructure.

Many Australians are having trouble finding affordable housing, and they are using a growing proportion of their income to keep it. This is a long-term measure to assist more Australians to achieve their dream of homeownership. Whether people can afford to buy or rent, the federal Rudd Labor government has a plan to comprehensively tackle the housing affordability crisis. The Liberal Party’s inflation legacy has made it harder for working families, especially first home buyers, to save a deposit and buy themselves their first home. The new government has an ambitious housing policy agenda. After more than a decade of neglect, this country is in dire need of direction. The Rudd Labor government is fixing the problems created by the previous, Liberal government. We now have a Minister for Housing, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek, backed up by the departmental capacity in the department of families—

Debate interrupted.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Health

Senator COLBECK (2.00 pm)—My question is to Senator Ludwig, the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing. Prior to the election, Prime Minister Rudd told us that he was going to reduce elective surgery waiting lists. He even told us that the Tasmanian government wrong when they say in their budget papers that elective surgery waiting lists will increase due to the federal government’s decision to increase the Medicare levy surcharge threshold? I seek leave to table page 6.12 of the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services budget papers.

Leave granted.

Senator LUDWIG—The government is committed to delivering better health systems for modern Australia. On this side of the chamber, a better health system for Australian communities is at our core. But you have to appreciate that the Liberals left us with a huge mess. After 11 years of neglect, we are beginning—
Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator LUDWIG—Clearly they agree that they left a mess and they are now trying to defend that mess. The Liberals did leave us with a mess, and we are beginning the important task of rebuilding the Australian health system. And, let me tell you, there is a lot of rebuilding to do. As we go around the country, that is reflected in what needs to be done.

The Treasurer announced the creation of a $10 billion health and hospital fund. It is important to note that this will be the single biggest investment in health infrastructure ever made by an Australian government. This will go to address waiting lists and problems in the health system right around the country, including Tasmania—which were ignored by the Liberals over the last 11½ years. The health and hospital fund will support future health infrastructure priorities, including health and hospital facilities and equipment; medical technology and equipment; and major medical research facilities and equipment, including projects and facilities which will support links between hospital based clinical research and high-quality clinical practice. This is a major step towards building the future and demonstrates this government’s commitment for a better health service for Australians now and into the future.

Senator Colbeck—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. My question was about hospital waiting lists and the Tasmanian budget, which was brought down last Thursday. I would ask you to remind the minister of the question.

The PRESIDENT—The minister is in order.

Senator LUDWIG—As I said, this is a major step towards building for the future—unlike what the Liberals did in their 11½ years. They neglected the issues and did not do what needed to be done. This government is committed to providing a fund for the future. But that is not our only investment in health; we are also investing an additional $1 billion for public hospitals in the next year, which will also go to the waiting lists that are being talked about by the opposition. It is a shame that the opposition did not look at how to address this when they were in government. This government is committed to addressing these issues. In addition there will be $600 million to slash elective surgery waiting lists, $780 million for dental care and $275 million to deliver GP superclinics in local communities.

This is not something that the opposition did when they were in government; it is something that this government is committed to do. This government is committed to deal with this matter over the course of its term. In fact, for the first time, total Commonwealth funding for health and ageing will top $50 billion next year. That compares favourably with the previous government’s health and medical infrastructure fund, which was scheduled to receive an initial allocation of $2.5 billion in the 2006-07 budget, which would have led to $150 million invested in a year’s time.

Our concrete steps to prepare for the future stand in stark contrast to what the Liberals left—the previous government’s 11 years of neglect in this area. In 2003 those opposite made the crucial decision to rip $1 billion from the public health system. No wonder they are complaining about it now in this place. And who were the losers from that decision? (Time expired)

Senator COLBECK—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I do note that the minister went absolutely nowhere near whether or not the Tasmanian government were wrong when they said in their budget papers that elective surgery lists would in-
crease due to the government’s decision to increase the Medicare levy surcharge. I noticed that there was no attempt to address that particular question. Will the minister guarantee that public waiting lists will not get any longer as a result of Labor’s changes, in light of the Prime Minister’s promises—which we know he is so keen to keep—that he made before the election?

Senator LUDWIG—What this government will guarantee is that we will commit to rebuilding the Australian health system, unlike what the opposition did. You left us with 650,000 Australians on public dental waiting lists, a nationwide nurses shortage of almost 6,000—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator LUDWIG—That is what you left us with. You left us with a nationwide doctor shortage, affecting 60 per cent of the Australian population, and 2,300 older Australians languishing in hospital beds every night when they should have access to aged-care homes. That is what the Liberals left us with. We have committed to fixing the hospital system. At the March 2008 COAG meeting, the Commonwealth committed an immediate allocation of $1 billion to relieve pressure for 2008-09 on public hospitals. This $1 billion is made up of the indexation of the previous Commonwealth allocation for 2007-08 plus a further $500 million in additional new money. (Time expired)

Budget

Senator McEWEN (2.07 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Evans. Will the minister outline for the Senate the reasons why it is important that the government’s inflation-fighting surplus is left intact?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thank the senator for what is a very important question. The Rudd Labor government’s first budget delivered on its election commitments. It delivered on the commitments it made to people in terms of tax cuts, child care, education tax rebate—every one of our election promises was delivered as part of our budget strategy. The Australian people appreciate and notice the difference. From 1 July a range of those measures, if passed by this Senate, will come in.

The other commitment we made was to be fiscally conservative. The opposition attacked us, saying, ‘You couldn’t possibly be fiscally conservative—we cannot accept that.’ Despite the fact that we inherited a high inflation rate, despite the fact that we came in in a period when interest rate rise after interest rate rise had occurred under the previous government and despite the international uncertainty, we delivered a budget surplus of $22 billion. We said we needed a huge surplus in order to keep downward pressure on inflation, to keep downward pressure on interest rates. So we delivered on the things we said we would do during the election campaign—delivered on our commitments, delivered on our fiscal conservatism—to make this economy strong and to protect Australian families from inflation and interest rates.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! We will not continue with question time until there is order.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—They do not like hearing it, Mr President. That strategy, endorsed by the Australian people, is under threat because the Liberal-National Party opposition will not pass our budget bills. They are seeking to undermine that surplus that is so critical to the economic conditions in Australia and so critical to families, pensioners and the whole community, who are relying on us keeping up a fight against inflation. This is economic vandalism, because they will not allow us to deliver the budget.
we want to deliver. Six months since the last election—six months since they had to learn to sit over that side—and the arrogance of the Liberal opposition continues. They will not accept the will of the people. The people said, ‘We elected a Rudd Labor government,’ and this government is delivering on its commitments and you are trying to prevent us delivering on our commitments.

Senator Ronaldson—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. The Leader of the Government in the Senate mentioned the fact that commitments were made to pensioners in the budget. I wonder whether he might remind us what they were.

The President—Senator Ronaldson, as you are aware, I cannot direct the minister as to how he will answer the question. He is in order.

Senator Chris Evans—I am happy to do that at any stage—and the cheques will go out, provided you pass the budget! The cheques will go out to pensioners provided you pass the budget. I, like everyone else in Australia, have no idea what the Liberal Party’s real position is. It is so divided, so confused. I remember, just after the budget, the baby bonus was the problem, then it was the FTBB! Have you heard anything in the last month?

Government senators interjecting—

Senator Chris Evans—I have not heard anything in the last month. Then it was all about luxury vehicles, ensuring that we do not tax luxury vehicles—apparently now that is the main cause of concern—or that we do not remove the excise exemption from condensate. And, of course, now they do not want us to give a tax cut to those paying the Medicare levy who are not in private health insurance—that is the current thing, although on the way in today someone told me they had decided to oppose our dental reforms as well. They are going to use their last gasp of a Senate majority to try and destroy the dental reforms as well. Quite frankly, the opposition’s credentials are in tatters. The great irony is that they are hiding behind process. They are saying, ‘We’ve got the numbers today, and we’re going to use our numbers to put off the decision till we don’t have the numbers.’ How politically courageous! How far have you fallen! You are going to delay your decision till you do not have the numbers. What political cowardice!

Opposition senators interjecting—

The President—Order!

Senator Patterson—Quieten down a bit.

Senator Colbeck—Thank you, Senator Patterson. We can hardly hear ourselves interjecting for the level of noise from the minister. Mr President, on a point of order: if the minister would like to address the chamber with some dignity, he might get some in return.

The President—Senator Colbeck, that is not a point of order.

Senator Chris Evans—They do not like it because they know it is true. Political cowardice at its worst! You are handing the balance to the Greens on all these issues. You say that is the worst thing that could possibly happen, but you are going to vote to give them the power to make the decisions. You are political cowards! (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The President—Order! I draw the attention of honourable senators to the presence in the President’s gallery of the distinguished former Senator Jean Jenkins. Welcome, former Senator Jenkins.

Honourable senators—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Senator Boswell (2.13 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Senator Evans. Is the minister aware that the federal government is going to take up to $50 a week in family and childcare payments from some 200,000 low-income families in the community sector due to changes to fringe benefits tax reporting? How can the minister for families say that the government has only recently been made aware of the problem when: (1) I asked questions in estimates two weeks ago on this issue; (2) these measures are contained in schedule 6 of the minister’s own bill, debated in the other house two weeks ago; and (3) the department wrote to the affected workers a fortnight ago setting out how their payments would be cut?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thank the senator for the question, although I did discuss this with him in estimates. It seems that the senator may still not have grasped the issue. The first thing to say is: this is not a result of this year’s budget. This impact on not-for-profit organisations and their workers is not a result of this government’s budget. It is actually a result of action taken by the former government, of which you were a senior member, Senator Boswell. It was contained in measures in the 2006-07 budget. So this was not a dorothy dixer, I hasten to add.

It was legislated by the previous government. I accept it may have an adverse impact on employees in the not-for-profit sector who salary sacrifice. I have friends in that situation and I know how much salary sacrificing has been going on—and quite frankly my personal view is that it has gone too far. That is a personal view, but we did have the debates in this parliament over recent years arising out of the Productivity Commission’s original report. The Democrats were active on the issue. Nevertheless, we have a large number of workers who have salary sacrificed to a huge degree. As I indicated, this was a decision of the previous government and it is now coming into effect. We are increasingly aware of the particular effects it is having on people who work in the not-for-profit sector. We are very concerned that it is going to impact on them, because these are people helping the most vulnerable in our community. For a lot of them, salary sacrifice is what gives them the capacity to work for what are traditionally quite low wages, and they have been poorly paid in the past.

The tax benefits that people are currently receiving from their salary sacrifice arrangements are not affected by the changes; however, some employees, depending on the circumstances, may have a net loss of family benefits. The change is to use the gross value rather than the net value of reportable fringe benefits in determining a person’s income to determine what level of family assistance they are eligible to receive. As I have said, this is not part of this year’s budget; it was a decision taken by the previous government that is to be implemented now. We are aware of the concerns. The minister has undertaken to investigate those concerns. Clearly, it is likely to have more impact than perhaps was first thought, but I do stress that these are measures that have been expected for some time—they are a result of the 2006-07 budget. We want to try and treat people equally, not give advantage to people who salary sacrifice in order to gain access to government benefits. But there is no doubt that there are some consequences of this measure appearing that are going to hurt people quite seriously, and the minister has undertaken to discuss this with various groups to try and work through the issues.

Senator BOSWELL—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Minister, you have admitted people will be hurt. I now ask how many people will be affected by this measure and how much money will they lose from the family budget already under strain from price hikes in food, petrol and housing?
I do remind you that you are the government and you put this bill through the House of Representatives two weeks ago, so do not blame any former government. It is your bill; do not try and fit us for it.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I do not know whether we are at cross-purposes or whether Senator Boswell does not follow this closely enough, but I refer him to Budget Paper No. 2 of the 2006-07 budget and the speech by the then minister, Mr Brough, as a point of reference for him for these issues. I want to make that clear. The government will attempt to resolve the issues involved, Senator, but I do not think it is fair for you to pretend you do not have to take some responsibility for this. But we are happy to address the issues and the concerns.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—It is interesting that you are all care and no responsibility now. The point is that concerns have been raised genuinely. The minister has offered to engage with people to work through those concerns. But, as you know, the clear principle is that people ought to be treated equally and not access benefits unfairly by lowering their assessable income. As I have said, we are working through those issues and hopefully we can find a resolution that at least helps. (Time expired)

Budget

Senator WEBBER (2.18 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law and the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Senator Sherry. Can the minister please explain to the Senate the challenges currently faced in delivering a solid budget surplus from 1 July?

Senator SHERRY—I thank Senator Webber for her question. The stakes before the Senate in the next two weeks are very, very high in terms of the budget. The budget is designed to combat inflation—that remains a key economic challenge for the Labor government—and one of the central elements in the government’s 2008-09 budget, of which a number of bills are to be presented here in the next fortnight, is our plan to fight inflation. We face a very extended period of elevated inflation. The Reserve Bank has forecast inflation to remain at or above three per cent over the next two years, and that is a legacy left to us by the now Liberal-National Party opposition. The average increase in the Reserve Bank’s measure of underlying inflation was 1.2 per cent for the quarter. That is to be 4.2 per cent higher through the year. That is the highest rate of inflation since 1991, or for 16 years. The government’s five-point plan to tackle inflation is focused on fiscal restraint, fiscal conservatism. That is what we promised; that is what we deliver in this budget. We are also expanding the economy’s productive capacity through addressing skill shortages, addressing infrastructure bottlenecks and raising workforce participation, and the Labor government has built a budget surplus of $22 billion to fight inflation and put downward pressure on interest rates.

This is the budget surplus that Australia needs in the current economic circumstances if we are to fight inflation, which we inherited from the Liberal-National Party senators opposite. They neglected it for so long, and now the fight against inflation has been made worse by a number of global economic factors. One of the threats to fighting inflation is being presented to us by the Liberal-National Party senators opposite, who have decided to oppose several budget measures. Let me give one example of the budget measures that they are threatening to oppose—that is, the condensate measure. As part of the budget surplus measures, we are removing the current exemption of condensate from the crude oil excise. Taxing condensate has no impact
on the price of petrol or gas. The measure will increase the return to the Australian community from allowing private interests to extract non-renewable energy resources located in the North West Shelf project area and offshore.

This important inflation-fighting measure, which is contributing to the budget surplus, will have an ongoing net revenue gain of an estimated $2.5 billion over the forward estimates. And it is now being opposed by the Liberal-National Party senators opposite.

_Senator Minchin interjecting—_

_Senator SHERRY—_Yes, $2.5 billion, Senator Minchin, is under threat. The impact of the tax will simply lower the profits of the producers of condensate from particular areas who have benefited substantially from the recent large increases in crude oil prices. The Australian community expects a fair share—and should receive a fair share—of the recent substantial increases in the price of this non-renewable resource. The budget must be passed in full by 1 July or the surplus will begin to fall by $284 million. That will put upward pressure on inflation and upward pressure on interest rates and all because of the irresponsible Liberal-National Party senators opposite.

_Workplace Relations_

_Senator FISHER (2.23 pm)—_My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Senator Wong. I refer to clause 12(2) of the National Employment Standards. Will the minister define how many hours constitute ‘reasonable additional hours’?

_Senator WONG—_As I outlined yesterday, Labor is delivering on the National Employment Standards. Yesterday, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister released the National Employment Standards, which will come into effect in January 2010. Unlike those opposite, we in this government will provide a guaranteed safety net of 10 minimum conditions of employment. I remind the chamber that it is double the number of conditions guaranteed by the former government’s Australian fair pay and conditions standard. Again, this is the Rudd Labor government delivering on its election commitments to provide a fair and flexible industrial relations system of which the government can be proud and which was promised to the Australian people prior to the election. Over the last 24 hours we have seen the opposition asking: ‘What about this?’ ‘What about this?’ ‘What about this?’ What the Australian people will be asking is: where was this opposition, when in government, when people were having their conditions and wages stripped away by Australian workplace agreements under Work Choices? Where was Senator Fisher then? Was she asking the minister for workplace relations then what the impact was on low-paid workers of the award-stripping Australian workplace agreements?

_Senator Fisher—_Mr President, I rise on a point of order. My question was simple: will the minister define how many hours constitute ‘reasonable additional hours’? There are 50 pages in this document—how many hours, Minister?

_T he PRESIDENT—_Senator Wong, I would remind you of the question.

_Senator WONG—_Thank you, Mr President. I am reminded of the question; I am reminded that Senator Fisher, like all of those opposite, chose to pass the Work Choices legislation, which ensured that workers in this country could be subjected to wage-stripping, conditions-stripping Australian workplace agreements. If the question is referring to maximum weekly hours, I would refer the senator to the provisions of the National Employment Standards which deal
with that—they are quite lengthy—notwithstanding the fact that—

*Senator Abetz interjecting—*

*Senator WONG—* She has them there; I am sure she can look it up. Notwithstanding the fact that, unlike your unwieldy 149 pages, which were required—

*The PRESIDENT—* Order! Senator Wong, I would ask you to address your remarks through the chair.

*Senator WONG—* Mr President, as I said, I refer the senator to the provisions of the National Employment Standards. I am sure, as a lawyer, she might have her own opinion about them. But those employment standards are delivering on the government’s commitments of 10 National Employment Standards as part of our fair and flexible industrial relations system.

*Senator FISHER—* Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I note the minister’s ill-defined definition. I refer the minister to clause 12(4)(b) of the National Employment Standards, which requires an employer to take into account an employee’s family responsibilities when considering ‘reasonable additional hours’. Does the government, as an employer, consider that requiring a working mother of two to work 37 hours straight constitutes reasonable additional hours? In the light of this, will the minister guarantee that no Australian worker will be worse off under the government’s proposed National Employment Standards?

*Senator WONG—* I note the guarantee request. Can I make it clear, again through you, Mr President, to Senator Fisher that we on this side can guarantee that Labor’s workplace relations system will be balanced and fair. We can guarantee that there is nothing about the operation of Labor’s workplace relations system that will disadvantage employees. Unlike the other side when in government, we can guarantee that every employee in the federal system will be protected by Labor’s 10 legislated minimum standards and will not be subjected to the wage-stripping, conditions-stripping Australian workplace agreements that Senator Fisher and every other member of the opposition over there voted for and imposed on the Australian people prior to the last election. And no amount of questioning now about guarantees will allow the Australian people to forget that, Senator Fisher.

*Natural Resource Management*

*Senator SIEWERT—* (2.28 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Senator Wong. It relates to the future of natural resource management in Australia under Caring for our Country. Is the government aware of the number of staff already leaving catchment management organisations, regional natural resource management groups, other groups and networks previously funded under the NHT? Don’t these people represent three decades of investment and capacity building within natural resource management? Has the government conducted an assessment of the number of people working in the NRM and landcare sectors who will lose their jobs as a result of Caring for our Country? If so, how many? And if not, why not?

*Senator Abetz—* What about caring for our workers?

*Senator WONG—* I will take that interjection, Senator Abetz. I recall you were the one who steered the Work Choices legislation through this. Through you, Mr President, as the chamber would be aware—

*The PRESIDENT—* Senator Wong, I would ask you to address your remarks through the chair, not across the chamber at Senator Abetz.

*Senator WONG—* Through you, Mr President: the government has announced
our Caring for our Country arrangement, a $2.25 billion initiative which is intended to bring leadership, accountability and an integrated approach to the protection of Australia’s environment. I am aware of the issues that Senator Siewert has raised, and to her credit she has raised them consistently both in this chamber and through the estimates process. I indicate to her that it is the case that Caring for our Country will refocus natural resource investment, but regional groups and others will continue to be supported and partnerships with states and territories will be maintained. I make the point that over the first five years over $636 million will be provided as secure baseline funding for regional NRM organisations and additional funding of up to $75 million will be available to help overcome transitional problems. Funding to regions, as the senator would be aware, is a mix of Commonwealth and state funds as well as investment secured from other sources. In March, the relevant ministers announced the amount of Commonwealth funding to regions, and the government has moved quickly to ensure a smooth transition to Caring for our Country.

The government is currently working closely with the states to ensure that the necessary state arrangements for funding to regions will be in place in July 2008. In relation to the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality—which I think the senator was alluding to—I make the point that many projects funded under NHT and NAP were scheduled to end on 30 June 2008. It is logical that contracts for staff attached to these projects would also cease at the same time. This is a normal part of program management. In 2008-09, regions and others can seek funding for any staffing positions they need to help them contribute to Caring for our Country priorities. As part of this, funding of $189.2 million has been allocated for Landcare over the first five years and volunteers will be supported through existing components.

We make the point that, unlike the previous government’s programs, regions, states, local governments, NGOs and others will be able to access the broader pool of program funding this year and a range of more targeted small grant activities will be available.

Senator Ian Macdonald—Mr President, I rise on a point of order, again on relevance. The question was very specific. Is the minister aware of the number that will be thrown on the unemployment heap? Has she conducted an assessment of the number that will be without a job? If so, how many is it? If not, why was it not done? All of what the minister is talking about is very interesting, but it is not the question that was asked by my colleague in the Greens. Could I ask you, Mr President, to insist upon the minister actually answering the question and not just raving on about something that is of no relevance to the question asked.

Senator Fielding—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. Why are the Greens their friends and not Family First?

The PRESIDENT—Senator Fielding, I would remind you of standing orders and how they relate to frivolous points of order. Senator Macdonald, I have listened carefully to Senator Wong and, as senators are well aware, ministers both past and present have been allowed to expand their answers considerably. If Senator Siewert were to have taken the point of order indicating that she was not happy with the answer, I might have looked upon it differently. But I think that Senator Wong is in order.

Senator Siewert—I rise on a point of order, Mr President. I cannot let that invitation go. Senator Macdonald jumped to his feet prior to me being able to take the point of order. I note that the question is not being answered and that is specifically: how many
people will lose their job? And has the government done an assessment?

The PRESIDENT—Having heard Senator Siewert’s point of order, I would remind Senator Wong of the question.

Senator WONG—It is an interesting alliance across the chamber between Senator Macdonald and the Greens. It is a bit like yesterday between Senator Abetz and the Greens. It is a new approach from those on the other side, one I am sure that Senator Brown and Senator Siewert might look upon with a little bit of consternation, some might say!

Senator Siewert, what I can say to you is to remind you that a number of these programs were only funded to the conclusion of the current financial year. As I said, it is obviously natural that staff contracted or attached to such projects, which were only funded under the previous government till 30 June 2008, would also cease at that time. As some senators might be aware, the government has provided some transitional funding to regional bodies. As you would be aware, Senator Siewert, we have provided all regional bodies with 60 per cent of their historical funding level for 2008-09. I can advise the Senate that in terms of additional transition support funding each of the 56 regional bodies has recently been advised of their share of the 2008-09 transition support funding, which totals $31.8 million. Senator Siewert, this means that on average regional bodies will receive approximately 75 per cent of their historic funding level in 2008-09 and I indicate that decisions on each body’s share of the available transition support budget took into account principles such as equity between jurisdictions, local transitional pressures, regional capacity and level of funding support from other avenues, operational overheads and the level of carryover in regions. On the specific three organisations the senator alluded to I will undertake to see if I can obtain further information.

Workplace Relations

Senator WONG—As I was outlining and as I have outlined previously, there has been a focus on and a prioritisation of the Caring for our Country funding in accordance with the approach that Ministers Garrett and Burke have outlined. Obviously, reprioritising for issues of national priority has meant the government has focused its funding in those areas. I reiterate that regional bodies will receive approximately 75 per cent of their historic funding level in 2008-09 and I indicate that decisions on each body’s share of the available transition support budget took into account principles such as equity between jurisdictions, local transitional pressures, regional capacity and level of funding support from other avenues, operational overheads and the level of carryover in regions. On the specific three organisations the senator alluded to I will undertake to see if I can obtain further information.

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the government’s election commitments—double what was delivered under the previous government. We all remember that this is the opposition that, when in government, pushed through the extreme Work Choices legislation on this issue.

I am not sure which page the senator was referring me to, but it is the case that personal/carers leave and compassionate leave are one of the 10 minimum standards. If he is referring to page 29, he will see that annual leave is discussed there. I would refer him to those standards and I would remind the senator and those opposite that in government they pushed through the extreme Work Choices legislation, which contained Australian workplace agreements, which enabled wages and conditions to be stripped away. That was the policy that you argued for at the election. We argued for Forward with Fairness, a policy that is designed to provide both fairness and flexibility in the workplace. We are delivering on that election commitment. We delivered on it with the progress through the Senate of the transition bill. We recall that the opposition was in two minds about whether it was going to oppose that, just as on the budget it is in two minds as to whether it is actually going to put a hole in the surplus in a manner that my colleagues have described.

Now we have the 10 National Employment Standards, again delivering an election commitment made by Labor at the last election. The opposition has to decide whether it wants to oppose Labor implementing its election commitments or whether it is going to come to the task of responsible economic policy on the other side. This is an election commitment being delivered. The National Employment Standards are clearly an election commitment which was discussed prior to the election and, as I outlined yesterday, these national employment standards, unlike the Work Choices legislation, were the subject of detailed consultation with industry and with the community prior to being finalised.

Senator Abetz—Especially industry? Not with unions?

Senator WONG—It is interesting—isn’t it—that Senator Abetz is interjecting again. Yes, Senator Abetz, we actually do engage in consultation. We engaged in consultation with the community, we engaged in consultation with the union movement and we engaged in consultation with various sectors of industry and business. The reality is that these employment standards were informed by those consultations, unlike the Work Choices legislation, which was not.

Senator WATSON—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Is it not a fact that under the coalition’s current workplace relations system workers can cash out a maximum of only two weeks of their annual leave? Will the government guarantee that no worker will be worse off under Labor’s current National Employment Standards?

Senator WONG—Let us recall that under the Work Choices legislation, certainly as it was originally passed, you did not have a no disadvantage test against the award. What we have are the 10 legislated minimum National Employment Standards as well as a commitment to a modernised award system. As I said in answer to Senator Fisher, we on this side can guarantee that our system will be balanced and fair and we can guarantee that there is nothing about the operation of Labor’s workplace relations system which will disadvantage employees. As has previously been said by the Deputy Prime Minister, I can guarantee that every employee in the federal system will be protected by our 10 legislated minimum standards, something that could never ever be delivered and could never be guaranteed under your government.
Political Donations

Senator POLLEY (2.43 pm)—My question is to the Special Minister of State, Senator Faulkner. Has the government identified any areas where the accountability, integrity and transparency of the electoral laws are deficient and in need of urgent repair?

Senator FAULKNER—I certainly can assure Senator Polley and the Senate that the government is committed to an accountable and transparent electoral system. There are a number of areas where the accountability, integrity and transparency of the Commonwealth Electoral Act need very urgent and substantial repairs. One of the most critical is the area of the disclosure threshold which applies to political donations. We must lower the donation disclosure threshold from the current $10,500 enacted by the Howard government. This is simply too high. I can assure the Senate that the government’s policy is to ensure that all donations over $1,000 are exposed to public scrutiny. The Australian public needs to know who gives substantial donations and to whom they are given.

We must also close the loophole through which people can avoid their disclosure obligations and cover up their donations by splitting those donations between state divisions or branches of the same political party. And we must ban overseas donations because they are beyond the jurisdiction and of course cannot be investigated by the AEC. We must remedy the absurdly long time frames which political parties and candidates have to report their donations publicly. Today, in June 2008, we still do not know who made significant donations to the major political parties and the candidates during the campaign for the election of November 2007. Reporting requirements for political parties and candidates need to be made more comprehensive and they should be more timely. We must also ensure that no-one can profit from standing for public office. Public funding must be for electoral expenses incurred.

There is mounting concern in the community, I think, over the erosion of transparency. The AEC has reported that for 2004-05, when the donation disclosure threshold was $1,500, 1,286 donor returns were lodged with the AEC. For 2005-06, after the previous government raised the threshold to $10,000 indexed, only 317 donor returns were lodged—fewer that one-quarter of the number of donor returns could be scrutinised by the public than had previously been the case. This is bad for democracy and for the political process. These are problems that need to be fixed and they need to be fixed now. The way to fix them is to pass and support the government’s Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2008, which the opposition is trying to block—for not days, not months, but years.

Senator POLLEY—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. In his answer, the minister referred to the fact that candidates can receive more public funding from the taxpayer than the expenditure incurred on their campaign. How can this practice be stopped?

Senator FAULKNER—The government is aware that under the Electoral Act candidates for public office—or parties for that matter—can receive more in public funding than they spend on their election campaigns—that is, candidates can make a profit from running for public office. I want to say very clearly that the Howard government, which allowed this situation to continue for election after election—

Senator Minchin interjecting—

Senator FAULKNER—Well I can say to you, Senator Minchin—
The PRESIDENT—Order! Senator Faulkner, please address your comment through the chair.

Senator FAULKNER—Through you, Mr President, I say to the whole Senate that the Rudd government is committed to ending this rort.

Workplace Relations

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS (2.49 pm)—On that previous question, Senator Faulkner, the residents of the Illawarra will be watching that issue with great interest. My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Senator Wong. I refer the minister to the government’s announcement of the requirement for employers to distribute a so-called fair work information statement under the National Employment Standards. Will the government rule out including the name of a particular union or unions or the contact information for unions in the fair work information statement?

The PRESIDENT—Before I call Senator Wong, I remind you, Senator Fierravanti-Wells, that it is not in order to comment on a minister’s previous answer.

Senator WONG—It is pleasing to see that the opposition have a new-found interest in the conditions of workers in the workplace because, as we know, when the opposition were last in government they were responsible for the most extreme industrial relations laws this country has ever seen.

Senator Minchin—There were massive increases in real wages under our government.

Senator WONG—I note the interjection by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Minchin. He is a well-known supporter of Work Choices. In fact, my recollection is that Senator Minchin was one of those who thought you should have gone further. Is that still your position? And he still cannot help himself. He still comes in here and defends the legacy of an industrial relations system that was all about reducing wages and conditions.

It is the case, as Senator Fierravanti-Wells has indicated, that a fair work information statement is one of the 10 minimum standards. I refer her to the National Employment Standards for an outline of what is included in that statement.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. It is clear that the minister refuses to rule out that there will be details about the unions in the fair work information statement. But I refer the minister to Minister Gillard’s comments last year:

I’m troubled Australian employers are basically being forced by the government to hand out its propaganda.

... the burden of that for a small business person I just think is astronomically large and I don’t see why small business people particularly should be forced to bare the burden of handing out the Howard government’s propaganda. Given these comments, will the government be legislating to exempt small business from handing out the Rudd government’s propaganda? Will the minister guarantee that no Australian worker will be worse off under Labor’s new employment standards?

Senator WONG—In terms of what is included in the statement, I refer the senator to section 65(2) on page 50 of the National Employment Standards, which states:

(2) The Fair Work Information Statement must contain information about the following:

(a) the National Employment Standards;
(b) modern awards;
(c) agreement-making under this Act;
(d) the right to freedom of association;
So it is very clear what it must contain. The regulations may prescribe other matters and I am sure that those opposite will know the process by which regulations are made.

**Overseas Aid**

**Senator ALLISON (2.53 pm)**—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I refer to criticism earlier this year by the UN Secretary-General of the sharp decline in international funding for reproductive health and family planning.

Is the minister aware that universal access to family planning would reduce maternal deaths by 20 to 35 per cent and child deaths by 20 per cent? Is the government aware that 200 million women in the developing world have no access to contraception and are unable to plan their families? If so, when will the government reverse the massive cut in Australia’s family planning aid over the last 12 years from 0.44 per cent in 1996 to just 0.07 per cent last year?

**Senator Faulkner**—I will assist Senator Allison where I can, certainly in relation to one aspect of the question which she raises, which goes to the issue of the recommendations of the report of the all-party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development on sexual and reproductive health in the Australian aid program, which I am sure is part of what Senator Allison is referring to. The Senate may know, and Senator Allison may be aware, that the government is certainly considering the implications of the report’s recommendations. Senators might be aware that this all-party group was previously chaired by Dr Mal Washer, a member of the House of Representatives, and is now chaired by my colleague Senator Claire Moore.

I can say to you as far as the government’s approach on this particular issue is concerned, Mr President, that the federal parliamentary Labor Party has, as I understand it, formed a subcommittee to consider the recommendations of the report, including the recommendation to abolish the Australian government’s aid program’s family planning guidelines. I can say to you, because I am a member of the Australian parliamentary Labor Party, that I certainly understand that this particular group has been formed by self-selection. The government’s approach is that any member or senator who has an interest in these issues certainly has an opportunity to put forward a point of view and to participate fully in the discussions of the group.

I think it is important to acknowledge that around the parliament, not only in this chamber but also in the House of Representatives, there are very strong views on these issues. I would always—and always have when these issues are debated—both within the chamber itself and certainly within the parliamentary party that I belong to, acknowledge that these strong views are genuinely held by members and senators. I can say to you, as far as the government, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister are concerned, these issues are going to be seriously considered and all views will be taken into account.

The only other thing I can add to this, Senator Allison, which may assist you in relation to the question that you have asked is that at this stage there has been no date determined for the finalisation of this process.

**Senator ALLISON**—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for his answer but I was actually asking about the funding provided for family planning. Useful though the answer was with regard to the family planning guidelines, which no doubt have some influence over the amount of funding which is provided for family planning, my question to you was:
how come—and you are not responsible; I realise this—over the last 12 years family planning funding has dropped from 0.44 per cent to 0.07 per cent? That is a massive cut down to one-sixth of what it was in 1996. So I ask you: will the government deliver on its commitment to the ICPD, by the Keating government in 1994, reaffirmed by the Howard government in 2005, to sexual and reproductive health being at least four per cent—not 0.4 per cent but four per cent—of aid spending? Is the new minister aware that the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, to which he referred, recommends that this aid be raised to 10 per cent of ODA?

The PRESIDENT—Senator Allison, this is a very long question.

Senator FAULKNER—Some elements of the supplementary question I will need to seek some advice on from the minister, because the senator asked me of the minister’s views. I can say to Senator Allison that, within the health component of the aid program, the government certainly takes the issues of sexual and reproductive health very seriously. I understand that the estimate is that it is 4.8 per cent of Australia’s total aid program—or more than $152 million this financial year is being spent on controlling sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and on reproductive healthcare, family planning and population policy through international aid agencies and also through non-government organisations. That is the limit of the detail I have, and I am very happy to ask Minister Smith if he can provide any further information on the other elements of the question and supplementary. (Time expired)

Hybrid Vehicles

Senator BIRMINGHAM (2.59 pm)—Given the tragic absence of Senator Carr this week, my question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Evans. Can the minister explain how the government’s $35 million gift to Toyota to assemble the hybrid Camry in Australia will most effectively reduce global greenhouse emissions, given there are currently some 78 more fuel efficient cars being made around the world than the hybrid Camry, which the government is proposing to support?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thank the senator for his question. I acknowledge that Senator Carr is not here, but I suspect Senator Birmingham must not have been here yesterday because I thought we dealt with these issues fairly comprehensively. I am happy to, again, expand on the breadth of my knowledge of these issues. I made it very clear yesterday that, as part of the government’s commitment to the development of green car innovation, we are going to contribute, as was announced, $35 million to Toyota’s much larger investment in this hybrid Camry production. I think your question, Senator Birmingham, implies that somehow Toyota are not investing in this, that somehow it is a contribution by the government. What we are doing is making a small capital grant of $35 million as part of a much broader investment by Toyota. For you to prove your argument that somehow this is an ineffective argument you must say that Toyota are acting against their self-interest, that they do not think this is a worthwhile project. They think this is a very worthwhile project. They had to choose where to do it, and partly because of the support they got from this government they decided to do this development work in Australia.

We think that is a really good thing for Australia. We think it is a really good thing for the Australian car industry and I am surprised that the opposition are unprepared to support the future of the Australian car industry. This hybrid will make a contribution
to the development of cleaner, more fuel efficient vehicle transport in this country. This is part of that contribution. Yes, there are other models like the Prius and others being developed which are going down this path. What this means is that Toyota will look to develop its hybrid Camry in Australia. It will receive the support of the Australian government and the Victorian government. We think it is a really good project. We think it will assist in reducing carbon emissions and lead us to cleaner vehicle technologies. I think that, while it is not the only measure, it is one of a number and it is one that is worth supporting.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I note that the minister did not deny that there are 78 more fuel efficient options. In fact, he even conceded that there were other more fuel efficient options that the government could have considered. Minister, is it not a fact that an average Australian family driving the hybrid Camry will not save the $1,000 per year the Prime Minister has claimed, but will save just $585 per year? Did the Prime Minister not mislead Australians when he said that an ‘average family driving some 20,000 kilometres a year’ will save ‘up to $1,000’ with one of these hybrid Camrys. Is this not just further proof that the government’s $35 million gift to Toyota was all about spin over substance and not evidence based at all?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I think the only spin is that in the question. What a rambling, confusing question. The answer to the question is this: I do not know how many other options are being developed by other car companies. What we do know is that Toyota have committed to building a hybrid Camry in this country and we have committed to supporting it. We have committed $35 million out of a $500 million fund we have established. So this is a first instalment of a large program about driving more fuel efficient vehicles in this country. It is a commitment that the previous government was not prepared to make because it was so torn about whether it believed in climate change or not. We made an election commitment, we are delivering on it and the Australian people will, I think, be grateful that we have made that commitment. Mr President, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Health

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania) (3.04 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Human Services (Senator Ludwig) to a question without notice asked by Senator Colbeck today relating to hospital admissions and waiting times.

Senator Ludwig’s answers today effectively bell the cat on promises to the Australian people made by the Rudd government prior to the election where they said they would actually reduce hospital waiting lists. The revelations in the Tasmanian budget papers effectively expose the impact of the ill-considered measure of the Rudd government in changing the Medicare levy thresholds, particularly given the lack of work they did on this measure as part of the overall budget consideration. Mr Rudd has made a big deal about keeping his promises and the people of Tasmania will be very disappointed to find that, rather than a reduction of hospital waiting lists that he promised them, they will in fact see an increase of 627 over 2007-08 levels in the 2008-09 year. That is a seven per cent increase, not the decrease that was promised by the Rudd government. Now the Tasmanian government were well aware of all the measures, the $600 million, that Senator Ludwig told us about when he responded to the questions that we asked during ques-
tion time. They are aware of all those programs. In fact, they already have some of the money that was allocated under the first $150 million, so the program would have started. But despite that, their budget papers say that they expect to see a seven per cent increase in hospital waiting lists in Tasmania.

We know that other states also have concerns about this measure and the impact that that is going to have on their hospital waiting lists. And we know from our questions at estimates that, when calculations were made about the impact on private health insurance companies, there was no calculation with respect to children; children were not included in the numbers, so the estimates that were provided to us by the government fell short. We know that if you include children that puts the numbers at over 700,000 people. Therefore, the estimates that were ridiculed by the government from the industry and from the medical fraternity are in fact much closer to being about right. Estimates of 700,000 to one million people moving out of private health insurance are obviously going to have an ongoing impact on people who still have private health insurance. Therefore, people will be moving into the public health system and, as the Tasmanian government has admitted, will be placing additional pressure on waiting lists around the country.

We know that the government did not take all of the effects of this into account. We found that out through the estimates process. They are about to embark on new five-year Commonwealth-state funding agreements and yet they did not consult the body that they put together to advise them on health—the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission—at all on this measure, despite the significant impact that that was going to have on health, going forward. They did ask the Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to advise them on the five-year health funding agreement between the Commonwealth and the states, but they did not mention the fact that they were going to attack a significant chunk of the health system in this country and they have not even costed the potential second-round impacts that might occur. So they have no idea, going into the five-year health funding agreements with the states, what the costs are going to be. They have no way of knowing what claims are going to be made against them by the states to compensate for this or whether those claims are genuine or not. They are just effectively going to have to take the state government's word for it.

At this point in time, despite the first reports on the reduction of waiting lists being due on 6 May, we still do not know what is happening with those. At estimates a couple of weeks ago we were told that the first quarterly report that was supposed to be provided by the states would be available in the next few weeks, yet we still do not have that information. (Time expired)

Senator HURLEY (South Australia) (3.10 pm)—The election, of course, was a devastating loss for the Liberal Party and I can understand that they have not quite got their balance and bearings today. It will take some time for the party to settle down and get a decent policy position, because we have seen some amazing U-turns and backflips on policy here today—none more than this one here today as outlined by Senator Colbeck. I mean, this sympathy for the states is just extraordinary when before the election, for month after month, we heard attacks on the states; attacks on their health policies and attacks on every policy that they had; attacks about not spending enough; and attacks about their management of the hospital system. And now we have sympathy for the states. Now we have acceptance of their costings; now we have acceptance of their
estimates of what is going to happen with their health policies.

The difference is that the Rudd Labor government are actually talking to the states; they are actually discussing funding needs with the states and what they need with their health systems. So it absolutely rings hollow to have this pretend sympathy as to the state system because no sympathy was shown under the Howard government—no sympathy at all. They were squeezed down in their health budgets and their funding; they were squeezed down in every direction so that the Howard government could claim superiority and direct money to programs that they wasted their revenue on.

So we now have this attack on this policy. What is this policy going to do? It is going to remove from lower income earners a tax slug that was put on them in the past. The Liberal opposition is trying to stop the removal of a tax slug on low-income workers on the basis that it subsidises the hospitals. I am sure, if you spoke to anyone who is struggling on $50,000 a year, that they would have absolutely no sympathy for that argument whatsoever—and neither should they. For year after year the Howard government refused to adjust that income level and the result is that people on those low to medium incomes were paying more than they should have into the healthcare system while tax cuts kept being given to higher income earners. The Rudd government are now redressing that system and they are balancing that by discussing with their state counterparts how to make sure that the health system starts to work properly after 12 years of neglect by the Howard government.

It just astounds me that, having suffered that devastating loss in the election, the Liberal Party have not, it seems, learnt a thing. They are now telling people in that income group that they are going to block a provision by the Rudd government that removes this tax impost on people earning $50,000 a year or more. It is just breathtaking. I have to say that it just shows how little the Liberal opposition have got in putting together their policy. The Leader of the Opposition said at one stage that he believes that people earning over $150,000 are doing it tough. We also have the opposition trenchantly opposing the luxury car tax, and yet it is okay for people on a $50,000 a year income to pay this extra tax impost that gradually crept upon them over the years of the Howard government. I would be very astounded if the opposition again go to an election with that kind of policy. I mean, if they are a good opposition then I think they need to go back to the drawing board, recover from their devastating election loss, look again at their policies and look again at the kind of legislation they are blocking. (Time expired)

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia) (3.15 pm)—I also rise to take note of the answer provided by Senator Ludwig. In his answer today, the minister again tried to defend a bad public policy decision by ignoring the facts and totally ignoring the impact on our public hospitals. The challenge for any government is to set up a policy framework that will ensure that all Australians have affordable and timely access to quality hospital care. In Australia, we aim to achieve that through a mixed health system, with a public hospital component and a private hospital component. When we last came into government in 1996, that system was totally out of balance. In 1996, private health insurance membership was in free fall. It bottomed out at 30 per cent before we were able to turn the ship around. How did we turn that ship around? Through a three-pillar policy supporting Australians who were prepared to take additional responsibility for their own healthcare needs by taking out private health insurance. This was done through the 30 per
The 12 months between December 2006 and December 2007, nearly 400,000 additional Australians took additional responsibility for their own healthcare needs by taking out private hospital insurance. By December 2007, 9.4 million Australians had taken out private hospital insurance. Now we have a government that comes up with a Treasury-driven bad public policy which is ill thought out and short-sighted and will have a devastating impact on our public hospitals. What did we find out in the Senate estimates process? Treasury did not understand the difference between what is called in industry jargon ‘single equivalent units’ and ‘persons covered’. ‘Single equivalent units’ are adults. ‘Persons covered’ are adults and their dependent children. That is why the Treasurer was out there for weeks on end trying to tell Australians that only 485,000 people would leave private health insurance as a result of this measure. We have found out since then that it is going to be significantly more; it is going to be well in excess of 700,000 people.

We then tried to assess the impact on public hospitals. If you look at the budget papers, the government expects to save $959.7 million as a result of not having to pay the private health insurance rebate to those Australians who will leave private health insurance as a result of this measure. We have found out since then that it is going to be significantly more; it is going to be well in excess of 700,000 people.

As a result of this measure, $960 million no longer has to be spent by the Commonwealth due to people leaving private health insurance. That is only the 30 per cent private health insurance rebate. The total funding lost to the health system as a result is well in excess of $3 billion. When we asked questions in estimates about whether the Commonwealth had consulted with the states or modelled, costed or in any way assessed the impact of this measure on state public hospitals, the answer was, ‘No, we have not.’ Treasury said, ‘We don’t cost, model or assess second-round effects.’ What a joke! There is a tsunami of additional demand about to hit public hospitals across Australia. We have a Prime Minister who, in the lead-up to the election, was telling Australians that he would end the blame game and would start a new era of cooperative federalism in health. Yet here they are taking $3 billion out of the Australian health system without any meaningful compensation and trying to hide it through smoke and mirrors. It is an absolute disgrace. Quite frankly, there is a very serious need for some additional scrutiny on the impact of this measure. (Time expired)

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (3.20 pm)—We had a very interesting situation in question time today. On the one hand, we had Senator Boswell, who was very much concerned about the impact on low-income earners—people earning about...
$50,000 on FBT and salary sacrificing—and then we had Senator Colbeck attacking a measure that seeks to alleviate the tax burden on people earning $50,000.

Senator Colbeck is again playing politics with the Tasmanian health system. Those opposite did it during the election, with the Mersey hospital, and they are doing it again here. I remind the Senate of what actually happened under the previous government in terms of hospital funding to Tasmania. We do not have to go too far; we only have to look at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s *Health expenditure Australia 2005-06* report, which was released last year and showed that the Australian government’s share of the public hospital bill declined by more than five per cent in the four years to June 2006, with the load shifting to the state government. That meant that the Howard government short-changed Tasmania by $70 million each and every year. It was funding that would have paid for more nurses and opened more beds to allow for more operations to be performed across Tasmania’s public hospitals. That is the situation. That was the situation under the previous government, and Senator Colbeck well knows that.

I will also inform the Senate exactly what Labor has delivered to Tasmania’s health system. The recent budget delivered significant investments in Tasmania’s health. These investments underpin the recommendations of the clinical services plan and include $15 million towards the establishment of an integrated care centre in Launceston; up to $2.5 million towards the establishment of a GP after-hours clinic in Burnie; up to $5 million towards the establishment of a GP superclinic in Devonport; up to $7.7 million for an additional radiation oncology unit in the north or north-west; $1.25 million for mental health counselling with the Sisters of Charity; $60,000 towards the redevelopment of the Penguin Medical Centre; $3.5 million to support the purchase of a PET scanner at the Royal Hobart Hospital; up to $8 million towards the establishment of a GP superclinic for the eastern shore, with clinics at both Bellerive and Sorell; and $10 million for patient transport services. This is what the Rudd Labor government has delivered to Tasmania, as well as it being part of the $3.2 billion National Health and Hospitals Reform Plan. What we saw from the previous government was a ripping out of $70 million from the Tasmanian health system.

I will just go back to the Medicare levy surcharge. The surcharge was introduced by the Howard government in 1997. The then Minister for Health and Family Services, Dr Wooldridge, in his speech introducing the surcharge, indicated that the surcharge was aimed at high-income earners, the people who could afford to pay for private health insurance. However, under the Howard government, the levy income threshold has remained static over 10 years, while average weekly earnings have increased by nearly 50 per cent. The Howard government’s refusal to increase the levy threshold meant that close to 50 per cent of Australians, many of them only earning the average wage, were being slugged with paying the surcharge despite the fact that this was not who the surcharge was intended to impact on.

In his speech in reply on the budget, Dr Nelson railed against what he labelled as ‘bracket creep’ and ‘tax increases on the sly’. However, such claims are hypocritical when applied in retrospect, considering that the now opposition did nothing—I repeat: nothing—for 10 years and effectively imposed tax increases on the sly on working families in Australia by simply not increasing the Medicare surcharge threshold. *(Time expired)*

_Senator HUMPHRIES* (Australian Capital Territory) *(3.25 pm)*—Allow me to contaminate some of the arguments put by the
Labor members in this place with a few facts. First fact: it is not the case that this adjustment in the Medicare levy surcharge thresholds is to account for inflation since the measures were introduced in 1996. If you had made that adjustment, as you claim you were trying to do, you would have ended up with a singles level threshold of something like $70,000, depending on whether you were adjusting for increases in the price of goods or of wages. So this argument that putting it up to $100,000 for singles and $150,000 for couples is simply about adjusting pursuant to the policy of the previous government is absolute and arrant nonsense.

The second fact is about the argument that this is a tax slug which the government believes should be taken off the shoulders of working Australians. The fact is that there is tax relief and there is tax relief. Not all tax relief is a good thing. You need to consider the downstream effect of any decisions of this kind on the total picture in the area that you are affecting. Take this example. If the government had announced in its budget that it was going to decrease the burden on working families by reducing the excise on tobacco products, what would we say? Of course, there are some families who would pay less for their tobacco products, but what would the effect be on the health of Australians? It would be to cause a deterioration of the health of Australians overall—and so with this measure. We need to pose the question: is this actually in the interests of Australians' health generally?

Let us look at the effect. We know that this will cause hundreds of thousands of Australians to surrender their private health insurance. We know that means that when those people get sick the chances are that they will move into the public health system to obtain medical treatment. We know that that will increase waiting lists. We know it will increase pressure on public hospital systems in this country, systems which are already seriously burdened by very large numbers on their waiting lists. Take dental care as a particular example. It is sometimes said that people who are younger and fitter are the ones who will give up their private health insurance under these arrangements. But people of any age need dental treatment. They need check-ups. They need fillings. They need the sorts of things that have to happen throughout our lives. What will happen to these people, these 700,000-plus Australians—as Senator Cormann points out—who have given up their private health insurance, when these people need dental care? The chances are that either they will have to bear those very severe costs themselves, and we all know that going to the dentist is no cheap affair—so much for helping working families in Australia—or they will have to join the public dental waiting queues, very long queues that are increasingly under pressure, growing all the time, which are not going to be much relieved by the decisions of this government, to be perfectly frank, and we are going to find more people under pressure because of the state of their dental health.

The fact is that this has not been thought through by the government. They have not taken this step in order to relieve the pressure on working families; they have taken this step because they have an ideological opposition to the entire concept of private health in this country. They want to get people out of private hospital lists, out of private health insurance and into public systems, for reasons which are very hard to determine indeed. If those systems were working well, if they were under less pressure than they are now, you might understand it, but the truth is simply that they are not. That ideological position will cost Australians in terms of their health very dearly in the future.
Let us be clear about this decision. It will increase the cost of private health insurance—no ifs, no buts; it will certainly do that. Medibank Private has already said it is going to lose 10 per cent of its customers. What will it do to its premiums in those circumstances? It will have to put them up—and those opposite claimed they were going to bring premiums down, not put them up. It will force more Australians out of private health insurance and it will force more people into public hospitals and onto waiting lists for public health services.

With this decision, Labor will dishonour spectacularly its election promise to put downward pressure on public hospital waiting lists. There is no other consequence which can be foreseen except that that will occur. That is an absolutely gross dishonesty towards the Australian people. It is time, as Senator Cormann said, that we have more debate about this, that we expose the reasons behind Labor’s decision and that we bring to light the true downstream effects of this decision, because they are extremely damaging to the health of Australians. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

**Natural Resource Management**

**Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia)** (3.30 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Climate Change and Water (Senator Wong) to a question without notice asked by Senator Siewert today relating to natural resource management.

Recently, in the run-up to World Environment Day, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, was on *Lateline* and he was asked a difficult question about how he coped with the politics of compromise. He said:

I’ve learned that compromise can be powerful.

Then he held up the Caring for our Country program as the shining light of how powerful compromise can be. I will tell you what he is compromising. He is compromising NRM, natural resource management, in this country. There is absolutely no doubt about it. The government are cutting funding to natural resource management groups. The staff working in natural resource management groups and catchment groups around this country are leaving in droves. They are already leaving. The government are not funding all of the programs and projects that used to be funded. There are projects that are not winding up in June that they are not funding, or have not told natural resource management groups if they are funding.

I am aware of at least one group that has the potential of losing 22 staff. If you multiply that by 56 regional groups around Australia, that is thousands of staff that will be leaving natural resource management. As somebody from a regional group—who I will not name because I do not want to compromise them in their battles to get their funding—said to me recently in an email:

It’s not just the people– it’s the momentum, the intellectual base, the corporate wisdom, the historical knowledge – we will have to re-start a whole number of projects for 2009-13, from scratch—

that is if they get funded—

‘cos the people who are currently involved will be working for the mining companies!

We have spent three decades in this country investing in land management, natural resource management and Landcare, and now the expertise that has been built up over those years is walking out the door because they are not being funded by this government.

Three key networks that I am aware of, the Threatened Species Network—apparently threatened species are not a priority for the government anymore because they have re-focused their priorities—the Marine and
Coastal Community Network and SeaNet, still do not know if they have been funded again. It is now 17 June. At the end of June they will have to close their doors if the government does not tell them if they are getting re-funded. All those staff, all that expertise, will be lost. It is very important to remember, particularly with those groups that have an environmental focus, that they work across sectors. They particularly work with industry—in the marine industries, the land management industries, the agricultural industries—to forward the aims of natural resource management.

This government says it has refocused its priorities. Well, it has refocused its priorities away from salinity. Apparently salinity in this country is not an issue anymore. It is not a natural resource management issue. I would really like the government to explain that to the farmers, particularly in Western Australia, who have six million hectares at threat from salinity. The government, with a stroke of the pen, has decided that salinity is no longer a natural resource management priority. It has also decided that marine conservation is not a priority. Apparently it has refocused its objectives. It has refocused its priorities.

In estimates, the government said that the department confirmed that they had cut funding to marine conservation by half. Then they came back to me and said: ‘The government are still working out whether they are going to fund marine conservation under Caring for our Country, so watch this space, Senator, because maybe it will be re-funded under Caring for our Country.’ The point here is: when are the government going to make a decision? How can we have a strategic, sustained, holistic approach to environment and natural resource funding and management if the government are taking this ad hoc and unstrategic approach to funding for the environment and for natural resource management?

Various programs have been running for quite a significant period of time—three decades, as I said. Over those three decades, we have learnt and built up a better understanding of how we should be funding and dealing with natural resource management. We know we need to be taking a whole-of-landscape approach. We know we need to be investing in long-term programs. We know that we need to keep the expertise in place in the regions if we are going to have any hope of dealing with these programs in the long term. It is quite clear this government does not understand natural resource management and does not understand agriculture. It has taken a series of ad hoc election promises it made, for dealing with the Great Barrier Reef, cane toads and Tasmanian devils—all of which themselves are important—thrown them together and realised that they have to be funded, and so therefore it has looked at where it can get funding from other programs to start delivering on this ad hoc process of environment programs. This is not the way that we need to be dealing with—\(\text{(Time expired)}\)

Question agreed to.

**PETITIONS**

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

**Live Animal Exports**

To the Honourable President and members of the Senate in Parliament assembled:

The petition of the undersigned protests in the strongest possible terms against the live export of Australian animals for slaughter in other countries.

The live export trade is cruel. Inhumane conditions are inherent to the trade, resulting in high death rates and unacceptable suffering for animals involved.
The live export trade costs jobs. Rural and regional Australians, already suffering under a lengthy drought, can ill afford to send animals overseas for slaughter when there are workers in Australian abattoirs who can perform this work.

As long as animals continue to be sent overseas for slaughter, jobs in Australian abattoirs will suffer.

Furthermore, the live export trade is unnecessary. Australia’s export markets in Asia and the Middle East WILL accept meat that has been slaughtered in Australia according to their cultural requirements.

There are currently 123 abattoirs in Australia with an approved Halal program that could slaughter livestock for export to markets that demand Halal products.

The live export trade for slaughter is both cruel and unnecessary. Your petitioners request that the Senate act immediately to abolish the live export trade and replace it with an expanded chilled meat trade.

by Senator Bartlett (from 16,704 citizens)

Petition received.

NOTICES

Presentation

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

That the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Friday, 20 June 2008, from 9.15 am, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the review of reforms to Australia’s military justice system by the Australian Defence Force.

Senator Fielding to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to provide for the regulation of poker machines to promote responsible gambling practices and minimise problem gambling, and for related purposes. Poker Machine Harm Minimisation Bill 2008.

Senators Stott Despoja and Bartlett to move on 19 June 2008:

That the Senate—

(a) welcomes the Government’s engagement with the United Nations (UN) and commitment to human rights via its:

(i) proposed ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and

(ii) consultations on Australia’s ascension to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

(b) notes that:

(i) Australian companies are increasingly active in developing countries, some of which have weak regulatory environments,

(ii) the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises has reported to the Human Rights Council on the responsibilities of host and home states and the corporate responsibility to respect human rights,

(iii) the Special Representative emphasises that it should be an ‘urgent priority of governments’ to ‘foster a corporate culture respectful of human rights at home and abroad’, and that states must provide access to remedies, and

(iv) the Special Representative advises that companies have a responsibility to respect human rights, undertake human rights impact due diligence, and institute rights-compliant grievance mechanisms; and

(c) calls on the Government to:

(i) encourage Australian companies to respect the rights of members of the communities in which they operate and to develop rights-compliant grievance mechanisms, whether acting in Australia or overseas,
(ii) consider options to develop regulatory and non-regulatory measures to prevent human rights violations by Australian companies overseas,

(iii) consider options to develop mechanisms, that are accessible to persons whose human rights are violated by Australian companies operating overseas, to hear complaints and enforce remedies against companies, and

(iv) support development at the international level of standards and mechanisms aimed at ensuring that transnational corporations and other business enterprises respect human rights.

Withdrawal

Senator PARRY (Tasmania) (3.36 pm)—At the request of Senator Ellison, I withdraw business of the Senate notices of motion Nos 5, 7 and 8. By way of brief explanation: these matters were dealt with at our Selection of Bills Committee hearing earlier in the day, and they will be dealt with when we consider the selection of bills.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (3.36 pm)—by leave—I move:
That leave of absence be granted to Senator Fielding on 16 June 2008, for family reasons.

Question agreed to.

Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (3.37 pm)—by leave—I move:
That leave of absence be granted to Senator Forshaw from 19 June to 27 June 2008, on account of parliamentary business overseas.

Question agreed to.

Senator PARRY (Tasmania) (3.37 pm)—by leave—I move:
That leave of absence be granted to Senator Nash from 16 June to 20 June 2008, for family reasons. Her father died this morning.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—We extend our condolences to her on that ground.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Postponement

The following items of business were postponed:

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 1 standing in the name of Senator Siewert for today, proposing a reference to the Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee, postponed till 18 June 2008.

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 2 standing in the name of Senator Watson for today, proposing the disallowance of ASIC Class Order [CO 07/753], postponed till 24 June 2008.

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 4 standing in the names of the Leader of the Australian Democrats (Senator Allison) and Senator Murray for today, proposing a reference to the Economics Committee, postponed till 18 June 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 69 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Democrats (Senator Allison) for today, relating to music education, postponed till 19 June 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 94 standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate (Senator Minchin) for today, proposing an order for the production of documents relating to government appointments, postponed till 23 June 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 95 standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate (Senator Minchin) for today, proposing an order for the production of documents relating to grants approved in each portfolio or agency, postponed till 23 June 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 100 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Democrats (Senator Allison) for today, relating to crimes against women in Iraq, postponed till 18 June 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 101 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Democrats (Senator Allison) for
today, relating to Australia’s skills challenge, postponed till 18 June 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 102 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Democrats (Senator Allison) for today, relating to global warming, postponed till 18 June 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 103 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Democrats (Senator Allison) for today, relating to Western Sahara, postponed till 18 June 2008.

General business notice of motion no. 105 standing in the name of Senator Johnston for today, proposing the introduction of the Save Our Solar (Solar Rebate Protection) Bill 2008, postponed till 23 June 2008.

COMMITTEES

Community Affairs Committee

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia) (3.40 pm)—I move:

(1) That the Senate—
(a) notes the report of the Community Affairs References Committee, Beyond petrol sniffing: renewing hope for Indigenous communities, dated June 2006, and the current expenditure on programs aimed at addressing petrol sniffing; and
(b) expresses concern at recent reports on the increase of petrol sniffing in central Australia.

(2) That the following matters be referred to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report by 16 October 2008:
(a) the ongoing effectiveness of the eight-point plan in combating petrol sniffing in central Australia;
(b) the extent of the roll out of Opal fuel;
(c) the delivery of youth services in affected areas;
(d) the effectiveness and adequacy of resources provided to address petrol sniffing and substance abuse in central Australia; and
(e) what more needs to be done to effectively address petrol sniffing.

Question agreed to.

Public Accounts and Audit Committee

Meeting

Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (3.41 pm)—At the request of Senator Hogg, I move:

That the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit be authorised to hold public meetings during the sittings of the Senate on Wednesday, 18 June 2008, and Wednesday, 25 June 2008, from 11 am to 1.30 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s review of Auditor-General’s reports.

Question agreed to.

Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee

Report

Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (3.41 pm)—At the request of Senator McEwen, I move:

That the report of the Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee on waste management in Australia and the Drink Container Recycling Bill 2008 be presented by 28 August 2008.

Question agreed to.

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ENHANCED CHILD PROTECTION FROM PREDATORY TOURISM OFFENCES) BILL 2008

First Reading

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (3.42 pm)—I move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to sexual offences against children, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (3.42 pm)—I present the bill and move:
That this bill may proceed without formalities and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (3.43 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to table the explanatory memorandum and to have the second reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Enhanced child protection from predatory tourism offences) Bill 2008 aims to ensure that sexual crimes against children committed by Australians overseas are the subject of a comprehensive and up-to-date series of Commonwealth offences.

Sexual offences against children are among the most abhorrent offences that occur in our society. The effect on children, their families and society in general is debilitating and enduring.

The United Nations recognises the global child sex tourism industry as ‘one of the worst contemporary forms of slavery.’ And Australians play a large part in this industry.

As representatives of the Australian people, we have a duty to do all we can to protect the innocence of young people, be they Australian citizens or children living overseas.

Existing predatory tourism offences involving children in the Crimes Act cover a range of conduct by Australian citizens and overseas residents. This includes engaging in sexual intercourse with a child, participating in acts of indecency involving a child, and inducing a child to have sexual intercourse with a third person. Acts done – in or outside Australia – with the intention of encouraging or benefiting from any form of the aforementioned offences are also included.

The bill relocates the existing offences, currently located in the Crimes Act, to the Criminal Code.

New measures included in the bill will enhance Australia’s existing child sex tourism regime by creating new grooming, procuring and preparatory offences, thereby filling a gap in the current legislation. The purpose of the new measures is to give law enforcement agencies and prosecutors the mandate to take action before any child is harmed.

The aim of the grooming and procuring offences is to capture people who actively engage with children in ways that will make children more likely to submit to or engage in sexual activity.

The new preparatory offences aim to capture a range of preparatory conduct that occurs with the intention of preparing to commit a sexual offence with a child overseas. Again, this would allow law enforcement to take action before a child under 16 is harmed.

The bill will also make changes to a number of penalties with the aim of ensuring consistency for like offences across the Criminal Code. Therefore, the penalty for sexual intercourse with a child would be 17 years imprisonment; the penalty for sexual conduct with a child and procuring a child would be 15 years imprisonment; and the penalty for grooming a child would be 12 years imprisonment.

The bill introduces new offences making it illegal for Australian citizens and residents to possess, distribute, obtain or control child pornography or child abuse material while overseas. Currently, this behaviour is only outlawed within Australia. This measure therefore closes a gap in existing legislation. It also intends to fill the gap where a foreign country is unable or unwilling to prosecute persons engaged in child sex tourism offences, or where the country has no specific laws that deal with this behaviour.

New provisions contained in the bill provide for the forfeiture of child pornography and child abuse material, and any article containing such material, that is used in the commission of sexual offences against children. The provisions intend to streamline the process of forfeiture by court order or application by a constable or prosecutor. Once forfeited, the material becomes the property of the Commonwealth and can then be destroyed.

Children are the future of our country and they deserve to be protected from all who seek to harm them. This bill will strengthen existing child sex
tourism legislation and will make it clear to Australians that engage in this behaviour, either here or overseas, that they will face the full force of the law.

I commend the bill to the Senate.

Senator BERNARDI—I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

REMOTE AREA NURSES

Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (3.43 pm)—I move:

That the Senate—
(a) notes that remote area nurses are the mainstay of health service provision in remote Indigenous communities, often providing the only local health service available;
(b) recognises that remote area nurses provide an invaluable service to some of the most disadvantaged populations in Australia, while their work context and role put them at risk of emotional and physical burnout due to insufficient access to resources, limited professional support and social and cultural isolation; and
(c) calls on the Government to recognise the primacy of remote area nurses in providing health care to remote Indigenous communities and to improve remote area nurse representation in government efforts to develop long-term plans of action to overturn existing inequalities in health services between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Question agreed to.

ELECTION COMMITMENTS

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (3.44 pm)—I move:

That there be laid on the table, no later than 5 pm on 23 June 2008, a list of the commitments made by the Government during the election period to provide grants for sports and recreation facilities, which are being administered by the Department of Health and Ageing and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, showing the recipients, locations and amounts of the grants.

Question agreed to.

WHALING

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia) (3.45 pm)—I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 106.

Leave granted.

Senator SIEWERT—I move the motion as amended:

That the Senate—
(a) notes the high level of support in the Australian community for the Government to take international legal action to stop ‘scientific whaling’ in Australia’s Antarctic territorial waters;
(b) expresses its continuing deep concern at the killing of the whales in Australian waters; and
(c) urges the Government to immediately prepare international legal action to stop the killing of whales in Australian waters.

Question agreed to.

EXCISE RATES

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia) (3.46 pm)—At the request of Senator Bob Brown, I move:

That the Senate declares its opposition to the rates of excise contained in the Excise Tariff Proposal No. 1 (2008) and the Customs Tariff Proposals No. 1 (2008) tabled in the House of Representatives on 13 May 2008 unless and until the Government tables in the Senate a comprehensive and costed plan of new action to address the $10 billion per annum problem of alcohol abuse in Australia.

Question agreed to.

Senator PARRY (Tasmania) (3.47 pm)—by leave—I have a very brief statement. The coalition did support the motion but we want to place on record that we are also opposed to the changes to the rates of excise con-
tained in the excise and customs tariff proposals mentioned by Senator Brown in his motion. Secondly, we would also like to see the government’s comprehensive and costed plan on alcohol abuse in Australia; however, our support for this motion does not imply that our position on this excise measure has changed or will change.

COMMITTEES
Electoral Matters Committee
Advisory Report

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania)

(3.48 pm)—On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, I present an advisory report of the committee on schedule 1 of the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008. I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the report.

Leave granted.

Senator CAROL BROWN—I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I seek leave to incorporate a tabling statement in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The statement read as follows—

On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, I have pleasure in presenting the Committee’s report entitled Advisory report on Schedule 1 of the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008.

The Senate asked the committee to review the bill, which proposes to discontinue the tax deductibility of political donations.

The committee supports the discontinuation of tax deductibility for political donations and recommends that Schedule 1 of the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008 be passed by the Senate without amendment.

Discontinuing tax deductibility for political contributions and gifts is estimated to save $31.4 million over the four years to 2011-12, with savings commencing in 2009-10.

The policy of discontinuing tax deductibility for political donations was taken to the 2007 federal election by the Australian Labor Party. The bill will give effect to this pre-election commitment and deliver ongoing savings of over $10 million per year. Delaying the passage of this legislation will lead to these savings disappearing from the budget bottomline.

The savings estimates prepared by Treasury represent the best available estimate given the lack of information from tax returns, donations to political parties and political party membership.

While some inquiry participants argue that tax deductibility should be considered as part of a broader inquiry, it is doubtful that the future political financing landscape will retain such an unbalanced and inequitable scheme.

Tax deductibility for political donations was introduced in an ad hoc way in 1991 following amendments to electoral legislation in the Senate by the Coalition parties and the Australian Democrats. While initially only applying to donations by individuals and their party membership fees to a cap of $100 per year, in 2006 the government extended tax deductibility to businesses and lifted the threshold to $1,500 per year.

At the time, opposition members of the Electoral Matters Committee expressed their concern that these changes would encourage individuals and other entities to make extensive political contributions, in secret, and at taxpayer expense.

Discontinuing tax deductibility for these payments will remove the inherent inequity of the tax system which provides higher income earners a larger subsidy for contributions to political parties. Abolishing tax deductibility for business taxpayers will remove a loophole under which payments by businesses to political parties are subsidised by the taxpayer to the tune of 30 per cent.

There is no evidence to suggest that removing tax deductibility will necessarily lead to reduced participation in political activities. Members of the community can still join political parties and individuals and businesses will still be able to donate to political parties and candidates for public office. However, the inequity created by the tax
system will be removed and provide a fairer basis for political participation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members for their contribution to the inquiry and those that participated by making submissions or appearing at the public hearing. I would also like to thank the committee secretariat for their assistance.

I commend the report to the Senate.

Senator CAROL BROWN—I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS (EQUAL TREATMENT IN COMMONWEALTH LAWS—SUPERANNUATION) BILL 2008
TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (MEDICARE LEVY SURCHARGE THRESHOLDS) BILL 2008
NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT (PHARMACEUTICAL AND OTHER BENEFITS—COST RECOVERY) BILL 2008
TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (LUXURY CAR TAX) BILL 2008
A NEW TAX SYSTEM (LUXURY CAR TAX IMPOSITION—GENERAL) AMENDMENT BILL 2008
A NEW TAX SYSTEM (LUXURY CAR TAX IMPOSITION—CUSTOMS) AMENDMENT BILL 2008
A NEW TAX SYSTEM (LUXURY CAR TAX IMPOSITION—EXCISE) AMENDMENT BILL 2008
EXCISE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CONDENSATE) BILL 2008
EXCISE TARIFF AMENDMENT (CONDENSATE) BILL 2008
NATIONAL FUELWATCH (EMPOWERING CONSUMERS) (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2008
TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2008 MEASURES No. 3) BILL 2008
COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (POLITICAL DONATIONS AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2008

Referral to Committees

Senator ELLISON (Western Australia) (3.50 pm)—by leave—I move:

(1) That:

(a) the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws—Superannuation) Bill 2008 be referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for inquiry and report; and

(b) any related bill or bills that may be introduced to give effect to the recommendations of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s report Same Sex: Same Entitlements, dated May 2007, also be referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for inquiry and report together with the following matters:

(i) the definition of ‘couple relationship’,

(ii) empirical evidence from the states concerning the existence, recognition and relative numbers of interdependent relationships, other than de facto (whether heterosexual or same-sex) and marital relationships,

(iii) whether the definition of ‘couple relationship’ should be amended to incorporate other interdependent relationships and, if so, whether the definitions should be broadened to include those relationships or whether a separate definition is required,

(iv) the fiscal implications of the statutory recognition of other interde-
pending relationships for superannuation and taxation purposes,

(v) the definitions of ‘child’ and ‘child of a couple relationship’,

(vi) the legal and fiscal implications of the definitions referred to in (v), particularly as they relate to the rights, obligations and liabilities of co-parents (i.e., the parent in a couple relationship that does not have a biological connection to a child of that relationship), and

(vii) all other matters considered necessary by the committee.

(2) That the committee is not to conclude its consideration of the matter contained in subparagraph (1)(a) until it has concluded its consideration of the matters in subparagraph (1)(b).

(3) That the committee must hear evidence, inter alia, from:

(a) the Attorney-General’s Department;

(b) the Department of Finance and Deregulation;

(c) the Relationship Registries of Tasmania, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory;

(d) the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission; and

(e) the Law Council of Australia (Family Law Section).

And:

(1) That the National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical and Other Benefits—Cost Recovery) Bill 2008 be referred to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report not before 18 August 2008, together with the following matters:

(a) the impact of the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS) cost recovery on:

(i) patients’ timely and affordable access to medicines,

(ii) the Australian pharmaceutical industry,

(iii) new products and innovation, and

(iv) the independence of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee;

(b) cost recovery mechanisms in other countries;

(c) how cost recovery will improve the timeliness and effectiveness of the current PBS process for listing new medicines; and

(d) the modelling and consultation underpinning the decision.

(2) That, in conducting its inquiry, the committee hear evidence, inter alia, from the
pharmaceutical industry, generic medicines industry, consumer and patient health groups, the Department of Health and Ageing, the PBS Evaluation Units and the Australian Medical Association and other medical bodies.

And:

(1) That the provisions of the following bills:

- Tax Laws Amendment (Luxury Car Tax) Bill 2008
- A New Tax System (Luxury Car Tax Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2008
- A New Tax System (Luxury Car Tax Imposition—Customs) Amendment Bill 2008 and
- A New Tax System (Luxury Car Tax Imposition—Excise) Amendment Bill 2008,

be referred to the Economics Committee for inquiry and report not before 26 August 2008, together with the following matters:

(a) the incidence of the luxury car tax (LCT) and the effect of the proposed increase in the LCT rate on rural and regional communities, small business families and tourism operators;

(b) the effect of the LCT increase on the prices of vehicles, the affordability of motor vehicles, the cost of living, and the consumer price index (CPI);

(c) the expected impact of the increase in the LCT rate on vehicle demand and the likely consequences for government revenues including from the LCT, goods and services tax (GST) and stamp duty;

(d) the growing incidence of the LCT over time and the adequacy of current arrangements for indexation of the LCT threshold, in comparison with alternative measures including the CPI, average weekly earnings and the increase in the retail price of motor vehicles;

(e) the rationale for taxing ‘luxury’ cars at a higher rate than other goods and services;

(f) the effect of the LCT and the proposed increase in the LCT rate on Australian vehicle manufacturers and vehicle importers and distributors;

(g) the overall taxation burden on ownership and operation of motor vehicles including customs duty, GST, LCT stamp duty and excise on fuel;

(h) the effect of the LCT and the proposed increase in the LCT rate on the adoption of vehicle safety features and environmental technologies; and

(i) the extent to which the LCT is viewed as a non-tariff barrier by other car exporting countries.

(2) That:

(a) as a minimum, the committee hold hearings in Melbourne and Adelaide and hear evidence, inter alia, from Australia’s vehicle manufacturers, importers and distributors as well as from the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, the Australian Automobile Association, the Motor Trades Association of Australia, the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, the Motor Trades Association of Queensland and the tourism industry; and

(b) the committee also take into account submissions to, and recommendations of, the Bracks’ Review of Australia’s Automotive Industry.

And:

(1) That the provisions of the Excise Legislation Amendment (Condensate) Bill 2008 and the Excise Tariff Amendment (Condensate) Bill 2008 be referred to the Economics Committee for inquiry and report not before 26 August 2008, together with the following matters:

(a) the impact of the changes on retail prices of domestic gas and electricity in Western Australia, and any consequent effect on consumer prices;
(b) the impact of the decision on the industry generally and on the exploration for petroleum products in Australia; and
(c) the impact of the decision, and the decision-making process, on domestic and international investment confidence in Australia.

(2) That the committee must conduct hearings in Western Australia and hear evidence from, inter alia, industry bodies and joint venture partners on the North West Shelf.

And:

(1) That the National Fuelwatch (Empowering Consumers) Bill 2008 and the National Fuelwatch (Empowering Consumers) (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2008 be referred to the Economics Committee for inquiry and report not before 29 September 2008, together with the following matters:

(a) the impact of the proposed Fuelwatch scheme on the price consumers will pay for motor fuel (including unleaded petrol, diesel and LPG) in metropolitan areas, regional centres and rural Australia;
(b) the economic benefits and costs of the proposed Fuelwatch scheme to consumers in metropolitan areas, regional centres and rural Australia;
(c) other economic costs of the proposed Fuelwatch scheme, including the compliance costs of the scheme for industry, particularly independent retailers;
(d) the impact of the proposed Fuelwatch scheme on competition between motor fuel retailers and the operation and viability of independent motor fuel retailers;
(e) intraday price volatility in the retail market, established price cycles in each state and territory, and consumer awareness of price cycles;
(f) the impact of Fuelwatch on discounting, as well as the amplitude and duration of price cycles, including any penalties that will apply to motor fuel retailers for not fixing prices for 24 hour periods;
(g) the potential use under the Fuelwatch scheme of sophisticated pricing strategies by motor fuel retailers who have more than one retail outlet, and how they may take advantage of the 24 hour rule;
(h) independent analysis of the overall economic benefits and costs of the proposed Fuelwatch scheme;
(i) independent analysis of the differences in motor fuel prices between Western Australia and other Australian states and territories, with particular reference to volumetric or consumption-weighted prices; and
(j) the legal basis for the legislation.

(2) That, in conducting its inquiry, the committee:

(a) hear evidence in all capital cities and in such major rural and regional centres as may be determined by the committee; and
(b) hear evidence, inter alia, from independent retailers, motoring bodies with knowledge of the retail motor fuel market, business organisations with an interest in motor fuel prices and independent think tanks and economists who have knowledge of retail pricing arrangements in the motor fuel industry.

And:

That the provisions of Schedules 1 and 2 of the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 3) Bill 2008 be referred to the Economics Committee for inquiry and report not before 18 August 2008.

And on behalf of Senator Ronaldson:

That the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2008 be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry and report on 30 June 2009 in conjunction with the committee's inquiry into the 2007 Federal Election.
To clarify the terms of the notices: when I gave notice, the bills were still in the House, and my notices therefore referred to the provisions of the bills. Now that the bills have arrived in the Senate, I make it clear to the Senate that in relation to notices No. 7, No. 11 and No. 12 I am moving to refer the actual bills and not just the provisions off to committees.

There are a number of bills involved in this matter and we are conducting a cognate debate in order to save time. I believe it is best that we take each of these bills in turn in relation to the merits of referral to the respective committees. But, before I do, I think it is useful as a backdrop that I remind the Senate of statements made previously on the referral of bills to Senate committees. In this regard, I would refer to the following statement:

Whether or not this government has a majority in the Senate and whether or not the Liberal government won the last election, the Labor Party are not required to say, ‘Oh, well, we’re just going to roll over, agree to everything the government has announced and do nothing for the next three years.’ That is not the approach in a democracy …

That statement was made by Senator Sherry on 16 June 2005. Indeed, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Evans, on 14 June 2005, stated:

It is our responsibility to provide an alternative view of legislation, to speak out when we think things are wrong and to fight for those people whose interests we represent.

That is precisely what these referrals are all about: providing adequate time for those pieces of legislation to come under the scrutiny of Senate committees and, furthermore, providing stakeholders with a vital interest in these bills with an opportunity to have a say. Of course, we understand the government has an agenda. We have notified that a number of bills are non-controversial and, indeed, a number which are time critical. In that regard, we have referred three packages to Senate committees for reporting by next week. The coalition recognises that there are bills which are time critical and that we can conduct the scrutiny of those in the next fortnight and have them dealt with according to the government’s agenda.

But I am dealing here with something quite different. We have a package of bills, many of which were not election policy statements of the government in the recent election and many of which, we believe, have no budgetary impact. In fact, we say that the government, in painting a picture that this is in some way vandalising the budget, is conducting a completely false exercise in misrepresenting to the Australian people the process that we are pursuing. We are pursuing here the referral to Senate committees—and in one case to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters—important bills, some of which the Australian community has had little or no notice of.

I will turn to them in order. The Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2008, which we seek to have referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for reporting on 30 June 2009, is an important piece of legislation dealing with political donations and related matters. The coalition is committed to a holistic reform of election campaign finance laws in the wake of many scandals which we have seen, particularly the Wollongong ‘sex and bribes scandal’. We make it very clear that having a piecemeal approach to electoral reform will not result in the outcome that all would desire.

We have heard from the government that they are pursuing electoral reform. We say: let that be in an informed manner and let the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, which deals with a review of each elec-
tion, have available to it the means and the standing to conduct this review. This particular bill should be reviewed with other matters in relation to the recent election.

In relation to the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws—Superannuation) Bill 2008, the government intend to introduce further legislation dealing with other recommendations of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report. The coalition believe that this piece of legislation requires careful scrutiny. The coalition have said that we support this bill in principle, but there are details in this bill and in the government’s proposed bills—and I refer to the comments of the Attorney-General in this regard—that require scrutiny which you could not offer in just two weeks. We believe that, despite the fact we have given in principle support, it would be irresponsible of us as an opposition to simply wave it through and wait for further like legislation to come along which could have unintended consequences as a result of not being considered holistically with this bill. I might just add that this was not an election policy issue. I concede it was in the platform of the ALP but not one which was canvassed in the election campaign.

The Tax Laws Amendment (Medicare Levy Surcharge Thresholds) Bill 2008, to be referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics for reporting by 26 August, is an extremely important bill. We have recently learnt that the Rudd government did not ask either Treasury or the Department of Health and Ageing to model, cost or in any way assess the impact of the change to the Medicare levy surcharge on public hospitals. That is just one matter which requires close scrutiny. It is imperative for the health systems run by the states, territories and the Commonwealth of this country that we have careful scrutiny of this bill, and 26 August would provide that opportunity for the appropriate scrutiny to be conducted. Again, I reiterate the precise terms of this bill are not ones that I recall being an election policy of the government in the last election.

Similarly, the luxury car tax was not an election policy and it involves the government introducing another tax without consultation with industry, motorists or other stakeholders. This is an area where you could have flow-on effects which could be detrimental to motorists across Australia. The Tax Laws Amendment (Luxury Car Tax) Bill 2008 also requires careful scrutiny by the Senate Standing Committee on Economics. In our motion, we have put a reporting date of 26 August.

Similarly, the National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical and Other Benefits—Cost Recovery) Bill 2008 was not an election policy of the government and we would seek its referral to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs for reporting on 18 August. This is a measure which has had absolutely no consultation. Concerns have been raised about the independence of the PBAC, and that needs to be looked at. Other measures in this bill could have effects on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which affects so many Australians. That needs careful scrutiny. The Fuelwatch bill was done overnight, in a matter of 30 or so hours, with public officials working through the night. It was not an election policy, and we believe that it has such consequence that it should be referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics, to report by 29 September.

No less than four government departments have briefed the Rudd government against the introduction of Fuelwatch including the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Finance and Deregulation, the Treasury and the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism. We have a number of departments briefing against this
legislation, and the government is intent on rushing it through. This concerns something which is uppermost in the minds of many Australians: the price of fuel. This is something which demands close attention and we have asked that the committee concerned not report until 29 September to give the Australian public the chance it deserves to have input into this important piece of legislation so that it is not simply rushed through in these last two sitting weeks of the financial year.

We would seek that the Excise Legislation Amendment (Condensate) Bill 2008 be referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics, for reporting on 26 August. This, again, was not an election policy and could well have ramifications in the energy sector. The government is making much of the fact that it says this will cost taxpayers $177 million if not passed by the end of this month. This bill is capable of amendment to such an extent as to recapture any excise from the date it was announced. There is absolutely no problem with that. The opposition has had a briefing from Treasury. I would defy the government to prove beyond doubt that this is the case, because it cannot deny the fact that an amendment—

Senator Chris Evans interjecting—

Senator ELLISON—It does. The government stands charged with misleading the Australian community in saying that this will cost $177 million of lost revenue to the taxpayer. What that is saying is that this bill, as such, will cost that amount of money if not passed by the end of the month. The government has not looked very far, because you can just amend this bill to allow it to recapture the excise for a longer period and to allow for this scrutiny—for the industries and the companies concerned to make submissions to the committee—and you could still have no loss of revenue. There is absolutely no basis at all to the argument that there would be lost revenue or that this will cost taxpayers money.

What we have on the other side of the ledger is a measure which could well see inflation in relation to the price of gas, increased taxation on gas, a clean energy—and this is a government which talks about greenhouse emissions and clean energy. Here we have a further tax being placed on gas. This is of essential importance to all Australians and also for foreign investment, which has brought much prosperity to this country.

We also have Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 3) Bill 2008. That again was another piece of legislation which was not an election policy. This is a bill in response to a 2007 High Court decision known as McNeil’s case. It is a complex piece of legislation and one which merits close attention. It is not one that I think most senators would be across, nonetheless it deserves that scrutiny. As I said at the outset, we have agreed to three packages being referred to Senate committees for the scrutiny that can be offered in the fortnight that allows that and that they are time critical. But with these bills we do not accept that there is the cost involved that the government says. We reject that totally. We do not accept that they are time critical. We believe that they are of such importance that the Australian community deserves an opportunity—and especially those stakeholders who have an interest—to make submissions to the Senate committees. The July-August break provides a golden opportunity for that to be done. The coalition have a proud record in referring matters to committees.

Senator Chris Evans interjecting—

Senator ELLISON—We can look at the facts. In 2006, the first full year of the coalition’s Senate majority—perhaps those commentators who take an interest in this might
have regard to it—the coalition government supported the referral of more than 100 bills to Senate committees for inquiry and report. This was the highest number of bills ever referred to committees in a calendar year and double the average number of bills referred to committee when the ALP was last in government. Let us see what the Rudd government is going to do about referring matters to Senate committees. Let us see if it can match the coalition’s record of 100 in a calendar year. Let us see if the Rudd government will agree to these referrals. Or is it going to deny the Australian people the chance to scrutinise important legislation which in some cases came with little or no notice?

I have mentioned the fact that the government has made much of the cost and the effect that this will have on the budget. These measures are all capable of being dealt with by referral and scrutiny without the attendant loss of revenue that the government claims. If the government were at all on its game, it would be able to remedy any aspect of delay especially in relation to the fuel condensate bill. I have outlined how it can do that. It is a matter which is capable of simple amendment. There is absolutely no vandalism or denial of revenue at all in any of these measures. It makes eminent sense, when we have the time, to deal with them together, for example in the case of a bill such as the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws—Superannuation) Bill 2008—especially when the Attorney-General has said there will be others to follow. Yet this government wants to do it piecemeal, which will result in unintended consequences. It is similar with electoral law reform. We say you can have the law reform. It should take its course and it should be dealt with together with other aspects of reform. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, as I recall, has been around for in excess of 25 years. That is its job. That is what we are asking it to do: to look at political donations and to incorporate it in the other aspects it is looking at in relation to electoral reform.

Any denial of these referrals is one which will deny public scrutiny and will be, in any shape or form, an arrogant denial of Senate process. We have carefully considered those bills which are needed and where time is of the essence. We have indicated to the government that we will comply with the government’s agenda in relation to those budget bills and getting through its package of bills in this fortnight. There are around 40 packages, as I recall, and we anticipate getting through those packages in this fortnight. However, there are some that have to be referred to Senate scrutiny by virtue of its committee system, and that is what we are all about. Where that can be done quickly we have pursued that path, but of course you could not do all of these bills justice by sending them off to Senate committees for reporting back by next week. That would be an abrogation of our responsibility in the Senate and as an opposition.

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (4.08 pm)—I think anyone listening to that contribution would realise that the Liberal opposition is dissembling. There is no coherence at all about its position. This is a very important debate because it is about whether the elected government of this country is allowed to deliver its budget, whether it is allowed to deliver its election commitments and whether it is allowed to deliver the surplus that underpins its attack on inflation and rising interest rates. This is fundamental to the government’s budget. It is fundamental to what we were elected to do only six months ago.

What we have seen today is an opposition who are prepared to say: ‘We lost the elec-
tion but we are not going to allow you to
govern the country. We are not going to al-
low you to deliver your budget. We are not
going to allow you to deliver your election
commitments. They concede that these are
election commitments but they say: ‘We
know better. We don’t accept the view of the
people. We don’t accept the election result.
Most of us, as former ministers now in oppo-
sition, think we should still be allowed to
determine the size, shape and nature of the
Australian budget.’ Unfortunately for them,
the budget is drawn up by the government.
The first Rudd Labor government is remark-
able for the fact that this was the first budget
in many years that delivered on election
commitments made by the government. It
also delivered on our commitment to fiscally
conservative policy to try to keep pressure on
interest rates. That is fundamentally under-
mined by a debate in which the coalition, in
their dying days as a majority in this cham-
ber, say they are going to use their power to
destroy the budget strategy, to prevent the
government introducing the revenue meas-
ures that were going to help fund the surplus.
That is their arrogance—that they think it is
permissible for them to try to destroy the
financial and economic strategy of the gov-
ernment by looking to defer and delay reve-
nue measures that underpin that strategy and
underpin the $22 billion surplus that is fun-
damental to that strategy.

This is economic vandalism. It is eco-
nomic vandalism because it serves no pur-
pose. It does not achieve anything. The op-
position are not actually saying: ‘We oppose
these measures. We are going to defeat
them.’ They are saying: ‘We are going to
delay and defer. We are going to act as van-
dals. We do not have a point of principle
here.’ They are not making the argument
against the measures; they are making the
argument that they ought to delay and defer,
because they can inflict vandalism on the
government’s budget. They hope to gain
some short-term political advantage from that.

When they were asked today about the
measure to remove the excise on condensate
and were accused of achieving what they
would by their position—which is to destroy
a revenue measure that will return $177 mil-
lion to the Commonwealth during the period
for which they delay it—they said: ‘But we
are not opposed to the measure; we just want
to defer and delay.’ They do not have a posi-
tion. Like everything else the Liberal opposi-
tion reflects at the moment, they are con-
fused, lost and have no position or principle.
What they are going to do is delay—and rob
Australian taxpayers of $177 million that
would help fund the economic strategy of the
government—so they can consider the is-
suess. They have had six weeks to consider
the issues. This budget process is the same as
every other. The government brought down
the budget on 13 May. The opposition have
had six weeks to consider their position and
still they have not got a position. Still they
hide behind process. Still they say: ‘We
don’t necessarily oppose it; we just need to
think about it longer. We just need to con-
sider it more.’ They do not have a position
other than that of vandals and other than that
of hiding behind process in order to prevent
the government achieving its economic strat-
egy as contained in the budget.

Where they thought there was political
pressure, where they thought they were un-
der the pump, they have given in and said:
‘We’ll consider those bills quickly. We’ll
consider the bills that deal with FTBB and
the baby bonus.’ Because they have decided
they do not have the political courage to op-
pose those, they are going to consider them
quickly.

Senator Abetz—Do you want us to now?
Senator CHRIS EVANS—I do not know whether you are going to. I have been waiting six weeks for you to find a position.

Senator Abetz—Make up your mind.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—You get the chance to tell us what your position is today on all these measures, Senator Abetz. You have an invitation, and I hope you do not hide behind process. I hope you do not use the coward’s answer. You can tell us what position the coalition has on each of these bills, because quite frankly if you have a position we can have the vote and get on with it. If your answer is that you have no position and you need to think about it some more, that shows the political cowardice which you stand accused of. You do not have a policy, you do not have a coherent position, you cannot agree among yourselves.

I understand you walked out of your shadow cabinet meeting today after deciding to knock off another measure. The opposition are going to move a disallowance to our dentists reforms. There was no mention of that in Senator Ellison’s contribution today. The election commitments that the Labor Party made are apparently going to be disallowed in the Senate because they decided they could. They have got about eight days left of their Senate majority and they are going to wreck that measure as well. Why? Do they have an alternative that they have any hope of putting in place? No. They are doing it just because they can spoil and be vandals, not because they have a constructive alternative or any policy outcome capable of being achieved. By seeking to undermine these measures, they are going to delay and vandalise the budget to prevent the government from delivering on its election commitments and from governing in an economically conservative way.

Despite what Senator Ellison indicated, some of these measures will cost the Australian taxpayer. The delay will cost us millions of dollars. There will be consequences and a loss of revenue from this delay. There will be $220-odd million that the Australian government will not be able to collect as a result of the opposition’s actions. We will nail the opposition with the price of this. They are going to vandalise the budget by using their numbers to prevent the collection of that revenue. Their leisurely consideration will come at a cost, at last count, of about $220 million to Australian taxpayers. But the position changes so quickly so I cannot be authoritative on this; it was $300 million earlier in the week but it is now down to $220 million. With the dentistry measures they are going to oppose, it may have gone up again.

I do not know what their position on the bill is. All I know is what their position on process and procedure is. If you ask them where they stand on any of the great issues in Australian politics, they cannot tell you. They are all over the place. I look forward to the opposition senators contributing to the debate because we will then hopefully know where they stand on the condensate bill, on same-sex relationships, on the Commonwealth electoral amendment to make political donations more transparent, and on the increase in the luxury car tax. Are they going to support the luxury car tax increase or are they going to oppose it? I have no idea; they are hiding behind process—they are unable to say and need to look at it longer. They have had six weeks, including estimates. They have had ample opportunity.

These are not questions of broad public policy. These are small amendments to existing taxation revenue measures.

Senator Abetz—if they are so small, how can they be vandalising?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Because they are very important economically. This is not
for some important broad social or economic policy like the Telstra bills, which I recall the Liberal opposition, when in government, rushed through with a one-day inquiry and with two-days notice. So, to be lectured by Senator Ellison on Senate process and proper behaviour is obscene, given their performance when in government.

We in the Labor government support the right of the Senate to examine policy issues contained in legislation. We support the role of the committees and we will continue to do that. But the debate today is about the government’s budget; it is about normal process and whether the recently defeated opposition are going to allow the government to deliver its budget. The weight is now on the opposition. They actually have to say what they stand for, if they stand for anything at all. They cannot hide behind process. They can have these bills referred and brought back next week if there are serious issues they want to examine. But these are not issues of wide application or broad public policy. They are very specific measures that, if you like, are much more narrow than some of the measures they have agreed to consider and bring back next week.

This is all about political vandalism and their inability to cope with the responsibilities of opposition. The Liberal Party are in a mess all over the country. They may make themselves relevant at some time down the track, but we do not have to worry. But they are relevant today because they are trying to destroy the budget and undermine the economic strategy of the government of this country.

It is an absolute irony of this chamber that the coalition come into this chamber and say: ‘Oh, no, we need to follow all these processes that we absolutely refused to apply when in government. We are going to apply them to the nth degree and drag them out for as long as we can to deny the government revenue and the capacity to deliver on its budget.’ But they will not do this on measures that they are opposed to; it is on measures they have not quite made up their minds about yet. They have not had enough time to work out whether they support or oppose the budget so they are going to drag it out until September, denying $220 million of revenue to the Australian government at the expense of taxpayers, while they decide whether or not they have got an opinion.

They have got a chance to have an opinion and do their jobs by voting in the Senate. They have got a chance to consider the legislation that is before them, which they have known about for six weeks.

Senator Abetz—You have said the same thing a hundred times. Add something new to the debate!

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Senator Abetz, I have listened to you for years saying how terrible it will be if the Greens have the balance of power; how awful it would be to hand over to the Greens, to the Democrats or to the Independents the capacity to influence legislation and to hold the balance. And what are you doing today? You are saying, ‘We will defer these measures until we lose the numbers. Then we will leave it to the Greens and the Independents’—sorry, Senator Bartlett, not the Democrats, because they will no longer be with us. The great irony is that the opposition are so confused, so lost, so without direction and are such a rabble that they have decided to hand the decision to the Greens. They are saying: ‘We could vote on this now, but it is too hard. We are so confused, so divided, so lost and so lacking in any political courage that we are going to let the new Senate deal with it—the Senate where we do not have the majority.’ It is a cop-out. It is political cowardice at its worst. You can defend some of this behaviour on
the basis that they have had a crushing electoral defeat, that they have a leader who is making no impression with the people of this country and that they are a dispirited rabble. But they have got to the position of making the decision—it is a strategy and Senator Abetz was no doubt part of this cunning plan—and they have said: ‘We will give up our right to make a decision on the budget. We will hand it over to the Greens, Senator Fielding and Senator Xenophon.’

Senator Siewert—They’ve seen the light!

Senator CHRIS EVANS—They have obviously seen the light, Senator Siewert, because this is certainly a change in their position. Senator Abetz and others have railed against you having the power to decide these things for years. But, somehow, now it is kind of convenient, because they want to run and hide. They do not want to take responsibility. What they want to do is hide behind process. They want to say: ‘We need to look at this for much longer. We have had six weeks, but we haven’t got a position yet and we would kind of like it if, when we come back, somebody else has to wear it. Senator Fielding is the swing vote. He will get to wear this. We can sort of oppose it but not have to carry the public criticism of our position. We could probably safely oppose it in July and August because Senator Fielding and the Greens will wear the criticism.’ What cowardice! What an absolute abrogation of your responsibilities.

This Senate has the capacity to debate—and pass or defeat—the government’s budget bills this fortnight in accordance with the normal process. It has the capacity to have short committee inquiries, as has been recommended by the opposition, into a number of matters that could be extended into the other bills in the motions before us. But the political cowardice of the opposition does not allow them to do that. They are going to try to run and hide. You cannot run and you cannot hide. You have to front up in this Senate and answer questions. Do you support these measures or not? Are you in favour of removing the exemption on the excise on condensate or not? Are you in favour of increasing the luxury car tax or not?

Senator Abetz—I rise on a point of order. I draw your attention to standing order 196. It appears as though the honourable senator was given one paragraph to read out. I think he is now on the 26th—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Marshall)—What is your point of order, Senator Abetz?

Senator Abetz—version of the same paragraph. It is tedious.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—There is no point of order. Resume your seat, Senator Abetz.

Senator Abetz interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Senator Abetz, resume your seat.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I think that just confirms my earlier analysis.

Senator Abetz—You are tedious and repetitious; that is right.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Senator Abetz, you have, if you have the moral and political courage, the opportunity to vote on the government’s budget this fortnight. It is your chance to put up or shut up. You can hide behind process, but you will be found. There is nowhere for you to hide. Your political position now is to say, ‘Let’s defer it and hope the Greens and the Independents make the right decision.’ That is your political decision. I have never seen anything as cowardly in all my time in the Senate. You have the chance to deal with the legislation. Senator Minchin invited me to come to him and work with the opposition on the passage of legislation through this place. I have made
that point to my colleagues. That ought to be one of the things we first look at. Well, here is your chance. Here is your chance to support the right of a government to deliver on its budget. Here is your chance to ensure that the budget strategy of the government is not undermined. Take your opportunity, Senator Abetz and the opposition, and show you have some political courage. Do not try and hide behind process, because you have been exposed.

*Senator Abetz interjecting—*

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT**—Order! Senator Abetz!

*Senator CHRISt EVANS*—In addition to all of the budget bills—

*Senator Abetz interjecting—*

*Senator CHRISt EVANS*—You can’t take it, can you?

*Senator Abetz*—I rise on a point of order. Mr Acting Deputy President, you are quite right to chide me for interjecting. But when you allow the Leader of the Government in the Senate to personally address me non-stop—

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT**—What is your point of order? Are you dissenting from my ruling, Senator Abetz? What is your point of order, Senator Abetz?

*Senator Abetz*—If I can get the point of order out, you might hear it. What I am inviting you to do is to require the Leader of the Government in the Senate to abide by standing orders and not address senators directly across the chamber, because, when he does that in this thuggish, arrogant way—guess what?—I am tempted to interject.

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT**—Senator Abetz, resume your seat. Senator Abetz, you have been consistently speaking directly to the Leader of the Government in the Senate—

*Senator Abetz*—As a result—

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT**—No, not ‘as a result’.

*Senator Abetz*—Check the *Hansard*.

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT**—They have been tedious and repetitious interjections. If you refrain from interjecting—

*Senator Abetz*—Be very careful, Chair.

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT**—If you refrain from interjecting—

*Senator Abetz*—Be very careful.

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT**—I beg your pardon, Senator Abetz?

*Senator Abetz*—I am inviting you to be careful.

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT**—Yes, well, thank you, Senator Abetz. I do not need your advice. If you would cease interjecting, I will ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate to direct all his comments through the chair.

*Senator CHRISt EVANS*—Thank you. I accept that I should do so. This is, as I said, a very important debate. It is important that the budget is delivered. It is important that the government of the day is allowed to deliver on its election commitments. The opposition have to answer the question: what gives them the right to deny the government the ability to deliver on its election promises? They were defeated at the last election for two reasons: (1) because the public lost faith in them because they failed to deliver on the promises they made to the electorate and (2) because of their abuse of their Senate majority. Here we are, within six months of the election, and they are seeking to carry out those two things that hurt them most at the last election.

All the government is asking for is the capacity to pass its budget. We accept the reference of matters of interest to Senate committees, but we ask the Senate to allow them to be returned in time for the bills to be de-
bated and voted on by the end of this last sitting fortnight. It is the same process that has always applied to the budget. The opposition have had more than enough time to consider the bills. What they have not been able to do is find a position. They are so internally divided that they cannot work out what to do. They think that, by hiding behind Senate process, somehow it will all be resolved for them.

The bottom line is that it is economic vandalism. It is action that reeks of arrogance and reeks of the despair, disunity and weakness that the opposition are showing. It is important that the government gets its budget bills through. We urge the Senate to allow the government to pass its budget bills and not to hide behind process. Proper consideration can be given to bills and let’s not hide behind process. Let’s debate the bills and vote on them. Let’s have some political courage from the opposition. We ask them to support the budget bills and ensure that this government is allowed to deliver on its election commitments and pass its budget.

Senator BARTLETT (Queensland) (4.30 pm)—As senators would know and as Senator Evans reflected on briefly, this is my final fortnight in this chamber. I have been working in and immersed in the Senate for 18 years, as an adviser and then as a senator. In some ways it is nice that, even after 18 years of seeing everything that gets thrown up in this chamber, one can still be surprised by the level of absolute, bare-faced, extraordinary hypocrisy being put forward by the coalition here. After seeing all the things that get put forward for political reasons with the most ludicrous propositions being used to justify decisions and actions that are clearly politically driven, this is something that still leaves me breathless. I guess in some ways it is nice to not be so drenched in cynicism that I can still be surprised, or maybe the coalition are so creative that they can still find new ways to absolutely dredge the depths of debauchment of democratic process, weasel words and two-faced positions. The sorts of justifications that are being put forward by the coalition in regard to at least some of this legislation is nonetheless a disgrace and an insult to intelligence.

We are dealing with a whole lot of committee references cognately here and some of them are justified. I would certainly ask that we get to vote on some of them separately at the end, because clearly some of them are justified and appropriate but, frankly, some are ludicrous. Some of the suggestions that are being put forward to justify what is being done are completely offensive. We had some statistics from Senator Ellison saying that, when they controlled the Senate for the first year, they referred more bills than anybody else ever did—another wonderful example for those who like to catalogue lies, damned lies and statistics. It was a debauchment of process that the coalition used their Senate majority to block inquiry after inquiry into a whole range of areas at the same time they were bulldozing through other inquiries, which were sometimes into extraordinarily complex pieces of legislation, with a one-week turnaround.

Indeed, I can still recall another area where initially my breath was taken away with the audacity of the position being put forward. The coalition, when in government, would come along to the Selection of Bills Committee, which is the process used to consider whether or not to refer bills to a committee, and refer their own bills to committee before the bills had even appeared with a requirement that they report back, in some cases, by the next week. The committee was getting a bill that actually did not yet exist. I can recall being on Senate committee inquiries—and I am sure you can as well, Mr Acting Deputy President Marshall—where the committee would get a bill and would be
sitting there asking: why are we looking into this? Who has got an interest? What is the issue of concern? There were no answers; the government were just bulldozing them all through like a sausage machine to try and use these debauched non-inquiries as a way of ensuring that their legislation got pushed through as quickly as possible.

It is also a sick irony that, after all the years of listening to the coalition whingeing about a hostile Senate and about how the government of the day could not get on with its program because issues were being examined by Senate committees, which the Democrats and the crossbenches often quite rightly insisted on, and after the coalition went so far as to block inquiry after inquiry when they had a majority, we are now getting this mantra about how we need proper accountability. We have seen it already of course. After no Senate select committees were put in place to examine specific issues at all over the last couple of years, three or four were put forward with coalition chairs and coalition majorities in the first week or two that we got back here after the election.

I will leave the argument about the potential budget impact to others to make. That is something that the government is much more aware of than I would be. Frankly, I think there are different arguments that can be made about some of the budget bills, but to me the major issues relate to the referral of bills that do not have anything to do with the budget. I think some of them are being sent off for longer than they need to be.

There is one other component of these motions that I must say again I find interesting and which I do not recall having seen before, despite my 18 years of experience. A whole range of bills are being sent off for August reporting dates, or September for the Fuelwatch bill, containing the wording not that the committee report by a set date, but that the committee not report before that date. Quite what that means, I am not sure. It is quite an interesting innovation whereby, even if the committee examines the matter, decides it has all it needs to look at and finishes its deliberations, according to this motion it is still not allowed to report before the date that the coalition is insisting on. I am not sure how that fits in terms of standing orders and it looks like a fairly curious innovation to me. If anything, it looks like another example of the coalition’s absolute insistence on forcing it off for as long as possible and refusing point-blank to allow the committee to report back any earlier, even if it has finished its job. Presumably the coalition will cover its ears, chant noisily and do everything possible to refuse to examine these issues, even if the committee has finished its job before the date that is set forward. It is interesting that that wording is not used for the ones that are reporting back next week; it is simply for the ones that are reporting back in August. The committees are being prevented, at least in theory, from being able to report back earlier, even if they decide that is valid.

One thing that particularly astonishes and appalls me is the suggestion that the legislation dealing with political donations should not report back until June 2009—more than 12 months away. I know it is nice to be thorough, but need we take 12 months to examine an issue that is not that complicated? What is in the bill has also been dealt with before by previous Senate committee inquiries: the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has dealt with it in the broad, and other committees have examined the whole issue of electoral donations in narrower contexts. To try and make any sort of argument that that issue cannot be dealt with on its merits in isolation outside of the entire electoral matters committee inquiry into the last election is an insult to the intelligence.
That is fine when you have the numbers in this place; you can insult everybody’s intelligence—the numbers are the numbers and you can bulldoze things through or block things as you desire. But do not think that it is just the intelligence of other senators that you are insulting. You are insulting the public’s intelligence. That sort of argument is simply ludicrous; it is farcical. And to apply it to try and prevent, for over a year, debate on legislation dealing with political donations is clearly just a matter of naked political self-interest, and it will be seen as such and should be condemned as such.

Having said that, the opposition go one step further in regard to one other piece of legislation. The electoral matters bill, the political donations bill, they sent off for a year, with the report not due until 2009. But the bill relating to superannuation entitlements for people in same-sex relationships who have public sector superannuation, they are sending off, potentially, forever. It is quite an amazing reference: they are sending off the bill for the committee to inquire into and report on, but the committee is not actually allowed to conclude its inquiry into that bill and report back on it until it has looked at any other related bills that might be introduced down the track to give effect to the recommendations of a human rights commission report. Who is going to determine whether or not every single bill that is ever going to appear in regard to a recommendation from that report has appeared? Is it going to be the committee? Is it going to be the Senate? It is not stated. What we have is an open-ended inquiry—one, potentially, going on into the never-never—that is not able, according to this form of words, to report back until every related bill that may ever be introduced has also been examined. How farcical! How disgraceful, particularly when it is on a basic matter of justice, and particularly on a matter which, the coalition would have us believe—Senator Ellison’s own words would have us believe—they support in principle. Do not be so ludicrous. If you support that matter in principle, you would not send it off to a Senate committee to inquire into but never report on. It is simply a disgrace.

Adding to the disgrace is the history of this legislation and the issue involved. The Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws—Superannuation) Bill 2008 deals with a matter that has been examined time and time again by Senate committee inquiries. It was examined as part of a general, wide-ranging inquiry that was reported on to this chamber back in 1997. It was examined as part of a Senate Select Committee on Superannuation inquiry into work patterns in the mid-1990s. It was examined again by the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation, specifically in regard to another private senator’s bill, in 2000. The legislation of the Democrats that specifically aimed to address this matter has been debated in this chamber on at least one occasion, if not more, as have many individual amendments specifically relating to superannuation. The issue was examined specifically in relation to superannuation by a Senate committee as part of inquiries into the government’s superannuation laws and the superannuation choice laws in early 2000. The government, with the support of the Democrats, passed legislation containing similar measures to what is in this bill, in regard to personal superannuation, through this chamber. Yet we have Senator Ellison saying: ‘We cannot deal with this single bill in isolation from all these other measures, even though we support it in principle, because it would be irresponsible, because it requires careful scrutiny.’ How much more careful scrutiny do you need?

You were able to deal with a one-off piece of legislation that dealt with superannuation...
and issues relating to same-sex couples and interdependence on its own, in isolation, with the support of the Prime Minister of the day, Mr Howard. I had a joint press conference with Mr Howard out in his courtyard when I was leader of the Democrats, it was so important to him. It was the only time I ever had a joint press conference with Mr Howard in his courtyard. It was with regard to the superannuation choice legislation, which contained measures specifically enabling people in same-sex relationships to have equal rights—the same issue that is contained in this legislation. Five years later, you want to come in and say, ‘It would be irresponsible to deal with that in isolation, and we cannot pass it—we cannot even report on it—until every other piece of legislation that might appear, ever, at any time in the future, has appeared.’ Do not even try to suggest that you can make any sort of argument like that with any sort of integrity.

To cap it all off, last year this chamber considered a proposal by me to review a piece of legislation that would implement the recommendations of the human rights commission inquiry—the very report that you now say has to be examined in extensive detail, potentially forever. And that proposal, to examine a piece of legislation that would give effect to the recommendations of that report, you blocked. You stopped it being looked at, at all—not even in a one-week inquiry. Why? What was the pathetic, dishonest, dishonourable excuse you gave at the time? It was: ‘It has already been inquired into. We do not even need to look at it because it has already been looked at.’ You make me sick.

But what makes me even more sick is that people have been waiting for this injustice concerning superannuation and same-sex couples to be rectified for a long time and, year after year, they have had to listen to weasel words like ‘we support it in principle back in 2005. I wrote to him then and said: ‘We’ll cooperate. Anything you want, we’ll put it through.’ There was nothing. No action, no inquiry, no legislation—nothing. The coalition cabinet debated legislation concerning same-sex partnerships before the last election, and they refused to act on it when they could have. The current government proposes to act on one part of the issue which, according to the majority view, the coalition actually support but now want to send off to a committee with no reporting date. It is disgusting.

I, and also on behalf of Senator Nettle, who has worked on this issue over the years, propose to move an amendment that has been circulated in the chamber. The amendment seeks to rectify the flaw that I identified in the coalition’s notice of motion No. 6—namely, a reporting date. My motion provides a reporting date of 24 June, which is only next week. As government speakers themselves said last year, this issue has already been inquired into extensively; it was looked into only last year. The government’s legislation deals with only one part of this issue—public sector superannuation. That is clearly self-contained, as anybody who has been examining the issue for any time would know. So, frankly, one week is ample. One week is all that is being proposed by the coalition to look into the budget measure bills that deal with changes to the baby bonus eligibility, the family tax benefit, the Commonwealth seniors health card and the eligible age for partner service pension. The coalition can do all of that in a week, apparently. Therefore, I am quite sure that they could deal with this piece of legislation in a week—and that is what should happen. I, and also on behalf of Senator Nettle, move:

(1) At the end of subparagraph (1)(a), add “by June 24, 2008”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2).
It makes me angry to be treated like an idiot. Part and parcel of being in this chamber is that you have to listen to people give laughable excuses and then they expect you to take them seriously. To some extent, that is part of what happens in politics. I appreciate all of that. I am not trying to be high and mighty about these things, but this is an issue of injustice and it is a very serious injustice. As I have said, over a long period, it has been identified time and time again in a range of Senate committee reports. To use such facile excuses to delay justice once again, potentially indefinitely, is not only unjust—obviously—but extremely hurtful to a lot of people. Many people have been waiting for this injustice to be rectified for a long time. One of the reasons that it is time-critical, apart from the fact the bill has a 1 July start-up date—although, that can be changed—is that injustices come into effect in this area particularly when a person’s partner dies. That time is often very distressing to people. To have that distress compounded by this ongoing injustice is, I think, unconscionable.

People recognise that occasionally things take a while, but excuses are being used to indefinitely delay the implementation of measures that have a big impact on people. Those people whose partner dies between 1 July and however long this legislation is delayed for will bear the brunt of this political gutlessness. That is what is at play here. If anyone can make a good argument for what is being done here, I would like to hear it. You can say that this is to allow proper consideration and prevent anomalies—I have heard those sorts of excuses many times when I have moved amendments in this place—but what you are really doing is pandering to bigots. That is bad enough but, when people have to suffer injustice as a consequence of that, it is acceptable. When my amendment comes to a vote, I urge everyone to give it special consideration, because there will be a direct personal impact in what you do.

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland—Minister for Human Services) (4.49 pm)—The government has built a budget surplus of $22 billion to fight inflation and put downward pressure on interest rates. With these referrals, the Liberals are threatening the surplus. This is the surplus Australia needs if we are to fight the inflation that we inherited. We have to ensure that we put maximum downward pressure on interest rates, and the Reserve Bank board minutes released earlier today are a stark reminder of that. They reveal that inflation remains a key challenge. The minutes state that, over the past year, inflation has picked up at an uncomfortably high rate against a background of limited spare capacity and earlier strong growth in demand. The minutes also highlighted the role of the government’s strong surplus in fighting inflation.

The actions of the Liberal Party in this referral are clearly irresponsible. They are using, without good reason, their numbers in the Senate to delay key revenue measures in the budget. The bill contains straightforward measures that need to be passed by 30 June to ensure their implementation. These are not novel pieces of legislation. These are not grand policy initiatives. These are budget bills. The details can be considered either in a committee on Friday or in the Senate during the committee stage. That is the process that has been adopted in the past. We have a May budget, which means that implementation dates are from 1 July.

In opposition, the Labor Party had to deal with legislation in the time available. We came to a conclusion on the bills. We did not send them off to the never-never. We took the responsibility that opposition provided to hold the government to account for decisions
in their budget. We dissected their budgets. We considered again the measures that we opposed, and we supported those measures that were beneficial. We did that so that the then government could implement their measures by 1 July. The May budget provided a time frame for us.

In this instance, this government wants its budget to be passed so that those matters can be implemented by 1 July. From what the opposition have said, you could really say that they are playing politics with it, but the truth is that they are ditherers. They are dithering about these 13 bills—not one bill, not two bills, but 13 bills. They cannot come to a concluded view about what their position is on these bills. The Liberals would rather play politics with the condensate bill. They would rather that those who can afford luxury vehicles not play a role in fighting against inflation. There is now a real threat to the inflation-fighting surplus. Those opposite, the Liberal Party, are delaying, perhaps even planning to oppose, several measures, but we do not know about that. They cannot find the gumption to come to a concluded view to inform the Senate what their position is on these bills. In fact, if the budget measures of these bills are not passed by 1 July, the next chance they will have is in early September. But the budget has to be passed. It should be passed. The first Rudd Labor government’s budget should be passed so that those matters contained in the budget measures can be implemented by 1 July.

The Treasury estimates the cost of delay that those measures will see at $284 million, and that will come directly off the budget surplus. You would think, from the way the opposition are behaving, that they do not care—that they do not care about working families, do not care about working Australians, do not care about those who are doing it tough in the community—because they do not want to assist this government in putting maximum downward pressure on inflation. They do not want to see those working families, those working Australians, those that are doing it tough, try to get the benefit of these budget measures.

It is time that the Liberals stopped using the Senate process to defer their responsibilities. The internal party tensions—I suspect—over leadership should not spill into this chamber. They are hiding behind the Senate processes now. It is irresponsible. They should not be doing it. They are delaying consideration of legislation at the expense of the Australian community. The reality is that the opposition have sent three bills to committee for Friday. It is within their ability to send bills to be dealt with by a committee on Friday if they think there are measures that require inquiry or that they wish to explore further. That is the opportunity that we have adopted in the past. We have met those challenges in the time available to ensure that the Senate can perform its function of scrutinising legislation but also meet budget considerations such as implementation dates of 1 July.

Of course, the Liberals could have treated all the bills in that way, or they could have actually come to a concluded view on some of them and informed the Australian public what their views about these bills are rather than hiding behind them. In fact, they are now doing a curious thing. By delaying, they are clearly handing over the responsibility to a future Senate that they do not have a majority in. They do not want to exercise the control that they have exercised in the past. It is curious because in the past they did exercise control—badly, I think. They used this place as a sausage machine. They processed bills through it. They used Fridays for committees. They had one-day inquiries. They referred all bills, whether they needed scrutiny or not, to committees to jump up their numbers, quite irresponsibly, to make sure
that they could then come into this place and argue, if they had a mind to, that they were being responsible and ensuring that the Senate processes were being dealt with. It was a farce. What they were really doing was using the Senate as a sausage machine.

In opposition, they cannot let go of the reins. They cannot accept that the government of the day should have its budget dealt with appropriately by this Senate and the bills passed so that matters can proceed. Of course, when the opposition were exercising their numbers, they did not have regard to the matters that Senator Ellison talked about today. They did not have regard to the due processes that the Senate has. They had regard to the stark political reality that numbers win. That is what they had regard to. What they do not accept is this: they pretend to hide behind the process, but it is a fig leaf. What they are doing is transparent. The Australian public will judge them adversely for this role that they now play.

Senator Bartlett makes a very good point about the same-sex couples bill. It is a point that is worth reiterating: the essence of the subject matter of that bill has been dealt with many, many times in this place. The government has decided, according to its election commitments, to meet those commitments, but the opposition have decided to refer the bill off to the never-never. One questions the referral in itself, in that by referring it they have said ultimately that it will be referred contingent upon some unknown future event. One wonders whether it is in truth a deferral rather than a referral. In my view, it is a deferral because it is not contingent upon some known fact that we can ascertain so that the bill can be dealt with in truth.

The opposition should be reminded that they need to consider how these matters are dealt with and dealt with appropriately. The Rudd government recognises that working families, those people in the community who are doing it tough, need the inflation pressures alleviated. Let us look at what the opposition have done. When they got to opposition—if that is a better way of phrasing it—they immediately put in four select committees to deal with matters that they wanted to scrutinise—matters that they wanted to reflect upon, examine and inquire into. Here, they can pass the bills. They could refer these matters off to committee to have a look at their substance if they were really concerned about them. It is not necessary for them to take the role of simply deferring these measures. If they want to maintain an opposition’s role of being accountable, to scrutinise the government’s actions—

Debate interrupted.

VALEDICTORIES

Senator WATSON (Tasmania) (5.00 pm)—In achieving 30 years in the Senate, one has to balance Canberra duties with electorate responsibilities such as delivering much-needed programs to the community, befriending the elderly and those in need, upholding the law and encouraging youth to aspire to greater things.

In the words of my friend the late John Button, I arrived in this place as a ‘refugee from the textile industry’. Yes, I was a casualty of the tariff policy of the Whitlam government which caused much devastation to my home town of Launceston and led to Kevin Newman winning the famous 1974 Bass by-election. The following year saw the election of the Fraser government, in what some opposite might describe as controversial circumstances.

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Prior to coming here, I had qualified professionally quite early in life and at the same time had attained business success. Then the Kelsall and Kemp mill closed—and grown men and women openly wept at the closure
announcement; not surprising, since many of these folk had parents, grandparents or children working at the mill—in an environment where the company was lending millions of dollars to associated companies.

Kelsall and Kemp had an enviable reputation of quality for a diversified range of woollen production. Kelsall and Kemp were the last of the fine spinners in Australia. Doctor blankets were a brand name across the nation. At one time we had 70 per cent of the school-wear trade, with skirts and blazers with the famous 80-20 wool-nylon blend. Australian and Tasmanian cricket teams wore blazers made from our fabric. Billiard and snooker games were played on Kelsall cloth, and Cathay Pacific Airways female staff wore our distinctive red uniforms. How could such a decision be made? We will never know. I doubt that the story will ever be written.

Unlike in the other chamber, one does not really have to aspire to high ministerial status to achieve results in the Senate, but it does help to specialise. In my case it was through the public accounts committee, where I served 27 years. The high point there for me was the Auditor-General becoming an officer of the parliament and not the executive arm of government. Changes through the Senate finance and public administration committee since the 1990s, though significant, were not monumental.

I chaired the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation for 10 years, under both Labor and Liberal governments, presenting in that time 58 high-quality reports, thanks to the support from the Australian Democrats Cheryl Kernot and Lyn Allison. Senator Nick Sherry provided great input, as did Sue West and Bruce Childs from the ALP. The committee worked for great retirement outcomes, generally on a non-partisan basis. Certainly Prime Minister Rudd did the right thing in appointing my Tasmanian colleague Senator Sherry as Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law in the new government. To my friend Nick, I now urge you to work on short selling and scrip lending.

My first responsibility as chair was to convince the Liberal Party leader of the time, John Hewson, whose intellect I still admire, and the Liberal Party to accept the concept of universal superannuation promoted by the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating. We now have a first-class system, affirmed by the World Bank.

Following each hearing of the super committee, we met briefly with the bureaucrats to discuss the significance of the proposals of each of the witnesses. One of the most significant inclusions was the need for a custodian to protect the super. ComSuper was certainly saved from a major fraud over the Christmas period a few years back because of the speedy action of the custodian. Another hallmark was a halfway house in weaning Australians off lump sums to introduce the concept of an allocated pension.

Peter Costello’s generational change report followed much of our superannuation report two to three years earlier; the Productivity Commission picked up the thrust of that report in its presentation to the Treasurer.

The committee also fought hard to lift standards across the industry and recover moneys lost by innocent investors.

For those who were here during the 1980s and early 1990s, I apologise for some of my long and technical speeches on income tax.

The chamber was a very different place 30 years ago to what it is now. Then there were no lecterns and no reading of speeches. I remember the late night stoushes between Justin O’Byrne and some of his older colleagues attacking Senator Harradine. Senator Harradine was a colleague whose courage I
always respected and whose views I also respected. He gave me a phone call of support from New York when I first received preselection.

The service that senators receive around this place is really second to none, and I thank all the staff. In particular, I give special recognition to the Clerk, Harry Evans, who, while not always the flavour of the month with the government of the day, upholds the principles and virtues of the Australian Senate and is a strong advocate for parliamentary transparency and the ideals of democracy with his fearless writings.

My most traumatic event occurred when my colourful predecessor, the late Hon. Sir Reginald Wright, almost involved me in a bar room brawl during election campaigning, urging me to stand up and fight at Bridgewater pub in 1977, a situation that could have swiftly brought to a close my future parliamentary career. A sawmiller by the name of Cameron and his staff stepped in to bring peace and order. The Hon. Reg was a fine, robust speaker but was probably better known for the number of times he and his Queensland colleague Senator Wood crossed the floor. The Hon. Reg crossed on 150 occasions and Senator Wood crossed 130 times. My modest total of four to five really pales into insignificance compared with that.

The Senate no longer has its great orators, unfortunately—although I recognise some of the good ones here at the moment. In particular I think of the late Hon. John Wheeldon, who gave a most impressive hour-long dissertation on foreign challenges around the world, speaking in the old house without notes. On the other side, we had the great Sir John Carrick, well known for his involvement in the Second World War. He gave a most inspiring address to a local school speech night. My colleague Reg Withers, my first Senate seating companion, had the most incisive mind and made frequent, forthright and cryptic comments. Nor does the Senate have characters such as Tony Mulvihill, with his passionate speeches about such issues as the booby bird. On the other hand, three of the finest, outstanding minds ever to grace this place were elected to the Senate from Queensland in 2004. I am referring to George Brandis, Brett Mason and Russell Trood. What is surprising is that we had a record four senators with that sort of talent elected from Queensland.

In terms of compassion, Senator Fred Chaney really had no equal, and Robert Hill was a fine senator who really should have headed foreign affairs rather than defence. I also wish to acknowledge the work of my Tasmanian colleague Senator Peter Rae, who achieved so much with his quango reports—quasi-autonomous non-government organisation reports—through the Senate finance and public administration committee. Peter, on retirement, went into state politics as minister for education and later reached his zenith as Chair of the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission, with his passion for renewable energy, and chairing several international committees.

I still recall an incident with Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser when I was called away from a formal dinner in New Zealand expecting to be reprimanded having made the local New Zealand press that morning condemning aspects of the closer economic relations agreement because of Tasmania’s special interests affecting dairying, apples and other issues. Fortunately, Malcolm said that he was granting $30,000 for the world ploughing championship just out of Longford. My wife conveyed the much awaited message to the organisers, who rang back at 12 o’clock worried that it might have been an April Fool’s Day joke! But the real challenge with Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was that he was unhappy about driving the sponsor’s tractor
to open the event; however, we solved that problem by substituting two horses, with Malcolm managing a single-furrow plough. The picture event was so successful that the photo appeared on the front pages of almost every newspaper around Australia the following day.

My thanks go to the late Senator John Button for saving the poppy industry in Tasmania in its infancy when it faced overseas and internal abandonment. It showed that we can work with members from the other side to benefit our state. I also acknowledge his help on another occasion in getting Reserve Bank of Australia assurance for the depositors at the Trust Bank of Tasmania, when large queues of depositors, very visible from my room in St John Street, were lining up wanting to withdraw their money. That action was an instant success and stopped the run on the bank.

My special thanks go to Senator Ron Boswell—a politician who, during the Bjelke-Petersen era, had no equal in terms of predicting election results. Senator Boswell was a great friend of Tasmania, and I frequently called on him for funding of the east and west overpasses on each side of Devonport, the port access road from Devonport, and the Bass Highway upgrades, especially the overpass at Westbury to provide access to the important processing plant of Tasmanian Alkaloids. Unfortunately, his and our support for the Southern roadworks and a bridge crossing the Derwent had to be switched to Penguin through local government and state government intransigence and procrastination. Ron’s comment to me was, ‘Any more roads, Watto, and Tasmania will sink!’

While speaking of roads, I would also like to acknowledge my friend Professor Dr Coleman O’Flaherty, an expert here in Canberra on road construction before he moved to Tasmania to head the State Institute of Technology, and later the Launceston campus of the University of Tasmania. He gave great technical advice, which was vital in upgrading from two to four lanes the road from Launceston to the Breadalbane turn-off near the airport. He also did great work in establishing the fine school of nursing at the Newman campus.

Aboriginal Senator Neville Bonner was a great friend and I was appalled that he lost preselection—a fate that also befell another great friend Senator Tsebin Tchen, who was a great thinker and rationalist. Senator Tchen was the first Chinese-born senator to grace this upper house. Then there was the remarkable Misha Lajovic, whose death we mourned just the other day. He survived severe military and intellectual battles in Slovenia, his country of birth, before arriving in Australia as a refugee and accepting a lowly job as a simple labourer. He was the first non-Anglo Saxon elected to this Senate. In fact, he was a great pioneer. During his time, Senator Misha Lajovic spoke of the evils of totalitarianism.

Don Chipp from the Democrats identified another side of Senator Misha Lajovic’s character, saying ‘he had a delightful European sense of humour which enchanted us all’. Fred Chaney recalled that the most remarkable thing about Misha was that he even survived to reach Australia!

I have been a lifelong member of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship. With Harry Edwards as president and me as secretary, together we pioneered the first national prayer breakfast in Old Parliament House, which still continues on an annual basis. This was a great challenge, but it was made easier by World Vision agreeing to financially underwrite the event. So successful was the breakfast that we ended up not needing any financial support whatsoever for that event. The prayer breakfast had the largest number
of people for a sit-down breakfast to ever grace the Old Parliament House dining room—about 700 people. The function was addressed by Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of the Philippines, and Senator Kim Beazley, renowned for his leadership of the moral rear-mament movement.

John Howard, I acknowledge, is one of Australia’s greatest Prime Ministers, leading the Liberal Party for 13 years after 1996, and introducing some great reforms. I do thank him for conveying his kind remarks, through Senator Parry, at the Winkleigh Hall farewell last weekend.

While I am about to exit the Senate, I remind my colleagues that Tim Kellar, my daughter’s brother-in-law, is a highly talented member of our wider family. He lives in the United States of America and has just been elected as a senator to the parliament of New Mexico. I offer him my congratulations. In fact, so great was the win that he won in each of the 23 electoral precincts around Albuquerque. Maybe some of my Australian electoral advice helped in the final result! I certainly hope so. Further success in due time may well see him in the US federal senate, and I wish him well.

Assisting migrants has always been a part of my work and it really would not have been possible without the assistance of ministers such as Amanda Vanstone and departmental representatives including David Foulkes and others. In other portfolios, I would like to salute the officers from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, who I have worked closely with over time, and in particular the people at Social Security, which is now Centrelink. If I have to name them, locally there is Mike Bennett, who I rang up constantly on behalf of constituents, and the recently retired head of Centrelink, Jeff Whalan. Jeff Whalan, I believe, ran one of Australia’s most efficient agencies with a high degree of professionalism and in an environment of people often in very great need and sometimes in very difficult circumstances. In recent times we have heard very little criticism of Centrelink. To Treasury and tax officials I offer my thanks for suffering me on taxation issues so frequently and with such professionalism. Many of these dedicated personnel I have discovered are committed Christians with a great sense of professionalism, which is something that a lot of people do not know.

From the very beginning I would like to thank my preselectors, who were responsible for my being here. We recently enjoyed a very happy farewell from the Hobart women’s group, where many of the original loyal preselectors from my election in 1977 were present. To my family in the gallery, I offer my support and apologise for the long time away from home during the children’s formative years. While not alone in this situation, I am really conscious of the sacrifices other groups apart from politicians, such as defence personnel, make and the impact it has on family life.

To all my Liberal Party Senate colleagues past and present, I give thanks—some for the challenges, others for their deep friendship over many years. Over my 30 years I have been fortunate in being part of many delegations where I have left my footprint, I believe, in terms of benefiting a number of people, particularly in the wider Asia-Pacific region. The calibre of our representatives in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is extraordinarily high, and their help has been appreciated. I must highlight two occasions that spring to mind: one when my wife, with her dignity and great charm, proposed a vote of thanks at the final dinner concluding the Commonwealth Conference in Dakar, Bangladesh, which was attended by over 800 people. My thanks also go to the ambassador, who helped with that significant address.
The other honour was leading the Australian delegation to the 28th Association of South East Asian Nations Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, AIP A, General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur last year where the delegates’ feeling towards Australia was so genuine and heartfelt. I will share one experience from a woman parliamentarian who told everybody that she was denied the opportunity of coming to Australia many decades ago under the Colombo plan because of the atrocious activities of the Pol Pot regime. She was now a politician and was so deeply appreciative of Australia’s support. I think she said that we ranked something like fourth in the world for aid given to Cambodia. The nature of the aid and the people who delivered the aid really resonated well with the Cambodian people. She was not alone, but that was just typical of the sorts of remarks about Australia. So I say: keep it that way; keep us as an observer nation. In particular I wish to acknowledge AusAID for their tremendous work.

I have also sought to be easily accessible to all my constituents, irrespective of their origin or party beliefs. Taking to heart Senator Lajovic’s concern that the party needs to embrace migrant communities, I really had a great rapport with so many new arrivals—initially those from Central Europe, Italy and Greece and then in helping people from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, the Philippines, China, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Russia. I helped them in maintaining their place in Australia, placing them in jobs and getting some genuine cases out of the Baxter Detention Centre in South Australia—not an easy job. They are now making great citizens. Another delightful couple from Argentina, which a lot of people do not believe is a problem country, I saved from imminent deportation and they have now established themselves in Australia as fine professionals and citizens.

Much of my time has been filled with resolving the concerns of those with personal problems or difficulties. This has not always been easy but in hindsight has been one of the most satisfying parts of my work as a Senator. The tragedy of the Kelsall and Kemp closure changed my attitude to life and refocused my priorities when I reached Canberra. Those on low incomes, the disadvantaged and refugees, in fact all those who have had difficulty in getting their voice heard, have been high on my agenda. This has been reflected through my close association with community organisations such as refugee groups, churches and City Mission—with the establishment of breakfasts so no one need go hungry—and in the later years with Australia’s oldest benevolent institution, the Launceston Benevolent Society.

Tasmania is indeed a great place. Mainlanders are increasingly finding it a wonderful place in which to live, but the challenge is to provide meaningful opportunities for our children. To the people of Australia, my thanks for 30 years of support and for providing me with such a great opportunity to serve their interest. To the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania, I thank you for your enthusiasm and support. Together we got over $200 million for the university campus in Launceston. I also thank him for the work that he did with the maritime college. To my colleagues in this place, thank you for your friendship, advice and support. I trust that this institution maintains its strength and integrity in supporting our amazing Australian nation. I thank you all.

Senator PATTERSON (Victoria) (5.22 pm)—I can hardly believe it is 21 years that I have been here, and have spent a third of my life here. There are 14 of us leaving, and one valedictory after the other makes one feel that yet another one might be superfluous. However, I was reminded—and when you
find out who it is you will realise it was quite forcefully—when I was speaking to our former colleague Ambassador Amanda Vanstone that not everyone has the chance of closing the chapter of one’s life here with the privilege of a final speech. I know she regrets having missed that opportunity and in particular that her thank yous were not able to be made publicly.

Our friend and colleague Jeannie Ferris, had she been with us, would have been giving her valedictory today—no doubt in her own inimitable style. I know she would have had a long list of those she wished to thank and the Comcar drivers would have been high on that list, as they are on mine. It is always dangerous to mention people individually. But I was in Melbourne and I had promised Jeannie I would get her home from hospital in Sydney. I pursued every option to no avail. I asked the drivers for help and Gordon Kirchner, on his day off, took Jeannie’s car to Sydney, collected her and drove her home. That mountain for Jeannie and me became a molehill. Jan Broughton also gave Jeannie tremendous support. Others have similar stories about the times drivers have gone that extra and very special mile.

Behind the senators and the House of Representatives members there is an army of people who work mostly behind the scenes to support us. A trip to the basement is enough for visitors to realise just how vast this army is. The electricians, the engineers, the sound and vision team, the caterers and a host of others beaver away down there. The attendants around Parliament House and the AUSPIC team deserve a mention as well. The staff canteen and dining room staff do not always find the refuelling of sometimes over tired and over wrought members and staff easy and they deserve our thanks. Although only working part-time now, Kate Robertson has been a stalwart. The few of us left who served in the Old Parliament House know just how long and how dedicated her service has been. Thanks too ought to go to the Library staff who are tremendous and who respond to the oddest questions, complicated topics and impossible deadlines with infinite professionalism, patience and courtesy.

The long-suffering Senate staff, both current and former, have endured questions about procedures, standing orders and register of interests. As I have said before in this place they sometimes answer the same question over and over, when it has been asked innumerable times, as graciously the first time as the last. I have spoken before about the amazing service given to the Senate and to me personally by the former Deputy Clerk Anne Lynch. Her dedication to the Senate and her strength in dealing with the challenges she has faced are an example and inspiration to all of us. Thanks too to Cleaver Elliott. I thank him especially for his help with amendments when I was shadow minister and always wanting them done sooner, if not earlier, and for his valuable advice with private members’ bills I have introduced. My comments on the Senate staff would not be complete without acknowledging the enormous contribution Harry Evans, Rosemary Laing and Andrea Griffiths have made to my time in this place and to the Senate. The secretaries and staff of the various committees on which I have served deserve recognition for the important contribution they make quietly behind the scenes to the role of the Senate.

I would like also to acknowledge the Senate chamber staff. There are too many of them to name but all are dedicated to the Senate and its orderly conduct. Hansard, sticky notes and water—without gin or whisky, which I have sometimes asked for—are rustled up with the press of a button at a moment’s notice. They never complain—
well, not to us at least! When we sat those horrendous hours many times after the sun had risen, they managed to keep their sanity in the Alice in Wonderland world of the Senate when Friday was really Thursday and when what to the outside world was two days was only one in this rarefied atmosphere. Thank heavens, and thanks very much to the former Senator John Herron, those mad times are over and sitting hours are now somewhat more sensible. There is also another hidden army in the parliament—the cleaners—and some have been here since Parliament House opened 20 years ago. There are a few I wish to mention in particular—Vivienne, Olga, Maria and Anna. Their cheery greetings, and sometimes hugs, have often lifted my spirits, especially on those days when everything seemed to be going awry. To the Senate transport officers, Ian and Michael: thank you for your help. We are not an easy lot to deal with and it must be harder than herding cats, especially on Wednesday nights when we are all out.

It would be remiss of me not to mention our Public Service. They are the backbone of our democracy. I have worked with many outstanding officers. I am not sure which role they preferred me in in estimates—as inquisitor or as their minister. The staff of the department of immigration were assiduous in assisting me to reform the student visa program and, with Defence, caring for the thousands of Kosovars and East Timorese who were given safe haven in Australia. During my short time with Foreign Affairs and AusAID, I was given enormous assistance. I was also exposed more closely to the demands that service in Foreign Affairs places on those officers and their families who are sent on postings overseas.

My time in the health portfolio saw us confronting a range of issues. To name a few, we increased the number of medical schools, addressed falling bulk-billing rates, dealt with the medical indemnity crisis, managed the very real threat of a SARS outbreak, coordinated the Health response to deal with the victims of the Bali bombing, negotiated the Commonwealth-state health agreement and, despite those opposite constantly saying that it was not the case that we increased it, delivered a 17 per cent increase over and above inflation in that healthcare agreement. We saw the establishment of the National Blood Authority and a greater public awareness of the PBS and the department worked tirelessly with me to promote prevention, which included measures such as funding to vaccinate Australia’s young people against meningococcal C and the initiation of the pilot bowel-screening program.

The staff of the Department of Family and Community Services worked to ensure we saw, for example, a record increase in family assistance through managing the rollout—and I refer to you here, Senator Kemp—of the $600 per child per annum increase—which you learnt from me when I repeated it over and over in the Senate—which the current Treasurer tried to claim was not real. The family payments were put on a firmer footing and overpayments were significantly reduced. The disability business sector was reformed and we saw the introduction of productivity based payments. We achieved increased assistance to carers and increases in respite for older carers, oversaw the signing of the reformed supported accommodation agreement with the states and, with the Attorney-General’s Department, established family relationship centres around Australia and a range of other measures focused on the importance of early childhood development. Many of the officers who worked with me went over and beyond the call of duty. I am indebted to them, and I wish I could thank them all individually. I acknowledge the professionalism and contribution of Todd Frew.
Jane Halton and Jeff Harmer—they were outstanding.

I have had some of the best personal staff a senator or minister could ever wish for. I know they thought I was a tyrant about systems, the danger of thoughtless emails, the importance of proofreading and my hatred of split infinitives—but they all survived. With some, I have shared some memorable experiences. We have travelled throughout my home state of Victoria, been to the UN in New York and an OECD conference in Paris, seen aid projects in Cambodia and AusAID at work in Papua New Guinea and made many visits to remote Indigenous communities. We have shared the ups and downs and highs and lows of political life. To all of them go my thanks for their loyalty and friendship. It is not possible to mention them all but I know they will understand that I must acknowledge my personal assistant Lynne Barrow, who was with me in my previous job and who came with me to the Senate and remained with me until 2004. She is a great friend and can be very proud of the part she played in my role here in the Senate. Often when one announces one’s retirement, staff go off to greener pastures. I want to thank Barbara Richards, Cathy Hales and Rachael Forbes—Cathy and Rachael are here in the chamber—for their ongoing support and care and Merrilyn Johnston, Karen Browne and Rosemary Graham, who have only been with me a relatively short time but have been an important part of my team.

People say you do not make friends in politics, but I know this to be a myth. You can not be here for 20 years working with people like Margaret Reid, Jocelyn Newman, Amanda Vanstone and Sue Knowles and others like Fred Chaney and Robert Hill—I should note that, between us, the first four I mentioned and I chalked up over 100 years of Senate service—and not form lasting friendships. There are many others, both past and present, and in both chambers and on both sides, whom I can count as friends. I hope with modern technology I can maintain those friendships.

My 21 years in this place would not have been possible without the support of the Victorian division of the Liberal Party. Many branch members and members of the Women’s Council have encouraged and supported me since I first stood for preselection. It was Lorraine Elliott who was the one who first suggested I should think about standing for the Senate. She has been there with me through the highs and lows, and I thank her for her unconditional friendship.

I want to thank those battalions of branch members who have worked in fundraising, manning booths and information centres—people like Betty Johns, who in her 80s still believes so strongly in the principles of the Liberal Party that she continues to work tirelessly. It is to people like her, Lyn and Don Jewell and others in the party that I owe a great debt of gratitude. They do all the hard work, and I have been one of the beneficiaries of their selfless commitment.

As I said earlier, not everyone has the privilege of a valedictory speech, and I count myself blessed that I am leaving this place at a time of my choosing. Having said that one’s maiden speech and one’s valedictory are like bookends of one’s time in this place, I looked back at my first speech last week and it brought home the truth of that saying that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Things have changed. When I entered this place, I had a typewriter with a four-page memory, two IBM ball typewriters and no fax, and I shared a photocopier in Old Customs House with six others. I did, however, have my own Macintosh with cardboard covered floppy discs.

The demands of the job have increased exponentially over the 21 years—emails,
mobile phones and 10 or more news cycles a day have increased the pressure on members of parliament. If I have a message for those staying here and those entering the Senate on 1 July—and I pay particular tribute here to Helen Kroger and Scott Ryan, who will be following Senator Kemp and me into this place—it is that it is important to work hard but it is also important not to neglect family and friends. Little was I to know that my father’s life would bookend my Senate term. I was sworn in on his birthday on 14 September 1987 and, just over a week ago, I gave what was my last speech in public as a senator when I gave the eulogy at his funeral. Nor was I to know in 1987 that my neither nor my mother nor my soul mate and confidant, Professor Eric Glasgow AO, would not be there to share in the excitement of my being sworn in as only the eighth woman ever to serve in cabinet.

The greatest legacy Eric could have left me was the host of friends and former students he taught and cared for, and they in turn have been my mainstay. My thanks go to them for their love and concern, especially the Gurney/Beale, Beattie, Atkins, Lindquist, Homewood, McArdle and Bare families. So many friends have included me in their families and have been great backstops during my time here. I cannot omit the wonderful extended Downing/Cumming family, and I cannot omit saying just how much all those Sunday dinners have meant to me. Friends like Heather Cathcart, Gillian Edwards, Nan Brogan and Sue and Rod Viney are rare. They have been there whenever I needed them, and they deserve a special mention.

I am looking forward to spending much more time with my family: my fantastic young brothers, Steven and Andrew, and their wives, Justine and Maria, and the little Pattersons—David and Isobel, who I think might be listening tonight, and William, who is in Thailand. Aunty Kay will not need to rush in and rush out when she visits Sydney as much anymore.

I mentioned in my maiden speech that I applied a number of tests to the Australian economy and compared it with other developed countries. We were not doing very well. One of my goals on entering this place was to work to ensure that young people had the sort of opportunities I had when I was starting out in life. I am proud of what we have been able to do through the limited opportunities of opposition and then through the past almost 12 years in government. Australia is in a much better position than it was in 1987. However, the job is never ending and we still need to improve our balance of payments, encourage the reduction of personal debt and keep downward pressure on inflation and interest rates.

As I said, the more things change, the more they stay the same. I mentioned in my maiden speech the challenge of an ageing population. I said ‘the baby boom was going through its corporate mid-life crisis’ and said that may have explained the pressure on superannuation issues. That same baby boom, the first of whom are entering their early 60s, will involve increased pressures, for example, on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. I have tried not to be too political up to this point, but it galls me to hear the current government say that we are not fiscally responsible. Where was the then opposition when I, as health minister, wanted to make the PBS more sustainable? I remember how they opposed an increase in the indexation of the PBS co-payment. We finally got it through, and it is now on a firmer footing and also there is greater intra- and intergenerational fairness, but it needs constant attention.

While I am letting off a little bit of steam, I have never forgiven the opposition for waging an unconscionable campaign against our policy of having an ingoing or bond for nurs-
ing homes. In opposition we supported that policy for hostels. I would remind my colleagues and the public that the challenges the current government now confronts, with difficulties being faced by nursing home providers, is partly of its own making. Also, I still do not understand why the Labor opposition opposed bills I introduced over two parliaments to eliminate the compulsory retirement age in the Public Service. I am so glad we were able to eliminate it in government. I have seen firsthand some women, in particular, well into their 60s, who have been able to go back and work in the Public Service. It will behove both government and opposition to keep their eyes on the benefits and challenges that increased longevity and an ageing population brings and will continue to bring—and I declare an interest in that at the moment.

I hope we will continue to see surplus budgets and I hope that emphasis on both sides of politics will be placed on ensuring that we continue to do more for people with disabilities. Former Senator Jocelyn Newman introduced, for the first time, a carers payment for people caring for a child or children under 16 with a profound disability. It was quite restricted, because at that time we were trying to pay back $96 billion of debt. I acknowledge that the current government plans to extend this measure. Despite needing tweaking—and I am sure the Senate inquiry will recommend appropriate changes—the Special Disability Trust measure has made a difference to a small number of people and, hopefully, there will be more. But for those it has assisted I know from personal contact I have had that it has been one of the most significant things that has happened to assist them in providing for their adult sons and daughters.

However, one of my greatest regrets is that, as yet, we do not have a scheme which assists people with a disability, irrespective of how their disability was acquired. It seems unfair that some are able to sue successfully and may have millions of dollars to assist them, while others, where there is no-one to blame, have less than adequate help. Both the Commonwealth and the states, especially, need to do more. Vigilance is required to ensure that the voices of those policymakers and others, promulgating fads and fashions, do not speak louder than the voices of those people with disabilities, their parents and carers who know better what is best for them and their loved ones.

Mr President, when this Parliament House was opened—I do not suppose you can call it the new Parliament House anymore—by Sir Ninian Stephen, he said, and I will paraphrase to save time: ‘Australia, Britain, USA, Canada and only two of all the nations of Europe can count an uninterrupted span of over 87’—now 107—‘years of democratic government, years of governments which have come to power by the free vote of people and which have at all times held themselves effectively accountable to the people.’ I hope you noticed that I did not split an infinitive! His comments remind all of us that democracy is fragile. When pressure is put on members of parties always to agree, and, when they do not, it is portrayed as division and disunity rather than healthy debate; when party discipline is so tight that one is expelled, as has occurred in the Labor Party; when, as has occurred in the Liberal Party, given the treatment in the press, people are now very unlikely to cross the floor—the examples that Senator Watson gave of the number of times people used to cross the floor highlights that; when, in the matter of a conscience vote, people’s preselection is threatened or indeed taken away if they do not vote a certain way; when politicians do not discern when the role of a politician and the role of a parliamentarian begins and ends; and when the behaviour of any of us is
such that it diminishes the standing of the body corporate of politicians, then we increase the fragility of our longstanding and precious democratic process.

Before closing, may I wish all my colleagues who are leaving the Senate with me all the best. May your postparliamentary life be challenging and rewarding. And for those staying, I wish you all the best in your time in this place. It is a great honour and one of the most significant and important ways in which one can serve our nation and the people of Australia. Mr President, I said in my maiden speech:

I hope that the trust—
of the people of Victoria, whom I have had
the great honour of representing—
… will be justified by my service to them and my performance in this chamber and in the various committees of this Parliament.

It is for others to judge. I hope it has.

The PRESIDENT—Senator Kemp.

Senator Kemp (Victoria) (5.41 pm)—Thank you, Mr President—and I might say a very good President, too, of this chamber! As I have said to my colleagues, the Senate is truly the best club in Australia. I am proud to have been a member of this club for some 18 years. I am grateful to the Liberal Party and the people of Victoria for giving me the opportunity to serve here. I would like to express my strongly felt gratitude to the members of the Liberal Party and the people of Victoria for giving me the opportunity to serve here. I would like to express my strongly felt gratitude to the members of the Liberal Party and its office holders. I am proud to have served as a minister in the Howard government. I believe that government will be viewed as one of the great administrations in Australian history. Even the doubters—and there have been a few—are no doubt thinking that the Howard government is looking better day by day, as the Rudd government starts to stumble.

Mention has often been made, rather unkindly, by my colleagues of my performances in question time. I would like to set the record straight. During my time as Assistant Treasurer, I received some 700 aggressive questions from non-government senators, mainly half-pitches aimed at the head. To set the record straight, I have been fascinated as the new ALP ministers have queued up at my door wanting to withdraw their previous attacks on me and saying to me how they regard me as one of their mentors. I never thought that would happen in politics.

I am delighted that my wife, Daniele, is here this evening with my daughter, Nathalie. It is lovely to have both of you here. My son, Alexander, has an exam in Melbourne this evening and, unfortunately, cannot join us. Danni, as you all know, has been a wonderful wife and shown enormous enthusiasm for politics. Janette Howard once remarked to Daniele, noting her interest in the arts, that, with my appointment to the arts portfolio, the government was getting two for the price of one. How true!

Danni must truly be the only political wife who, on those rare occasions when I was home, always wondered why we were not both attending some arts, sports or political function. I have not been able to persuade my daughter or son to consider a political career, but their support and advice—and often too frank advice—has always been helpful.

I have been very fortunate to have a brother in politics. One thing I think David and I can claim is that we have been the only two brothers to have ever served in a ministry concurrently. I mean no discourtesy to anyone else here, but David Kemp was certainly the best education and environment minister in memory. It has been an honour to be regularly confused for him. My father used to tell David and I that our sister Rosemary had the best political brain in the family—and I suspect that is probably true. Interestingly, my late parents were unenthusi-
astic when they heard that both their sons were going to stand for parliament. But I would hope in the end that they thought that it was all worth while.

During my time in the Senate, some 98 senators have passed through this place. Yet during this period of time we have only had two leaders of our party in this chamber, Robert Hill and Nick Minchin. I am sure I speak for all senators when I say what a wonderful job both Robert and Nick have done in that position. As Kay Patterson so beautifully said it, in politics they say you tend to lose friends rather than gain them. And we all know that old joke: if you want a friend in politics, get a dog. But I have enjoyed the friendship of so many colleagues. Former senators such as Ian Campbell, John Herron, Richard Alston, Jim Short, Michael Baume, Warwick Parer and many more have all had a very substantial influence on me. I have also enjoyed the company of, really, all current senators. I will not go through naming them all particularly, but I have enjoyed being here with you and I am certainly going to miss you.

I would like to pay tribute to the departing senators: John Watson, who spoke so well, Grant Chapman, Sandy Macdonald, Ross Lightfoot and my old friend Kay Patterson.

_Senator Patterson interjecting—_

_Senator KEMP—_My longstanding friend Kay Patterson. Thank you for that correction. All of these senators have made a very important contribution to this chamber. Kay was my great rival for Senate and ministry positions. For every post that Kay went for—whether it was No. 1 or 2 on the Senate ticket or a post in the ministry and the cabinet—I was her rival and vice versa. I know it is hard to believe, but our rivalry never got in the way of our friendship.

John Watson and I worked very closely when I was Assistant Treasurer. He would visit my office very regularly and was a great contributor to the government’s superannuation policies. It was very wise for the Assistant Treasurer in those days to take note of what John Watson said because, if you did not respond in the privacy of your office, he would certainly get up in the party room and make sure your life was not as comfortable as it might otherwise have been. So thank you, John, for all your advice.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the retiring Labor, Democrat and Green senators. When a Liberal like me starts to think that a class warrior like George Campbell is really a good bloke, it is certainly time to leave! This is of course a historic day, when the last Democrat senator departs this chamber. Lyn Allison and Natasha Stott Despoja are here with us. Seeing they are with us, I would say that I have over the years said one or two unkind things about the Democrats. I unreservedly withdraw them now.

On a number of occasions we were able to negotiate with the Democrats on key legislation. From the perspective of today it seems extraordinary that the GST caused such agony in this chamber. When you think of the overblown comments that came from the other side of the chamber—that the world as we knew it was going to end, that Australia was going to be plunged into a recession, that unemployment was going to rise and that the incomes of working Australians were going to be cut—how strange it all seems now. In order to carry the GST debate through, we did need allies, and I for one would like to praise Meg Lees for the leadership that she showed to get this very difficult reform through the Senate. I know it was very difficult—and I make no judgements on those who had a different view—but, in the end, she took a stand and she paid quite a heavy political price. So it is appropriate that I mention her name today.
The greatest missed opportunity in my time, I believe, was the failure of the Greens to negotiate over the sale of Telstra. Instead, they threw the passage of the bill to the Independents in the chamber. If the Greens had been able to talk and negotiate on that bill, I believe it would have delivered billions of extra dollars to the environment and great projects like the Murray-Darling Basin may have been brought forward five to eight years. I will not be here to say this to people, but I do hope that the new Green senators will not miss the opportunities that this chamber presents in the future.

I stood for parliament at the urging of my very good friend Michael Kroger. Michael has in fact persuaded quite a number of people to enter this parliament. One of my failures has been an inability to persuade Michael to take the jump himself. It has also been a great experience to work as Assistant Treasurer with Peter Costello, who undoubtedly is the ‘Don Bradman’ of the parliament. One only has to see question time in the other place today to appreciate the dominance that he had in that forum. I am also delighted that two of my close friends, Scott Ryan and Helen Kroger, will be senators in just a few days time.

I had the privilege of working for five years as a staff member with a former senator and an outstanding minister in the Fraser government, Dame Margaret Guilfoyle. No person could have received a better apprenticeship in politics, and I am grateful to Dame Margaret and her husband Stan for their continuing friendships.

As I was going through my files—and, in over 18 years, you do make quite a pile, I have to say—I was astonished to learn that almost 120 people have worked in my office, though not at the same time, naturally! Many of those, of course, were students, getting some work experience during vacations. A number of them have gone on to political careers. My replacement in this chamber, Scott Ryan, is one of those. A number of staff members have served me for a very long period of time: Melissa Houghton, Julie Reid, Roger Brake, Adrian Chippendale and Bill Rowe. To Adrian, who is with us in the gallery: it is wonderful to see you here, Adrian. I know that you have taken enormous efforts to get here this evening. Thank you for coming. Adrian came from Treasury. He knew nothing about the arts and he was thrown in to be my arts adviser. He left that job with the respect of the arts and film community. Thank you for all the magnificent work that you did.

My current staff, headed by Felicity Giles, Andrew Baker and Tim Singh, have done an excellent job in making sure that I sprint to the finishing line. They have been joined by Elise Parham and Adam McKee. Along the way, as a backbencher, a shadow minister and as a minister, I have met and worked with many wonderful Australians. Peter Bartels, David Gonski and James Strong all chaired major agencies in my arts and sport portfolio and their advice was always valued. There are many effective advocates for their industries and community sectors that have crossed my path. Richard Gilbert of IFSA, who is well known to many in this chamber, and John Faulkner’s best friend in the Wilderness Society, Alec Marr, are just two who have made a very effective contribution in promoting the interests of their members.

One of the pleasures of being a minister is the opportunity to work with outstanding public servants like Ted Evans and Ken Henry at the Treasury and Helen Williams at DCITA. I have benefited enormously from the advice of Harry Evans and the Senate staff—and it is great to see Anne Lynch here as well. Thank you for your help.

Honourable senators—Hear, hear!
Senator KEMP—I have been a relentless user of the Parliamentary Library. At one stage they told me that only one person was using their services more. I do not know if this is praise but that was Mark Latham. Thanks must also go to Bill McCormick and all the very worthy people who work in the Parliamentary Library. I have spent many of my most interesting moments at Aussies, which is run so well by Tony and Dom, and many thousands of dollars of Kemp money have gone to that family. I am told that there is a Kemp wing at their home.

The Senate has changed very substantially from when I commenced my term in July 1990. To be quite frank, I believe that it is a better chamber, a more vigorous chamber. It is a chamber which demands greater accountability from governments. I have no doubt that this tradition will continue to grow. I am of the view that the Senate is still stretching its wings and it will cause considerable pain to governments in the future and, provided I am not part of the government that it is causing pain to, I am all in favour of that Senate practice.

Looking back on my time in the Senate, I would like to make a few very brief observations. Perhaps one of the major changes has been the change in the attitude of the Labor Party towards the Senate. Those of us who are old enough to remember the 1975 crisis can perhaps understand that the Labor Party was not an enthusiastic supporter of this chamber. Labor senators might correct me if I am wrong but not so long ago it was part of the Australian Labor Party platform to abolish the Senate. Our most famous critic was, of course, Paul Keating, who called us some terrible names. Today I suspect that such comments would be very poorly received in the wider community and I do think the strong bipartisan support this chamber has is helping to add to its strength.

Another thing which has struck me is the remarkable shift in political debate in this country. Let’s face it; during the 1980s and 1990s it was the Liberal Party and the National Party that won the historic philosophical debate. Free enterprise, not government planning and regulation, was seen as the road towards greater prosperity and individual liberty. To hear Craig Emerson, just last week, arguing for a world of free markets, smaller government and tax cuts proves the comprehensive nature of the coalition’s victory over the ALP comrades. The Labor Party’s new-found affection for responsible economic management is most certainly not rooted in that party’s history or culture. As one of my colleagues said to me, how many people joined the Labor Party because they were opposed to big government, high taxes, and budget deficits? Not many, I think.

Time will tell whether all the song and dance made by the Rudd government about fiscal conservatism is just another example of government spin. Likewise, I believe that the coalition has won some really historic victories in the cultural arena—I speak of in my maiden speech. We now hear Labor leaders speak about the importance of high standards in education, the need for comprehensive testing and the desirability of returning to the basics. These views are light-years away from the attitudes of teacher unions and state education bureaucrats. The excesses of multiculturalism have been rejected and there has been a healthy return of pride in Australia. It is now bipartisan policy that Australia needs a citizenship test that recognises our shared values and culture. The Howard government, to its undying credit, and the former Prime Minister himself took on the ‘black armband’ view of history and showed how flawed it was. As a result of this, there is healthier debate on our past than in the days of political correctness that marked the Hawke and Keating eras. The
Liberal Party must be vigilant in defending the victories it has won, and the legacies it has built.

I started my senatorial career in opposition and I leave it while in opposition. Despite the fact that we lost an election last year, it has to be conceded that the Labor Party ran a remarkable campaign by any previous standards. Not only was it remarkably well funded—never before has one group, the ACTU, spent more money than the political parties themselves—but the discipline of the ALP members and senators was a good lesson to a lot of us, and the research of the Labor Party was remarkable. It shows the challenge that we will be faced with in the next election. For those who may be interested, the Labor Party, despite its protestations, involved itself in massive pork-barrelling in our marginal seats. That debate will continue to flow over the next 12 months.

The truth is that the Labor Party is not John Howard ‘light’. The Labor Party comes from a different tradition. The conservative clothing it has put on is starting to be cast away. There are some rocky reefs ahead for the Rudd government. It will be tested on its promises, and the huge challenge of its policies on climate change is certainly going to be the subject of major debate in this chamber. I will look forward to it with great interest.

I would like to mention one colleague on the other side: Senator Forshaw. Senator Forshaw and I went away last year to the UN to save the world—

Senator Ian Macdonald—And you succeeded.

Senator KEMP—And succeeded, as Senator Ian Macdonald says. I say to Senator Forshaw and his wife: it was a great pleasure to be with you over that period.

I come back to my colleagues here, whom I will greatly miss and whose friendship I have enjoyed. Unlike old soldiers, old senators do not tend to fade away. I suspect that some of you will be hearing from me from time to time. I am grateful to the people of Victoria for giving me the honour of representing them for these last 18 years.
economic and social system was strongly demonstrated by the collapse of communism and its centrally planned economies. In Australia, it was exemplified by the successes of the Howard government—the best federal government in Australia’s history—especially in the case of its labour market reforms, which I first advocated in 1980, albeit unheeded by the Fraser government. Undoubtedly, the Howard government’s workplace relations reforms laid the foundations for Australia’s economic success during the last decade, creating more jobs and higher real wages. It is sad that the misleading scare campaign of the trade unions diminished community support for those essential reforms.

Similarly, in my earlier House of Representatives maiden speech on 4 March 1976, I applied the Liberal philosophy to the motor vehicle industry policy. I argued that, as a first stage of reform, the Fraser government should implement an 85 per cent local content plan, as advocated by Chrysler—which was then manufacturing in the Kingston electorate—rather than the more protectionist 95 per cent plan. The motor vehicle industry represents one of the greatest transformations in Australia during my more than three decades in politics. To go from high import tariffs, import quotas and high local content plans in the mid-1970s to 10 per cent tariffs and some taxpayer support for industry competitiveness today is a remarkable change, and it was supported by both the Howard and the Hawke-Keating governments. From cars which no-one really wanted to buy—I remember having an HQ Holden company car in the early 1970s, and I remember how hard it was to even keep it on the road, even at reasonable country driving speeds—

Senator Minchin—But you don’t drink!

Senator CHAPMAN—Exactly, Senator Minchin. Today’s Holden Calais compares favourably with any vehicle in the world, and it is a car which I am proud to drive. Such are the benefits of the practical application of the Liberal philosophy. Such are the massive changes that I have been privileged to play a role in over more than three decades since I first had the honour of serving in this parliament. I certainly hope that the Rudd Labor government will not halt the process of tariff reform.

It was a great privilege to retain the confidence and represent the people of Kingston for three terms. Being a member in a marginal seat demands strong local community engagement and an enormous amount of one-on-one assistance to constituents. I loved that work. The residents of Kingston rewarded that diligence with strong personal support, which enabled me to retain that seat despite swings in South Australia against the Fraser government in 1977 and especially in 1980. Even when I lost the seat in 1983, a strong personal vote was evident. According to figures from the Parliamentary Library, there was a net improvement of 4.9 per cent in the Liberal vote in Kingston compared with the state-wide Liberal vote over the period of my stewardship.

While politicians may be subject to some cynicism in the media, at the local level hard work and attention to constituents has its measurable rewards. Being part of restoring good government in 1975 after the Whitlam disaster was extremely satisfying. May I say to young political aspirants: the apparent longer term security of a relatively safe seat might beckon, but it will never give the satisfaction and the adrenaline rush of ripping a seat off your political opponents and holding it for a period. Indeed, I would say it is in the interests of our political system to direct young aspirants to marginal seats, where they can learn diligently to serve their constituents and prove their mettle before perhaps later moving to a safer seat.
There have been three great eras of the federal Liberal Party, originating with the overwhelming election victories, respectively, of 1949, 1975 and 1996. It has been a privilege for me to be part of two of those, with links to the third. When I was first elected, in 1975, the likes of Reg Wright, Sir William McMahon, Bruce Graham and one or two others, all veterans of the 1949 Liberal victory, were still here in the parliament. Like those 49ers, I suppose, by retiring in 2008 I am the last of the veterans of 1975, along with David Jull, who retired at the 2007 election, six or seven months ago. I am the last survivor of the ‘oncers’—that epithet hurled across the chamber from 1975 to 1977 by our Labor opponents. We proved them wrong. A couple of my Liberal-National colleagues lost their seats through major boundary changes but the rest of us returned in 1977 and enough of us again in 1980 to retain government. Being an oncer is a liberating experience. I commend it wholeheartedly to the Rudd government!

I was already a senator when our third great era began with the 1996 election. My work in the Senate for the last 21 years has been very fulfilling, especially the nearly 12 years in government. I believe my marginal seat lower house experience has helped me as a senator. It has reinforced the importance of staying in touch and engaging with constituents. That has remained a very satisfying part of my job, supplemented by detailed attention to issues and legislation through my work on committees. For the whole of my time in the Senate, until the last few months as a participating member, I have been a full member of the Senate Standing Committee on Economics or its predecessors and have tried to enhance my knowledge of some of the quite technical areas of tax and industry policy, in particular, coming under the jurisdiction of that committee.

Chairing the government members industry and resources committee, which at various stages also included small business, for the whole life of the Howard government provided the chance to make a practical difference by contributing to policy and legislation on these key sectors of the Australian economy. However, my most rewarding work has been as Chairman of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services—again, for the whole period of the Howard government. The work of this committee has been in the quite technical area of Corporations Law and the regulatory framework for the provision of financial services. This is not glamorous stuff. The media does not find it sexy—except, on occasions perhaps, the Australian Financial Review. However, it was a privilege to work with Peter Costello on our reforms to give the Corporations Law stronger economic focus. Consistent with our Liberal philosophy, we introduced principles based, light-touch regulation of financial services while ensuring proper consumer protection. Even then it involved periodic battles, not always successful, to thwart the bureaucratic penchant for overregulation.

Our reforms have been of great importance in providing the regulatory framework which has undergirded Australia’s economic growth. A strong economy requires a robust but not excessively intrusive and bureaucratic regulatory framework for business, and that is what we have provided—a world-leading regulatory framework for corporations and financial services. It is far superior to those of the United Kingdom, the USA or other countries.

May I thank the several secretaries of the joint committee and its other staff for the support they gave me through this era. I also valued the input into and, except near election times, the multiparty cooperation on the work of this committee. Democrat Senator
Andrew Murray was always helpful, while a number of ministers in the new Labor government contributed to the committee’s work: Senator Conroy, Senator Wong, Senator Sherry and Mr Bowen, to name a few—even Prime Minister Rudd for a time. Obviously, I trained them well.

Another example of the effective behind the scenes work which a backbench parliamentarian can do was my work in persuading my good friend, the then chairman of the United States Senate Committee on Finance, Senator Chuck Grassley, to give timely approval to the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement. The agreement had to be approved by his committee to come into force but was stalled in joint consideration with several other free trade agreements. Although it had support for approval, it was Senator Grassley’s intent that this should not happen until 2005, in concert with the several other free trade agreements. It was as a direct result of my discussions with him in mid-2004 that he agreed to separate the Australian free trade agreement and have it approved and in place before our 2004 election—a direct benefit to Australia from a longstanding personal friendship, which demonstrates the importance of relationships in politics, even at the international level.

My other great satisfaction as a senator has been the opportunity that it has given me as a city resident—but the son of generations of farmers and with continuing involvement as a farm owner—to represent the rural and regional people of South Australia as well as representing metropolitan people. My empathy has always been with rural communities. I have always had rural issues front of mind. I hope I have been effective in speaking up for the bush. From July I look forward to spending at least part of my time re-engaging more practically with my rural roots. I hope I do not cause my sharefarmer Glen Wandel too many ulcers.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Liberal Party for regularly re-endorsing me as one of its federal parliamentary candidates over the last 33 years. In particular, my thanks go to present and past members of the South Australian Liberal Party State Council for endorsing me for the Senate on six successive occasions, including twice for my first election—for the half Senate team in 1986, and then in 1987, when the double dissolution intervened and I had to go through the preselection process all over again before being first elected.

I thank my early mentors and many friends and supporters over the years—those both inside and outside the party. I will not name them because there is always the danger of leaving someone significant out. They know who they are. Nevertheless, I must mention my father’s friend the late, great Bert Kelly, the ‘Modest Member’, who for years fought a lone battle against the idiocy of tariff protection. He was a great mentor during my school and university days and in my early years in this parliament, seeking to keep me—mostly successfully—on the path of economic rectitude.

However, he might be sceptical about one of my as yet unachieved goals during the past 15 years, which has been to see a viable space industry develop here in Australia with some limited but targeted government support which recognises that this is one of the few areas where market forces alone will not achieve lift-off. Nowhere in the world is there a viable space industry without government support. Earlier this year I was successful in initiating a Senate economics committee inquiry on space, which is currently underway. I trust it will result in positive government initiatives for this key sector on which Australia is so dependent.

I am indebted to my extended family for the love and support they have given me.
over this long period of time and to my late parents, Hedley and Edith, for the start in life they gave me. My father was national President of the Australian Wheat Growers Federation in the late 1940s, at the time of the establishment of the Australian Wheat Board and postwar orderly marketing. Undoubtedly, it was his involvement in agripolitics which stimulated my initial interest in politics. I trust he would have accepted the reforms to wheat marketing being debated this week. During one of my early Kingston campaigns, Dad was the designated driver of my campaign truck. He drove so many miles we thought the Transport Workers Union might tap him on the shoulder for a membership fee, under the bad old days of compulsory union membership.

My sister and brother-in-law, Lyn and Roger Goldsworthy, have also been a great support, along with their children—and it is great to see Lyn here in the gallery tonight. Without more than a quarter of a century of love and support from Sally and our children, Alexander and Jane, fulfilling this vocation would have been much more difficult. It is sad that Sally is not here tonight, but she was always with me, side by side and step by step. It is a real thrill to have Alex and Jane here tonight.

Politics demands enormous sacrifices from families. One example I recall is when Alexander came home from school as a little tacker, saying his mates had taken his cricket bat because their families’ taxes had paid for it. And I know Sally suffered barbs from some people regarding my views on certain issues. Despite all that, and my absences from home that federal politics inevitably requires, Alex and Jane have grown into trouble-free, well-educated, well-adjusted, sensible young adults in the early stages of their careers and adult life experiences, with bright futures. It is a great credit to Sally, who was mother and father during my many absences.

I hope my initiatives in a couple of what I might call ‘extracurricular activities’ have helped to make this place more tolerable by improving relations between individuals across party lines. The first of those is the more active role played by the federal Parliamentary Christian Fellowship. Although it was established in 1966, when I first came here in 1975 the fellowship was only occasionally active, organising the annual church service to commence the parliamentary year and an occasional lunch or dinner. After attending, and being inspired by, the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington DC in early 1981 and also the regular weekly fellowship breakfasts shared by American senators and congressmen, I was appointed secretary of the fellowship here and immediately proposed that we meet regularly for breakfast. This was welcomed by colleagues from all sides and has been maintained ever since.

Apart from providing a regular opportunity for colleagues to share their faith, I believe this more active fellowship has become a civilising influence in this hothouse. I know it has made me more forgiving of those opposite. I am sure the new president, Senator Ursula Stephens, who was in the chamber earlier, will continue the good work of the fellowship.

The other more civilising influence in more recent years has been the establishment of the parliamentary sports club. This took longer to get going. I was first contacted by a gentleman by the name of Andy Turnbull in about 1993, seeking participation by the Australian parliament in the Parliamentary Rugby World Cup, accompanying the real World Cup in 1995. Andy was a businessman associated with sporting activity in the United Kingdom parliament and was referred to me as the convenor of the parliamentary
cricket team by then Speaker Steve Martin. Although my background was not rugby but the far superior code of Aussie Rules, I sought to establish a team among my colleagues but failed to do so for both the 1995 and 1999 world cups.

Persistent and enthusiastic, Andy Turnbull contacted me again in early 2001, and I was successful in organising a parliamentary team to play against a touring United Kingdom and Ireland Parliamentary Lions rugby team here in Canberra. Then he followed up in early 2003 with the message: ‘Do you know the Rugby World Cup is to be held in Australia later this year?’ I said, ‘I’m vaguely aware of it, but I am not a real rugby fan.’ But he insisted that not only did the Australian parliament have to enter a team in the Parliamentary Rugby World Cup but we actually had to host that particular event.

At last I was able to enthuse sufficient of my colleagues to put a team together, which at its first involvement in that event, which had been going on for several previous world cups, won the Parliamentary Rugby World Cup. In the meantime, Andy Turnbull and his family have made their home in Australia as very welcome business migrants. And, at my suggestion that colleagues may be interested in interparliamentary contest across a wider range of sports than rugby, he has become the driving force in organising contests, at this stage between the Australian, UK, New Zealand and state parliaments across a wide range of sports—even a revival of the long-dead snooker competition in recent weeks. In the process we have raised more than $150,000 for charity.

I take some pride in my persistence in earlier years, among less than eager colleagues, but all of us who now can participate owe a real debt of gratitude to Andy Turnbull for the enormous effort he has put in in this regard. I have no doubt that, apart from greater fitness, we are all benefiting from the more cordial cross-party atmosphere created by participation in parliamentary sport—not to mention the benefit of another angle to our relationships with several foreign parliaments. Parliamentarians do work hard, and we are entitled to a reasonable quality of life. For those who enjoy it, parliamentary sport assists in that. I look forward to seeing Julie Bishop and Julia Gillard on the same netball team!

I came to politics from a background in the corporate world, although it was many years ago. I understand systems. But after going through my party’s preselection process on a number of occasions, I have remained mystified by the relatively amateurish way all parties go about selecting candidates. Even as long ago as 1970, when I was selected by the Shell Company as a graduate junior executive, I went through a rigorous interview process with senior company executives. There was detailed psychological, aptitude and IQ testing and a further interview, conducted by a professional psychologist. And, yes, I still got the job! This is standard practice today for most executive appointments, usually conducted by specialist human resource consultants. Surely, selecting those to be entrusted with setting the framework for our whole society as members of parliament is at least as important as selecting company executives? You would never guess it.

Gaining preselection can be as simple as meeting the relevant voting delegates, one on one or in groups, having a chat over a cup of tea, making a speech and answering questions at a preselection meeting. Certainly, that is an important part of the democratic process. However, I believe it would be highly beneficial in ensuring the preselection of talented candidates from all parties if those voting delegates were also equipped with independent professional appraisals of
each candidate. It might even identify candidates with anger management problems. No longer having a vested interest in preselections, I now advocate this enhancement of the selection process to choose parliamentarians! What applies to candidate selection should apply in even greater measure to ministerial appointments. A Prime Minister should have available this sort of professional advice about prospective members of his ministry.

The other mystifying thing about parliaments is the lack of professional development training once we are here. Again, parliaments could take a lead from the corporate world. It would be rare for corporate executives, particularly early on, to go through a year without undertaking some type of professional development or skill training. Yet in our parliaments this simply does not happen—perhaps with the exception of very occasional party-provided training in media spin. Parliament should take the responsibility for providing a range of continuing professional development courses to enhance the capacity of its members.

Earlier I thanked my family, friends and supporters. Over the years I have also benefited from the support of a number of loyal and competent staff. I thank all who have worked as my staff during this long journey. Some of them I must have trained well—they have gone on to bigger and better things as ministerial staff, in the private sector and, in the case of one, Di Laidlaw, as a minister in a state Liberal government. I pay particular tribute to my two longest serving loyal staff in Di Hocking, who has been my electorate secretary for the past 18 years and is sitting in the adviser’s booth, and Andrea Bell, now Bennett, an early electorate secretary who later returned for an extended period as an able research assistant. May I also thank all of the parliamentary staff, transport officers, Comcar drivers and departmental staff who have helped to make my task as a parliamentarian so much easier over the years.

It has, as I said, been a fulfilling period in my life, with a number of highlights to which I have referred. I will mention just a couple of others: my three years as the government party’s representative at the Inter-Parliamentary Union Council, being appointed by the United Nations to its panel of eminent persons to combat desertification and being recognised by the Chilean government with the highest honour that it bestows on foreigners. It has been a long but fulfilling journey—standing here tonight after 21 years in the Senate, the journey of a generation. It leaves me behind Senator Watson, who spoke earlier and is also retiring, and that living legend, Ron Boswell, as the third-longest serving among current senators. Added to my 7¼ years in the House of Representatives, this makes me the third longest in service amongst all current parliamentarians, behind my long-time friend Philip Ruddock and, again, Senator Watson. Indeed, the Parliamentary Library tells me that I retire as the longest serving non-Labor federal parliamentarian ever elected from South Australia since Federation. Senator Patterson said she had spent, I think, a third of her life in politics. I think I have spent about half of my life in politics, or in this parliament, and virtually all of my adult life. So it has been a long but a great journey. Not many people have the chance to live the dreams of their youth. I missed out on the one to play test cricket for Australia, but thanks to the Liberal Party and the people of South Australia I have been able to live this one. I trust I have given them some service.

I wish my continuing colleagues all the best for their individual and collective futures and, particularly those on this side, success in returning to government at the next election. I will be there to help.
Senator SANDY MACDONALD (New South Wales) (6.25 pm)—It comes to all of us, this difficult task of saying goodbye and farewell, but I can reassure the Senate that fortunately I leave willingly, the timing is right, whatever contribution I could make I have made and the opportunities that lie ahead are generous. I have had some wonderful days, wonderful opportunities and wonderful responsibilities, and, like all federal parliamentarians, have gone places and met people that most Australians only dream of. But I remind all senators that politics is part of life and we forget that at our peril.

For me this game is over, and I only say that to reinforce the admiration that I have for all senators, who give up so much to make this wonderful country of ours a better place. If only the general public would reflect a little more on why we have such a good country—it is only because we have good people who give up otherwise productive lives to serve. This is not a given, not even in our great democracy, but it does still remain the case in 2008 Australia. On a lighter note, as young Mr Grace used to say in that long-running comedy Are You Being Served?, you’ve all done very well. Seriously, though, I wish all the work of government was more generally appreciated, but public service, as we all know, has its own rewards.

I feel enormously privileged to have been elected in 1993. I had to wait five weeks for the sixth New South Wales spot to be declared, taking the spot of Democrat Senator Karin Sowada and taking the problematic third spot on the coalition ticket. To have spent three years in opposition and then three years in government, to have lost my Senate spot through no fault of my own because of the Pauline Hanson charade—which drew off the coalition vote in 1999—and to have come back by casual vacancy in 2000 has been all good fortune. Success in politics, as all in this chamber know, is assisted vicariously by your party’s success, your state, your gender and other considerations. To have lost my spot—and the modest performance of my party, unfortunately, did little for my advancement, but then again very few people get a second chance as a senator, and I had that—and to have then been part of a government that changed the face of Australia, for better or for worse, but overwhelmingly for the better, was an incredible privilege.

I do not expect to see another government as good in my lifetime. It had discipline, it had until its last term incredible unity and it had positive themes that drove it to improve real living standards of all Australians, to balance the books and to spend money where it should be spent, to assist in providing lower interest rates, to revolutionise the tax system, to provide better super, to recognise the challenges of generational change, to establish the Future Fund, to establish good defence priorities, to make the waterfront work after 100 years of rorts, to establish good social policy as diverse as Farm Management Deposits and Green Corps—and the list could go on. The Howard government could never be accused of wasting its time.

I am personally indebted to former Prime Minister Howard. He gave me, I think most people would agree, the two best parliamentary secretary positions available on the numbers: trade and defence. Both areas I had taken a long interest in, and I was therefore very enthused to assist. The John Howard government, the Howard-Costello government, will be remembered fondly, maybe sooner rather than later. Despite how partisan we legitimately are in this place, I do feel that governments sometimes win one election too many. Mr Keating should not have won in 1993, and, however good our economic management was, electorates in functioning democracies tire of you and hence
vote for change—however unfair or unpalatable it may be to the government of the day. I am not ungenerous to the new government: I wish it well, for all our sakes. After all, I know many of its senior members well and regard them as friends. The challenge and responsibility now lies with them.

To my wife, Alice, the heart and soul of our immediate family: I could not have done this job or had a degree of normalcy in my private life without her. To be frank, political life challenges your health, your wealth and your family life. Families do make a sacrifice, and there is frequently damage in the ranks along the way.

I got a chuckle the other day when I heard Adam Spencer of Sydney’s 2BL asking Dame Edna what she put her success down to. She replied:

To be frank, Adam, I have always insisted on putting my family last.

To politicians, this is a bit too close to the bone. All our children—Camilla, William and Angus—have been born since I have been in the Senate, and I have spent an enormous amount of time away from them. Children of course do not know whether they are lucky or unlucky, but they do know whether they are loved, and our children are that. The enormous richness of their lives, of which politics has inevitably been a good part, has been provided largely by Alice. I admire her and thank her for that. I also thank her for coming to live in Australia, for becoming a citizen and for contributing to Australian society, both locally and on a wider scale.

I also want to acknowledge my wider family: my wonderful mother; my parents-in-law, who, unusual as it may seem, I wish I lived closer to; my four sisters and my brother, all with strong, diverse and divergent political views, but all people with good priorities.

I want to thank my manager at Wallabadah, Harry Kelly, and also all of those who keep the show on the road at home. Harry has a uniquely safe pair of hands, and I could not have spent literally years away from home in the last 14 years if I had not known that he was in charge. These of course have been very demanding years in agriculture. In my time in the Senate I can remember few times and few periods when I have been relaxed about the season—and I am lucky, I live in a preferred rainfall area. I know how distracted and helpless people feel in continuing drought. Let us hope that, for Australia and for Australian farmers, we are blessed with good seasons and prices in the future.

Australia is fortunate to have food that is the envy of the world in both quality and price. And geographically positioned as we are, we will remain an agricultural superpower as we in parallel develop our importance as an energy superpower as the world’s largest exporter of coal, second-largest exporter of natural gas, and with the world’s largest deposits of uranium. Food and energy are paramount in the modern world. Let us seek excellence and leadership in both, because Australia is truly blessed in both.

I have had wonderful support from my staff down the years. I want to thank Gaye White, my first chief of staff—Gaye is in the gallery—and a wonderfully wise friend and confidant. I want to thank Di Kershaw, my executive assistant. Di is a super person, who I hope will assist in my postpolitical career. I want to thank Rachel Sherman, Scott McFarlane, Meredith Dickie, Katherine Martin, and my parliamentary secretary staff, Dianna Stainlay, Ross Jordan, Robin McKenzie, Joe Nyhan and Kate Duncan. Some of the latter are trade and defence departmental people who provided wonderful service to me. I also thank Peter Langhorne, who worked for John Anderson and later for
Prime Minister Howard. Peter ranks among the most capable public servants I have met.

We are a lucky nation to have so many outstanding public servants, which has been alluded to by previous speakers. I have been fortunate to have had my share. I thank them for myself, but I also do so on behalf of the country. In trade, I know we sold Australia well. In defence, I hope we made the pointy end of defence capability a little bit pointier. In defence, I very much enjoyed working for Brendan Nelson—to have shared a little of the incredible responsibility of putting ADF personnel in harm’s way, of sending them to war, of visiting them abroad, of comforting their bereaved and of welcoming them home. Living constantly with the current operational tempo has been an unbelievable responsibility and honour. To have worked alongside the CDF, Angus Houston, the service chiefs and the secretaries of Defence, Rick Smith and Nick Warner, was an experience I will cherish all my days. As I said, we are a fortunate nation to have people of such quality to protect our welfare.

I want to acknowledge the leaders of the National Party: Tim Fischer, John Anderson, Mark Vaile and Warren Truss. It is a very difficult job to be the minor party in government, particularly with John Howard, who had a real sense of what you might call country mindedness. I particularly thank John Anderson because his relationship with Prime Minister Howard meant that after we had balanced the books he was able to direct essential funding to regional Australia. All the regional partnership programs—the Roads to Recovery, AusLink, essential medical infrastructure, Investing in Our Schools—have been a great fillip to regional Australia, building on social capital and assisting regions’ natural advantages. These are easy targets for political muckraking, but overall they have meant a lot to regional communities, and I hope and trust the new government will continue to help address the understandable unfairness of the tyranny of distance that affects a country as large as Australia. Local to where I live, near Tamworth, the National Equine Centre will be forever a reminder of what good government can do—not creating something in a vacuum but building on the natural advantage of our area. Across New South Wales I have been pleased to be associated with many community initiated programs in health and in transport and with the many community improvements in which we, as senators, have an important role to play.

I, like many senators, have played an active role in a couple of the parliamentary friendship groups—namely, Turkey, a country with which Australia has a unique relationship, and of course with Taiwan, a vitally important regional neighbour in North Asia and our seventh largest trading partner. When I became chairman of the group we had about 50 members, and now it is well over 100. Although not an official parliamentary group, it is one of the largest in the parliament. Both Turkey and Taiwan are countries that I will continue to have contact with when I leave the parliament.

I have enjoyed the constituency work that came with having my main office in Tamworth, a large regional city with a forward-looking community.

I have enjoyed my committee work, which developed a focus on foreign affairs, defence and trade and the security and intelligence areas. The early advice to pick areas of particular interest was well received by me. And when I had the opportunity to be Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade and then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence I had a good understanding of the issues on which Australia should be focused.
One inquiry I particularly enjoyed was the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into the loss of HMAS Sydney in November 1941. I am delighted that the wreck of the Sydney has now been found, but I do caution that, despite a new inquiry, there are questions that can never be answered. Dead men, of course, do not tell tales. The Sydney was lost with all hands, having fought magnificently to the end.

I thought when I came to the Senate that I would make the best of the clubbable aspects of the extraordinary life we live here in Canberra away from family, friends and, can I say, a certain relevancy that comes with everyday life in the suburbs. I made some very good friends. Bos, my leader for 14 years—'lonely is the head that wears the crown,' as he says—I respect immensely. Many people around this place, including myself, have the word 'honourable' before their name. Bos is honourable in every sense. He is wily, wise and committed to his causes—but always honourable. I have always enjoyed his turns of phrase, like: 'They get on like a cat and a dog in a paper bag'; or, 'That person looks like he has lost a quid and found a sixpence'; or, 'That person is so lucky, he'd put his hand into a bucket of the proverbial and pull out a gold watch.' I hope he gets the years of relaxing and sailing of Moreton Bay that this very great Australian deserves.

I acknowledge my other National Party colleagues, particularly Nigel. I thought of him at Gallipoli in April. He has some of the same bravado as that exhibited in 1915. When all is lost, Nigel will think of something to get the troops out of being garrotted. To my other friends on this side—Senator Minchin, a distinguished former minister and the true professional on our side of politics; Senator Abetz; Senator Brandis; Senator Ferguson; Senator Parry; Senator Eggleston, a most unusual doctor in that he actually prescribes what you tell him to; Senator Lightfoot; Senator Chapman; Senator Johnston; Senator McGauran; Senator Bernardi; Senator Barnett; Senator Ian Macdonald and many others: we have all shared a certain humour along the way. Thank you for your friendship and generosity.

Like many on our side, I do admit to respecting Senator Faulkner. I would not say that John is a friend, because he would not wish to be categorised like that, but his word is his bond and you can forgive a lot for that. And, on a lighter note, he seems to have morphed exquisitely from the poacher to the gamekeeper with the change of government. Also, to my good friends John Hogg—shortly to be Mr President—Senators Forshaw, Bishop, Hutchins and others both here and in the House of Representatives: I have enjoyed your comradeship. As I depart this place, I would naturally prefer the coalition to be in government, but good democracies have a corporate life unconnected with us bit players. I can say that amongst our political opponents there are good, able and energetic people in whose hands the nation will now be to be looked after until their time is up—which, on the recent performance of some, particularly a distinguished former senator and now member for Robertson in another place, may not be so long.

I would like to acknowledge senators who have died during my Senate stay: John Panizza, Jeannie Ferris, Bob Collins, Peter Cook, Sid Spindler and Rob Bell. I remember them all very fondly. They all died before their time, and I suspect political life did nothing for their longevity.

I wish my fellow retiring senators well. I particularly acknowledge the contribution of Senator Murray to this institution. He has had a fascinating career. Brought up in what was Rhodesia, he is totally committed to the rights of man. I thank all those who make the
Senate work and our lives as senators that bit easier: the Clerk, his deputy and assistants; the Black Rod and staff; committee secretariats, who are outstanding; Senate transport and Comcar; Tim and Kate up in the dining room—there are many senators who never visit the dining room, and I think it is a great shame that they do not; all the attendants; and the list goes on. I thank Jan Broughton, a Comcar driver who moonlighted keeping my Canberra unit so spotless that it looked like nobody lived in it. Thank you all.

So, fellow senators, if ever you drive up the New England Highway between Sydney and Brisbane—I suspect in future you will be doing that in electric cars—please consider stopping when you get to Wallabadah. We live very close to the highway. You will be assured of a strong drink and a very warm welcome. Perhaps I might take the opportunity to remind you of the five possible Ds of political departure: you leave dead, defeated, disgraced, disillusioned or divorced. Any or all or none of the formula need apply, but be careful. Finally, as Banjo Paterson wrote in the foreword of a book he gave to my grandfather: may all of you have better seasons than you deserve. I wish you all, and this institution, good health and good fortune in the years ahead. Godspeed.

Senator LIGHTFOOT (Western Australia) (6.42 pm)—I might just, as a short preamble, say that I only left my apartment late this afternoon to speak here this evening. I have not been feeling well. If I do not match the standard of the previous speakers, I would ask you to please give me that indulgence and listen to what I have to say, albeit not with the same fire or verve with which my colleagues have delivered their valedictory speeches here this evening. I came into this parliament at the untimely death of Senator John Panizza. That was in early 1997. I had spent some years in the state parliament, where I had served in the lower and upper houses. I first entered that state parliament on 5 February, 1986. My time in the state parliament was in some ways retrogressive for my entry here. Apart from perhaps the first week I was here, I have never held any fear of being in this place, nor, I hope, have I ever been seen to lack any courage.

I did have two views that I held passionately when I was in the state parliament that I carried with me into this august chamber. I was a fervent supporter of the monarchical system, partly because when I was 16 I put my age up to 19 and I joined the Army. In 1953 I became part of a guard of honour for Her Majesty the Queen. Whilst I did not touch her, as Sir Robert Menzies said and intentionally plagiarised, I did but see her passing by and yet I love her till I die. That was true of me. I was told to leave the Army some time later in the early fifties, because I had been called up for national service, where I had spent some years, both full time and part time. After my obligatory obligation in national service, I joined the Mounted Police in South Australia. I think it was the only mounted cadre in the world that had all grey horses. It was a magnificent experience for a young man like me—to leave national service and then, feeling a little lonely after a short period of civilian life, rejoin the Mounted Police and have the most exhilarating time. One of the most memorable events was when the Queen again visited South Australia. I think it was in 1961 and I was chosen as part of her personal escort. There was no-one who would have protected Her Majesty better than me at that stage. I would gladly have given my life for her. I think those two experiences have given me a lifelong appreciation, not just of perhaps the most wonderful woman mentor in the world and of that exemplary life she has led as a mother, wife and leader, but also of a monarch whose respect and power stretches around the globe.
The other aspect of that which I brought to this chamber was that I still burned, albeit not with the same fierce passion that I once held, for the secession of Western Australia. It seemed to me to be something that was not quite fair, not quite reasonable and not quite equitable to have a big state like Western Australia, a third of this nation, producing a great deal of the national export income and to have that income mainly flow to Canberra and seem not to flow back to Western Australia all that much. But, whilst I maintained my devotion to the monarchical system in Australia, and always will until someone produces something that is manifestly better than that under which we live at the moment, I have since softened my view with respect to the secession of Western Australia. This chamber has changed me completely.

I suppose it is because I was a country boy. I never left the Eyre Peninsula until I was 16. I had a firm and narrow view of what life was about, but that view did not seem to superimpose on those areas that I was supposed to support in this chamber, and I changed my direction about secession. Australia is not just governed under the best system that the world has ever seen—it is not perfect, but it is better than anything else—it is also the most fortunate country in the world. My 11-odd years here has been one of the greatest experiences that I have ever undertaken and am ever likely to undertake. I have had many experiences that a country bloke like me is very fortunate to have had. When I look at Australia with its six states, its two territories, its lack of terrestrial frontiers with any other nation on earth, its 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone right around the nation, which we share with Timor and Papua New Guinea, and with the area we have in the Antarctic and the other islands that we have in that exclusive economic zone, it makes us the biggest area of the globe next to Russia against any other assessment that you could have. If one was to secede in Western Australia then that God-given gift would be broken, and I think that is most important for any of my colleagues in Western Australia that burn with the juvenile passion of wanting to secede from this magnificent Commonwealth. I would ask them to perhaps reflect on what I have just said.

I was also a little miffed when I was in state parliament and Robert J Hawke ceased appeals to the London Privy Council. I was not outraged—I am not a person to get outraged—but I was certainly miffed. As a member of parliament in Western Australia, I took it as an insult that someone who was so isolated and far away in Canberra should take it upon themselves to introduce legislation and then instruct the High Court through that legislation that it, the High Court, would be the last appellate court, without any change to the numerical strength of the High Court. So I packed my portmanteau and I made arrangements to go to the London Privy Council, meet the registrar there and put my case to him.

I had on my RM Williams boots, of course, and, in deference to the registrar, I had even put on a tie to go and see him. And he informed me, with a smile on his face—and I am sure that smile was to try and placate me—that it was not his opinion, and it was not his move, and it did not even attract his support, that the High Court of Australia should be the last appellate court in the Commonwealth. But he did tell me that the machinery still existed under the Western Australian Constitution for Western Australia to appeal. Of course, I was immediately and perceptibly elated at this information. However, he had only paused for breath. He said that, notwithstanding the Constitution of Western Australia, the High Court, in its omnipotence, was not to give its permission or leave to appeal by the Western Australian
Supreme Court—which was rather off-putting. So the last appeal from the Western Australian Supreme Court to the London Privy Council was taken by the affable David Malcolm, an eminent barrister, who then became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and, more recently, has become the foundation Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle, Western Australia.

So to this wonderful country of Australia, and the Commonwealth which presides over this land—this land that is the great exporter and which has the greatest deposits of coal in the world; which has the biggest diamond mine in the world; which is the biggest exporter of iron ore in the world, sometimes swapping with Carajas in Brazil; this land which has the second biggest deposit of nickel and the second biggest deposit of gold in the world, and which has the biggest molybdenum deposit and the biggest vanadium deposit in the world, and which has other minerals, lesser-known: should it be a non-renewable resource from which we are drawing this enviable standard of living that we have today?

Mr Rudd said, prior to the last election, that he has a plan for post-boom, to work out something that would allow us to maintain this momentum that we have, from all these minerals which we are digging from holes in the ground and exporting overseas. I hope that is the case. I will not be here to oversee any of that, but I am sure that my colleagues who remain, most of whom are younger—let me correct that: all of whom are younger—let me correct that: all of whom are younger—than me, would oversee this and make sure that that plan is implemented in the not too distant future. I have seen this country go from strength to strength—not for all of my 72 years; I was not aware of Canberra for a great deal of that time. I have watched it expand, and I have seen the evolution of the mining industry. I have studied geology in Kalgoorlie. I even studied geology at the Adelaide school of mines as well, for a year. And there has to be something more than the export of our minerals to sustain us in the future. We seem to be concentrating too much on that area. We are very good at it; we are exceptionally good at it. But not all of our mining companies are owned by Australians. BHP Billiton is perhaps less than 50 per cent; Rio Tinto is perhaps less than 50 per cent; Xstrata is not even owned by any Australians, unless they have shares in it from the London Stock Exchange. That is a big worry of mine, and I will continue to watch and perhaps support the diversification of Australia. And, if the diversification had happened yesterday, it would not have been too soon.

I have been privileged to serve the state of Western Australia since 1986, as I said. I thought I would serve the people of Western Australia here exclusively. I soon learnt that that was not the case—that you cannot serve your people in the state exclusively, even though constitutionally the Senate was set up exclusively as a states’ house originally. I am not displeased now with the way the Senate has evolved. I think that the position of the Senate where it overlaps with the House of Representatives, where it sometimes opposes its states, where I am called upon sometimes to oppose the government of Western Australia, is not necessarily bad, and I am very happy with the evolution of it at this stage.

I was also chuffed, as a member of this place, to go overseas on so many occasions, to visit every continent on earth. That obviously includes Antarctica, where I spent five weeks. Some of those weeks were spent mostly in my cabin travelling down to the Antarctic. We had force 11 gales, which, the captain told me, he had never ever experienced in his 10 years on that route. And we had 47 degree lists. Now, 47 degrees is a bit over half-way. And I wondered who was go-
ing to come down and rescue me, because I was halfway across the Southern Ocean, if we actually tipped over. The name Bullimore came to mind, and I was buoyed—to use a good seagoing term—to think that, if it did turn over, maybe I could find some refuge in an air pocket in the upturned hull and that someone could come down and dive under the ship and rescue me. However, no matter how grateful I was for that envisioned act, I was not going to kiss my rescuer. I have learnt and have broadened my mind on these trips. I like to think that I am not just a marginally better but a considerably better person for travelling and that I have lost the parochialism and insularity that I had, growing up on the Eyre Peninsula.

I speak, perhaps a little flippantly, of when I was in Cambodia with Mal Brough, who led a delegation there; I think it was in 1999. We had dinner at the Hilton Hotel in Phnom Penh and our host was the King, King Norodom Sihanouk. He was a most pleasant, diminutive man, completely unaffected by his position. He spoke in a high-pitched voice, which was a little off-putting. He had a couple of good-looking daughters—I remember that very well; though my colleagues should not read too much into that.

When I walked out with the King, we passed a souvenir shop. It was an upmarket souvenir shop, as one would expect in the Hilton Hotel. I looked briefly at the shop as we went past it, and he said to me—I will not emulate his voice; it is a few semitones above mine—‘You see something you like in there, Senator?’ I said, ‘Yes, I do.’ And he said, ‘You should buy it. You should buy it,’ and we kept on walking to his car. But when I came back to the hotel I walked into the shop and, out of duty to His Highness, the King, I thought I had better buy something there. I said to the chap in the shop, ‘Gee, this is a nice shop,’ and I bought a life-size silver scampi. It is a wonderful objet d’art, and I have kept it to this day. As this chap was wrapping the scampi up, I said, ‘You know, the King recommended that I come here.’ He replied: ‘Oh, yes, so he should. It is his shop.’ So the free enterprise system works very well in Phnom Penh, even at that elevated level.

In the couple of minutes left to me, I want to say how much I appreciated being the inaugural chairman of the Australian-Iraqi Parliamentary Friendship Group and how much I have appreciated the great assistance given to me by people in the Iraqi parliament, from President Jalal Talabani to the Iraqi Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Ghanim Al-Shibli. Ghanim Al-Shibli is a wonderful man and he has a wonderful family. My opinion of people from the Middle East has changed dramatically as a result of my close association with both President Talabani and His Excellency, Ghanim Al-Shibli. I will always hold much affection for these people. I have also met many people in the Kurdistan regional government. Kurdistan, a state in northern Iraq that has limited self-government, has some wonderful people. They are Kurdish people, not Arabic—but the ethnic groups work together. They want to solve the problems between the Kurds and the other different races in their country. They do not want to separate from Iraq. I believe that Iraq has a magnificent future ahead of it. As a man who formerly worked in the industry and studied geology, I agree with others who say that Iraq has the biggest oil reserves in the world; its reserves are even bigger than those in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

After having expressed those few words of my affection for Iraq, I will close by saying that my first job in my life was in an abattoir and that, at least until 1 July, my last job will be as a senator. That is widely removed from my first job in the abattoir in Port Lincoln, South Australia. It is testimony
not so much to the tenacity that I showed in climbing up that sometimes steep cliff to get to this heady and elevated plateau but more to the system in Australia that allows people like me, from an extremely modest background, to end up in an august and wonderful chamber such as this, amongst wonderful people and great Australians. I have been fortunate enough to do that.

I would like to thank the chamber staff and Mr Harry Evans. I would also like to thank Hansard and all those people—the public servants—who make this place operate. I would like to thank—and this is a bit hard—the journalists who sometimes occupy the seats above us: please say some nice things about me tomorrow, won’t you, if you report it at all! To all of my colleagues here, I think I can say that the IQ of the Senate will probably depreciate as a result of all those who are leaving it, and the private sector will probably be enhanced as a result. I also want to thank the former President of the Senate, Paul Calvert, who took me under his wing when I was wounded and limping around the corridors in this place. The affection that I hold for Paul Calvert is second to none. It is a very healthy affection, Mr President! Paul Calvert is a great man. He was a great mentor to me, and he was a great President. He is a wonderful man for Tasmania and a wonderful Tasmanian, and he is also probably one of the greatest and nicest Australians I have ever met in my life. So, with that, I thank the Senate for its indulgence, and I look forward to talking with many of my colleagues in the few days that I remain in the Senate.

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Leader of the Government in the Senate) (7.04 pm)—I want to make a couple of brief remarks on behalf of the Rudd Labor government and Labor senators to the retiring senators. I thank Senator Minchin for the opportunity to speak first in this valedictory motion, on the basis that I have an appointment that will take me out of the parliament.

I would like to offer my best wishes to all the retiring coalition senators. Not only is the coalition losing a great deal of experience and service with this large turnover of senators, but so, too, is the Senate. I suppose it is fair to say that, if you are going to leave, leaving at the time of a change of government is probably as good a time as any. I think for some of the long-serving senators to go back to opposition is probably not a very pleasant experience.

I want to make it clear that these are not obituaries; they are valedictories. I do not want to canvass all the contributions of those senators, but I want to put on record some personal remarks in wishing them all the best. I think Senator Lightfoot did a remarkable job for someone who is not feeling very well. He displayed what an extraordinary life he has had with his various occupations and adventures. I will never forget the photo of Senator Lightfoot gun-toting in Kurdistan, with what he described as ‘strapping youths’. His relationship with the Queen was news to me, but it adds to the Lightfoot story. He is obviously one of the real characters of the parliament and of Western Australia, and I wish him well for his future.

Senator Chapman has also had a very long career. As he rightly pointed out, very few parliamentarians make a career in both houses. It is a credit to his longevity and his commitment to parliamentary work, and we wish him all the best for his future.

Senator Sandy Macdonald came in in 1993, together with Senator Minchin. He was rubbed out for a year or so—I hope not for bad behaviour. He was out for a while and came back in, and we were glad to see him back. I will obviously have to pop in when I am heading up that road, Senator Macdonald, driving my hybrid Camry, and
we can have an alcopop together! As always, Senator Macdonald was gracious. He has a well-earned reputation as a gentleman and decent bloke, and I personally will miss him.

Senator Kemp—where do I start? Senator Kemp referred to it, but we regard him as the absolute guide to ministers’ performance in this chamber: how never, ever to answer a question asked of them; how never, ever to bring any relevant remarks directly to the question—and I certainly have learnt at his feet! I am looking to apply his techniques, as all the other new Labor ministers are, and I think you are beginning to understand that we are starting to work!

Senator Abetz—You’ve already exceeded your master.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—No, Senator Kemp was the world’s best; there is no question about it. His good humour and his love of a debate and contest here will be missed. I look forward to him enjoying his retirement in Wagga Wagga. We wish him the best for his future.

The father of the house, Senator Watson, is retiring. John has had an enormous career, and he is a real example of someone who has been able to pursue a policy interest throughout his career to great effect. He proves that someone can work on the backbench in government and opposition and really contribute to public policy debate in a meaningful way. Certainly from Senator Watson I learnt the value of committee work as a young senator here. The contribution he made to the superannuation committee will always be remembered in this place, but his capacity to work in a bipartisan way and pursue good policy was a really good lesson for a young senator. I congratulate him on a tremendous career and wish him and his family all the best for the future.

I left Senator Patterson till last because, from my point of view, Senator Patterson is one of a group of feisty women that the Liberal Party selected in the late eighties. I hope she does not mind me using the word ‘feisty’, but I think it is a fair description. Senators Knowles and Vanstone fitted the category. I think the Liberal Party had a flash of brilliance around that period in terms of pre-selecting women with attitude. It lost the plot there for a while but seems to have picked up its game again more lately.

Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I think the preselection of women did go down there for a while, but Senator Patterson, Senator Knowles and Senator Vanstone were all feisty. I have had pretty fair clashes with all three of them but have always maintained my respect for them. Senator Patterson and I in recent years have developed a better personal rapport, I think out of the fact that we had mutual friends who went through a difficult period. It reminded us all of a personal life and wider values than just the political contest. One of the contributions that Kay Patterson has made around this place, in addition to her very distinguished career and her time as a minister, is that she has always provided advice to senators about trying to keep a personal life, keep their friends and look after the people that are important to them in their lives. It has always been good advice to me, and I have always appreciated that from her.

That leads me to the point that no-one today in their farewell speech said that they regretted not spending enough time at work. I always regret it a little sad when we repeatedly hear senators and others, in retiring from the parliament, talk about how little time they have had to contribute to their family and their home life. I think it is probably incumbent on us all to think about that before we retire. It is not a criticism of the other senators—it is one I share—but I think
we do have to try and keep that in mind while we are in this place, not just as something we do after we leave. We ought to think about how our work and family balance is managed much more than we do.

The Liberal Party and the coalition are genuinely losing six very experienced senators. I think they will find that leaves a hole in their capability and experience for a while, but, as I said, it is probably a good time to go in the sense that, going back into opposition, there are hard yards. I think it would be harder to adjust to the new lifestyle that comes with being in opposition. I look at Senator Minchin—he looks like he has had a bit of trouble adjusting!

Senator Minchin—Thanks!

Senator CHRI$ EVANS—Well, I think no-one would deny that. It is important on behalf of the Labor Party to indicate our best wishes for all those who are leaving. It is the case that we are much more generous in your last days than we were during your whole career. That is one of the things we all note here—that no-one ever says anything nice about you until you are finished and on your way out the door. But I think it is true in the Senate that we do develop personal relations across the chamber and learn about people’s capabilities and contributions, perhaps in a more fundamental way than you do in other chambers. The committee work and those things help build those sorts of relationships. So the Labor Party wishes to express its best wishes to all the retiring coalition senators, acknowledge their contribution and hope that their post-Senate life is productive and rewarding.

Senator MINCHIN (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (7.14 pm)—Given the length of the list of speakers, I will be mercifully brief. Tonight we celebrate six wonderful servants of the Liberal and National parties whose terms expire on 30 June. Together they represent no less than 15 per cent of our current complement of coalition senators. They comprise a mighty 115 years of experience in the Senate. And, for the statistically minded—which I am as a former finance minister, of course—they comprise 1.2 per cent of all the Australians who have ever served in the Senate since Federation. It is equal to the biggest loss of coalition senators at one time that we have ever had. With respect to what Senator Evans said, the coalition does have four very talented and capable new senators coming in on 1 July, but our loss of these six highly valued colleagues really is immense.

In John Watson, we are losing our longest serving coalition senator and the father of the Senate. John has served a remarkable 30 years in this place. He has earned the respect and admiration of all whose privilege it has been to serve with him. Amazingly, 31 per cent of all the Australians who have ever served in the Senate have been sworn in since John first arrived here. John carved a niche for himself as the in-house expert in the Senate on superannuation and was fastidious in his attention to the detail of legislation of a financial nature. His enormous experience and knowledge will be greatly missed not only within coalition ranks but within the Senate as a whole.

My good friend and South Australian colleague Grant Chapman is the next longest serving of our retiring coalition senators. As he mentioned in his own speech, he has the added distinction of being one of only 44 Australians ever in our history to have served in both the House of Representatives and the Senate—a very exclusive club. All up, as Grant said, he has served 28 years in this parliament—a magnificent contribution. When I was still a student at the ANU across the lake in 1975, I clearly remember seeing a front page picture in the Australian of Grant Chapman and James Porter standing together.
in South Australia. That article heralded the fact that these two young 25-year-olds had both won seats in the House of Representatives in that great 1975 election. As a young student, I was mightily impressed with that fantastic achievement. Here we are, nearly 33 years later, and Grant is finally bowing out. Grant is the only one of our six retiring senators to have actually been defeated at the last election. As our No. 3 on the ticket in South Australia, he had the great misfortune to run into what I call the ‘Xenophon phenomenon’. I think, without that, he certainly would have retained his seat.

Grant may be best remembered by some for taking the Australian Senate to the world. Grant has a remarkable tolerance for the rigours of overseas travel, and we want to thank him for flying our flag in so many parts of this great planet of ours. As a South Australian, I want to acknowledge Grant’s enormous contribution to the South Australian Liberal Party, especially, as he quite rightly said, as someone who understands marginal seat campaigning better than any of us. He made a huge contribution in that area.

Kay Patterson is the next longest serving of our retiring senators, the only female and the only former cabinet minister. I think, without doubt and without fear of contradiction, she is the most empathetic and compassionate of us all. Her genuine concern for the mental and physical wellbeing of our colleagues is legendary and, regrettably, all too rare. From my perspective, I regard her as the most wonderful mentor to our new senators.

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It was a privilege to serve with Kay in the Howard cabinet. I am pleased to have played a small part in Kay’s promotion from parliamentary secretary straight into cabinet after the 2001 election. John Howard had shocked me by asking me to move from the industry portfolio to the health portfolio following our re-election that year, despite the fact that I had displayed absolutely no prior interest in the health portfolio. I did my absolute best to dissuade him from this disastrous course but said that, if he really wanted me to, I would do it. But I did very specifically ask him to appoint Kay Patterson as my junior minister in the health portfolio should he be so foolish as to make me health minister. The next day, after reflection, John called me to give me my preferred option of finance—and I breathed a great sigh of relief—and he went on to tell me that he had made the decision to give health to none other than Kay Patterson. Kay and I were both winners from that discussion, and I was very happy to have played that small part in her well-deserved elevation. I will certainly miss Kay very much. She has been a great friend and colleague for the 15 years that we have been together here.

Closely following Kay in Senate longevity is her Victorian colleague Rod Kemp. Rod is one of my genuine soul mates in this place, with the same world view and all the same right-wing prejudices. One of my great regrets about the 11½ years that we were privileged to govern is that Rod never had the opportunity to serve in cabinet. I really am very sorry that John Howard did not recognise Rod’s more than ample capacity to have been a very successful cabinet minister. It is my view that there was no better junior minister in our government. We all remain in awe of Rod’s handling of questions on the GST in the Senate during his time as Assistant Treasurer. Rod, I must say that I had no idea that you answered some 700 questions—that must be a world record. Rod has been a tremendous contributor to the coalition Senate team for 18 years, a great source of political wisdom and common sense and has a delightful sense of humour.

Sandy Macdonald is next in line to Rod as a retiring coalition senator, and is, of course, the only National Party senator to be retiring
on 30 June. Sandy is one of my colleagues from that great class of 1993, along with Senator Evans and Senator Ellison. He did take a 10-month holiday from the Senate in 1999-2000, but we were all delighted he was able to come back. Like Grant Chapman and, indeed, John Watson, Sandy is not actually leaving the Senate voluntarily, having been unsuccessful in his party’s Senate preselection for the last election. Sandy is a true coalitionist, someone who genuinely believes our two parties working closely together provides Australia with the best prospects for successful government. While I am pleased Sandy did have the opportunity to serve as a parliamentary secretary in both the trade and defence portfolios, I am genuinely sorry he did not have the opportunity to serve as a minister, in which capacity I am sure he would have been a great success. I certainly regard him as someone with as much talent as many other Nationals who served as ministers in our government. I mean no reflection on them; I mean that as praise of Sandy’s great virtues.

I recently had the privilege to spend a very intimate 10 days with Sandy in the Arabian Gulf, visiting our Air Force and Navy personnel who serve their country with such great distinction. We got to know each other even better after four nights together in a very small ship’s cabin. Sandy has a deep and abiding interest in the Defence portfolio and in the men and women who serve in our ADF, an interest which was on full display during our 10-day gulf visit. Sandy, all Liberal senators will miss your presence in our coalition.

Ross Lightfoot, with 11 years service to this Senate, is the most recent of our retiring senators—also the oldest, but no doubt the best preserved. No-one can actually believe that he is all of 72. Ross has the distinction of having served as a Liberal in three parliamentary chambers—a feat that to my knowledge is matched only by our South Australian friend and colleague Steele Hall, who also served in three parliamentary chambers. So Ross actually has 18 years service as a Liberal MP, to his great credit.

Although born and raised, as he mentioned, in the great state of South Australia, Ross is a great champion, as we all know well, of his adopted state of Western Australia. He as much as anybody in this place takes very seriously his responsibility as a representative of his state. He is a reminder to all of us that constitutionally this is the states house, where all states, large and small, are represented equally. And I am pleased to hear tonight that he no longer has the passion that he once had for secession!

Ross is also a self-confessed slayer of political correctness in all its forms, a man never afraid to say exactly what he thinks. His refreshing honesty has not been conducive to political advancement and has made him something of a figure of controversy. Nevertheless, he has represented here the views of thousands of his constituents, who deserve to have their voice heard. As a fellow conservative, I am certainly glad that Ross has been here to give voice to the views of those many Australians somewhat derogatorily dismissed by some in the Canberra press gallery as ‘right-wing’.

On 30 June the coalition loses six outstanding senators from its ranks. As coalition Senate leader for the last 2½ years, I want to thank all six for their loyalty, their support and their great contribution to our team. I wish our six retiring colleagues all the very best for a happy and fulfilling life after politics.

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (7.24 pm)—It is indeed a sad and different day when I rise in this place to see so many of my colleagues leave. One gets used to
turning up and seeing them—they are all a part of the furniture. Everywhere you look there they are, day in, day out. So losing so many will very much change the way I will spend my time here.

I have a very great colleague in Senator Sandy Macdonald. He has been a National Party senator from New South Wales since 1993, as the previous speaker indicated, bar a short siesta, after which he was re-preselected and returned in a casual vacancy in 2001. I think that the party at that stage and in those circumstances saw the value of Sandy Macdonald. All I can say, Sandy, in regard to this most recent occasion is that it is my very strongly held view that they have made a mistake.

In terms of his work in the Senate, I think that he has done an absolutely outstanding job. That is shown particularly in his ministerial appointments as both the parliamentary secretary for trade and the parliamentary secretary for defence. When Senator Minchin indicated that he thought that some of the National Party people would have done just as good a job as a minister, I am quite sure he was referring to me. The terrible irony was that, had Sandy not lost his preselection, I certainly would not have become minister. I do not think I should offer my thanks for that, Sandy, but it is certainly something to be noted.

During his first term he was very heavily involved in the native title and the Wik debates. I was actually in the Senate gallery at the time in 1993; I cannot say that I actually remember Sandy Macdonald crossing the floor on the matter, but I do remember the passion under which those debates were held and I followed them as a much younger man very closely. It is that sort of commitment to what he believes in that I think has provided Sandy with such an insight into his community. A man with such an insight and such a vast experience, his coming to the Senate has enabled him to put a great deal of work into the Senate, particularly through the committees. His committee experience has been very broad over the years. As I indicated, his particular preference has been with regard to the areas of trade, defence and security. All in this place—on both sides—would know and respect very much the wonderful contribution he has made to those areas.

He was a member of the Australian delegation to Gallipoli in 2001, where he read the call for commemoration at the Anzac Day service. I can recall seeing him very proud with his two sons at the most recent Anzac Day service in Gallipoli. I know how pleased he was that he was able to go there with his two sons to commemorate in that very special place. As chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, he also visited the Australian troops in East Timor in 2001, in Bougainville in 2000 and more recently in the Middle East. If anybody has been around Sandy when he is talking to the Defence Force—and probably in many other parts of many other communities—they would know he has a certain knack: you can always find him sitting in a corner with someone having a yarn about where their kids go to school or what the particular issues are that affect them. I think that is where his really insightful questioning and input, particularly into defence matters, came from—because he had this fantastic, intimate knowledge.

I can recall, when he was working as parliamentary secretary for defence, one of his responsibilities was to be in charge of the Defence Force Parliamentary Program. I know quite a few of the people who run the defence parliamentary program and I have to say they speak with great affection and great delight of the time that he provided their leadership.
Sandy also represented Australia as part of the Commonwealth observer group at the Zimbabwean elections. He has also been very interested in the diplomatic process, as anyone who has ever had a discussion with him about his very passionate feelings on the matter would know. He also represented Australia prior to that at the Indonesian elections of 1999. He represented Australia at the European Parliament in 1996 and at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting at Mauritius in 1997.

He led a delegation at the re-inauguration of Taiwan’s President Chen in May 2004. I travelled to Taiwan, and it was amazing. It did not matter which party they were from, and I cannot recall who they were, but probably on at least five occasions at different meetings someone came to me and said, ‘Do you know Sandy Macdonald?’ As my old mate Senator Parry steps out the door he is nodding wisely, but he was there with me at the time. It was amazing to have such a range of people remember the individual, and I think it is an absolute credit to him.

As I have said, he has been very interested in trade policy and the free trade agenda, and particularly in his role as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade he made some outstanding steps forward in that regard. For his personal community he has secured funding for major facilities in northern New South Wales. In his valedictory speech a moment ago he referred to the Tamworth equine centre, which is completely due to Senator Sandy Macdonald. I know how hard he fought and lobbied for it. Madam Acting Deputy President Troeth, you would understand that when we come here we think it is all about belting up the people on the other side, particularly when they are in government—and I am sure Labor are starting to understand that at the moment. It is more about belting up your own to ensure that you can elicit the right program for the right areas, and Sandy was particularly adept at that. He has assisted in getting a centre for national science, IT and maths research. He has also assisted in the development of the $3 billion telecommunications package and the development of telecommunications generally to the benefit of all regional and rural Australians. Whilst he was a member and former chair of the New South Wales black spot consultative committee he helped secure more than $15 million to fix black spots in New South Wales. Over that period of time he was fighting others for the same place, and we have to acknowledge what fantastic work he has done.

I could spend all day talking about Sandy Macdonald’s achievements in this place. But one of the things he certainly has been to me is a very good mate. He always says Australia is the place of the long goodbyes, and I know he would probably like me to end up there. We all know, mate, that nowhere in Australia is too far from Wallabadah.

My good mate Senator Watson is in the Liberal Party and is a pure coalitioner. It is interesting that perhaps I have not been long enough in this place to know of the original divides, but I see him as my natural colleague, in the same way as I see the National Party. Senator Watson—Watto—you have become a superman in the area that I have absolutely no interest in at all. I have to say that superannuation, income tax and public accounts and audits send me to sleep, but you are somebody I have always been able to rely on either for personal advice, which you have given so freely, or for advice on matters that confuse me. I am no rocket scientist but I am certainly much better served than before I met you, mate, so thank you for that. You said, ‘Come on down to Tassie, Nige. I understand you know a bit about the seafood industry. You should have a yarn to them.’ I can tell you that if he knows as much about the seafood industry as he does about other
aspects of his community it is not a wonder that he is so loved there. You have made a great contribution to this place, and I know you will make a great contribution to life in Tasmania in the future. Thank you.

Much has been said about Senator Patterson. A common theme is what a contribution she makes to the private lives of people in this place, and that is very true. Senator Patterson is an exemplar. She mentioned in her speech that she was, I think, the eighth female senator to come to this place. She slipped straight into being the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, became the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, went into cabinet as the Minister for Health and Ageing and then became the Minister for Family and Community Services. In my very short time as a minister it was a fantastic thing to have Senator Patterson tap me on the shoulder and say, ‘You really should think about that, Nige,’ and ‘Have you thought about that?’ When I needed to ring someone to explain and unwind the intricacies of the particular portfolio, you were there; I appreciate that very much. You went on to be the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’s Issues. Obviously you have maintained that passion throughout this place.

What is perhaps not particularly well known about Senator Patterson’s predilection for helping out and generally looking after the health of the Senate community is that she also tends to keep the moral standards of the Senate alive, and that is how, I will have to confess, I have had a lot of my less than favourable meetings with the senator. When I first came to this place, she came to me and said, ‘Senator, I’ve heard that you’ve managed to stay on your feet now for some 50 hours—and not much of it has been in this place—but I think that if you are going to make any contribution at all you have got to stay sober.’ It was about a week into my being a minister. We had a few of those conversations. She has been lovely to me. Probably in my first week as a minister I remember that I made the dreadful mistake of sharing a couple of bottles of wine with Senator Ian Campbell, which can be very dangerous. The next day I was in question time on the front bench. Someone liked me, because I did not get a question. She said, ‘You’ve really got to smarten your act up,’ and it is as a consequence of that, I think, that I did not drink throughout the entire time. We will definitely miss you, Senator Patterson, and I am quite sure you will continue to make a contribution to all those aspects of life that you have made a contribution to here. I am looking forward very much to your contribution in the future.

When I came into my very first question time I was absolutely miffed—I am sure we can all remember our first question time—because it was so impressive; all this intellect! I was sitting down the back. One of the Labor Party senators stood up and asked a question of Senator Kemp—I did not know who he was—and there was a huge roar: ‘They’ve asked Kempie a question!’ It was not until a couple of months later, probably, that I realised what a foolhardy thing that was to do. If somebody were to say, ‘How would you describe Kempie?’ I would say he is a brilliantly funny man. He is funny; he is humorous. It does not matter how serious the situation is; he always has the time to be humorous. I think that is a great attribute you have brought to this place, mate. I spent a bit of time with you when you were the Minister for Arts and Sport. It was a very complicated place, particularly in Indigenous arts. You did an absolutely fantastic job and made such a hardworking contribution to that particular
space. I know you have done many other things but, as a Territorian, I think it was absolutely fantastic. It is a testament of the sort of legacy that one would want to leave. When we had an opportunity to put forward a whole range of different standing committees, you decided that you would support the Senate standing committee on the intervention in the Northern Territory. So thank you, mate.

Chappie, you have always been a bit of an odd bloke—odd, because I was in the corridor and I said, ‘Who’s that?’ People said, ‘That’s Chappie.’ I said, ‘I have never seen him before.’ I went and introduced myself. You, Senator Kemp, will remember me saying, ‘Where have you been? I haven’t seen you. I have been here since 2002.’ He said, ‘I’ve been heading up this parliamentary delegation’ or whatever it was. And there were always the guarded remarks about ‘Chappie doing the travel’. But, as I travel around the world—in my own time, I might say—whether it is in South America, Thailand, Europe or wherever, most people who have been anywhere in the parliamentary world know you, Chappie. You have been a great ambassador because, as a consequence, they speak very fondly of Australians. Well done! I am quite sure that you will go on and upwards and I am also sure that you will take that great character with you.

Senator Lightfoot, again, is one of the great characters of the Senate. He is one person who, I think, lied about his age and became a mounted police officer; the other was my father. I knew Senator Lightfoot personally through his work on the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories. At the time, Norfolk Island was a very difficult area to deal with. I recall with great fondness that, when I first met Senator Lightfoot, which was on the external territories committee, he was cross-examining the Antarctic Division about this myth of global warming. I think that was in 2001. It was a very interesting conversation. The theme was: if you expect us to stop driving cars and stop using coal, do you know what that will cost us? Many people were thinking: if you have just parachuted from Mars, we should be a bit more reasonable than that. But the great irony is that, as these conversations go around, some of the same issues do come up and they were probably very prophetic questions. But to all my coalition senators who are leaving today, I say: thank you for your great friendship and thank you for your contribution to this place, to these communities and this country.

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania) (7.39 pm)—Tonight we farewell and pay tribute to six of our coalition colleagues, all of whom can look back with a sense of satisfaction that they were contributors, that they cared and that they made a real difference to make Australia a better place. As speaking time has been curtailed, I will make the following brief comments.

Firstly, I will talk about Senator Chapman, an excellent, authoritative speaker, with a voice that commands attention, a quality he shares with Senator Lightfoot. Senator Chapman covered a diverse range of topics, but his expertise in matters economic and desertification are two areas where he has earned deserved respect. Although he has spent a fair time in both the other place and here, he is still young enough to pursue other career options, and I wish him well.

Senator Lightfoot is an interesting amalgam of qualities, whose eloquence, I think, is both his strength and his weakness. His interesting life experiences enabled him to make a rich contribution to this place, and of course we wish him well.

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Senator Kay Patterson typifies the rich diversity of talent and life experiences that the coalition enjoys. Her policy rigour and
commitment to the parliamentary process will be missed, as will her personable and very caring nature. I trust the good Dr Patterson, as she will be known after 1 July, will continue to use her considerable expertise for the benefit of others, albeit in a different forum.

I turn to my National Party friend Senator Sandy Macdonald. Politics is at times a harsh and unpredictable path, and Senator Macdonald’s parliamentary career has unfortunately proven that to be the case. But, as he reflects on his contribution to the rural and regional issues of this country, as well as to defence and foreign affairs, he can look back knowing his contribution was not inconsiderable. A true coalitioinist, he understood it was better to compromise and stay in government and deliver for his rural and regional constituents. He is a class act, a true gentleman and young enough to establish himself in another career, apart from spending time with his lovely wife and children. I appreciated his insights, keen sense of humour, absolute key knowledge of military history and the many discussions that we had, especially in the members dining room, about the defence department, as we both were once parliamentary secretaries for Defence. Can I say without being too provocative that I would welcome you, Senator Macdonald, into the Liberal Party at any time.

Can I turn to that raconteur Senator Rod Kemp. I think we are all agreed that the best thing about Senator Kemp is in fact his wife, Daniele. In coming into the Senate I noticed Senator Kemp—well, you could not help noticing him, unless you were devoid of all sensory faculties. He was in there pursuing treaties, pursuing NiMaLS and calling for extra Senate estimates hearings because of Mr Epstein’s less than impressive performances, for which of course Mr Epstein has now been rewarded by being made Mr Rudd’s chief of staff.

As shadow environment minister, Senator Kemp delivered a sensational policy mix in 1996, although I confess his environment regalia of brown shoes and slacks did wear thin, but he thought he needed to do that to identify with the environment community. Others have spoken of Senator Kemp’s stewardship of the Arts and Sport portfolio, and that has won him many deserved accolades. I believe his finest contribution was steering the GST legislation through the Senate without one hitch or one wrong answer in many a relentless question time. For some interesting reason, that contribution was never acknowledged by the leadership of my party. I do not know why that was. Can I simply say this lack of recognition may have been due to Senator Kemp’s capacity to speak his mind very forthrightly—but he always did it without fear or favour and always with the best interests of the party, the government and the people of Australia at heart.

I had the pleasure of sitting next to Senator Kemp for some time. I think he has dined out many a time on the story that his baldness was contagious and he had caught it off me. But I must say his follicle condition is still substantially better than my own. I admired Senator Kemp’s insights, observations and interjections, which were always poignant, devastating or just plain humorous. Such antics saw him bounced out and welcomed back into the Senate on a memorable evening and also saw a particular word recorded in Hansard because he so successfully got under the skin of his political opponent.

Senator Kemp’s contributions and interjections will be missed. His insights and colourful descriptions of opponents and colleagues are legendary, as were his book launches at Lee’s Chinese Inn. I would simply say this to those on the Labor Party side: if they thought that they had got a bit of a tongue-lashing from Senator Kemp, I think he reserved his best for himself personally
and also his colleagues. He had a good self-deprecating sense of humour and, just in the event that any of us thought we were ever getting somewhere, that we were being successful, you could always rely on Senator Kemp for a funny one line put-down, which was always appreciated. The public humiliation at Lee’s and elsewhere, Senator Kemp, was appreciated by many of your colleagues because it was never done with any venom or bitterness but was absolutely full of humour. You knew that Senator Kemp was in fact very supportive. Senator Kemp has immense ability, an ability which was never fully tapped. I wish him and his wife, Daniele, my dear friend from old Europe, all the best.

Last but definitely not least, I turn to the father of the Senate and my fellow Tasmanian, Senator John Watson. Having come to this place with an excellent record in the accountancy and managerial world with a well-known record of care for his employees, Senator Watson devoted three decades to the service of the people of Tasmania and Australia, drawing on that rich and successful professional life. And he made a difference. You can ask individual Tasmanians; you can ask the Taxpayers Association; you can ask the superannuation industry. Senator Watson has left a legacy. Just last Saturday night, a local branch of the party, the West Tamar branch under the guidance of Julia Gulson and Murray Grose, together with Lyons electorate chair Tony Gee, held a function at the Winkleigh hall in honour of Senator Watson and his wife.

Those of you who visit Tasmania ought to come and visit downtown Winkleigh, a genuine country town with a country hall. The locality and the venue for the function were very indicative of Senator Watson, what he stood for and what he prided himself on, and the function was locally catered by the Taskers—and excellently catered, might I add. The food was very good, wasn’t it, Senator Colbeck? It was a dignified, understated affair, which I am sure was exactly as Senator Watson would have wanted it. All his fellow Tasmanian Liberal Senate members were there, along with many others paying tribute to a fine and distinguished career. While some might think that Senator Watson deserves to retire, those of us who have observed him over the past six months have seen him work as though he has just been elected. His community functions, branch activities, questions, speeches in the Senate and involvement in the last Senate estimates continued unabated. Methinks Senator Watson will continue to give of himself for the benefit of his community for many years yet. To Jocelyn, his wife, I say a big thank you for your support. I note other senators will be retiring as well on 30 June. I wish them all—but especially my coalition colleagues—a rich and rewarding retirement with good health. I wish you Godspeed.
And, more importantly, perhaps, we will miss his great respect for the dignity of man. He has made Australia a better place.

I apologise to Senator Stott Despoja as well. She did not speak to me for three years after we went to Cambodia, because I embarrassed her in front of the Cambodian Prime Minister—so much so that not only did she not speak to me for three years but she also said she would never speak to me again. Nonetheless, she has been a wonderful senator; she has been engaging and has been a very vital person. She has a great skill in being able to grasp complex problems and articulate them to a television camera better than nearly anyone I know. I must admit I had a tear in my eye when she resigned as Leader of the Australian Democrats several years ago. I have never told her that, but she will hear that tonight, and I regret that her resignation happened.

Senator Bartlett was great company as well in his own Gothic sort of way. I forgive him for his purple shirts and purple ties. I think he should smile a little bit more. I was always worried that he seemed to be very depressed, particularly when he saw me. He is a man of great integrity.

Senator Allison has one of the toughest jobs, of course, in Australian politics—to lead the Australian Democrats. It is a very difficult job, but she has done it very, very well, and we will all miss her.

Senator Nettle is going as well. I do not think I have ever agreed on any issue with Senator Nettle. On every issue before this parliament I am on the other side to her. One thing I respect about Senator Nettle is that in politics it is easy to be a white bread politician, to stand for nothing and to go along to get along, but Senator Nettle is a senator and a woman of conviction, and I respect that.

Senator George Campbell—what is it about these old lefties from the Australian Labor Party, Madam Deputy President? I went with Senator Campbell to New York. He was wonderful to travel with; I do not mind admitting that. We spent many nights together in New York City, and he took me to all these bars and nightclubs, apparently recommended by Mr Rudd. He brought a great expertise to this chamber in industrial relations and in training, and also, particularly in his later years, he brought a great generosity of spirit to us all. It is funny how all my life I have been fighting against the Left and yet I am praising one of them—what has happened?

I have always been scared of Senator Linda Kirk. She is much more intelligent than me and a much better lawyer. She has also added a great intellectual rigour to the debate here in the Senate and in committee work. I know Linda lost her preselection in difficult circumstances. It is none of my business, but, suffice to say, I will miss her and I will miss her rigour.

Every time Senator Ruth Webber sees me, for some reason she starts laughing. She has the most distinctive laugh, with the possible exception of Senator Brandis, in this entire chamber. Many a time I have been nodding off in question time and the first trickle of a giggle comes from Senator Webber and I am immediately alight and woken up. I am going to miss her joviality and good spirits.

I now turn to farewelling my coalition colleagues. In my office in Canberra I have a photograph of Senator Sandy Macdonald and me astride an elephant in southern Thailand.

Senator Sandy Macdonald—We were on holidays together.

Senator MASON—We were on holidays together; that is right. Suffice to say, Sandy, you and I have not changed at all—we have not aged. That holiday was a long time ago. I remember smoking all your cigars and drinking all your grog overseas. I thank you for
your always wonderful company, your urbanity and your waspish wit, which I loved. You were generous to most but devastating to some, and I will miss you.

Senator Watson is the father of the Senate. John, there was always a kind word from you, and that is rare in politics. You were always very supportive, and that is rarer still. I thank you personally for that. You have been a wonderful senator for 30 years, and all of us will miss you. We will miss your experience, your warmth, your civility and, John, Tasmania is a better place because of you. I thank you very, very much for all you have done.

Senator Chapman, your service in parliament—I was thinking about this before when you spoke, Grant—spans the defeat of the Whitlam government right through to the election of the Rudd government. You have seen it all. You are a great survivor, you are wise on matters financial and corporate and you have brought a dignity and bearing to this place which will be sorely missed. Grant, my only bit of real regret is that I never bowled leg spin to you.

Senator Lightfoot is a gentleman and is one of the great characters of this place. In fact I think he is quite a romantic figure in his own way. Ross repeatedly asked me to go to Iraq with him. Fortunately I did not go, because I am not very good with guns. He is much better at that sort of thing than me. I have to say there is no-one I would rather have a gin and tonic with than Ross Lightfoot. He has also been wonderful company—different, but a wonderful character in this place.

Senator Kay Patterson warmly welcomed me to this place. She cautioned me when I became too abrasive, counselled me when I needed help and praised me when I did the right thing.

Senator Faulkner—that would be a full-time job.

Senator MASON—the latter never or rarely happened, John. Kay achieved what few will achieve—service in this place for over 20 years, a position in federal cabinet and, of course, leaving under her own steam. That is something that most of us will never achieve. I honour her for that.

Senator Rod Kemp is a very rare bird in this place. He combines a heavyweight intellect with great joviality. He is more like a Greek god than a senator. He is very, very different. He has made some of the funniest speeches I have ever heard and his answers, or non-answers, to questions without notice, especially as Assistant Treasurer responsible for the GST, are legendary. His record I suspect will never ever be beaten.

The Senate is a wonderful institution. There is partisanship yet cooperation, there is a battle of competing ideas yet always understanding, and fierce loyalties yet in the end civility. That is what makes this chamber the greatest democratic chamber in this nation—we have our arguments and our debates, yet there is greater civility in this chamber than in any other democratic chamber in this nation. I want to pay great tribute to all the retiring senators. I will miss them all and I want to congratulate them so much for what they have done for the Senate and for their country.

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (8.00 pm)—I am not sure if it is a particularly well-known fact, but the five Liberal senators who are retiring today have between them just over 100 years of service to this Senate—an extraordinary feat. And if we add in Senator Chapman’s eight years in the lower house, we have nearly 110 years of service. I would like to thank all of those who are retiring for what they have done for the Liberal Party and the National Party:
Senators Chapman, Kemp, Lightfoot, MacDonald, Patterson and Watson—but I would especially like today to speak about Senator Watson and Senator Patterson. I know that we all come here with what can be perceived by outsiders as the banal hope that we will make a difference and that we will contribute to the greater good of Australia and the Australian community—and both Senator Patterson and Senator Watson can claim very credibly to have done so.

I did not know until today that Senator Watson’s middle name is Odin. Odin, of course was the god of war, poetry, knowledge and wisdom. I think you were very aptly named, Senator Watson. Within the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, I have highly treasured your wisdom, your calm temperament and your experience of over 30 years—which others have spoken about. It has been a pleasure to have the opportunity to learn just a little of what you know. In fact, I am sure you have forgotten more than most of us have ever learned about the superannuation and taxation system of Australia.

Of course, if Senator Watson is the father of the Senate, I think we should be anointing Senator Patterson as the mother of the Senate. I think this is a somewhat overdue position, and we will have to of course be fairly quick about it. As Senator Patterson’s speech attested—and as others have already said—she is someone who is interested not just in people who can assist her but also in people she can assist. I share the experience of, I think, all the new senators, where I was taken aside by Senator Patterson when I arrived and was told what I should do and what I should not do. She especially had some views on some of my, what I would call—

Senator Birmingham interjecting—

Senator BOYCE—We could call it that. Yes, let us call it that. I think Senator Patterson is the epitome of someone who came here and made a difference, not just in terms of her ministerial and political career but also in terms of the assistance that she has given so many of her colleagues—not just from the coalition but right across the Senate. I know that there are many in the Queensland disability community who join me today in thanking Senator Patterson for what she has done.

One thing that she mentioned briefly in her speech may yet come to be a far more important contribution than she anticipated, and I am speaking about the special disability trust, which she as a minister guided through the parliament. The special disability trust is in fact the first time that the parliament has tried to grapple with the ongoing problem that we have in terms of the way our systems force people to impoverish themselves before we assist them. There is always going to be a group within our society who cannot, because of their own lack of ability, their family circumstances or their caring needs, support themselves either during their working lives or in their retirement. The special disability trust is one of the few times that we have started to look at how we might uncouple the inability of people to supply their own resources due to the fact that we will not support people whilst they have some resources. I hope that this will in the future provide some sort of a model for how we might get to the stage where people do not have to become completely impoverished before they receive assistance from the government.

I would very much like to thank all the coalition senators. You have made my very short time here far more productive and far more enjoyable. I hope that I can continue some of the traditions of civility, service and graciousness that you have all demonstrated.
Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (8.04 pm)—It is always very, very difficult to follow speeches like these we have heard from our six retiring colleagues—speeches of eloquence and sincerity; speeches that I found very emotional. I do not know if those giving them had the emotion that I felt. Over the years all of them have had an influence on me in one way or another and they have all also had a considerable impact on Australia. In their speeches, those retiring—and those senators who have spoken since they spoke—have outlined the highlights of their careers and have in some detail mentioned the contribution that they have made to Australia. I know that even now, because they are people of such humility and because they are very self-effacing people, all of them would rather be elsewhere than hearing their colleagues say nice things about them. So I want to be very brief in deference to my colleagues.

I do want to wish John Watson and Jocelyn all the very best in their future together. John is a very, very committed person—a very committed Liberal. You could fill a volume with the work that John has done for this parliament and for Australia. Many people have mentioned his work on the superannuation committee, and others have mentioned—and I certainly endorse their comments—the fiscal understanding that others of us sort of glazed over. John Watson was one of the few in parliament—in fact, I have often said the only one in parliament, including treasurers of all political persuasions—who actually understood the tax law and the superannuation law.

I got to know John over the years but more particularly in the 2004 election when John, as the patron senator for Lyons, took me around Lyons in one very exhausting day. John is a little older than me, and I was amazed to see the John Watson on the ground in Tasmania; he is quite a different person from the John Watson I knew in the parliament. John knew everybody in Lyons, and I say that without exaggeration. Everywhere he went people knew him. The way he ran around the electorate absolutely amazed me. When we were up at Ringarooma they treated him like a returning hero, although I understand he is there all the time. I too had an experience at Winkleigh, a town where Senator Watson arranged a campaign meeting. The hall was full that night too. John, I am sorry that I was not aware of your send-off last week, but Winkleigh was certainly a great place to have that farewell. I think Senator Abetz was exaggerating when he called it a town. Besides the hall, there is only a public bar there, isn’t there?

Senator Watson—No pub.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—There is no pub; just the post office. Senator IAN MACDONALD—There is no pub; just the post office. But it was full the night that John arranged this campaign meeting there. He has made a great contribution, as others have said, and I repeat that I wish him and Jocelyn all the very best in the years ahead.

Senator Kay Patterson has had a very long and distinguished career and is a very committed Liberal. We will miss her in many ways. A lot of those ways have been spoken about, but her prowess with the camera and as the keeper of records of coalition social functions will live for many a year. I suspect that Kay’s farewell gift to the Liberal Party will be a volume of her photographs that she has taken over many years.

Senator Chapman has also had a long and very significant career in this parliament in both chambers. I have always been impressed with Grant Chapman’s understanding of economic matters. I mentioned this at his last attendance at an economic committee that I was involved with just last week. He certainly does have expertise in that area, which I think will ensure that he has some-
where to go when his term in this place finishes. I am very confident that he will have a big future in business and industry and, again, I thank him for the contribution he has made.

Senator Rod Kemp was sworn in the same day as I was, almost 18 years ago, so I have had a lot to do with Rod over that time. We have shared some of the highs of life in this business, and we have shared some of the lows. We both agree that our considerable talents were not properly recognised at all times, and at times we have shared the same prejudices for people whom we will not mention. I know Rod and others recount fondly his answers to the GST questions when he was Assistant Treasurer in this place, carrying what was a very, very difficult GST debate. Whilst a lot of people joke about it, to a very substantial degree the success of the GST, the way that it was implemented and the way it was made possible to be implemented is in no small measure due to Rod Kemp. As I said, people make light of those days, which always had a purpose, and in this business we know that a wrong word by the Assistant Treasurer at the time could have just about destroyed the GST work. So, on a serious note, I want to mention that the success of the GST was in no small way due to Rod Kemp.

As others have said, Rod is also a very entertaining speech giver. I have heard a lot of good speeches over my time, but one of the best speeches I have ever heard in my life was Rod Kemp’s speech to the Scottish gathering in Melbourne last year. It is a pity it was not recorded; it would go down as one of the best after-dinner speeches with a meaning that has been delivered in this country, certainly in the time that I have been in public life.

Rod has had a long involvement and made a real contribution to the Liberal Party. For that we also thank him. He mentioned his brother being a very good environment minister. Of course, newer members may not realise that Rod Kemp was the shadow environment minister in the run-up to the 1996 election.

**Senator Kemp**—John Faulkner thinks I was a very good one.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—John Faulkner thinks you were a very good shadow minister, and so do I, Senator Kemp. In fact, anybody who was around at that time—and, unfortunately, many who are now in the chamber were not—would know that the Liberal Party had quite wrongly been thought to be offside with the genuine green movement for a long period of time, and we barely spoke; or, if we did speak about the greens, or they about us, it was always in very antagonistic ways. But Rod Kemp—and again, I say this very seriously—cultivated a friendship with Mr Marr.

**Senator Kemp**—A great man.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—What was his name?

**Senator Kemp**—Alec Marr.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Alec Marr; that is right. How could I forget Alec?

**Senator Kemp**—John Faulkner’s friend.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Alec would have been almost to the left of John Faulkner, I think, and that is saying something. Rod cultivated Alec Marr because Rod had an environmental policy that actually appealed to the genuine environmentalists. They always say that Robert Hill and David Kemp were two of the best environment ministers ever. But there was a serious element in saying that they were both set up for it by the work that Rod did as the shadow environment minister in the time leading up to the 1996 election. Rod and Daniele leave this place with the very best wishes of all of
us, particularly from me and my wife, Lesley. We want to thank you both for the kind friendship that you have shown to us, and I know that you have shown to everyone else, in the time that you have been in the Senate.

Senator Lightfoot is a very courageous senator. His presence and his speech here tonight demonstrate a courage that many of us would aspire to. Senator Lightfoot is not well at the moment. He has a disease which, I think, he got from working in the mines in some remote part of west Africa. As has been mentioned, Ross has had a very distinguished career in two parliaments. I think he is one of the great orators of this parliament, and his presence will be missed. He has a real knowledge of the mining industry and mining policy and he is a very committed Western Australian. As well as his policy advice, I will also miss his advice on shares. Ross was always a good source for a good tip on a penny-dreadful mining operation in Western Australia. He seemed to know everyone involved in the mining industry—which ones were rogues and charlatans and which shares might have a bit of a future sometime down the track. I will not thank Ross for the money I have made out of share trading in the penny-dreadfuls, because I am a notoriously bad judge myself; but the one or two successes I have had might have been attributed to Ross Lightfoot. I wish Ross all the very best in the future and I do hope that his health allows him to continue to lead a very fulfilling life in the service of our country.

Finally, I mention Senator Sandy Macdonald. Notwithstanding his other, very obvious, qualities, the one thing that is very clear about my friend Sandy is that he has a name that will be forever revered in parliamentary annals and is synonymous with commitment, ability, portfolio success, and for being just a downright decent person. I might add that it is only coincidence that the New South Wales agriculture minister and another senator in this chamber share the same name, but the descriptions I gave are applicable to Sandy alone. I was often distressed that Sandy was not a member of the Liberal Party during his very distinguished term here, but I hasten to add that there were not many—if any at all—issues in a policy sense where Sandy and I would have had a difference of opinion.

Sandy has had a difficult time in this political game. He would never complain, but it distresses me a little that his loyalty and commitment were treated, I think, so shabbily. That is a feeling that I have, and I know that Sandy is too large a person to dwell on that. In the difficult journey he has had in this parliament, he has conducted himself so very well. I know what he achieved as a minister in the former government. His legacy will be seen for a long while in the portfolio successes he had. Over the years he has achieved a lot for the people of New South Wales. Sandy and Alice leave this chamber with the best wishes of Lesley and myself. I know we will see Sandy around in the future—probably in the corporate world achieving even greater success than he has achieved here. Sandy, you have been very generous with share tips as well, and between you and Ross they are the only successes I have ever had. I know that you will forge a very successful career in whichever direction you choose.

All of our colleagues leave with the goodwill and best wishes of all of us. They also leave with my thanks for their friendship, support and advice over the time that I have known them all in this chamber.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia) (8.19 pm)—It is my pleasure to contribute to this discussion tonight. Indeed, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to do so. When I was preselected by my party to join
our Senate ticket in February last year, I did not anticipate that I would be in this place until July this year. It was the sad circumstance of Senator Ferris’s passing that brought about my earlier start in the Senate, it has been to have the opportunity to spend some time with a number of the retiring senators whom we are honouring tonight, to be able to learn from them and to enjoy their company and their advice over this time.

I will tackle them in no particular order, save for the fact that I am going to tackle Senator Kemp first, because he asked me to. Senator Kemp has been something of an accidental mentor to me. When I arrived here, Senator Parry shoehorned me into the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts. He said, ‘We’ve got a vacancy and you’ve got to fill it, son.’ So in I went and, alongside me I found Senator Rod Kemp, whom I did not know before then but who has been an excellent mentor. I was able to watch Rod in Senate estimates trying to nail a good political point and feigning outrage—dare I say—from time to time. Of course, it is never actually feigned. Senator Kemp is always appropriately outraged at everything that may occur, particularly during estimates. But some of us have to learn how to feign it like Rod. Rod was also always looking for serious policy outcomes in the committee work that was undertaken. In watching the conclusion of the inquiry into the Indigenous arts sector and hearing about other inquiries that he participated in, as well as knowing of his background working in policy institutions prior to coming to this place, you could see a man determined to make a difference through the enactment of policy and legislation and through the battle of ideas in this place.

In the chamber we see a man who has a unique approach and speaking style that has been recognised by some here tonight. It is an entertaining one, a slightly flamboyant one and certainly one that includes some of the most entertaining of interjections. Just as I was fortunate to be positioned with Rod on the environment and comms committee, I find myself seated here just behind Senator Kemp, where I can keep a careful ear on his interjections, what he has to say across the chamber. He has that great knack of being the last person to say something just as the President has made the chamber go quiet, to ensure that his voice is truly heard.

Rod’s contribution is something of which he can be genuinely proud. I will not go through it all tonight because of time. Many have mentioned his contribution to the GST. I would also highlight his work in the arts and sport, in particular the legacy that he leaves for many of the nation’s institutions.

We shall miss the ritual that has developed in estimates in my time here, where the arts agencies appear and Senator Kemp probes them most insightfully on how their upgrades and capital works are progressing. He probes them as to when they received that funding and then probes them as to who the minister was when they received it. As they reply, ‘It was you, Senator Kemp,’ Senator Kemp then duly replies, ‘Oh! Was it now?’ in a most entertaining sort of cycle. We promise to ensure that all of those capital works are finished and that they continue to honour your work, Rod. You have often said to me when you have walked back into an estimates committee meeting, ‘Simon, I don’t want you to go soft.’ We give the undertaking that we will not.

I now turn to my South Australian friend and colleague Senator Grant Chapman. Many have spoken of Grant’s long service here. Of all of the senators retiring tonight, Grant is someone whom I have known the longest. In fact, I first came across Grant
during a Lions Club Youth of the Year contest back when I was a high school student. Grant was one of the judges sitting in that forum. It was the state finals, and I am not sure whether Grant stacked the general knowledge questions and so on in my favour, but I was very pleased that, as one of the panellists in the judging forum, he saw to it that I came out successful as well.

Grant then became my pair, patron and mentor during the Hindmarsh campaign. Grant mentioned in his valedictory speech tonight the thrill of running for a marginal seat. He of course enjoyed victory in 1975, holding onto that marginal seat of Kingston. I was contesting Hindmarsh, which, because of boundary changes, shared some of the patches that Kingston had included, particularly Glenelg, where Grant worked very hard on introducing me to some of the local sporting clubs. I acknowledge that for my Senate pair, Senator Chapman, in trying to help me win that seat—which I fell short of winning by just 108 votes—no task was too small or too menial. I recall him coming along one day with a folder of information on all the polling booths, having personally driven, with his good friend Michael Willson, around each of the polling booths with a camera, taking photos and working out the entrances to ensure that we were as well prepared as we could be for polling day. I thank him very much for that effort and for his efforts beyond that.

Grant Chapman is well known across the Liberal Party for his work in regional South Australia in particular. His commitment to supporting our branches in the Liberal Party throughout country areas is nothing short of legendary. I have no doubt that a key part of his surviving for as long as he has in politics has been that fostering of ongoing relations with so many Liberals throughout South Australia. It is something of which he can be proud and from which those of us who follow in his footsteps can learn a lot. I acknowledge his commitment to many issues, a lot of which he covered tonight, such as the space industry and trade. I also acknowledge his commitment to the commercial and financial services industry and his many years of hard work on superannuation services. Grant’s address tonight was quite moving at times, particularly his recognition of the commitment of his family and the role they played. Grant, we wish you every success in the years to follow.

I turn now to Senator Watson, who is perhaps one of the last of those old liberal lions, if I can say that. Senator Watson warmly welcomed me when I came to this place, apparently based on my reputation as one of the liberal thinkers within the Liberal Party. Senator Watson, I thank you very much for that. I know that, as with all of the retiring coalition senators tonight, some of my South Australian predecessors—in particular Robert and Di Hill and Amanda Vanstone—would wish that I extend their best wishes to you for all of your years of service. Your record on crossing the floor, your record on attention to detail in legislative matters, particularly in relation to regulations and ordinances and so on, is something that as a newcomer I have much admired. There is much to look back on and learn from. I hope that as one of the new Liberals in this place I can help to do you proud in the years to come.

I now turn to Senator Patterson, whom I have had the pleasure of sitting next to for all of this year in the Senate. Many have spoken of her compassionate and caring approach. That of course is something of a legend around this place. I first met Kay during the Hindmarsh campaign that Senator Chapman helped me on. We were campaigning at a facility supporting mentally disabled workers. It was a large workshop in the western suburbs of Adelaide, and Kay was then the
Minister for Family and Community Services. That warmth, that loving approach that she has, shone through loud and clear as we worked our way around, talking to the different people who were working on the assembly lines in the packaging rounds. She showed great compassion, hugging people and talking to them. It was great to see and to be part of, to join with her in lighting up their day. Certainly I have learnt much from it.

Kay has a lot to be proud of. Most of the women who come through this place can still consider themselves to be trailblazers to some extent. Kay, with her ministerial career, is certainly no exception. Sitting next to her, I have enjoyed very much assisting her with technology through this time as well. I will miss greatly Kay leaning across, taking my phone and wanting to know how to use it and accidentally sending emails to people in my address book. I will miss the entertaining little additions that Kay makes on the side, as well as all those very kind words that she has to say.

I have not spent much time with Sandy Macdonald in this place, of course, but I did have the fortune of at least sharing many hours sitting in airports on the recent trip to the Middle East. Much has been said of Sandy tonight. Certainly I have seen a very decent, laid-back but well-thinking gentleman in Sandy. I wish I had more time to spend with Sandy, but I have thoroughly enjoyed my time chatting to him, getting to know him, and I know that he will be making the most of life as it goes forward.

I pay my tribute to Senator Lightfoot as well. His presence in the chamber, particularly when occupying the chair, is something to behold. He has a certain je ne sais quoi about him, and it is really quite impressive.

I also pay tribute to the two other South Australian senators who are also retiring on 30 June. Natasha Stott Despoja is something of a legend in South Australia. Certainly, when asked what the Senate was, it could, for many years, be defined for South Australians as the place where Amanda Vanstone was or the place where Natasha Stott Despoja was. Their recognition across South Australia was truly second to none. Natasha was truly a trailblazer for women in this place, leaving here at a very young age, having arrived at an even younger age. Her championing of issues has been nothing less than prolific across education, R&D issues, maternity leave, the Republic and stem cell research. Natasha will, I am sure, be going on to bigger and better things, and will not be leaving those issues behind. I pay tribute to her work as a fellow South Australian.

I also note, as has been recorded, this is the last session where we will have Democrats in this chamber. Whilst there are many things I disagree with the Democrats on, the demise of a party is a sad thing to see, and I do put on the record that there have been many great achievements by the Democrats in their time. They should be proud of their achievements as a party, particularly the four senators who leave here at the change of session.

Finally, I acknowledge Senator Linda Kirk—a fellow South Australian, who I also knew prior to her arrival in this place from our work together in the Australian Republican Movement. I will not dwell on Linda’s departure from here, but I know that she has much to offer and I hope that she will be able to offer it in the private sector and also by assisting in some way, shape or form the new government that she—I am sure—was so happy to see elected.

I know that all of the 14 departing senators have much to offer. I offer them my best wishes and hope they enjoy every success and enjoy the life that lies ahead of them.
Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (8.33 pm)—Today is a very special occasion as I make a formal farewell to my National Party colleague and friend, Senator Sandy Macdonald. This is Sandy’s second appearance as a Senate valedictorian. The first was in June 1999. I would like to remind him of his words on that occasion. He quoted from a verse from *The Servant Song*:

We are pilgrims on a journey,
We are brothers on the road,
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and share the load.

Sandy, you have been my brother. We have been pilgrims on this road together. We have weathered storms and fires; we have negotiated the falls and the triumphs, political and personal. There is a loyalty between some people that is very rare in political circles, and I am very fond of telling that story that has already been told tonight: if you want a friend in politics, bring a dog. But friends are possible, even here—and Sandy proves it.

There is a loyalty that can only be won over steaks at the Kingo, late night sittings, pots of tea, the lonely, but comradely, crossing of the floor and other political crises—and not forgetting our annual seafood barbecues, where Sandy has been the longstanding chef. This loyalty can only be won if there is something strong which is shared. In this case, while we are so different on the surface, underneath Sandy and I share a passionate belief in the supremacy of the family and an overwhelming desire to support country and rural Australia, small business and areas that do not get the attention that they may deserve.

In 1999, Sandy said we should not forget that all of us lucky enough to be elected to this place are on a journey to make our abundant country a more abundant place, and we should never forget the privilege of that because that is an end itself. Senators from all sides will miss Sandy, as he has earned respect for his essential decency and generous amiability. He came here to make a difference, and he has. He has turned his intellectual sights on international issues and on Australia’s defence role, being rewarded with the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence. He was also the Parliamentary Secretary for Trade. He has made countless contributions in this area in his two stints as a senator for New South Wales from the Nationals. His observations and warning about Zimbabwe years ago have proven to be only too true in recent times. Sandy has found the committee work engaging and stimulating. He was properly committed to and fitted for these processes, toiling away at the substance of being a serious legislator.

Sandy is probably the last of the gentleman pastoralists of the bush who will come here. He has fought a valiant fight for the great primary industries of Australia, bringing the voices of the wool grower, the cattle producer and the wheat grower to the great debates we have had on their futures. He sees his political life as one of responsibility to a great trust bestowed on him. It is a noble view that is given little coverage in these days.

Sandy also prides himself on being a reasonable man. He prefers to use reason in debates. He once said that to meet the needs of compromise in politics is not hypocritical but common sense, and common sense is a very good measure for political outcomes. However, when reason cannot win the day, Sandy is prepared to walk the walk. When he first came into the Senate, he decided to cross the floor on Mabo and stand up for his constituents. Today, his valedictory day, Senator Sandy Macdonald stood up and crossed the floor with his fellow Nationals on the wheat single-desk bill. Sandy has proven that, when the chips are down, when reason has failed to
find the way; he will make a stand. When Sandy left the Senate the first time, he was voted out because of the Pauline Hanson phenomenon. He noted on that occasion, and noted again tonight, that almost none of the nine per cent of New South Wales voters who voted in protest of Mrs Hanson would have realised that this haemorrhage of coalition votes would mean the Democrats would come up through the centre.

Earlier today, I joined Sandy, his wife and Senator Nigel Scullion with the kids from Wallabadah Public School, who are visiting Canberra. They will likely never meet with a home town senator again. Sandy Macdonald, the senator from Wallabadah—it would only happen in Australia. I know that Sandy has valued especially his earlier chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, and the visit to the Menin Gate in 1996 was one of the highlights of his political career.

Sandy has always been generous with his remarks about me, saying things like I am ‘on the side of the angels’. Well, Sandy, if I am ever to be found there, it would only be in your company. It has been a privilege serving with you and having you as my former deputy leader in the Senate. I wish Sandy, his wife, Alice, and their children, Millie, Will and Angus, a wonderful life away from the goldfish bowl of politics. Knowing Sandy’s enthusiasm and talent for service to his country, I am confident he will continue to make a contribution to Australia in the life ahead of him. It is another journey ahead for the pilgrim; our roads will divert now, but remember, my friend, my brother, that we are always here to help each other.

I would like to make some comments about the other senators that are leaving. When Senator Watson, my Tasmanian friend, whom I have been able to assist from time to time, leaves, I will be taking over from him as the father of the house. I owe Senator Patterson a special thanks. One day she saw what I thought was a freckle on my forehead and she said, ‘Go and get that seen to.’ I did, and it was malignant. If she had not been so observant then it could have been a disaster. Senator Kemp has been a great friend, a great raconteur. I always used to joke with him—I have a grandson who is pretty good at sport and I always used to ask him to put him in the Institute of Sport. He never honoured that commitment. Senator Chapman, Chappie, good luck as you go. We wish you the best. You fell on hard times with another senator. You rode that suicide position, No. 3, in the South Australian Senate for many years, and it got you in the end. Senator Lightfoot is a delightful person and a great speaker. I enjoyed his speech tonight and I wish him the best. I wish all the other senators that are leaving, from the Labor side and the Democrats, the best of health.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania) (8.42 pm)—Periodically there is a significant change in the membership of the Senate, and we are seeing that again on 30 June this year with the retirement of 14 senators. There were in fact 15, but former Senator Robert Ray escaped this process and retired a little earlier. I acknowledge his contribution to this place over a significant period of time. I always recall advice from colleagues when I first came into the Howard ministry that if Senator Ray and Senator Faulkner turned up you knew something was going on. They never disappointed me, I have to say. I always recall advice from colleagues when I first came into the Howard ministry that if Senator Ray and Senator Faulkner turned up you knew something was going on. They never disappointed me, I have to say. It is at times like this that you tend to reflect on your place here, and I suspect that this process does us all good. It sometimes does not hurt us to sit and reflect on what has been happening over a period of time and where we sit within that.

I would like to pay tribute to all the retiring senators, who have made significant contributions to this place. First, I mention the
four Australian Democrat senators: Senators Stott Despoja, Allison, Bartlett and Murray. I have not always agreed with the Democrats' position on matters before this place—in fact, I think it would be fair to say I have rarely agreed—but I have always appreciated the hard work done by Democrat senators, who have to cover the whole gamut of government policies. I recognise the workload that senators from the minor parties have to put in to be across the legislation that comes before this parliament. I have often reflected on how I might manage in that particular position. I would particularly like to mention Senator Andrew Murray, who has made a tremendously substantial contribution to the Senate, particularly in the area of financial management and transparency. Andrew is also a gentleman senator, and many of us will sorely miss him from this place.

I also acknowledge the contribution of the retiring Labor senators: Senators George Campbell, Linda Kirk and Ruth Webber. I have not specifically had a lot to do with all of them in this place—although I have enjoyed cordial relations with them—although I do remember accompanying Ruth to Japan on an Australian Political Exchange Council delegation in 1994, before either of us were in this place. I particularly remember a sandwich lunch that we shared at the speaker's residence. I think we will both always remember the images of each other's faces across the table that day after a fairly big night out the night before. Neither of us was all that well.

I also note that Senator Kerry Nettle will not be returning after the winter recess. It is one of the vagaries of this place that a Senate quota makes elections somewhat hit and miss for minor parties. I wish Senator Nettle all the best in whatever she decides to do post her career in this place.

Of my own colleagues, I am sad to see the retirements of Senators Grant Chapman, Rod Kemp, Sandy Macdonald, Kay Patterson, Ross Lightfoot and my Tasmanian colleague John Watson. It has been a privilege to be a colleague of each of these senators.

Grant Chapman has given service to both the House and the Senate for almost 30 years and has made a significant contribution, particularly in the field of corporations law reform. It is not a sexy area of public administration, but I know that Senator Chapman's contribution is well regarded by many in the corporate world. I also note his contribution to parliamentary sport, particularly his love of parliamentary cricket. While he did not get to play test cricket for Australia, I do note that he did captain the Australian parliamentary cricket team against the old enemy on two occasions and has come out of that process with an unblemished record. I am sure there are plenty of other Australian captains who would like to see that.

Rod Kemp will be greatly missed. He is a senator who combines being a good tactician with someone who takes the long view of parliamentary democracy, as was clear when he edited that wonderful collection of major parliamentary speeches, Speaking for Australia. He also faced up to constant barrages from the other side during the GST debates—as we have heard so many times here in the chamber this evening—in the late 1990s when he was Assistant Treasurer. Like most good batsmen he always held the line and never gave away his wicket. In fact, I think he could almost be said to be the ultimate dead bat. Like Senator Abetz, I remember very fondly what would have been one of the most entertaining book launches I have ever seen, when Rod made an impromptu launch of a booklet prepared by Senator Abetz for distribution in Tasmania. I am very disappointed that he did not get to fulfil his threat to complete a follow-up performance
on another one of my colleagues’ publications.

Senator Sandy Macdonald is someone who has been, from my perspective, a quiet achiever. I did appreciate greatly the work that I did interacting with Sandy when he was in the defence portfolio and I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance with responsibility for administering the Lands Acquisition (Defence) Act. Given the amount of land that Defence had around the country, our portfolios quite often interacted. He always made a thoughtful contribution, particularly in the areas of trade, international security and defence. He is a senator whom I have always respected.

Senator Kay Patterson is retiring after 21 years in this place. Kay has always brought a business-like but extraordinarily compassionate voice to debate in the Senate, particularly in regard to the care of the elderly, as befits her pre-Senate career. Her time as the Minister for Health and Ageing will be remembered for the improvements in federal assistance to carers of those who are permanently ill or profoundly disabled. I do not think anyone could ask for a better legacy than that. And I always value and recall the careful and watching eye that Senator Patterson kept over us all.

Ross Lightfoot came here after serving in both houses of the Western Australian parliament, but his career is much wider and much more colourful than that, having been, amongst other things, a farmer, a mounted policeman, a mine developer and a CMF soldier. Ross brings some Old World courtesies to this place. The Senate has been the better for him being here. He has made a great contribution, especially in regard to the development of Canberra and the external territories during his chairmanship of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories. I wish him good fortune as he returns to the west.

Finally, I turn to my longstanding friend and Tasmanian colleague, the father of the Senate, John Watson. John leaves this place after being first elected in December 1977 and seeing 11 subsequent elections. John has been the epitome of putting his role as a parliamentarian before that of being a politician. I think that is a very rare trait to see. No-one in this place has a greater knowledge of the complexities of taxation and superannuation legislation, and John has gained and held the respect of all his colleagues in this sphere. In fact, I am not too sure that I have seen anyone else get as excited over superannuation and taxation as he did at various meetings that I have attended. It is also obvious that, in the many hearings of the Public Accounts and Audit Committee and the Select Committee on Superannuation, the senior officers of the Australian Taxation Office, the Department of the Treasury and the finance department all respected John’s expertise and sincerity. It is a tribute to John that he was elected chairman of a select committee in 1993 even though in opposition at a time. That was a very rare occurrence, but the Democrats and the other crossbench senators shared the coalition’s view that he was the best man for the job. John was also given a meritorious award by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia for his long contribution to the profession, and he was elected patron of the Canberra branch of the Institute of Internal Auditors.

There is a very nice story about John’s terrier-like pursuit of potentially bad taxation law. During the time of the Hawke government, the then Minister for Finance, Senator Peter Walsh, was taking a complex tax bill through the Senate. During the committee stage, Senator Watson alerted the minister to a possible bad consequence if a particular clause was not amended. The officers in the
adviser’s box assured the minister that all was okay. Senator Watson persisted. Again the minister sought advice and again the officers said all was fine with the clause. Senator Walsh then paused and said something along the lines of, ‘If Senator Watson thinks there is a problem, then there probably is a problem,’ and so he moved that the debate be adjourned. On closer examination ‘Watto’ was found to be quite correct!

But John has not been a one-dimensional senator. He has made significant contributions on education, and, as we have heard, on agriculture, on social policy and on trade. John was, before coming to the Senate, as he mentioned in his own speech, managing director of a very significant Australian company. That is not a common background for a member of this parliament. When that company, Kelsall and Kemp, had to close following the Whitlam government’s changes to the tariff regime, John spent months and months securing employment for many ex-Kelsall and Kemp employees. I know that there are many, many families in Launceston who will never forget what he did.

John has been a loyal servant of the Liberal Party in Tasmania. He provided important representation for the north-west coast when he personally funded an office in Devonport during a time when there was no Liberal representative in the region. Anyone who knows Tasmania knows the importance of the whole state having representation by both parties. John deserves enormous credit for that; I also know that he earned the respect and thanks of the people of the north-west coast of Tasmania.

John also has a particular capacity to work at the grass roots and support the Liberal Party and its membership. To demonstrate how closely John has continued to work right up until his retirement, as we have heard here today, at the Liberal Launceston Women’s Group annual function last December, John turned up with a rosebud for every lady at the function. You can guess who was king of the castle that particular day, but it also demonstrates how John worked closely with the organisation. It probably also demonstrates why he has been so successful over so many years and, despite the fact that he had been written off at so many preselections, continued to win through and serve such a distinguished career here in the Senate.

John has never worn his Christian principles on his sleeve, but he has lived by them in his daily life. We have heard a bit about that tonight. It is not necessarily something that I was fully aware of, even though I know him quite well. He has been ably supported throughout his career by Jocelyn, his wife. Jocelyn retired only last month after her own long and distinguished career as a leading pharmacist in Launceston. Both Gaylene and I join in wishing them both a long life and happiness in the opportunities that retirement will bring.

Senator ADAMS (Western Australia) (8.54 pm)—It gives me great pleasure to speak about our retiring senators this evening. I would like to start with the father of the Senate, Senator John Watson, who has given 30 years service to the Senate and the people of Tasmania. I think that is a wonderful record. Last year I was fortunate enough to go to the scrutiny of legislation conference in Wellington. John and I were both delegates. I must say that, having him there beside me to offer support, I learnt so much. He was always around to answer any questions and to support me. As I had to present a paper, I was quite nervous about it, but John gave me support and paid me the attention that I really needed to do that. I thank him very much for that. I am not really involved with the financial side of this place—the finance committees or any of that area—but I do know that John is. Listening tonight, we
have heard about the terrific contribution that he has made to the Senate in that area especially. I thank him for that.

I move on to Senator Grant Chapman, who has represented South Australia for 28 years both in the House of Representatives and the Senate. This is a wonderful achievement, and I am sure that, when Senator Chapman returns to South Australia, he will be focusing a lot of his time and his experience on rural South Australia. I wish him very well in his next life and with what he is going to do. I am sure that he will continue contributing and trying to rectify rural issues for his constituents.

Senator Kay Patterson has been in the Senate for 21 years. I am really going to miss Kay. She is a very hardworking and distinguished senator. She has been, in everything she has done, determined to succeed in what was very important to her. Her track record really says it all. Her advocacy skills have been second to none. As has been said this evening by all those senators on the coalition side, Kay has always been there with her support, wisdom, sense of humour and, sometimes, caution. I thank her for that. We will certainly miss her for all of the things that she has done—quietly achieving in the background but always there to steady us up and say, ‘That’s enough; let’s go this way,’ or ‘I think you should be going in another direction.’ I really thank her for those words of wisdom.

To Senator Kemp, who has spent 18 years representing Victoria: estimates will not be the same without you, nor will the chamber. I recall his banter across the chamber with Senator Lundy when he was Minister for the Arts and Sport. We really will miss that. He has made a huge contribution to the parliament, especially, as people before me have said, with the GST and the other areas that he has had terrific expertise in. Sandy Macdonald has been a great contributor in this place. His knowledge of rural and regional issues is second to none. Probably the main area where I have worked with Sandy was as Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister for Defence when he had responsibility for the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program. As I have been very involved with that program, I must say that Senator Macdonald was a great advocate for the position he held and also for all those people that he met with in that area. He supported and advocated to his parliamentary colleagues to get them to take part in the program. We have not agreed on all issues, but I feel that Senator Macdonald is a great ambassador for his rural constituents. I am sure that he will continue to be so when he leaves this place.

Senator Ross Lightfoot is a WA colleague who has served the people of Western Australia in three parliamentary chambers. He has been a great supporter of the resource sector and is also the patron senator for the mining and pastoral area of Western Australia. Senator Lightfoot has worked tirelessly in that area, and his constituents there will be very sad that he has left the Senate, but I am sure he will continue in the same vein.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Lightfoot)—I have not left the Senate yet, Senator Adams, but I do thank you for those kind words! I changed over into the chair at a very opportune time. Senator ADAMS—I am sorry. I was so involved with—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—It was good timing.

Senator ADAMS—Anyway. Senator Lightfoot, I thank you very much on behalf of Western Australia for what you have done. Reflecting on my committee involvement and looking at the other retiring senators in this place—the Labor Party senators, the
Democrats and Senator Nettle from the Greens—I think I have worked on committees with all of them. Senator Ruth Webber and I have travelled extensively together and worked on a number of community affairs committee inquiries. I really will miss her and her great sense of humour. We often sit together coming across from Western Australia.Hopefully she will be one of those people who we will not lose contact with. I wish her well in whatever she does. That also goes for Senator Kirk and Senator George Campbell. Senator Robert Ray retired earlier, but I was deputy chair of the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, and his words of wisdom and support to me when he was the chair were very, very good. I really thank him for that and wish him well in his retirement.

Moving on to our Democrats senators, I have worked closely with Senator Lyn Allison on a number of committees. I have also worked with Senator Stott Despoja on a number of committees, and I certainly wish her very well with her young family. Senator Andrew Murray is a Western Australian senator who has also been very interested in the issues that I have also been pursuing. He has been very supportive of me on a number of those issues. Senator Andrew Bartlett and I worked very closely together on the Senate Standing Committee on the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. We would never agree on several of the issues—one of them being live exports—but I must say that on other issues he was really a very experienced senator and I learnt a terrific amount from him on that ECITA committee. Senator Kerry Nettle and I also worked on two committees together. I would like to wish all retiring senators every best wish for their future endeavours.

**Senator FISHER** (South Australia) (9.03 pm)—It is humbling for a relatively new senator like me to have an opportunity in these circumstances to recognise, farewell and thank my departing coalition colleagues. I want to start with Senator Sandy Macdonald, with whom I share a passion for things rural and regional. While Senator Macdonald and I have not always shared a common view on the policy outcomes, I have learnt from him how to benefit from respecting another person’s point of view whilst never, ever taking away from the dedication to the cause and the commitment to the people whom you seek to represent. From Senator Lightfoot I have learnt how a senator born of one state can perhaps contribute all the more richly to the advocacy on behalf of the people of another state. Essentially I look forward to doing in reverse what Senator Lightfoot has done by moving from South Australia to Western Australia. In my case it is from Western Australia to South Australia.

From Senator Rod Kemp I have learnt how to work very hard at being a senator whilst also having fun and to never, ever lose one’s perspective but always remember that we are here to do a job. Senator Kay Patterson is the Senate’s glue. Senator Kay Patterson owes me and her Senate colleagues nothing, but I owe Senator Patterson much. My father would not let this occasion go by without me reminding Senator Patterson that my father, since meeting her, would never dare do anything other than tie his own. My South Australian colleague Senator Grant Chapman said in his own words that he is a ‘oncer’. His commitment to rural and regional South Australia was never, ever a once-off. It is probably to his rural roots that Senator Chapman owes his reputation as being amongst the rare breed of politicians who are also genuinely nice guys. To my coalition colleagues, I say thank you and farewell.

**Senator RONALDSON** (Victoria) (9.06 pm)—I would like to say a few words tonight about the non-coalition senators who are retiring and I wish them all well. Particu-
larly I would like to make mention of Senators Andrew Murray, Natasha Stott Despoja and George Campbell.

I have been on a number of committees with Senator Murray. I always know when I have gone far enough because Andrew just looks at me, and I know that I have said as much as I should say and it is time to let someone else have a say. I do hope that he and I leave this place as friends, because I do value very much his intellect and the contribution he has made to this place.

As for Natasha Stott Despoja, I have known Natasha for a long time, and her record speaks for itself. I wish her well. To see someone who was certainly a young warrior settle into motherhood so remarkably easily I think is fantastic, and I wish her and Ian the very best.

George Campbell is someone I will also miss. I am a little bit concerned; I find George a bit hard to understand when he gets excited, but that is going to pale into insignificance when Dougie Cameron gets here and gets overly excited. So if Doug could just slow down a bit I think we would all be very grateful. I have had the opportunity to mix socially with George outside this place and I think he, like me, is a great believer that you leave the wars in this place and that there is the opportunity for us to enjoy each other’s company outside it.

There has been something quintessentially Australian about the discussion tonight: there has been mention of ‘Kempie’ and ‘Watto’ and a whole lot of discussion that I think you probably would not see in any other parliament in the world; that is what makes ours so unique. I will start with ‘Watto’—Senator John Watson—led that delegation and Jocelyn was there, and they were marvellous delegation leaders. I think we have all been the better for their leadership and experience. John, we are going to miss you, and Jocelyn particularly deserves a big vote of thanks from everyone in this parliament.

Sandy Macdonald: if someone could explain to me what the sense is of the Sandy Macdonalds of this world not being here, then I would be grateful for their input, because I find it quite bizarre. Sandy will be missed; I would have thought he would be missed by his party. He is a warm and engaging person, and I wish him well.

Ross Lightfoot—Mr Acting Deputy President: you and I share experience, because one of my first jobs, apart from hay-carting, was working in an abattoir—

Senator Fisher—I bet you were a bone-picker.

Senator RONALDSON—Yes; I have always got a bone to pick—well done, Senator Fisher. That was many years ago. I learnt some of my earliest tricks when I worked in the abattoir. In those days, of course, it was heavily unionised, and I remember that we used to knock off very early because someone would walk along with a Bic lighter and put it under the thermometer; once it got over 98.5, I think, we would knock off—is that right, Mr Acting Deputy President?

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Lightfoot)—That is quite correct.

Senator RONALDSON—Sometimes we would leave at about nine o’clock in the morning, having started at seven; it was nowhere near a hundred degrees at that stage, but I would dutifully walk off the job with my comrades in the abattoir and have the rest of the day off.
Mr Acting Deputy President Lightfoot, you hold yourself as someone who exhibits a strong sense of self-confidence, and that is understated, but the way you hold yourself, sir, I think is a great example to all of us.

Senator Chapman—‘Chappie’—has had a very substantial input into this place. I think that Chappie’s is one of those records that deserves to be read and reread, because he has made a substantial contribution. I think it is fair to say that Chappie has probably had better 12 months than the 12 months he has had, but he has done so with great dignity and he has not stopped smiling, and we will miss him very, very much.

I want to finish by talking on my two close friends: ‘Patto’—or Kay, or ‘Kaysie’, as I also know her—and Rod Kemp. I will start with Kay. Kay Patterson is one of those people who is a giver, in the classic sense of the word; Kay Patterson is a giver, not a taker, and she has always been so. I vividly remember, back in 1996, the day after Prime Minister Keating announced the 1996 election; it was the day that I actually went into hospital for surgery for cancer. It was a dramatic way to avoid the election campaign—I admit that. But I was there, and the first person in that office at nine o’clock in the morning was Kay Patterson, and that is where Kay Patterson stayed for the duration of the campaign. It was the mark of the woman that she was there; she was there early, and with no fuss—she just got on with it. I think it is a matter of great sadness that Eric is not here to join with Kay in her retirement. They deserved that retirement together, and I think that is a matter, as I say, of enormous sadness. But Kay Patterson is a warm, dedicated person, and I personally will miss her greatly.

Finally, I turn to my friend Rod Kemp—‘Kempie’. Quite frankly, I do not know what all the fuss is about! I have heard a lot of stuff said tonight, and I do not know whether I believe all of it! In fact, I believe it all—plus a little bit more. Rod and I first entered this place in 1990. I think it is generally acknowledged, looking at us, that he has suffered worse for the experience than I have! But, putting that to one side: we did come here in 1990 together and we do share a lot of things. We became members of the executive on 14 October 1996. I had a look at that photo the other day, Kempie, and you and I have not aged gracefully, I regret to say.

Rod Kemp is a funny, articulate, quick-witted man, whose contribution to the Liberal Party, to its Victorian division and to the Senate stands on its own. There was some fleeting commentary made about it tonight, and I, for the life of me, will never understand why Rod Kemp did not serve in the Howard government cabinet. That is something that I will never, ever understand, and there is only one person who knows the reason for that—and it is certainly not me, and I suspect it is not Senator Kemp!

Senator Faulkner—Well, let’s ask him.

Senator RONALDSON—I haven’t got his phone number.

Senator Faulkner—You’re more likely to have it than me.

Senator RONALDSON—I suspect that is probably right. Rod’s contribution has certainly been extraordinary. I want to pay tribute to Daniele—or ‘Danni’. Here I look at someone who is a political wife, and I see that Danni is as amusing, committed and passionate—

Senator Kemp—Quite rightly.

Senator RONALDSON—as Rod is. Danni has made an enormous contribution, and I think she has enabled Rod to do the job he has done, particularly in the arts community. I never cease to be amazed by the response of people from the arts and sports
communities when the name Rod Kemp is mentioned. To get into areas with the sports and arts communities where we have had some historical differences and to come out the other end with both of them being so supportive of the minister and the coalition is a great tribute to you, Rod. You were able to do it because you engaged with them. You were prepared to sit down and spend the time with those people and engage with and respond to them. There was no more powerful advocate in the last two decades for either the arts community or the sports community than Senator Rod Kemp. Rod, I thank you most sincerely for that.

I am often summoned by Senator Kemp for coffee or breakfast at a restaurant called The Commune, which is just around the corner from a couple of comrades—it is just around the corner from Treasury Place. The rules are that, when Rod says to you ‘What’s new?’ you are meant to provide him with every bit of political gossip you have. At the end of the meeting, he walks away fully briefed and, if you are lucky, he will have thrown you a bit of a bone of information to go away with. I have enjoyed those meetings, Rod. I know we will continue to have them. You and Kay have been incredible contributors for the Victorian division of the Liberal Party. And I know that you share my great joy at the imminent arrival of senators-elect Helen Kroger and Scott Ryan. I am sure they are going to make a fantastic contribution as well. On behalf of the Victorian division, I thank you and Kay most sincerely for your remarkable contributions.

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania) (9.17 pm)—I rise tonight to pay tribute primarily to my Tasmanian Senate colleague Senator John Watson but also to my other coalition Senate colleagues who will be leaving us in a few days. I first recall hearing of Senator Watson when he was elected as the third Liberal on the ticket at the 1977 election. Although at the time I was only a young 12-year-old, I did have a passing interest in politics, as my father had at that time been a Liberal member of state parliament for some 17 years. Despite this, my focus on the Senate at that time was fairly thin. But when my father became outwardly excited at the election of John Watson to the Senate, I took a greater interest in the matter.

I recall quite clearly the delight in Tasmanian Liberal circles at his election. The Liberals winning the third seat was not expected. John Watson was not supposed to win this seat. It is important to remember that, as at the 1977 half-Senate election, there were only 10 senators elected from each state, and the Liberals ended up winning three out of five of those seats in Tasmania. That certainly had not been expected. My father told me how deserving of a win this ‘John Watson’ was—how he had done so much to help workers at Kelsall and Kemp, a local textile mill, how he was a fine Christian and how he would prove to be a fine representative for Tasmanians in Canberra. From the day he took up his seat on 1 July 1978, he proved my father right.

In preparation for tonight, I took the liberty of reading Senator Watson’s first speech given to this chamber, in the old building, in November 1978. Interestingly, Senator Watson spoke of the economic difficulties facing Australia at the time, the challenges facing Australian manufacturing and the impacts of record high petrol prices and rising unemployment. Thirty years later it all sounds very familiar. I also noted the names of the people that Senator Watson thanked in his first speech—Kevin Newman, Peter Rae and the recently retired President of the Tasmanian upper house, Don Wing. All of these people played significant roles in Tasmanian and Australian politics. All of these people featured prominently in Tasmanian politics, as I watched and learned in my formative
On 30 June 2008, when Senator Watson’s final term comes to an end, he will have been a senator for exactly 30 years. He will retire as the father of the Senate, being Australia’s longest serving current senator. For this chartered accountant turned businessman turned politician, Senator Watson’s longevity in the Senate has had nothing to do with chance. It is apparent to all who have observed him that the vigour with which he has engaged his constituents and fought for their causes has kept him in Canberra.

Senator Watson will long be remembered for his significant contribution to shaping the prudential regulation of superannuation in Australia. An unrivalled detailed knowledge of the investment and accounting sectors has allowed Senator Watson to provide a guiding hand in the development of the superannuation industry over the last 30 years—a period in which a small and relatively unregulated industry has grown massively and become subject to significant government legislation and regulation. Senator Watson’s role over that period is unrivalled, and he has earned the highest respect from all involved in the industry for his depth of knowledge and expertise in this area.

Senator Watson also made a strong impact on Australia’s public accounts as Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit for many years. He believes that accountants make a crucial contribution in ensuring adequate scrutiny of bills. He has always strongly advocated for professional diversity in parliament to overcome what he has called the gross under-representation of the professions in government. To quote Investment and Financial Services Chief Executive Richard Gilbert:

He really cares about investors and his contributions to the tax world have been unparalleled.

In mid-2007 Senator Watson received the highest honour the CPA could bestow on him—the meritorious service award.

Also during his career, Senator Watson has served loyally as a shadow parliamentary secretary to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I would like to recognise the dignity and integrity that Senator Watson has always delivered to his role as a senator for Tasmania. Indeed, he has always emphasised that he is primarily a senator for Tasmania and that he has been proud of his independence and determination to represent his state.

To John and his wife, Jocelyn: I would like to wish you a long and healthy retirement from politics—although, knowing John, I am sure he will keep actively working on his farm and within the community. John, thank you for all you have done for Tasmania and the country in this place.

To the other retiring coalition senators, Senators Kemp—and I must say that I have enjoyed your sense of humour and I will miss that aspect of being in this place—Patterson, Chapman, Lightfoot and Sandy Macdonald, I would also like to pass on my best wishes and regards. I have only had the pleasure of working with them for a short period of time, although I had met most prior to joining this place. Of course, as Senator Patterson’s immediate neighbour both in this place and in terms of offices, I have been lucky to receive many pearls of wisdom and advice from Senator Patterson, all of which have been greatly appreciated. To each of the six retiring coalition senators: thank you for your contribution to the nation and best wishes for a long and fruitful retirement. I would also like to pass on my best wishes to all other retiring senators.

Senator JOYCE (Queensland) (9.22 pm)—I would like to briefly touch on a few senators. I will not touch on all of them—I know that they will be looked after well and
truly through other valedictory speeches. First and foremost, I would like to pass on my congratulations for his service to Senator Watson. As another fellow of the CPAs: to see another accountant leave this chamber certainly narrows our numbers down quite considerably. I have always admired Senator Watson. He is someone who gives the continuity of history to this chamber. He is someone who can take the experience from the past to where we are at the moment, and the work he did in superannuation is certainly to be admired. His diligence in an accountant’s way, his dry diligence to the cause and his ability to get under the facts, to dig round and to make sure that we have a Senate that does what it is supposed to do—review and amend legislation and represent the rights of the states—and to be discerning and forensic in legislation are things that I feel Senator Watson has been quite an able advocate for. He has also been a very able advocate for his state, Tasmania. It is a shame to see him go.

I would also like to talk briefly about the Acting Deputy President, Senator Lightfoot. Senator Lightfoot has been an absolute pleasure to work with in my work with the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories. When you meet him, you can see the human side of him. He has a very dapper exterior; there is no doubt about that. Sometimes you take that the wrong way and when you meet such a person you think, ‘This is a foil to protect the proper person,’ but what I like about Senator Lightfoot is that the proper person is ready and waiting to meet you. He is a very colourful and encouraging character who is able to engage with people. Another character that adds to the colour of this place will be lost when Senator Lightfoot walks out the door. I thank him for the work he did, especially in the national capital and external territories committee.

I too went to Antarctica, and I noted that some people on the ship still remembered their experiences with Senator Lightfoot. The way they expressed it to me was, ‘If all that Senator Lightfoot tells us is true, we presume that he must be about 143.’ He certainly left his impression on the good ship Aurora Australis.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Lightfoot)—I’ve crammed a bit into my life.

Senator JOYCE—I also know the sentiments that he still holds dear, which have carried him through this place, on the ownership of Australian assets by Australians predominantly—that the resources of this nation should be the benefaction of the wealth of the Australian people. That, I think, is a sentiment that is still widely held and will continue to be widely held, because we must look after our own number first.

To be honest, at times Senator Sandy Macdonald and I have had our differences on a range of issues, but I still respect the fact that Senator Sandy Macdonald is truly a person, like me, from New England. Being people from New England, we really do feel that we are from New England first and other places after that. There is a confusion in New England in that everybody believes that what they do should be right and proper; it is just that everybody has different ideas as to exactly what that is. It breeds a certain affection towards a conservative way of life, a view of the protocols and structure of society being in a balanced form. Senator Sandy Macdonald is certainly a great exemplar of that. He is a true reflection of a true section of the Australian community. I also admire his patriotism in his connection to our defence forces and the work he has done there. For our differences, I would never, at a blush, ever consider that he has done anything else but try to represent our nation in
the best possible form so that our nation remains a sovereign and protected place. His engagement with and his love for the defence forces is something to be admired.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the person who has just walked into the chamber and sat down beside me, Senator Murray. In this place Senator Murray goes down as someone who across political party lines is acknowledged as one of the best senators whose shadow has been cast in this chamber, because he holds the chamber in the true respect with which it was formed. At times when for me the pressure might have been on, I could rely on Senator Murray to be a non-partisan, non-parochial but honest arbiter of a view. If you wanted to speak to someone who was not going to spin you the line but would try and tell you the truth, try and be honest in their appraisal of a situation and try to see it through your eyes rather than their own, then Senator Murray was the person to speak to. I think he will be a great loss.

All of us here have seen the amount of work that Senator Murray does when he walks into this chamber. He actually does do the briefs. He actually does write the speeches. He does do the research. He is forensically and clinically incisive in the way that legislation is put forward in this place. He is a great example, I hope, to other senators who come into this chamber, to see what you can do and how you can attain a respect across political lines if you dedicate yourself to the job.

Senator Murray has done that, and it will be a great loss to this place when he walks out the door. I hope that other people acknowledge that, when you come here, you come here not for your own personal designs, not for the possibilities of laurels that may be delivered to you at a later stage in your life or a later stage in your political career; you come here, first and foremost, as a servant to your nation and as a servant to your state to make sure that you deliver the best outcome for them. That is the sort of example that Senator Murray has delivered to us, and it is peculiar in the extreme, but wonderful, that he came from another nation to do that for our nation.

**Senator FIFIELD (Victoria) (9.30 pm)**—I rise to pay tribute to my coalition Senate colleagues who, Cinderella-like, will be transformed at the stroke of midnight on 30 June. I begin by acknowledging the service of Senator Sandy Macdonald, Senator Grant Chapman, Senator Ross Lightfoot and Senator John Watson. Between them, they have given an extraordinary 81 years of parliamentary service to the people of Australia. But I must single out Senator Watson, who holds the honour of being the father of the Senate, with his 30 years of dedicated service. He has been the very model of a legislator. I think in Senator Watson’s chest beats the heart of a United States senator, such is his commitment to hold governments to account—not least his own. Senator Watson is a grand and wise senator.

But I particularly want to pay tribute this evening to my close colleagues and friends, fellow Victorians, Senator Kemp and Senator Patterson. Senator Kemp comes from a great political family, a civic minded family—not a dynasty, but a family with a deep commitment to ideas and to public service. Rod has served the community in this place and outside in the same dedicated manner as his brother and father. The Australian of 27 March 1990 heralded the arrival of Rod Kemp and his brother David in Canberra as ‘what many people consider a new force in Australian politics’. The article went on to describe Rod, David and others, such as Peter Costello, as:

... the intellectually able, articulate, committed candidates the Liberals need in Canberra to win
government ... they would blow into the national capital as a crackling dry wind of new rationale.

Rod came to the Senate after seven years at the Institute of Public Affairs, where his commitment to ideas was very much on display.

Rod, as he is known, also served as both a senior frontbencher in opposition and as an opposition staffer to former Senator Dame Margaret Guilfoyle and to the Hon. Andrew Sharp Peacock. Senator Kemp can list numerous achievements over his parliamentary and ministerial career, but I think he will be remembered best for two of his more prominent roles: firstly, as Assistant Treasurer and the part that he played in shepherding the GST through the Senate. I was working for a former treasurer at the time and took a very close interest in the work of Senator Kemp. Senator Kemp fronted up to question time each day and fielded a regular barrage of probes on the intricacies and obscurities of the new tax system. He acquitted himself magnificently. Indeed, he answered some 379 questions without notice on the GST and the new tax system. This amounted to a little under half of the 808 answers he gave to the Senate as Assistant Treasurer.

As a staffer I also used to delight in watching Rod answer questions—or not, as the case may be—from Senator Sherry in the context of the now defunct super surcharge. Time and again Senator Sherry would ask Rod what the difference was between a tax and a surcharge. Senator Kemp took great pleasure in assisting Senator Sherry understand the difference, going to great lengths. I think the answer which typifies Rod’s service as a minister and service to advancing the cause of providing answers to opposition senators was:

Senator Sherry, a tax is a tax; a surcharge is a surcharge.

You could not be clearer than that.

Senator Faulkner— Couldn’t get that through to Senator Short, though.

Senator FIFIELD— Touche! But Senator Kemp did play favourites in this chamber. He could, I think it is fair to say, have been more helpful to Senator Sherry and, for that matter, he could have been more helpful to the late Peter Cook when answering questions. Senator Kemp did have his favourites on the other side—and Senator Lundy comes to mind. At times it seemed like there was a non-aggression pact between Senator Lundy and Senator Kemp. There was a certain ardour that was evident. It was in his role as Minister for the Arts and Sport for six years that Senator Kemp and Senator Lundy came to know each other better. Rod’s appointment to that role after the 2001 election was met with some initial scepticism by the arts community, fearing that the Carlton fanatic would be more focused on sport than the arts. But they did not have anything to worry about, because Senator Kemp’s passion for the arts was life long. That commitment translated into incredible support for the arts in Australia.

Upon the announcement of Rod’s retirement from the ministry, Australia Council chairman James Strong spoke glowingly to the Age of how the arts had fared under Rod’s stewardship. James Strong said:

It has been a very constructive period of consolidation and stability. Many people take it for granted and don’t appreciate how successful Senator Kemp has been in getting the money delivered after it had been recommended.

Well done, Senator Kemp. Just prior to Rod’s retirement from the ministry, he would have been very proud of the record funding announcement for the Australia Council of $418 million over three years.

We are indeed fast approaching a watershed moment in Victorian and Australian politics. For the first time since March 1990
there will be no Kemp in the federal parliament. It is much like when the last of the Daniher brothers left Essendon in 1997.

But there is an extremely odd thing about Rod’s career, and that is that, not only in this place but also in the Liberal Party organisation, Senator Kemp seems to be largely bereft of enemies—and I think I found the reason why that is the case. In Rod’s maiden speech, he noted of Dame Margaret Guilfoyle that she:

... showed that politics can be conducted with dignity and decency. She showed that a successful political career could be built without vicious personal denigration of opponents; that politics in sensitive portfolios could be conducted successfully without sordid deals with vested interests.

And, 18 years later, we can judge that Rod Kemp has been faithful to this standard that he was no doubt setting for himself.

I would now like to turn to my other valued colleague, Senator the Hon. Dr Kay Christine Lesley Patterson, who is one of only four serving senators, I believe, to have served in this chamber for more than two decades. One thing that each and every one of us knows about Kay is that she has always adopted a pastoral approach to her constituents, to her staff and to her colleagues. There would be very few in this chamber who have not had the experience of sitting next to Kay during the course of a division and receiving a free and often unsolicited diagnosis followed by a referral. Kay would also very freely dispense parenting advice, personal advice, and she would also offer perspectives on the psychological state of colleagues in both houses. Kay also has an incredible ability and encyclopaedic medical knowledge, and, at the drop of a hat and without invitation, Kay will talk to you endlessly about issues ranging from hermaphrodites to foetal alcohol syndrome. Such is the experience of sitting next to Kay during a division.

Too often and unfairly, some in other parties—not to mention any by name—give the impression that they believe that their party possesses a monopoly on compassion and concern for those facing additional challenges in life. Kay’s career and public life puts the lie to that. Kay has always championed issues for those with disabilities and she flagged the intergenerational challenges of an ageing population and the contribution and challenges facing carers long before they were in policy vogue. Kay’s policy interests were not those that were sexy or ones that a careerist would have chosen. But Kay did reach high office, becoming just the eighth female cabinet minister since Federation and one of only 14 women to have served in the federal cabinet. Kay’s ministerial achievements are many, but I will single out just one that she was particularly passionate about, which was the idea that she pushed for many years, allowing the families of people with severe disabilities to establish private trusts to provide for their care, which could be established without affecting entitlements to benefits. Kay championed it without much support and was instrumental in putting together a $200 million package to give effect to it.

I think Kay’s finest moment as a parliamentarian came after her retirement from the ministry, through her sponsoring the Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction and the Regulation of Human Embryo Research Amendment Bill 2006. Although I voted on the other side of the chamber to Kay on this issue, I acknowledged at the time that bringing the bill forward was a demonstration of Kay’s compassion and commitment to the health of Australians. In presenting the bill to the parliament, Kay was discharging her responsibilities as a legislator and was giving the parliament the opportunity to decide on the recommendations of the Lockhart review, as was the intention, I believe, of the review
provisions of the 2002 act. Kay has always been a parliamentarian first. At a recent dinner in Melbourne, organised by the Victorian Liberal Women’s Council to celebrate Kay’s public life, there were 400 people from around Australia representing all aspects of Kay’s life. What struck me most was that pretty much all of us in political life lose friends along the way, but Kay has not only kept her pre-political friends but added to them through public life.

Both Rod and Kay will certainly be remembered in their postpolitical lives as substantial figures in the history of the Australian Senate. They can be very pleased with their successors in this place, Scott Ryan and Helen Kroger, both of whom have very large shoes to fill. When Rod and Kay first entered parliament they no doubt wondered, like all of us do, what their careers would hold for them. But I think, Rod and Kay, as you leave this place, you can do so in the full knowledge that you have done yourselves, your families, your party and your country immensely proud. We are grateful to have served with you. Your presence here has meant that this parliament, the state and, indeed, Australia are much better places. You are leaving us, but we know that we will see Rod and Dannii an awful lot in the future. We know that we will see Kay Patterson a lot in the future as well. Your commitment to public debate and to the Liberal Party will continue. You will certainly both be missed.

Mr Acting Deputy President, I seek leave to incorporate some further remarks on vale-dictories by Senator Fisher.

Leave granted.

Senator FISHER (South Australia) (9.42 pm)—The incorporated speech read as follows—

To my colleague, Senator John Watson. Thank you for your calming influence in the Coalition’s contribution to the work of the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee. Your intellectual diligence and regard for policy over politics has given us balance which will be missed.

Senator MURRAY (Western Australia) (9.43 pm)—I was not on the speakers list because I had another engagement, but I am able to come down now to make a five-minute set of remarks. I thank my Liberal colleagues for giving me the opportunity. I briefly want to note the passing—in the Senate sense, not an eternal sense—of the Liberal and National senators who are leaving this place. In particular I want to address remarks to two sets of people: those who I have not dealt with much and those who I have dealt with much. In the category of those I have not dealt with much, I want to remark upon Senators Lightfoot, Sandy Macdonald and Patterson, who have not covered my portfolio areas or my committees that much. With respect to Senator Lightfoot, I sometimes think that when you are going to make remarks about people, as in funerals or valedictories or anything else, a simple sentence or two helps just to give a picture of the impression they have given you over a long period, and I have known Senator Lightfoot for a long period. So this is the impression that Senator Lightfoot leaves me with: a man who was a gentleman, who was good company and who was provocative in his views but kindly in his dealings, and I am glad to have known him.

Senator Sandy Macdonald has always been a warm, friendly and thoughtful human being, a genuine soul, and I am glad to have known him. Senator Patterson is a warm, caring and compassionate person, a principled and very decent person, somebody whom you would describe as eccentric and amusing, and I am glad to have known her. Of the three, the one I have dealt with quite extensively as a senator is Senator Kemp: funny, provocative, self-deprecating, a man
who is difficult to know but is strong, determined and very consistent in his beliefs but always with the equanimity which it is useful to bring into this chamber. I am glad to have known him. Senator Watson: a great loss, I think, to the Liberal Party; an independent thinker, a lateral thinker—which is unusual in an accountant—a surprisingly cunning politician; a man who has generated a great deal of respect amongst serious people in the bureaucracy in the tax and finance world; a person who will be missed at the Senate policy end much more than probably he and many others realise. I am glad to have known him.

Last of all, Senator Chapman: probably not respected enough in his own home state. He is a thorough and diligent man. He carried out his work as Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services with great ability, and I think the influence and the effects of that committee’s findings under his tutorship will be felt in corporate law for many a year. He is a reserved man but I think he is a much better senator than I have seen him described in his home media. I hope he gets some of the credit he deserves.

To all of you: I wish you well in your retirement. I have enjoyed knowing you.

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (9.48 pm)—I must say that I think these valedictory nights in the Senate are among the most memorable that we have in the Senate, as we hear colleagues reflect upon their careers and hear other colleagues relate their experiences of the individuals who are leaving. I think it is one of those times when we are reminded of the great diversity of backgrounds and life experiences of our fellow senators, and it is also one of those nights when there is a great sense of collegiality in the Senate. We all belong to this institution and we share our experiences of it.

I would like to make a few remarks about some of my departing colleagues—beginning, as several other senators have, with Senator the Hon. Rod Kemp. I have sat next to Rod Kemp for 12 years in the Liberal Party party room, and I can personally attest to his capacity for quick and amusing comments about individuals and events and to his very strong commitment to the principles that we in the Liberal Party believe in. He is one of the most committed Liberals I have ever met in my life, and he certainly enjoys the combat that the parliamentary process offers in terms of putting forward his views and couching them in terms of Liberal Party principles. It has been said that Rod very much enjoyed the challenge of winning points in the chamber and in Senate estimates. In the chamber, the most memorable exchanges he had in the time I have been here were with the late Senator Peter Cook. Rod delighted in reminding him of what he described as Senator Cook’s most memorable statement, which was that the Labor Party was a high-taxing party. Rod continually put this before Senator Cook, and Senator Cook would, of course, always rise to the bait and a little bit of an exchange would occur.

The other situation where Rod enjoyed combat was in estimates, particularly with Senator Lundy. It was always somewhat amusing, from my point of view as the chair of the estimates committee concerned, to see them rise to the challenge and score points off each other. But underlying it all, they had a common interest in sport and I think that they achieved some policy objectives through that common interest. After his period as Assistant Treasurer, Rod did become the Minister for the Arts and Sport, and I think he is especially remembered for his contribution in the arts area for the support he gave the Australian film industry in the form of the package of measures contained
in the 2006 budget. This is something of which I think he is justifiably proud, because that was a package which gave very significant support to the Australian film industry.

Another important area of interest to Rod was Indigenous art. While minister he proposed that the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts set up an inquiry into the Indigenous art industry. As things transpired, as that inquiry progressed he himself became a member of the committee and helped drive the committee’s inquiry into Indigenous art. He was also very helpful in drafting the recommendations of the committee, some of which were quite strong recommendations on funding for Indigenous art centres and for the ACCC to be involved in the policing of fraud in Indigenous art.

Rod, over the years you have been here you have made a very strong contribution to the affairs of the Senate. I must say that in the years before I became a senator I noticed you in question time and thought that you were somebody who was quite clearly a very effective member of the Senate and somebody who certainly articulated the Liberal Party policy and cause very well. It is said that Daniele, your wife, is your most important asset. I endorse that view. I must say that you deserve to be congratulated for choosing such a lovely lady to marry during the time that you were in Paris. I wish you both well in your retirement.

Secondly, I would like to speak about Kay Patterson. Everybody has remarked upon the fact that Kay has often set out to help people. When I first came to the Senate, she sat in front of me. I learned that she had been the Commissioner of Girl Guides in Victoria before she came to the Senate. I did not have any trouble believing that because before question time she would straighten my tie and rub down my lapels and make sure all my colleagues were similarly suitably in order for their appearance on television during question time.

Kay, in the early years that I was here, had a great interest in aged care. I believe that in fact she went to the United Nations in 1997 as an adviser on the International Year of Older Persons. Another great delight to me in relation to Kay was that in my early years here her great friend Eric Glasgow used to come with her to the formal dinner which the coalition senators hold in August every year. Eric Glasgow was an anatomist. At that stage he held a joint professorship, I believe, between the University of Hong Kong and Stanford University in California. When I was a medical student, he used to be a senior lecturer in anatomy at the University of Western Australia. He was a tutor in the university college in which I lived, and he was also a tutor to Mal Washer. Eric Glasgow was a very delightful Irishman and a man I greatly respected. It was very nice to find him here as a great friend of Kay’s.

Kay went on to become Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Foreign Affairs and served as the Minister for Health and Ageing. I have always thought she was a very genuine person with a very active and curious mind. I am sure that she will find much to do in her retirement and I wish her well in that period.

I have always had a friendly relationship with Sandy Macdonald since I came to the Senate. I think he and Ron Boswell thought that because I grew up in the country and came from the country I could be talked into joining the National Party so that the National Party would yet again have a senator from Western Australia.

Senator Patterson—Misguided as they were.

Senator EGGLESTON—But they were, as Kay Patterson has just interjected, quite
misguided. I was quite happy to be friends with them, but I have always been very strongly committed to the principles of the Liberal Party rather than to those of the National Party. But I must say that I have always regarded Sandy Macdonald as a kindred spirit and seen him as a man of principle in politics. He is somebody who I think has made a great contribution to the Senate during the time that he has been here. I wish him well also in his retirement.

Senator John Watson, from Tasmania, has had 30 years in the Senate. You have been here for an unbelievably long period of time, Watto. You have made a great contribution. I have always enjoyed your company, discussing issues with you, and your wise counsel on a wide variety of not only financial matters but also other issues that we have been confronted with during the time that I have been in the Senate. I think perhaps you are one of those people who should have been a minister. I think it is a matter of some regret that you were not, considering your great knowledge of finance and clear understanding of issues relating to Treasury matters.

Senator Ross Lightfoot, my colleague from Western Australia, as has been remarked, has the unique distinction of having served in three houses of parliament. He was the member for Murchison-Eyre in the lower house in Western Australia; the member for the North Metropolitan Region, in the northern suburbs of Perth, in the Legislative Council; and later a senator. It is a unique achievement, Ross. Ross is one of the three senators in the parliament who have a base in the federal electorate of Kalgoorlie. The three of us are here tonight. Ross Lightfoot represented the central part of the Kalgoorlie electorate, the Murchison and Gascoyne region. Senator Johnston is also from Kalgoorlie, and I came out of the north-west.

Ross was a pastoralist in the Gascoyne and a prospector. I think he is very much a man of the old school, as he revealed in his speech tonight, with his great respect for the concept of the monarchy and royalty. I have always found him to be well read and a man with thought-provoking opinions. I think, Ross, you will be long remembered as a very special person in this chamber, just as you were in the Western Australian state parliament. I wish you well in your retirement as well.

Grant Chapman is another very long-term MP, who served both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. He is somebody I have always respected and enjoyed the company of. He is a man with a great knowledge of financial matters, as is John Watson. Again, I think he is somebody who could well have been a minister. Perhaps it is a matter of some regret that he was not made a minister during the period that he has been in the parliament.

I am not sure whether his suggestion tonight of aptitude and psychological tests for members of parliament would really work. I think we are all rather unique characters, and I am not sure that there would be a suitable test which would identify the kinds of unique abilities and characteristics that a person who wants to get into politics and be a senator needs. I think it is far better just to have people decide for themselves that they would like to be a senator and serve the people of their state in Australia in this house.

The end of this Senate term will probably see the end of the Democrats as members of the Senate. Three of them, Senators Lyn Allison, Andrew Murray and Natasha Stott Despoja, came into the Senate about the same time as I did. All of them have made marks in different ways in the period that they have been here. My Western Australian colleague Andrew Murray has become a widely re-
spected voice in the world of business and finance—particularly in terms of calling for ethical standards of conduct in business affairs. Natasha Stott Despoja and Lyn Allison have both become important voices in our community, taking up issues of importance to them. For Natasha Stott Despoja these have been education, youth and various causes, which she has taken up with great enthusiasm. Senator Lyn Allison, of course, has taken up environmental and health issues.

With the closure of the era of the Democrats in the Senate, I think an important chapter of Australian political history has been brought to a close. I think they played a responsible role, by and large, in holding the balance of power in the Senate, and I only hope that any other parties which hold that balance of power will act with responsibility equal to that of the Democrats during the time that they held it.

The end of this Senate term also sees the departure of several ALP senators, and I would like to mention two of them. I have always felt Linda Kirk was a person of great ability, and—no doubt—a victim of the vagaries of politics in losing her preselection. I think the ALP is the loser for Linda Kirk’s not being re-endorsed, because I think in the long term she would have made a great contribution to the Senate. Senator George Campbell is also retiring. I dealt with George while he was the ALP whip and I was the acting government whip a couple of years ago. I must say I always found George to be a pretty tough character—there were no shades of grey, you knew exactly where George stood. He either said yes or no when you approached him with an idea seeking some sort of accommodation from the opposition. Obviously, he was a great son of the union movement, and I wish him in particular all the best in his retirement.

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (10.03 pm)—Six people on our side of politics have given their valedictory speeches tonight—they have 114 years of Senate experience between them, which is quite significant. There is an enormous blend of personalities and interests and, in my two years here, I consider myself very fortunate to have interacted with all of them in different ways and I have relied on their advice and guidance. One thing that strikes me in saying these words tonight is that all of them—my colleagues—have given an enormous commitment and very distinguished service not just to their political party and not just to this chamber but to their colleagues, to their party, to their states and their country. Our democracy is much richer for having had their contribution, and I know that many of them are going to go on and contribute a great deal more in their post-Senate lives.

Briefly, I would like to touch upon my interaction with each of them tonight, and I would start with my South Australian colleague Grant Chapman. I start with Grant because I have known Grant longer than any of the other senators. Grant is somewhat of a legend in South Australian politics. His notoriety spans all kinds of fields. Some of it, though, is widely unknown to the broader public—that is, Grant’s contribution to organisations well outside of the public field. Grant and I have the privilege of being former students of Prince Alfred College.

Senator Chapman—The best school in Australia.

Senator BERNARDI—As Senator Chapman just reminded me, it is the best school in Australia—he is always an advocate. Upon my appointment to the Senate, Grant rang me up and suggested I come to a quiet lunch at Prince Alfred College, which I was happy to do, thinking it was lovely to go back there—not knowing the price tag that
was attached. Grant had quietly been raising funds and signing people up to the Prince Alfred Foundation at the princely sum of $1,000 a year. It was a very expensive lunch, Grant, but I feel not only is the college richer for inviting me—

Senator Patterson—that should be on your register of interests.

Senator Bernardi—Yes, indeed, it is on my register of interests. That is an example of the kind of work that Grant has been doing not only for school organisations, and a fine school like Prince’s, but for any number of sporting and charitable organisations. It is something that Grant has never sought publicity or acclaim for, but it is something that I would like to recognise tonight.

The first time I met Senator Chapman I was a new member of the Liberal Party—it would have been some 22 years ago. Certainly Senator Chapman would not recall it. I had joined a branch of my own volition—the Burnside branch of the Liberal Party, if I recall correctly—and I found myself in the midst of a heated debate about who should be the chairman of that branch. Not knowing too much about politics, I was a true believer, and I remain so today. I looked around the room and I saw who the advocates were on either side of each of the campaigns. I saw Grant and Sally Chapman walk in and I turned to the person I was with and said, ‘I think this fellas selling something.’ I did not know who he was, but he looked very dapper, young and quite dashing. Someone said, ‘That’s Senator Chapman,’ and I said, ‘Well, whatever he’s selling, I’ll buy it.’ So whenever Grant put his hand up I put my hand up too. Whilst we do not have factions in the Liberal Party, I am delighted that that was the choice that I made, because I have stuck with it ever since. I am only hoping that Grant has stuck with me when I have put my hand up as well. That was my first occasion at the Burnside branch meeting of the Liberal Party. It was an exciting time; it was something that certainly piqued my interest in politics. Grant has been there all along the way to offer advice and suggestions.

Grant mentioned in his speech—and it has been mentioned, obviously, on numerous occasions in this chamber—that he is much travelled. I am one of those people who believe it is important for all people to travel as widely as they can. I also believe it is particularly important for politicians to expose themselves to political parties in other countries, to understand exactly how the systems operate overseas. I think our parliament is much richer for those sorts of events having taken place. Senator Chapman stood up here earlier today and mentioned his involvement in the free trade agreement and his recognition by the government of Chile with an award. Amongst many of the efforts he has made on behalf of the Australian parliament and his colleagues, I think these have been real blessings to this place, and I hope that, simply because politicians travel to benefit this parliament and our communities, they are not continually exposed to negative press at the whim of journalists or others.

Grant, you have been a great soldier for the Liberal Party. You have made an enormous contribution, I believe—in my short time I have seen it—to the corporations and financial law. I was just saying to Senator Chapman before that very few people in this country have his knowledge of the corporations and financial services law. Grant, I am sure whatever career you pursue after your time in this place you will continue to serve the Australian public. I know you have a great deal to offer. You are a young man, you have been a fantastic friend, you have been a very good servant of the Australian people and I wish you well in everything that you do.
I have been very fortunate to have received the advice of Senator Watson on a number of occasions.

Senator Patterson—Super advice.

Senator BERNARDI—Super advice, amongst many types of advice, but most recently it was to ensure that I enunciated a bit more and spoke a little bit slower for broadcast days. That is the sort of wisdom that we young fellas, or new fellas, need, and we need continual reminding about it. I say that in all seriousness, because it is important for us to know. More than that, John, you have given me specific advice about the financial industry, which is of particular interest to me. I am humbled by not only your knowledge of tax and superannuation but your continuing interest in it. It never ceased to amaze me that whenever something came up you knew exactly what it was about and you knew the history of it. This is the sort of thing that I can only aspire to in my career, however long it may be, in this place. You have set a very high benchmark; I salute you for it.

I also recognise your enormous contribution to Tasmanian politics. One of the things that I admire about the Tasmanian senators is that they regularly get together and discuss what is of great importance to Tasmanians. They caucus and they represent the interests of Tasmanians very effectively. They have obviously been doing it for a long time; it obviously started somewhere and you have obviously been a very big part of that. It is a lasting legacy that all of us representing our states in this chamber should learn from, so I congratulate you. I extended my best wishes to you and your wife when I was in Tasmania recently and I hope, whatever path you choose after 1 July, you enjoy it, because it is a very well deserved respite from a very gruelling experience in this Senate.

Sandy Macdonald—I note Sandy is not here—has always been a true gentleman, very generous with his advice and support. Whenever I had a phone call from Sandy I always knew it would be important. It would not necessarily always revolve around politics but it would be important to my family, to society or to the community. Sandy never took his eye off the ball as far as that was concerned. He was a great lobbyist and a great advocate, and continues to be, and I am sure that Sandy will enjoy his time outside of the parliament as well.

It is interesting that Senator Lightfoot has been talking about Western Australia a lot, but I understand he is basically a South Australian. Once again, the best of the west comes from South Australia! He was indeed in the Port Lincoln light horse, or grey horse, unit of the police force. Ross also has a few secrets, not too many of which I will share in this chamber. He was the chairman of the G&T committee, which is a private committee that meets occasionally. He was an able chairman, always defending Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and her heirs and successors—

Senator Patterson—Hear, hear!

Senator BERNARDI—which some of us support very strongly. I note Senator Patterson’s ‘Hear, hear!’ Ross has been a very good friend of the Liberal Party and politics in general. I say that because politics is a business in which it is very easy to become an anonymous grey suit. I think that Ross embodied the strength and courage of conviction to stand up for what he believed in and to advocate it—not always to his own best ends, I must say. None of us know what the result is going to be; the only thing we can do is come here and be true to ourselves and advocate for what we feel strongly about. Ross has never shirked that—he has never shied away from that. I recognise that, and I admire it, quite frankly. I have enjoyed every minute that I have been able to spend
with Ross. I wish you every best endeavour, Ross, for what you pursue in the future.

Senator Patterson, I am a bit disappointed after listening to Senator Eggleston’s speech because not once have I had my tie adjusted or my lapels pulled by you. But I have been on the receiving end of much advice—some solicited and some unsolicited, if I may say so. Very early on I was given a set of instructions by Kay about what every new senator should be doing if they aspired to do anything more than sit on the back bench. Everything that Kay told me has come true so far. She advised me to keep particular records and to identify the future areas that I would like to specialise in. She has encouraged me every step of the way to follow bills through the House and understand the process and the procedure. I have got a heck of a long way to go, Kay, but the journey is going to be much shorter as a result of your advice.

It is interesting that Kay and I have a particular friendship, and I will say that it is a special friendship, because we are a bit like bookends—we are opposites on any number of issues.

Senator Patterson—Only about two!

Senator BERNARDI—Only about two, but they are two quite significant ones, Kay. That is the beauty of this place. We can have a disagreement or a battle of ideas and you can advocate fiercely for what you believe in, but if we respect each other as Kay has certainly respected my position—and I hope that she would consider that I have respected hers—we can take different sides in a battle but continue to get on and advocate very fiercely together on what we agree with. I value that very highly, Kay. It is what I have always intended to do in this place. I will play it as hard as everyone else but at the end of the day we are in the business of politics and we advocate very strongly for what we believe in. You have always done that.

I remember when you were part of the group that introduced the therapeutic cloning bill, along with another one of my very good friends. I rang you up and said: ‘Please do not lobby me. I do not agree with you at all on this. I am not going to vote with you. I understand and respect your right to do this, as all of us have a right to pursue our passions in this place, but in a positive manner.’ One of the great things was that you never missed a beat. You never rang me and lobbed me. You respected my position on that.

You have always been there for me when I have wanted to have a cup of tea and to ask you about where I should be heading next. I will miss you and I will still leave those phone messages for you asking you to ring back with some advice over the course of time.

Last—actually, not last and certainly not least—I would like to speak about Senator Kemp. I met you for the very first time when I was on the board of the Australian Sports Commission. You became Minister for the Arts and Sport and what a wonderful addition you were to the sports portfolio. I noticed that Senator Eggleston spoke briefly about your contribution to the arts. May I say that I agree with Senator Eggleston in that you punched above your weight when you married Daniele. People often accuse me of the same thing so we have that in common. I have not married Daniele but I have certainly married a wonderful woman who people look at and think, ‘My goodness, there must be some redeeming quality in this man because he has married such a great lady.’ I think you are the same. So I recognise your contribution to the arts, but it is in the sports portfolio that you truly made a difference to the athletes of Australia. As a former sports person, I know how important it is.

For all the words said about how important it is to get participation, there is nothing
that will encourage sports participation in this country more than winning gold medals at Olympics and having heroes who young people can worship and idolise. That is one of your lasting legacies. You advocated very strongly for increased funding for the ultimate centre of high performance in this country, the Australian Institute of Sport. They have brand new facilities there such as an aquatics facility, sports science and medicine facilities, new residences and a whole range of things that are going to contribute to elite sport in this country for decades to come. That is the result of your advocacy, your lobbying, your interest and your commitment to that portfolio. I hope you do not underestimate it because, if we are to address juvenile diabetes and obesity in children and in the wider community, we need to produce heroes for young people so that they will become involved. You have made a great contribution to that, Rod.

You have been a great friend all the time. You have been most generous with your advice and with your support for me, not only because of our common portfolio interests but simply as a mentor. I thank you for that.

Whilst I have covered the six retiring senators, I did not say ‘last’ when I referred to Senator Kemp because one of my great friends when I came into this place is not with us tonight, and that is Senator Jeannie Ferris. Jeannie would probably not have liked to have given a valedictory speech because nothing that Jeannie did was really about herself. She was always interested in other people. In saying these few remarks about her, I remember her as a great friend, as a fierce ally and as a fierce foe on occasions too. Unlike Senator Patterson, Jeannie never stopped lobbying me about stem cells, and I sat there and took it like a good boy because I was worried about what would happen if I left. Jeannie was a great mate and it would have been wonderful to have shared this occasion with her, but she has gone; however, she is certainly not forgotten. In paying tribute to all my retiring colleagues, I would like to also recognise Senator Ferris tonight.

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia) (10.22 pm)—I commence my brief remarks tonight by conveying to all retiring senators my sincere and very best wishes for their futures. More importantly, to my coalition colleagues I want to say just a few words. Everything that could possibly have been said has been said, but I feel it necessary to say something personally.

Kay Patterson is a person of great conviction and dedication. She is a phenomenal example of what a true Liberal parliamentary woman should be: fighting all the good fights with great passion and great conviction and bringing those around her along with her. John Watson is a chartered accountant of great knowledge and has a wealth of experience. John, the thing that I learnt in my six years with you in this place is respect. I have respected you and everything you have stood for, said and done. He is someone who has seen it all, who has done a lot more than most, who has usually backed a winner and who has made the right decision at the fork in the road. You have been a great source of wisdom and experience to me. I say to Grant Chapman: you are the personification of Liberal principles. I enjoyed our time together at RIMPAC and I know that there are many happy memories that you take with you from this Senate chamber. I know that I enjoyed some small part of those with you on at least two occasions.
A very important person in my life has been Senator Ross Lightfoot. As a very young man in the middle and early eighties, I was a branch president of the party in Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. I obtained tremendous support in that role from the then member for Murchison-Eyre, Ross Lightfoot. He would travel to Kalgoorlie often from Perth or some place further away to assist me in organising branch meetings to bring party members together on a monthly basis. When I was young and foolish, I stood for the federal seat of Kalgoorlie in 1987. Ross was one of my great supporters and took me throughout the Murchison district of Western Australia, which is no small feat. Ross, I congratulate you as an observer of your fabulous career in state and federal politics. I wish you all the very best for your retirement, and I thank you for your assistance and guidance over the years.

I say to Sandy Macdonald, a person who I want to talk a little bit about in a moment: you are a very affable and charming man whose company I have enjoyed enormously in my time here. I am very sorry to see him go. Rod Kemp is a giant of a senator, if I may be so bold. Rod, wisdom is a valuable commodity that a lot of people think they have seen and want to talk about; you actually deliver it. Your experience and your genuine wit is something that means that, for me, on 1 July this place will not be the same. I must say that it will be a lesser place for your retirement. I thank you for the guidance that you have given to all of us. Your genuine wit in particular has enabled me to see how one can fight the political fights and retain the respect of one’s adversaries. I think you have shown great political poise and are an example to the likes of me.

May I say to each of my coalition colleagues: I thank you for your tremendous service to the parliament, to your states and to your party. I compliment the state divisions of the Liberal Party that have delivered such a quality group of men and women who have been very, very successful for the Liberal Party and great ambassadors of their states and of their divisions.

I say to Sandy Macdonald: there is no justice in this place. We are the privileged ones. We come with no justice and we leave with no justice. I do not understand the reason why I am making a valedictory to Sandy Macdonald. I have respected Sandy’s contribution. He was a parliamentary secretary. He was a hard worker and has made, as I said, a phenomenal contribution. I wish Sandy and Alice every good thing in life. Sandy and I have served together on HMAS _Newcastle_. We have been to the United States twice on defence matters. It has been, as Sandy would say, a great, honourable adventure. I must pause to say to Sandy: I wish you every good thing.

To all of my Liberal and National Party colleagues, I say thank you and pay my respects and my compliments to you. I pause for a moment to say that I will miss Andrew Murray. Andrew Murray is a very honourable man and I have enjoyed his company, his commentary and his political perspective. He and Pam are people who I see on a regular basis at the lounge at Perth airport and on planes. I want to say thank you to Andrew and wish him well also. Natasha Stott Despoja is another conviction politician, though one whose perspectives I am not often on all fours with. I wish her and Ian a very happy future.

To my three Labor colleagues Linda Kirk, Ruth Webber and George Campbell: I know George is going to enjoy the golf course, but, for the life of me, I cannot understand why I am making a valedictory speech about Senator Ruth Webber and Senator Linda Kirk. I have admired the amount of effort, diligence and skill that they have put into the task that
they have been given by their party. I stand here in some disbelief, totally lacking any understanding of why they have not been re-preselected. There is nothing fair about this business. I compliment them on the way that they have carried out the tasks that they have for their party. They have been hard workers and diligent members of their party. As I said, why I should be making a valedictory comment to them escapes me. I wish them both every good thing in the future.

Senator ELLISON (Western Australia) (10.29 pm)—As Manager of Opposition Business I wish to set an example and incorporate my speech, such is the fortnight we face. But before I seek leave, I say to my colleagues that we shall miss you all. We have a body of coalition senators here who have made an outstanding contribution to this country and to its parliament. For that I say thank you and we shall miss you. I seek leave to incorporate my remarks.

Leave granted.

Senator ELLISON (Western Australia) (10.30 pm)—The incorporated speech read as follows—

Mr President, in this last sitting fortnight for this Senate term, we farewell no less than 14 Senators from every party in this Chamber.

From the Coalition, we farewell the father of the Senate John Watson, Kay Patterson, Rod Kemp, Grant Chapman, Ross Lightfoot and Sandy Mac-Donald.

It is hard in the short time available to place on record the acknowledgement and personal remarks which appropriately address the combined outstanding years of service represented by this group of Senators.

John Watson, the Father of the Senate, commenced his term in 1977. Over that time, John or “Wato” as he affectionately known has made a significant contribution to the Senate Committee system, particularly in the area of Finance and Public Accounts where he served for more than twenty five years. Senator Watson chaired the Select Committee on Superannuation for a record 10 years and did much work in an area few fully understood. A fierce representative for Tasmania, Senator Watson never missed an opportunity to address the interests of his State.

Senator Patterson not only made a significant contribution as a senior Minister in the Howard Government but was also a source of wise counsel over the many years I have known her. In particular, Kay has been a house mother to us all if you like surrounded by some naughty boys. I stress they have now all left! On a more serious note, Kay always took time out for those who had more serious personal issues. Her concern and support for the late Jeannie Ferris who served as Government Whip during a long illness was such an example. Jeannie was an outstanding person who made a great contribution in the Senate. Kay had many achievements as a Minister however her work in the disabilities sector is one to which I pay special tribute. We all regret that Eric is not here to enjoy the time with Kay that will now be available to her as a result of her term expiry. My wife Caroline and I enjoyed his company immensely. We wish Kay a very happy time away from this place.

Rod Kemp was also a Minister with the Howard Government and one of a special number, namely Manager of Government Business in the Senate. Apart from his contribution as Minister to the Howard Government, the questions Rod took whilst Minister on the GST must be a Senate record. His approach for answering questions makes an illuminating study for new and aspiring Ministers. Notwithstanding the different questions, the answers all had a familiar ring in that they never changed.

Rod once told me that there were only two types of music; “country” and “western”. This no doubt stood him in good stead whilst Arts Minister although the influence of Danielle, his wife, was unquestionably positive. My wife Caroline and I wish them both well for the future and they will be missed at Lees on Wednesday night.

Grant Chapman leaves politics after an extensive career in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Indeed, Senator Chapman was first elected to the Federal Parliament in 1975 and is one of the few who have served in both Houses.
His service to Corporate Affairs and conservative politics in the Senate has been outstanding. Ross Lightfoot similarly leaves politics after a lengthy political career based not only in the Senate but in the Legislative Council of Western Australia. Ross, during his time, represented strongly those Western Australian issues which he championed. It is fair to say that Ross has brought a degree of colour and flair which has made this place all the more interesting.

Sandy MacDonald is one of those rare Senators who have left the Senate and then returned. Sandy has made a solid contribution particularly in the area of Defence. I wish Sandy and his lovely wife Alice and family all the best in some well earned time together.

To all the Coalition Senators who are leaving, I say you can all be proud of your achievements. Farewell and good luck with your new future.

Senator BARNETT (Tasmania) (10.30 pm)—I stand tonight to thank in the first instance all the Liberal senators who are retiring. I want to thank them as a whole for their contribution to the Liberal Party, to their state and to their country, this great nation of Australia. I want to wish them the very best for their future endeavours. Specifically and firstly I turn to my fellow Liberal senator from Launceston, Senator John Odin Wentworth Watson, the father of the Senate. It is 30 years this year since Senator John Watson entered the Senate in November 1977. He was the former general manager of Kelsall and Kemp in Launceston. He worked hard to get a fair deal for his fellow workers at that facility when the plant closed. Those were tough times in the mid-seventies, just after the Whitlam era.

He was successful in gaining preselection. He has seen out six elections and five prime ministers since then. It was only last Saturday that the West Tamar Branch of the Liberal Party hosted a farewell tribute to Senator John Watson. It was a great event organised by Julia Gulson, Murray Gross and their team, together with Max Burr, a former federal member initially for Wilmot and then for the Lyons electorate. Many here would remember Max Burr. It was a great night, with all Liberal senators present to pay a tribute to Senator John Watson for his service to the state, to the Liberal Party and to our nation. Of course, there have been other special farewell events from the Launceston Women’s Group of the Liberal Party, the Hobart Women’s Group of the Liberal Party and numerous other branches and indeed the Bass electorate meeting, which is the home electorate of Senator John Watson, paid a tribute to him just last week.

He has been a fighter for Tasmania over those 30 years and has made an enormous contribution which is hard to put a value on. I would not wish to do that tonight other than to say that it has been substantial in many respects. It was lovely hearing Senator Watson speak earlier tonight about his advocacy for different people who are disadvantaged in the community, for the local people, for the little people and for the small businesses. These are the people that he has been standing up for. He has been representing their concerns and their interests and advocating for these people when they have been in difficulty. As an example, he has been a great supporter of the Launceston Benevolent Society over many years, and I know Ivan Badcock came to the special tribute event last Saturday night.

Of course he has become well known in the area of superannuation and tax and was Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation for many years. I think that started on 20 June 1991 and for nigh on 10 years he served as chairman of that committee. He is renowned, not just in Tasmania, but throughout Australia and the Commonwealth, having received invitations to many parts of the world to speak on that very topic. He was a member of the shadow cabinet from 1990 to 1994 and held various parlia-
mentary secretary positions plus numerous committee positions. He has been an executive member of the Tasmanian Chamber of Manufacturers and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He is an accountant by profession, with degrees in economics and commerce. But he has also been a survivor of the political bearpit as it were. The contribution that he has made over those 30 years has been fantastic.

He is held in high regard in Tasmania. There is a very high level of respect for Senator John Watson. I want to pay a tribute tonight to Jocelyn Watson, who has been with Senator Watson from day one. She is a steadfast, true blue supporter and loves her husband and their family. It was lovely to see Jocelyn Watson in the chamber tonight with John’s family as well. I know that for Senator Watson his family come first and he will now be able to spend more time on his farm and also with his family. I pay a tribute to Senator John Watson.

I want to refer to Senator Grant Chapman, who is in the chamber tonight and who I class as a friend. He has been here since 1987 as a senator, some 21 years, and has been a member of the House of Representatives for Kingston for some eight years from 1975 to 1983. He served on numerous committees but is probably best known as Chairman of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services. He led some of the reforms under the Howard government, worked with former Treasurer Peter Costello for many years and brought in those reforms which are still there today. I want to pay a tribute to Grant and to say that he is a man of kindness. He is thoughtful and is a man of integrity. That is acknowledged and respected and I think people accept that. I thank Grant for his friendship and also for his faith and beliefs. As he indicated in his valedictory address, he was a secretary of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship for many years and has made a great contribution not just to the fellowship but to the parliament in terms of crossing the divide and supporting relationships across political boundaries. That is not easy to do but he has been an advocate in that regard and he should be thanked for it. He highlighted the important role of sport in a politician’s life and he has been a great advocate for sport. He has travelled widely and that has been well acknowledged.

Senator Kemp—I didn’t know that!

Senator BARNETT—Senator Kemp, you do know that! In fact, I note also tonight that Senator Chapman received the highest award that could ever be given in Chile to a foreigner, and I think that is a testament to the type of contribution he has made and the professionalism with which Senator Chapman has undertaken his role with the IPU and his other roles also.

I want to pay tribute to Senator Sandy Macdonald. In doing so, I acknowledge his great love and care for Alice and his family. If you know Sandy Macdonald you know that he loves his family, and that comes through. He and I have something in common in that we went to the same school. He has been a senator here since 1993, and I know that he really enjoyed those roles as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence; they were very special roles that he really appreciated. I am glad that in some respects he has achieved his dream to perform and contribute in that area. He is a true gentleman—friendly, kind and generous in every respect. Indeed, he is a very good ‘Nat’, as it were. He is great mates with Senator Ron Boswell, and I remember one time when both of them were making quips when I wore a more country-oriented sports jacket, and Bozzie said to me, ‘You can certainly join up as an honorary member
of the National Party if you wear that type of attire in the Senate. They have a good sense of humour. I note that Senator Macdonald said in his valedictory speech that being in this parliament is a challenge to health, wealth and family life; I am sure that everybody in this chamber would agree. I acknowledge his work with the country of Turkey and with the Australia-Turkey friendship group. He has been to Gallipoli, and he has certainly done a lot to forge the relationship between our two countries. I want to agree with Senator Macdonald when he says that Australia is not just a lucky country; it is a blessed country. The contributions that all the six Liberal senators have made have been outstanding.

To Senator Kay Patterson: you do have, as I think has been referred to in the valedictory speeches tonight, a pastoral approach. You provide advice, care and compassion, and you demonstrate that in different ways. You have demonstrated that with me—even today, asking about my diabetes and how I am going with my blood sugar levels and that sort of thing, and commenting if I am looking a little tired or weary. That just demonstrates that there is empathy, there is compassion and there is a heart in Senator Kay Patterson. She does that, obviously, not just for me but also for other colleagues, and that friendliness and heartfelt concern for people comes through. I must protest a little, however: at lunchtime she made it very clear to me, for the second time, that she still does not like my beard—

Senator Patterson—It’s prickly!

Senator BARNETT—and that it is a bit prickly; I did give her a little smooch before, at the end of her valedictory address, and she said she did not like my beard. She said it makes me look old, and I said, ‘Is that old and wise?’ and she said, ‘No; just old,’ so that is the type of person she is! She has been here since 1987. She has made a huge effort and a huge and substantial contribution to the affairs of our country as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, between 1998 and 2001, and, of course, as Minister for Health and Ageing and Minister for Family and Community Services between 2001 and 2006—huge portfolios; a huge contribution. Whatever you say, as Senator Bernardi indicated, we have been like two bookends at either end on issues like cloning and stem cell research—

Senator Patterson—Only about two.

Senator BARNETT—Only about two. But that is par for the course in this place; in the Senate, you can agree to disagree. I just also wanted to indicate she has been a lecturer; indeed—

Senator Patterson—Three; we’ve got three now. I hear you are a republican.

Senator BARNETT—We’ve got three now, have we? Yes, I am a republican.

Senator Brandis—You’re joking.

Senator BARNETT—Yes, a minimalist, Senator Brandis—not the Keating republic that we didn’t have to have. Senator Patterson has been an academic and she also lectured my wife, Kate, who is a speech pathologist, and I think my wife is the better for it. So, Senator Patterson, I note that.

I turn now to Senator Rod Kemp: he has a quirky sense of humour, and yet he has that ability to put the needle in and twist it, and you can see the other side squirming and carrying on a treat. But they know that he is a man who is highly regarded and is respected in this chamber and is certainly appreciated for his contributions. He was elected in 1990; he was Assistant Treasurer from 1996 to 2001 and then Minister for the Arts and Sport from 2001 to 2007. I guess
my relationship with Senator Kemp was forged, at least in part, during his role as
Minister for the Arts and Sport during the 2004 campaign, in our efforts to combat the
childhood obesity epidemic. We had a special forum on 29 June 2004. Senator Kemp
will recall dinner at my home the night before and then, with John Howard, launching
the government’s anti-obesity initiatives at Launceston’s Grand Chancellor Hotel, with
Senator Kemp speaking, as well as other keynote speakers. That was a great event and
he has done a lot to advance the cause in that regard and to support more healthy lifestyles.
The active after school program is probably the most obvious one that comes to mind as
far as an initiative and a program that he has advocated for successfully under the former
government. So he will be missed in this parliament. I wish him and Danni very well
in their future endeavours.

To Senator Ross Lightfoot: he is a great man and great camaraderie is shared with
Ross. He certainly is a strong advocate for Western Australia. He certainly has, as per
his valedictory speech, previously supported WA seceding; now he has softened that
a little bit, but he is still a very strong supporter of WA. I have always enjoyed Ross’s
company. He has a kind, generous spirit; he is certainly gentlemanly in every respect.
Ross, you will be missed, and I wish you well with your future endeavours. You have
certainly made a very positive and substantial contribution in this place, including to
the relationship between Australia and Iraq. You have visited Iraq many times and I know
that you have a heart for the people of Iraq and that you want a difference to be made
there for their good. So, to all those Liberal senators, I wish them well. Congratulations
and well done on a very fine effort—a huge contribution over many years.

I want to say of Andrew Murray that he is a professional, thoughtful and insightful
man. He is honourable in every respect. He is one of the most honourable of honourable
senators. He has been kind and generous. I remember when I and my wife, Kate, and
Andrew and his wife, Pam, visited Sweden and Denmark in 2005. He has been a long-
standing member of the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, and tomorrow morning the
committee will be commemorating his service with a sausage sizzle at Parliament
House. His contribution on any committee is worth listening to; it is valuable. He will cer-
tainly be missed. To Senators Stott Despoja, Allison, Bartlett, Kirk, Webber and Camp-
bell, I wish you all well in your future endeavours. I thank the Senate.

Senator HUMPHRIES (Australian Capital Territory) (10.45 pm)—I suspect that
what began as a pleasant experience for those senators who are retiring has probably
now turned into something of an ordeal, so I will attempt to be as succinct as I possibly
can—short of actually sitting down, which I do not propose to do.

To see 115 or so years of corporate memory and experience walk out the door is a tad
distressing, but I realise that they all have the right eventually to take that experience and
memory somewhere else, and I wish them the best in doing so. I want to thank each of
the retiring senators for the example they have set for newer arrivals such as me. Every
one of them has left us all a legacy of some sort, a model of the way to behave as a poli-
tician—a policy plank which we still use—and the strengthening in some way of the
corporate brand that we all rely upon as members of political parties.

Senator Chapman has been a model of stamina and staying power. He has been a
consistent and tenacious contributor to the Liberal Party’s mission over nearly 30 years
and in two chambers of parliament. Senator Lightfoot has stood firmly for the values in
which he believes, one of which, I have to say, is that, however vital the issue or however fierce the battle, one should always deal with others courteously and respectfully. And a dry sense of humour, of which we had a taste this evening from Senator Lightfoot, is another asset in that process. I am particularly grateful to him for having kept me in touch in recent years with the work of the National Capital and External Territories Committee when I was not a member of it. Senator Sandy Macdonald is likewise the model of a gentleman legislator. I thank him particularly for infecting me with enthusiasm about the parliamentary defence program, for which he was surely the most committed—ever parliamentary secretary.

John Watson, likewise, is a model of a thoughtful and reasoned legislator. Senator Watson’s guidance on the issue of indexing the superannuation of retiring or retired public servants and military personnel at the same rate as that of age pensioners in Australia is a particularly important legacy. His view that these two rates of indexation should in fairness be aligned, which he expressed in at least two parliamentary committee reports on superannuation as chair of the committee, was a reminder to me that principle has a more honoured place in politics than pragmatism.

I remain forever indebted to Senator Kemp for the close attention he gave me and my position as the coalition’s sole representative in the ACT. He was forever concerned, helpful and involved in the issues I confronted here, in Canberra. It may distress members of the arts community in Australia to discover that the new home for the National Portrait Gallery was not for them but, in fact, a personal gift from Senator Kemp to me—at least that is what he led me to believe. He was always responsible for a personal epiphany I had as a politician in my first year in this place. I was increasingly concerned and distressed about the plans by the Australian Film Commission to take elements of the National Film and Sound Archive to Sydney. I eventually plucked up the courage to ring the minister of the Crown and tell him about my concerns. Before I could blab out a couple of sentences, he said, ‘Tell me, Senator, what do you think we should do?’ I told him, and he said: ‘Well, you’re our man on the scene. If you think that is the thing to do then that is what we’ll do.’ The decision was duly reversed. He taught me a great deal about how to approach ministers—although, I doubt that any minister would have quite the same receptiveness as he did.

No-one in this place could better exemplify the enthusiastic, committed and involved law maker than Senator Kay Patterson. In parliament, one is constantly confronted by decisions about which balls to let go through to the wicketkeeper and which ones to bat back. It seems to me that in Kay Patterson’s case no ball ever reached the wicketkeeper. She has a ferocious interest in everything and an opinion to match. She is always prepared to share that with her colleagues. That is not to say, of course, that I agree with everything Senator Patterson has had to say. In fact, as Senator Barnett has already suggested, on medico ethical issues she is a dangerous radical—indeed, a ratbag.

But your wife will agree with me.

Senator HUMPHRIES—That is another matter, Senator Patterson, which we will leave to another time when you are not around. So I would advise senators that, if they are ever, for example, on a life support system in hospital and Kay Patterson offers to visit them, do not let her sit on the side nearest to the power point of your respirator. You might not live to regret it. I have enjoyed battling with Senator Patterson but I
have enjoyed much more working with her on issues of similar concern, particularly on the Senate Community Affairs Committee.

Senator Patterson—You need re-educating.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You have only a few days left to do that, Senator. I hope and expect that her restless intelligence will keep batting those balls in every direction over the coming years. It has been a privilege to share an innings with her.

I want to mention briefly two other senators. I am truly sorry to be losing the company of Senator Andrew Murray. Every parliament needs an Andrew Murray, but I really do not know where we are going to find one after 30 June. I will also particularly miss Senator Ruth Webber’s laughter.

Senator Webber—Ha, ha!

Senator HUMPHRIES—Yes, thank you—right on cue. I wish we could all delight as much in spending time in this place as you obviously do, Senator Webber, and I will miss you particularly. To all my colleagues: God speed and a happy retirement.

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland) (10.52 pm)—Mr President, 30 June marks a very important moment in the history of the Senate and therefore in the history of Australian politics, because there will be the most significant turnover of senators in the history of the Federation. Some 14 senators will retire. Tonight we commemorate and pay tribute to the work of six of those senators, the six coalition senators who retire on 30 June. Between them, on my calculation, those six coalition senators have contributed almost 123 years of service to this parliament. Three of them—Senator Chapman, Senator Watson and Senator Patterson—began their parliamentary careers in Old Parliament House. When they leave us on 30 June, there will remain only two members of the Senate who saw service in Old Parliament House. So, by any measure, just on my side of politics, not to mention on all sides of this chamber, 30 June will mark a very, very significant loss in the corporate memory and the political and intellectual capital of this nation.

May I say personally that it has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve with each and every one of the retiring senators. These valedictory debates, which very, very few people listen to, are in fact one of the great occasions of the Australian parliament—more carefully observed, I am forced to say, in the Senate than in the House of Representatives—because this is an occasion when we shed the garb of the tribe. It is an occasion when we speak to each other person to person rather than through the prism of party allegiances. If only the Australian people were more conscious of the regard in which we hold one another and the relationships built over many years of work together, not so much in the chamber but in committees and in various other personal associations, they would I think have a better appreciation of the way in which this parliament works. Each and every one of the senators who will retire on 30 June has brought their own unique perspective, background, experience and outlook to this place, and Australian democracy is the richer for it.

Let me say a couple of words, if I may, about each of the retiring coalition senators. Let me begin, as is appropriate, with the father of the Senate, Senator John Watson. I think probably the greatest thing that you can say about a person as they reach the end of their political career is that they were held by their colleagues on both sides of politics in universal respect, and that can absolutely be said about Senator John Watson. It was my privilege to serve with Senator Watson on a number of Senate committees—on the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and on the Senate Economics Committee—and I
observed him in those fora, in this chamber and in particular in the party room.

The thing that we all know about Senator John Watson is that he made a particularly important area of public policy his own, and that was superannuation policy. He had other deep interests as well—taxation policy, accounting standards and other aspects of financial policy—but superannuation policy in particular. John Watson spoke with the voice of ultimate and absolute authority. The ultimate compliment to Senator Watson was that his opposite number, who for most of my time in this place has been Senator Nick Sherry, would always, even though they were politically opposed to one another, defer to Senator Watson’s knowledge, learning and erudition about this area of policy. And I can tell you, Mr President—and you yourself will recall this—that there was more than one occasion in the coalition party room when Senator Watson took on the member for Higgins, then the Treasurer, Mr Costello, on an issue of superannuation policy or taxation policy. Mr Costello is a fairly formidable opponent, but when Senator Watson took him to task about a perhaps obscure aspect of superannuation or taxation policy there was no doubt left in anyone’s mind about who spoke with the most authority. Senator Watson has been a great contributor to this Senate, a great contributor to Australian public policy, and we are all the poorer for his retirement after 30 years of service.

Let me pass to Senator Grant Chapman, with whom I served for several years when he was Chairman of the Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services and with whom I served on the Senate Economics Committee for several years. Grant and I worked together on a number of important reports. I remember in particular the report on which he and I wrote the minority report, as it turned out, on the effectiveness of the Trade Practices Act in protecting small business, which, if I may say so, largely thanks to Senator Chapman’s contribution, was the gold standard for commentary on that area of policy and which is had regard to by the new government as it was by the former government in the years since that report was brought down.

May I say—and I do not want to embarrass him—that I think Senator Chapman was very, very unlucky not to have been a minister. I can think of lots of people on my side of politics, and even more on the other side of politics, of much more slender ability than Senator Grant Chapman who served as ministers and indeed as cabinet ministers. But there is nothing fair about the game of politics, and circumstances perhaps conspired against Senator Grant Chapman. He would have been a great minister. He was undoubtedly a great parliamentarian, and he showed that you can be a great contributor to Australian politics as a great parliamentarian—and it is better to be a first-rate parliamentarian than a second-rate minister.

Let me say a word about Senator Rod Kemp. I had the pleasure of following Rod Kemp in the portfolio of the Arts and Sport, when the former Prime Minister, Mr Howard, was good enough to appoint me to that portfolio in January 2007. Transitions from one minister to another are often fraught. Transitions from one minister to another are not universally blessed with harmony and ease. But I have to say that no minister coming into a portfolio for the first time could have had a more generous, a more helpful or a more cooperative predecessor in his portfolio than I had in Senator Rod Kemp. I would ring him for advice from time to time. I would ring him for advice on particular areas of policy within the portfolio. I would ring him for advice on personalities. I would ring him for advice on a topic—if I may put on the record but not elaborate upon a private joke between us: the subject of border pro-
tection. Senator Rod Kemp would always give me very shrewd advice and he was very free and generous in his advice.

I think it is appropriate for me to say, in dwelling upon Rod Kemp’s contribution and his generosity to me, that it fell to me during my relatively brief period as Minister for the Arts and Sport to announce the film package—the most important series of reforms to advance the interests of the Australian film industry in a generation. It was a series of reforms, I am very sorry to say, that have been abated and retreated from by the new government and the new minister, who of course has turned out to be a complete flop. Although the credit came to me, because I was the minister at the time that the package was announced in May 2007, in fact almost all of the work was done by my predecessor, Rod Kemp. If anything of the film package survives the new philistines of the new Labor government, and if any enduring benefit to the Australian film industry survives the new philistines, it is Rod Kemp who deserves the lion’s share of the credit.

Senator Kay Patterson, with whom I share a family connection through the Strasser family, has been a good friend. I have enjoyed my association with her enormously. She has always been friendly, sensible and direct. Those features of her personality have, I think, shone through the tributes that have been paid to her. I had relatively little to do with Senator Patterson professionally, but there is one particular episode that I want to record and acknowledge her for, and that is the occasion when she was in the health portfolio and Senator Mason, Mr Ciobo, the member for Moncrieff, and I approached Senator Patterson to seek to persuade her to give her authority to the creation of a medical school at Griffith University on the Gold Coast and she acceded to our entreaties—and, may I say, you did the right thing, Senator Patterson. The Griffith Medical School at the Gold Coast has been a tremendous success.

Senator Sandy Macdonald is a person whom I liked the moment I met him, and I have had a very friendly association with him from the first day I came into the Senate, slightly more than eight years ago. Sandy Macdonald is a rare species in Australian politics today—and, with his departure from the Senate, the species is even rarer. Sandy Macdonald is one of the few Brahmans left in Australian politics, a landed gentleman who, in the Jeffersonian tradition, goes into public life to serve his country. And he has served his country well. He is a perfect gentleman. Nobody could define a gentleman better than to describe Senator Sandy Macdonald. I think his valedictory speech today had all the emblems of the charm and gentlemanliness which we associate with him.

Importantly, Senator Macdonald understood both that politics is very important but also that politics is not everything. There are a lot of people who pursue careers in public life and who fail to keep those two considerations in balance. Sandy Macdonald did not. Sandy Macdonald understood that politics was not everything. As is plain to all of us, he will leave this place a happy and contented man, fulfilled in the knowledge of the conspicuous service he has given to his country but also knowing that there is a very rich life for him in his family and his pastoral interests that lie before him.

Let me turn finally to my friend Ross Lightfoot. Ross Lightfoot is somebody I had not encountered before I became a senator but I had read about him. I had read about his infamous maiden speech. I had read about what were regarded as his as his very right wing political views.

**Senator Patterson**—He has mellowed.
Senator BRANDIS—I would not have expected that Senator Ross Lightfoot and I would have, as it were, hit it off. But there is something about the chemistry of this place that one does develop personal friendships with people of widely variant political views. Ross Lightfoot and I hit it off enormously. Senator Patterson said that Senator Lightfoot has mellowed. Perhaps the proof of that observation was that tonight we had the final hauling down of the separatist flag.

Senator Parry—A very important event.

Senator BRANDIS—It was a very important event in Australian constitutional history, I might say, Mr President. After the high tide of separatism in the 1920s and the occasional echoes of that view in the years since, the last advocate of separatism for Western Australia has this evening, the evening of 17 June 2008, at last hauled down the flag of Western Australian separatism. So we can say on this rather sad and melancholy evening that at least we know that the Commonwealth of Australia is intact.

Senator Parry—Stand down the home guard!

Senator BRANDIS—As Senator Parry said, stand down the home guard. It was a great disappointment to me that, when Senator Lightfoot invited Brett Mason and me to accompany him on a visit to Kurdistan in the early months of 2006, I received a telephone call from Mr Tony Nutt, the then Prime Minister’s principal private secretary, who counselled me and Senator Mason that this was perhaps not such a good idea. Mr Nutt said to me words to the effect that Kurdistan was a pretty dangerous place, and I was left with the rather doleful feeling that, although, of course, my wellbeing and Senator Mason’s wellbeing were a matter of acute interest in the Prime Minister’s office, the potential embarrassment to the government of any harm that might come to us was a matter of even greater concern.

Senator Lightfoot—They never tried to stop me.

Senator BRANDIS—They never tried to stop Senator Lightfoot, and I am very sorry that we did not make that trip. Of course, Senator Lightfoot came back unscathed and, indeed, much publicised. It is one of the great things of knowing Ross Lightfoot that, as was evident in his valedictory speech tonight, he said some things that perhaps would not play very well in the Fairfax press and are unlikely to be publicised on Lateline or on the ABC, and that some people might be uncharitable enough to describe as perhaps even slightly eccentric. And yet, there are many people in Australia, more than politically correct opinion will acknowledge, who would find more in common with Ross Lightfoot’s points of view than they would find in the points of view evident in the editorial pages of the Age or the Sydney Morning Herald. I want to pay tribute to Ross Lightfoot for having the courage and the pure integrity to express his opinions, unfashionable in some quarters though they may be, with absolute sincerity and conviction. As was said of Robespierre, he is a sea-green incorruptible.

It has been one of the small pleasures but one of the charms of my life in the Senate in the last two or three years to have been a member of a very exclusive club—the G and T club—which would convene in Senator Lightfoot’s office once a week when the Senate was sitting, and we would enjoy a glass or two of gin and tonic. Senator Mason was a member of the club, as was Senator Calvert. And, Mr President, you were invited on occasions. I think we even extended the circle to Senator Bernardi once, in our more egalitarian days. That was a great pleasure. And the pleasure of Ross Lightfoot’s charming,
enigmatic personality has lightened my days in this place.

To all of those who are departing on 30 June, may I humbly pay my tribute of regard to your immensely valued service to this parliament and to this country. It is a great thing to serve in this place; it is a great thing to leave a legacy; and each of the six coalition senators whom we celebrate tonight has done that.

Senator PARRY (Tasmania) (11.10 pm)—I would like to say to the retiring senators that I am worried about deep vein thrombosis. They have been sitting here for a long time, so this will be very short. I believe I am the last speaker, prior to the President concluding the debate. As Senator Patterson just reminded me, I will be the last one to let you down, and that is probably from my old vocation.

Prior to commencing my remarks, Mr President, I seek leave—and I have canvassed this with the opposition, who are the only other party present in the chamber at the moment—to incorporate two speeches, one each from Senator Helen Coonan and Senator Russell Trood, who also share my concern for the longevity of our retiring senators being in the chamber.

Leave granted.

Senator COONAN (New South Wales) (11.11 pm)—The incorporated speech read as follows—

With 14 Senators concluding their terms in the Senate on 30 June, it is impossible to do justice to the depth and significance of their individual service—the subject of these Valedictory speeches.

When you have worked closely with a group of men and women they become more than just colleagues. The relationships that have been forged with Senate colleagues are strong and those relationships will endure.

Regardless of our different political hues, it is fair to say that together we have enjoyed the enormous privilege of being elected to serve the Australian people. This forges a bond that is not easily broken, and I fancy we will remember each other with respect and regard.

However briefly, I will mention some of the retiring Senators in more detail - not to recount their many varied and significant achievements - that will be done in their own speeches and by others.

I have never been one to rely heavily on the Parliamentary Library for biographies and on this occasion my remarks will be personal, reflective, heartfelt, but unfortunately incomplete.

I will start with my dear friend, Senator Kay Patterson—a mentor to many and a friend to us all. After Kay entered this august place in 1987, she went through many discouraging years of Opposition and ultimately in the Howard Government, was appointed a Cabinet Minister in the Health portfolio, the eighth woman in Australia’s history to be appointed to a Cabinet position.

She has an incredible work ethic. A journalist recently described her Cabinet Portfolio work this way—“Her determination to focus on the BEST health outcomes, rather than the political points that earn publicity, means that there is a huge gap between perceptions of the job she has done, and the reality.”

Having served in the Cabinet with Kay I can truly vouch for her compassion and commonsense approach to many a vexed issue. Her passion and work for achieving better treatment for ageing parents of adult disabled children is just one example of her tireless championing of complex issues - and her work on this alone would have made her time in this place worthwhile.

Her contributions while Health Minister in the Cabinet were significant—doubling the immunisation programme, improving pathology standards, introducing a pilot scheme for early detection of bowel cancer, increasing the number of outer-metropolitan doctors, and foreign medical graduates of Australian universities as hospital interns—to mention a few.

Warmth, humour, compassion, and care all describe Kay’s style—whether as a Senator, Cabinet Minister, or simply an outstandingly successful woman.
The State of Victoria was very lucky indeed to have Kay represent them. Many of us have great stories, and wonderful memories of our times with Kay. But for me—I can truly say—"I will miss you enormously Kay".

Senator Rod Kemp entered the Senate in 1990, and also worked hard with others to bring the Coalition to Government in 1996. As the Assistant Treasurer he carried much of the burden in the Senate of the implementation of the GST—a formidable burden and task. I can well recall him taking every question in Question Time for consecutive weeks.

I had the pleasure of working with Rod as Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts from 2004 to 2007. As Minister for Arts and Sport, he devoted himself to the job, working tirelessly—specially on Melbourne’s Commonwealth Games in 2006, and he delivered a significant increase in funding to the Arts portfolio across the varied fields of orchestras, contemporary arts, regional arts, and national institutions during his tenure. He deserves to be congratulated for his substantial contribution to advancing Australia’s culture and the Arts.

Senator John Watson—(or Watto as we all call him affectionately) really is a long-standing servant for Tasmania in this Chamber, being first elected in 1977.

John served in the Opposition Shadow Ministry from 1990 - 1994, at the same holding positions as Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Parliamentary Secretary to the Business and Economic Group and Parliamentary Secretary to the Chairperson, the Economy, Public Sector and the Law Management Group—all until 1993/1994.

Watto distinguished himself in many ways, but is probably best known for his extensive knowledge of superannuation and as the participant in dozens of reports of the Senate Standing Committee on Superannuation.

As Assistant Treasurer at the time, I know just how significant his contributions to superannuation were. I read in an article recently that Senator Watson “still knows more about superannuation than anyone else in parliament.” Those sorts of comments have usually been self-generated, but in Watto’s case, it is a fair assessment.

John Watson may claim that the reform of superannuation was his greatest passion, but I believe the Liberal Party, and the people of Tasmania, were the greatest beneficiaries of his service, and of course this Chamber. And for all those contributions - we thank him.

Senator Grant Chapman is another long standing member of the Liberal Party, elected to the Senate for South Australia in 1987 after also serving for 8 years in that other Chamber as the Federal Member for Kingston.

The dedication and commitment to his work has certainly not gone unnoticed within the Senate where he has a distinguished record, particularly as Chairman of many of the Senate’s Committees, but particularly that of the Senate’s Corporations Committee.

Senator Chapman, now referred to as a political veteran, has spent a lot of his time dedicated to representing Australia overseas. You may all remember that Senator Alston used to be referred to as “Marco Polo”—but I think Senator Chapman has a better claim to this title given his vast work around the globe.

Senator Ross Lightfoot first provided sterling service in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly, and then the Western Australian Legislative Council, prior to being appointed, then elected as a Senator for Western Australia.

Senator Lightfoot has sometimes been described as one of the most “outspoken and gun toting” Senators. Sometimes referred to as “extreme”, he has never made any apologies for his convictions and has always voiced them strongly.

When announcing his retirement last year, Ross commented on how he thought he was never cut out for politics—but I disagree. In this game, we may not always be popular, but ultimately those who do not pretend to be what they are not will be respected. I wish Senator Lightfoot all the best for the future, and commend him for his lengthy service.

I am sorry to see Senator Sandy Macdonald leave the Senate for the second time, having been elected again as a National Senator in 2001.
Sandy has always done his very best to represent his constituents in NSW on a diverse range of issues, even under great pressure that saw him cross the floor in support of them during the Wik debates.

Sandy’s range of interests go from wool, to defence, to foreign affairs, to ASIO, to community affairs, and his travel record indicates he needed a “king size” Passport to enable him to carry out the many parliamentary trips he made overseas, whilst at home he was honoured by being appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Trade, followed by appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence.

Sandy can best be described as an urbane and decent man and he will be missed.

It has been a matter for media commentary and for my part, regret, that this Senate session also sees the exit of the Australian Democrats who have occupied a significant place in Australian political history. They have been over the years represented by committed and able Senators.

Whatever side of the political divide you fall on, Natasha Stott Despoja is someone to admire, particularly in terms of the landmarks she has achieved for Australian women. When she was elected she was the youngest woman to sit in the Parliament of Australia.

She is also retiring as the longest serving Democrat Senator, either male or female.

Throughout her colourful career, Senator Stott Despoja has faced adversity, especially throughout her term as Leader of the party. I have found her to be articulate and her arguments well thought out. She will have a successful future, and I know she has plans to do some honorary work as a research fellow with her former University, the University of Adelaide.

Senator Andrew Murray entered the Senate at the same time I did in 1996 and in the time he has served here he has gained a reputation as an intelligent and thoughtful debater, while continually championing the need for greater parliamentary accountability.

He supported the Goods and Services Tax, helping the Coalition Government to carry through the bills in 1999.

I recently read an article that described Senator Murray as “one of the most able politicians in the land” and I believe he will be remembered for his forensic and dignified questioning throughout Senate Estimates. I have spent many hours with Senator Murray but lest this be misinterpreted, it was in my role as the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer with carriage of innumerable tax bills. Senator Murray never let up. He insisted on the best outcomes he could possibly achieve. This was not always an easy path for me, but I respect his integrity and deep interest in sound tax policy.

In not going on at great length about each retiring Senator, I do however want to acknowledge, Senators Allison, Bartlett, Campbell, Kirk, Nettle and Webber.

Each of you have served with distinction; each can be rightfully proud of your achievements; and each of you will leave with the respect, admiration and good wishes of those of us who remain to serve in this wonderful Senate.

Good luck to all the retiring Senators of 2008. Don’t be strangers—and visit us when you can.

**Senator TROOD (Queensland) (11.11 pm)—The incorporated speech read as follows—**

It is my great delight to have the opportunity this evening to make some remarks about some of our colleagues who will be leaving the Senate on 30 June.

Amongst the departing Coalition colleagues, all have made a significant contribution to Australian public life. These contributions are distinguished not only by membership of the senate, but in several cases through service to their state parliaments. Some were fortunate in having careers that took them into the ministry and in one case into Cabinet. But executive office should not be the only measure of a successful parliamentary career. It seems to me that all members of parliament act in the service of the Australian people and of our democracy. Indeed, more Australians should be willing to serve their country and provide the example of public service personified in the senate careers we are recognising tonight.

As I have discovered in the nearly three years that I have been fortunate enough to be in the Senate,
one is required to make sacrifices to be in this place and each of our retiring colleagues has made those sacrifices. They have done it willingly and I suspect all have regarded the opportunity to be part of the Australian senate as a distinctive privilege. Nevertheless we should not dismiss the considerable personal costs involved in the contributions that our colleagues have made to Australian public life.

I agree with the remarks of many other senators, who have observed that the departure of colleagues does not just reflect change, it also means, in a way that is difficult to express fully, that we are losing some close, much respected, and greatly treasured friends. Although I have been here for a relatively short time, I certainly feel the sense of loss at their departure and will retain many very fond memories of each of them as they move on to other activities in life.

I will recall Senator Patterson’s warmth and generosity. Although when I arrived here she was in that very distant place - the Cabinet, she was always available to offer advice to a new boy keen to ask for it. There was no, ‘you need to know this’ about it, rather ‘here are some thoughts if you would like to make use of them.’ There is too much to disaggregate here, but especially valuable were Kay’s insight into the way a person with a university background could make progress in an arena not necessarily known for its commitment to or admiration of academics and their ways.

I will remember my many conversations with Senator Watson. These often seemed to take place during divisions, but whether punctuated by votes or not they invariably involved the dispensing of wisdom, whether on senate standing orders, the art of local politics or just life in general. Whatever the topic, I valued our talks, and the fact that they took place independent of any sense of urgency that there were other duties John was being called upon to perform.

My friend and colleague on the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Senator Sandy Macdonald, sits in the parliament as a National, but whether he would thank me for it or not, I’d be more than happy to regard him as a Liberal. On slow days in Estimates and other many other occasions he offered me some extraordinarily valuable insights in to many things, not least life on the land and the sometimes confusing nature and workings of his party. I suspect that in light of Coalition developments in Queensland, these insights will prove more valuable than I might have thought at the time.

Senator Kemp has been particularly solicitous of my welfare on several occasions. I recall for example, his generous compliments after my first contribution to the Liberal party room. I also attracted his close attention when a matter close to his heart, public diplomacy, was the subject of an enquiry before the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee. Rod pressed certain views upon me, not I hasten to add in any way that was improper, but he was persistent. As I remember, the Committee’s report was one with which Senator Kemp was eventually reasonably content.

Senator Chapman from South Australia whose distinguished career in politics spanned the Parliament of South Australian and the House of Representatives as well as the senate, always impressed me with both his ready good humour and commitment to the virtues of senate committees. And as all senators will know, it was difficult not to find one self propositioned for one of Chappy’s sporting enterprises. These opportunities were always extended without pressure and I took them as a sign of inclusiveness, though in my case it was an inclusiveness I resisted as I suspected the standards of competition were rather higher than the good senator was prepared to let on.

Finally, but hardly least, the distinguished senator from Western Australia, Senator Lightfoot. I think Ross would agree with me that we didn’t immediately seem to have much in common with each other. Before too long, however, his natural generosity of spirit and willingness to extend goodwill to a relatively new senator served as the foundation of a firm collegiality and friendship. This eventually led me to membership of one of the most important, but least recognised committees of the Senate, and for that I am most grateful. In so far as I have anything to do with it, he can be certain that the traditions of that committee will be maintained in his honour.

Each one of these people has made an important contribution to my professional and personal life
in the Senate since I arrived here in 2005. I am grateful to all of them for friendship generously offered, professional development enthusiastically encouraged and wisdom liberally dispensed. This is perhaps an occasion to also note the historical significance of the passing of the Democrats from this place. The Democrat philosophy is not one I embrace and I rarely agreed with their policy prescriptions. But for 30 years Australians from various states have been sending their representatives to the Senate and that is something we as small ‘d’ democrats and in my case as a Liberal are obliged to respect. It is undoubtedly a moment of significance in Australian political history that at the end of this month their remaining number will all be leaving the Senate. It is truly the end of an era, but also the involuntary end of two Senate careers, that of Senator Allison and my colleague from Queensland, Senator Bartlett. Somewhat unexpectedly perhaps, Senator Bartlett and I have found that on occasions, we have had more in common than either one of us might have anticipated. I particularly wish him well in his post senatorial career.

Indeed in closing I wish all of the departing senators every best wish for their future in retirement, including those from the government and Senator Nette from the Greens. I trust they will have long and fulfilling lives after the Senate. I especially wish good fortune, fulfilment and a richly enjoyed future to my colleagues in the Coalition. In many ways you have helped to define my early days and years in the Senate and I very much hope that the friendships I have made with you will not be lost as you leave us.

Senator PARRY (Tasmania) (11.11 pm)—I will just begin by saying that, as government whip and as opposition whip, you could not get a greater calibre of senators than these six retiring senators to assist you in your role; in particular, telling you how to do your job, at what pace to do your job and what degree of enthusiasm to use for fulfilling your role. I have really enjoyed the counsel and the advice that I have had from the retiring senators.

The other thing that I want to comment on—which I hope the Australian public comprehend when it is read as time moves on—is that each of the six retiring senators have actually contributed right up until this very day, and I am sure that that will continue until 30 June. They have not lagged in their duties; they have not relaxed in their stance or in their role to represent the people of Australia and their respective states. In fact, I have detected vigour and great enthusiasm in representing their particular constituencies and certainly in their work within the chamber. Nothing would be more evident than the estimates process, where each of the senators who are retiring, who really did not need to contribute as hard as they did, contributed above and beyond what I would call the call of duty for any senator, and I was particularly impressed by each of the senator’s contributions. I particularly want to place that on record.

Equally, all of the senators have been involved in chamber duties of one description or another, even assisting the whip and being acting whip on occasions when we have needed that assistance. They have done that at short notice, have been willing to do it and have stepped into the chamber. I particularly appreciate that, and I know the other whips appreciate that.

I want to briefly touch upon the six senators and then hand over to you, Mr President. First is my good colleague from Tasmania, Senator John Watson, the father of the Senate. I am not going to go through all the other things, and I particularly want to associate myself with all the comments being made by everyone here this evening. Senator Watson has taught me two great things. John, I do respect the way you have ingrained that in me and I will not forget that. Secondly, he replaced the good Sir Reginald Wright. Sir Reginald Wright and I were in the same Lib-
eral Party branch and we had some good debates. But Sir Reginald Wright was an early mentor of mine and encouraged me to join the Senate. John said that I could learn a lot from Sir Reginald, but he said, ‘Do not cross the floor as many times as he did.’ I have not done that once yet, John, and I will hopefully not have to seek that particular path. I have particularly enjoyed John’s company and mentorship in Tasmania. John has taken a personal interest in me and I have appreciated it, as has my wife. John, I thank you very much for that.

My mother has gone to bed now so I can say this safely: Senator Patterson has become a little bit of a mother figure to me. I have had the privilege of travelling overseas with Senator Patterson. You get to know people a lot better when you travel with them. Kay, you were a great leader of our delegation. We had some very solemn moments as well as some really good, fun times, and we worked extremely hard on our delegation—as I am sure all delegations do. But, Kay, you were a credit to the Senate and you were great in your leadership. We have always maintained a strong bond since that trip, and I have also appreciated you popping into the whip’s office during times of crisis, as all whip’s offices have, and you have been a calming influence. I thank you for that.

Senator Kemp: who would have thought that Senator Rod Kemp and I would ever sit down and enjoy a red wine together, after our start in life? I used to sit up in the gallery during the GST debates when I was here lobbying for an industry association and Senator Kemp was taking the GST legislation through this chamber. I would be in his office and we would be arguing and fighting very deeply over my industry’s issues. As Senator Kemp reminded me this evening, I won, and we got some great concessions for my industry, but it caused him a lot of heartache. As Peter Costello reminded both of us today, he received more complaints about me from you than any other person in Australia. It probably cost me a casual vacancy in the Senate at the time. Senator Kemp and I started out life arguing from two different perspectives on the GST—in fact, about death, about the funeral industry. I represented my industry’s case, and Rod and I had some serious, heavy debates over a protracted period of time. But we never lost respect for each other or our loyalty for each cause, and I think that has deepened our relationship since I entered this place.

I want to relate one incident about Senator Kemp. I was at a Bradfield function up in the Mural Hall one night and the Assistant Treasurer, the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and Senator Kemp came through. I was at a table with some good Liberals and it was announced that I was a potential senator from Tasmania. Rod just gasped. He could not believe it. He said, ‘This man has argued with me for the last two years.’ Senator Paul Calvert took me to your office and put the oil on the waters, and we have been very good friends ever since. We have respected each other and enjoyed each other’s company in various locations. I have respected your advice too, Rod. You have given me great advice.

The most recent thing I will recall from Senator Kemp’s career is Senate estimates. Senator Kemp, Senator Birmingham and I were the formative members of the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts, and Senator Kemp performed his duties exceptionally well. He gave us a lot of vigour and fought extremely hard. In the estimates prior to the most recent ones, though, I did think that vanity crept in when he asked a lot of officials how different policies were working, and he asked, ‘Now who was the minister then?’ The recurrent answer was, of course, ‘Senator Kemp’. Rod, you have been a fine example to this Senate
and I have absolutely appreciated what you have done and what you have taught me.

Senator Chapman is, I think, one of the great orators of the chamber. Again I associate myself with the remarks others have made, and I will not go through all the kind things that have been said about him tonight. Senator Chapman, you were great as a whip, especially as a government whip when we had taking note of answers after question time—when you had to quickly develop the theme and work out what was happening. Probably the most reliable senator in that process was Senator Chapman. He would quickly develop the debate and then attack the opposition and do it admirably, and he never, ever missed a beat. On this side it is a little bit easier, because we dictate what taking note is. I remember a few weeks back, Senator Chapman, I asked if you would do taking note and you did. I was just flabbergasted. I could not leave the chamber, I was so engrossed with what you were saying. I remember saying to you, ‘I’ll have to get the DVD.’ Someone said, ‘Can you?’ and I said, ‘Yes, we can.’ It was just a great performance; it was fantastic—an inspiration to those on this side. We will miss your impromptu ability and the oratory skills that are needed in this chamber and that you clearly demonstrated beyond the capacity of most.

Senator Sandy Macdonald and I used to sit over on the other side when he was on duty as a minister and I was on duty as whip into the late hours of the night, and we would trade secrets. When I say we traded secrets I mean that we would talk about shares. They are all on the senators’ interests register, but we did engage in discussions about which stocks would be good to buy for our respective superannuation funds. I developed a great bond with Senator Macdonald on those issues and an appreciation of his enthusiasm for the Senate and his portfolios.

Senator Lightfoot: what can I say? A fellow police officer, we bonded from day one on that basis. The thing I was particularly interested in with Senator Lightfoot when I arrived in this place was that he was ‘the voice’. Senator Lightfoot was the voice on the radio that I would listen to when driving my car from one end of Tasmania to the other—well before I ever entered this chamber as a temporary chairman of committees. His was the most magnificent voice on the radio. It just epitomised what I thought the Senate was all about. When I got here and met him, the illusion was not burst. He was the epitome of a gentleman senator and I have really appreciated that. I have never, ever changed my opinion of him on that basis. Even when I once had to say, ‘Would you mind stepping into the office, Senator Lightfoot? I need to discuss a matter with you,’—as I was government whip at the time—Ross came in, very erect, and said, ‘You don’t have to explain to me what I have done wrong. I understand completely and it will never happen again.’ I felt like I was dressed down by Ross. It was the easiest dressing-down I have ever given to a senator. I appreciated it. It was only a minor misdemeanour. Nevertheless, Ross knew exactly what the situation was and made it very easy for me.

Mr President, I have said enough. The night has been long and it has been very good, because we have all recalled memories of six fantastic senators for the Australian parliament. I say, as many others have: Australia will have a lesser capacity in this place for the loss of these senators, for a variety of reasons. We understand we cannot keep you forever. That is just impossible. Please leave this place knowing that you have served your country exceptionally well and you have served your states exceptionally well. You leave this place with the knowledge that you have given to this place the best possible
capacity, and we have acknowledged that all during this evening. I thank you for your friendship but, more importantly, for your service to Australia.

Senator WEBBER (Western Australia) (11.22 pm)—As one who is soon to leave this place, can I thank those opposite for some of the generous remarks they have made. I will have more to say on that on a later occasion. Following Senator Ellison’s fine example, I seek leave to incorporate Senator Nick Sherry’s remarks.

Leave granted.

Senator SHERRY (Tasmania—Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law) (11.23 pm)—The incorporated speech read as follows—

It is with great pleasure today to acknowledge two distinguished Senators who have made a significant contribution to the Senate over a combined period of 42 years. Senator Watson and Senator Murray leave the Senate on the 30th June.

I particularly want to thank them for their contribution in the policy areas of superannuation and financial services.

This is an area some would consider droll and boring but Senators Watson and Murray have shown this can be far from the truth.

It is nice to give a valedictory to Senators, even when not in your own political party, who you know, respect and whose company you have enjoyed and whose interest and focus is often aligned to your own.

Senator Watson has had a long career in the Senate, an impressive 30 years after beginning his first term as a Senator for Tasmania on the 1st July 1978.

This length of service confers him with the title “The Father of the Senate” one which he wholeheartedly deserves.

Senator Watson a fellow Tasmanian has represented Tasmanians well, placing policy and constituency work at the forefront of his focus as a Senator. As mentioned Senator Watson has focused on financial services issues over his thirty years, as a chartered accountant this placed him in a strong position to comment in a knowledgeable, focused and thoughtful way.

I have lost track of the number of committees Senator Watson has been on, just during my time in the Senate, and I know his contribution will be sadly missed by all. In recent years we have shared time together in the Economics, Finance & Public Administration and Corporation and Financial Services Committees and have spent many a late night asking like minded questions of departments.

In particular I want to acknowledge his role as a member and Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation: he was a member from 20th June 1991 to 9th November 1998 and from 14th March 2002 to 10th September 2003 and he was Chair of this committee from 1st July 1993 to 9th November 1993 and 20th March 2002 to 10th September 2003.

Senator Murray another distinguished Senator and Rhodes Scholar, began his first term as a Senator for Western Australia on the 1st July 1996.

He also has placed strong policy and constituency focus as an essential component of politics and has dedicated his Parliamentary career to Legislative and Committee scrutiny.

His 12 years in the Senate shows a long list of committee service where again we have spent many a late night seeking answers to similar questions.

It is very important to acknowledge two distinguished Senators who complete their time in this place and to acknowledge two very successful careers with a major policy focus. As I have said they were interested, questioning, focused, and knowledgeable. Their styles and approach were always thoughtful and of consideration.

I wish John and Andrew and their families all the best for the future. I have enjoyed their company and their contribution to the Senate and policy in general. They have made a difference.

I wish them both well.

The PRESIDENT (11.23 pm)—Senators, I am quite conscious of the fact
that our retiring senators have sat here and listened for almost 5½ hours to valedictory speeches complimenting them on their contributions to the Senate.

Senator Chapman—Don’t stop now!

The PRESIDENT—Senator Chapman, I am not going to stop now, but I do not intend to put you through the ordeal for much longer, because all of the things that should be said have already been said in a genuinely heartfelt way by other senators. In the 16 years that I have been in this place, I have served with all of you for all of that time, except Senator Lightfoot, who has been here for the past 11 years. The contribution that each of you has made as a senator is unique. You will all be remembered for different contributions to the Senate—some in a major role in government, some as backbenchers and some as chairs of committees—but you have all played a significant role. I want to speak only very briefly to each of you because I think to extend the valedictories when much has already been said probably only makes it more of an ordeal for you.

I want to firstly mention Ross Lightfoot. Ross came in some 11 years ago. I refuse to believe that Ross Lightfoot has mellowed since he has been here. The Ross Lightfoot that I see sitting in that seat is almost the same Ross Lightfoot that I saw 11 years ago. I do remember Senator Lightfoot’s maiden speech. I also remember the very hasty phone call he got about two minutes after he had finished, when he was summoned to an office somewhere else. But what I liked about Senator Lightfoot from the time he arrived in this place was that you always knew what Ross stood for, and that is what I admired him for. Every parliament needs a Ross Lightfoot. Every parliament needs someone who can be known for the position he will take, for the stance he will take on any particular issue and for the passion that he shows for his own particular interests. Ross has spoken about Iraq and Kurdistan and the things that are particularly important to him. The mining industry in Western Australia is particularly important to him, although I must remind you that Ross Lightfoot is really a South Australian who migrated to Western Australia.

Ross has always been a gentleman and has always impressed his fellow senators by the way he conducts himself. I think that is important in this place too. There are many people who are what we call nice blokes but they do not always know how to conduct themselves. Ross, you always have; you have always been polite. You have always known what you believe in. As a temporary chairman of committees, you were an example to others through the way you conducted yourself in this chair and the way you conducted the proceedings of the chamber. You did it with authority, you did it with style and you did it with presence. Many of us will remember the way that you have involved yourself in the works of the Senate and in the running of this chamber. You can go out of this place a very proud man for your contributions to the Senate from your state of Western Australia.

To Senator Sandy Macdonald can I say that he is my type of guy. He has been a great friend ever since he came here in 1993. I remember on many occasions he and Bozzie and I putting our steaks on the barbecue at the Kingston Hotel on a Thursday night. Bozzie liked his quick and rare because he was always hungry. Sandy and I were a bit more circumspect!

Sandy has been a wonderful friend and he has also been the epitome of a National Party coalititionist. That is what I have always liked about Sandy. I cannot think of any major policy issues that Sandy and I disagreed on.
We had a division today where Sandy voted with the National Party, against his Liberal Party colleagues, but he was voting that way not because it was what he believed in but because he was so loyal to the party that put him here—and the party that deselected him, which means that he is not coming back here—that he said, ‘I can’t vote against my colleagues.’ I admire someone like Sandy Macdonald, who appreciates how he got here and who put him here, which was the reason for him voting that way. I am sure his heart was not in it but he felt that he owed loyalty to his party. To me, that is the character of the man.

Sandy and I had many other opportunities of being together. We both were involved in the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for a number of years. I could say he is a fellow serviceman. Sandy and I both went to the RIMPAC exercises in Hawaii. We think we are eligible for a gold card, actually—we are not quite sure.

Sandy Macdonald has spent a lot of time away from his wife, Alice, and their young family. Two of his children—maybe the third one—were born while he was here. But Sandy is someone who will go back to his farm having served the Australian parliament and contributed to the Australian way of life and will make a major contribution in his own community. He is so highly respected. I want to thank Sandy for his friendship and for his contribution to this place. As other people have said before, Sandy is a true gentleman. I do not think there is anybody in this place who does not like Sandy Macdonald. If you can leave this place with no enemies I think you have done yourself a great service.

I next want to speak about Senator Chapman. Senator Chapman, I think, is probably one of the best public speakers I have ever heard. I listened to him on Sunday in Adelaide at a function that the Liberal Party were having. Senator Chapman gave one of the best speeches I have ever heard—and this is on his retirement. They often say that you save the best till last, but I know in Grant’s case he has not, because I have heard him on numerous occasions speak in public and express a point of view, and there is nobody more articulate than him when he makes a public speech.

I think that for anybody to have spent almost 30 years in this parliament is a period of outstanding service—just outstanding service. He won a marginal seat, knocking off a sitting Labor member of parliament in Kingston in 1975 in the tide. He then went against the tide for a couple of elections and maintained that seat when people thought he would not. He lost in 1983 in the big swing to the Hawke government. He bided his time, and in 1987 came back, into the Senate. For 21 years Senator Chapman has served in this Senate, and he has always been loyal to his party and to his beliefs. He has never varied—everybody knew where Senator Chapman stood on any particular issue. For that, the people of South Australia have every right to be proud of you, Grant. We, as your colleagues, wish you well in the future. I know at your age you have a chance to have a great future still, and the experience that you have had as a senator will be invaluable to somebody when you leave this place. Congratulations on your ability, your loyalty to the Liberal Party, and on those friends that you have within the party.

Senator Kemp: I do not quite know where to start. My campaign manager—an in-house joke, I apologise to my colleagues on the right. When I first came to this place, Senator Kemp was one of the very first people that befriended me. I remember his words, and he used them again tonight. He said, ‘You have just joined the best club in Australia.’ For a while I thought, ‘That is almost belittling, a
bit of an insult to talk about joining a club.’ But, in fact, the Senate—in its own way—is the best club in Australia. There are only 76 of us, and we get a chance to get to know each other in an intimate fashion. We work together on committees unlike our counterparts in the other place who work on committees, but there are so many of them they never have the same interaction that we have as senators in this place. Some people you think you might not like finish up becoming your best friends.

We are all in this place with a different philosophical point of view. I think we all want the end result to be the same, but we have different ways and means of how we think we should achieve that same end result. To me, Senator Kemp was a mentor, someone who gave advice generously. He was someone who I shared a philosophical viewpoint with anyway, so that made it much easier, because Kempie was never afraid to share his philosophical viewpoint. I first heard his father speak at a function—I think it was in Adelaide, where his father was a guest at one of the functions that we had. I saw then the enormous ability that the Kemp brothers, I should say—not just Rod—had in their contribution to the Liberal Party, and—with apologies to my Labor colleagues—the Liberal Party philosophy which they adhered to.

Rod Kemp’s history in the party was one of working for Margaret Guilfoyle, and working at the Institute of Public Affairs. He was consistent all the way. After being here, and when we won government, Rod became a minister. I had a lot to do with Rod as a minister because I actually chaired the Economics Committee when he was at the table on the other side. We had a couple of infamous occasions, one with a former senator—who is no longer with us—at about one o’clock in the morning. I will not say any more, but tensions tend to overflow a little bit at one o’clock in the morning. But Rod was fantastic in estimates: he listened up to a certain point, and would then intervene. He was asked 700 and something-or-other questions and, quite frankly, he did not give a lot of answers but he never made a mistake. He never got one wrong, I can promise you that.

I am delighted to have known Rod and Daniele. Daniele was the most wonderful support. She is a wonderful person that all of us who have known her have grown to love on our side of politics. I know that Rod and Daniele will have a very interesting and lively future, and we certainly wish them both well.

I am not sure where I should start with Senator Patterson. I wrote down a few notes, actually, when Senator Patterson was speaking, and these are the things I wrote: thoughtful, helpful to new senators—enormous help to new senators—always giving advice quite freely. Whether it was taken or not did not matter. Kay always gave advice, and it was always such sound advice. She was a wonderful personal friend—from the time you came into this place, you always felt that Senator Patterson was your friend. She did not care who it was—she would always willingly come into your office and say, ‘How are things going? If I were you, I would do it this way.’ I can always remember she once tried to teach me how I should keep my electoral allowance in one account and something else in another account. I got it mucked up anyway, not that it really matters—she gave the advice, and that is what really counted.

I think in your case, Senator Patterson, your service to this parliament and to Australia as a minister is something that we will all remember. Being a minister is a very difficult job—you cannot please everybody. As a matter of fact, you can only please very few people, but you were always quite forthright.
You were very good to your colleagues, who would come and ask you questions and try and get information. No question from a colleague was too much. I want to congratulate you, particularly on your service to the Australian public, the Australian Senate and to the government that you served in. I think it will serve you well in the future, because I know you have other things and other interests that you are moving on to. Your experience here is one that you can be immensely proud of. I certainly wish you well.

I come to Watto, Senator Watson. When I first came into this place I had spent eight years in the superannuation industry. I had not been here all that long when Senator Alston said, ‘I think you’d better get on the superannuation committee because I’m getting off.’ I think it was at the time he became deputy leader. I cannot remember the exact date. I spent four or five years with Senator Watson on the superannuation committee. Senator Watson, your contribution in that area alone is one that you will be remembered for. I had forgotten that there were some 58 reports—I was probably only involved in some probably 20 or 25 of them. You seemed to churn them out a lot more after I left. Probably they were quicker to write!

The service that you have given this place, the fact that you have been in the parliament for 30-plus years, is an achievement that hardly anybody will ever replicate. Thirty-plus years—it is a lifetime. It is a lifetime of service to the Australian public. It is a lifetime of service to the Senate. In every case I heard many people say that Senator Watson was probably the least political person in the chamber because all he wanted to do was the right thing, and that is true.

I should not digress, but I distinctly remember an occasion when we were in opposition in the early nineties and Senator Bob McMullan was on this side taking a bill through the parliament. Senator Watson was over the other side and moved an amendment. He moved it, spoke very eloquently and Senator McMullan stood up and said, ‘I’ve consulted advisers and it can’t be done.’ Senator Watson said, ‘Yes, it can.’ Senator McMullan consulted the advisers and said: ‘It can’t be done. It’s not possible.’ Senator Watson stood up and said, ‘Yes, it can; I’ll show you.’ He dashed around the back of this chamber, around the advisers. About two minutes later he went back to his seat and Senator McMullan said, ‘I accept your amendment, Senator Watson.’ Such was his knowledge of the taxation laws that were promoted in this country that I think Senator Watson left the impression on both the government of the day and his colleagues of being one person who was an expert in the area. When you have someone with that sort of knowledge it is respected by everybody in this chamber.

Senator Watson, you have, over the 30-plus years that you have spent in this place, left a mark that people will remember for a long time. I congratulate you for it. I wish you well in the future; I am sure that there will be many things that you want to do in the future. Wherever your future may lead you, I am sure you will make a positive contribution.

When a large group of senators is leaving this place it is both a sad time and a happy time, because we welcome a new crop of people who will come and make a contribution to this place. For those that are coming in, I think it would do them well to look back at what has been said tonight by a whole range of senators about those that are leaving. It would give them some indication of the sort of contribution they can make to this place if they apply themselves in the way that will best suit the chamber, the Senate and their responsibilities as the elected repre-
sentatives of the Australian public in this place. I look forward to the time when we can pay tribute to the retiring Labor senators, Democrat senators and others that might be leaving. But tonight is a special night for coalition senators, so, on behalf of all senators, can I say to each and every one of you: we wish you well.

**Senate adjourned at 11.41 pm**

**DOCUMENTS**

**Tabling**

The following government documents were tabled:


Airservices Australia—Equity and diversity program—Progress report for 2006-07.

Australian Communications and Media Authority—National relay service provider performance—Report for 2006-07.


Australian Military Court—Chief Military Judge—Report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2007.

Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency—Quarterly report for the period 1 January to 31 March 2008, and a report to Parliament under section 61 of the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998*.


*Migrant Act 1958*—Section 486O—Assessment of detention arrangements—Personal identifiers 413/08 to 436/08—Commonwealth Ombudsman’s reports.


NetAlert Limited—Report for 2006-07—Statement relating to exemption from reporting requirements.


Treaties—

**Bilateral**—


Text, together with national interest analysis, regulation impact statement and annexures—Australia-Chile Free Trade Agreement.

**Multilateral**—


Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:

[Legislative instruments are identified by a Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) number]

Civil Aviation Act—Civil Aviation Safety Regulations—Airworthiness Directives—Part—

105—

AD/A320/224—Hydraulic Power – Ram Air Turbine Georotor Pump [F2008L01904]*.
AD/AT-62—Horizontal Stabiliser Rear Spar Connector Fittings [F2008L01909]*.
AD/AT 800/9 Amdt 2—Engine Mount [F2008L01908]*.
AD/B727/101 Amdt 2—Rear Pressure Bulkhead Web [F2008L01912]*.
AD/B767/242—Airworthiness Limitations and Inspections – Fuel Systems [F2008L01923]*.
AD/BEECH 65/36 Amdt 1—Exhaust Augmenter Clamps [F2008L01714]*.
AD/BEECH 65/37—Electrothermal Deice Firewall Connector – Sealing [F2008L01715]*.
AD/BEECH 65/41—Fuel System – Placards [F2008L01717]*.
AD/BEECH 65/44—Flap Gearbox – Inspection of Gears [F2008L01718]*.
AD/BEECH 65/54 Amdt 2—Aft and Nose Hinged Baggage Door Latching [F2008L01720]*.
AD/BEECH 65/55 Amdt 1—Nose Baggage Compartment Door [F2008L01721]*.
AD/BEECH 65/59 Amdt 1—Elevators [F2008L01723]*.
AD/BEECH 76/13—Rudder Torque Lower Hinge Adaptor [F2008L01730]*.
AD/BEECH 77/13—Engine Control Rod Safety Washers [F2008L01751]*.
AD/BEECH 77/15 Amdt 1—Alternator System [F2008L01752]*.
AD/BEECH 90/1—Engine Oil Pressure Gauges – Modification [F2008L01753]*.
AD/BEECH 90/2—Firewall Fuel Shut-Off Valve Switches – Modification [F2008L01754]*.
AD/BEECH 90/18—Rudder Control System – Inspection [F2008L01763]*.
AD/BEECH 90/59—Elevator Control Horn Attachment – Modification [F2008L01781]*.
AD/BELL 206/172 Amdt 1—Power Turbine RPM Steady State Operation Avoidance [F2008L01925]*.
AD/CESSNA 180/57—Fuel Hose [F2008L01803]*.
AD/CESSNA 185/23—Throttle/Mixture Control Cable Attachment [F2008L01816]*.
AD/CESSNA 340/30 Amdt 1—Placards and Cabin Fittings [F2008L01831]*.
AD/CL-600/99—Fuel Tank Climb Vent Loop [F2008L01926]*.
AD/DAUPHIN/97—VNE Limitation [F2008L02076]*.
AD/DHC-8/141 Amdt 1—Elevator Centering Torsion Springs [F2008L01929]*.
AD/ERJ-190/10—Ram Air Turbine Deployment [F2008L01930]*.
AD/ERJ-190/11—Hydraulic Tube Clamps in the Fuel Tanks [F2008L01931]*.

AD/ERJ-190/12—Hydraulic Shutoff Valves [F2008L01932]*.

AD/ERJ-190/13—Cargo Doors [F2008L01933]*.

AD/F100/88—Engine Controls – Reverse Thrust Control Normal Maximum (Second) Detent [F2008L01937]*.

AD/FU24/66—Aileron Control Cables [F2008L01939]*.

AD/PA-23/31 Amdt 1—Rudder Trim Tab Control Rod – Inspection [F2008L01942]*.

AD/PA-28/43—Rudder Bar Assembly – Inspection and Modification [F2008L01875]*.

AD/TBM 700/50—Alternator and Vapour Cycle Cooling System Pulley Drive Assembly [F2008L01945]*.

106—

AD/ARRIEL/29—Low Fuel Pressure Switch [F2008L01906]*.

AD/THIELERT/9 Amdt 1—Engine – Clutch Assembly [F2008L02078]*.

107—AD/SEATS/29—Sicma Passenger Seat Inspection [F2008L01944]*.

Commissioner of Taxation—Public rulings—

Class Rulings—


Product Rulings—

Addendum—PR 2008/3.

Notice of Withdrawal—PR 2007/76.

PR 2008/56.


Customs Act—Tariff Concession Orders—

0802512 [F2008L01915]*.
National Health Act—Instruments Nos PB—

59 of 2008—Amendment declaration and determination – drugs and medicinal preparations [F2008L02048]*.

61 of 2008—Amendment determination – responsible persons [F2008L02051]*.

Navigation Act—Marine Orders Nos—

6 of 2008—Construction —Subdivision & stability, machinery and electrical installations [F2008L02064]*.

7 of 2008—Load Lines [F2008L02065]*.

Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act—Northern Territory National Emergency Response (Other Areas) Declaration 2008 (No. 4) [F2008L02079]*.

Remuneration Tribunal Act—Determinations—

2008/05: Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Public Office [F2008L01800]*.

2008/06: Specified Statutory Officers – Remuneration and Allowances [F2008L02069]*.

2008/07: Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Part-Time Public Office [F2008L02070]*.

2008/08: Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Full-Time Public Office [F2008L02072]*.

* Explanatory statement tabled with legislative instrument.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following answers to questions were circulated:

Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: Government Appointments and Grants
(Question Nos 118, 119, 120, 146 and 151)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion, 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 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) Senator the Hon Chris Evans as Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate will respond on my behalf.

(2) Current vacancies as at 20 February 2008

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Safety and Compensation Council</td>
<td>Deputy Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council</td>
<td>Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comcare</td>
<td>CEO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coal Mining Industry (Long Service Leave Funding) Corporation</td>
<td>Director representing companies engaged in black coal mining in NSW, Qld or Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council</td>
<td>Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Workplace Relations Consultative Council</td>
<td>One member representing ACTU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission</td>
<td>Member representing the ACTU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seafarers’ Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Authority</td>
<td>Member representing employers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(3) The Education, Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio manages a diverse range of grants on behalf of Government.

Delegates of the Minister approve grants. The majority of grants are appropriated through legislation for the education sector for schools, higher education and training providers. There are also grants for a range of other program activity appropriated through the Annual Appropriation Acts. Discretionary grant programs are payments made to applicants at the discretion of the portfolio minister or the paying agency and the description of the programs is in the respective annual reports as follows:

Department of Education Science and Training 2006-07: Pages 322-324
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations 2006-07: Page 218

Grants made by the Department in respect of Discretionary Grant programs for the period 1 July 2007 to 31 March 2008 are attached.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Title</th>
<th>Grants approved</th>
<th>No of Grants per Program</th>
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<tr>
<td>Child Care Services Support Appropriation</td>
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<td>Children’s Services Local Government Appropriation (LGA)</td>
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<td>COAG Skills Package</td>
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<td>Employer Demand Demonstration Project</td>
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<td>Enterprise and Career Education Program (ECEP)</td>
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<td>Industry Training Strategies Program</td>
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<td>National Programs</td>
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<td>Science Connections Program</td>
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<td>Strategic Intervention Program (SIP)</td>
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<td>Support for Small Businesses on Regional University</td>
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<td>Campuses Program</td>
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</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.

The honourable senator is welcome to attend Estimates hearings in future and request the information sought in this Question on Notice.

Veterans’ Affairs: Government Appointments and Grants
(Question No. 143)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, 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 Veterans’ Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) and (b) Senator the Hon Chris Evans as Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate will respond on my behalf.

(2) At the time of the honourable senator’s question there were two vacancies to be filled, both part-time members of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission.

(3) My Department has prepared the following spreadsheet detailing grants that have been approved during the period 3 December 2007 to 4 April 2008.

Major Commemorative Saluting Their Service Grants approved during the period 3 December 2007 to 4 April 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount Approved inc GST</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Purpose of Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Commemorative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>Ballarat City</td>
<td>An election commitment of $160,000 was approved for maintenance of the Ballarat Ex-POW memorial over 4 years at $40,000 per year (2007-08 to 2010-11) to Ballarat City Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Commemorative</strong></td>
<td>$11,000</td>
<td>Shrine of Remembrance Trustees - Victoria</td>
<td>Shrine of Remembrance Trustees - Peacekeepers Exhibition on 6 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service Commemorative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$3,994</td>
<td>12 Field Regiment</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the Australian War Memorial on 13 May 2008 followed by a light luncheon dedicated to the 12 Field Regiment (Vietnam).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vietnam) Associa-</td>
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<td>(Vietnam) Association -</td>
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<tr>
<td>tion - Gosford</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gosford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their</strong></td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Blayney Shire Council</td>
<td>Install an honour board in Millthorpe dedicated to all servicemen and women from the district who served in wars and conflicts in which Australia was involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service Commemorative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$3,750</td>
<td>Horsham Rural City Council</td>
<td>Install a Darwin Defenders Memorial at the Horsham War Memorial and Cenotaph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their</strong></td>
<td>$2,750</td>
<td>Port Stephens Historical</td>
<td>Hold a parade, commemorative service and luncheon in March 2008 to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of HMAS Assault. An exhibition of memorabilia connected to HMAS Assault will be on display at the Neil Carroll Rotary Park, Nelson Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service Commemorative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Society Inc - Nelson Bay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Kurrajong Colo RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Upgrade the Kurrajong-Colo War Memorial.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants approved during the period 3 December 2007 to 4 April 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount Approved inc GST</th>
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<th>Purpose of Grant</th>
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<tr>
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<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Blayney Shire Council</td>
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<td><strong>Service Commemorative</strong></td>
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<td>$3,750</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their</strong></td>
<td>$2,750</td>
<td>Port Stephens Historical</td>
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<td>Society Inc - Nelson Bay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Kurrajong Colo RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Upgrade the Kurrajong-Colo War Memorial.</td>
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<td>Program</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,350</strong></td>
<td>4/19 Prince of Wales’s Light Horse Regiment Unit History Room - VIC</td>
<td>Install a display case at the 4th/19th Prince of Wales’ Light Horse Regiment Unit history room to conserve and display 2nd/4th Armoured Regiment Group wartime memorabilia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,000</strong></td>
<td>Cooktown RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Install two plaques in Anzac Park, Cooktown dedicated to all veterans from the district who served in WWI and WWII.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,460</strong></td>
<td>Maritime Museum - Ballina</td>
<td>Install lighting at the Ballina Naval &amp; Maritime Museum to illuminate the wartime memorabilia on display.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,000</strong></td>
<td>Perth Diocesan Trustees for St George’s Cathedral</td>
<td>St George’s Cathedral Choir, Perth. Participation in Anzac Day Commemorations, Villers-Bretonneux, France, and produce booklet on history of Villers-Bretonneux Cross.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,970</strong></td>
<td>Peterborough RSL</td>
<td>Restore the Terowie War Memorial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,200</strong></td>
<td>1st Armoured Regiment Association Inc - Briar Hill</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the Australian War Memorial dedicated to the 1st Armoured Regiment Royal Australian Armoured Corps and commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,132</strong></td>
<td>2/1 Australian Anti-Tank Regiment Association - West Pennant Hills</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the Australian War Memorial dedicated to the 2/1st Australian Anti-Tank Regiment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$904</strong></td>
<td>2/33 Australian Infantry Battalion AIF Association - Cheltenham</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the base of a tree in the grounds of the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance dedicated to the battalion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,000</strong></td>
<td>3 RAR Corporation - Corinda</td>
<td>Dedicate a plaque at the Enoggera Barracks on 24 April 2008 dedicated to members of 3 RAR who lost their lives in action in Korea. The dedication will be followed by a luncheon for 100 attendees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,750</strong></td>
<td>4 RAR Battalion Association QLD - Calamvale</td>
<td>Hold a dinner in April 2009 in Canberra to commemorate the 40th Homecoming Anniversary of Charlie Company 4 RAR 7, 8 &amp; 9 Platoons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,000</strong></td>
<td>50th Anniversary and Book Committee - Wombats 12th Intake - Fadden</td>
<td>Publish a book titled ‘50 Years of Wombats’ to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the 1958 RAAF Apprentice and JEAT intake which commenced at RAAF School of Technical Training, Wagga Wagga in January 1958.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,000</strong></td>
<td>7th Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment Association Inc - Werrington County</td>
<td>Install a memorial in Alma Memorial Park, Uralla dedicated to the memory of soldiers of C Company 7 RAR (The Road Runners) who paid the supreme sacrifice during the Vietnam War.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$2,750</td>
<td>86 Transport Platoon Vietnam 2008 Reunion - Wellard</td>
<td>Hold a reunion to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the deployment of 86 Transport Vietnam back to Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,375</td>
<td>Aged Care Services Eighteen (Hallam) Pty Ltd - Southbank</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at the Hallam Residential Aged Care facility for use by residents on days of commemoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,639</td>
<td>Aged Care Services Four (Park Group) Pty Ltd - Southbank</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at the Cosgrove Park Aged Care Facility in South Launceston for use by residents on days of commemoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,375</td>
<td>Aged Care Services One (Central Park) Pty Ltd - Southbank</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at the Tamar Park Aged Care Facility in Lagana for use by residents on days of commemoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,639</td>
<td>Aged Care Services Three (Balmoral Grove) Pty Ltd - Southbank</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at the Balmoral Grove Aged Care Facility in Grovedale for use by residents on days of commemoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,639</td>
<td>Aged Care Services Twelve (Albury &amp; District) Pty Ltd - Southbank</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at the Albury &amp; District Private Nursing Home for use by residents on days of commemoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,375</td>
<td>Aged Care Services Two (Ronnoco) Pty Ltd - Southbank</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at the Ronnoco Nursing Home in St Albans Park for use by residents on days of commemoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,667</td>
<td>Anglican Parish of Port Adelaide</td>
<td>Replace two broken pillars holding up the roof of the World War I War Memorial located at the front of St Paul’s Anglican Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,190</td>
<td>Anzac Committee - Clarence Town</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at the Clarence Town Boer War Memorial Gates, where the community gathers on days of remembrance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,266</td>
<td>Arawata Community Hall Association Inc</td>
<td>Install an honour board at the Arawata Community Hall dedicated to veterans from the district who served in WWII.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorative Grants</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service</strong></td>
<td>$1,450</td>
<td>Australian Forward Air Controller Group - Gowrie</td>
<td>Hold a reunion in April 2008 in Canberra to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Forward Air Controller Group’s service in Vietnam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Amount Approved (inc GST)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,026</td>
<td>Australian Forward Air Controller Group - Gowrie</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the Australian War Memorial on 28 April 2008 dedicated to the Australian Forward Air Controllers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Australian Intelligence Corps Association - Bundall</td>
<td>Construct a memorial garden at the Defence Intelligence Training Centre at Bundall to commemorate members of the Corps who lost their lives during operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Australian Mining Corps Memorial Campaign Inc - Kirwan</td>
<td>Hold a permanent display including a bronze plaque at the North Queensland Military Museum at Jezzines Barracks, Townsville, dedicated to Australian Tunnellers from WWI titled ‘The Australian Mining Corps 1915-1918 Exhibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Avoca RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Construct a shelter over a 25 pounder field gun to avoid erosion. The gun is on display at the Avoca War Memorial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Avro Anson Project Committee - Brocklesby</td>
<td>Repair and restore an Avro Anson Engine and add explanatory information on its history at Blacksmith Park, Brocklesby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Balgownie War Memorial Fund</td>
<td>Install security system at the Balgownie War Memorial to deter further vandalism attacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$2,516</td>
<td>Balmattum Recreation Reserve Inc</td>
<td>Install a new honour board at the Balmattum State School with names of 15 servicemen from the district who served in WWII and three who served in the Boer War and three pioneers who served in the Boer War.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,320</td>
<td>Balranald Shire Council</td>
<td>Restore a 25 pound artillery cannon located at Kyalite. The cannon will be sandblasted and re-painted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Barham RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Construct new memorial gates to the entrance to the Barham Cenotaph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>Barunga West District Council</td>
<td>Upgrade the Alford War Memorial due to cracking of the Bakelite sheets and fading lettering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Barwon Health</td>
<td>Upgrade the mural wall in the Garden of Reflection and Remembrance in the grounds of the Geelong Hospital with the addition of Navy and Peacekeepers plaques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$847</td>
<td>Beaconsfield RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Plant 22 Silver Birch trees with accompanying plaques dedicating all who died during WWII.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Beenleigh RSL Sub-branch (RSA)</td>
<td>Install higher display cabinets in the Beenleigh RSL Memorial Room. At present the cabinets are too low for members to see the memorabilia effectively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Blacktown City Council</td>
<td>Hold the 2008 Blacktown Festival on 24 May 2008, which will honour and commemorate Blacktown City’s involvement in Australian Military history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commemorative Grants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$1,639</td>
<td>Blue Care - Yarrabee Centre of Care</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at the Yarrabee Centre of Care at Redland Bay for use by residents on days of commemoration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Bombala RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Restore the Bombala WWI Honour Board and erect a protective covering over the board. The honour board will be put on display at the RSL Club Rooms.</td>
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<td>Commemorative Grants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$2,305</td>
<td>Briagolong RSL (QLD) Sub-branch</td>
<td>Clean and restore the Anzac Park Memorial at Briagolong which is 80 years old and has never been professionally cleaned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Bundaberg Special School</td>
<td>Install a memorial in the grounds of the Bundaberg Special School for the use of students on days of remembrance.</td>
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<td>Commemorative Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$1,254</td>
<td>Bunyah Public Hall</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the Bunyah Public Hall commemorating veterans from the district who served in wars and conflicts in which Australia was involved.</td>
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<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$2,098</td>
<td>Carlyle Gardens RSL Townsville</td>
<td>Install two display cabinets at the Carlyle Gardens Retirement Village in Townsville to display wartime memorabilia donated by residents of the village.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Central Darling Shire Council - Wilcannia</td>
<td>Upgrade the surrounds and replace the fence around the Menindee War Memorial Cenotaph.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Clayfield-Toombul RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Install a memorial stone at the Clayfield-Toombul All Wars Memorial in memory of those who gave their lives in the service of Australia since the Nation began.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Commemorative Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>Coolum-Peregian RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Create memorial gardens around commemorative plaques at the Coolum Primary School, Coolum Christian College, St Andrews Anglican College, Peregian Community College and Coolum High School for use by students on days of remembrance.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Commemorative Grants</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Darwin High School</td>
<td>Restore submarine buoys which supported boom nets across Darwin Harbour during WWII. The buoys will then be put on permanent public display on a headland overlooking Darwin Harbour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commemorative Grants</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Deniliquin RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Restore a Krupp Field Gun located at the Deniliquin RSL Club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commemorative Grants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Amount Approved inc GST</td>
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<td>Purpose of Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$2,960</td>
<td>Derrinallum &amp; Lismore Community Association Inc</td>
<td>Install a plaque dedicated to soldier settlers from the Ettrick Estate, Derrinallum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Dr Catherine Blackmore - Geeveston</td>
<td>Publish a book ‘War, Medicine and the State’. This book will tell the soldier’s real war on the Western Front and his interaction with Repat and Repat doctors during the first 15 years of the scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$900</td>
<td>Elsmore Soldiers War Memorial Trust</td>
<td>Restoration of Elsmore Honour Board to original condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,750</td>
<td>Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) Association - SA</td>
<td>Install a plaque dedicated to the FESR in the Adelaide Naval Memorial Gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) Association - South Australian Division</td>
<td>Purchase a new banner for the FESR (Navy) Association South Australia as the original banner is in a poor state of repair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) Association - South Australian Division</td>
<td>Hold a dedication service followed by a luncheon in August 2008 at the Adelaide Memorial Gardens to unveil a plaque to commemorate the service of the FESR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Far East Strategic Reserve (Navy) Association NSW/ACT Division - Wyong</td>
<td>Erect a new war memorial in Woy Woy listing names of ships and those veterans from the district who served in Malaya with the FESR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,490</td>
<td>Fig Tree Developments Ltd - Safety Beach</td>
<td>Reimbursement to Brian Rickert of Fig Tree Developments Ltd for cost of flag pole to then Village Life Aged Care Facility in Safety Beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,935</td>
<td>Flinders Island RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the Flinders War Memorial dedicated to all veterans from the district who served during WWII.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Friends of the Skipton RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Attach a plaque on the Skipton War Memorial dedicated to Soldier Settlers from Skipton and district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Gloucester Historical Society Inc</td>
<td>Hold an exhibition of wartime memorabilia from the Boer War to the Vietnam War held by the Gloucester District Historical Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Granville Historical Society</td>
<td>Produce a DVD based on the experiences of servicemen from the Granite district who served Australia in times of war and conflict to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the end of WWI.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Greenbank RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Restore and display wartime memorabilia at the new Greenbank RSL club rooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,990</td>
<td>Hepburn Shire Council - Daylesford</td>
<td>Erect a soldiers settlers memorial at Sutton Park, Newlyn, dedicated to the original soldier settlers from the district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Hervey Bay Community Association</td>
<td>Construct walkway and wheelchair access paths at the Too-goom Community Hall. This will be stage II of the Memorial project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,200</td>
<td>Highfields RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Install a war memorial at Highfields. At present a temporary memorial is used on ANZAC and Remembrance Days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,671</td>
<td>Historical Arms &amp; Military Society Inc - Glenorchy</td>
<td>Hold a final memorial service and a luncheon on 23/10/07 for veterans of El Alamein and the 9th Division to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$418</td>
<td>Historical Society - Casterton &amp; District</td>
<td>Restore two honour boards located at the Dergholm Memorial Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,750</td>
<td>HMAS Shoalhaven Association - Rooty Hill</td>
<td>Hold a first and final reunion and plaque dedication for members of the HMAS Shoalhaven Association on 27 September 2008 at Bomaderry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Inglewood Shire Council</td>
<td>Improve access to the Inglewood War Memorial by concretising the sounds to allow veterans a smooth stable access to the memorial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,966</td>
<td>Innisfail State School</td>
<td>Install a community war memorial at the East Palmerston State School to be used by students and members of the community on days of commemoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Kadina RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Restore the Kadina Memorial Arch, which is dedicated to all veterans who served Australia in time of war and conflict and restore the immediate surrounds, by replacing paving, replanting shrubs and replacing the old wooden flagpole with aluminium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Karuah RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Upgrade the Karuah War Memorial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Kempsey Macleay RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Restore the Frederickton War Memorial location on Great North Road, Frederickton.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

**Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program</th>
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<tr>
<td>$3,000 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Korean War Veterans’ Association, Grafton Memorial Committee - Bushgrove</td>
<td>Hold a final reunion in Grafton, which will be held between 25-28 June 08 to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the cease fire of the Korean War.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,000 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Kurri Kurri RSL</td>
<td>Install a mural at the front of the Kurri Kurri Workers Club commemorating the service of veterans from the district who served in wars and conflicts in which Australia was involved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Lake King Progress Association Inc</td>
<td>Erect a commemorative plaque in Lake King Bicentenary Park, Lake King dedicated to all servicemen and women from the district who served Australia in times of war, conflict and peacekeeping operations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,000 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Lobethal Tapestry Weavers - Kangarilla</td>
<td>Design and weave a tapestry depicting the history of the Onkaparinga Woollen Mill, which produced cloth for the uniforms of servicemen and women during WWI and WWII and all the grey blankets that were issued.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,000 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>MECWA Community Care - East Malvern</td>
<td>(1) Create a memorial garden with a flagpole, lighting and a garden in the grounds of the MECWA Independent Living Units in Glen Iris for use by residents on days of commemoration. (2) Hold a morning tea for 80 guests at the initial flag raising.</td>
<td>Install an honour board dedicated to the Merchant Seamen at the Monument Hill Reserve in Freemantle and purchase a new Association banner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,730 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Merchant Seamen Association - WA</td>
<td>Install an honour board dedicated to the Merchant Seamen at the Monument Hill Reserve in Freemantle and purchase a new Association banner.</td>
<td>Install a Koreana Memorial Plinth in the City of Onkaparinga Memorial Gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,000 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Morphett Vale &amp; District RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Install a Korea Memorial Plinth in the City of Onkaparinga.</td>
<td>Install a unit history of the 16th Battalion in World War I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,000 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Mr Ian Gill</td>
<td>Install a unit history of the 16th Battalion in World War I.</td>
<td>Install a plaque at Elsie Laver Park in Mudgeeraba dedicated to the 16th Minesweeping Squadron.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$844 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Mudgeeraba Social Club</td>
<td>Install a plaque at Elsie Laver Park in Mudgeeraba dedicated to the 16th Minesweeping Squadron.</td>
<td>Install six commemorative plaques in Murrayville dedicated to veterans from the district who served in WWI. The plaques will replace six gum trees which were planted in their honour, but were removed due to safety issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,185 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Murrayville Liaison Committee</td>
<td>Install six commemorative plaques in Murrayville dedicated to veterans from the district who served in WWI. The plaques will replace six gum trees which were planted in their honour, but were removed due to safety issues.</td>
<td>Upgrade the QUOTA Memorial Park Memorial Wall to include plaques dedicated to those from the district who served in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and all Peacekeeping Operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,000 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>Nambour RSL</td>
<td>Upgrade the QUOTA Memorial Park Memorial Wall to include plaques dedicated to those from the district who served in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and all Peacekeeping Operations.</td>
<td>Install commemorative plaques as a tribute to National Servicemen including Citizen Military Forces 1951-1959.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,299</td>
<td>Naval Association of Australia - Darling Downs Sub-branch</td>
<td>Hold a memorial service and luncheon at the ‘Mothers memorial’ Queens Park Toowoomba on 4 April 2008 to commemorate the RAN involvement in the Korean War. This will be 55 years since the end of the Korean War.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Nerang RSL</td>
<td>Hold a commemorative service and dinner at the Nerang RSL Club in August 2008 to commemorate the battles of Coral and Balmoral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$2,250</td>
<td>No 3 Control and Reporting Unit - Williamstown</td>
<td>Hold a dinner on in November 2007 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the formation of No 3 Control and Reporting Unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Nowra Greenwell RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Refurbish the Greenwell Point War Memorial located in Anzac Park, Nowra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>OP Solace 15 Year Reunion - Townsville</td>
<td>Hold a 15 year reunion dinner in April 2008 at the Lavarack Barracks in Townsville commemorating the deployment of 1 RAR to Somalia in 1993.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Palm Beach RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Relocate the Palm Beach RSL Sub-branch War Memorial to a more prominent location closer to the club entrance and flagpole and due to a council approved building development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$616</td>
<td>Parramatta Museum</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the 4RAR (Commando) Museum dedicated to members of the battalion who were killed in action in Wars and peacekeeping operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,599</td>
<td>Payneham RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Install a display cabinet at the Payneham RSL Sub-branch to house War Memory books held by the sub-branch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$627</td>
<td>Peterborough RSL</td>
<td>Erect two flagpoles at the new Peterborough RSL Club premises for use on days of commemoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$2,550</td>
<td>Progress Association - Branxholme</td>
<td>Install a flagpole and erect a safety fence behind the Branxholme War Memorial which is located a few metres from the Henty Highway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>RAAF Association SA Division - Mitcham</td>
<td>Construction and dedication of a Civic War Memorial within the Soldiers Memorial Gardens in Mitcham. Mitcham City does not currently have a War Memorial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Rainbow Primary School</td>
<td>Research the service history of WWII, Korea, Vietnam and Peacekeeping veterans from the Rainbow district and produce honour boards to these veterans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Redlands RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Install a flagpole at Redland Memorial Bay, Neville Stafford Park.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$750</td>
<td>Resthaven Inc - Mitcham</td>
<td>Replace the flagpole at the Resthaven Aged Care Facility in Mitcham for use of residents on days of commemorations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,317</td>
<td>Returned Ex-servicewomen’s RSL Sub-branch Perth</td>
<td>Hold a reunion luncheon to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Returned Ex-Servicewomen’s RSL Sub-branch. This will be their last reunion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$172</td>
<td>River Heads Progress Association Inc</td>
<td>Install a memorial plaque in Progress Park in River Heads dedicated to the service of all those who served this country in all conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,150</td>
<td>Royal Air Forces Association QLD - 1269 - Riverview</td>
<td>Commemorative event to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the formation of the Royal Air Force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$978</td>
<td>Royal Australian Air Force Association Queensland Division - Cairns</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the Rocky Creek Memorial dedicated to the 19th &amp; 43rd Heavy Bombardment Groups, 8th Fighter Group of the United States 5th Airforce &amp; the Australian airmen who flew with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Royal Australian Navy Communications Branch Association ACT Branch - Rivett</td>
<td>Replace the existing RANCBA ACT banner with a new banner to incorporate the new Communications &amp; Informations Systems Badge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$968</td>
<td>Royal Australian Regiment - 3rd Battalion - QLD</td>
<td>Install a plaque at the Australian War Memorial dedicated to the 3rd Battalion Regiment Corps commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$2,750</td>
<td>Royal Australian Regiment Association - Northern Territory Branch</td>
<td>Hold a service at the Darwin Cenotaph followed by a reception at the Casuarina Sports Social Club on 15 May 2008 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral, and the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>RTFV 35 Squadron Council of RAAF Vietnam - Glenoria</td>
<td>Hold a presentation of US Air Medals at the Australian War Memorial on 4 April 2008 to members of Australian aircrew who were serving under US Air Force operational control during the Vietnam War. This will be followed by afternoon tea for 300.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,204</td>
<td>RTFV-35 Squadron Association - Arana Hills</td>
<td>Install a commemorative plaque at the Australian War Memorial dedicated to RTFV/35 Squadron.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Scottsdale RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Install a life size wood sculpture of Simpson and his Donkey at the entrance of Scottsdale Cenotaph Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Sherwood Returned Services Club - Corinda</td>
<td>Restore the Sherwood WWI Honour Board which was installed in 1917.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$1,320</td>
<td>Snowy River Shire Council</td>
<td>Restore and conserve the Snowy River Route March Roll of Honour, a significant historical document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>South Mandurah RSL Sub-branch - Falcon</td>
<td>Install a flagpole with an internal lanyard to prevent vandalism at the Dawesville War Memorial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Southern Mallee District Council (SA)</td>
<td>Hold a display that will recognise the contribution women made during war service. The display will also recognise a local nurse, Sister Florence Casson, a local nurse who was one of the nurses killed at Banka Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>St Joseph’s Church Nambour</td>
<td>Install two stained glass windows in St Joseph’s Church in Nambour, commemorating veterans who lost their lives while serving Australia in wars and conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>St Joseph’s Nudgee College - Virginia</td>
<td>Install a display cabinet at the St Joseph’s Nudgee Museum to exhibit wartime memorabilia held by the college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>Tenterfield RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>(1) Create a new display area at the Tenterfield RSL Club with the installation of three display cabinets to exhibit a large amount of wartime memorabilia held by the club. (2) Restore and preserve memorabilia and honour boards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>The Royal Australian Regiment Association South Australia Inc - South Australia</td>
<td>Hold a commemorative service followed by refreshments at the Torrens Parade Ground, Adelaide in May 2008 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Battles of Coral Balmoral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>Toorak Services Club</td>
<td>Install display cabinets to exhibit wartime memorabilia held at the club and install display cabinets to exhibit the memorabilia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Coolangatta-Tweed Sub-branch - Elanora</td>
<td>Install a plaque and hold a commemorative event at the Kirra Sports Club on 1 June 2008 to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral and Balmoral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$945</td>
<td>Vincenpaul Hostel (St Vincent de Paul Society) - Mont Albert North</td>
<td>Install a flagpole and plaque in the grounds of Vincenpaul Hostel in Mount Albert North for use of residents on days of commemorations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>War Memorial Committee - Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest</td>
<td>Install a ‘Touch &amp; Tell’ Interpretive facility in Anzac Park, Tea Gardens. The facility is a small metal post which houses a pre-recorded commemorative message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Wariialda &amp; District RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Replace the badly deteriorated Wariialda War Memorial with a new memorial to be located in Captain Cook Park.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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**Program** | **Amount Approved incl GST** | **Organisation** | **Purpose of Grant**
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Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $4,000 | Watsonia RSL | Erect a memorial and flagpole at the Cherry Street Avenue of Honour in Macleod dedicated to Australian servicemen and women who gave their lives in WWI.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $1,529 | Western Health Reg Geary House - Melton South | Install a flagpole in the grounds of Reg Geary House to be used by residents on days of commemoration.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $3,097 | Wilberforce School of Arts | Install an honour board at the refurbished Wilberforce School of Arts dedicated to the Wilberforce ex-servicemen and women who served in World War II.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $1,880 | Wingham RSL Sub-branch | Upgrade honour rolls at the Wingham Memorial Town Hall dedicated to veterans from the Manning Valley who served in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $2,420 | Wooloowin State School - Lutwyche | Attach a bronze slouch hat to the top of the Wooloowin State School War Memorial.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $3,600 | Woy Woy Ettalong Hardy’s Bay RSL Sub-branch | Preserve two honour boards at the Peninsula Centre at Woy Woy by enclosing them with glass fronted cabinets.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $1,792 | Yannathan Public Hall | Restore Honour Boards at the Yannathan Public Hall.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $2,000 | US Army Small Ships Association Inc - Coomba Park | Install a plinth and two plaques at Dawes Point Sydney, dedicated to the US Army Small Ships.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $2,458 | City of Lismore RSL - Sub-branch | Restore the Nimbin War Memorial Cenotaph in Allsop Park, Nimbin.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $3,000 | Dean Walsh / The Performance Space Ltd - Kensington | Back from Front’ is a large scale theatre production which explores the experiences of returned soldiers and particularly the impact of their wartime service on future generations.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $4,000 | Oakleigh Primary School | Re-locate the Oakleigh World War I Memorial Gates from a busy main road to the entrance of the Oakleigh Primary School.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants | $2,250 | Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia - TAS Branch | Hold a commemorative service and luncheon at the Launceston RSL Club on 21 May 2008 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the battles of Coral and Balmoral. Expecting 200 attendees.

**Total** | **$359,354** | | |
Veteran & Community Grants approved during the period 3 December 2007 to 4 April 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount Approved inc GST</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Purpose of Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$4,245</td>
<td>2/10 Field Regiment Association - Queensland</td>
<td>To assist with the cost of producing the Association’s Newsletter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$6,860</td>
<td>Adelaide Legacy</td>
<td>Legacy Club of Adelaide will conduct a series of yoga and art classes with a number of bus trips to address social isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$7,031</td>
<td>Adelaide Legacy</td>
<td>Legacy Club of Adelaide will install security camera monitoring system in rear car park of Legacy House to ensure safety of widows attending activities and functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$39,953</td>
<td>Alzheimer’s Australia - New South Wales</td>
<td>Help install disability access to the new dementia and memory centre. The centre will provide information and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$13,244</td>
<td>Ardrossan Sub-branch RSL</td>
<td>Upgrade facility - Purchase and install air-conditioning and carpets. Project addresses social isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Australian Federation of TPI Ex-Servicemen and Women - Tasmania</td>
<td>To assist with funding to allow members to take part in 5 full day outings per year for the next 3 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,556</td>
<td>Bakers Hill RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To purchase a computer, printer, photocopier and BBQ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$27,522</td>
<td>Berwick RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To assist with the cost of upgrading the kitchen facilities at the Sub-branch premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>Burnie RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Purchase Crockery for RSL to replace existing substandard stock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$18,935</td>
<td>Camberwell RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To assist with the cost of upgrading the toilet facilities and kitchen appliances at the sub-branch premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,520</td>
<td>City of Lismore RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Conduct two forums in Lismore and Ballina on 9 &amp; 10 April 2008 on advanced care planning for the veteran community and their friends and families. Invite guest speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$7,400</td>
<td>Claremont RSL (TAS)</td>
<td>Replace cupboards which, after 18 years are in a state of disrepair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$12,010</td>
<td>Clarence Valley Vietnam Veterans Association - Grafton</td>
<td>Purchase trailer equipped with bbq, gas, water tank, eskies and lighting for use by veterans and their families on retreats and bbq outings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Coburg RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Assist with the purchase and installation of a air-conditioner at the Sub-branch premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,720</td>
<td>Coffs Harbour RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Conduct 4 x 3 session courses in driver awareness for older drivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Drysdale RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To upgrade its bingo equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Amount Approved inc GST</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Purpose of Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,852</td>
<td>Dubbo RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Upgrade equipment at the Day Club including wireless headset microphone, table/stools, cd player, camera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$10,242</td>
<td>East Maitland RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Upgrade the kitchen at the RSL community hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$36,284</td>
<td>Forestville RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Help to finish setting up the facility including building a ramp and purchasing woodworking and metalwork equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$8,260</td>
<td>Freedom Day Club</td>
<td>To purchase equipment to help establish a Day Club program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,797</td>
<td>Geelong Legacy Club</td>
<td>To purchase computer equipment to enhance the production of its newsletter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,063</td>
<td>Glenorchy Bowls Club</td>
<td>To assist with purchasing 2 sets of yellow bowls as members are beginning to struggle with seeing the current dark bowls. Also to assist with purchasing material to build awnings on bowls green to shield players from the sun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$9,412</td>
<td>Harvester Day Club</td>
<td>To purchase equipment to help establish a Day Club program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$21,008</td>
<td>Kilcoy RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To make the Drop-in Centre safer - more comfortable and secure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$8,985</td>
<td>Launceston RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To install appropriate benches and a storage area to the kitchen at the RSL Sub-branch along with an air-conditioning unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$10,732</td>
<td>Launceston RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To install 2 air-conditioning units in the Flanders Room to alleviate hot conditions in this area in summer and provide warmth in winter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$31,120</td>
<td>Legacy Club Toowoomba</td>
<td>Provision of a mini-bus to enable Legacy widows greater access to the Drop-in Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$32,218</td>
<td>Lifeworks Community Care Inc-</td>
<td>Lifeworks Community Care seeks funds to provide mobile training in practical skills on computers for the veteran community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$6,096</td>
<td>Mallee Track Health and Com-</td>
<td>To purchase a range of equipment to support a strength-training program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$12,677</td>
<td>McLaren Vale Sub-branch RSL</td>
<td>McLaren Vale RSL will purchase chairs, tables, TV and entertainment system. Extend current range of activities to address healthy lifestyle issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,225</td>
<td>National Service men’s Associ-</td>
<td>To assist with bus hire for social outings to assist with decreasing isolation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount Approved inc GST</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Purpose of Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,608</td>
<td>National Service-men’s Association of Australia - Tweed Valley/Murwillumbah</td>
<td>To increase communication to older and frail members of the group by providing a monthly newsletter to members &amp; visitors .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,670</td>
<td>National Service-men’s Association of Australia - Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>Purchase colour copier and laptop to produce bi-monthly newsletter and colour leaflets and invitations for community and commemorative events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-branch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,690</td>
<td>Naval Association of Australia - Twin Towns Sub-branch</td>
<td>Provide four trips per year to interesting locations to stimulate social interaction amongst the participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,745</td>
<td>New Lambton RSL</td>
<td>Purchase 3 computers plus printer and software to conduct computer training and produce a bimonthly newsletter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,258</td>
<td>North Beach RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To purchase shirts, hats and water bottles for a walking group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,292</td>
<td>Ouyen Bowls Club</td>
<td>To assist with the cost of the installation of two fixed water cooler fountains, and the purchase of a variety of safety equipment for use at the bowls club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc - WA</td>
<td>To purchase a colour photocopier to produce newsletters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>Penguin RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To purchase 10 hip chairs to ensure the comfort and safety of members with knee and hip problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$7,486</td>
<td>Pinjarra RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To purchase a dishwasher for use in the sub-branch’s premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,348</td>
<td>Portland Group Legacy</td>
<td>To assist with the cost of upgrading the kitchen equipment at its premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$8,906</td>
<td>Power House Day Club</td>
<td>To help establish a Day Club program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,646</td>
<td>Queenscliff/Point Lonsdale RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To assist with the purchase of computer equipment to continue the production of its newsletter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,332</td>
<td>Queensland Ex-P.O.W. Association Inc - Gold Coast District Sub-branch</td>
<td>Portable PA System to assist members to hear speakers at social gatherings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Queensland RSL Bowls Association - Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>Bus hire to mix and match bowls events to enhance physical, social and mental well-being of participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>RAAF Association - North West (TAS) Division</td>
<td>To assist with bus hire for social outings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sub-branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Amount Approved inc GST</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Purpose of Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$13,340</td>
<td>Renmark RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Upgrade facilities to encourage veteran participation in activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,973</td>
<td>Rockingham RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To purchase a photocopier to produce a newsletter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>RSL Women’s Auxiliary Southern Division (TAS)</td>
<td>4 Social Outings per year for three years to encourage social interaction for isolated members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,007</td>
<td>RTFV-35 Squadron Association - Arana Hills</td>
<td>Establishing their Website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,221</td>
<td>Runaway Bay RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To provide the expanding membership with a quality newsletter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>Scottsdale RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To provide funding for socially isolated members to enjoy some social outings over the next 3 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,597</td>
<td>South East Asia &amp; Korea Peacekeeping Veterans Assoc, Inc - Queensland</td>
<td>To produce a newsletter for members who are spread across the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$7,216</td>
<td>South East Asia &amp; Korea Peacekeeping Veterans Assoc, Inc - Queensland</td>
<td>To provide social outings for members unable to do so on their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,399</td>
<td>South East Asia &amp; Korea Peacekeeping Veterans Assoc, Inc.</td>
<td>To be able to communicate to members at social functions, meetings and outings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,135</td>
<td>Sunshine RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To purchase a photocopier to continue the production of a newsletter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$4,183</td>
<td>T&amp;PDSA - Caboolture Sub-branch</td>
<td>To hold social outings for the Veteran Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$5,642</td>
<td>T&amp;PI Social Welfare Club - Sutherland &amp; District</td>
<td>Organise trips by bus and ferry each month for the veteran members of the TPI Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$1,962</td>
<td>Tasmanian Bowls RSL Association</td>
<td>To assist with social outings - to include transport to attend state bowls tournament in Dec-Jan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td>Temora Shed 4 Men Incorporated</td>
<td>Upgrade woodworking and metalworking equipment at the existing men’s shed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$9,304</td>
<td>The Royal Australian Regiment Association South Australia Inc</td>
<td>Royal Australian Regiment will facilitate a range of programs and activities that address physical/mental health and social isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$15,086</td>
<td>Tongala RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>To assist with the cost of updating the kitchen and installing air-conditioners at the Sub-branch premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Amount Approved</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Purpose of Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$6,069</td>
<td>Totally &amp; Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association of Australia - Newcastle</td>
<td>Purchase computer and printer for newsletter. Purchase projector and screen to show health promotion and information sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,493</td>
<td>Tweed Heads &amp; Coolangatta RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Dissemination of information that will provide opportunities for recipients to participate in and benefit from projects and activities that support a healthy quality lifestyle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,602</td>
<td>Ulverstone RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Purchase a computer and projector for production of newsletter and production/use in PowerPoint presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$19,827</td>
<td>Unley RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Upgrade of kitchen facilities for the Unley RSL Sub-branch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$4,250</td>
<td>Vietnam Veterans Association of Coolangatta-Tweed Sub-branch - Elanora</td>
<td>To produce a monthly newsletter to provide ongoing health education for Vietnam Veterans, partners and families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$4,650</td>
<td>Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia - ACT</td>
<td>Purchase a metal working lathe to expand the level of skills and challenges for the members of the shed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Walkerville RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Walkerville RSL Sub-branch will upgrade the toilet facilities in their clubrooms to sustain and enhance activities addressing socialising and healthy lifestyles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$8,800</td>
<td>Wallangarra RSL</td>
<td>Painting the Drop-in Centre at the RSL hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$8,460</td>
<td>War Widows Association - Tweed River</td>
<td>A program of five bus trips to reduce social isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>War Widows’ Guild of Australia - Burnie Sub-branch</td>
<td>Funding sought to assist with Bus Hire for Social Outings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$8,702</td>
<td>War Widows’ Guild of Australia - Launceston Sub-branch</td>
<td>To assist with purchasing 40 appropriately armed seats and 15 hip chairs. Current seating is plastic chairs. Meetings attract 60-75 ladies, with many weekly events attracting the same numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>War Widows’ Guild of Australia - Tasmanian Branch</td>
<td>To provide funding to enable members to take part in social outings. They plan on 5 trips per year for 3 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$3,127</td>
<td>West Wyalong RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Purchase projector, chairs, kitchenware for Goldminers Day Club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,120</td>
<td>Woden Valley RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Conduct 4 demonstration sessions including a taste test for the members of the ACT Eddison Day Club over four weeks. Aim to increase skills in preparation of meals/snacks, shopping, meal planning and nutrition for the elderly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tuesday, 17 June 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount Approved including GST</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Purpose of Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$7,166</td>
<td>Woy Woy Ettalong RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>Set up a new RSL Day Care club at Woy Woy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran &amp; Community Grants</td>
<td>$2,278</td>
<td>Yandina RSL Sub-branch</td>
<td>A mobile PA System to assist members to hear presenters at health and lifestyle seminars and while attending social/entertainment functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$664,907</td>
<td></td>
<td></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.

The honourable Senator is welcome to attend Estimates hearings in future and request the information sought in this Question on Notice.

### Housing Affordability

(Question Nos 189 to 224)

**Senator Cormann** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, upon notice, on 13 February 2008:

With reference to the Government’s pre-election commitment to release surplus land in order to help ease the housing affordability crisis: (a) since 24 November 2007, what land owned by the department or any agency in the Minister’s portfolio has been identified as surplus to requirements; and (b) what land is currently for sale or in the process of being sold.

**Senator Sherry**—The Minister for Finance and Deregulation has supplied the following answer to the honourable senator’s question, on behalf of all Ministers:

(a) Since 24 November 2007, the following land has been identified as surplus to the Commonwealth’s requirements*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPT/AGENCY</th>
<th>PROPERTY DETAILS</th>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airservices Australia</td>
<td>25 Stony Creek Road, Llandilo, Shanes Park.</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Information as of 16 April 2008.

(b) Information provided by agencies indicates that the following properties are currently for sale, or in the process of being sold*:

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<th>Property Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Airservices Australia</td>
<td>Lot 1001, Plan B000241, off Irvine Street, Tennant Creek.</td>
<td>NT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airservices Australia</td>
<td>Lot 15, Plan 79/073, Victoria Highway, via Katherine, Timber Creek.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airservices Australia</td>
<td>POR 966, OP 001367, Brunette Downs, Tablelands Highway.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airservices Australia</td>
<td>Lot 1462, Plan S73/045, via Stuart Highway, Elliot.</td>
<td>NT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airservices Australia</td>
<td>Section 44, Vol 5350, Folio 142, Mine site, Leigh Creek.</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Meteorology</td>
<td>41 Delta Circuit, Charleville.</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</td>
<td>31 Murarrie Road, Murarrie &amp; 1068 Wynnum Road, Cannon Hill, Brisbane.</td>
<td>QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Defence</td>
<td>Lot 3002, West Wattlegrove, Moorebank Area, Anzac Road, Moorebank.</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Senator Cormann asked the Minister for Human Services, 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 answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) Since 24 November 2007, there have been no cuts to the Human Services portfolio that have had specific impacts on federal funding, programs or services to Western Australia.

(2) Updated program estimates were 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.

Veterans’ Affairs: Western Australia

(Question No. 251)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, upon notice, on 12 February:

(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 Veterans’ Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) Nil; and (b) N/A

(2) (a) and (b) Updated program estimates was 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.

United Nations (Question No. 303)

Senator Kemp asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon notice, on 27 February 2008:

Can a coordinated time series be provided of all expenditure, grants and membership subscriptions, made by every government department and agency to the United Nations (UN), UN agencies and UN-associated entities (including peacekeeping operations) for the past 4 financial years, indicating the expenditures made by each department and agency and the UN agency or association that received it (including all regular budget, extra-budgetary and peacekeeping expenditure).

Senator Faulkner—The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the honourable senator’s question:

Data on core contributions made by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio to the United Nations (UN), UN agencies and UN-associated entities (including peacekeeping operations) for the four years 2003-04 to 2006-07 is provided in the table below.

To provide the detailed information sought in respect of all other government departments and agencies would entail a significant diversion of resources and, in these circumstances, I do not consider the additional work can be justified.

Foreign Affairs and Trade Core Contributions to United Nations (UN), UN agencies and UN-associated entities for the past four financial years (2003-04 to 2006-07) (A$’000)

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Foreign Affairs and Trade Core Contributions to UN International Peacekeeping Operations for the past four financial years (2003-04 to 2006-07) (A$’000)

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**AusAID**

- Yes. See Attachment A.
ATTACHMENT A
AusAID Core and Non-Core Contributions to United Nations (UN), UN agencies and UN-associated entities for the past four financial years (2003-04 to 2006-07) (A$’000)

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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<td>World Bank’s costs under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative</td>
<td>14,480</td>
<td>14,480</td>
<td>2,880</td>
<td>136,200</td>
<td>14,480</td>
<td>14,480</td>
<td>2,880</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations World Food Programme</td>
<td>32,800</td>
<td>7,872</td>
<td>32,500</td>
<td>136,200</td>
<td>32,800</td>
<td>7,872</td>
<td>32,500</td>
<td>136,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations World Health Organization</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>16,827</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>136,200</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>16,827</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>136,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>356,104</td>
<td>224,523.5</td>
<td>214,909</td>
<td>220,174.5</td>
<td>200,710</td>
<td>249,834</td>
<td>162,729</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Represents encashment amounts drawn down by the Global Environment Facility from the Reserve Bank.
2 Represents Australia’s core contribution based on negotiated burden share.
3 These are cash payments made to meet previously committed multi year replenishment contributions to the International Financial Institutions (IFIs).
4 These are cash payments made to meet previously committed multi year replenishment contributions to the IFIs.

Veterans: Compensation
(Question No. 308)

Senator Allison asked the Minister representing the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, upon notice, on 27 February 2008:

Can the following details be provided for each of the compensation payments made to Australian veterans since 1996: (a) the date of the payment; (b) the payment amount; (c) the nature of the compensable injury; (d) the legislative vehicle through which payment was effected; (e) whether the case was the subject of appeal and the out of that appeal; and (f) the cost of legal services associated with the case.

Senator Faulkner—The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

My Department has advised that it would take a considerable amount of resources to extract the information requested to cover all payments resulting from compensation claims since 1996. I am not prepared to authorise such a significant diversion of resources to answer this question.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Water
(Question No. 353)

Senator Allison asked the Minister for Climate Change and Water, upon notice, on 4 March 2008:

(1) With reference to media reports that, since the commencement of Murray-Darling Basin permanent water allocation trading, the cost of permanent water allocations has risen by 2 000 per cent over the past 2 years, what is the trend and the cost increase since the commencement of water trading.

(2) Acknowledging that trading occurs within the confines of the basin cap, to what extent is water trading increasing or decreasing the demand on the river relative to the cap.

(3) What is the incidence of ‘sleeper’ water allocations (that is, water allocations that have been inactive or underutilised coming to market), water theft, evaporation and other losses that increase the demand on the river and that have otherwise not been accounted for.

(4) What compliance measures are being considered to enforce allocations or adjust for unanticipated losses.

(5) (a) Has there been any purchase of permanent water allocations for the environment; (b) what has been the level of these purchases; (c) have they been purchased from the market; (d) were they purchased from willing sellers; and (e) how is it ascertained that these sellers were willing.

(6) What is the trend of water allocations being traded from grazing, farming or horticultural enterprises to managed investment schemes.

(7) What level of trading is occurring between districts or between states.

(8) What coordination is there between state governments.

(9) What is the level of participation of non-water users (speculative investors, state governments or others) within the market.

(10) What level of regulation applies to the water market.

(11) What review has been undertaken of the workings of the water market.

(12) Has there been any analysis of the financial impact, including the ability to pass on costs to end users by farming type (for example, graziers, dairy farmers, and horticulturists).

(13) (a) What assistance to farmers and communities experiencing hardship due to water price increases, reduced water allocations of a loss of productive farming capacity is being progressed; and (b) could this include interest rate relief, income support and/or walk-off and adjustment packages.

(14) What partnership programs, between government and farmers, exist for the transition to lower water use practices, infrastructure improvement or other drought-proofing activities.

(15) If it is commonplace for markets, such as the energy market, to be regulated or administered, has the appointment of a regulator of the water market with responsibility to administer, oversee and intervene in the market to achieve economic and community, social and environmental outcomes and with the power to suspend or restrict trading, prevent profiteering or speculation by non-water users, determine carryover, water banking provisions and emergency water supply measures and make all decisions

Senator Wong—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) Media reports on the 2,000 per cent increase in prices refer to trade in water allocations (temporary trade) and not to trade in water entitlements (permanent trade). Figure 1 shows the average price per megalitre of allocation trades in the Goulburn district of Victoria from 2002-03 to 2007-08. Although allocation prices vary across the Murray-Darling Basin, the observed trend in annual average prices in the Goulburn district is broadly representative of allocation trade. Water allocation
prices relate to the availability of, and demand for water within a year, and are therefore quite variable. By contrast, the price of permanent water entitlements has been more stable.

Fig. 1 – Temporary Water Allocation Prices in Goulburn district, Victoria

(2) The basin cap is set on a state by state basis. Within this cap water allocations are established periodically based on water availability. Trading in water allocations does not impact on demand on the river.

(3) Sleeper water allocations are monitored by state governments. Since the National Water Initiative (NWI) was introduced in 2004, progress has been made on separating land title from water entitlements which has reduced the incidence of sleeper water allocations.

While primary responsibility for managing illegal water diversions rests with the states, the Department is actively investigating a number of allegations about the diversion of environmental water from the Macquarie Marshes Ramsar wetland and is working with New South Wales authorities to audit water diversion structures in that area.

Irrigation corporations and other large water users have conveyancing licenses which take into account losses from evaporation.

(4) Water use is monitored by the state governments. Under the memorandum of understanding reached at the Council of Australian Governments’ (COAG) meeting on 26 March 2008, the Australian Government is willing to consider additional support for monitoring and enforcement activity by Basin States flowing from new obligations under the Water Act 2007 (Water Act).

(5) The current Australian Government Water Purchase Program was announced on 26 February 2008 with a budget of $50 million and the first tender process closed recently. Holders of water entitlements interested in selling their water to the Australian Government submit an expression of interest form. Sell offers are assessed against value for money criteria. Participation in the Program is voluntary.

On 20 May 2008, the Government announced the appointment of a Stakeholder Consultative Committee to provide input to the review of the first round of Government water purchase in the Murray Darling Basin. The Committee is comprised of twelve people with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise including irrigators, community members, environmentalists and water experts.
This group will be tasked with providing advice on how the Government can best respond to community concerns as the water purchase is progressed. In addition, the review of the water purchase program will assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of this initial stage of the program, and will be used to inform all subsequent water entitlement purchasing activity.

(6) Data on allocation trades is collected by State and Territory Governments but not in a form that identifies trade between types of agricultural activity or ownership structure.

(7) Regarding interstate trades, in 2004-05, there were 46 permanent and 368 temporary water trades between states with 5.2 GL of permanent water trades and 81.7 GL of temporary water trades. All water traded permanently during this period originated from Victoria, with South Australia receiving 4.8 GL (92 per cent) and New South Wales receiving 0.4 GL (8 per cent) of the total interstate water trades.

More recent preliminary data provided by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission indicates that during the period 1 July 2007 to 29 February 2008, the following out of state and district allocation trades were approved in the Basin States:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Out of State Trades</th>
<th>District Trades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2,042 (108,961ML)</td>
<td>959 (50,129ML)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1,317 (33,862ML)</td>
<td>7,790 (207,978ML)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>18 (686ML)</td>
<td>304 (29,572ML)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preliminary data shows a much lower level of out-of-state and district entitlement trades approved over the same period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Out of State Trades</th>
<th>District Trades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>0 (0ML)</td>
<td>317 (210,210 units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1 (200ML)</td>
<td>1,747 (181,558ML)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>0 (0ML)</td>
<td>108 (10,515ML)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(8) This question should be directed to the States. Co-ordination between the States is facilitated through COAG. COAG has asked that a forward work program covering the following areas be developed in 2008:

- extending the CSIRO Murray-Darling Basin sustainable yields project beyond the Basin;
- coordination of environmental water purchasing programs in the Murray-Darling Basin;
- national guidelines on over allocation, overuse and sustainable yield;
- accelerating interception commitments in the NWI;
- prioritising implementation of NWI commitments in relation to groundwater planning and management;
- reviewing structural adjustment programs;
- reviewing the four per cent interim threshold limit on permanent trade out of districts within the southern Murray-Darling Basin;
- improving water registers;
- a forward work program to enhance water markets;
- assessing the performance of water supply and wastewater systems in remote communities (including Indigenous communities);
- developing an enhanced urban water reform framework;
• actions on human resources and skills; and
• improving information and knowledge to support water reform.

(9) Data on water trade is collected by State and Territory Governments with some jurisdictions recording information on whether participants in the market are water or non-water users. For example Victoria has a 10 per cent limit on the amount of water shares in any water supply system that can be owned without being associated with land. In each water system there are separate 10 per cent limits for high-reliability and low-reliability water shares that can be held as unassociated water shares. Up-to-date information on the 10 per cent non-water user (NWU) limit within a defined water system can be found at the following web address:

(10) Water markets are primarily regulated under state legislation. Trading in water between states is conducted in accordance with principles agreed under the NWI and the Murray Darling Basin Agreement.

Water market activities (including trading and transferring) are not excluded from the operation of the Trade Practices Act 1974 (the TPA). The TPA contains provisions against anti-competitive conduct and unfair trading practices that apply generally across all sectors of the economy.

Within the Murray-Darling Basin water trading rules (the trading or transfer of tradable water rights in relation to the Basin water resources), market rules and charge rules will be made under the Water Act.

(11) COAG’s Working Group on Climate Change and Water is overseeing a work program on enhancing water markets. This program includes:
• by July 2008, a review of the four per cent limit on out of district permanent trade in the southern Murray-Darling Basin;
• ensuring that compatible water registers are in place by April 2009 and examining the feasibility of moving to a common national register; and
• a forward work program to enhance rural water markets comprising: actions to reduce transaction times and costs (including adopting standard form contracts and simplifying processes for approving trade); identification of constraints and actions necessary to remove barriers to trade and expand water markets into new areas, including rural-urban trade; and a review of the adequacy of existing regulation.

Other reviews conducted on the water market include the National Water Commission’s (NWC) ‘Biennial Assessment of Progress in Implementation of the National Water Initiative’; and NWC and Murray-Darling Basin Commission’s study on ‘The Economic Impacts of Water Trading’; and PriceWaterhouseCooper’s ‘National Water Trading Study’.

(12) The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) periodically produces publicly available reports based on farm surveys. The Department is currently funding an extension to the 2007-08 ABARE Farm Irrigation Survey. This funding will allow ABARE to expand its farm survey to include a statistically significant representative sample of irrigation enterprises from selected regions and industries in the Murray-Darling Basin. The survey results will provide irrigation industry stakeholders and Government with a better understanding of the economic characteristics of the irrigation industry in these regions.

(13) Programs for farm adjustment are administered by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Exceptional Circumstances assistance measures support drought affected farmers, rural communities and agriculture-dependent small businesses through income support, interest rate subsidies and free counselling. As at 16 May 2008, the Exceptional Circumstances Irrigators Manage-
ment Grant has provided funding of $126.8 million to 6,663 irrigators. Nearly 50 per cent of the irrigators in the Murray-Darling Basin have been provided with Government assistance.

(14) The $12.9 billion ‘Water for the Future’ initiative has allocated $5.8 billion for the Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program for water efficiency measures including upgrading irrigation infrastructure.

(15) The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) will be responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the Basin Plan which will include a sustainable cap on surface and groundwater diversions across the Basin. The MDBA will provide a Basin Plan in early 2011. Under the Water Act trading rules will be enforced by the MDBA as part of the Basin plan, and water market rules and water charge rules will be enforced by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

The COAG work program on enhancing water markets includes a review of the adequacy of existing regulation.

Australian Citizenship Advertising
(Question No. 387)

Senator Ellison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, upon notice, on 31 March 2008:

With reference to advertising aimed at promoting Australian citizenship and applications for Australian Citizenship: For each month since January 1997, or commencing when a monthly figure can be obtained after January 1997: (a) was there any advertising to promote Australian citizenship, applying for Australian citizenship or becoming an Australian citizen; and (b) how many applications to become an Australian citizen were received.

Senator Chris Evans—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(a) Monthly details regarding citizenship advertising are available from 2001. Table 1 (attached) provides details of advertising undertaken each month.

(b) Monthly figures for applications for citizenship conferrals are available from July 1997. Table 2 (attached) provides monthly figures for applications for citizenship conferral.

Table 1—Citizenship Advertising: 2001/02–2007/08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Year</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
<td>Adver-tising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions on Notice
Table 2—Total number of clients who applied for Conferral of Citizenship, by month, by program year: 1 July 1997–31 March 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997/98</td>
<td>11,235</td>
<td>9,645</td>
<td>8,832</td>
<td>9,100</td>
<td>8,630</td>
<td>16,051</td>
<td>6,380</td>
<td>6,327</td>
<td>6,726</td>
<td>6,054</td>
<td>6,992</td>
<td>5,797</td>
<td>101,769</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998/99</td>
<td>8,278</td>
<td>6,891</td>
<td>7,485</td>
<td>7,016</td>
<td>6,397</td>
<td>6,083</td>
<td>6,713</td>
<td>7,208</td>
<td>6,658</td>
<td>6,806</td>
<td>6,886</td>
<td>6,742</td>
<td>83,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/00</td>
<td>6,642</td>
<td>6,431</td>
<td>6,632</td>
<td>6,508</td>
<td>6,568</td>
<td>5,102</td>
<td>5,572</td>
<td>5,665</td>
<td>6,474</td>
<td>6,550</td>
<td>6,402</td>
<td>6,686</td>
<td>72,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>5,826</td>
<td>6,190</td>
<td>5,973</td>
<td>6,069</td>
<td>6,001</td>
<td>5,269</td>
<td>7,267</td>
<td>7,216</td>
<td>7,996</td>
<td>6,109</td>
<td>7,264</td>
<td>7,209</td>
<td>77,470</td>
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<td>2001/02</td>
<td>8,789</td>
<td>10,940</td>
<td>8,447</td>
<td>9,037</td>
<td>7,139</td>
<td>5,394</td>
<td>7,560</td>
<td>6,993</td>
<td>6,158</td>
<td>6,839</td>
<td>7,004</td>
<td>5,646</td>
<td>89,946</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>8,029</td>
<td>6,917</td>
<td>7,045</td>
<td>7,837</td>
<td>7,113</td>
<td>5,996</td>
<td>8,365</td>
<td>7,947</td>
<td>7,168</td>
<td>6,645</td>
<td>7,321</td>
<td>7,353</td>
<td>87,736</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>8,481</td>
<td>8,075</td>
<td>8,770</td>
<td>8,702</td>
<td>6,875</td>
<td>6,706</td>
<td>8,899</td>
<td>8,672</td>
<td>8,410</td>
<td>8,309</td>
<td>8,802</td>
<td>8,870</td>
<td>99,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>9,026</td>
<td>9,106</td>
<td>9,149</td>
<td>8,821</td>
<td>9,458</td>
<td>6,936</td>
<td>8,383</td>
<td>8,152</td>
<td>7,834</td>
<td>8,784</td>
<td>9,515</td>
<td>7,581</td>
<td>102,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>9,431</td>
<td>10,762</td>
<td>10,882</td>
<td>10,598</td>
<td>10,278</td>
<td>7,938</td>
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<td>9,913</td>
<td>8,381</td>
<td>12,421</td>
<td>10,779</td>
<td>120,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>9,947</td>
<td>11,504</td>
<td>14,478</td>
<td>14,048</td>
<td>12,951</td>
<td>10,544</td>
<td>12,173</td>
<td>11,260</td>
<td>14,781</td>
<td>13,611</td>
<td>17,706</td>
<td>16,106</td>
<td>159,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>11,352</td>
<td>13,939</td>
<td>21,189</td>
<td>2,194</td>
<td>3,447</td>
<td>3,264</td>
<td>4,207</td>
<td>4,957</td>
<td>5,554</td>
<td>70,103</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The monthly figures may add up to different yearly totals to those published in the annual report. This is because the end of financial year figures are ‘frozen’ at a particular time for official reporting, but departmental systems are dynamic and monthly totals may vary slightly depending on when reports are run.

Standards of Ministerial Ethics
(Question No. 401)

Senator Siewert asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 7 April 2008:

In regard to: (a) the Prime Minister’s ‘Standards of Ministerial Ethics’ dated December 2007; (b) the appointment of the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia, the Honourable Gary Gray AO MP; and (c) Mr Gray’s former employment by the Woodside group of companies:

(1) While not stated, do the Standards of Ministerial Ethics apply to parliamentary secretaries.

(2) Given that ministers are required to divest themselves of all shareholdings, other than through investment vehicles, such as broadly diversified superannuation funds or publicly-listed managed or trust arrangements, has Mr Gray complied with this requirement.

(3) Did Mr Gray accompany the Prime Minister on a tour of the Woodside offshore oil and gas platforms; if so, in what capacity.

(4) Given that, as reported in the West Australian on 22 January 2008, after touring Woodside’s offshore oil and gas platforms: ‘Mr Rudd said a slice of the revenue from large resources projects such as Woodside’s new Pluto development would be returned to the State over time’ and the ‘Prime Minister pledged to work side-by-side with Federal Resources Minister Martin Ferguson and Infra-
structure Minister [sic] Gary Gray to ensure the economic powerhouse of the nation continued to thrive’, will Mr Gray, having had a past personal association with Woodside, be allowed to make decisions that affect that enterprise or will this responsibility be passed to a senior minister or a minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

(5) Given the arguments between Australia and East Timor over maritime boundaries, the former Government’s role in encouraging Woodside in its efforts to overcome the constraints of the American sanctions law that sought to limit worldwide investment in Libya and the role Mr Gray, as director of corporate affairs for Woodside, played in these negotiations, will the Prime Minister ensure that Mr Gray takes no part in negotiations or deliberations pertaining to the oil and gas exploration and production industry.

(6) Given the role Mr Gray, as director of corporate affairs for Woodside, played in the negotiations on behalf of Woodside with Ms Clare Martin, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory in 2002, is it appropriate for him to be the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia.

Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) Yes. The Standards of Ministerial Ethics states: “All references to Ministers should be read as including Parliamentary Secretaries”.

(2) Mr Gray has advised the Prime Minister he has fully complied with the requirements of the Standards of Ministerial Ethics.

(3) (a) Yes.

(b) In his capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia.

(4) - (5) Mr Gray will continue to discharge his responsibilities as Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia.

(6) Yes.

Aged Care
(Question No. 403)

Senator Patterson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Ageing, upon notice, on 9 April 2008:

With reference to the Minister’s media release of 22 March 2008, ‘Better protection for frail aged Australians’, which states that the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency has been instructed to undertake a record 7,000 visits (up from 4,000) to aged care facilities across the nation:

(1) Is this over and above the increased number of accreditation visits required for compliance in 2008.

(2) Are the 3,000 extra visits solely spot checks; if so, will they be undertaken on a yearly basis.

(3) (a) How many inspectors currently carry out spot checks; and (b) how many new inspectors will be employed to undertake the increased number of spot checks.

(4) (a) How many staff does the agency currently employ; and (b) how many staff will the agency employ once the increased number of spot checks is underway.

(5) What processes does the agency have in place to implement the spot checks.

(6) Will further funding be provided in the Budget to implement the spot checks.
Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) Yes.

(2) The 7,000 visits will be a combination of announced and unannounced visits. The Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency (the Agency) is obliged to undertake at least one unannounced visit to each home, annually, and will undertake more if necessary.

(3) (a) There are 420 aged care quality assessors registered with the registrar, Registrar Accreditation Board Quality Society of Australasia (RABQSA) International; and

(b) The Agency uses a combination of employed, short term contract and casual assessors as required from the pool of 420 registered aged care quality assessors to meet operational requirements.

(4) (a) As at 30 April 2008, the Agency employs 181 full-time, part-time and contracted employees who manage the day-to-day operational requirements of the Agency,

(b) Workforce planning for 2008-09 has not been finalised.

(5) Unannounced visits are conducted without prior notice given to the home. Assessors are trained in, and use, the audit processes and methodologies as set out in the Audit Handbook, and the Results and Processes Guide. They also use the assessment modules to guide their onsite activity. These are available on the Agency’s website, www.accreditation.org.au.

(6) Funding for the Agency’s visits for 2008-09 will be determined by the Government.

Aged Care

(Quarter No. 405)

Senator Patterson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Ageing, upon notice, on 9 April 2008:

With reference to the Minister’s media release of 26 March 2008, ‘Federal Government issues challenge to Opposition to support new tough measures to improve quality in Australia’s aged care facilities’, in which an undertaking is provided to strengthen the powers of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency, can details be provided of how the powers of the agency will be strengthened.

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

Measures to improve the quality of care in Australia’s aged care facilities are currently being assessed by the Government and details of these improvements will be released to the aged care sector for discussion in coming months.

Commonwealth Own-Purpose Outlays

(Quarter No. 408)

Senator Patterson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Ageing, upon notice, on 9 April 2008:

Can the formula for the Commonwealth Own Purpose Outlays and a breakdown of the components for the formula be provided?

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

Different indexation arrangements are applied to different Commonwealth Own Purpose Outlays.
Dr Mohamed Haneef
(Question No. 410)

Senator Nettle asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 10 April 2008:

(1) Can an outline be provided, of the work currently being conducted by Australian Federal Police staff working on the case relating to Dr Mohamed Haneef, as of 4 April 2008.

(2) Does the work referred to in paragraph (1) relate to any new evidence since the charges against Dr Haneef were dropped.

(3) Can an update of the total cost of the case to date be provided.

Senator Ludwig—The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) No. I am advised by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) that the investigation remains ongoing and as such no further comment can be made.

(2) Please see answer at part 1.

(3) I am advised that as at 31 March 2008, the total cost of Operation Rain (the investigation assisting the UK Metropolitan Police in relation to the Glasgow and London bombings 29 and 30 June 2007) was $8,280,052. At this time, it is not possible to provide costs any later than as at 31 March 2008.

Commonwealth Property Leases
(Question No. 417)

Senator Milne asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 16 April 2008:

Can a list be provided of building leases signed since the Australian Labor Party formed Government in 2007, including details of each building’s Australian Building Greenhouse Rating.

Senator Wong—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

There is no centralised collection of information on office accommodation used by Commonwealth agencies. Decision making on property leasing was progressively devolved to individual agencies commencing in 1989.

Rain Enhancement Technology Trial
(Question No. 418)

Senator Milne asked the Minister for Climate Change and Water, upon notice, on 16 April 2008:

Were the contracts with the Australian Rain Corporation and the University of Queensland in relation to the trial of the rain enhancement technology signed during the caretaker period prior to the 2007 Federal Election; if so: (a) did these contain clauses allowing the contract to be rescinded following a change of government; if not, why not; and (b) what was the wording of these clauses.

Senator Wong—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

The policy decision to execute contracts between the National Water Commission and the Australian Rain Corporation (ARC) and the University of Queensland was approved before the caretaker period (on 15 October 2007). The contract with the ARC was executed during the caretaker period, the contract with the University of Queensland was not.

(a) The two funding deeds provide for the Australian Government to terminate the contract at any time by written notice.
(b) Under the “Termination with Costs” clause of the funding deeds, the Australian Government is required to pay any reasonable costs incurred as a result of the termination and any funding payments which have fallen due under the two funding deeds, to the extent the funds are required to meet the Australian Government’s share of the monies spent or committed for the project. In addition, for payments already made, the Australian Government is entitled to recover any unspent or uncommitted monies.

**Water**

(Question No. 419)

**Senator Milne** asked the Minister for Climate Change and Water, upon notice, on 16 April 2008:

The Government’s election policy document, ‘Labor’s national plan to tackle the water crisis’, dated November 2007, set an aspirational target that by 2020 all Australian homes, where suitable, will have appliances such as rainwater tanks and grey water reuse systems: Since forming Government, what steps has the Australian Labor Party taken to ensure that this target will be achieved.

**Senator Wong**—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

The Australian Government has announced Water for the Future that includes $250 million for a National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative. By providing rebates for households to install rainwater tanks and greywater systems, this program will support the very many Australians who are prepared to take personal responsibility for conserving our water supplies.

**Melville Island**

(Question No. 422)

**Senator Siewert** asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 22 April 2008:

1. (a) Has the department carried out an investigation into breaches of legally binding environmental conditions in relation to the Great Southern Limited (GSL) forest conversion project on Melville Island, Northern Territory; and (b) has the investigation been completed.
2. (a) Has the department reported on its findings; and (b) will the report be made public.
3. (a) Has the matter been referred to the Australian Government Solicitor or any other Commonwealth legal agency for advice on prosecution; (b) has this advice been received by the department or the Minister; (c) what does the advice say in regard to the breaches and the need for prosecution to occur; and (d) will this advice be made public.
4. When will GSL be prosecuted for breaches of its legally binding environmental conditions on Melville Island.
5. Will GSL be required to rehabilitate the areas of native forest habitat it illegally cleared on Melville Island.

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

1. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has been investigating alleged breaches of approval conditions made under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) for this project. This investigation is not yet finalised.
2. (a) No
   (b) Once the Department’s investigation is complete and any decisions taken about compliance action, the Minister will consider whether to make a statement.
(3) The department has engaged the Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) to assist and provide advice related to aspects of the investigation. This advice is legally privileged and will not be publicly released.

(4) It is premature to say what action might follow the completed investigation.

**Immigration Detention**

(Question No. 423)

Senator Allison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, upon notice, on 28 April 2008:

With reference to the answer provided to question on notice no. 24 from additional estimates hearings of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee in regard to 29 people held in immigration detention after having their visas cancelled: Can the Minister advise for each detainee: (a) their country of origin; (b) their overall length of stay in Australia; (c) the age they entered Australia; (d) the number of days spent in detention; (e) the detention centre they are held in; (f) the crimes they were convicted of under Australian law; (g) the reason for their detention; and (h) the action being undertaken to resolve their status.

Senator Chris Evans—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

Since providing a response to the question on notice no. 24, three individuals have had their immigration status resolved and are no longer in immigration detention. Further review of this data indicated that one person had been incorrectly identified as being transferred directly from prison to detention. In this case, the person had not had a criminal conviction in Australia and did not spend time in prison. Therefore, this person has been removed from this response.

There are now 25 people remaining in immigration detention identified in the earlier groups.

To ensure each individual’s privacy is protected, my Department has grouped the data to prevent the identification, or potential identification, of any one person.

The information provided in the initial response to Senator Allison was current as of 12 March 2008. In this response we have included the latest information and is current as at 7 May 2008.

(a) The countries of origin of the 25 individuals are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Vincent &amp; the Grenadines</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(b) The overall lengths of stay in Australia have been grouped into the following ranges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of stay (years approx.)</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) The ages of the 25 individuals when they first entered Australia have been grouped into the following ranges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) The number of days the 25 individuals have spent in detention have been grouped into the following ranges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of days</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-150</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-200</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-250</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251-300</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-500</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-600</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601-950</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>951-1000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001-1100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(e) The detention centres the 25 individuals are currently located in are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detention centre</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villawood (NSW)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maribyrnong (VIC)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth (WA)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(f) The 25 individuals were convicted of a number of crimes under Australian law which resulted in their visa cancellation under section 501. The majority of individuals have had multiple convictions which are provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child sex offences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder, manslaughter, kidnapping</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent robbery, armed robbery, assault</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual bodily harm, grievous bodily harm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malingious wounding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break and enter, break enter and steal, larceny, auto theft, burglary, theft, shoplifting</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug importation, supply, possession</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted administration, firearms offences</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malicious/property damage</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession stolen/prohibited goods, receiving</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stolen goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape lawful custody</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trespass, perjury</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving offences</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(g) Once an individual has had their visa cancelled or refused under s501 of the Migration Act 1958 (the Act), they become an unlawful non-citizen. An unlawful non-citizen must be detained in accordance with section 189 of the Act and kept in immigration detention until they have either been removed from Australia or granted a visa.

(h) All unlawful non-citizens located in an immigration detention centre are removed as soon as practicable. There may be a number of reasons that prevent a person’s immediate removal, which includes active litigation, administrative or judicial review and issues surrounding the acquisition of the person’s travel documentation.

In regard to these 25 individuals:

- 9 are currently engaged in some form of Ministerial Intervention option and each case will be assessed on its individual merits;
- 12 are currently engaged in litigation action. Each process must be allowed to progress uninterrupted and will be determined upon its individual merits;
- 2 have current protection visa applications being processed. Each application will be assessed on its individual merits; and
- 2 are currently awaiting the acquisition of their travel documents. The Department is actively working with the authorities to achieve this outcome and they will be removed as soon as practicable. Prior to seeking travel documents, these individuals were afforded judicial review/appeal rights which prevent their removal.

**AusAID Family Planning Funding**

*(Question No. 425)*

Senator Allison asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs upon notice, on 30 April 2008:

(1) Given that the provision of family planning services will be fundamental to the achievement of a number of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly goals MDGs 4 and 5: (a) what percentage of AusAID funding is spent specifically on family planning activities; (b) what percentage of family planning activity spending is spent on: (i) education, (ii) service delivery, and (iii) contra-
ceptive supply; (c) what type of contraceptive methods were provided with AusAID funding in the last reporting period; and (d) what percentage of AusAID funding is spent on reproductive health in general, including HIV/AIDS.

(2) How does current expenditure on family planning activities compare, in real percentage terms, to expenditure prior to the introduction of the AusAID Family Planning Guidelines.

Senator Faulkner—The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the honourable Senator’s question:

(1) (a) Estimated expenditure on family planning activities for 2007-2008 is $2.85 million. This represents 0.09 per cent of projected ODA expenditure for this financial year.

(b) AusAID is unable to disaggregate expenditure data to this level.

(c) Australian aid funds can only be used to purchase contraceptives which are registered in Australia. The contraceptives purchased with aid program funds in 2007-2008 included:

- Contraceptive – hormonal, oral solids – Oral Contraceptives
- Contraceptive – Intrauterine devices (IUDs)
- Contraceptive barrier – Condoms
- Contraceptive Solutions – Injectable
- Emergency Contraceptive Pills – Postinor 2 and Pregnon

(d) In 2007-2008 the estimated percentage of ODA allocated to reproductive health activities, including HIV, is 5.3 per cent.

(2) The Family Planning Guidelines were introduced in 1996. The table below outlines expenditure on family planning activities, as a percentage of ODA, before and after the introduction of the Family Planning Guidelines.

The drop in funding between 1995-96 and 1996-97 can be attributed to a number of large activities concluding. For example an AusAID supported $1.2 million UNFPA Information, Education and Communication program in regional South East Asia was completed in 1995-96. Eleven other regional and country specific activities concluded in 1995-96. In 1997-98 six new family planning activities commenced.

The figures since 1997 do not reflect the increasing amount of funding that has been provided to improving broader health delivery and to HIV initiatives, which have in part subsumed stand alone family planning projects.

1995-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family planning $A</td>
<td>6,871,857</td>
<td>2,831,596</td>
<td>3,675,633</td>
<td>3,894,528</td>
<td>3,525,771</td>
<td>1,789,975</td>
<td>1,700,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As % of total ODA</td>
<td>0.44%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Australian ODA</td>
<td>1,559,903,322</td>
<td>1,432,352,254</td>
<td>1,443,300,493</td>
<td>1,531,300,228</td>
<td>1,752,343,960</td>
<td>1,638,894,452</td>
<td>1,765,814,117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2002-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>07/08 Estimates*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family planning</td>
<td>2,010,306</td>
<td>2,003,139</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>3,125,000</td>
<td>2,280,000</td>
<td>2,850,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As % of total ODA</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Australian ODA</td>
<td>1,840,696,454</td>
<td>1,986,447,085</td>
<td>2,211,077,773</td>
<td>2,673,805,315</td>
<td>3,079,398,343</td>
<td>3,155,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Estimated expenditure in the 2007-08 AusAID Budget