



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MS HELEN WILLIAMS**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 9 September 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Bowen, Chris, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

**Mr BOWEN** (Prospect—Minister for Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law and Minister for Human Services) (4.08 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence: Friday will mark the retirement from the Australian Public Service of Ms Helen Williams, who is present with us in the Speaker's gallery today. Helen has been the Secretary of the Department of Human Services since May 2007. However, Ms Williams has been a departmental secretary or equivalent since 1985—over a quarter of a century of service at the highest levels of the Australian Public Service. She was appointed Secretary of the Department of Education in January 1985. She subsequently served as Associate Secretary of the Department of Employment, Education and Training, Associate Secretary of the Department of Transport and Communications, Associate Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Secretary of the Department of Tourism, Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Public Service Commissioner and Secretary of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

Importantly, Helen was the first female departmental secretary in Australian history. She is also the longest serving departmental secretary currently serving, and I am advised that she has served longer as secretary or secretary equivalent than any other individual in Australian history bar one, Sir Robert Garran. Helen has been a trailblazer for women in the Public Service and has been involved in an enormous array of public sector reforms.

I have personally appreciated her counsel and support in my brief period as Minister for Human Services. Helen is well known for her support of the professional development of those under her management. This means that, although she leaves the Public Service on Friday, the qualities of rigour, independence and dedication that she has instilled in her colleagues will remain as perhaps her most valuable legacy.

I thought it was important that the House mark this important milestone and I know that the Prime Minister would like to add to these remarks. I know the whole House will join me in wishing Helen all the best for a very well-earned retirement.

**Honourable members**—Hear, hear!