Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (8.54 pm)—I move:

That the House welcomes the news of recent progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular:

1. recognises there has been a substantial decline in the proportion of people living on less than US$1 dollar a day and a substantial increase in the proportion of people with access to clean water;

2. acknowledges that despite some progress, a number of MDGs are off track and that a business as usual approach will mean the MDGs will not be met globally by 2015;

3. notes its concern that in a world of plenty there are still unacceptably high child and maternal mortality rates in the developing world;

4. recognises that progress toward the MDGs is being hampered by the global financial crisis, the global food crisis and the global effects of climate change;

5. welcomes Australia’s progress on developing a global partnership for development while recognising that our progress falls short of the aspirations we expressed when joining with the nations of the world to set the MDGs; and

6. acknowledges Australia needs to turn its aspirations into actions that draw us closer to achieving the MDGs by 2015.

The Millennium Declaration set 2015 as the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which established quantitative benchmarks to halve extreme poverty in all its forms. With less than six years to go the world finds itself dealing with the worst financial crisis in more than 75 years. The GFC means that the MDGs are now threatened by sluggish or negative economic growth, diminished resources and fewer trade opportunities for developing countries. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2009 provides a snapshot of global progress towards achieving these goals. It confirms that while progress has been made the international community must redouble efforts to ensure the goals are achieved by 2015.

The report estimates that the global recession will lead to 90 million more people falling into extreme poverty and threatens to slow or halt progress in developing countries towards achieving their MDG targets. Despite the global economic crisis the target for reducing income poverty remains within reach at the global level, based on current growth projections. The goals for gender parity in primary and secondary education and for access to safe water have also seen relatively good progress and are expected to be met by 2015.

Of greatest concern are the non-income human development goals. Based on a business-as-usual approach, most human development MDGs—especially for child and maternal mortality, but also for primary school completion, nutrition and sanitation—are unlikely to be met at the global level. On 11 September, UNICEF announced the results of a tracking study by the World Health Organization, World Bank and UNICEF. Their study shows that the number of children dying from hunger and disease has fallen 28 per cent since 1990. In 2008, 8.8 million children died—down from 12.5 million in 1990. This is 10,000 fewer children dying every day, but that still leaves more than 20,000 children dying each day.

A key to this reduction in child deaths has been immunisation for measles, use of insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria and vitamin A supplements to prevent blindness and to fight infection. Despite such progress more still needs to be done to help countries reach the MDG target of cutting child deaths by two-thirds by 2015. The Rudd government recognises that our efforts must be redoubled and has put accelerating progress towards the MDGs at the centre of Australia’s aid program. Australia is making greater investments in the key MDG sectors, such as education, health and environmental sustainability, and we are directing resources to support economic growth and infrastructure development, which in the long term also helps address poverty.
We are working with developing countries to support achievement of the MDGs through assistance at country, regional and global levels. Following the Prime Minister’s 2008 Port Moresby declaration, Australia is establishing partnerships for development to achieve better development outcomes in the Pacific, including more rapid progress towards MDG targets. The Cairns compact adopted by Pacific Islands Forum leaders in August 2009 provides a vital platform to improve government effectiveness and better coordinate development resources to advance the MDGs. Australia is also broadening and deepening our engagement in Africa, with increased development assistance to support Africa’s progress towards the MDGs.

In 2009-10 Australia will provide an estimated $3.8 billion in official development assistance, comprising 0.34 per cent of gross national income, on track to the government’s on-going commitment to increase official development assistance to 0.5 per cent of GNI by 2015-16.

The Pacific Partnerships for Development will be a mechanism to provide better development outcomes for the Pacific island nations and to accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Partnerships have been signed with Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga and Nauru. Australia’s estimated official development assistance to Africa in 2009-10 is $163.9 million to support Africa’s achievement of the MDGs and to contribute to humanitarian assistance and support in Zimbabwe.

In 2009-10, Australia will continue to implement the 2008-09 budget measure, UN partnerships for the MDGs, which provides $200 million over four years in core contributions to key UN agencies to support the MDGs. It was my privilege, on 14 September, as co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of the Millennium Goals to welcome delegates from the 2009-10 Micah Challenge Voices for Justice conference. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)—Is the motion seconded?