



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**McMillan Electorate: Sing Australia**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 25 May 2010**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 25 May 2010  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Broadbent, Russell, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
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**Mr BROADBENT** (McMillan) (4.33 pm)—Recently I received a card from Val McCormack, representing the Sing Australia group at Warragul. She asked if I would come around and see what they do, and I eventually got round to it. They were at the Salvation Army Hall. The conductor was John Steven, Val McCormack was my contact and the pianist was Bob Yuill. I met this amazing group of people—and I mean a really amazing group of people—drawn from all facets of life, who come together to sing once a week. They were energetic, disciplined and had wonderful timing and good humour. They were clearly social supports for each other.

I heard them sing *Georgia on my mind*, and they were kind enough to ask me to speak to them for a few minutes. Those of you who know me a little bit better than others will know that I have a history in this area. I discussed with them what I looked like in my twenties, when I wore the white stretch-cotton jumpsuit, the navy stretch-cotton jumpsuit or the outfits that flowed, and the fact that when I performed I had some 12 changes of clothing each night. We discussed these things. It got better than that. We were fairly frank with one another. Nobody in this room has suffered four federal defeats, as I have. I told them that part of my reconstruction, being brought back into public life, was the fact that I was cajoled into playing the part of the priest in the local production of *Les Misérables*. I explained to them that that is why I can still say to people today that I am a former priest. After we spoke, one lovely lady said, ‘When I look in the paper and see a picture of you now, Russell, I’ll have a totally different view of my local politician!’

This organisation apparently came out of stress money, drought money, from the federal government. It grew out of that and now it is all over Australia. I congratulate them on what they do. I love the way that they are supporting one another when many of them have obviously been through life’s difficulties—whatever they were—and yet there they were, freezing cold, in the place and ready to sing for the night. I did not stay for *The girl from Ipanema* because it means a bit too much to me, especially when they go: ‘A-a-ah.’ I knew they would do that very well, so I snuck out before then. Let me congratulate them. I would like to wish them all the best in their endeavours and, as they go into the end-of-year period, when they get busier and busier and are called on to sing for people, I hope they have a wonderful year and a wonderful build-up to Christmas.