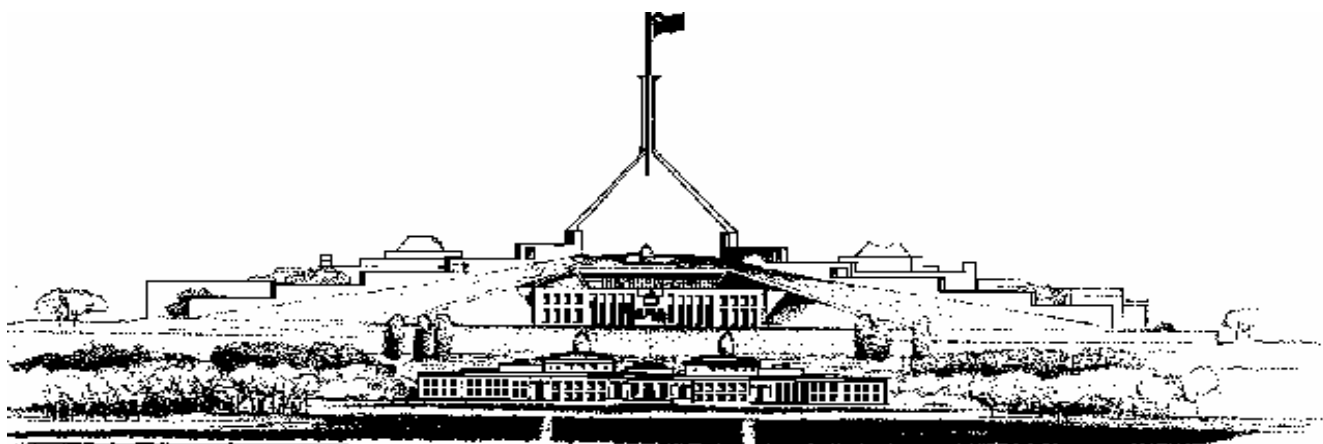




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 2, 2004

Monday, 29 November 2004

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SITTING DAYS—2004

| Month | Date |
|----------|--|
| February | 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19 |
| March | 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 |
| April | 1 |
| May | 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31 |
| June | 1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24 |
| August | 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 30, 31 |
| November | 16, 17, 18, 29, 30 |
| December | 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 |

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| <i>NEWCASTLE</i> | 1458 AM |
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| <i>BRISBANE</i> | 936 AM |
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| <i>ADELAIDE</i> | 972 AM |
| <i>PERTH</i> | 585 AM |
| <i>HOBART</i> | 747 AM |
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| <i>DARWIN</i> | 102.5 FM |

**FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD**

Governor-General

His Excellency Major-General Michael Jeffery, Companion in the Order of Australia, Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Military Cross

House of Representatives Officeholders

Speaker—The Hon. David Peter Maxwell Hawker MP

Deputy Speaker—The Hon. Ian Raymond Causley MP

Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Harry Alfred Jenkins MP

Members of the Speaker's Panel—the Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams, Mr Kim Christian Beazley, Mr Robert Charles Baldwin, Mrs Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop, Mr Michael John Hatton, Mr Peter John Lindsay, Mr Harry Vernon Quick, the Hon. Bruce Craig Scott, Mr Alexander Michael Somlyay, Mr Kimberley William Wilkie

Leader of the House—The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP

Deputy Leader of the House—The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP

Manager of Opposition Business—Ms Julia Eileen Gillard MP

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Anthony Norman Albanese MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Liberal Party of Australia

Leader—The Hon. John Winston Howard MP

Deputy Leader—The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP

Chief Government Whip—Mr Kerry Joseph Bartlett MP

Government Whips—Mrs Joanna Gash MP and Mr Fergus Stewart McArthur MP

The Nationals

Leader—The Hon. John Duncan Anderson MP

Deputy Leader—The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP

Whip—Mr John Alexander Forrest MP

Assistant Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

Australian Labor Party

Leader—Mr Mark William Latham MP

Deputy Leader—Ms Jennifer Louise Macklin MP

Chief Opposition Whip—The Hon. Leo Roger Spurway Price MP

Opposition Whips—Mr Michael Danby MP and Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives

Members of the House of Representatives

| Member | Division | Party |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Abbott, Hon. Anthony John | Warringah, NSW | LP |
| Adams, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry | Lyons, Tas | ALP |
| Albanese, Anthony Norman | Grayndler, NSW | ALP |
| Anderson, Hon. John Duncan | Gwydir, NSW | Nats |
| Andren, Peter James | Calare, NSW | Ind |
| Andrews, Hon. Kevin James | Menzies, Vic | LP |
| Bailey, Hon. Frances Esther | McEwen, Vic | LP |
| Baird, Hon. Bruce George | Cook, NSW | LP |
| Baker, Mark Horden | Braddon, Tas | LP |
| Baldwin, Robert Charles | Paterson, NSW | LP |
| Barresi, Phillip Anthony | Deakin, Vic | LP |
| Bartlett, Kerry Joseph | Macquarie, NSW | LP |
| Beazley, Hon. Kim Christian | Brand, WA | ALP |
| Bevis, Hon. Archibald Ronald | Brisbane, Qld | ALP |
| Billson, Hon. Bruce Fredrick | Dunkley, Vic | LP |
| Bird, Sharon | Cunningham, NSW | ALP |
| Bishop, Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen | Mackellar, NSW | LP |
| Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel | Curtin, WA | LP |
| Bowen, Christopher Eyles | Prospect, NSW | ALP |
| Broadbent, Russell Evan | McMillan, Vic | LP |
| Brough, Hon. Malcolm Thomas | Longman, Qld | LP |
| Burke, Anna Elizabeth | Chisholm, Vic | ALP |
| Burke, Anthony Stephen | Watson, NSW | ALP |
| Byrne, Anthony Michael | Holt, VIC | ALP |
| Cadman, Hon. Alan Glyndwr | Mitchell, NSW | LP |
| Causley, Hon. Ian Raymond | Page, NSW | Nats |
| Ciobo, Steven Michele | Moncrieff, Qld | LP |
| Cobb, Hon. John Kenneth | Parkes, NSW | Nats |
| Corcoran, Ann Kathleen | Isaacs, VIC | ALP |
| Costello, Hon. Peter Howard | Higgins, Vic | LP |
| Crean, Hon. Simon Findlay | Hotham, Vic | ALP |
| Danby, Michael | Melbourne Ports, Vic | ALP |
| Downer, Hon. Alexander John Gosse | Mayo, SA | LP |
| Draper, Patricia | Makin, SA | LP |
| Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig | Dickson, Qld | LP |
| Edwards, Hon. Graham John | Cowan, WA | ALP |
| Elliot, Maria Justine | Richmond, NSW | ALP |
| Ellis, Annette Louise | Canberra, ACT | ALP |
| Ellis, Katherine Margaret | Adelaide, SA | ALP |
| Elson, Kay Selma | Forde, QLD | LP |
| Emerson, Craig Anthony | Rankin, Qld | ALP |
| Entsch, Hon. Warren George | Leichhardt, NSW | LP |
| Farmer, Hon. Patrick Francis | Macarthur, NSW | LP |
| Fawcett, David Julian | Wakefield, SA | LP |
| Ferguson, Laurence Donald Thomas | Reid, NSW | ALP |
| Ferguson, Martin John, AM | Batman, Vic | ALP |
| Ferguson, Michael Darrel | Bass, TAS | LP |

Members of the House of Representatives

| Member | Division | Party |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Fitzgibbon, Joel Andrew | Hunter, NSW | ALP |
| Forrest, John Alexander | Mallee, VIC | Nats |
| Gambaro, Hon. Teresa | Petrie, QLD | LP |
| Garrett, Peter Robert, AM | Kingsford Smith, NSW | ALP |
| Gash, Joanna | Gilmore, NSW | LP |
| Georganas, Steven | Hindmarsh, SA | ALP |
| George, Jennie | Throsby, NSW | ALP |
| Georgiou, Petro | Kooyong, Vic | LP |
| Gibbons, Stephen William | Bendigo, Vic | ALP |
| Gillard, Julia Eileen | Lalor, Vic | ALP |
| Grierson, Sharon Joy | Newcastle, NSW | ALP |
| Griffin, Alan Peter | Bruce, Vic | ALP |
| Haase, Barry Wayne | Kalgoorlie, WA | LP |
| Hall, Jill Griffiths | Shortland, NSW | ALP |
| Hardgrave, Hon. Gary Douglas | Moreton, Qld | LP |
| Hartsuyker, Luke | Cowper, NSW | Nats |
| Hatton, Michael John | Blaxland, NSW | ALP |
| Hawker, David Peter Maxwell | Wannon, Vic | LP |
| Henry, Stuart | Hasluck, WA | LP |
| Hoare, Kelly Joy | Charlton, NSW | ALP |
| Hockey, Hon. Joseph Benedict | North Sydney, NSW | LP |
| Howard, Hon. John Winston | Bennelong, NSW | LP |
| Hull, Kay Elizabeth | Riverina, NSW | Nats |
| Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew | Flinders, Vic | LP |
| Irwin, Julia Claire | Fowler, NSW | ALP |
| Jenkins, Harry Alfred | Scullin, Vic | ALP |
| Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey | Tangney, WA | LP |
| Johnson, Michael Andrew | Ryan, Qld | LP |
| Jull, Hon. David Francis | Fadden, Qld | LP |
| Katter, Hon. Robert Carl | Kennedy, Qld | Ind |
| Keenan, Michael Fayat | Stirling, WA | LP |
| Kelly, Hon. De-Anne Margaret | Dawson, Qld | Nats |
| Kelly, Hon. Jacqueline Marie | Lindsay, NSW | LP |
| Kerr, Hon. Duncan James Colquhoun, SC | Denison, Tas | ALP |
| King, Catherine Fiona | Ballarat, Vic | ALP |
| Laming, Andrew Charles | Bowman, Qld | LP |
| Latham, Mark William | Werriwa, NSW | ALP |
| Lawrence, Hon. Carmen Mary | Fremantle, WA | ALP |
| Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope | Farrer, NSW | LP |
| Lindsay, Peter John | Herbert, Qld | LP |
| Livermore, Kirsten Fiona | Capricornia, Qld | ALP |
| Lloyd, Hon. James Eric | Robertson, NSW | LP |
| Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin | Groom, Qld | LP |
| Macklin, Jennifer Louise | Jagajaga, Vic | ALP |
| Markus, Louise Elizabeth | Greenway, NSW | LP |
| May, Margaret Ann | McPherson, Qld | LP |
| McArthur, Fergus Stewart | Corangamite, Vic | LP |
| McClelland, Robert Bruce | Barton, NSW | ALP |

Members of the House of Representatives

| Member | Division | Party |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------|
| McGauran, Hon. Peter John | Gippsland, Vic | Nats |
| McMullan, Robert Francis | Fraser, ACT | ALP |
| Melham, Daryl | Banks, NSW | ALP |
| Moylan, Hon. Judith Eleanor | Pearce, WA | LP |
| Murphy, John Paul | Lowe, NSW | ALP |
| Nairn, Hon. Gary Roy | Eden-Monaro, NSW | LP |
| Nelson, Hon. Brendan John | Bradfield, NSW | LP |
| Neville, Paul Christopher | Hinkler, Qld | Nats |
| O'Connor, Brendan Patrick John | Gorton, Vic | ALP |
| O'Connor, Gavan Michael | Corio, Vic | ALP |
| Owens, Julie Ann | Parramatta, NSW | ALP |
| Panopoulos, Sophie | Indi, Vic | LP |
| Pearce, Hon. Christopher John | Aston, Vic | LP |
| Plibersek, Tanya Joan | Sydney, NSW | ALP |
| Price, Hon. Leo Roger Spurway | Chifley, NSW | ALP |
| Prosser, Hon. Geoffrey Daniel | Forrest, WA | LP |
| Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice | Sturt, SA | LP |
| Quick, Harry Vernon | Franklin, Tas | ALP |
| Randall, Don James | Canning, WA | LP |
| Richardson, Kym | Kingston, SA | LP |
| Ripoll, Bernard Fernando | Oxley, Qld | ALP |
| Robb, Andrew John | Goldstein, Vic | LP |
| Roxon, Nicola Louise | Gellibrand, Vic | ALP |
| Rudd, Kevin Michael | Griffith, Qld | ALP |
| Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell | Berowra, NSW | LP |
| Sawford, Rodney Weston | Port Adelaide, SA | ALP |
| Schultz, Albert John | Hume, NSW | LP |
| Scott, Hon. Bruce Craig | Maranoa, Qld | Nats |
| Secker, Patrick Damien | Barker, SA | LP |
| Sercombe, Robert Charles Grant | Maribyrnong, Vic | ALP |
| Slipper, Hon. Peter Neil | Fisher, Qld | LP |
| Smith, Anthony David Hawthorn | Casey, Vic | LP |
| Smith, Stephen Francis | Perth, WA | ALP |
| Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward | Lingiari, NT | ALP |
| Somlyay, Hon. Alexander Michael | Fairfax, Qld | LP |
| Southcott, Andrew John | Boothby, SA | LP |
| Stone, Hon. Sharman Nancy | Murray, Vic | LP |
| Swan, Wayne Maxwell | Lilley, Qld | ALP |
| Tanner, Lindsay James | Melbourne, Vic | ALP |
| Thompson, Cameron Paul | Blair, Qld | LP |
| Thomson, Kelvin John | Wills, Vic | ALP |
| Ticehurst, Kenneth Vincent | Dobell, NSW | LP |
| Tollner, David William | Solomon, NT | CLP |
| Truss, Hon. Warren Errol | Wide Bay, Qld | Nats |
| Tuckey, Hon. Charles Wilson | O'Connor, WA | LP |
| Turnbull, Malcolm Bligh | Wentworth, NSW | LP |
| Vaile, Hon. Mark Anthony James | Lyne, NSW | Nats |
| Vale, Hon. Danna Sue | Hughes, NSW | LP |

Members of the House of Representatives

| Member | Division | Party |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Vamvakinou, Maria | Calwell, Vic | ALP |
| Vasta, Ross Xavier | Bonner, Qld | LP |
| Wakelin, Barry Hugh | Grey, SA | LP |
| Washer, Malcolm James | Moore, WA | LP |
| Wilkie, Kimberley William | Swan, WA | ALP |
| Windsor, Antony Harold Curties | New England, NSW | Ind |
| Wood, Jason Peter | La Trobe, Vic | LP |

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; Nats—The Nationals;
Ind—Independent; CLP—Country Liberal Party; AG—Australian Greens

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—H. Evans
Clerk of the House of Representatives—I.C. Harris
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—H.R. Penfold QC

HOWARD MINISTRY

| | |
|--|---|
| Prime Minister | The Hon. John Winston Howard MP |
| Minister for Transport and Regional Services and Deputy Prime Minister | The Hon. John Duncan Anderson MP |
| Treasurer | The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP |
| Minister for Trade | The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP |
| Minister for Defence and Leader of the Government in the Senate | Senator the Hon. Robert Murray Hill |
| Minister for Foreign Affairs | The Hon. Alexander John Gosse Downer MP |
| Minister for Health and Ageing and Leader of the House | The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP |
| Attorney-General | The Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP |
| Minister for Finance and Administration, Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council | Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin |
| Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP |
| Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs | Senator the Hon. Amanda Eloise Vanstone |
| Minister for Education, Science and Training | The Hon. Dr Brendan John Nelson MP |
| Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues | Senator the Hon. Kay Christine Lesley Patterson |
| Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources | The Hon. Ian Elgin Macfarlane MP |
| Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service | The Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP |
| Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts | Senator the Hon. Helen Lloyd Coonan |
| Minister for the Environment and Heritage | Senator the Hon. Ian Gordon Campbell |

(The above ministers constitute the cabinet)

HOWARD MINISTRY—*continued*

| | |
|---|---|
| Minister for Justice and Customs and Manager of Government Business in the Senate | Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison |
| Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation | Senator the Hon. Ian Douglas Macdonald |
| Minister for the Arts and Sport | Senator the Hon. Charles Roderick Kemp |
| Minister for Human Services | The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP |
| Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and Deputy Leader of the House | The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP |
| Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer | The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP |
| Special Minister of State | Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz |
| Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister | The Hon. Gary Douglas Hardgrave MP |
| Minister for Ageing | The Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP |
| Minister for Small Business and Tourism | The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP |
| Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads | The Hon. James Eric Lloyd MP |
| Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence | The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly MP |
| Minister for Workforce Participation | The Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration | The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources | The Hon. Warren George Entsch MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing | The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence | The Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary (Foreign Affairs and Trade) | The Hon. Bruce Fredrick Billson MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister | The Hon. Gary Roy Nairn MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer | The Hon. Christopher John Pearce MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services | The Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage | The Hon. Gregory Andrew Hunt MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary (Children and Youth Affairs) | The Hon. Sussan Penelope Ley MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training | The Hon. Patrick Francis Farmer MP |
| Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | Senator the Hon. Richard Mansell Colbeck |

SHADOW MINISTRY

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Leader of the Opposition | Mark William Latham MP |
| Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Education, Training, Science and Research | Jennifer Louise Macklin MP |
| Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Social Security | Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans |
| Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Communications and Information Technology | Senator Stephen Michael Conroy |
| Shadow Minister for Health and Manager of Opposition Business in the House | Julia Eileen Gillard MP |
| Shadow Treasurer | Wayne Maxwell Swan MP |
| Shadow Minister for Industry, Infrastructure and Industrial Relations | Stephen Francis Smith MP |
| Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Security | Kevin Michael Rudd MP |
| Shadow Minister for Defence and Homeland Security | Robert Bruce McClelland MP |
| Shadow Minister for Trade | The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean MP |
| Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Resources and Tourism | Martin John Ferguson MP |
| Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House | Anthony Norman Albanese MP |
| Shadow Minister for Public Administration and Open Government, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and Shadow Minister for the Arts | Senator Kim John Carr |
| Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Roads and Shadow Minister for Housing and Urban Development | Kelvin John Thomson MP |
| Shadow Minister for Finance and Superannuation | Senator the Hon. Nicholas John Sherry |
| Shadow Minister for Work, Family and Community, Shadow Minister for Youth and Early Childhood Education and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on the Status of Women | Tanya Joan Plibersek MP |
| Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Participation and Shadow Minister for Corporate Governance and Responsibility | Senator Penelope Ying Yen Wong |

(The above are shadow cabinet ministers)

SHADOW MINISTRY—*continued*

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Shadow Minister for Immigration | Laurence Donald Thomas Ferguson MP |
| Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries | Gavan Michael O'Connor MP |
| Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Revenue and Shadow Minister for Banking and Financial Services | Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP |
| Shadow Attorney-General | Nicola Louise Roxon MP |
| Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Local Government and Territories | Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O'Brien |
| Shadow Minister for Manufacturing and Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs | Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy |
| Shadow Minister for Defence Planning and Personnel and Shadow Minister Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations | The Hon. Archibald Ronald Bevis MP |
| Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation | Alan Peter Griffin MP |
| Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs | Senator Thomas Mark Bishop |
| Shadow Minister for Small Business | Tony Burke MP |
| Shadow Minister for Ageing and Disabilities | Senator Jan Elizabeth McLucas |
| Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs, Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate | Senator Joseph William Ludwig |
| Shadow Minister for Pacific Islands | Robert Charles Grant Sercombe MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition | John Paul Murphy MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence | The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education | Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Heritage | Jennie George MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure | Bernard Fernando Ripoll MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health | Ann Kathleen Corcoran MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development (House) | Catherine Fiona King MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development (Senate) | Senator Ursula Mary Stephens |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia and Indigenous Affairs | The Hon. Warren Edward Snowdon MP |

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MONDAY, 29 NOVEMBER

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Monday, 29 November 2004

The SPEAKER (Mr David Hawker) took the chair at 12.30 p.m. and read prayers.

MEMBER SWORN

Ms Sophie Panopoulos made and subscribed the oath of allegiance.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed from 18 November, on motion by **Mrs Markus**:

That the address be agreed to.

Mr JULL (Fadden) (12.32 p.m.)—The Governor-General, in his speech to the House, made particular reference to the government's initiatives in terms of overseas trade. I would like to inform the House of the importance of that in my electorate of Fadden. As I have mentioned previously, the seat of Fadden encompasses the Gold Coast. While the Gold Coast continues to be a foremost tourist destination, and tourism and hospitality are the chief money earners, I wonder if there is a realisation within the federal bureaucracy that the income generated by the tourism industry may not last for very much longer. The reality is that the Gold Coast is becoming very much a focal point for export industries for Australia.

I would like to mention to the House just some of the things that are happening. For example, the film industry which is based at Oxenford is now creating films for worldwide distribution. It is not only Australian productions which are being made; a number of American productions are also being made. The flow-on affect of that is tremendous. There are editing houses and specialty audio suites which have been established as well as specialty legal firms which deal in patents and copyright in association with that particular industry. While the industry has had a bit of a down time in the past 12

months, the forward projections on productions look absolutely tremendous.

There has also been the advent of the Gold Coast Marina, which is now a major luxury shipbuilder. Last year, the income generated from that through exports was in the vicinity of \$250 million. Estimates are that this year it could be as high as \$400 million, with principal markets being places like Fort Lauderdale in the United States. A new industrial estate has been established at Yatala, in the northern area of the Gold Coast. Along with our Austrade people, I have been undertaking some visits to a number of the manufacturers there. There is a pet food company there—a \$50 million business—that has now gone into the export of chilled pet food throughout Asia. It is estimated that its income, particularly through these exports, is going to double within the next 12 months to two years. A smallgoods manufacturer has started exporting to Japan. There is only one buyer, but that will amount to up to 30 tonnes of specialist sausages for the Kyoto market from 5 January next year.

Jewellery manufacturing has taken on quite an image on the Gold Coast. One particular manufacturer there, based at Sanctuary Cove, is now exporting around the world. We have the largest producer of computer games in the Asia-Pacific area. It is a company that employs 250 people, 170 of whom are graduates. It supplies video games and computer games to all areas of the Asia-Pacific except Japan. It is no wonder that something like 60,000 people employed in Fadden actually live in Fadden. It is no wonder that our unemployment rates are some of the lowest in Australia. The Gold Coast is virtually becoming a focal point for high-tech international manufacturing. As we have seen in recent times, we have got to a stage now where we have actually had to import labour from South Australia, from the old

Mitsubishi plant, to meet some of the requirements.

In fact, throughout the electorate we are finding that one of the greatest difficulties that we have is getting skilled labour. In that respect, the announcement of a technical college that will be built and operated by the Commonwealth to meet those specific needs is especially welcome. The Gold Coast is, as I said, very much a focal point for this. What we have seen is a spin-off into our educational institutions. After the recent redistribution, I have inherited the Gold Coast campus of Griffith University from my colleague the member for Moncrieff. To give you an example of what happens there, a whole new music division has been established specifically to meet the digital music requirements of the movie production houses. That is a huge business, with five sound stages now based at Griffith University all going flat-out producing graduates who have the opportunity to go into areas such as the film industry and the video games industry with digital music, which is really quite unlike anything that we have seen before. Quite proudly, Griffith University boasts of the fact that something like four of its graduates have been picked up by Hollywood already because of the standard of student that it is producing there.

As I said, we must have realised within the government that the Gold Coast is no longer just froth and bubble. It is not just an area that caters for tourism; it is very much becoming the specialist manufacturing heart of Australia. With the expansion of Brisbane airport, we have a major requirement now for specialist aviation engineering people. While a lot of that training is being done in a new school that has been established, with government help, at Brisbane airport, all the Queensland universities are very much involved now in producing graduates who will have the capacity to go for the highly techni-

cal jobs that will come with the advent of the new Qantas 767 maintenance base. There is also talk of a joint facility being set up between Qantas and Singapore Airlines for the maintenance and work involved with the new A380 aircraft.

So there are exciting times on the Gold Coast. Employment levels are very high. The demand for labour is immense. While we speak of technical areas, we have only to look at the building industry to see what is required there. I understand from the Master Builders Association that at the moment there are some 2,300 apprenticeships going within the building industry. The situation has become so drastic and there is such a requirement for qualified builders that a third-year apprentice in the building industry at the moment, if that person is good, has the capacity to draw something like \$100,000 a year. So the Gold Coast is, I think, probably the most exciting part of Australia at the moment. It is exciting because it is very much an international city, but it is most exciting because of the tremendous contribution it is making to the development of Australia.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the honourable member for Watson, Mr Burke, I remind the House that this is the honourable member's first speech. I ask the House to extend to him the usual courtesies.

Mr BURKE (Watson) (12.39 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, it is hard to believe I am here. This is the room where the arguments of the nation come to a head, the room where the government of the nation is determined and the room where all the diverse opinions throughout Australia are broken down to 150 voices. To be selected by the community to be one of those 150 voices is an extraordinary honour. It is the community where I have grown up, where my parents grew up and now where my own family is growing

up so quickly. It means the world to me to see them all here today: my wife, Cathy, who had the right of veto as to whether I would run for federal parliament and who has offered nothing but love and support in the many years that have led to today, and my three gorgeous daughters. Liana is in the gallery, and Caitlyn and Helena are carefully positioned behind soundproof glass! Mum, Dad, Rosemary, Sharon, and Michael: whether it was as your youngest child or little brother, every supportive comment has helped me to get here and all the other comments just count as training.

The campaign for Watson was run by Ari Margossian, the National President of Young Labor, with the ever present strategic advice of Morris Iemma. With so many volunteers to thank, I want to acknowledge all my friends on the campaign team and every branch member. I particularly want to thank those who were there every single day: Maria Iannotti, Vince Badalati, Wilma Hickey, Claire Haig, Peter Papodopoulos and Chris Taylor. I also thank Greg Donnelly and everyone from the SDA. A particular thank you to those friends who helped form Watson Young Labor Association more than 10 years ago, who made all this possible.

Campaigns are not only fought at a local level. In only 10 months Mark Latham did a great job to raise the spirits of Labor supporters and ensure that the party were seriously competitive as we moved into the campaign. I also note the improved result in New South Wales and congratulate my good friends Mark Arbib and Karl Bitar on their roles in the campaign. A number of good friends ran in marginal seats and some missed out in difficult circumstances. I want to acknowledge their effort, commitment and talent. They have been friends for some time and I look forward to calling them parliamentary colleagues in the years ahead.

The local area now covered by the seat of Watson was well represented in this chamber for 25 years by Leo McLeay. He served this chamber as both Speaker and Chief Government Whip. After the election I came down here to set up my office and, as I walked through the Members Hall, it dawned on me that it had really happened: Leo had in fact retired and I was now the member for Watson. As I walked along through the Members Hall I noticed out of the corner of my eye the framed pictures on the walls and glanced up to see who they were of. And there he was, staring straight back at me—a portrait of Leo McLeay, still here and still watching me. Leo, I wish you and Janice well for the years ahead.

I am in the unusual position of delivering my second first speech. Only last year I had the chance to deliver my first speech to the New South Wales Legislative Council. This year I deliver another first speech. Next year I will not. This will be my final first speech. But in introducing myself to a new parliament, I have not changed all that radically in a year. So, for the friends here who heard my last first speech, there will be some moments that will be familiar. Sorry about that. I cannot help it—it is the same me.

There have been a number of articles written and speeches made over the last 10 years which have profiled the previous careers of members of the House of Representatives. There have even been check lists in some of the more recent articles that said how terrible it is that so many federal MPs have previously worked as lawyers, teachers, staffers, state members of parliament and union officials. On that list I score four out of five. I have never been a teacher, although the business I ran did do training, so I might be able to stretch the definition and still get to full marks. I have no intention of trying to reinvent myself here today. I have great pride in the work I have done and the people I have

helped. There have been two main themes in my own working life and upbringing: small business and trade unions. You will not find me ever walking away from either.

Dad opened a small business in Riverwood when he was 27, and he stayed there until he retired. The sign in Belmore Road still reads 'Burke's Riverwood Pharmacy'. I grew up with no knowledge of the term 'nine to five', and I never understood small business as being where you worked for yourself. Dad was employed by a few thousand customers. He felt a real sense of service and obligation to each of them, and a handful of those customers knew how to be extremely tough employers. I remember dinner being postponed more often than not because extra customers had arrived at the exact moment Dad was about to close the shop for the night. I remember vividly Dad sitting at the dining table at night as I went to bed while he completed the streams of paperwork that were required while Mum sat at the other end of the table marking work for her students at school.

We had all the small business themes: the frustration of mounting paperwork; the pressure of government paying its bills to us late, when every creditor was demanding we pay them on time; and the difficulties associated with ever being able to organise time off when the business was your own. Do not get me wrong; I had a very fortunate upbringing. These were never crisis issues; they were just part of every day life. By simple, understated example, my parents taught me a work ethic which I have never let go.

I had the satisfaction of forming my own business some years ago with Ben Richards and Ray D'Cruz whom I had met through debating. Aticus Pty Ltd still runs successfully, providing public speaking and advocacy training around Australia and into various parts of South-East Asia. To have been

there from the start—planning the business, dealing with the bureaucracy that comes with incorporation—and going through the initial period of diversification while we gradually established the core business was an exciting and valuable time. To see the business still flourishing years later is a fantastic reward for the effort we all put in at the start, particularly the drive and commitment shown by Ray and Ben in seeing the importance and power of encouraging people to not only hold opinions but to advocate them.

During my time with Aticus, and while we went through that early period of diversification, I became involved in lobbying two issues which found supporters on both sides of this chamber. As a result, I formed many friendships early on with various caucus members, and I have enjoyed a good working relationship with the member for Menzies and the member for Wentworth. I sincerely hope it is not long before their party recognises their talent and allows both of them the opportunity which is already mine: to serve in this chamber as a shadow minister.

My first job, and my first involvement with unions, was delivering the Sunday papers for the Beverly Hills Newsagency. There was a grave injustice there: we were receiving 10 per cent commission while other shops were all paying 12½ per cent. I organised the other paperboys and said, 'Let's form a union.' We worked out our demands, but when I took them to the boss, he would not listen. He said we could not be a union because we had not charged fees. So everyone threw in a copper coin, and I went back to negotiate. It was a comprehensive log of claims: 12½ per cent commission, an extra \$1 every time it rained and free food for a Christmas party. He came back with the typical response, 'Why should I give you lot that?' I can still hear my 12-year-old voice answering him: 'If you don't, we'll have a

paperboy picket line out the front of the shop. The TV cameras will turn up because they'll think it's really funny. We'll be on TV, so we'll feel really important. The customers will know it's your shop and you'll look really bad.' He gave in to all three demands. To celebrate, we spent the union fees on mixed lollies.

Years later, I became a full-time official with the union I first joined as a checkout operator with Grace Bros: the SDA. While the fees were more than a copper coin, the methods of workplace organising through local delegates and giving people a direct stake in the outcomes achieved were not all that different.

It is bizarre that there have been speeches in this chamber claiming that the sort of work union officials do is not real work; that people like me do not get real world experience during those years. Seriously, does anyone actually believe that I would have had more real world experience if, instead, I had utilised my law degree to represent the same people on the same issues but charged them a couple of hundred dollars an hour to meet with me in some solicitor's office with dodgy wood panelling and terminally ill goldfish? The critics of trade unionists entering parliament speak as though unionism was a single industry where we spend our days in the same sorts of union offices doing the same sort of job, and that we bring the same life experiences to parliament. As an organiser, I did not have an office—I did not even have a desk. My workplace was wherever my members worked. My meeting rooms would be at Flemings at Bexley or Big W at Campsie. My lunch room would be the food courts at Roselands or at Hurstville. My desk would be whatever box I might have to lean on in that KFC at William Street, Earlwood.

I look around this chamber and am as proud to be among those with a union background as I am to be among those with a small business background. Just as business varies radically from one sector to another, so does the experience of union officials. What we bring in common is experience from the front line of the concerns and aspirations of people in every industry. Their workplaces have been our workplaces. For those who want to use the 'not a real job' line, I can only say that when I met with night fillers in the early hours of the morning to uncover systematic underpayments, it felt like a real job; when I visited fast food outlets on weekends and found that cost savings had been extended to not replenishing the first aid kit, with one manager telling 15-year-old employees to use serviettes and sticky tape as a substitute for bandaids, it felt like a real job; and when I negotiated roster changes for employees such as one who had been given a roster which would have seen him working nine hours during the only day he had access to his children or for another who would have had to leave her young children unsupervised had the original roster gone ahead, not only did it feel like a real job to me, I reckon those employees and every member of their families thought the job I was doing was pretty real too.

And none of these outcomes were achieved through aggression. Like any other organiser, I would sit down with the member, the delegate and management and we would work through the problem. All day, every day, managers and business owners would be explaining their pressures, their constraints—often explaining those pressures far more candidly to me than they would to their own head office. We would arrive at sensible solutions that everyone could work with.

I have read the *Hansard* of some of the debates in this chamber and have to smile at the claims that, for people like myself, the

involvement with unions is an albatross around our necks. Around the neck is not the way you wear a badge of honour. I will always wear my history with small business and my history with unions the same way. There is not a day of my employment history I would ever want to change.

I value every moment I spent in the state parliament, and thank those friends from the state parliament who have come down today. To be part of Bob Carr's government, to chair the State Development Committee and to work in Macquarie Street with a group of life-long friends was a real privilege. Yet for me, right here is where I have wanted to work for a long time. I know you lose the intimacy and the intensity of those New South Wales debating chambers and that this is a lonelier place for members in many ways, but there is something about the federal parliament that goes way beyond the legislation we pass here and way beyond our constitutional powers. I realised this one day about eight years ago when Cathy came home from work and told me the children were playing differently at the community based child-care centre where she taught and racist taunts had suddenly crept into the language of the children as they played. It did not happen because any law had changed. It did not happen because of government spending. It happened because a speech had been made by an Independent member in this chamber which was seen to legitimise racist comment in the name of free speech. There is something about what is said in this chamber that changes the mood of the nation, that gives us a role in affecting how Australians relate to each other. Just as we have the capacity here to run our politics in ways that appeal to the worst of the attitudes in Australia, we have the capacity to appeal to the best as well.

When we acknowledge the incredible strength and richness of the many cultures

which make our nation so vibrant, from Indigenous Australians through to the most recent immigrant, it has an impact on how Australians relate to each other at the workplace, in the shopping centre and in the playground. When members of this chamber talk, very few people tune in and certainly none of the under-fives in that Greenacre playground listen to the broadcasts, but somehow the message gets out. When members here demean others, divide communities and vilify some of the most vulnerable people, those people do not have to be listening to feel the hurt.

No matter how many pet issues an individual member can bring to this chamber, so much of what we have to address is determined by the pressure of the period of history in which we find ourselves here. I believe there are three overarching themes which will dominate the lives of anyone involved in the battle of ideas over the next generation: the ageing population, climate change and globalisation. Some of the impacts of a lower birth rate combined with an increased life expectancy have already been well documented and discussed broadly. We all know the subsequent importance of national savings and the pressures which flow to our health and welfare systems.

There is an added impact which is considered too rarely. We have an education system which is designed to cater for the demographic make-up of Australians more than 40 years ago. By and large our education system presumes you can receive all the qualifications you need well before you turn 25 and then you are set for life, but an ageing population will see people wanting, and in some cases needing, to have a significantly longer working life, and technological change will create an ongoing need for the update of skills. Many methods of continuing education are poorly planned, impractical for people who are already balancing work and fam-

ily commitments, and way too expensive for people under modern financial pressures.

For the last four years I have served as the President of Bankstown Community College and have seen the value of affordable short courses, not only for their content but for trying to ensure that people do not forget how to learn. I will never forget when the Lakemba Franklins store was for sale and one of the staff members was worried about her future employment. She said, 'Tony, if only I'd learnt how to type, but it's too late now.' Even though she ended up with secure employment in retail, the words she spoke still sound a warning for anyone who believes lifelong learning is just a luxury. As the skills shortage intensifies and our population ages it will become an economic necessity.

When I first joined the Labor Party all the environmental issues were about saving iconic sites: the Franklin, the Daintree, Kakadu. Climate change moves any environmental debate to a new plane. The implications for water, salinity, the viability of so many industries, and consequent issues in trade and health, right through to bushfire and natural disaster, all combine to move the debate on. The arguments over the causes of climate change or even questioning the existence of climate change are all fast becoming conversations of the past. The responses need to occur at each level of government and our international role needs to be taken seriously. The tired old stunts of bashing the UN and refusing to sign international agreements have reached their use-by dates. There is too much at stake to get this one wrong.

In any discussion about globalisation I should start by making clear that I am not afraid of it—not a bit. The growth in international campaigns on human rights has occurred hand in hand with globalisation. It is the strongest pressure on many nations to lift

their game and open up the rights of their citizens as they open up their economies. It was Labor that lowered the tariffs and introduced the competition reforms which began the process of breaking down the cartels which had shut out new businesses and prevented families from spending their income on fairly priced goods. This gave families a real increase in buying power—effectively a pay rise without a tax increase—thanks to the Labor reforms of the eighties and nineties.

We have to make sure that in pursuing the improvements available to people as consumers we do not now sacrifice their dignity at work. No-one should have any pride in the rate of casualisation. Anyone who thinks that it is all about voluntary flexibility on the part of employees should come with me to a local supermarket at one o'clock in the morning, go to a coffee shop the next day and see the same people working, and then go again to find the same people working as domestic cleaners or mowing lawns in a scramble to find the hours that used to be available through full-time work.

The flexibility that comes with upskilling is an important boost to productivity but that flexibility will always have a limit. Paying bills is not flexible, the mortgage and rent are not flexible and the demand to feed the family will never be flexible. I have seen people's personal lives thrown into chaos by shifts suddenly disappearing or by one roster change meaning that the second job is no longer viable. The world will force us to continue to embrace competition and to be flexible with skills development. There are many great benefits along that road, but if the word 'dignity' drops out of workplaces on the way through then we are missing some essential Australian values.

Do not get me wrong. For all the opportunity that comes with being a member of this

House I also recognise that being in opposition has nothing going for it. Five months ago I was in government. I am 100 per cent glad I went federal, but I do want to do something about the seating plan here. We become involved in the political system to make changes. We run for this parliament to affect the nation. Policy development is only ever the prologue. The real work is about implementation: reaching people and improving their lives. I have never believed in the nobility of defeat. I do believe in the capacity of the Labor Party to lift the spirits of this nation and lead Australia forward. Our job is to win: to implement the policies we offer, to provide fresh opportunities while supporting the most vulnerable and to see reward for excellence without ever deserting those in genuine need.

My predecessor was a member of this House for 25 years. If I manage the same length of service and spend only the first three years in opposition then there will be a reasonable chance to contribute. When I worked here in 1993 every commentator was saying how invincible we were. They soon said the same about Jeff Kennett. In fact, in recent years the pattern has been that most Australian governments do look invincible at the start of their final term. Three years of effective hard work stands between Labor and government—work to which Labor has an absolute commitment, work which is already under way, work which I am honoured to have a direct role in. I realise that this is the only time that the House observes the courtesy of no-one interjecting during a speech. Good. There is a battle of ideas that I desperately want to be involved in and this is the perfect room to have it out in open debate. Mr Speaker, bring it on.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call Mr Robb, I remind honourable members that this is his first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (1.00 p.m.)—From as early as I can remember, my mother and father instilled in me and my eight brothers and sisters that opportunity and freedom would come through education, personal responsibility and self-belief; that our destiny was largely in our own hands—how hard we studied and worked, the opportunities we took, how we dealt with people. I grew to believe that I was responsible for charting my own course—that I was free to follow my dreams, make my own mistakes, take the consequences of my decisions.

Importantly, my parents never seemed to convey any resentment or jealousy that others might have more than we had. There was no chip on the shoulder; rather, a notion of ‘blue sky’, a sense that if we really wanted what others had—whatever that might be—then the opportunity was there to achieve it. Ambition was presented as a good thing, something to be nurtured and applauded, and not only in sport. I embraced these simple truths as a philosophy, elements that I later came to see as best captured by the Liberal Party philosophy.

So there was no road to Damascus for me in my support for the Liberal philosophy. It evolved and owed most to my parents, which to some would seem surprising given their background. Many other life experiences have served to further entrench but also add to these principles or a set of ‘tram tracks’—a set of ‘tram tracks’ that guide daily my responses to issues and events and will help to direct my response to matters in this House.

I come to this place keen to put my experience to good use and proud to represent all the people of Goldstein and I come very conscious of the trust they have placed in me. I intend that they will be well represented. I am also conscious of the wonderful support for my campaign from so many Liberals in Goldstein, under the very able direc-

tion of my campaign director, Jeannette Rawlinson.

Vida Goldstein, after whom my electorate is named, was Victoria's foremost suffragist for two decades, standing for parliament in 1903—the first woman in the British Empire to do so. Vida was a woman of achievement and conviction, as befits the people of my electorate. Vida grew up in the Western District of Victoria, like another accomplished woman in my life: my wife, Maureen. I acknowledge the presence today in the gallery of Maureen and our children, Tom, Joe and Pip. They are my strength.

On this occasion I am also mindful of the outstanding service given to the people of Goldstein by my predecessor, Dr David Kemp, over 14 years. David, a man of great intellect, integrity and endeavour, should be justly proud of his wonderful contribution to public policy over more than three decades. I suspect and hope that David's contribution is not yet finished.

I bring to this place 33 years of work experience, with 20 years in and around the political process. I have worked in the public sector, the private sector and the very private sector—the political machine. In the early to mid-eighties, I was the chief executive of the Cattle Council of Australia and then the National Farmers Federation. During those years I was involved in negotiating federal land rights legislation pertaining to the Northern Territory.

As it turned out, the land rights legislation was a totally inadequate response to the real issue—namely, the collapse of personal dignity and self-esteem among many Aboriginals, particularly the young. In seeking to come to grips with Indigenous issues, I spent many, many weeks over a period of years in the Northern Territory, the Kimberley and North Queensland talking to cattlemen, to businesspeople, to officials and to other lo-

cals. I visited Aboriginal settlements and outback towns.

On many occasions, I would be taken to a bend in a river on a cattle station and shown where 100, 200 or 300 Aboriginals had lived for decades, with the men employed on the stations as stockmen and drovers, the older men as gardeners, and the women in the homestead. In many cases, schools were provided for the children. Aboriginal people were disadvantaged, but they had work and self-esteem, reasonable quality of life, strong mentoring from their elders, schooling and strict controls on alcohol.

Of course, all that ceased in the early 1970s following the understandable granting of equal wages in the pastoral industry, along with the misplaced provision of unfettered and generous welfare handouts. The related exodus of these people from their ancestral lands saw them living in settlements and on the fringes of towns. The highly disturbing result in many Aboriginal communities today is that we have basically poisoned recent generations; poisoned their bodies with alcohol and other substances and poisoned their spirit and self-belief with handouts and welfare dependency. In many places we are seeing a total breakdown in the social order.

As I was driven around vast cattle stations, I witnessed cattlemen come across an Aboriginal elder known to them. The mutual respect was palpable. On the same day I saw the same cattleman come across young Aboriginal men seriously affected by years of alcohol and aimlessness, young men stripped of any personal dignity or self-esteem. The cattleman's contempt was palpable. The chilling fact is that the very fabric of a proud and fascinating culture, many thousands of years in the making, has been brought to its knees in less than 30 years by well-intentioned but seriously misguided policy.

For me the lesson is clear. People are very, very responsive to incentives, for good or bad. The wrong incentives, no matter how well meaning, can debilitate a community in no time. In this case, unconditional handouts have provided the seeds of destruction in a breathtakingly short period of time. It is why every piece of public policy in this place is important. It is why every piece of public policy must be measured against a set of principles, a set of 'tram tracks'. It is why philosophy matters.

Clearly, restoring personal dignity and self-esteem is the bedrock of any solution for our Aboriginal community. In many places this means replacing the grog, the petrol and the paint with work. To this end, I commend the direction outlined by the Governor-General in his speech to the opening of the 41st Parliament.

During my years at the National Farmers Federation I was involved with two major industrial disputes: the Mudginberri abattoir dispute and the wide combs dispute. These two disputes proved that success is never easy, regardless of the merits. Importantly, they also proved the underlying strength of the employer-employee relationship in Australia. Mudginberri sought to establish a right for employer and employee to negotiate terms and conditions which best met the peculiar nature of that abattoir's operation. The wide combs dispute sought to establish the right of employers and employees to agree to adopt new technology—in this case, a wider shearing comb—on a workplace by workplace basis.

Nearly 20 years later it is now difficult to conceive that these rights were in dispute. Yet Mudginberri took 27 court cases, two years of litigation and a \$10 million farmers fighting fund to win. The wide combs dispute had to contend with bullets flying, shearing sheds being torched and paid thugs

intimidating communities. These two disputes were only won because, despite the belligerent stance of the unions, there existed—and, I believe, still exists—a fundamentally healthy and mature relationship between employer and employee in Australia with a mutual trust that the benefits of change can and will be shared.

The disputes also highlighted that no two workplaces among the millions of workplaces in Australia are the same. The more we do as a government to free up employers and their employees to settle on terms and conditions which maximise the unique opportunities in each workplace, the more jobs and the more prosperity we will see. From my experience, many employers have come to realise that, if they give their team the right incentives, they can move mountains.

I have also observed that this power of negotiating one to one has parallels in the international trade arena. My experience on the international scene includes expanding a commercial business into the New Zealand market in the late 1990s; advising major New Zealand companies on their move into Australia; facilitating large commercial projects in Asia, particularly in Thailand; employing trade lobbyists in Washington in the 1980s and negotiating with the European Union, the United States and Japan on agricultural trade matters over a decade. These experiences have long convinced me that the growing emphasis on trade agreements negotiated bilaterally between two countries is not only in Australia's best interests but also a harbinger of real progress on trade liberalisation on a global basis.

While multicountry World Trade Organisation negotiations obviously hold out the prospect of more comprehensive liberalisation, they proceed at a snail's pace, if at all, whereas bilateral trade agreements are delivering major benefits in our lifetime. The

closer economic relations agreement with New Zealand is a wonderful case in point. Successful bilateral agreements, rather than stymying progress on multicountry agreements, are in fact creating a competitive imperative for non-participating countries to be involved, leading the way incrementally to more comprehensive removal of trade barriers.

Over the last 33 years in my roles as an animal health officer working in abattoirs and saleyards and on farms; as a tutor in macro-economics working with highly motivated, mature age university students; as an agricultural economist and farm organisation and political party executive setting up and running an Australia-wide direct marketing IT company and, in recent years, as an adviser on business strategy to global companies and large organisations, I have been regularly to all corners of Australia. Working with people and communities from Albany to Cairns and from Hobart to the North West Shelf has left me a committed federalist. I have a great distrust of any central power, by itself, understanding and effectively meeting the needs of far-flung communities and businesses.

While I see the federal government having a critical leadership role to play, I agree strongly with the sentiment expressed by Sir Robert Menzies in 1960 when he said:

... there is a deep instinct in the Australian mind for a system of Government which, by a division of legislative and administrative powers, limits centralisation (or "control from Canberra") and protects a measure of individual freedom by not giving us one set of rules—even elected rulers—who have absolute power. In a great island continent with widely scattered communities, this is a healthy sentiment.

No matter how much it might irk members in this place from time to time—and, I suspect, me in the future—I believe that our great history of stability and resourcefulness owes

much to the decisions about local issues being taken locally. It owes much to the balance between our three tiers of government, including the sovereignty and authority of the states and the role played by local government in Australia. This balance has served Australia well.

The federalist imperative was further reflected in the intent of our founding fathers that the Senate be a states house of review, a chamber designed to ensure that the interests of communities in each state, large and small, were taken into account by the government of the day. In recent decades this intent has been progressively eroded, especially with minor parties in some cases being far more concerned with propagating an extreme left, international agenda than considering the impact of national policies on local communities in their state. This is one key reason why I favour consideration being given by a simple act of parliament to dividing each state into six regions with two senators selected from each region—one at each election.

Drawing senators from a smaller area within a state and being accountable to that area would go some way to restoring the original intent of the founding fathers for a strong state perspective to be present in the federal parliament without requiring any change to our proven institutions. This imperative to preserve our proven institutions underscored my support for an Australian head of state involving only minimal change to our Constitution. I still see, some time in the future, an Australian head of state providing a powerful and stabilising symbol without detracting from our proud history and the stability of our institutions.

My involvement with the Garvan Medical Research Foundation has opened my eyes to the recent revolution in medical and biological science—a revolution which, proudly,

Australia is in the thick of. While it is now 51 years since DNA was discovered, it is only in the last six to seven years that scientists have seriously begun to unlock this genetic code which not only controls our development from a fertilised egg to a complex human being but also determines what goes wrong in disorders as diverse as cancer, mental illness and obesity.

The innovations flowing from these discoveries in basic science are only just emerging and will reach well beyond health and disease. We will see genetically modified micro-organisms used in the creation of energy products, industrial products and a host of other traditional areas of manufacturing. Biotechnology will have an unimaginable impact over the next few decades, and the critical factor in gaining benefits for Australia is owning the intellectual property. If we do not own the technology, the profits will go elsewhere. It is about taking responsibility for our own future. To achieve this will require Australian investors to take big risks. Areas such as biotechnology, at this stage, involve high risks and low returns.

My last seven years working with the top end of town suggest to me that our capacity for risk taking is fading. Our great entrepreneurial spirit is residing in fewer and fewer people. Perhaps our self-belief is being eroded. The clamour for endless reporting, misplaced accountability and draconian regulations are choking the boldness of business and need a serious rethink. In my view you cannot legislate for ethical behaviour. The values of a society and its institutions dictate acceptable ethical behaviour.

Reducing high personal income tax rates must also play a big part in promoting risk taking. If we are to encourage individuals and businesspeople to pursue opportunities, if we are to reignite our entrepreneurial spirit and if we are to discourage some of our best

and brightest from remaining overseas because of uncompetitive tax rates, personal tax rates need to come down.

The biotechnology revolution also has major implications for older Australians and how we cope with a rapidly ageing population. Over the last 100 years in Australia, life expectancy has increased from 55 to 77 years for men and from 58 to 82 years for women. Yet this life expectancy stands to quickly reach much greater ages in the wake of the genetic revolution. As such, providing a decent quality of life for our older Australians presents a real challenge, especially with the birthrate at its lowest point ever. In my view, increased taxation is not an option; it is a backward step.

The best way to meet the challenge is to grow the economy. Getting many healthy Australians to keep working into their 70s in the years ahead is fundamental to achieving this objective. Many of these older Australians would prefer to continue taking responsibility for their own lives by undertaking permanent part-time contract work. If they were able to secure up to 100 per cent of their income from one employer, and still achieve independent contractor status, this would seriously encourage continuing involvement in the work force. We should not underestimate the challenge. It will require a serious cultural shift.

While I look forward to a rich and varied political experience in the years ahead, both in my electorate and in this House, I do expect that two types of security issues will dominate that experience. The first is our national security. The world has changed dramatically since 9-11. Terrorists have declared war on us for ideological reasons of their own, and there is no easy way out of this conflict, which is not of our making. Appeasement is not an option. It will be a

long fight, and we will need our traditional friends.

The second security issue is one of personal security. My years of political observation have led me to understand very clearly that what the majority of Australians aspire to most is a secure life—put simply, food on the table, a job, a manageable mortgage, a holiday, a movie with the kids, an ability to exercise some choices. To this end, maintaining a strong economy is paramount. I understand that aspiration and in this place I will do what I can to deliver it. In particular, I will take whatever opportunities I get to convey, especially to our young people, that true happiness and true freedom come from achievement—using whatever god-given talents we have to chart our own course, to take the consequences of our decisions, to have a go. If we do this, success and security will follow. I thank the House for the courtesy extended to me today.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the honourable member for Cunningham, I remind honourable members that this is her first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to her.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (1.19 p.m.)—It is an incredible honour to be chosen by the people who make up the community in which you live to be their representative, their voice in the federal parliament. So many good people contest elections and put forward their visions for the nation and yet so few of us are honoured with victory and the responsibilities that come with it. I would like to express my appreciation of the important and effective role that the Hon. Stephen Martin played as my Labor predecessor in the seat of Cunningham, both through his parliamentary career and through his tireless and enthusiastic advocacy for our region.

At the 2002 by-election the people of Cunningham sent a strong message to the

Labor Party. They returned Michael Organ as the member for the two years preceding this year's election. Michael is a person of commitment and integrity. I wish to take this opportunity to wish him and his family well for the future.

Each of us brings to this House our direct experiences of both the triumphs and the troubles of the people—individuals, families and communities—that make up our electorates. Over the past 20 years my area has seen significant change that has brought many exciting new opportunities and shown us new horizons. As a region, we have aggressively taken up the challenge of the industry restructures of the 1980s and diversified our economic base with great success.

We have a vibrant small, medium and home-based business community in the Illawarra that employs 83 per cent of the local people. The people in these businesses not only provide employment and growth opportunities but also are active in supporting the community in which they and their families live. At fundraising events in my electorate I am often impressed by the number of small business people actively involved in fundraising for really good causes in our area. It is insightful to talk to them about the challenges they face in a modern economic community.

I acknowledge the work of the Illawarra Business Chamber and the Wollongong office of the Australian Industry Group in researching and advocating on behalf of their memberships. Sometimes we disagree, and we will no doubt continue to do so on some issues, but I value the positive and consultative approach they always bring when raising their concerns with me. I recommit today to continuing my role in that constructive relationship.

Over the last few weeks I have been visiting many tremendous local organisations and

companies that are involved in exciting new ventures and growth in our area, including a local catamaran maker which exports internationally and employs over 50 local people and 14 apprentices—it makes very nice catamarans, I might add—and the local conservatorium of music, which is hopefully soon to be exporting its music education programs into Asia. I also visited the opening only last Friday of new facilities by 313, the music, entertainment and arts training organisation. We were entertained by a recent local success story, the group Porcelain, which has only just signed an international contract.

Wollongong is officially titled ‘City of Innovation’. It is clear from these success stories and so many others that we do more than pay lip-service to this title. We act on innovation, seek opportunities and retain confidence in our capacity. The arts, culture and entertainment sector in Wollongong’s economy is also important and growing. This is yet another indication of the way that Wollongong has responded to the major challenges that have taken place over the last 20 years. This sector provides nearly 5,000 jobs or seven per cent of our employment. The development of the arts and cultural industries in Wollongong not only provides jobs and opportunity to grow our economy but also, crucially, acts as a focus for innovation, talent and creativity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and recognise the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet today and of the land encompassing my electorate of Cunningham. I had the opportunity to meet with local Aboriginal elders and community workers during my candidacy. Against multiple barriers and too often under attack, they continue to advocate for their people. They represent resilience in the face of much adversity and I recommit today to assisting them in my new role.

The people of my area have built on the determination and resilience of our forebears in the mining and agriculture industries. My own family has worked in the Illawarra mining industry since the early 1900s. The unshakeable belief in the need to support each other through good times and bad which was forged in a dangerous and difficult industry has left a strong legacy of communal responsibility in me, my family and, indeed, the whole community in which we live. As a region we enriched our diversity and optimism by welcoming migration. For decades migrants have settled in Wollongong to work in the steelworks and other industries. At the same time, they have made a considerable contribution to the wonderful arts, entertainment and gastronomic diversity available to us—although the member for Watson assures me that I need to visit his electorate to truly appreciate that. This complements their important economic contribution to our region. My parents tell of the novelty of visiting one of the first coffee shops, located in Globe Lane, Wollongong—coincidentally, where my office now sits—and enjoying the exotic experience of a glass of apple cider or a cup of continental coffee and a slice of blackforest cake. We continue to welcome people from around the world who settle in our region, including our newest arrivals from the African nations in crisis today. We live the positive experience of tolerance and diversity each day.

Our area has a very distinctive geographic identity, sitting between the escarpment and the sea. You will have to excuse me if I sound like a travel brochure—I am quite attached to the area. It gives us our wonderful lifestyle and provides important economic opportunities through both tourism and our capacity to attract businesses by providing lifestyle advantages. An excellent example is the world-class University of Wollongong. Each year it attracts thousands of students

through its excellence in research and education, but marketing its high-quality programs is no doubt made easier when you add Wollongong's unique lifestyle advantages. Talk to any person from the Illawarra and they will describe the emotional pleasure they feel when, after being away from home for any length of time, they reach the top of Bulli Pass and look down at the breathtaking panorama of the Illawarra spread out before them.

Not only do we enjoy the beauties of our geography; the uniqueness of the landscape also gives us a very strong sense of identity with our place and our community. This, I believe, greatly contributes to our optimism and strong sense of community. Our area has been through many changes. We have met them with resilience and grown stronger. We do not, however, accept that there is no downside to change. We know from hard struggle that there are always potential victims in even the most promising of circumstances. I believe that the challenge of good government is not only to seek out opportunities for increased prosperity but also to ensure that all people are able to take advantage of the new circumstances. I have been a member of the Australian Labor Party for 27 years—I do not always admit that, but I do today—because we are a party that takes seriously the need to find sound policies and programs that open doors for all people and actively seek to assist them in overcoming barriers that nature, society or life circumstances have placed before them.

Over the last three years that I have been talking with local people as the Labor Party candidate, it has become absolutely clear to me that there are some groups in my community whose struggle to access a healthy and constructive life has become increasingly difficult. When my colleague the member for Lalor visited our area I asked her to focus the entire visit on the issue of mental health because several local organisations

had been telling me about the growing number of people needing assistance and their shrinking capacity to provide help. I was astonished, after the visit, by the number of people who contacted me. Most simply wanted to express their appreciation that we had raised the profile of the issue. So many people had a family member or friend who had experienced a period of mental ill health and had become aware of the stigma and lack of services for both sufferers and their families and supporters. I sincerely believe this is a crucial public policy issue for the future. It will become even more urgent as we begin to see many more crises in our communities that occur when mental illness is not given a priority. I have given a commitment to these people and groups to continue to advocate for them in this parliament and I reaffirm that commitment today.

During the campaign I attended a forum on poverty in Wollongong. I had already met with many of the organisations that attended the forum over the years preceding the campaign and I found their commitment and professionalism an inspiration. It is true that economic prosperity has resulted in material improvements in the lifestyles of many in our community. It is equally true that the pace and demands of the new economy are even more likely to leave too many people behind. Our local St Vinnies tell me they have experienced a 17 per cent increase in the demands on their services in the last few years. Many groups who have traditionally experienced hardship and poverty as a result of poor educational outcomes; poor health, wellbeing and safety experiences; or neglectful and abusive life circumstances are still as trapped in the poverty cycle as they ever were.

However, a new trend is emerging. Families who appear to be relatively well-off materially are increasingly seeking assistance. Some of the apparently more affluent sub-

urbs in my electorate have families registering for food hampers this Christmas for the first time ever. Many families are clearly living on optimism about their capacity to service their personal debt. Rising house prices and the large mortgages that come with them mean that many families are committing a larger and larger proportion of the family budget to mortgage payments. Their lifestyle is then often supported by the significant use of credit cards. It is not uncommon for families to be balancing several forms of credit commitments at the same time. This clearly means that they are only one setback away from financial hardship: one period of prolonged ill health, one period of unexpected unemployment or one major car repair or other unexpected expense. The spending optimism is often balanced on a fragile capacity and hides an underlying constant worry about the next bill to come in.

It is not easy in the current environment to raise these issues. You cannot help feeling a bit like the bore at the party who is warning about the potential hangover the next morning. Clearly people are enjoying their material consumption, and to raise concerns about the potential for financial problems is a bit like prodding a wound. I firmly believe, however, that it would be irresponsible not to be talking about this issue in this parliament. It is irresponsible to allow this level of personal debt and the increased potential for significant losses to be ignored. It is unfair to simply rely on our charity organisations, already struggling to meet current demand, to do even more. Addressing housing affordability, access to affordable health care, access to reliable work and reasonable working conditions and access to affordable child care are all crucial responsibilities for government, but even more so given the financial challenges so many families face today.

One of the issues that have caused great concern in our area over recent years has

been our unacceptably high level of youth unemployment. I well remember the huge annual intakes of apprentices at the steelworks and the coalmines when I was a teenager in the area. Over the last 20 years these have almost completely disappeared. Like so many other areas with a significant manufacturing base, we now face the disgraceful situation of both high youth unemployment and high skills shortages.

The Illawarra Regional Development Board commissioned a report in August this year on the size and nature of the skills shortage in our area. They did this in recognition of the increasing restraint this problem is placing on the growth of business. The board recognised the importance of quality data at a regional level to develop appropriate regional strategies for addressing problems. I commend their foresight in recognising that national and state focused data and strategies are important but are far more useful when complemented by additional region-specific data.

As a member representing a region in this parliament, it is my intention to advocate for more extensive regional development programs based on sound research and consultation with the specific regions themselves. I look forward to the final report of the Illawarra Regional Development Board to provide the analysis needed to add to the anecdotal evidence from businesses of the increasing problem of the shortage of skilled workers.

I must say that I found myself somewhat stunned in my first week in this parliament—and I rushed to rewrite part of my speech—to hear various members opposite make claims that my colleagues have failed to give due attention to the importance of technical education and training. As a former TAFE teacher and coordinator of joint schools-TAFE programs and traineeship programs,

not surprisingly I take pride in being a strong advocate for our excellent TAFE system and I have followed debate on these issues over the years very closely.

My colleague the member for Throsby very effectively advocated, over the three years of the last parliament, a new approach to creating apprenticeship opportunities in our area, and a very successful program is now running. I reject completely the claims by government members that Labor have failed to promote the importance of vocational training. In fact, we have had to drag this government kicking and screaming even to address the fact that there is a skills problem in this country. Throughout my campaign, I raised the concerns of local individuals and organisations, including my former colleagues at TAFE, about the issues of youth unemployment and skills shortages, and today I reaffirm my commitment to continue to advocate on these issues.

I realistically expect to experience both frustration and satisfaction in working as the federal member for Cunningham—it is a combination of experiences that I am well familiar with—but I am also familiar with the importance of perseverance in the pursuit of good outcomes for the people I sought to represent and who have now placed their trust in me.

I have several other concerns that I wish to fight for over the coming weeks, but I would like to give notice of one in particular, following also on some of the work done by my colleague the member for Throsby in pursuit of the allocation of a Medicare licence for the MRI machine based at Wollongong Hospital. It is well past time that the federal government took their responsibility for this matter seriously and provided the licence, and that they gave public hospitals a bit of a priority in their allocations.

A candidate in any election never wins through their own hard work alone. It is a team effort, and many people have helped me over many years. I would like to take this opportunity to place on the record my appreciation for their efforts. I would like to thank the many dedicated branch members and party supporters who letterboxed, attended fundraising events and staffed polling booths. They took a blow in 2002, and they rallied around their commitment to our party and their belief in a better Australia under a federal Labor government. Their support was invaluable, and I say to them today: one more rally around and we will be there.

I would also like to thank the volunteers who staffed my office—Craig, Paul, Liz, Berna, Rhys, Michael, Wilf, Stan, Joan, Reg and Chris—and the branch campaign team of Kevin, Bob, Evan, Ryan, Justin and Marc. Thank you also to my fellow elected representatives in the Illawarra: Senator Michael Forshaw; member for Throsby, Jennie George; my state colleagues; and the many local government colleagues who gave me invaluable support during the campaign. I also received tremendous support from EMILY's List, and I would like to thank Karen Mow for the many small but crucial tasks she undertook to help me—particularly remembering to take photos on election night.

I am deeply appreciative of the support of the members and officials of the union movement in the Illawarra and the South Coast Labour Council, in particular Richard Olsen and the TWU members, Mark Armstrong and the MUA members, Mick Lane and members of the CFMEU building division and Bob Mitchell and members of the CFMEU mining division.

There is one group of people spread across New South Wales who could not help directly that I wish to acknowledge. For the

seven years prior to my election I was enormously privileged to work with a team in the Youth Justice Conferencing Directorate of the New South Wales Department of Juvenile Justice. This group of people, under the inspiring and supportive leadership of the director, Jenny Bargaen, demonstrated every day the true meaning of public service. We were privileged to work with a truly innovative and successful piece of legislation introduced by the Carr government, which established restorative justice practices for juvenile offenders—a true success story. The team I worked with truly believed in their purpose and seriously applied themselves to delivering a high-quality program. I really valued working with them and I appreciate their efforts in supporting me.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow ministers who visited the electorate: thank you for your support, advice and encouragement. Thank you also to the tireless Alison who helped organise so many of these visits.

I bring to my new role a strength that has sustained me throughout my life—the wonderful support and unending faith of my family. I am proud of the values they have instilled in me and the example they constantly provide to me. I thank my maternal grandparents, Jimmy and Mavis Kerr, who taught me the value of strong beliefs and strong family, and my paternal grandmother, Annie Reed, who always had time to listen and made me feel I was special.

I thank my aunts, uncles and cousins, who always rally around to support me: my Aunt Cath, whom we sorely miss, and Uncle Kevin; Jim and Vanessa; Lorraine and John; Arthur and Lynn; Bob and Jane; Norm—also missed—and Jan; and Jack and Jeanette. I have 17 cousins, whom I will not name, but I very much value their numbers as well as their support and friendship.

To my former husband, Barry, and his family, Merv and Ruby, Russ and Cheryl, Barb and Tom, I say thank you for the years of support and encouragement that you gave me in so many ways. My great appreciation and thanks go to Gino for his faith in me and his invaluable encouragement and support.

I often jokingly comment that one of the reasons I am a survivor is that I have four younger brothers. The truth is they enrich me as a person each and every day. I thank Kev and Sharon and the kids; Rod and Dana and the girls; and Anthony and Maria and our newest little member Nicholas, who staffed his first polling booth and attended his first fundraiser at the age of three months. I also thank my other brother, Brett. You have all been through very difficult times with me on my journey here and your companionship has been a great strength to me. I am so pleased you can all be with me today.

I hardly know where to find words for the next two people I want to thank. It seems impossible to begin to describe what they have done for me, but I know they know how much I value what I cannot even begin to put into words. To my mum and dad, Bev and Kev Reed, I simply say thank you and I will not let you down.

Finally, I wish to thank the two most important people in my life, my sons, Michael and Chris. I know that sometimes you probably thought Mum was a bit mad to persevere with her dream, but I never doubted your love and support. You both make me very proud as I look at the wonderful young men you have grown into, and I am so glad to have you both here today.

Mr CADMAN (Mitchell) (1.41 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker and your exhibition of generosity in the last few minutes. The address-in-reply debate gives us an opportunity to look at the past three years and the chal-

lenges of the future, of the next three years. It is a pivotal point where the government sets out its plans for the coming period, based on the result of the election. A critical factor of the past three years has surely been the growth of Australia. Growth is needed to supply employment, and a growth of three to four per cent is critical for there to be a growth in jobs. The current government has achieved that growth. There has been a growth in jobs, and there has been an increase in the capacity of business and families.

The most important factor in achieving growth is to establish confidence. Confidence in business and families is the key factor in a successful economy and a successful nation. There has been confidence in Australia. Confidence has been built up over a period of time. One of the most significant factors in achieving that confidence has been a plan to pay off the debt that we were left with by the previous Labor government. That was a confidence-building factor for most people. They knew we were in debt and they wanted a process whereby we could restore a proper balance. There was \$9 or \$10 billion going out every year just to cover the debt. It was a huge drain on Australian taxpayers. They understood that a plan to deal with the debt was significant. A plan to reduce taxation, to give people more of their own money, was a significant confidence builder as well. We had a plan to be competitive, to be able to establish our place in the world, to trade with the best and to hold our own. The community has seen that and has welcomed the opportunity to expand into world markets and to expand into local markets and replace imports.

Reward for effort is a significant part of confidence building and, therefore, a significant part of growth and a successful economy. An increase in productivity has been brought about by people being more content

in the workplace. There have been fewer strikes, fewer stoppages, real increases in reward, better returns for effort, better returns for families and better outcomes for a week's work. These have also been part of a confidence-building process that we have experienced and which indeed has been part of the reason for the growth in the economy—more jobs, falling unemployment, real wage increases, a low cost-of-living increase and low interest rates. All these factors together have produced a boost in confidence, a capacity for growth, increased wealth, increased income and increased prosperity. Now is an opportunity for us to assess some of the problems that have been overcome: the Asian economic crisis, world terrorism and the declining rainfall that has affected so many Australian industries.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Causley)—Order! It being 1.45 p.m., the debate is interrupted in accordance with the motion agreed to on 18 November 2004. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour of the day. The honourable member for Mitchell will have leave to continue his remarks when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Lehner, Mr Mal

Ms CORCORAN (Isaacs) (1.45 p.m.)—So often local people who put so much into their community do not receive recognition unless they are in the media spotlight. However, once in a while somebody truly dedicated and excellent is recognised and given the kudos they deserve. Earlier this year I had the pleasure of recognising the achievements of one such person—Mal Lehner. Mal has put years of work and commitment into his local football club, the Seaford Junior Football Club.

On Father's Day this year, I was invited by the club to their annual presentation day to award Mal with his Commonwealth Sports Award. Mal was nominated for the award by his colleagues, who were impressed by Mal's dedication to the club and his work with the junior players. His work has fostered talent and given confidence to those who needed a little extra help. Not only did Mal play as a junior for the club for five years; he then returned as a trainer. His nephew was there playing for the club, continuing the family tradition.

In 1996 Mal began coaching the team he once played in as a youngster. He stepped aside in 2003 because the club could only field one team, but he has returned this year to coach the under-nines—the most inexperienced players in the club. Mal has a very encouraging coaching style. It is based on giving positive feedback and facilitating an inclusive atmosphere amongst the players. Last year Mal was rewarded with a life membership of the Seaford Junior Football Club in recognition of his 16 years service in different capacities in the club. *(Time expired)*

Social Welfare: Disability Services

Mrs DRAPER (Makin) (1.46 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to such high office. I rise to speak today in support of the aims of a group of parents and community leaders who have formed Dignity for the Disabled to lobby the government of South Australia for more support for intellectually disabled people. For too long, the Rann Labor government has ignored the plight of the disabled and their families. That is why these community based groups have taken the unprecedented step of organising a very public campaign to demand that their needs be heard on North Terrace.

Group leader David Holst and other parents have raised in the vicinity of \$100,000

for their campaign, which demonstrates the seriousness and urgency of the situation, particularly for the Moving On program. The program was designed as a day-stay program which provides social interaction and self-development for school leavers. It used to be five days a week, but this had been cut back to three and even fewer due to underfunding by the state government. While Minister Jay Weatherill has made an announcement, probably only because of adverse publicity, to now fund it five days a week, this performance is not good enough.

Most people would find it difficult to imagine how stressful daily life is for the parents of children who require around-the-clock care, and, to make it even harder, these are not small children but grown adults. The level of stress is magnified by the fact that this supervision is needed seven days a week for anything up to 30 or 40 years. According to David Holst, there are 330 people on the waiting list for urgent intellectual disability services council residential care. Premier Rann and his government must take immediate action to remedy this situation. *(Time expired)*

Cox, Captain Rodney

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (1.48 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, congratulations on your elevation to this role. I rise today to say congratulations also to the Victorian nominee for the Australian of the Year—Captain Rodney Cox, who is an extraordinary human being. In his 28 years of life, he has managed to put in an enormous amount. Sadly, Rodney is no longer a constituent of mine—since the recent redistribution of electorates—but I got to know Rodney very well when he was the resident captain of the reservist Army barracks in Huntingdale. Rodney then went to serve in Timor with INTERFET, and he was unfortunately involved in the Bali bombing.

For this event Rodney has been recognised by the Army.

He then decided that he needed a quieter life. He managed to do six weeks of his articles and then took a posting with the UN, where, yes, you guessed it, he was blown up in Iraq. He has been nominated for a bravery award, and I hope he is recognised for that service. Rodney has left Iraq, but he is now serving in Kabul in Afghanistan, in the area of security. It is a very risky pursuit, but he is doing it with absolute fervour and his normal dedication. Rodney is an exceptional person. I fervently hope that he will be made the Australian of the Year, because he sums up what we need to hold near and dear in our lives at the moment—mateship, commitment to your country. I congratulate him on his Victorian nomination and hope that we will get to congratulate him on Australia Day.

Ryan Electorate: Recognition Awards

Mr JOHNSON (Ryan) (1.50 p.m.)—Last Friday, 26 November, I had the wonderful opportunity of hosting the 2004 Ryan Recognition Awards. It is the third occasion that I have had the opportunity of doing this. We held it at Nudgee Junior College in Indooroopilly, in the Ryan electorate. We had an enormous number of residents from the community—in excess of 350—come along. It was a wonderful gathering of young people, businesspeople, community leaders and those many residents of Ryan who have made service to the community their No. 1 priority.

When I first initiated these awards, we had only some 25 to 30 recipients. On this occasion the recipients are too many to name and too many to be able to speak of all their contributions to the Ryan community. But I want to pay tribute in the parliament today to those people who, from across the spectrum of business, schools and community organisations such as Rotary and Lions, have really

led the way, showing how Australians give their time very generously to their fellow Australians. I want to mention very quickly the three categories that we had. We had the Ryan youth recognition awards, the Ryan Recognition Awards and a special category for young people from school who will clearly show the way in the future. (*Time expired*)

Federal Election: Visually Impaired and Blind Voters

Mr MURPHY (Lowe) (1.51 p.m.)—Amongst the questions I placed on the first *Notice Paper* of this parliament is question No. 40, addressed on 17 November 2004 to the Minister representing the Special Minister of State. My question asks what the minister is doing to ensure that visually impaired and blind people are able to independently cast a vote at the next federal election.

The Royal Blind Society of New South Wales and the Association of Blind Citizens of New South Wales are located in Enfield and Burwood respectively. I am very proud to report to the House that these wonderful institutions that do so much to help the visually impaired are both situated in my electorate of Lowe. In this modern and very technological age, there is no reason why people who are visually impaired cannot be afforded the right to cast a vote in secret. This is their democratic right. Accordingly, I call on the government and the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to immediately investigate this matter and provide the technology and a system that will allow visually impaired people to vote independently at the next federal election, which is expected in 2007. I urge all members of this House to support this initiative.

Macquarie Electorate: Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service

Mr BARTLETT (Macquarie) (1.53 p.m.)—Last Saturday I attended a presenta-

tion ceremony for members of the local brigades of the Rural Fire Service, to present the national medal and long service awards. This was the third such ceremony in the last two months. Also in that time I attended a similar ceremony for the State Emergency Service members in the Blue Mountains. All these ceremonies recognised the outstanding efforts of close to 100 men and women in the local brigades and SES. These awards range from 15 years to 50 years of service to the local community—voluntary service totalling many hundreds of years, with hundreds of hours for each of those years; service at great personal cost and cost to their own families; and service on the front line, which, in the face of blazing infernos and other dangers, involves serious risks to their own lives.

Most communities have their army of emergency service and firefighting volunteers, yet the nature of the Blue Mountains makes us particularly prone to the fury of nature. The incredible efforts of the men and women of organisations such as the RFS and the SES, not to mention others such as the ambulance service and the Red Cross, provide much-needed and greatly appreciated protection for our local community. We thank them for their outstanding effort and congratulate them for these thoroughly deserved awards.

Artists: Remuneration

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (1.54 p.m.)—I rise today because I have been presented with a petition from 1,622 local artists calling for the fair treatment of artists. It is fair to say that the contribution of artists is often overlooked in the Australian community. As for so many people who undertake work that they truly love, often the remuneration is simply not there; they are expected to work for love. These 1,622 artists ask that—instead of being expected to fulfil the cliché

of the starving artist—consistent with the recommendations of the Myer report, they are properly remunerated for some of the work they do.

When the coalition government was first elected in 1996, a mandatory fee that was usually paid to artists who were exhibiting in publicly funded galleries was withdrawn. That has made an enormous difference to the income of the average artist. The artists who signed the petition want to see that fee reinstated, consistent with the recommendations of the Myer report. It is worth remembering that the median income for artists in 2000-01 was about \$18,500. That of course includes some—very few—very highly paid artists. This is just above the poverty line. We need to work together to ensure that artists no longer fulfil the cliché of the starving artist.

Corangamite Electorate: Otway National Park

Mr McARTHUR (Corangamite) (1.55 p.m.)—In the Otways, in the heartland of Corangamite, the Victorian government is set to create a 100,000-hectare national park. The Minister for Environment, John Thwaites, announced this yesterday. It will be a nine times increase. I put on the public record concern about what resources will be devoted to this national park. Will the roads that were provided by the timber industry in the previous 40 years be maintained? Will the national park be able to fight another Ash Wednesday? Will the resources of the Victorian government be allocated to maintain the park, to make sure that weeds such as blackberries do not get out of control, that feral animals are kept under control and that access will be available for the residents of Corangamite? And will the state government be accountable in the way in which they maintain the park and put on the public record the value that the park now has and the

value the park might have in another 10 years? This is a very critical issue.

The Bracks government threw out the RFA in the Otways and are to remove logging by the year 2008, and they have now created this massive national park. But they have given no undertaking or guarantee that they will maintain the Otway National Park in its present state and that they will do so in the future, and they have given no guarantee of the amount of money they will put in the budget. Also, will the fuel reduction burning that should be undertaken to maintain the biodiversity in that park be undertaken on an annual basis to ensure that the quality of the park remains? *(Time expired)*

Canberra Electorate: Burns Club Pipe Band

Ms ANNETTE ELLIS (Canberra) (1.57 p.m.)—My congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your election to your office. In my electorate I have a Burns Club—in fact, one of the largest in the world. They very proudly sponsor a Burns Club Pipe Band. It is my pleasure to tell this House that, over the last two years, the members of that band did some fairly serious fundraising and managed to get enough money together to send a group of nearly 200 people to Scotland a couple of months ago for the world championship pipe band competition. They sent a second grade and fourth grade band across. The second grade band, amongst other things, won a fourth place. The fourth grade band won a first place. They had an extremely successful tour of Scotland, around Glasgow, Perth and Crieff, just north of Perth, and came back not only having achieved a great deal of success but also having represented my community extremely well.

Of course, the thing that makes it even better for me is that this band, under Pipe Major Athol Chalmers, actually runs a col-

lege to ensure that young pipers and young drummers are encouraged to take up their musical talent with pipe band music. With that group of 200 were included several very young students who are now budding pipers and drummers of the future. I would like to endorse to the House the very great success of the Burns Club Pipe Band at that competition. *(Time expired)*

Tofa Mamao a Samoa Park

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (1.59 p.m.)—On Saturday, 30 October, I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of a community park in the Ipswich suburb of Redbank. This park, the Tofa Mamao a Samoa Park, is not your average garden variety council park. It is dedicated to the local Samoan community, although I might add it is certainly able to be enjoyed by all members of the local community and belongs to all the people of Ipswich. 'Tofa mamao' translates roughly into 'thinking future', which is an apt description of what those who were involved in the establishment of this park were doing—thinking about the future and creating a place where their local people will be able to enjoy many hours of play, community and togetherness.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first council park in Australia to be named in honour of a local Samoan community. In the electorate of Oxley and in and around Ipswich and the south-western Brisbane area the Samoan community has nearly 3,000 members. Over the years, this park has become something of a focal point for the local community and it has attracted up to 10,000 people to specific events. I want to congratulate the Samoan community for the great work they have done and for having this park named after them.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 2 p.m., the time for members' statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES**Haines, Ms Janine, AM**

The SPEAKER (2.00 p.m.)—I inform the House of the death on Saturday, 20 November 2004 of Janine Haines AM, a former senator. Janine Haines represented the state of South Australia from 1977 to 1978 and 1981 to 1990, and was a former Leader of the Australian Democrats.

Mr ANDERSON (Gwydir—Acting Prime Minister) (2.00 p.m.)—On indulgence, I would like to say a few words about the passing on 20 November of Janine Haines, a former leader of the Australian Democrats. Janine Haines was born on 8 May 1945 in South Australia to Francis Carter, a policeman, and his wife, Beryl, a schoolteacher. She was educated at Brighton High School and Adelaide University, where she received a Bachelor of Arts, and the Adelaide Teachers College, where she received a diploma of teaching. She went on to become a teacher of English and maths in high schools before entering politics.

In 1975, Janine Haines stood for the Senate on the Liberal Movement Party ticket. She was not elected at that time, but was later chosen by the then Premier of South Australia, Don Dunstan, to fill a casual vacancy in the Senate following the retirement of Steele Hall in 1977. Janine Haines became the first senator and also the first female senator for the Australian Democrats. Her first term as a senator expired on 30 June 1978. She was elected to the Senate again in 1980, taking up the position on 1 July 1981. She was re-elected in 1983 and 1987. She was appointed leader of the Australian Democrats in March 1986 on the retirement of Don Chipp, becoming the first woman to lead a political party in Australia. She held that position until March 1990, when she resigned from the Senate to contest the House of Representatives seat of Kingston

and was defeated by the incumbent member, Gordon Bilney, from the Labor Party.

Throughout her time in parliament Mrs Haines was always an advocate for gender equity and women's issues, but she also maintained a strong interest in a wide range of issues affecting the Australian community. In her first speech to the parliament she said that it was not her intention to restrict herself to so-called women's issues or to put only the women's point of view but that she intended to concern herself with as many issues as possible affecting the people of Australia and in particular her home state of South Australia. She was the Australian Democrats' spokeswoman for what she called the social justice portfolios—health, social security, housing and construction, community services and women's affairs—as well as finance, Attorney-General's, Special Minister of State and Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio issues.

During her time as a senator and party leader she was a key figure in the Senate's consideration of quite a wide range of legislation. Among her political achievements she listed changes to the sex discrimination legislation, the negotiation of changes to the Hawke government's Medicare system, her determined public opposition to the Australia card and her stewardship of the Australian Democrats through one of their most successful periods.

During her time as a senator Mrs Haines was a member of a number of Senate committees, including the Senate Select Committee on Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes, the creation of which she strongly supported. She was also a member of the Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare, the Joint Committee on the National Crime Authority, and the Joint Select Committee on an Australia Card. She travelled overseas to represent the Australian parliament with parliamentary

delegations to Italy, Spain, Greece, Cyprus and New Zealand.

After she left politics she remained very active. She wrote a book, *Suffrage to Sufferance: 100 Years of Women in Politics*. She served on the council of Adelaide University. She was the President of the Australian Privacy Charter Council. She travelled the country speaking on a range of issues and engaged in radio, newspaper and consultancy work. In the 2001 Queen's Birthday Honours List Janine Haines was appointed as a member of the Order of Australia for service to the Australian parliament and to politics, particularly as parliamentary leader of the Australian Democrats, and to the community. On behalf of the government and, I am sure, all who knew her in this place, I extend to her husband, Ian, to her daughters, Bronwyn and Melanie, and to other family members and friends our very real and sincere sympathy on their loss.

Mr LATHAM (Werriwa—Leader of the Opposition) (2.04 p.m.)—On indulgence, the Australian Labor Party joins with the Acting Prime Minister in expressing our condolences and sympathy on the passing of Janine Haines. She was well liked and respected around this building and, of course, well remembered as leading the Australian Democrats when they were at their peak. She can take great credit for that achievement.

She saw them as much more than a Senate party—she saw the true legitimacy of Australian politics as resting in this place, the House of Representatives, and so at the 1990 election she decided to give up her place in the Senate to contest the seat of Kingston in this place. She won more than 26 per cent of the primary vote but failed to attract the preferences that were needed to take the seat. That was a real landmark in the development of the Democrats and an achievement in its own right. For that party, it had the spin-off

benefit of lifting their profile. In fact, at that election, in the Senate they lifted their support to 12.6 per cent of the vote nationwide and so her party easily held the balance of power in the other place. So while she was unsuccessful in trying to be the first Democrat elected to the House of Representatives, she gave them their high-water mark in the Senate.

She was a very effective politician. She was the first woman to lead an Australian political party and in that role was an inspiration to a huge number of Australians. She was a strong and committed leader of her party and saw its role as much more than an upper house political organisation. In the 1990s, after that defeat, she continued to make an important contribution to the Australian community through her writing and her public speaking. In fact, she had just begun a new career as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, her home town, when she was struck by illness.

On behalf of the Labor Party—and I am sure it is shared right around the House—I pass on my condolences to Janine's partner, Ian, to her daughters and to her grandchildren. She was well respected in Parliament House and well respected indeed in Australian public life, and she will be greatly missed.

Mr COSTELLO (Higgins—Treasurer) (2.06 p.m.)—On indulgence, on behalf of the Liberal Party, I too wish to pass on our condolences to the family of Janine Haines: to her husband, Ian, to her daughters, Bronwyn and Melanie, and to other family members, on what will be a very great loss for them. Janine Haines filled a casual Senate vacancy in 1977 at the age of 32. It was a very young age to begin a parliamentary career. She came into the Senate to fill the vacancy caused by Steele Hall, who had been elected on the votes of the Liberal Movement Party.

Steele had been a premier of the Liberal and Country League in South Australia and had disagreed with the Liberal and Country League and formed the Liberal Movement Party. He had been elected to the Senate and, when he vacated the Senate seat, Janine Haines filled it. Steele was to bring the Liberal Movement Party back into the Liberal and Country League and turn it into the Liberal Party of Australia in South Australia. Janine went on to the other third party force which was then gathering in Australia, the Australian Democrats—which had also been formed by a former senior member of the Liberal Party, Don Chipp.

Janine Haines's view was that if the Democrats were to become the significant third party force in Australian politics they had to win lower house seats. She had the courage of her convictions to run for a lower house seat in 1990, when she did exceptionally well but did not win. The seat that she ran for, Kingston, has been very much a marginal seat, slipping between the various political parties, ever since 1990. Janine Haines's position in the Senate was taken by Senator Meg Lees, who in turn was also to go on to lead the Australian Democrats.

Senator Haines began what has proven to be quite a tradition in the Australian Democrats. She was the first woman to lead a political party, and she did it with great panache and great aplomb. There is no doubt that in her day she was a very significant political player. She attracted a lot of adherence to the Australian Democrats, and she was a very forceful spokeswoman for the Australian Democrats. There is no doubt that she had a keen intellect, a very good political feel and a great deal of charisma as she led that political party.

Janine Haines went through some personal difficulties. She came close to death in a car accident once, out at Whyalla, but she

never let those difficulties deter her. She talked about a ravenous hunger for politics and said, 'Once you've tried it, you get hooked.' That may well be the experience of many members in the House. It is a great tragedy for her and her family, to whom I pass on the condolences of the Liberal Party. It is a loss to the people of South Australia and those people who supported her in third party politics during her career. On behalf of the Liberal Party, I pass on condolences to her friends and supporters.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (2.10 p.m.)—

On indulgence, I am very pleased to join the previous speakers to offer my condolences to Janine's family. Hers was an extraordinary life cut far too short. Janine Haines became the first woman to lead a federal parliamentary party, in 1986. I have to say I am very sorry that I did not know her. Those who did know her often described Janine Haines as having a very direct and no-nonsense style—one of the great characteristics that I think many people will remember her for. She certainly demonstrated that in some of her early speeches in the parliament where she called for urgent action to address the plight of Indigenous Australians. She also called for greater recognition of and participation by women in public life.

Given her prior career as a teacher, she pursued with great passion the issue of access to education. As she said herself, the right of children to the best education system possible was something that she pursued right throughout her parliamentary career. She called for the government of the day to stop providing placebos and start administering restorative medicine in the form of action not words, teachers not tape recorders and relationships not rock gardens. She had a great passion for education that of course came from her time as a teacher. In an unusual combination for a teacher, she was a teacher of both maths and English. She stud-

ied the Australian poet John Shaw Nielsen while she was teaching part time. She was a woman of extraordinary talents and interests.

As others have said already today, there is no question that she was a popular and very widely respected leader of the Australian Democrats. I think that, as others have said today, those years could be looked upon as the party's golden years, and that owes so much to her extraordinary leadership. To her husband of 37 years, Ian, her daughters, Melanie and Bronwyn, and their families, the grandchildren, we offer our sincere condolences.

Mr DOWNER (Mayo—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (2.12 p.m.)—On indulgence, I would very briefly like to support the comments that have been made and say how very sorry I was to hear of Janine Haines's death. I think Janine Haines was the most substantial leader that the Australian Democrats ever had, and I really mean that. As others have said, she was a very articulate woman and a very intelligent woman. She was also a very honourable and honest woman. Whilst I did not agree with her on many issues, I really did admire her fortitude, her courage and her integrity. She was, as I said, the most substantial leader that the Australian Democrats have had. She was substantial not just in terms of her high profile but in terms of the substance of the person.

I had a little to do with her, as she came from my own state of South Australia. In particular I think today is the day to confess that in 1990 we were very concerned about her determination to win the seat of Kingston. Janine Haines was very popular at that time. The Democrats were riding very high in 1990, and she put a substantial effort into winning the seat of Kingston against the then Labor member for Kingston, Gordon Bilney. I have known Gordon Bilney for a fair period of time, including before he became a

member of parliament. We were both in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade together. But, curiously enough, I did not want to see the Democrats win the seat from the Labor Party, because I believed that if the Democrats won Kingston then that would have given the Democrats a beachhead which they would have been able to build on, and in time the Democrats would have become a significant third force in Australian politics, rather akin to the British Liberal Democrats.

I recall working quite closely with Gordon Bilney to ensure that the Democrats did not win that seat—in other words, that Janine Haines did not win. I can only say that, in the interests of the diminishing support for the Democrats, Janine Haines's failure to win that seat was a very significant development. If she had won that seat, I think the Democrats would have made a beachhead into the House of Representatives. I think she would have been a very significant and forceful figure in the House of Representatives. For those of us who have had significant Democrat votes in our own electorates, it would have been a very major problem for us in terms of holding our seats. I have to confess some self-interest in that regard.

In conclusion, I think she was the most substantial and the most significant leader the Australian Democrats have had. She was a very good woman, a very honourable woman. I extend my condolences to her husband, Ian, and to her children, Bronwyn and Melanie.

The SPEAKER—As a mark of respect to the memory of Janine Haines, I invite all honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER—I thank the House.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ANDERSON (Gwydir—Acting Prime Minister) (2.16 p.m.)—I inform the House that the Prime Minister will be absent from question time today, tomorrow and Wednesday. He is, as members know, travelling to Laos to attend the ASEAN summit. I will answer questions on the Prime Minister's behalf today and tomorrow. The Treasurer will answer questions on his behalf on Wednesday. I inform the House that the Minister for Veterans' Affairs will be absent from question time today for family reasons. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will answer questions on her behalf. I also inform the House that I will be absent from question time on Wednesday to attend to personal commitments. The Treasurer will answer questions on my behalf on Wednesday.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**Regional Services: Program Funding**

Mr LATHAM (2.17 p.m.)—My question is to the Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Can the minister confirm that the guidelines for the Regional Partnerships program require that formal applications must be made for the funding, that applications can be made on an application form obtained from the local ACC or from the Commonwealth Regional Information Service and that all application forms are to be lodged with the minister's department? Were these guidelines followed in relation to all of the Regional Partnerships projects for which funding has been announced?

Mr ANDERSON—I thank the honourable member for his question. Broadly speaking, he has outlined the processes that apply when community groups want to apply for Regional Partnerships funding. However, I would make the point that this government, just like all political parties, does choose

from time to time to make election commitments which are not necessarily—

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr ANDERSON—You do; you did. You made a lot of them, and they were subject to no guidelines. Even Independents make commitments during an election campaign. Mr Speaker, there is nothing unusual or improper about that. You made commitments during the election campaign and so did we. For reasons of convenience and probity, many of those will be channelled through the expertise of the Regional Partnerships program section maintained in my department. Mr Speaker, I make the point again. You made election commitments and every political party, I suspect, for decades has done so. There is nothing wrong or improper about that.

The SPEAKER—Could I remind all honourable members that I would like remarks to be directed through the chair.

Economy: Current Account Deficit

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (2.19 p.m.)—

My question without notice is to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer inform the House of today's balance of payments data? What are the economic implications arising from these data?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for Mackellar for her question. Today, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released the balance of payments for the September quarter of 2004. The current account deficit widened by \$1.9 billion in the September quarter to \$13.7 billion—around 6½ per cent of GDP. While import volumes only rose by 0.8 per cent, they are up 13½ per cent over the year. For the quarter, export volumes fell 3.2 per cent, but remain 4.7 per cent higher over the year. In particular, exports of rural goods fell 3.9 per cent, which was driven by lower exports of wool and sheepskins. In addition to that, non-rural

goods fell four per cent for the quarter. As Australia emerged from drought, we had a very good wheat crop in the earlier part of 2004. Indications for 2004-05 are that the wheat crop will be lower than it was for 2004, which means we are coming off a higher base in relation to rural commodities.

One of the things that is undoubtedly challenging Australia's exports at the moment is the level of the Australian dollar, which is currently about 10c higher than its post-float average over the last 20 years in US dollar terms. This was the subject of discussion at the G20 meeting of finance ministers and central bankers in Berlin last weekend. The United States, with its own current account problems, has the US dollar falling against most currencies in the world, particularly the euro and the yen. While that will be advantageous for the United States, those other currencies which are appreciating against a falling US dollar will, as a consequence, find that their export competitiveness has been affected and that will make things harder for their exporters.

I acknowledge that the level of the currency has made things harder for Australian exporters. In part, this is because of commodity prices but, largely, it is because of a falling US dollar which, as I said, is falling against the major currencies of the world. It would certainly be helpful if that adjustment on the US dollar were shared by a wider range of currencies than is currently the case at the moment. We expect that it will be a challenging year for exporters. As a consequence, net exports will detract from the national accounts, which are going to be released on Wednesday of this week. It is important that we make all efforts to keep our economy competitive so that Australia's exports can cope with those difficult trading positions.

Regional Services: Program Funding

Mr LATHAM (2.22 p.m.)—My question is to the Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. I refer to the minister's funding announcement—not an election commitment but a funding announcement—on 24 September that the government had committed \$4 million to fund the R.M. Williams bush centre in Eidsvold, in the seat of Hinkler. Can the minister confirm the statement by the Chief Executive Officer of the Eidsvold Shire Council on 24 November that funding had been approved even though 'we haven't put an application in yet'? Why did the minister fund a project for which an application had not even been lodged?

Mr ANDERSON—This particular program, as the two members who have been involved in it will know, had an extraordinary, long history. It had been subjected to quite rigorous examination over a long period of time. It is a very good program. I would be interested to know whether the Leader of the Opposition is going to go up there and tell people that it is not a good program and that it should not go ahead. The mayor has written, making it quite evident that he regarded an application as having been made. There is an enormous amount of information available on it. I am happy to table all of that information.

The fact remains that it is a quality program that the government, as part of its election campaign, determined it would support, just as the Leader of the Opposition and his senior frontbench people wandered around the country giving clear indications of a very wide-ranging number of programs that they would support should the Australian people have chosen them for government. Just a few days ago the Leader of the Opposition said that one of the things he was going to do as soon as he got back here was to hold us to all

of our election promises, so that we would commit ourselves to doing everything that we said we would do during the campaign. We intend doing precisely that.

There is nothing illegitimate at all about us putting before the people an entire range of policy positions, from economic management—where you did not do very much—social policy and a whole range of issues on foreign affairs right through to the issues of how you might respond to good ideas that are thrown up by local communities. You found plenty of them, I would have to say. I could read out the list if you would like. I would like to know what sort of due process you thought they should go through, particularly the offer of \$150 million to the New South Wales government to fix the Murwillumbah-Casino railway line—a state government responsibility; they closed it. The only independent assessment of what that might cost to fix was done by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The Leader of the Opposition offered his mate Mr Carr \$150 million to do it. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimated that \$25 million was required and you were going to give Mr Carr \$150 million. Where was the due diligence in that? A bit of a profit for your mate Bob Carr in New South Wales, presumably to fix up the transport mess he has in the Sydney basin. I reckon the commitments we made will stack up to a lot more scrutiny than those that you made, and we have every intention of honouring the commitments we made during the campaign.

Mr Latham—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Acting Prime Minister said he was happy to table all the documentation about the funding application for the R.M. Williams centre, so I ask him to do that for the benefit of the House.

Mr Anderson—I am happy to make that available. I will pull it together and make it available.

Transport: AusLink

Mr HARTSUYKER (2.26 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Acting Prime Minister. Would the Acting Prime Minister advise the House on the progress towards implementing the AusLink transport policy? What are the benefits of this policy?

Mr ANDERSON—AusLink will revolutionise the way that this country faces its transport task, which is growing very rapidly. It will provide Australia with a long-term plan for our vital infrastructure in terms of transport needs. I have to say that without a better way of doing it in the future we will sell Australians short. Under this program we have allocated some \$12.5 billion over the next five years. In today's money that is more than twice what was spent on the Snowy Mountains Scheme. As part of that process we will see in this country for the first time an open, transparent transport funding framework freed up of ad hoc and short-term decision making processes.

The fact is that a rapidly growing economy is resulting in a very steep rise in the escalation of our transport task. At the rate that it is building, in the future our roads will not cope with the level of freight that is being put on them, so it is essential that our rail network is brought up to scratch. The leasing of the interstate track in New South Wales for a period of 60 years, the commitment to spend some \$1.8 billion on it over the next five years and, in cooperation with the states to streamline and facilitate the access arrangements, the safety arrangements and the signalling arrangements across this creaking network will see a dramatic improvement over the next five years.

So I make the point that we desperately need a nationally coordinated approach to our transport planning needs. We need adequate resources. For reasons of economic growth, amenity, convenience and better en-

vironmental outcomes, we need to ensure that it is done properly in the future. I believe that the community wants to see a greater emphasis on transport infrastructure and on infrastructure more generally, and I would suggest that the absence of a coherent transport plan from the opposition during the recent campaign would hardly have helped them electorally. It is about time they came forward with a decent, coherent explanation as to how they will develop our transport infrastructure for the future.

Regional Services: Program Funding

Mr LATHAM (2.29 p.m.)—My question is again to the Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Can the minister inform the House which projects under the Regional Partnerships program have been funded without applications being lodged in accordance with the guidelines?

Mr ANDERSON—I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. The answer is: to this point in time, none. We have given election commitments; we will work those through in the proper way. Contrary to the impression being created by some in the opposition—including Senator O'Brien with his 45 questions on notice—the answer is: to this point in time, none of them.

Association of South-East Asian Nations

Dr SOUTHCOTT (2.30 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister inform the House of the significance of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand summit for Australia's relationship with South-East Asia?

Mr DOWNER—I thank the honourable member for Boothby for his question. The government is delighted that the Prime Minister is able to attend the historic ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand summit, which will take place tonight and tomorrow in Vienti-

ane. Amongst other things, this summit will mark the 30th anniversary of Australia becoming an ASEAN dialogue partner. Indeed, I think I am right in saying that Australia was the first ASEAN dialogue partner.

This summit is a key recognition not only of the importance of ASEAN to Australia but of the importance of Australia to ASEAN. We are optimistic that a key outcome of the summit will be the beginning of negotiations towards establishing something that I think is extremely desirable—that is, an ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand free trade area or free trade agreement. That would build, of course, on the strong commercial links that already exist between Australia and the ASEAN countries, on the free trade agreements we have negotiated with Thailand and Singapore and on the work we are doing with Malaysia.

The summit is also an opportunity to reflect the depth and range of our ties with ASEAN, from counter-terrorism—Australia and ASEAN signed a joint declaration on counter-terrorism on 1 July, and we have counter-terrorism memoranda of understanding with a number of ASEAN countries—to the defence and security relationships that we have built up, in different forms with different countries in ASEAN; with all of them we have some measure of a defence and security relationship. We have excellent cooperation with ASEAN on drug trafficking and people-smuggling, to the extent that we have as good as stopped people-smuggling from being directed to Australia.

Our people-to-people links have continued to grow, too—through students, for example. There are 75,000 students from ASEAN countries studying in Australia, and over 600,000 tourists from South-East Asia visited Australia in 2003.

Finally, we make a strong aid commitment every year to a number of ASEAN coun-

tries—obviously, not to all of them. To those ASEAN countries that are eligible for the receipt of development assistance in 2004, we will be providing about \$400 million worth of aid.

This summit is an opportunity for heads of government, including our own, to draw together the threads of a very comprehensive and very successful relationship—one that has continued to build over many years. I think that both sides of the House have been committed to the relationship, but equally—and it is important to remember this—it needs to be a two-way relationship. I think that we as a country have in recent years demonstrated not just the importance of ASEAN to Australia but the importance of Australia to the ASEAN countries.

Association of South-East Asian Nations

Mr RUDD (2.33 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I refer to his explanation that Australia could not enter into the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with ASEAN, because of the alliance relationship that Australia has with the United States. Is the minister aware that Japan, a longstanding ally of the United States, signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with ASEAN in February this year? Is the minister aware that South Korea, another longstanding ally of the US, did the same on Saturday? Given that other longstanding allies of the US have signed the treaty, why won't the government abandon its Howard doctrine of regional military pre-emption and indicate that Australia will give positive consideration to acceding to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with ASEAN?

Mr DOWNER—The Labor Party had 13 years in government to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with ASEAN, and the Labor Party chose not to. The Labor Party then—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr DOWNER—I haven't finished yet. The Labor Party then had 8½ years in opposition to say it would sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. This is just another example of a wasted 8½ years, I assume; you did not think of it in those 8½ years.

The traditional Australian position on the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation has nothing to do with the notion of pre-emption—absolutely nothing to do with it at all. It is a treaty based on a series of principles. Some of them are the principles of the United Nations Charter, and one of the principles of the United Nations Charter is the right to self-defence. It is nothing to do with the notion of pre-emption. Other principles that the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation is based on are, among other things, the so-called 10 principles of the Bandung Declaration of the 1950s. One of the components of the Bandung Declaration was that governments that signed up to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation would abstain from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers.

Bearing that in mind, successive Australian governments—not just this one—have interpreted that particular principle as one that would be inconsistent with the ANZUS alliance. That obviously has been one of the reasons historically why Australian governments have not signed the treaty. Another reason is that it is a treaty that contains a provision for noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries. Therefore, it raises questions about whether, if you signed the treaty and you meant to sign it in a genuine way—taking seriously the provisions of the treaty—you would not interfere in the affairs of another country; you would not, for example, criticise Burma, Myanmar, for human rights abuses.

These are the traditional reasons why Australia has not signed the treaty. The govern-

ment has not changed its position, on the basis of those explanations. The reasons that Gareth Evans, Paul Keating and Bob Hawke gave for not signing the treaty are the reasons we give today.

Association of South-East Asian Nations

Mr JULL (2.37 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Trade. What benefits are to be had by Australia from a free trade pact with ASEAN?

Mr VAILE—I thank the honourable member for Fadden for his question. But firstly, I take the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election to the high office of Speaker of the House of Representatives—I was not here for the last two days of the previous sitting week. The answer to the member for Fadden's question is very simple: more and better jobs for Australians and Australian exporting industries. That is what the outcome of negotiating a free trade agreement with the 10 ASEAN countries will be. Of course, this has not just happened. It is the result of a lot of hard work by a number of people, particularly through the government's persistent trade diplomacy within the region. We started this process at a meeting of trade ministers in Singapore in 1999.

Opposition member interjecting—

Mr VAILE—Who is that up on the back bench interjecting?

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr VAILE—It is a senator. There is a stranger in the House! We started this process in 1999 in a meeting of trade ministers and we have been building on the strength of Australian trade diplomacy within the region. We add this to the architecture of a free trade agreement with Singapore, with Thailand and with the study that we are doing with Malaysia and China at the moment, and it sets us up with great opportunities in the coming years within the region.

We are targeting in terms of strengthening and greater integration economically with the 10 ASEAN countries. Within those 10 countries there is a population of 545 million consumers and a GDP of around \$700 billion. An FTA with the ASEAN countries will create jobs in Australia. It will help further expand Australia's exports to the region and, obviously, deepen our economic integration with the region. Regarding the economic relationship, there is already a \$43 billion two-way trade relationship with the 10 ASEAN countries and a \$46 billion two-way investment relationship. As I say, building upon the other bilateral negotiations that we have concluded in the region, this augurs well for improved exports within our neighbourhood in the east Asian region. An FTA between Australia, New Zealand and the ASEAN countries would complement our already profitable trade agenda in our pursuit of the multilateral outcomes of the Doha Round as well as our bilateral negotiations that have already been concluded, which have been adding their weight to the 1.4 million new jobs that have been created in the Australian economy since our government was originally elected in 1996.

I go back to my starting point, for the information of the member for Fadden. This outcome had its genesis in that meeting in Singapore in 1999 where we moved on to negotiate and conclude a closer economic partnership agreement with the ASEAN countries and things have now culminated in this summit in Vientiane at which the Prime Minister is representing Australia. If the Labor Party had been in a position in government to do this, they would have. They were not and they did not.

Economy: Foreign Debt

Mr SWAN (2.41 p.m.)—My question without notice is directed to the Treasurer. Is it true that Australia's record \$406 billion

foreign debt reported today is more than double the size it was in 1996, more than 50 per cent of GDP for the first time ever and more than \$20,000 of debt for every man, woman and child? Treasurer, do you believe this continued growth in debt is sustainable and what are its implications for interest rates?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for his question. I can give you the figures. In 1996, foreign debt was 39 per cent of the Australian economy and today it is 50 per cent, so it has not doubled. He is wrong in relation to that. Do I believe that Australia would be well served if the current account deficit were lower? Yes. I have made that point on a number of occasions. It is about the same level that it was back in 1994, but there are important differences between now and 1994. The most important difference of course is that, back in 1994, the budget deficit was 2.8 per cent of GDP—that is, the Commonwealth was running down savings—whereas today the Commonwealth budget is in surplus; that is, the Commonwealth is adding to savings. Back in 1994, inflation was 3.9 per cent and, since I was asked about interest rates, back in 1994 the home mortgage variable interest rate was 10½ per cent.

I thought I would refer to one of the speeches that was made back in 1994 on this question of foreign debt. It always pays to acquaint yourself with history. It was by a young member for Werriwa, who was speaking on the appropriation bills and was highly critical of the honourable member for O'Connor. There is no-one on this side of the House that would be critical of the member for O'Connor.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr COSTELLO—I do thank the honourable member for Lilley for his 'Kylie'. On 17 November 1994 the member for Wer-

riwa got up in this House during that episode and said:

The honourable member for O'Connor ... has again displayed the opposition's confusion on economic policy and its occasional tendency towards xenophobia on issues such as the current account deficit and foreign debt. The truth is that the current account deficit is the equivalent of the capital ... inflow. Capital inflow into Australia is a huge vote of confidence by international investors in the strength of our economy.

If that is the way the member for Werriwa saw it in 1994, today's figures must be an even huger vote of confidence. I asked earlier: would it be better if Australia's current account were lower? Yes. Would it be better if our exporters were more competitive? Yes. What is the key thing that is working against Australia's exporters at the moment? The exchange rate. You cannot have it both ways. I can remember the opposition coming into parliament, led by the member for Hotham, complaining when the Australian dollar was at 47c to the US dollar. Today it is at around 78c or 79c—that is double. That does affect your competitiveness and the competitiveness of Australia's exporters. That is why it is important that this economy be kept competitive. The day we hear about the Australian Labor Party supporting industrial relations reform to help Australia's exporters is the day that we will know the Australian Labor Party does intend to change its spots and does intend to support economic credibility in this country.

Demographic Trends

Mr McARTHUR (2.45 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Has the Treasurer seen a Productivity Commission report highlighting the need for government action now to combat the long-term effects of demographic change? How is the government responding, and what are the alternative policies?

Mr COSTELLO—I thank the honourable member for Corangamite for his question. This is the government that, as part of its Charter of Budget Honesty, required an *Intergenerational Report* to be prepared for the first time in 2002 and benchmarking of progress each five years thereafter. In addition to that, at the request of the Council of Australian Governments I asked the Productivity Commission to do its own projections in relation to the ageing of Australia's population.

The draft report of the Productivity Commission largely endorses the Treasury forecasts and says that Australia's ageing of the population could open up a gap between revenue and outlays—state and federal—of the dimension of around seven per cent in 40 years time. This is because the work force age population in Australia is hardly going to change but the number of people of retirement age is going to double, or more than double, over the next 40 years. In particular, the costs in relation to medical care—not only because older people draw down more on medical care but because new drugs and new techniques are being invented—are going to put considerable pressure on the Commonwealth account.

What is the government doing to address these challenges? We are taking measures to increase participation amongst the work force population. We are taking measures to increase productivity. We have announced an increase in the preservation age for superannuation to 60 and an increase in the age pension age for women to 65. We announced at the last election a mature age tax offset to encourage Australians aged 55 to remain in the work force. We have announced changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to base that scheme on a sustainable basis.

There were a lot of opposition spokesmen and spokeswomen out on the weekend. One

of them was the honourable member for Melbourne. He spoke quite a lot of sense on the weekend: he went out and warned of the Medicare Gold Labor Party policy, which would add a substantial burden to future federal budgets. He was right about that. There has probably never been a more irresponsible promise made. In the context of an ageing population and increasing health care, there was an offer, without private health insurance, of free first-class private health care to everybody over 75—a cohort of people that we know is going to grow and grow over the next 40 years. There has probably never been a more expensive promise made.

Where does the Australian Labor Party stand on Medicare Gold today? When I was a kid there used to be an ad that said, 'Don't wait to be told; you need Palmolive Gold.' Don't wait to be told; ditch Medicare Gold. The member for Melbourne was out there belling the cat on the weekend. Medicare Gold is a promise which is irresponsible. It is a promise which no government in Australia in 40 years, let alone 30 years or 20 years, would possibly be able to honour.

The Australian Labor Party have now conceded they lost the last election because they had no economic credibility. That is their own analysis. And the Australian Labor Party now say, 'We are determined to become credible.' You will not be credible if you maintain the policies that led to the loss of credibility. It is more than signing bits of cardboard. Economic credibility comes from policy. Until such time as the Australian Labor Party change their policy on Medicare Gold, change their policy on industrial relations, change their policy on unfair dismissal and change their policy on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme—which they opposed and then they supported and now they oppose—

Ms Gillard—What are you on about?

Mr COSTELLO—That is what happened in the campaign with co-contributions—one wonders where it is up to now. In the confused menagerie that the Australian Labor Party today represents, the Leader of the Opposition calls his economic spokesmen ‘roosters’. The member for Lyons calls the member for Grayndler a ‘mangy dog’. The member for Brand has his chief of staff out describing the Leader of the Opposition as a ‘dead parrot’. Those of you that watch Monty Python, as I do, please go back and have a look at the video. On the weekend, a rooster declared a jihad on a dead parrot! My head was spinning! This is the animal farm that the Australian Labor Party now represents. Until it has the opportunity to get some policy, it will not have economic credibility. Credibility comes from policy.

Economy: Foreign Debt

Mr SWAN (2.52 p.m.)—My question without notice is directed to the Treasurer. I ask him whether he recalls making the following statement when he was shadow Treasurer and a young member for Higgins:

Australia has high foreign debt and because Australia has a current account problem, that puts premium on Australian borrowings, that flows through and every Australian pays for the consequences.

Treasurer, do you still agree with that statement?

Mr COSTELLO—I have already answered this question. Firstly, comparing the current account deficit in 2004 to the current account deficit in 1994: as I have already indicated, in 1994, when the current account deficit was 6½ per cent of GDP, the budget was in deficit to 2.8 per cent—that is, the Commonwealth government was a borrower and a large reason for the run-down in savings. Now the Commonwealth government is a saver. The Commonwealth government is making no impact at all on foreign borrow-

ings. Secondly, as I have already pointed out, the home mortgage variable interest rate was 10½ per cent compared to 7.05 per cent today. Interest rates were higher.

I do want to make one other point. Back in 1994 Australia’s foreign currency borrowing credit rate had been downgraded not once but twice. It was downgraded in 1986 at the time of ‘banana republic’ and it was downgraded again in the late eighties. Since this government was elected, Australia’s foreign currency borrowing credit rating has been revised upward not once but twice—that is, Australia now enjoys a AAA credit rating on foreign currency borrowings. What determines a premium on your borrowing is your credit rating. A credit rating allows a lender to trade off risk against margin. So, if your credit rating is down, the risk premium which a lender will want in turn to lend to you is higher. This is the government that recovered Australia’s AAA credit rating in the international markets. That has made all the difference. That is one of reasons why mortgage interest rates today are 7.05 per cent rather than 10½ per cent, which they were in 1994-95.

Ukraine: Election

Mrs MOYLAN (2.55 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Would the minister inform the House of the government’s position on recent political developments in the Ukraine?

Mr DOWNER—First, I thank the member for Pearce for her question. I appreciate the concern she shows about the situation in Ukraine. Just before question time today I met with the Ambassador of Ukraine and expressed yet again the Australian government’s deep concern about the irregularities which clearly took place in the Ukrainian presidential elections on 21 November. It is clear from the reports of international observers that this election fell well short of

international standards. There was a suspiciously high voter turnout in several regions. There was fraudulent use of absentee voting. State employees were pressured to vote for Mr Yanukovich, the Prime Minister. There was abuse of state resources and overt media bias. In these circumstances Australia cannot accept the official result. We cannot accept that this result reflects the will of the Ukrainian people. I note—and, as members of parliament, we should all note—that the Ukrainian parliament has passed a resolution declaring the results invalid. The supreme court of the Ukraine will consider today whether the general election commission acted properly in declaring Mr Yanukovich the winner.

I can only make one other comment, which is that I would be pretty sure I spoke on behalf of all members of this parliament if I said that we have been pleased to see the people of Ukraine express their will in a very peaceful way through demonstrations in Kiev and other parts of the country. We very much hope that the differences that exist in Ukraine can be resolved satisfactorily and, more than that, they can be resolved according to the good principles of democracy and free and fair elections.

Education: Vocational Education and Training

Ms KATE ELLIS (2.57 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education. Does the minister support special levies or taxes to fund industry strategies dealing with the acute national skill shortage?

Mr HARDGRAVE—I thank the member for Adelaide for her question. The short answer is: no, we are not going down the pathway that the Australian Labor Party had in place where they were taxing businesses in order to try and drive a training agenda. In fact, this government is instead going down the path of encouraging good partnerships

with industry to take some of the responsibility, along with the state and territory governments, for the business of ensuring that more people are involved in taking up trade based apprenticeships around Australia. We have had quite a deal of success in this. We have seen enormous numbers of new apprenticeships developed over the last few years. Under the Australian Labor Party, the number of trade based apprenticeships plummeted from 160,990 in 1990 to 107,000 in 1994. Today there are 146,400 trade apprentices in training. We are driving an agenda that is undoing a lot of the mess of the previous government's neglect. Unfortunately, what we are finding—

Ms Macklin interjecting—

Mr HARDGRAVE—The member for Jagajaga is interrupting, but there has been a 250 per cent increase in the number of new apprenticeships in her own electorate. The other key point is that all around Australia today we have state governments driving up TAFE charges—charges up front. The upfront fees that are charged to new apprentices are going up all around the country. For instance, there has been a 50 per cent increase in South Australia and a 300 per cent increase in New South Wales. The Victorian government has driven them up as well. But the latest insult to injury has happened: the Bracks Labor government in Victoria now wants to charge apprentices \$30 to receive their completion certificates. So here we have people who have put it all on the line, worked hard and gained an apprenticeship and, in order to get the piece of paper to say they have done the job, the Bracks government wants to charge them \$30 for that certificate.

I therefore welcome the member for Adelaide's question, because it does raise the question—it is another one of those the Treasurer would call a 'Kylie', I suppose. It

is time for the Leader of the Opposition to pick up the phone and ring Steve Bracks, the Premier of Victoria, and tell him to ease the squeeze on apprenticeships and to end the 'Bracks whack'. But of course the Leader of the Opposition probably cannot pick up that phone and guarantee he will get put through, so maybe a certain Labor senator from Victoria, Senator Conroy, can do it for him.

Environment: Murray-Darling River System

Mr SECKER (3.00 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Would the minister update the House on the progress of the Living Murray initiative, especially with respect to my seat of Barker and with reference to the premiers' withdrawal during the election campaign?

Mr TRUSS—I thank the honourable member for Barker for his question. He will be aware that the Murray-Darling Basin has experienced the driest four years in recorded history, so the reserves of water in the basin are exceptionally low and it will not be possible to meet all of the commitments to irrigators and other users in the year ahead. Nonetheless, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council is proceeding with plans to develop and implement the Living Murray initiative first step.

Honourable members will be aware that six icon sites have been identified where 500 gegalitres of water will be used to help improve the environmental health of the river. Those sites and the engineering works associated with putting these projects together have been approved over recent months. At the meeting last Friday, ministers agreed on four packages of projects in New South Wales and Victoria to provide 240 gegalitres of the water intended for the first stage. That is a very significant step. It is about half the volume of Sydney Harbour to be available

every year to improve the environmental health of the river, and it is around half of all the water that will be required for the first stage. So, well ahead of schedule, around half the water has already been identified for the Living Murray initiative, and there is about another 70 gegalitres available in projects under development to help make this ambitious plan a reality.

What is also important—and I am sure the honourable member for Barker will be particularly pleased by this—is that none of these projects will require the commission to enter the marketplace or distort the market. This will all come from savings through the system: the cooperation of the various jurisdictions and users of water to help deliver savings to benefit the environment. This is a very significant environmental project for Australia. As soon as the jurisdictions recommit to the National Water Initiative it will be possible to roll out the environmental projects for these six icon ecological sites along the river and to help build a stronger and healthier river.

Can I also mention that the meeting adopted salinity targets for the various river systems in the Murray-Darling Basin area, and it will release a salinity management strategy to help address this other key problem in the Murray-Darling Basin region.

Finally, I am sure the honourable member, along with other members from South Australia, would be interested to know that the council has committed a further \$7.5 million towards maintaining the sand pumping and dredging project at the River Murray mouth. When there is no water, it is simply not possible for it to be flushed out naturally, so this extensive pumping and dredging arrangement will need to continue. Adequate budget funds have been provided to make sure that the mouth of the river is kept as healthy as possible in these dry times.

Education: Vocational Education and Training

Ms MACKLIN (3.04 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education. Is the minister aware that on 4 November the ACCC authorised an industry levy on bricks to address Australia's shortage of skilled bricklayers and fund more apprentices? Minister, won't this levy mean increases in cost to businesses and families? Why has the Howard government let a severe skill shortage develop and allowed a levy on families and businesses? In the light of the minister's earlier answer, what will he do to stop the price of bricks increasing as the result of this new levy?

Mr HARDGRAVE—I think the member has really asked the wrong minister, in the sense that the ACCC is not within my remit, but I am happy to check it all out. What I am particularly conscious of—and, naturally enough, concerned about—is that the impact of the state governments' fee increases is driving up the cost to apprentices taking up new apprenticeships.

Ms Macklin—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. The point of order is on relevance. This is all about a new industry levy to fund apprenticeships.

The SPEAKER—The minister has only just started answering his question, so there is no point of order.

Mr HARDGRAVE—Mr Speaker, it is also about the area of traditional trades, of which bricklaying is just one. The point that the Labor Party need to understand very clearly is that, as a direct result of Labor government actions around various states of Australia, it has become harder for apprentices to afford the cost of a new apprenticeship. It is extremely important for the Labor Party to understand the culture of what their own governments at the state level have actually driven. We have done some work with

Access Economics—and Access Economics, of course, is by no means strange to those opposite—and in fact we have had to revise downwards the projected increase in demand for vocational and technical education over the 2004-06 period from 2.9 per cent to 1.7 per cent in VET hours.

That is a result of factoring in the increases in the costs of studying in order to get people such as bricklayers out into the workplace. I am happy to look into the specifics the member has asked for but at the end of it those opposite need to understand that there has been a cultural change in the work force today. Those opposite also need to understand that we are delighted to receive questions on vocational and technical education. I think we have had more in the last week and a half than we have had in the previous 8½ years.

Health: Services

Dr WASHER (3.07 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Ageing. Would the minister update the House on how new technology is helping deliver better health care to Australians?

Mr ABBOTT—I thank the member for Moore for his question and I congratulate him on increasing his margin from six per cent to a very healthy 10.8 per cent—

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT—as many members opposite have done in the recent election. It is a fact that the most comprehensive major study of avoidable deaths in Australian health institutions suggested that 20 per cent of these were due to poor information or inadequate record keeping. So an integrated electronic health record should mean better care for patients and it should mean lower costs to taxpayers and to consumers. It should mean less need for patients to keep records and to carry information around with them. It should mean fewer expensive and

invasive diagnostic tests. It should mean less overservicing and it should mean less misuse of prescription drugs.

Just about all the computers on all the health professionals' desks right around our country are already linked via the Internet. The challenge is to try to create a secure database with secure transmissions so that patients and health professionals can access the information they need precisely when they need it. In the last budget, the government committed \$128 million to prepare for a national HealthConnect roll-out. In Tasmania, they have just concluded a trial which has proven the technology and helped to demonstrate the business case. I can inform the member for Moore and the House that the Commonwealth and the states have just established a National E-Health Transition Authority with the task of trying to ensure that health records move out of the horse-and-buggy era. We have to ensure that our health record system, no less than our medical treatment, remains the very best in the world.

Education: Vocational Education and Training

Mr BURKE (3.10 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education. Is the minister aware that the Western Australian Master Builders Association has forecast a 10 per cent price hike in the cost of building or renovating a house because of the shortage of skilled labour and the increased cost of materials like bricks? Doesn't this mean that Australian families and businesses who are building or renovating are being forced to pay the price for the Howard government's lack of action on Australia's skills crisis? Don't Australian businesses and families need action from the Howard government on skills now, not in another four years when the government's overdue and insufficient technical colleges will finally be fully in place?

Mr COSTELLO—I will take that question on housing costs and thank the honourable member very much for his question. It is true that, because unemployment is low in Australia, in some areas there are shortages of skilled labour. That can be looked at as a bad thing in an economy or it can be looked at as a very positive thing, frankly. If we had our choice between an oversupply of labour or a shortage of labour, we would probably take a shortage of labour because what that indicates is that people can find work.

Australia was not actually suffering from any skills shortages or any shortages of labour during the Labor Party's term in government when we had 11 per cent unemployment. But, having said that, if you want to ensure that there are no bottlenecks in an economy it is important that you continue to supply skilled labour lest you get price pressures in those areas. That brings into play two issues. One is this government's immigration program, which has been refocused on skilled immigration very deliberately. It contrasts with the Australian Labor Party's program, which was focused on family reunion. Second is the program that this government announced to set up Australian technical colleges.

We announced that because, as the Prime Minister said over and over again during the election campaign, we want a system where Australian young people and their parents value a trade certificate as much as a university degree. The idea which was developed for a good period during the 1980s and 1990s that every child should go to university was not serving our community well. It was not in their interests and it was not in the interests of the economy. This government is ensuring that there are additional technical and trade training areas. We are stepping in where there has been a failure by the states and we are ensuring that there will be a strong labour market. We will make sure that

demand is still strong because demand in the housing market has been a big part of Australia's success story and its recent economic growth over the last eight years.

Superannuation: Policy

Mr BALDWIN (3.13 p.m.)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer. Would the minister advise the House of the extent to which Australians are accessing the government's superannuation co-contribution scheme?

Mr BROUGH—I thank the member for Paterson for his question. I am pleased to inform the House that the ATO has informed me that they are about to roll out the first tranche of payments of the Howard government's co-contribution scheme. They have recently checked 1.25 million income tax returns for their eligibility for the co-contribution. Of that 1.25 million, I am pleased to inform the House that some 215,000 middle- and low-income earners will be receiving a co-contribution towards their retirement income.

This is particularly good news because it is not only doing something positive today, but it is also giving an incentive to Australians to make provision for their retirement in years to come. The tax office estimates that \$110 million will be injected into Australia's superannuation as a result of these payments, which is an average of about \$510 per payment per person. To put this into the context, with this extra payment, a person on \$28,000 over a 30-year working life will increase their retirement balance by about \$54,000 or potentially about \$2,300 extra income in retirement, which is a great thing for Australians to look forward to.

This morning I noticed in the *Australian Financial Review* that one of Australia's largest industry funds, the Australian Retirement Fund, is planning a promotion in which one of its members describes the co-

contribution as 'bloody brilliant'. Quite frankly, I am sure the 215,000 Australians out there who are about to receive extra money through the Howard government's co-contribution would agree with the sentiment that this is 'bloody brilliant'. It means that Australians are being provided an incentive to make provision for themselves and, in doing so, to have more secure superannuation.

Education: Vocational Education and Training

Ms MACKLIN (3.16 p.m.)—My question is again to the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education. Is the minister aware that skills growth as a driver of productivity has plummeted 75 per cent in the last 10 years and that Australia now has a severe skills shortage in key trades and industries? Isn't it true that under the Howard government around 40,000 Australians have been turned away from TAFE each year, including 15,000 young people, and that the vast majority of secondary school students will miss out on a technical college place? Minister, isn't Australia's skills crisis a direct result of the Howard government's failure to create enough training opportunities and boost Australia's skill levels?

Mr HARDGRAVE—The member for Jagajaga has discovered the trades! The workers' party have discovered the trade skills that underpin Australia's economy! What is true is that in 1995 an estimated 89,300 individuals applied for but were unable to get a place to study in a vocational education training course. Of those, 69,400 were seeking access to a TAFE place. In 1999 the level was 71,100—it had fallen—and 53,900 were seeking a TAFE place. In 2003 the level had fallen to 55,400, of whom 45,900 were seeking a TAFE place.

In the face of state governments lifting TAFE fees, in the face of a decade or more

of neglect from those opposite, this government has deliberately turned around the importance of training apprentices and people in traineeships. This government has made an enormous difference: from 141,000 people involved in vocational education and training, as apprentices and trainees, to 400,000. That is a fundamental change. Now let us look at it in dollar terms. The Australian government's contribution to states and territories has grown from \$777.9 million under Labor to \$1.13 billion. In fact, there is legislation that drives that up, indexing the base to \$1.154 billion under this government. That is an increase of over 45 per cent.

Those statistics speak for which side of politics is focusing on the trades skills shortage, and has done for almost a decade, compared to those who neglected it for over a decade. Those figures underscore the fact that this side of Australian politics understands very clearly the way to guarantee ongoing growth on top of the already tremendous growth that we have. The Treasurer has outlined the enormous way in which this economy is demanding more and more people with more and more skills. This government is addressing that.

There is one last point, and this is where those opposite have got the biggest problem of all. All members on this side know it, but those opposite still have not cottoned onto it. On this side of the chamber we are not afraid of the Australian workers driving up their wages based on the productivity they are achieving. We are not afraid of the Australian workers gaining an additional dividend in their pay packet because of the skills they have. Those opposite like to reward mediocrity; we do not.

Mr Anderson—Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr CAUSLEY (Page) (3.20 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr CAUSLEY—I do.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr CAUSLEY—On Thursday, 18 November, the last sitting of this parliament, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a story with the banner headline 'Deputy PM named as bribe row flares'. Accompanying that story was a large photograph of me talking to the member for New England and the Deputy Prime Minister was walking past. That photograph must have been taken on Wednesday, 17 November, at about two or three minutes to two, because that was the only time that I spoke to the member for New England. The photograph had on it a caption that read, 'Whatever it takes'.

The member for New England made a statement to this House at 7.30. So to tie the photograph and the story together is a breach of the rules as laid down by the Speaker. The cut-and-paste fabrication of the story for sensational effect, with a conspiratorial reference, I believe must breach any journalistic ethics as well.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (3.21 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr ALBANESE—I do.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr ALBANESE—Yesterday on the *Insiders* program Michael O'Connor of the forestry division of the CFMEU stated that I called members of his union 'vandals' during an interview on the *AM* program. This is not

true. I have respect for all workers and have never criticised workers for doing the job they are paid to do. Companies and politicians, not individual workers, determine environmental practices.

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (3.21 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr WINDSOR—Yes, I do.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr WINDSOR—Before making the personal explanation, I would like to concur with the comments of the member for Page. That photograph was taken when he was talking to me about the health of the Hon. Bob Katter before question time. In question time on 18 November 2004, in answer to a question from the Leader of the Opposition to the Deputy Prime Minister about comments made to me in a conversation with me in this House relating to his contact with Mr Greg Maguire, the Deputy Prime Minister misrepresented this conversation. He said:

Yes, I was walking out of this place—I think it was probably during June ... and on the way out he—

meaning me—

motioned me over and said, ‘I understand you might want to talk to me.’

The Deputy Prime Minister’s version of his response was:

‘No. What? I don’t know anything about it.’ I have no understanding whatsoever as to why he thought I might want to talk to him about it. I still don’t. I said to him: ‘No. If I want to talk to you at some point in the future, I’ll get in contact.’

Those are the words that the Deputy Prime Minister misrepresented in this House last week. This is a misrepresentation of that conversation.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member has explained where he has been misrepresented.

Mr WINDSOR—No, I have not. My recollection of that conversation was that I said: ‘John, I understand you want to talk to me. People are saying in Tamworth that you are saying I won’t talk to you. I’m more than happy to talk to you at any time.’ Mr Anderson then said, ‘You mean my meeting with Mr Maguire,’ to which I said, ‘Not only Greg Maguire but others in the community.’ This is a correct account of that conversation.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—Petitions have been lodged for presentation as follows and copies will be referred to the appropriate ministers:

Human Rights: Falun Gong

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

The petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that:

Sydney resident David Liang, father of two, was shot in both feet only hours after he and eight other Australians arrived in South Africa to file a lawsuit against Chinese officials who were visiting South Africa.

This proposed lawsuit charged China’s Vice President Zeng and Minister of Commerce Bo with torture, genocide and crimes against humanity, committed according to Jiang Zemin’s personally stated policies regarding Falun Gong to “Ruin their reputations, bankrupt them financially and destroy them physically,” as well as, “Killing them won’t matter because their deaths will be counted as suicides.” Zeng and Bo have been served with lawsuits during previous overseas visits for their pivotal role in prolonging the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

South African Police are investigating the incident as attempted murder against an Australian.

Australians Terrorised

Falun Gong practitioners have long been the victims of discrimination, harassment and assault

from Chinese officials on Australian soil and worldwide. A known 'blacklist' has been circulated to prevent Falun Gong practitioners traveling overseas. This incident in South Africa is the most severe case to date and marks a new level of violence in the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners outside of China.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE REQUEST THE HOUSE TO:

- (1) Pay close attention to the safety of Australians, including Falun Gong practitioners, who face terrorist attacks by Jiang Zemin's faction within the Chinese Government to help prevent such terrorist activities.
- (2) Co-operate with authorities in South Africa to thoroughly investigate this incident and bring to justice those responsible for this attempted murder.
- (3) Condemn the acts of terrorism by Jiang Zemin's faction against Falun Gong practitioners both inside and outside of China.

by **Mr Albanese** (from 701 citizens)

by **Mr Andren** (from 87 citizens)

by **Mr Baldwin** (from 151 citizens)

by **Mr Bartlett** (from 116 citizens)

by **Mr Cadman** (from 942 citizens)

by **Mr Causley** (from 141 citizens)

by **Ms Annette Ellis** (from 525 citizens)

by **Mr Fitzgibbon** (from 85 citizens)

by **Mr Hardgrave** (from 168 citizens)

by **Mr Hartsuyker** (from 96 citizens)

by **Mrs Hull** (from 112 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

'That this Synod regrets the Government's adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding

permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.'

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at St Mark's Anglican Church, Wonga Park, VIC, 3115, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by **Mr Andrews** (from 7 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

'That this Synod regrets the Government's adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.'

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at St Stephen's Anglican Church, Warandyte, VIC, 3113, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by **Mr Andrews** (from 10 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

‘That this Synod regrets the Government’s adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.’

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at St Chad’s Anglican Church, Chelsea, VIC, 3196, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by **Ms Corcoran** (from 21 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

‘That this Synod regrets the Government’s adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.’

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at The New Community Church – Salvation Army, Carrum Downs, VIC, 3201, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by **Ms Corcoran** (from 8 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

‘That this Synod regrets the Government’s adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.’

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at St John the Baptist Parish, Ferntree Gully, VIC, 3156, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by **Mr Wood** (from 46 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

‘That this Synod regrets the Government’s adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obli-

gations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.'

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at the Adult Learners Event 2004, Springvale Town Hall, Springvale, 3171, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by **Mr Crean** (from 11 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

Whereas the 1998 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne carried without dissent the following motion:

'That this Synod regrets the Government's adoption of procedures for certain people seeking political asylum in Australia which exclude them from all public income support while withholding permission to work, thereby creating a group of beggars dependent on the Churches and charities for food and the necessities of life;

and calls upon the Federal government to review such procedures immediately and remove all practices which are manifestly inhumane and in some cases in contravention of our national obligations as a signatory of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.'

We, therefore, the individual, undersigned attendees at the Church of Christ, Camberwell 3124, petition the House of Representatives in support of the above mentioned Motion.

AND we, as in duty bound will ever pray.

by **Mr Georgiou** (from 9 citizens)

Social Welfare: Reform

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House

The very high incidence of abortion - one for every three live births in Australia today - and the use of health care monies to pay for the destruc-

tion of the nation's future children through these abortions.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House take necessary steps to direct those monies to helping mothers and babies instead.

by **Mr Baldwin** (from 1,458 citizens)

by **Mr Cadman** (from 623 citizens)

by **Mr Jull** (from 1,027 citizens)

by **Mr Slipper** (from 632 citizens)

Health: Cancer Treatments

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia points out to the House that -

1. 1,400 Australians every year are diagnosed with a primary brain tumour, many of which are of the most lethal type called glioblastoma multiforme grade iv;
2. At a major oncology conference held in June in the USA scientists reported the results of a Phase III trial of 573 patients with this particular tumour in 85 centres throughout Europe, Canada and Australia, which showed remarkable improvements in the two-year survival of patients and better median survival and progression-free survival.
3. The trial involved concomitant use of radiation therapy and the chemotherapy drug temozolomide (Temodar), and continuing use of the drug afterwards, resulting in an increase in the number of patients still alive at two years from 10% to 27%.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House ask the Health Minister and Government to take urgent and compassionate action to ensure that this new therapy is made available immediately as a subsidised benefit for all newly diagnosed brain tumour patients who have this particular type of tumour.

by **Mr Baldwin** (from 8 citizens)

by **Mr Melham** (from 33 citizens)

by **Mr Nairn** (from 24 citizens)

by **Mr Quick** (from 60 citizens)

Trade: Fur Imports

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

This petition, of citizens and residents of Australia, is to call the attention of the House to the international trade of dog and cat fur products and accessories, being sold in Australia.

Humane Society International has investigated and unearthed evidence of the appalling international fur trade, where dogs and cats are cruelly slaughtered by inhumane methods, with animals dying by slow suffocation, hanging, clubbing or beating to death. All these methods involved severe panic, trauma and needless prolonged suffering. More than two million dogs and cats are killed each year for use in the international fur trade.

Your petitioners request the House to send a strong message to this terrible industry, by banning the importation of dog and cat fur products into Australia.

by **Ms Corcoran** (from 107 citizens)

by **Ms Hall** (from 16 citizens)

Human Rights: Falun Dafa

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that:

- (a) Falun Gong (also known as Falun Dafa), is a practice of meditation and exercises with teachings based on the universal principle of "Truthfulness-Compassion-Tolerance", practiced in over 60 countries world-wide and has roots in traditional Chinese culture - has been subject to a systematic campaign of eradication in China since July 1999;
- (b) The Falun Dafa Information Center has verified details of 890 deaths (as at 25/2/2004) since the persecution of Falun Gong in China began in 1999. In October 2001, however, Government officials inside China reported that the actual death toll was well over 1,600. Expert sources now estimate that figure to be much higher. Hundreds of thousands have

been detained, with more than 100,000 being sentenced to forced labour camps, typically without trial;

- (c) The implementation of this policy of eradication violates the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which China has signed, the Convention Against Torture and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, both of which China has signed and ratified; and
- (d) Australia is the elected Chair of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for 2004 and the Commission will convene on 15 March 2004.

Your petitioners therefore request the house to initiate a resolution to condemn China's persecution of Falun Gong at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and request China to:

- I. Unconditionally release all Falun Gong practitioners imprisoned for their spiritual beliefs, including those family members of Australian citizens and residents currently detained;
- II. Allow unrestricted access into China to the United Nations rapporteur on torture in order to carry out independent, third-party investigations on the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners.

by **Mr Cadman** (from 120 citizens)

by **Mr Hardgrave** (from 15 citizens)

Health and Ageing: Aged Care

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled:

The petition of the undersigned shows:

- concerned Australian citizens

point out to the House of Representatives:

Due the increasing shortfall between the income available to deliver aged and community services and the rising costs of delivering those services, Australia is facing the imminent collapse of the aged and community care system as we know it.

Your Petitioners therefore ask the House of Representatives to:

- Replace the current system of indexing pricing in the aged and community care sector with a system which reflects the true increases in the costs of running aged and community care services.
- Immediately inject \$10 per day, per bed to restore the existing viability of residential care services.
- Provide a 10 per cent increase in the prices paid for community care to ensure viability of these important services, which help keep our elderly and disabled in their own homes.

by **Mr Andren** (from 40 citizens)

Health: Dental Services

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament

The petition of certain electors of the Division of Calare draws to the attention of the House the deplorable state of Dental Health particularly among the lower income earners of the community. Your petitioners therefore pray that the House see fit to introduce legislation to bring Dental Health under the Medicare umbrella.

by **Mr Andren** (from 183 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that the Jeza family, currently being held at Villawood Immigration Detention Centre, Sydney, has been in detention since their arrival in Australia more than three years ago. The family of five —Manee Jeza, Shahla Nazari Zadh and their three children, Behnam, 18, Reem, 15, and Rana Jeza, 13 —are Iranian citizens and members of the Sabian Mandaean minority religious group. In the Federal Court on 30 May 2003, Justice Richard Cooper found Iranian Mandaeans to be persecuted in their home country, not simply discriminated against as the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs had asserted. Your petitioners therefore ask the House to call on the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs to immediately release the

Jeza family from detention and grant permanent residency, with a view to future Australian citizenship.

by **Mr Andren** (from 20 citizens)

Pinner, Mr Kirk

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

This petition of citizens of Australia calls on the Parliament to recognise:

- (1) Kirk Pinner is an Australian citizen who underwent an unfair trial in the USA. Evidence and fact were presented and ignored by the Howard government.
- (2) Kirk Pinner currently suffers from suspected tuberculosis, which was contracted in unhygienic conditions in the Ada County Jail, Idaho, USA. Kirk goes without treatment for this preventable disease. To continue to go untreated may amount to a death sentence at any stage for Kirk Pinner.
- (3) Kirk Pinner has applied for transfer under the International Transfers of Prisoners Scheme in May 2004.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to seek the immediate return of Kirk Pinner from USA under the transfer scheme and on humanitarian and health grounds. We ask the House to request the Howard Government consent to the transfer of Kirk Pinner under provisions of 42 (b) of the Transfer of Prisoners Act and he be returned to Australia and his family.

by **Mr Baker** (from 183 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

- That under proposed changes to Medicare, families earning more than \$32,300 a year will miss out on bulk billing, and doctors will increase their fees for visits that are no longer bulk billed;
- That the rate of bulk billing by GPs has plummeted by 11% under John Howard;

- That more than 10 million fewer GP visits were bulk billed this year compared to when John Howard came to office;
- That the average out-of-pocket cost to see a GP who does not bulk bill has gone up by 55% since 1996 to \$12.78 today;
- That public hospitals are now under greater pressure because people are finding it harder to see bulk billing doctors.

We therefore pray that the House takes urgent steps to restore bulk billing by general practitioners and reject John Howard's plan to end universal bulk billing so all Australians have access to the health care they need and deserve.

by **Mr Crean** (from 59 citizens)

Telstra: Privatisation

To the Honourable Speaker of the House and Members of the House assembled in parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the following issues to the attention of the House:

- There is widespread concern that services and jobs will be cut back if the rest of Telstra is sold, particularly in outer metropolitan, rural and regional Australia.
- A fully privatised Telstra will focus on profits not people; shareholders will be more important than customers.

We therefore pray that the House oppose any further attempts by the Liberal Party and Nationals to sell Telstra.

by **Mr Crean** (from 43 citizens)

Environment: Myrmecia Pilosula

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

We, the undersigned citizens of Australia, draw the attention of the House to the serious consequences of the allergic reaction to stings by the 'hopper' or 'jack jumper' ant, *Myrmecia pilosula*. Some 2-3% of the exposed population in southern and eastern Australia are known to exhibit allergic reactions to stings, many of these potentially lethal. Some commonly prescribed medications may increase the danger. And yet many residents are unaware of the risks and some medical practitioners uninformed. A desensitisation treatment

has proven effective, yet no programs are in place to educate or desensitize victims.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House will release resources to protect citizens, particularly residents of South-Eastern areas from this danger.

by **Mr Downer** (from 340 citizens)

Health: Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives, Parliament House Canberra.

The petitioners as set out below who are mental health consumers and carers being residents of the Hunter Electorate in the State of NSW.

Brings to the attention of the House:

That the undersigned petitioners request that the Australian Government reviews the process that delineates what drugs fall within the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to allow those in need access to the medications that are proven to assist in the controlling of various forms of Mental illness beyond the recommendations set by the Health Insurance Committee.

These medications include Risperdal, Cozaril and Zyprexa for the reasons as described in the attached letter to the Hon Tony Abbott and enclosed discussion paper.

by **Mr Fitzgibbon** (from 491 citizens)

Health: After-Hours Services

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

Request that the House take immediate action to guarantee the ongoing funding to allow for the Hunter GP Access After Hours to continue to provide emergency after hours service to people of the Hunter.

The After hours service offers a valuable service to the region and allows for greater access to medical treatment.

Your petitioners therefore to respectfully request that the House do everything in their power to ensure that the Hunter GP Access After Hours remains open.

by **Ms Hall** (from 301 citizens)

Medicare: Belmont Office

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

We the undersigned request that the government re-open a Medicare Office at Belmont as there is no Medicare office between Charlestown and Lake Haven and there has been a drastic decline in the numbers of general practitioners bulkbilling.

The closure of Belmont Medicare Office by the Howard Government has caused great hardship to many local residents particularly the elderly and those with young children.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully request that the House do everything in their power to ensure that Belmont Medicare Office is reopened as a matter of urgency.

by **Ms Hall** (from 1,412 citizens)

Health and Ageing: Aged Care

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

Request that the House take immediate action to address the chronic shortage of residential aged care beds and Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) in the Hunter and Central Coast.

We further request that immediate action is taken to address the crisis in capital and recurrent funding, the crisis in wages and conditions of staff working in the aged care industry and that red tape and the current bureaucratic nightmare be resolved.

by **Ms Hall** (from 104 citizens)

Taxation: Funerals

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that a majority of Australians voted against the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax (GST). We believe a GST on funerals and all associated services is an unfair tax on death.

Your petitioners strongly request the removal of a GST on funerals and associated services

by **Ms Hall** (from 188 citizens)

Environment: Kyoto Protocol

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

This petition of concerned residents of Australia draws the attention of the House to the issue of environmental damage resulting from the production of Greenhouse Gasses. Continued deterioration of the environment will be destructive to weather patterns and lead to catastrophic economic and social damage around the world.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to immediately ratify the Kyoto Protocol and help preserve the environment for present and future generations of Australians.

by **Ms Hall** (from 78 citizens)

Howard Government: Antiviolence Campaign

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

This petition of certain citizens of Australia, condemns the Howard Government for refusing to run the anti-violence campaign, "No Respect, No Relationship" that was designed to educate young people that violence in relationships is wrong and must be stopped.

Your petitioners ask the House to ensure that the Government releases the campaign material that was developed over the last 2 years, at a cost of millions of dollars to taxpayers so that it can be used by others in the community to send a strong message to young people.

Public money paid for the development and production of this campaign and we urge the House to demand its release for public use.

by **Ms Hall** (from 22 citizens)

Australia Post: Services

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the house:

- That Australia Post use stamps on mail, not labels.
- That the cancelling of stamps by Australian Post by pen, be ceased.
- That stamps should be available at all post offices.
- That Australia Post deliver registered mail, by hand, or note left to collect at P.O..

by **Ms Hall** (from 128 citizens)

Telstra: Privatisation

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

These petitioners of the Division of Shortland and adjoining areas are deeply concerned at any plans to further privatise Telstra.

Further privatisation of Telstra will result in the loss of thousands more Telstra jobs, worsening services to regional and rural Australia, and the loss of up to \$1 billion a year for all Australians earned from Telstra profits.

We believe these profits, both now and in the future, should be set aside to secure improved educational opportunities for our children, increased research and development funds for our scientists and doctors, and more money for rural and regional Australia.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully request that the House reject any further sale of the Commonwealth's shares in Telstra and that the annual profits from Telstra be used for the benefit of all Australians.

by **Ms Hall** (from 118 citizens)

Indigenous Affairs: Native Title

To the Honourable, the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The Petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House.

that:

"Aboriginal Land Rights and the Native Title Act", is Racial Discrimination, against the major-

ity of Australians, and is tantamount to "Anti-White Apartheid."

Your petitioners therefore request the House to:

Hold a "National Referendum" so as to allow the Australian people to decide whether to grant or rescind "Aboriginal Land Rights" through a democratic vote.

by **Mr Hartsuyker** (from 2 citizens)

Social Welfare: Reform

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The Petition of certain Pensioners of Victoria draws the attention of the House:

We the undersigned are old age pensioners. We have the house we live in and own one other house, which we use solely as holiday house. We make no income from either property.

As a result of significant movements in values of house prices the following consequences have occurred:

- (1) We are affected by the asset thresholds, which unreasonably includes the holiday home, motor vehicle and furniture in the holiday home.
- (2) We are penalised and part of our pension payments is deducted.

There is no reason why we should be penalised now that we are old age pensioners from continuing to enjoy the benefits of our holiday homes. Nor should we be put in a position with draconian asset test to ultimately require us to sell our holiday homes to lose our pension to help finance other social security programmes. For to be able to have this second home we worked twice as hard and contributed by paying twice as much taxes when we were young.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House adjust the Social Security laws to exclude the:

- (a) Holiday Home
- (b) Furniture in the holiday home
- (c) The value of the motor car from the asset threshold.

by **Mr Hunt** (from 42 citizens)

Ballarat: Prisoners of War Memorial

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in the Parliament:

This petition of certain citizens, being electors of the Division of Ballarat and members and associates of the Ballarat, Victoria, branch of the Royal Australian Air Force Association:

Draws to the attention of the House that as proven loyal members of the Commonwealth Military Forces during the conflict known as World War Two and subsequently in such other emergency situations as the Commonwealth has been involved we, like our predecessors, have at all times been prepared to serve wherever we were placed by the military and political authorities. Among us we include some who were incarcerated by the enemy through no fault of their own. Indeed a large number were surrendered by their superiors, in theatres such as Singapore, Crete and Greece.

The people of Australia can conclude only from the attitude and actions of the Australian Government at the time and subsequently that those who were taken as prisoners of war are regarded as the 'forgotten ones', even though many of them suffered far greater privations for a longer period than many who continued to serve in active combat roles. That the Commonwealth Government has been reluctant to acknowledge the role these servicemen and women have played is all too evident. No register was kept at the time of those so incarcerated and indeed even today there remain many who are unidentified. Whilst it is right and proper that those who died in the service of their country should be commemorated, we are convinced that similar recognition should be afforded to those who went through a living hell as prisoners of war.

To this end a Prisoners of War Memorial has now been erected in Ballarat, funded largely by public subscription, on which are permanently recorded the names of prisoners of war from throughout Australia who served their country in all wars from the formation of the Commonwealth up to the present. Thus the people of Australia have seen fit to recognise the role these men women played in wartime, even though successive Gov-

ernments appear to have been embarrassed by their existence.

Whilst recognising that the Commonwealth Government has made a modest contribution to this Memorial the amount falls into insignificance when compared with how much has been spent on other memorials both in Australia and overseas.

Your petitioners, the undersigned, therefore ask that the House demonstrate its recognition of the role these servicemen and servicewomen played in Australia's history by Gazetting the Prisoners of War Memorial as a Federal shrine and by allocating a further sum of \$290,000.00 to enable its completion to a fitting standard in its current setting at the heart of Australia's proud tradition of selfless service and democracy.

by **Ms King** (from 67 citizens)

Family Services: Child Care

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

The need for more childcare places in the seat of Banks.

We therefore pray that the House – as a matter of urgency – will create more quality, affordable child care places throughout Sydney.

by **Mr Melham** (from 546 citizens)

Australian Defence Force: Medals

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament;

The Petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

That a citizen who serves to defend the country does so with the highest patriotic motives in mind. They know they could be called to serve in war and lay down their life. After that commitment they may leave the service without any tangible recognition being given to them. Unless a member receives a medal for overseas service their first chance of gaining a medal is for long service after 15 years service, if the member serves that long.

The medal sought is not for service in the sense of long service but more for the individual who makes a commitment to serve the Nation.

Your Petitioners pray that the House will institute a medal for two years full-time or part-time service in the Australian Defence Force from 1 January 1946 to the present and future servicemen and women who serve and protect our Nation.

by **Mrs Moylan** (from 20 citizens)

Family Services: Child Care

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

The need for more childcare places in the seat of Banks.

We therefore pray that the House – as a matter of urgency – will create more quality, affordable child care places throughout Sydney.

by **Mr Murphy** (from 519 citizens)

Health: MRI Machines

To the honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in the Australian Federal Parliament:

The petition of certain residents of the State of New South Wales draws to the attention of the House the refusal by the Federal Government to license a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) facility at the Concord Repatriation and General Hospital denies equitable access to vital health services for cancer, heart, orthopaedic, burns and MS patients.

Despite a commitment by the NSW Government to purchase a MRI machine, Concord Hospital remains the only teaching hospital in Sydney not approved to provide MRI diagnostic services via the Medicare system.

This means Concord's frailest patients are unable to locally access vital diagnostic services.

Your petitioners request the House to protect the public's interest and provide equitable access to the Medicare system for inner western Sydney residents by licensing MRI diagnostic services at the Concord Repatriation and General Hospital.

by **Mr Murphy** (from 536 citizens)

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

The need to keep bulk-billing for the families and communities of Inner West Sydney.

We therefore pray that the House opposes the introduction of an upfront fee for GP visits.

by **Mr Murphy** (from 55 citizens)

Social Welfare: Protection of Children

To The Honourable The Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The undersigned petitioners wish to draw to the attention of the House, the need for a Brisbane Children's Contact Service. We therefore pray that the House takes steps to ensure that the Government will fund this Service.

We, the undersigned, believe that Brisbane should have a Children's Contact Service available to provide safe contact visits and changeovers for children. We further support Building Bridges Together's application for an increase in funding to enable them to set up and manage a Brisbane Children's Contact Service.

Clients of Building Bridges Together Children's Contact Services who have concerns about including their address for security reasons, may note their address as c/- BBT, for this purpose only.

by **Mr Ruddock** (from 7,499 citizens)

Agriculture: Apple Industry

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in the Parliament

The Petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the decision by Biosecurity Australia to permit the importation of apples from countries which have infestations of *Erwinia amylovora* (Fireblight). Biosecurity Australia admit infestation of Australian plants is likely, and have published "Fruit sourced from

infected orchards have the potential to carry epiphytic bacteria potential for spread – feasible potential for consequences – significant.” Published Biosecurity Australia February 2004.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that the House

- (a) Rescind that decision by Biosecurity Australia on environmental grounds as this pest cannot be eradicated, or alternatively
- (b) Legislate that all Australian citizens affected financially by the decision each year be reimbursed for all costs associated with control of the disease, from the date of infestation. This will include orchardists, nurserymen and gardeners.

by **Mr Bruce Scott** (from 1,197 citizens)

Foreign Affairs: Aid

We, the undersigned, respectfully request the Members of the House of Representatives to note that in the last thirty years Australia's giving to development funding for needy countries has fallen from 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) to 0.25% of GNI (Source: DAC Development Corporation Reports 1982-2002).

We further request Members of the House to take action which leads to an increase in Australia's development aid to needy countries with the goal of returning funding to 0.5% of GNI, at least.

by **Mr Kelvin Thomson** (from 7 citizens)

Education: Marriage Education in Schools

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament

The petition of certain citizens of Australia draws the attention of the House to the fact that courses of Marriage Education (How to get married, How to stay Married and Parenting Responsibilities) are not being delivered to Australia's Teenagers, the future Husbands and Wives of this Nation.

We the undersigned respectfully sheweth that the omission of 'Marriage Education' as the central issue in our school's 'Sex Education' courses is failing our children and grandchildren as well as our Constitutional Forefathers (articles 51 (xxi), & 109) and the directive of the Marriage Act 1961, IA Marriage Education.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the House would broadly grant monies for courses of 'Marriage Education' which target our Nation's Teenagers in their school years.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by **Mr Vaile** (from 69 citizens)

Education: Funding

To the honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

The Petition of certain citizens of Australia undersigned draws to the attention of the House:

A well funded Public Education system is vital to the maintenance of a fair and democratic Australian society.

We need our public schools to be well resourced.

This requires the Federal Government to provide a fairer model for funding Australian schools.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to:

Ensure that the funding policies of the Commonwealth Government are reformed to provide increased and fairer funding for public schools.

by **Mr Wakelin** (from 72 citizens)

Immigration: Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

This petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia draws the attention of the House to the position of asylum seekers in Australia whose Temporary Protection Visas are expiring and who are applying for Permanent Protection Visas.

We are deeply concerned to hear that such people, as they apply for further protection, are being refused it. There is therefore an expectation that they will be returned to where conditions are no better than when they were originally granted protection.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to urge the Australian Government to give sympathetic consideration to all asylum seekers who apply for further protection, and to take into consideration the parlous state of law and order in countries where asylum seekers are likely to be

returned, at best, to further persecution, and quite probably, to their deaths.

by **Mr Windsor** (from 221 citizens)

Petitions received.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed.

Mr CADMAN (**Mitchell**) (3.31 p.m.)—Few people in Australia would not acknowledge that the basis of the confidence that this country has experienced has been laid down by the government's building on the economic base that inspires confidence and commitment to growth and future investment in Australia. The three per cent to four per cent growth over the last few years has been the basis of that confidence. That was the nub—the crux—of the last election. From the day the election was called the electors were asking, 'Can we maintain our confidence in light of the proposals put by both the coalition and the Labor Party?' They looked at the certainty they were experiencing with interest rates and high levels of employment and with the capacity to invest and make decisions with certainty. They compared that with the proposals being put forward by the Australian Labor Party.

The coalition had built on the lack of confidence that brought about the change of government in 1996 with a plan for doing something about the massive debt that the Labor Party had run up. The coalition came into office with a plan to reduce taxation and give back to Australian citizens more of their own hard-won savings. The coalition came into office with a plan so that Australia could be competitive and take up a role of challenging those in the world who want to compete against us in our markets and also expand local businesses so that export replacement could take place purely by being more competitive. The coalition came to office with the promise and commitment to

reward effort and increase productivity, and that was carried out. Those were the key factors that were evident from the day the last election was called. Growth, more jobs, falling unemployment, an increase in real wages, low cost of living increases and low interest rates were all part of those factors.

We came through a number of problems. The economic downturn in Asia was a challenge for us to overcome. The worldwide terrorism that confronts us all and is with us today could have been a stalling factor, and it broke the confidence of countries with less confidence in the future than Australia. The change in climatic circumstances brought real issues of concern to rural communities, as did a downturn in our export earnings from rural produce. The longer term impact of an ageing population with a work force maintained at about the current level but a need to expand our production and output is a longer term issue that is confronting us and is being dealt with by the government.

The confidence of Australians that the coalition could handle the circumstances and had a track record that indicated that they could do that was compared with a whole list of ideas that came forward from the Labor Party. The coalition's ideas to provide a mature age worker tax offset to make it more financially attractive for older Australians to remain in employment on a full-time, part-time or casual basis was one idea presented at the election. The government's announced tax cuts would provide 80 per cent of taxpayers with a marginal tax rate of no more than 30 per cent. It was said that legislation would be introduced to give formal recognition and protection to independent contractors—the single contractors in building and transport and other industries who are the real generators of economic activity and production in our community. The meeting of the skills needs of our community by investing more in better quality tertiary and further

education and the capacity and commitment to build 24 Australian technical colleges catering for year 11 and year 12 students, thereby lifting the skills base of Australia, were part of the attractive features that were acknowledged by Australians coming into the election. Working with parents, the government will invest directly in school infrastructure through an additional \$1 billion commitment over the next four years, working directly with schools and parents to invest in education to help address the shortfalls that many state governments have failed to rectify in their own education programs.

This was compared by electors to a whole range of ideas that started to emerge in December 2003. It was not better highlighted anywhere than in the *Australian Financial Review*, in an article on economics by David Bassanese. In his article, David Bassanese recounted some of the ideas that were coming forward from the Leader of the Opposition at that time—and that were carried through into the election campaign. They created an air of confusion and uncertainty that, when balanced against the confidence the community had in the coalition government's management, forced the community to vote in a massive way for the coalition rather than for the ALP. That theme stayed with the electors right through the campaign. Although many listened very carefully to what the Leader of the Opposition said, he could not assure them that they should have the confidence to change their vote.

Some of the ideas that came forward around 12 months ago were really interesting, but they were such a mishmash that they caused Access Economics director Chris Richardson to say about the Leader of the Opposition:

He is an ideas man ... But ... too many ideas may mean too many risks.

I think that that probably proved to be right. Some of the ideas, which amounted to \$6.5 billion of spending over four years, included changes to the baby bonus, changes to ethanol subsidies and cutting fuel subsidies. Things that people had acknowledged as being important were played around with and then funds were redirected elsewhere. Favouring tax cuts for those earning more than \$80,000 a year did not seem consistent with Labor Party philosophy. The speedy release of federal land when demand is high was an interesting concept, but the federal government holds little land compared with what is held by state governments. After all, the state government planning provisions would override any federal government decisions in that area.

The tweaking of immigration policy to boost incentives for migrants to settle outside Sydney was an interesting idea. It has never worked anywhere in the world and would not work here either. Other ideas were: to reduce the superannuation contributions tax, to provide incentives for employee share ownership and to provide matched savings accounts for low-income earners. If you are not earning much money, you do not have much to put into a savings account anyway. I do not know quite how that would work. Another idea was the beefing up of the Trade Practices Act.

It was a mishmash of ideas that did not inspire confidence, as compared with a steady program of confidence building that had been initiated by the coalition from the beginning of our term in office in 1996. On this side of the House we have worked consistently to build that confidence, to make sure that the entrepreneurs, the small businesses and the families of Australia have the confidence to make decisions and invest in the future, in their businesses, in their families, in their homes and in their neighbourhoods. So the confidence in the government that had

been built up over that period of time was reinforced by a confused presentation from the Australian Labor Party.

This is no more obvious than in the area of industrial relations, where productivity and real wages have risen massively under this government. That compares with a two per cent rise in real wages over a period of 13 years under Labor and, generally, a very disheartened labour force which was more prone to strike and less happy with its employment prospects than has been the experience under this government. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, in national accounts released in August 2004, showed that labour productivity grew by 3.8 per cent in the last financial year. That is the largest increase in productivity since the 4.3 per cent growth in productivity in 1998. That just gives an idea of the trend—people working not harder but smarter and gaining better rewards for their efforts. Encouraging that attitude in the community has been a theme for this government. This is not a heavy-handed government but a light hand encouraging people in their workplace. That has borne fruit and has brought with it the confidence of growth and the confidence to re-elect the current government.

The building industry, in particular, has been the focus of economic and industrial relations reform. The Cole royal commission points to a number of areas where more reform is needed. This government intends to go further in one area which I want to indicate as being significant. It is estimated that if the same sorts of practices and productivity could be applied to commercial construction as apply to residential construction there would be a 25 per cent equivalent better outcome in commercial construction. The Cole royal commission identified shortcomings, and it is this government's intention to move ahead and make further changes to both un-

fair dismissal and the area of independent contractors.

A survey conducted by the University of Melbourne in 2002 found that the cost of state and federal unfair dismissal laws to small and medium business is about \$1.3 billion annually. It estimates the cost of the unfair dismissal process, both state and federal, to be about 77,000 jobs. So we have the prospect of increasing the employment rate, reducing unemployment by 77,000, through a simple change, not a harsh change. Note that this is not a harsh process, because the 20 notifiable processes that are cemented in legislation will remain there. They will not be taken out. It is the extraneous stuff that makes it really hard for a small employer to get rid of somebody who is not performing, for fear of an unfair dismissal claim often running in the range of \$10,000 to \$20,000—something that small business cannot contemplate and cannot take a risk on.

More recently, the Sensis business index survey found that 28 per cent of small and medium businesses had decided not to take on additional employees because of the possibility of unfair dismissal action. The survey proved that this is a continuing concern for small businesses in the building industry. The independent contractors act will be initiated after consultation with contractors. These are independent contractors who like the freedom to choose the working arrangements that suit them best. They do not want to be under the CFMEU. They want the freedom to make their own decisions about their hours and conditions of work. They do not want to be roped in by an aggressive union. They do not want to be deemed employees. They want the freedoms that have been the very strength of the Australian residential construction industry—a strength that needs to be extended.

The other area in which I think the parliament needs to give some lead is in relation to urban water supply. I do not think there is a state government that is really tackling this issue in an effective way. I know it is not the Commonwealth's constitutional responsibility to supply water to the cities of Australia but, of all organisations, the CSIRO seems to have done the most work to identify the difficulties and propose solutions. Dr Grace Mitchell in a recent address in Canberra outlined a wide range of proven processes that can be beneficial in retaining water for reuse and for further conserving water on site. Dr Grace Mitchell said:

Australia's self-sufficient suburb would have no potable water piped to homes and factories, and all residential, commercial and industrial waste water would be collected, treated and recycled by a local waste water treatment plant.

This is feasible, but it does sound radical. Within the Sydney region, stormwater from blocks of units and households is trapped but, in fact, none of that water is used on gardens or for domestic purposes. It is sent down the drain and out into the Pacific Ocean. It seems a shocking waste. I know that many within the nursery and building industries, as well as the residents of Sydney, think that Bob Carr's policy of 'get used to it' is not good enough. *(Time expired)*

Mr LATHAM (Werriwa—Leader of the Opposition) (3.47 p.m.)—On this day 150 years ago more than 10,000 miners gathered on the Bakery Hill in Ballarat to protest their rights and demand democracy. At this meeting, the Southern Cross flag was unfurled for the first time, its dramatic design inspiring the miners to burn their licences and continue their campaign against unfair taxation and the unfair use of colonial power. The next day, Peter Lawler led a group of miners to Eureka, where they built their stockade. Three days later, on 3 December, the troops attacked and the battle of Eureka was fought

out—one of the most important events and legends in the history of our country. We should not let this parliamentary week pass without honouring the significance of Eureka. It says so much about the Australian character and identity: our love of the underdog and support for those who have a go; our willingness to stand up for our rights, to not buckle in the face of authority; our tradition of defiance, dissent and the larrikin spirit that makes us truly Australian. This is why Eureka is often described as the birthplace of Australian democracy, where we learn the importance of human rights and the great values of a free society; that individuals should be able to express themselves freely, to protest and mobilise politically without being punished by the oppressive power of the state.

Can I just say how glad I am that the spirit of the Eureka rebellion is alive in the chamber today, with so many of the preselectors of Wentworth here to listen to the parliamentary debates. The spirit of rebellion was free in their own preselection decisions when they sent Peter King away, burning his miners licence, and stood up for their rights to preselect a new member for Wentworth, from whom we are about to hear for the first time.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—The gallery should come to order!

Mr LATHAM—I welcome their applause because never have so many people from Vaucluse travelled so far to also listen to me in the parliamentary forum.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The Leader of the Opposition should be neither distracted nor overly encouraged by the gallery.

Mr LATHAM—I am reminded of the great words of John Lennon. Perhaps, instead of applause, they could just jangle their jewellery and make their noise known around the chamber. Mr Speaker, they are not well amused, but I hope they enjoy the following speech.

Eureka also established the great Australian tradition of social diversity. Only two of the miners were said to be Australian born; others came from lands like California, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Jamaica, China and, of course, Britain. In its diversity, its spirit and its egalitarianism, this was the first multicultural community in Australia and, despite the violence of the stockade, it worked. It worked in its rich ethnic background and sense of common purpose.

This was the vision proclaimed on the Bakery Hill by the Italian rebel leader Raffaele Carboni, who called on the miners—irrespective of nationality, religion and colour—to salute the Southern Cross as the refuge of all the oppressed from all the countries of the earth. It was a community of fairness, a community of nations. The miners of course had diverse backgrounds as tradesmen, lawyers, doctors, sailors, farmers and mechanics. History tells us there was even a politician present at Eureka, the President of Victoria's Legislative Council, Sir John Palmer—not the first politician, of course, to have gone digging for gold nor the last. I will refrain from the obvious comment about the next speaker. It is a terrible shame that politicians in the Howard government are not participating in the first sesquicentenary celebration of Eureka in Ballarat. The celebration is to be held this week, and of course the celebrations started last week. I congratulate the Victorian government, the Ballarat Council and also the member for Ballarat for participating in and organising such a great round of celebrations.

The Prime Minister obviously sees this as a Labor style celebration. But no one party has a final claim on Eureka. It is a political event that can be embraced by different parts of the spectrum. A campaign against high taxes and the oppressive power of the state are not uncommon themes for right of centre parties around the world, so why is it that the Prime Minister has effectively placed a boycott on the Eureka celebrations? In fact, one of his predecessors at the time of the centenary of Eureka, in 1954, Prime Minister Menzies, who in fact went to school in Ballarat, described Eureka as a movement for the proper control of public finances. He would say that, of course. On our side of politics, the left of centre, we take inspiration from the struggle of the workers, the great nationalism, the great patriotism of the movement and, of course, the struggle for democracy and human rights. So I say we should all share in the celebration of the Eureka spirit. As Australians, as patriots, we should all have the maturity and confidence in our own views and values to embrace the legend of Eureka.

It is regrettable that the Prime Minister has refused to fly the flag above Parliament House and has rejected the member for Ballarat's private members bill to give the Eureka flag official status. However, like the miners, we struggle on. I congratulate the state and local government authorities who will be flying the flag and the members of parliament who will display it in various parts of the building. We, too, shall salute the Southern Cross. This boycott of Eureka highlights one of the great flaws in the Howard government: its meanness and its divisiveness—in this case expressed through its ignorance of Australian political history. The Prime Minister is often fond of saying that the things that unite us as Australians are more important than things that divide us. Well, surely one of the things that unite the

nation is our love of Australian history, our love of Australian culture and heritage, our love of the Eureka legend. It should have been celebrated by all the parties in this place. We should all have been represented to share in the historical significance of that great event. But this is the meanness and divisiveness of the Howard government.

This leads me to the second theme in this response to the address of the Governor-General: the government's neglect of the education, training and skills development agenda—an area of meanness in the allocation of public investment that is costing Australia dearly. In fact, this great debate about education, training and skill development is one of the longest-running debates in the history of the Howard government. Labor made the point in 1996 that the government was setting down a path of underinvestment in the basic skills of the Australian people. The biggest cut in the first budget of the Howard-Costello government was to education. Their biggest and harshest cut in that first budget was to education and training investments. We warned then of the folly of underinvesting in the skills of the Australian people. The government's decision—the eight- or nine-year underinvestment in the skills of the Australian people—defies the logic and the true meaning of the new economy.

The basic message heard by economists, financial experts and indeed workers right around the world is that jobs based on muscle and machine power are disappearing; the jobs of the future are coming from brain power. The best investment a nation can make in its future is to invest heavily in the skills and capabilities of its people. The greatest mistake of the Howard government has been to ignore that lesson and underinvest over eight or nine years. Of course, we are now seeing the critical skills shortage in Australia damaging our prospects for future

prosperity. It gives the Labor Party no joy in pointing out this historic error—the failure of the government over a long period of time to invest properly in skills—and now the skills shortage is one of the greatest threats to our long-term prosperity as a nation. It is leading to capacity constraints, putting pressure on businesses and, of course, putting upward pressure on interest rates.

Let me just give the House some of the key figures. I welcome the fact that the minister is at the table. Earlier, in question time, he was trying to deny these basic realities. Skills growth, as a driver of productivity in Australia, has dropped 75 per cent in the last 10 years—that is a Productivity Commission statistic. The Australian Industry Group, in its submission to the Senate skills inquiry, reported that over half of the businesses surveyed face skills shortages in this country. Surely a government that cares about business capacity and economic expansion would be moving quickly to address this skills shortage, especially given its failure over the past eight or nine years. It is also estimated that skills shortages will cost the Australian economy \$9 billion in lost output over the coming decade. That is the economic cost to the nation of the government's neglect: \$9 billion in lost output over the coming decade, with \$20 billion worth of major infrastructure and resources projects in jeopardy. Moreover, there are currently between 18,000 and 21,000 unfilled vacancies for tradespersons in Australia.

Mr Hardgrave interjecting—

Mr LATHAM—The minister says, 'The government talks about trades.' Minister, how about investing in the trades to fill the shortage? There are nearly 22,000 unfilled vacancies for tradespersons in Australia. If this government had been investing in trades instead of just talking about them over the last nine years that figure would not stand

there as a major blockage to the prospects of the Australian economy. It is also estimated that the number of apprenticeships in traditional trades has dropped 15 per cent under the Howard government. So there is a record of neglect, and all the minister can do in question time is make the cheapest points to try and overcome the neglect of the Howard government over a long period of time. What has been the government's response? What do we find in the Governor-General's address to the parliament? The government's plan is to build a series of federally controlled and run technical colleges to try to reinvent the wheel. The skills shortage is affecting Australia right now. We do not have four years to waste, four years to wait for the construction of these technical colleges. What is wrong with investing in TAFE right now to build a world-class training and vocational education system? Why wait four years, Minister? Why wait four years to solve a problem that threatens the prosperity of the Australian economy right now?

The minister and the government need to accept the neglect. They need to recognise these figures and they need to do better than a four-year wait to build the infrastructure and invest in the capacity of Australians to develop their skills. What is wrong with investing in TAFE right now? There is no need to reinvent the wheel. We need the investment in TAFE right now. In fact, this would be the most efficient use of public money. Why reinvent the wheel and build a new system that involves duplication of resources, red tape, more administration and bureaucracy? Isn't the whole purpose to get scarce public resources into the education and training system for the benefit of the Australian people? So wouldn't it be wise for this government to not have to reinvent the wheel—a separate system with its own administration systems, its own bureaucracy and its own red tape? Why duplicate the system when we

could invest in TAFE right now, put in the federal resources and build a world-class system?

There are further problems with the duplication, the reinvention of the wheel through these technical colleges. Will there be accreditation of courses for students? Say a student goes to year 11 in a technical college in a particular part of the country and then the family moves to another part of the country where there is no federally run and managed college. Will there be accreditation of those courses when they go to the local TAFE or the local school that specialises in the technical skills? Also, will there be portability for teaching staff? Will there be consistency of the curricula between the various institutions? The minister just shakes his head. It is going to fall off soon. He does not know the answers to these basic propositions that are fundamental to solving the skills shortage in this country.

It defies the Prime Minister's own advice at the recent Local Government Association conference about the best way of getting a solution to a public policy problem. This is what the Prime Minister said at the Local Government Association convention in Canberra on 10 November:

... we really have a responsibility to make the present system of government work as efficiently as possible and one of the ways in which we do that is to recognise that nothing is more destructive of the efficient working of the present system of government than for any level to engage in cost shifting, to recognise that if you do have a division of responsibilities and particular levels of government are given resources they have a responsibility to use those resources wisely to discharge their responsibilities.

Applied to the skills shortage, applied to the question of training and vocational education in Australia, that statement by the Prime Minister is a recommendation to invest in TAFE: don't duplicate, don't cost-shift, don't

reinvent the wheel; invest in TAFE right now to solve the critical skills shortage in this country. That is Labor's approach. Labor's approach is to ensure that in the future TAFE will be a world-class system, that we invest in it, that we build quality, that we build efficiency, that we build the outcomes that are needed for a skills revival in this country. The government is talking about trades but it is not investing in them, and it will not have a solution to the problem that we have right now until four years down the track, if and when these technical colleges are constructed and open.

Labor's approach is to build a world-class TAFE system, and I am sure that employers in small and large businesses right around the country looking for a solution right now would see the sense in our approach. There will be a lot of questioning of the government's long delay in addressing this problem; of the duplication; of the extra administration and bureaucracy; and of the issues of portability and accreditation. The government is yet to answer any of these questions, but right now businesses are looking for an answer to the skills shortage. Australian homebuyers of course want the skills shortage and the capacity constraints addressed so that there is less pressure on interest rates in this country.

Labor support the TAFE system; we want to make it truly world class and we want to put it in the framework of lifelong learning. The skills of the Australian people rely on lifelong learning, not just at TAFE but right through the education system. Early childhood development is the great area of underinvestment and neglect by the Howard government. They have been talking about an early childhood agenda for eight years but they are doing nothing. Labor want to see early childhood development extend the principles of public education into child care and preschool. We recognise that learning

does not start on the first day of school; it starts on the first day of life. Around the world, there is recognition that we need to invest early in our young people—invest early in their literacy, their skills and their capability and extend the principles of public education into the child-care and preschool system.

So, too, Labor want to invest properly in our schools with a needs based funding system. Early development of skills and ensuring that every school in this country is a good school: this is the basis of Labor's school funding policy. It defines a new national standard of resources and excellence for all Australian schools, government and non-government, and then allocates funding on the basis of need, ensuring that 9½ thousand underresourced schools can reach the new national standard as quickly as possible.

The government of course has attacked this policy for its reallocation of resources away from 67 wealthy schools identified in the election campaign—schools which have already exceeded the funding benchmark in their fee income alone. However, given the limited nature of government funding, there is no logical alternative to this approach. Redistribution is not only a fair policy; it is also the most efficient way of achieving a rigorous national standard. Indeed, there is no point in governments establishing a national approach to schooling unless they are willing to protect its integrity. The sooner all schools can reach an acceptable standard, the sooner governments can maximise the number of families in Australia that realise their aspirations for the education of their children. The skills base would be set in the early years through school, and then they would build on that through a world-class TAFE system.

Labor's schools policy is not a punishment policy; it is an efficient and fair way of achieving a vital national goal: all schools

offering their students a quality education and a decent start to life. In the name of equity, why should schools without libraries and computers wait any longer for fair funding when schools with boatsheds and rifle ranges have been overfunded for quite some time? These are already successful schools and they would remain successful, with a high standard of classroom excellence, under Labor's policy.

What we are on about is an aspirational policy—aspirational not just for the few but for all parents and students; aspirational not just for the King's School and Geelong Grammar but for every Australian school. This is about defining a common standard, a national standard, and needs based funding for government and non-government schools alike. Why should people who do not have a school that is up to scratch because of under-resourcing wait any longer to realise their legitimate aspirations for the skills development of their children and the education of the next generation? Under this policy, 2½ thousand needy private schools would benefit from the needs based funding.

Beyond that—beyond early childhood development, needs based school funding and a world-class TAFE system—we need access and affordability in the higher education system in this country. Beyond that, we need a commitment to adult and community education—to skills for life—through the renewal of education and vocational capacity across a full lifespan.

These are the critical issues. It is the blending of economic and education policy; it is the area where the government has got it wrong. These two issues need to come together. There is no more pressing issue for the management of the economy than the skills shortage. There is no more pressing area of government neglect than the underinvestment in TAFE, the underinvestment in

vocational education and training. There has been an historic underinvestment for eight or nine years, and that is why the figures are so bad. That is why we have the Australian Industry Group reporting that over half of the businesses surveyed in Australia face skills shortages.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr LATHAM—The government backbench think it is funny. They claim to represent business and trade interests, but they will not invest in the trades to overcome the skills shortages.

The minister has no answer for these things. He cannot give a basic answer as to why the government will not invest in TAFE. He cannot give a basic answer as to why it is going to take four years to build the technical colleges. He cannot give a basic answer as to why they should try to reinvent the wheel with duplication, new bureaucracy and new administration. He cannot give answers about accreditation of courses or portability of staff. There is an answer, Minister, and it is called TAFE. It is time that this government invested in it properly and addressed the skills shortage that way. These are the critical issues that come out of the Governor-General's address.

I again welcome the preselectors of Wentworth to this fine chamber. I congratulate the new member for Wentworth on his long struggle to arrive in this place; we look forward with great interest and anticipation to the things that he is about to tell the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the honourable member for Wentworth, I remind the House that this is the honourable member's first speech. I ask the House to extend the usual courtesies.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth) (4.07 p.m.)—I am proud and honoured to address this House today as the member for Wen-

Wentworth, whose people I thank for the great trust they have reposed in me. Each of us comes to this House to represent our own communities, each unique, each making up Australia—the home all of us are pledged to serve. Wentworth's green hills and golden beaches are strung like jewels between the harbour and the sea. From the tropical gullies of Bronte and Cooper Park to the urban bustle of Bondi Junction and Double Bay, from the sheltered rock pools of Watsons Bay to the thundering surf at Tamarama, Wentworth's geography is as varied and engaging as its people.

It is not a big place. You can paddle a surf ski from one end to the other in an hour, which is not a lot longer than it takes to drive in peak traffic. Wentworth's most endearing aspect is perhaps its least well known. Contrary to popular myth, our community is egalitarian, democratic and far from homogenous. Like many of Wentworth's residents, I grew up living in flats—mostly rented—and, in the style of the times, with small rooms running off a long, dark corridor. I did not feel deprived of anything—apart, perhaps, from a dog. I was rarely inside. The best things in Wentworth—the waves at Bondi, the ducks at Centennial Park or even the brisk nor'easter whipping down the harbour on a summer's day—take no account of your bank balance.

Most mornings my father and I went for a swim at North Bondi Surf Club. The surf club showers were no respecters of rank or privilege. Our companions included judges and garbos, teachers and policemen and businessmen of all types—from shmattas in Surry Hills to high finance in Martin Place. There were surgeons whose hands saved lives and there were gentlemen whose calloused hands were used, in a rather emphatic manner, to collect debts for bookies.

Wentworth was multicultural before the term was invented. Our prayers fly heavenward, not just in English but in the language of the New Testament at St George's Greek church, of the Old Testament at Central Synagogue and our many other shuls and, if you believe the Irish—and who would doubt them?—just once a year in the tongue of the angels themselves at St Patrick's in Bondi.

Wentworth has the largest Jewish community in our city. The community has grown stronger with successive waves of immigration from Europe, from Russia, from Israel and from South Africa. Their generous community spirit, their family pride and tireless enterprise are admired by all of us. Australia is a good friend of Israel, the Middle East's only democracy. We have been resolute in supporting Israel's right to take the necessary steps to defend itself from terror. The death of Arafat has now opened up new opportunities for peace based on the road-map—two states within secure, internationally recognised boundaries. We must hope and pray that all parties, in the words of King David's 34th Psalm, do not merely 'seek' peace but 'pursue' it.

Wentworth is a federation seat and its representatives have been as distinguished as the great colonial statesman after whom it is named. The longest serving, Sir Eric Harrison, was Sir Robert Menzies' deputy and a co-founder of the Liberal Party 60 years ago. I salute all my predecessors and thank them for their service, which has set a high bar for my own.

I was an only child, and my parents split when I was nine. My father, Bruce Turnbull, was a single parent for much of my childhood. All divorces are difficult and painful. My parents' was no exception. My mother had moved overseas. My father and I moved into a smaller flat. Yet my father never spoke a critical word in my presence about my

mother, nor she about him. He went to the greatest pains to ensure, very successfully, that my mother and I remained on the most loving terms. I was very close to my parents, both of whom died long ago and far too young. I thank them for their great love.

I will work here to defend and promote marriage and families. We must do more to help families stay together. When divorce occurs, we must do all we can to help parents, no matter how bitter their differences, to support each other's vital role in the life of their children. I am proud to be part of a government that has already made great strides to make family law more about families and less about divorce. But we must always remember that those of us with intact families owe as much to providence, or good fortune, as we do to commitment and in this, as in so many other areas of social policy, we are not called to judge or preach, only to help and to heal.

Like most children who live in Wentworth my father chose to send me to an independent school. I boarded at Sydney Grammar from the age of eight as my father, a hotel broker, travelled around New South Wales on business. Sometimes when I was at home on school holidays he would take me with him, often to complete a stocktake before a pub was sold. I was counting beer glasses long before I was old enough to drink out of them. My father found paying the school fees was often a struggle, but he chose to postpone other things like buying a flat of our own so that I could go to the school he chose for me.

This came back to me vividly when the election campaign was in full swing and the Labor Party was declaring that so-called elite schools deserved little or no government funding. I knew exactly which parents that policy would hurt the most: the battlers, the renters, the Bruce Turnbells of today, who

choose to sacrifice personal comforts so they can give their children the education they have chosen for them.

I met the love of my life in 1978. Lucy Hughes was 19 and I was 23. She was smart and happy. She shone with love and optimism, as she does today. I immediately proposed and, two years later, she relented and we were married. Lucy has been my partner in life and in love, in law and in business. In addition to all that, and bringing up our children, she was the first woman to be Deputy Lord Mayor and then Lord Mayor of Sydney. She oversaw the expansion of the city's boundaries into Kings Cross and Glebe, and her disarming charm and keen vision are sorely missed.

Lucy and our daughter, Daisy, who is at Sydney University, are here today. Our son, Alex, also at University, is overseas watching us on the Internet. Lucy's mother, Joanna, is with us today, as is her father, Tom Hughes, and his wife, Chrissie. Tom was a member of this House for nine years and Attorney-General in the Gorton government. I could not have asked for a more loyal friend or a better role model.

Apart from loading bananas in the city markets, my first real job was as a journalist—a political correspondent at state parliament. I suppose it was just downhill from that noble calling into 25 years of law and business. Lucy and I have found that much of our satisfaction in business has come from starting new enterprises: creating new jobs and new markets for Australian technology. Our life's experience has been that there is little reward without risk. We believe Australia's economy and prosperity depend on a culture of initiative and enterprise which supports Australians doing what we do best—having a go—and, when things do not succeed, getting up and having another go.

Big public companies and multinationals are no strangers to the political process. However, the smaller, newer and more entrepreneurial businesses often feel disconnected or crowded out. The cost of regulatory compliance falls especially heavily on small and medium sized businesses. We need to ensure that no regulation and no compliance burden is imposed on business unless it is absolutely necessary and the policy objective cannot be achieved in any other way. I hope that my experience in the small and medium business sector will enable those men and women who are the very engine of our nation's growth to become better understood, as our parliament makes laws that affect them.

I believe passionately that politics is for people. It is not an elite sport played only by members of parliament. All my life I have practised active citizenship. It is why I first joined the Liberal Party in 1973. It is why I ran for parliament. It is why I have written and spoken, often controversially, on some of the big issues that await us in the coming decades. It is why I am a director of Clean Up Australia, our largest grassroots environmental action group. It is why for nearly eight years, as a private citizen, I was chairman of the Australian Republican Movement.

I am for the republic: Australia's head of state should be one of us. The republic debate brought together many Australians from both sides of politics. The constitutional convention, which sat in the Old Parliament House and in which many in this room participated, was a splendid moment of Australian democracy—when a common love of country cracked the frosted lens of partisanship, and every speech on every side was from a patriotic heart.

Within the lifetimes of most of us, and certainly in the lifetimes of our children, the world we know today will be transformed.

Improved life expectancy and the sharp decline in fertility are resulting in the old and very old making up a larger percentage of the world's population, a slowdown—if not a decline—in the labour force and, in many countries, a decline in the overall population itself. In the developed world only the United States has a total fertility or birth rate at replacement level of 2.1. Ours is 1.7. In Japan and most of Europe it is 1.3 or lower.

This phenomenon has been described as an 'ageing population'. That is a glib and slippery euphemism. Societies such as those in Italy, Spain, Greece, Russia and many others in Europe with birth rates of 1.3 or lower are not ageing, they are dying. A population with a birth rate of 1.3 will, absent immigration, shrink by 75 per cent over 100 years. This would mean that if Italy, for example, has the same population in a century as it does today, less than a quarter of that future population will be the descendants of today's Italians.

Can it be true that at the peak of our technology and prosperity the western world is losing the confidence to reproduce itself? Are we witnessing the beginning of the dying of the West? Certainly we are at a tipping point in our civilisation's story. Unless fertility rates dramatically improve then, in a cycle of loss and dislocation matched only by the Black Death in the 14th century, societies with birth rates substantially below replacement level will either dwindle into an insignificant fraction of their current numbers or be swamped by larger and larger waves of immigration.

Our welfare state was devised in days when fertility was higher, life expectancy was shorter, medical costs were lower and the percentage of the population over 65 was a fraction of what it is today. Within 40 years the over 65s will double as a percentage of Australia's population, from 12 to 25 per

cent. In countries such as Japan with lower birth rates it will be closer to 40 per cent. China is not exempt; it may be the first country to get old before it gets rich.

Demography is indeed destiny. America's global leadership is reinforced by its strong population. The *Economist* has estimated that by 2050 the US population will not only have overtaken that of Europe but that the median age of Europeans will be 53—17 years older than Americans and 10 years older than Australians. These changes to our population and their consequence of very substantially increased demands on government for health and aged care will preoccupy this parliament and its counterparts in other nations for the rest of this century.

Australia is well prepared to deal with these challenges, as we have seen laid out in the Treasurer's groundbreaking *Intergenerational Report* of 2002. More than the leadership of any other developed country, the Howard government has not only recognised these demographic changes and their implications but moved to meet them. There is, however, no room for complacency. The demographic storm is coming. How hard it blows and how well our children weather it will depend in large measure on the decisions we take today and our maintaining the courageous and determined leadership of the last 8½ years. A strong Australia in a changing world will be one committed to enterprise, self-reliance, economic growth and, above all, high productivity. It will be an Australia that recognises that we have a vital interest in strengthening, promoting and defending marriage and family life.

Sound economic management has reduced government debt to the lowest in the OECD and created the conditions for long-term sustainable economic growth. Other countries combine soaring levels of government debt and unfunded pension and retirement

schemes. We, on the other hand, have a strong and growing superannuation and investment savings culture. The continued promotion of savings and self-reliance will be of vital concern for this parliament.

As the Productivity Commission reminded us only last week, our economy is driven by three Ps: population, participation in the work force and productivity. With slow growth or no growth in the labour force, the only factor which can drive our economy this century will be improving productivity. There will be growing claims on governments in the years ahead; only higher productivity can generate the revenues to meet them.

There is no conflict between good public health and education on the one hand and economic reform and productivity on the other. Nothing increases choice or widens the horizons of families more than a strong economy. Indeed, without the tax revenues that only a strong economy can deliver and a government capable of keeping that economy strong, even the warmest words and kindest hearts will bring cold comfort to the aged and the sick.

Our birth rate is higher than that of most comparable countries, but it is in the national interest that it decline no further and ideally increase. The government's family policies have already helped more parents have the families they want. But, just as the causes for this unprecedented decline in fertility are debatable, so are the appropriate policy responses unclear. Over time some will be more effective than others. Pragmatism, experience and commonsense will be better guides than ideology. There is nothing any of us are likely to do which is more important for the future of this nation than raise children. Motherhood and fatherhood have been greatly devalued, and this has occurred to our grave cost. We must affirm that children

are a social good and not merely a private optional pleasure. Australia's children are Australia's future. They are our future. We must work to enhance rather than restrict Australians' work and family choices and recognise that it is desirable for women, if they wish, to fulfil two goals: child-bearing and a career. Our society's survival depends on making it possible and easier for them to do both.

More workplace flexibility with all it entails is not an option but a necessity, and not just for parents. The worthwhile objective of longer participation by older Australians in the work force will also require more flexible workplaces. We have the technology. All that is required now is commitment and imagination. We need to continue to expand the government's skills based immigration program in addition to meeting our humanitarian obligations. Our immigration program is essentially a recruiting exercise conducted in the national interest of Australia. It is a competitive world and we want as many of the world's enterprising and energetic to join and strengthen our Australian family.

While we wish all other nations tranquility and prosperity, the fact is that troubled times in other lands have brought many migrants to Australia. The social problems arising from demographic change in other countries are likely to bring many more highly qualified immigrants to this country.

More, perhaps, than any other people, Australians are particularly mobile and employable around the world. Already one million of us are working and living overseas. High skills and easy familiarity with other cultures make Australians citizens of the world. But immigration is a two-way street. It is a revolving door, in fact. If we are uncompetitive, if our economy falters and if our personal income tax rates remain relatively high or become higher, we run the

very real risk that our best talent will leave, and in large numbers. In some recent years New Zealand, for example, has suffered a net loss of nearly one per cent of its native born population.

It is not just populations which are changing. So, apparently, is our weather. We must assume on the basis of current science that our world is getting warmer and our country, at least, drier. I am proud to be part of a government which has led the way in the better management of our water resources. For the first time a federal government has shown it is prepared to take a leadership role to help meet the challenges of urban water supply and cleanliness.

The Wentworth campaign was hard fought, which is no bad thing. The party's organisation was unstinting in its support, as were ministers, senators and members. Nearly a thousand Liberals volunteered to work on our campaign and more than 600 on polling day. Our magnificent Young Liberals, some of them voting for the first time, worked side by side with veterans who had joined the party in Sir Robert Menzies' day. Nearly 400 are here today and I thank them in particular for this very moving show of support. I thank all of our Liberal Party family from the bottom of my heart. I particularly thank our Prime Minister, John Howard. He provided every assistance we requested and much more. In Wentworth, as across the nation, he clearly set out the choice presented to the people. His discipline, leadership and teamwork delivered our victory. Finally, I thank my best advocates, Lucy, Daisy and Alex. Their love gave me the strength to run, their charisma made up for many of my shortcomings and their advocacy was as compelling as it was sincere.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (4.27 p.m.)—For the first time in my whole life in this parliament, as I rose to my feet I was ap-

plauded. I want to thank the member for Wentworth for bringing the good burghers of Wentworth to this House to give me that applause. I am pleased that the member for Wentworth has now initiated his contributions in this chamber by making his first speech. I am sure that he will make many more, but in a sense none will be as important as the one he has made today. I congratulate him on his arrival in this place. Of course, we want to make sure that he is on the government side of the chamber for a very short space of time and that we see him relocated to the opposition benches after the next election. I am sure that there is a very high probability of that happening.

Later in my contribution to this address-in-reply I want to address particular remarks to the contribution made by the new member for Goldstein in his first speech this morning. I will make those comments when I resume my contribution later this evening. Let me say, though, how pleased I am to be again addressing this parliament as the member for Lingiari. It is, in my view, certainly the most diverse and dispersed electorate in this country. It includes not only all of the Northern Territory except Darwin and Palmerston but also the Christmas and Cocos islands. This is unquestionably a most diverse electorate. It is quite the opposite of the electorate of the member for Wentworth. I do not know the area of Wentworth, but I suspect it is less than 100 square kilometres. The area of my electorate, for the information of the good burghers of Wentworth, is 1.34 million square kilometres.

Whilst it is possible for the member for Wentworth to dawdle around his electorate in a day, walking and—depending on his state of mind—perhaps doing other things, in my own case it takes literally days to travel from one part of the electorate to another if I use a vehicle. Of course, even by plane, to visit the Christmas and Cocos islands requires a

week. In a sense, that shows the contrast of the electorates that we represent in this parliament.

I am extremely pleased—and I know the government is disappointed—at my return to this place with a dramatically increased majority. I am sure that must have been what the applause was all about—I cannot imagine what else it could have been. I note, however, that those who were so vigorous in their applause have left before I have finished my contribution, and I cannot for the life of me understand why this could have happened! It must be the invitation list for the soiree which is about to take place in the Great Hall at the invitation of the new member for Wentworth. Oddly, I will not be able to see the applause continued in that place because I was not invited. I am not sure if anyone—apart from the very close friends and colleagues, the thousand members of the Liberal Party in Wentworth and the 600 who worked on election day—has been invited. I ask my friends at the table: were you invited? Did you get an invitation to this little soiree?

Mr Kelvin Thomson interjecting—

Mr SNOWDON—No-one did. I have to say—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Causley)—I think the member for Lingiari is straying from the point. I will draw him back to it.

Mr SNOWDON—No, it is very important to me, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is very relevant to how we spend our time in this place. I will just say that I regret the fact that we were not invited to continue our conversation with the member for Wentworth's constituents. Mr Deputy Speaker, would you enlighten me as to whether or not I have to terminate this discussion now?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I will accommodate the member for Lingiari. It being

almost 4.32 p.m., the debate is interrupted in accordance with the resolution agreed to on 18 November 2004. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed:

That grievances be noted.

Environment: Climate Change

Mr MURPHY (Lowe) (4.32 p.m.)—I congratulate the member for Lingiari and join with him in congratulating the member for Wentworth on his first speech in this House. I am impressed that the member for Wentworth raised the issue of climate change, but I think he should get a copy of what I am about to say to establish the facts. However much the Howard government may congratulate itself, there is no doubt that many of the government's policies, particularly those concerning climate change, are doing no more than indolently and cynically setting aside some very serious concerns that will leave a cruel legacy for future generations. Tragically, the Howard government is presiding over an unsustainable growth of fossil fuel consumption and, in so doing, it is guaranteeing that Australia will continue to suffer damaging climate change from the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. There is no longer any doubt that burning fossil fuels—that is, coal, oil and natural gas—and releasing the resultant carbon dioxide into the atmosphere is increasing the average temperature of our planet.

The government pretends the science behind the warnings of climatologists is unsupported by facts and the vested interests that control the government's policies say policy changes to reduce carbon dioxide emissions would be too expensive. No matter what members of this government may want to believe, the natural forces that we have

unleashed through releasing massive quantities of greenhouse gases will have an increasingly damaging impact upon the rural economy and the quality of our life in our cities. Very few credible scientists now discount the reality of global warming. The number of reputable scientists who accept the evidence for global warming far outweighs the few who remain unconvinced, yet the Howard government acts as if the case for global warming is unproven and action to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide can be put off indefinitely.

Scandalously, the Howard government stubbornly refuses to recognise the seriousness of the threat posed by global warming. This only mirrors the arrogance of the Bush administration in the United States, which has been accused by many eminent American scientists of 'predetermined, inflexible positions' on the dangers of climate change. The Howard government's single proposal for dealing with carbon dioxide emissions—namely, geosequestration—is unproven and expensive and has not even been demonstrated at pilot plant scale. Moreover, it is only applicable to fixed sources such as power stations, leaving the bulk of emissions to be vented to the atmosphere.

Not only is the evidence for global warming beyond dispute, but levels of carbon dioxide have reached a concentration where any further substantial increases could lead to drastic shifts in the world's climate and sea levels. I will state the evidence as it presently stands. First, since the early 1800s the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide has risen from 280 parts per million to the present level of 370 parts per million, an increase of over 30 per cent. Second, the effect of the rising carbon dioxide level has been to increase the amount of solar radiation absorbed by the earth compared to the amount of heat radiation lost to space. Third, the imbalance between incoming solar energy and

heat energy radiated from the earth is now between 0.5 and one watt per square metre of the earth's surface, approximately equal to a lit torch bulb on every square metre of the earth's surface, land and seas included. Fourth, the effect of this imbalance is being felt as global climate change and the observed changes are in agreement with well-tested climate models.

Aside from endless droughts, the main concern is the rate at which the polar ice sheets will melt under the additional heat input caused by the imbalance between incoming solar and outgoing heat radiation and the effect that this ice sheet melting will have upon global sea levels. The evidence that has been obtained from Antarctic ice cores gives us a grim warning of what may lie ahead if carbon dioxide levels continue to increase. Ice core data tells us that current average global temperatures have risen to be equal to the highest temperatures experienced since the end of the last ice age. An additional watt of imbalance between incoming solar energy and outgoing radiated heat energy will take temperatures to the levels of the warmest times that preceded the last ice age. Sea levels were then six metres higher than present-day sea levels—a disastrous increase, were such a change to occur in our lifetimes.

While the government refuses to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the rest of the world, with the significant exception of the United States, has moved to counter the unprecedented threat posed by global warming. Russia has formally ratified the Kyoto protocol, and the protocol will become legally binding on 16 February 2005. The 30 industrialised countries that have supported the protocol have committed to cutting their carbon dioxide emissions to five per cent below 1990 levels by 2005. This is as much as 25 per cent below current levels.

Only four industrialised countries—Liechtenstein, Monaco plus Australia and the United States—remain outside Kyoto. That means that 61.6 per cent of the world's emissions are covered by the Kyoto protocol. Despite an ineffective campaign of obstruction by the Howard government, policies will be introduced by the protocol members to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels. Australia is excluded from Kyoto emissions trading and will suffer trade restrictions because of the government's opposition to the protocol.

The effect on Australia's balance of trade will be serious, with significant impacts on the coal exports that are presently our largest earner and which generated an income of \$A13.5 billion in 2001-02. Nearly half of Australia's coal exports are burned in overseas power stations, and measures that will soon be introduced to reduce emissions from these power stations will have a significant impact on our coal export earnings. I have recently seen for myself an Australian designed and built large-scale solar collector that is specifically designed to reduce the amount of coal used in existing power stations. This is located near Liddell power station, where solar power is intended to replace 50 megawatts of fossil fuel power at Liddell, and I pay tribute to Dr David Mills, whom the member for Wills knows.

This technology has attracted great interest here and overseas and, despite a derisory level of support for renewable energy from this government, solar energy will replace increasing quantities of coal-fired electricity generating capacity. Solar augmentation could presently displace half of the coal used in Australian power stations and, with high-temperature storage, these inexpensive Australian designed solar power collectors could replace virtually all coal fired generators in Australia. These solar collectors if sold overseas could also displace much of the coal exported from Australia while at the same

time producing a replacement income in the form of high technology sales to countries concerned to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The government makes much of the costs that it claims would have to be borne if effective measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions were to be enforced in Australia. Of course, the government neglects to account for the enormous subsidies that encourage fossil fuel consumption. In 1999, Professor Quiggin, Australian Research Council Senior Research Fellow at James Cook University, demonstrated that, under the GST, the net subsidy for road transport fuel is approximately \$2.2 billion per annum. In addition to this amount, other fuel subsidies include the approximate \$1.4 billion per annum for the Diesel Fuel Rebate and the expenditure of \$2.6 billion recently incurred to prevent the GST adding to fuel price rises for ordinary consumers. This amounts to approximately \$4 billion per year in subsidies for fossil fuel use, and yet the government claims that measures to reduce fossil fuel consumption are too expensive to contemplate. To this sum one should add an additional \$500 million per annum handed to purchasers of the many gas-guzzling four-wheel drive vehicles. This money should be used to encourage Australians to buy more fuel-efficient vehicles.

The former Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Kemp, warned that carbon dioxide emissions had to be reduced by 60 per cent if a disaster were to be averted. No doubt this advice did not fit 'predetermined, inflexible' positions, so Dr Kemp was dispatched. Yet cuts in emissions of this order from electricity generation and transport alone are possible. Solar thermal electricity generators can now reliably replace coal fire electricity at competitive prices and could cut total emissions by 40 to 50 per cent. Affordable hybrid vehicles with double the fuel

economy of conventional cars and electrification of the trunk railway routes together with the transfer of the majority of freight to railways could halve carbon dioxide releases from the transport sector, which presently produces one-third of total emissions. These measures are affordable, are being introduced in other parts of the world and are needed as a matter of urgency if a climatic disaster is to be forestalled. I ask: what sort of catastrophe does Australia have to face before the government will act?

Australian Taxation Office: Inspector-General of Taxation

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (4.41 p.m.)—I grieve for the Australian taxpayer. I wish to comment on the recent report by Mr David Vos, the inaugural Inspector-General of Taxation, into the Australian Taxation Office's administration of the general interest charge or GIC. In doing so, I would firstly like to extend my personal thanks to Mr Vos for the extensive and detailed work he has obviously done to provide the government with this report. Its conclusions have been reached as a result of detailed investigation and analysis of administrative matters. Mr Vos has also taken time to get out of his office and meet with practitioners and taxpayers to get the feel of what the real effect of this tax penalty regime is on ordinary Australians.

It is a vivid contrast to the complete failure of the tax office to meet its obligations and do the same. Indeed, some of Mr Vos's key findings are for the ATO to do what it promised to do in the much vaunted Taxpayers' Charter—a document proposed by the ATO, written by the ATO and claimed by the ATO to be its standard for dealing with taxpayers' affairs. Unfortunately, as Mr Vos points out, the ATO has failed to examine taxpayers' individual circumstances and has taken what it considers to be an administra-

tively efficient global view of everyone on certain arrangements.

As we already know, the Commonwealth Ombudsman concluded in 2001 that the ATO breached the Taxpayers' Charter by its failure to take the individual circumstances of taxpayers into account in mass marketed arrangements. We can see from the inspector-general's findings that nothing has changed. When the commissioner reverses his view on an investment product, he just gets out a calculator and the investor list, presses a mail-merge button and everybody involved is automatically a tax cheat.

So it would be no surprise to members of this House that the commissioner considers with contempt the informed and independent opinion of the Inspector-General of Taxation to have as little relevance as the views of the Ombudsman. Mr Vos is in distinguished company—most of the members of this House and the other place have been rebuffed and told at some stage by the ATO to butt out. The professional bodies, the taxpayers association, the Law Council, have all have had their representative views scorned. It seems the concerns of the Prime Minister himself have been summarily dismissed. And now, the much anticipated circuit breaker in the problem of tax administration, the Prime Minister's personal solution, the Inspector-General of Taxation, has been put in his place and stared down. The inspector-general has found in his report that the ATO is treating taxpayers inconsistently and therefore unfairly in the way concessions are allowed.

Let us make this point up front. The former Assistant Treasurer, Senator Helen Coonan, was forced to investigate this review in November 2003 for only one reason—the universal condemnation and criticism of the ATO's handling of the EBA issue. As the dispute lengthened, it became more obvious to MPs and the government

that the commissioner's actions were inconsistent and of serious concern. An inquiry into the application of the GIC, in particular as it related to EBA taxpayers, was the independent and competent view that the government could rely on.

In March 2004 the PM encouraged members of this House who had approached him with demands for intervention to wait for this report, as it would provide the government with the clearest view and the best solution. Well, the umpire has ruled, and taxpayers have accepted his view—the commissioner should allow all taxpayers in the arrangements under review to receive the same concessions as those in mass marketed arrangements. To remind members of those terms, they were as follows: no penalties; no interest; allowance of a deduction for the cash component; and a five-year period to pay the settled debt, with the first two years interest free. But the commissioner has rejected the inspector-general's findings in this regard, and his reasons for rejecting them are included in the report.

However—and this is a very telling point—the report also includes the inspector-general's secondary comments on the commissioner's reasons, and guess what: he rejects them. Not only does he reject them; he clearly states that some of the commissioner's contentions are just plain wrong. Here are three examples: firstly, the commissioner claims that interest remission provisions do not provide him with an 'unfettered discretion' to remit interest and that the power to remit can only be activated in exceptional circumstances. The IGT says that is just plain wrong. The remission power contains no express requirement that is to be exercised only in special or exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, the IGT states:

The approach by the Commissioner would seem to unnecessarily restrict the operation of the dis-

cretionary power afforded by Parliament to remit the interest charge.

Secondly, the commissioner claims that a no penalty, no interest outcome would 'significantly impact on the future health and integrity of the tax system'. The IGT says that is wrong. The remissions for mass marketed investors, of which there were significantly more than those in the EBAs, have had no adverse consequences. The IGT also notes that the ATO itself regarded EBAs to be mass marketed arrangements until April 2001, when it reduced interest for some of the mass marketed taxpayers, and provides evidence that internally the ATO actually still regards EBAs as a form of mass marketed investments.

Thirdly, the commissioner claims that EBA taxpayers are different to mass marketed taxpayers and therefore do not warrant the same settlement. The IGT rejects this claim and notes that he prefers the submissions made to him by other parties that the commissioner's views are incorrect. Not only that, the inspector-general pointed out that mass marketed products for which the settlement was provided could only lay claim to five or six ATO rulings in their favour over a period of several years. EBA products were the subject of over 60 ATO rulings and advance opinions in their favour. Those 60-plus rulings and opinions, along with the chaos in the rulings section at the ATO, mean that taxpayers and their advisers still have to take the 'she loves me, she loves me not' approach to planning their tax and business affairs.

Mr Vos is quite clear and firm in his findings. Taxpayers in EBAs, retirement villages, equity linked bonds and securities lending arrangements deserve the same treatment as taxpayers in mass marketed arrangements. Now associated with that finding are other findings about the ATO's administration of the GIC, many of which the commissioner

has reluctantly agreed to take on board. Mr Vos's independence and clear views are obviously recognised by the commissioner when it suits him. But these issues will only affect taxpayers in the future. EBA taxpayers are being pushed to insolvency by the commissioner because he refuses to accept any responsibility for the failures of his office.

That is why this parliament must act. As a member of parliament I wish to place on the record that I am personally offended and dismayed by the commissioner's written comments in a letter to the inspector-general, dated 8 July 2004, and incorporated into the report as appendix 1. The commissioner claims that the health and integrity of our tax system is jeopardised when lobbying successfully achieves favourable settlements that he describes as being 'not otherwise justified'. He is wrong. The commissioner stands alone in his views that the settlement is not justified. No member of this House, or indeed of the other place, who is dedicated to representing their constituents in this, the highest court in the land, will ever countenance the view of any bureaucrat, no matter how senior, that constituents are not entitled to have their parliamentary representatives lobby on their behalf to bring reason and fairness to a situation where both are so clearly absent.

Accordingly, members who are very seriously concerned about this matter are proposing a private member's bill that will achieve two outcomes: firstly, it will require the commissioner to act on the IGT's findings in this report and implement the mass marketed settlement provisions in full for all the affected taxpayers currently in dispute with EBAs, retirement villages, equity linked bonds and securities lending arrangements. This will bring these disputes to an end immediately. The primary tax will be paid; the Federal Court and Administrative Appeals Tribunal calendars will be cleared; further

futile expenses and suffocating pressures on businesses and families involved will disappear; and a clear view of the future will enable all parties, including the ATO, to move forward. ATO staff currently deployed in perpetuating this unholy mess can be re-assigned to more productive tasks.

Secondly, the bill will include overriding provisions to limit the commissioner's ability to retrospectively apply a changed view or amended policy or procedure to situations where the law or its administration by the ATO is unclear. Taxpayers will be able to lodge a disclosure statement with a return where they and their advisers are of the view that specific components of their tax affairs in the relevant income year are not clearly defined in the statutes or are not the subject of ATO practice statements. Such disclosure statements will be required to be accompanied by competent professional opinions that support the taxpayer's interpretation, as are presently recognised by government and business alike. Where such disclosure statements are lodged and, no more than two years after lodgment, a subsequent ATO examination concludes that tax deductions or income exemptions are not allowable, the tax in question will then be payable, subject to the existing appeal provisions. However, it will be exempted from penalties, the GIC and the part IVA anti-avoidance provisions.

The bill will also incorporate measures to protect the revenue from taxpayers who attempt to abuse its effective safety net as a form of statutory tax deferral. The effect of such provisions will be to prevent the penalising of taxpayers when best advice is obtained and followed, provided that the ATO is kept informed and is aware of the details of the arrangements. Suffice to say the train of global disputes that have dogged our tax system over the past few years would not have occurred had these measures been in place.

These matters should not have to be dealt with by the parliament, and they would not be if the ATO had done their job in a timely manner or agreed to accept the inspector-general's independent findings. However, as representatives of the taxpayers of this nation we are obligated to stop this mistreatment of our constituents by the means available to us.

Veterans: Health Services

Mr EDWARDS (Cowan) (4.51 p.m.)—I want to raise a serious issue today relating to one of my constituents. It is an issue which also impacts on the broader veteran community. In this instance, I have been contacted by Mr Con Sappelli JP, who set out a very concerning experience he had recently following a heart attack. Mr Sappelli suffered this attack in September, at about 2.30 in the afternoon. I quote from a letter he wrote to me:

I am a returned serviceman with private health insurance. As a result of a heart attack in the afternoon from 1830hrs that Tuesday I found myself on a merry go round of hospitals until an eventual permanent bed was found for me at Mount Hospital at 1430 on Wednesday 8th.

When picked up by an ambulance that Tuesday evening I was informed that Joondalup Health Campus (the nearest facility) was full and on advice from the paramedics QEII was the recommended destination. Having received the necessary medical care to ensure my wellbeing at QEII I requested to be sent to the repatriation hospital as my heart condition is an accepted condition by DVA so doing my request to be taken to repat. However, I was informed that there were no beds available, then a request for St John of God Subiaco, ditto. I was then informed that a bed would be found within Sir Charles Gairdner. Wrong again.

A bed was eventually found at Murdoch at 0100 on the morning of Wednesday 8th September, after further tests to ensure my well being I was eventually transferred to Mount Hospital at 1430 that Wednesday. With the exception of the time at Murdoch I was on a stretcher until a bed

became available at Mount some 20 hours after being picked up by the ambulance.

The requirements by DVA are that should you wish to partake of the services other than those approved by them without permission from them, the cost for those services becomes a liability to the patient and in my case my private fund. What would have occurred had I not been privately insured, would I have remained on a trolley in a casualty ward waiting to either die or wait until a suitable bed vacancy became available in the appropriately approved facility in accordance with DVA protocol.

The last thought in a persons mind when a crisis occurs requiring intensive care is to seek permission from a bureaucracy as to whether they will accept any cost incurred by the said crisis. As a consequence the entire doctors, hospital and ambulance accounts (a substantial amount) with the exception of the initial ambulance from home to QEII (paid by DVA) were paid by my health fund with some out of pocket cost paid by myself. One could say that ultimately that is why one has private health insurance, the fact that my medical condition is an accepted condition by DVA, by way of principal they should be responsible for all accounts, irrespective of whether the medical care provided was by an approved establishment or not.

Especially given that the majority of private hospital has similar charges, Hollywood although a repatriation hospital, it is foremost a private hospital.

Where there are not sufficient hospital beds available within the medical system, which is not a situation or fault of my making, the system should be flexible enough to allow a person to make a decision, which is in his or her best interest without having to seek prior permission as to which DVA approved facility is most appropriate.

I think Mr Sappelli raises a number of important issues in his letter. Firstly, I was under the impression that Hollywood Private Hospital was supposed to give priority to veterans, and I am surprised that he was refused admission. Hollywood Private Hospital has a very good reputation amongst the veteran community, and I can fully understand

why a veteran would want to go to Hollywood hospital.

Secondly, the issue that Mr Sappelli raises in relation to veterans needing private health cover is certainly one which is causing concern to many veterans, given the demise of the gold card. Indeed, what would have happened had Mr Sappelli not had private health cover? Traditionally, in this nation, veterans who have Department of Veterans' Affairs accepted war caused disabilities or illness have had those conditions treated at the expense of DVA. In recent years, however, our nation appears to be turning its back on the proper care of veterans. Many veterans are now faced with the dilemma of whether or not they should take out private health cover to ensure they get treatment for conditions accepted as war caused. What a disgraceful situation this is!

Are men and women who have served this nation and who have suffered medical conditions as a result of that service no longer entitled to have those conditions treated through DVA? When did this change come about? Has it come about by way of government policy change or by way of sheer neglect of our duty of care to our nation's veterans? I suspect it is the latter.

I say that because many veterans will now tell you that accessing medical care with the use of a DVA card—gold or white—is becoming increasingly difficult, and this is a situation that the government must address. Why should Australia's ageing veterans have to carry the cost of their own medical care, and why should they be forced to accept second-rate treatment by this nation when they gave the nation first-class service in the prime of their youth?

I also want to take this opportunity to compliment Blue Ryan, the National President of the TPI Association, for his dedication to the cause of his members and for his

personal commitment to Australia's sick, ageing and disabled veterans and T&PIs and their families. I know the issue I have raised here today is one of great concern to Blue Ryan and his members because it goes to the heart of their wellbeing. I say to Blue Ryan: Blue, keep up the good work. I call on the veteran community to get behind the likes of Blue Ryan and Tim McCombe and Graham Walker from the Vietnam Veterans Federation and be prepared to unite and fight to restore the principle of proper medical care for our veterans.

Next year we will have numerous celebrations to mark the 90th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli and the 60th anniversary of the ending of World War II. I just want to pose this question: how can we possibly mark these significant hallmarks of our history with any integrity or sincerity at a time when we are downgrading medical care for our ageing veteran community? Mr Sappelli said that this is a matter of principle. It is indeed a matter of principle, and while I know that the current minister is only new in the job I call on her to redress this serious and disgraceful situation as a matter of priority.

In conclusion, we in this nation have had a very strong commitment over a long period of time to the men and women of this nation who have gone overseas and served this nation in the armed forces and who in so doing—usually in the prime of their life—have ultimately paid a heavy penalty in later years as a result in terms of their health due to the impact of war caused disabilities and war caused illnesses. It is not good enough for this nation to now turn its back on those servicemen and their families, particularly as many of those service men and women are now ageing and in greater need of care and medical support than at any other time of their life.

Sunshine Coast Regional Organisation of Councils

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher (5.01 p.m.))—I rise today to salute the work being carried out by the Sunshine Coast Regional Organisation of Councils, generally known as SunROC. I have long been on the record as supporting the amalgamation of the City of Caloundra, the Shire of Noosa and the Shire of Maroochy so that the Sunshine Coast would be able to portray itself as a strong, united region and be best able to advertise the wonderful opportunities we have in our area. Also, if we were one local authority we would be able to deal with all levels of government in a very effective way. Having said that, at this point in time we do not have one council on the Sunshine Coast, so SunROC, although somewhat of a halfway house, is doing an excellent job in the interim.

SunROC is a voluntary regional organisation of councils for the Sunshine Coast, with the three local authorities I mentioned a moment ago as its members. SunROC places an emphasis on the development of infrastructure to underpin the growth of the Sunshine Coast region economically, socially and environmentally. SunROC has a specific role, function and purpose. It is the pre-eminent government liaison organisation for the regional interests of the City of Caloundra and the shires of Maroochy and Noosa. Through sensible and proactive lobbying and council cooperation, SunROC aims for the Sunshine Coast to have the best physical infrastructure of any region in Australia. Achieving that excellent level of physical infrastructure will in turn create the highest standards of economic, environmental and social infrastructure for the region and the best quality of life for citizens of the Sunshine Coast.

The chairmanship of SunROC is rotated between the three mayors. The current chairman is Councillor Don Aldous, Mayor

of the City of Caloundra, and in May 2002 SunROC appointed its first executive director, Mr Graeme Pearce, to manage the organisation.

SunROC has recently released three groundbreaking studies which will outline key strategies to manage future growth throughout the Sunshine Coast region. The three commissioned studies include regional economic development, the knowledge economy and land transportation—SunTran. The Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy is designed to provide a clear direction for the future by documenting coordinated action plans that promote and facilitate regional prosperity. The study identifies priorities to encourage investment and employment growth while ensuring that the region's unique attributes are protected and capitalised upon for all sections of the Sunshine Coast community, especially small and home based businesses and professional and other service providers, as well as all forms of entrepreneurial and export business activity. The aim is the very achievable creation of 30,000 sustainable jobs in the region over the next 25 years.

The knowledge economy strategy responds to a core element of the economic development strategy: knowledge industry employment growth. Future economic prosperity for Australia as a whole, and not least the Sunshine Coast, will rely on this important sector. Most local industries around Australia, but particularly the knowledge based industries, are increasingly advised to coordinate within regional clusters to maximise opportunities and outcomes. If these local industries are to transform themselves into regional industry clusters then the following issues need to be addressed and provided for: research support, skills development and supportive physical infrastructure. An important part of SunROC's studies has focussed on the practical aspects of SunROC provid-

ing support to the public sector in the areas of research and skills development and also focussing on potentially assisting the research of tertiary institutions.

Regional physical infrastructure is the focus of the third of SunROC's groundbreaking studies. The transportation, or SunTran, study is one of the first steps towards addressing regional transport issues on the Sunshine Coast. SunTran is the first major transport study for the region. Its completion will provide transport strategies that are absolutely vital to the future of the Sunshine Coast. Some of the key issues and findings that were identified in stage 1 of the SunTran study include that car travel is the dominant mode of transport on the Sunshine Coast—by 79 per cent; that the current share of scheduled public transport is only around one per cent of travel, which falls significantly below the overall public transport mode share target for south-east Queensland of 6.5 per cent of all trips by 2011; that a significant change in public transport investment strategy and policy measures by the Queensland state government would be required to achieve a material impact on the amount of private vehicle use; and that enhancing the cycle and pedestrian network would provide a platform towards decreasing the dominance of private motor vehicle use.

But the key issue identified that underpins all of the above is that, for the population of the Sunshine Coast region and its demographic, there is a low level of public transport provided by the Beattie state government. Stage 2 of SunROC's land transportation study will review the variety of transport options available to the region, and stage 3 will cover a raft of recommendations of which I sincerely hope the Queensland state government will closely take note. Both are expected to be completed by mid-2005.

I would also like to underline the fact that each of the three studies outlined above are part of the project known as Vision 2025—the Sunshine Coast Economic Development and Integrated Transport Strategy Project. The project has been supported by funding from the Australian government under our very successful Regional Partnerships program. The three studies also have the support of the three local councils of Caloundra City and the Maroochy and Noosa shires. I mentioned the chairman of SunROC, Don Aldous, who is also Mayor of Caloundra City Council; also involved are Councillor Bob Abbot, the mayor of Noosa, and Councillor Joe Natoli, the mayor of Maroochy.

The councils, together with SunROC, will work collaboratively with the Australian government on the outcomes of these studies. It is also expected and hoped that the Queensland state government, tertiary institutions and the private sector will become closely involved with the strategic project to further develop investment and growth in the Sunshine Coast and region without compromising the unequalled and enviable lifestyle that residents currently enjoy.

I therefore publicly call on the Queensland Beattie government to assist SunROC with the coordination and implementation of this strategy, in line with other recently completed strategic work in the regional area. It is essential that we get the strategic action plan for the future development of the Sunshine Coast region absolutely right and that it is efficiently implemented. With record numbers of new residents moving to Queensland's south-east region each month, it is crucial that at this time, at this stage, we envisage the physical, social and economic development of the region correctly and appropriately.

I understand that, to this end, it is proposed that an overseeing committee within

SunROC be established that will take carriage of the overseeing of the following tasks: to agree on the top 10 most important regional strategies to be implemented over the next three years and to review the progress of these actions at each stage; to work with the Queensland Office of Urban Management on the implementation of the South East Queensland Regional Plan; to ensure that adequate resources are allocated from all levels of government to these projects; and, as is always necessary with such organisations with strategic plans, to coordinate advocacy for the region and to assist member organisations with the government and community liaison activities, primarily by building stronger partnerships with Queensland state and Australian government representatives to ensure the ongoing partnership among the three tiers of government. I therefore commend the excellent work that these three studies by SunROC represent and contribute towards the future prosperity and sustainability of the Sunshine Coast and region.

As I said before, with so much population and economic growth in the region and with so much interest in the Sunshine Coast from around Australia and around the world, the future that we imagine must be strategically developed and appropriately, intelligently and sensitively implemented. Any failure in judgment may have serious consequences in the decades to come and for future generations. All levels of government representing the Sunshine Coast have a responsibility to ensure the future sustainability of lifestyle and economic progress. I would like to commend the role carried out by Mr Tony Long, a Sunshine Coast businessman, with respect to what SunROC is currently achieving.

In conclusion, I am very pleased to say that the Australian government have taken our share of the responsibility seriously and have worked in partnership with SunROC

and its member organisations. We will continue to do so. All the relevant government members—I am one of them—from each sphere must ensure that we continue to get on board with these strategies so that we may together achieve an even better future for the Sunshine Coast.

**Aviation: Sydney (Kingsford Smith)
Airport**

Mr ANDREN (Calare) (5.11 p.m.)—I rise today to grieve for the future of regional air services in this country and specifically the treatment of our biggest regional airline, Regional Express, in its efforts to secure fair, reasonable and competitive access to facilities at Sydney's monopoly-owned Kingsford Smith airport. I know my concerns are shared by others in this place, especially my colleagues from regional and rural electorates.

In early November this year, the Regional Air Summit 2004 was held in Canberra. The summit was attended by interested parties from business, government, the airlines and the airports. I was not able to attend the summit, but I did make a submission for its consideration delivered by my senior staffer as an observer, largely based on the inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services, of which I was a member, into regional air services in this country.

The committee's report, *Regional aviation and island transport services: making ends meet*, was tabled in October-November last year. At recommendation 22, the committee urged the Commonwealth government to retain its current measures to ensure regional airlines have access to Sydney airport and other capital city airports. I stated in my submission that, on reflection of industry trends since the tabling of the *Making ends meet* report, it might have been advisable for the committee to have qualified this recom-

mendation to ensure fully competitive access to Sydney and other capital city airports.

Smooth connections and adequate facilities are important for business travellers and tourists alike. My colleague the member for Riverina emphasised the importance of access for regional carriers to the major airports in her address to the summit, describing Sydney airport as a gateway to her electorate and rural Australia as a whole, which indeed it is. The summit, chaired by former Minister for Transport and Regional Development John Sharp, resolved:

Provision should be made in legislation for fair, reasonable and competitive access of airlines to landing, airside terminal and landside facilities in all Australian Airports.

The summit also resolved that, in the event of an access dispute, there should be a legislated independent mechanism for review and resolution.

Certainly, Regional Express, our largest regional carrier, could benefit from such legislation. Rex, as the airline is known, has been served notice to vacate its gate, gate 39, by 30 November—that is tomorrow. To further complicate this situation, the business lounge at gate 39 that Rex has used since it began operations has been leased to a competitor airline for 17 years. This is despite public comment by Sydney Airports Corporation CEO Max Moore-Wilton to central west New South Wales's local ABC that Rex could keep its lounge if it wanted to. Rex has occupied gate 39 and its lounge since the collapse of Ansett on a nominal lease of \$1 per annum to maintain regional air services in what was then a difficult environment for all airlines, let alone a new regional carrier.

Rex has grown into a commercially viable airline, turning an operating profit of just over \$1 million last year. It carries half a million passengers a year on some 80 flights a day and has almost 2,000 lounge members

and corporate clients making use of its facilities for business travellers. Regional Express was more than willing and able to enter into a commercial lease arrangement to retain the facilities that have been an integral part of its growth to date and are very much part of its business plan for the future.

As events transpired, Rex did not get the opportunity to put in a tender to retain those facilities. Despite its efforts to negotiate equivalent facilities since February this year, Rex has only managed to achieve some certainty about its gate and lounge facilities this morning, after a lot of heartache, negotiation and, indeed, stonewalling at times by the Sydney Airports Corporation, which has offered Rex exclusive use of gate 47. Rex has also successfully come to an arrangement with Virgin Blue and the SACL to extend its use of the gate 39 business lounge for three months while a new lounge is being constructed.

While all this is a welcome development, coming late in the day, Rex has only been offered a three-year tenure on its new gate and lounge at this stage. The uncertainty surrounding access arrangements that Rex has endured since February is not something the airline wants to go through every few years. The downgrading of Rex's gate and facilities would have had a negative impact on the airline's operations, with increased congestion from a shared gate, the need to bus all its passengers to aircraft, and increased staffing costs due to the need to operate on two levels of the terminal with a lounge 400 metres away from the departure gate. Further, if Rex had not reached a satisfactory arrangement today for continued use of the lounge, it would not have been able to meet its contractual obligations to its lounge members and corporate clients. According to the airline, this would have resulted in the withdrawal of the Canberra-Sydney service at the very least.

These are real risks for all regional airlines and underline the need for a close regulatory watch on the domestic airline industry and the new airport ownership regime. The key regional player, with an operating profit of over \$1 million and showing every sign of healthy growth into the future, was at risk of being severely marginalised—and, I would suggest, is still at risk of long-term marginalisation—by the apparent unwillingness of the owners of Sydney airport to negotiate a lease for it to retain its facilities on a long-term basis. With Australia's largest regional airline under such pressure, I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the Commonwealth government adopting the recommendations of the Regional Air Summit 2004 in regard to access to capital city airports. I also stress the recommendation of that parliamentary report adding that there must be fully competitive access, not just access, to ensure we do not have the emergence of a dominant two in the domestic airline industry in this country, with the rest pushed to the fringes with no capacity to grow or take on the larger airlines at some point.

The summit resolved that there must a legislative solution to the access issue and an immediate review of what constitutes fair, reasonable and competitive access. Professor Warren Pengilley argued very forcibly that there is a case for legislation to guarantee fair and competitive access to not only Sydney airport but other capital city airports. One issue he raised was that section 46 of the Trade Practices Act, dealing with misuse of market power, does not apply to access situations, because the airlines and the airports are not actually competitors. Further, guaranteeing fair access in legislation could well be regarded not as anticompetitive but as having procompetitive benefits encouraging regional players and delivering considerable benefits to regional and rural areas.

This was supported by a paper delivered to the summit by National Economics, which found regional aviation to be vital for the social and economic wellbeing of regional communities. Indeed, communities with regular air services enjoy economic growth almost double that of those communities without such services. These regional services would also be served by the establishment of an aviation ombudsman, as recommended by the summit. The ombudsman would be charged to investigate and mediate in disputes between aviation industry players. In a complex regulatory environment which is becoming increasingly cutthroat, I can only agree with the summit that an ombudsman similar to the office created for the telecommunications industry is a common-sense and proactive measure for the aviation industry. The recommendations of the summit provide what would be a working framework to improve the viability of regional services for rural and regional Australia, and I urge the Minister for Transport and Regional Services to support their adoption by the parliament under the guidance of the government.

Indigenous Affairs: Palm Island

Mr LINDSAY (Herbert) (5.20 p.m.)—The shocking events of last Friday on Palm Island in North Queensland underscore a dysfunctional community in disarray, a community that has to be helped. In all of the words that have been said and written about the riot on Palm Island, I have not been able to find any talk about the real solution that has to be faced. This is a community of 42 different tribes that has lost its cultural heritage and will continue to spiral downwards if Indigenous leaders and governments do not face this core problem. With 86 years of experience, just how long is it going to take all Australians to conclude that Palm Island is not viable, and never will be, while it sits as an out of sight, out of mind, welfare-

dependent community? It will remain a community where alcoholism, domestic violence, drugs, health problems, unemployment, housing, sense of self-worth and literacy standards may be the worst in the country.

The 42 tribes and their leaders on the island have had ample time to do something about the hopelessness that pervades the community. They have had more than enough money, yet nothing changes, year after year. Since 1998, when I came to understand Palm Island, I have been supporting an integrationist model—a model that has worked well on the mainland. There are 8,000 Indigenous Australians in my electorate of Lindsay, the majority living in the cities of Townsville and Thuringowa. Those on the mainland do not share the lack of self-esteem, the domestic violence, the lack of job opportunities, the lack of housing and the poor education that typify the Palm Island community.

Premier Beattie's five-point plan, announced yesterday when he went to the island, has to be seen for what is—a recipe for more of the same. The Indigenous people of Palm Island do aspire to be better, and I believe that the key to that is the current review of the Queensland government Aboriginal Land Act. I strongly support making changes to land tenure on Palm Island. It is the key to improving the self-esteem of islanders and to bringing about local integration. It will provide an opportunity for economic participation and home ownership; something islanders cannot even dream about under the deed of grant in trust tenure. Presently islanders cannot own their own home or their own land, so they do not have any equity and cannot get a business loan.

The Queensland government will say, 'This is all too difficult,' and ask, 'How would we ever handle freeholding the town-

ship areas? How would we ever handle the tenure on the balance of the island?' But I remind the Queensland government of two things: firstly, failure to act will see Palm Island stay the way it is and, secondly, Aboriginal people I talk to want this to happen. The most costly mistake that we could make now would be to continue to think that the provision of infrastructure and the introduction of a coordinated program delivery strategy on Palm Island will solve the social, political, cultural and economic issues impacting upon the residents there.

I remind the House of the history of Palm Island. The settlement was established in 1918 as a government reserve under the 1897 Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act. This enabled local police protectors throughout Queensland to remove Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to reserves. Palm Island was established in the early days as an Aboriginal penal settlement. That is how representatives of some 42 tribes came to be taken to the island and to form the core of the problem that we have today.

Following last Friday's riots no-one misunderstands the need for the community to undertake a whole lot of healing, and the government cannot do that for the community. We understand that the islanders need to deal with their historical issues and that governments need to look differently at how we do business with the island community. For the government's part, we can get our systems operating better and our service systems sorted out, but the answer is not in plane loads of bureaucrats going to Palm Island trying to interfere with the rebuilding of the community. Unfortunately, Palm Island does not have the cultural authority of traditional owners that is found in other communities. This is the result of its history. It is an artificial community. People have lost their way. Young people these days have no

idea where they have come from or what their culture is.

In the immediate term I am concerned about the influx of strangers who are now arriving daily on the island and what they will bring to the community. This is not a time for radicalism. Out of respect for Mr Doomadgee's family, I ask that people remain calm. I am encouraged that the Australian government's new arrangements for the disbandment of ATSIC will see many problems in Indigenous affairs sorted out. There has been a welcome response from Indigenous leaders, but governments can only do so much. In the end the community needs to do a lot more.

Over the years there have been many reports on the conditions of Palm Island and what to do about them. They reaffirm time and time again that the way forward must recognise the contemporary issues facing Aboriginal people, that they are linked to history and that any response needs to address that history. Residents of Palm Island have said on many occasions that the lack of an economic base and limited employment opportunities perpetuate the continued dependence on governments for funding of basic services. This results in residents who find themselves living below the poverty line in inadequate housing with minimal support services. Most residents resent this situation and see economic development as the only means of breaking the welfare cycle. This is why I believe that the integration model I have rearticulated today is the only way forward for islanders to be able to live a decent life free from the scourge of Third World conditions.

I have been travelling to Palm Island for nine years. I despair when I go there and I see the way that the people live: garbage strewn about the main town centre, homes that are destroyed, four families living in one

home, alcoholism and domestic violence—and on it goes. We have to change it. We have a responsibility as community leaders to articulate the way to change. As much as many islanders will perhaps say that this is pretty radical, it is the only way it is going to change. Otherwise, we will be here in 100 years time and it will still be the same.

I certainly would like to see the integration of Palm Island into mainstream Australia as the way forward. I do not ever again want to see headlines such as the one we saw in Saturday's *Townsville Bulletin* which said, 'Palm Island Explodes. Police station, court-house torched'. I do not ever want to see headlines such as we have seen today on ABC News Online: 'Angry scenes at Palm Is court hearing'. It was a disgraceful situation. The media tell me that even on the mainland in the court they were concerned for their safety. This is Australia. This is no place for the violence that has erupted in the north in the last few days. There is no place for future violence. I certainly hope that the Aboriginal leaders know and understand that.

The coalition government believe Indigenous Australians, wherever they live, should have the same opportunities as other Australians to make informed choices about their lives, to realise their full potential in whatever they choose to do and to take responsibility for managing their own affairs. In that sense, we will spend thousands of millions of dollars in the coming financial year on Indigenous specific programs. While much has been achieved, Australians all want better results. We can get better results. I encourage the Palm Island community to think deeply about a new land tenure model which will see an integration into mainstream Australia and stop the terrible dysfunctional community that currently exists 70 kilometres north-west of Townsville.

Regional Services: Program Funding

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (5.30 p.m.)—Mr Deputy Speaker Beazley, I congratulate you on your first appearance as Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. K.C. Beazley)—I got it for free, mate; don't worry about me!

Mr WINDSOR—I grieve today, and I call for a parliamentary inquiry—preferably a Senate inquiry—into the various allegations that I made in this House last Wednesday night and into the broader implications of government funding and political preconditions that are being placed on various packages of government funding, particularly Regional Partnerships program arrangements. There was some cross-examination during question time today relating to that particular issue.

I think it is very important that a number of things be placed on record in terms of the Australian Federal Police inquiry into the allegations and the people that have been named recently and in terms of the much broader issue of funding arrangements, ministerial ethics, the rights of a member of parliament to represent, and the various political conditions that are being placed on financial arrangements through the Regional Partnerships program.

The date 20 September is very clear in my memory, because it is the day that the funeral was conducted for the Independent member for Dubbo. He was a good friend of mine. I am pleased to see the member for Parkes in the chamber, because he, like me, will be celebrating the victory of the new member for Dubbo, Dawn Fardell. I am delighted that she had a very good win in the Dubbo by-election last Saturday. On my way back from Tony McGrane's funeral on 20 September, I was phoned by various media people from Canberra. It had become public knowledge

that I had been approached by an intermediary for two political players with a view to requesting me to vacate the premises as the member for New England. That was the first day that particular issue became public. The next day—or it may have been the day after—the Australian Labor Party referred it to the Australian Electoral Commission and on to the AFP for investigation as a breach of the Electoral Act under the bribery provisions.

At no stage did I mention any names. In fact, at that stage I refused to mention names, because I saw it as a piece of political stupidity. That night, there were a number of abusive phone calls made to a number of people. Some of them were from one Greg Maguire, who was subsequently—after my speech last Wednesday—recognised as the man who was the intermediary. It was obvious at that stage that Mr Maguire had recognised himself as the messenger, even though no-one had been named. A few days later, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, made a phone call to Mr Maguire. The message conveyed in that phone call was, ‘Get your mate to pull back’—remember that this was in the middle of an election campaign—‘this is bigger than all of us.’ Some would ask, quite rightly, how I know that. I know it because Greg Maguire told me that the Deputy Prime Minister had rung him.

These are the sorts of facts that need to come out in an inquiry. They could not come out in the AFP inquiry because that inquiry was very narrow, in that it looked at a breach of the Electoral Act, and the questioning was very narrow. It was based on one conversation and the various witnesses to that conversation. I was not at all surprised when the AFP found that there was not a *prima facie* case to answer in terms of proceeding to a criminal charge. As I mentioned in my speech last Wednesday night, up until that time John Anderson had spent a lot of time in

my electorate. After that, he was very rarely there; I think he came back on one occasion. He went off to places further north—mainly the electorate of Kennedy.

The broader issues that I spoke about earlier are the preconditions for funding—the political benefit as opposed to the public good. I will not go through them this afternoon, but they have been outlined on the *7.30 Report* and Lenore Taylor had a good article in the *Financial Review* last week. That was essentially about a whole range of Regional Partnerships programs that have been abused in some sense—not in terms of the benefits or multiplier effect of some of those programs. I think the equine centre is a classic example. It is a great program and I am glad it is funded, but there were political preconditions put on in a number of these cases. Another example is the University of New England cash for comment scandal that occurred some months ago in my electorate. There are other examples in other electorates across Australia.

I call on the parliament, particularly the Senate, to conduct an inquiry into these matters. There are some very broad matters relating to not only the bribery issue but also the broader issue of political compromise in relation to the funding of particular Regional Partnerships packages. At that inquiry, the people who were witnesses to the various events that I discussed last week are quite willing to present their evidence and to be cross-examined. For the life of me, I cannot work out why Mr Anderson and Senator Sandy Macdonald are afraid of an inquiry. If I am the one who has wronged in this particular issue, as they keep claiming, why not barbecue me on the floor of some inquiry and pull me to pieces? Why are they afraid of having an inquiry into this incident? Why are they afraid of the truth? Why do they hide behind that very narrow interpretation of the AFP? They may well have known

about that result before the AFP came out. I do not know that. But I do know, as one who was interviewed, that it was a very narrow inquiry into a section of the Electoral Act. Are they prepared to make their phone records available? Is the Deputy Prime Minister prepared to make his phone records from that period of time available? I am quite prepared to make available my records which will trace the phone calls I made. Is the Deputy Prime Minister willing to make those phone call records available?

Another issue that has come to light in the last week is that of the Bundarra Grace Munro aged care facility. It goes to the heart of this issue and the right of the MP to carry out his job. I wrote to the aged care minister some time ago, inviting her to open the Grace Munro aged care facility. She wrote back suggesting that she could not be there but that Senator Macdonald would be her representative. A draft program was put out with a number of official parties, some of whom were to speak, of which I was one. I have had quite a bit to do with this project. I received a letter on Friday from Robert Fulcher—who in my view is a very good general manager—of Uralla Shire Council, the hosts of this particular function. They deserve great credit for the work they have put in. Robert Fulcher wrote:

Dear Tony,

The Commonwealth government has advised that its representative—

the name is not written here but Senator Macdonald is the representative—

has advised that its representative at the official opening of the Grace Munro Centre does not wish for you to be part of the official party or the official speeches. The mayor, Councillor Ron Filmer, has asked me to tell you that he regrets to advise you that the council will need to comply with the government's wishes.

I think that goes to the heart of this very issue. I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr WINDSOR—I also seek leave to table the cash for comment documents in relation to the University of New England and the preconditions that were placed on the announcement of that funding and subsequent political ramifications associated with the University of New England.

Leave granted.

Mr WINDSOR—I will not have time to go through that particular part of the issue. In conclusion, I would ask the parliament not to be afraid of inquiring into this issue. There are much broader ramifications of this than the issues that I raised last week. The issue of truth was raised last week, and the truth has not yet been told. I think that one of the major jobs of this parliament, and particularly the Senate, is to spend time on ascertaining the truth, and to allow the witnesses to those conversations—and others who have been privy to various funding arrangements and preconditions across Australia—the opportunity to put their cases, to be cross-examined and to be torn apart if that is what is required. As I said earlier, why are Senator Macdonald and Deputy Prime Minister Anderson afraid of the truth of this issue? (*Time expired*)

Regional Services: Program Funding

Mr JOHN COBB (*Parkes—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services*) (5.40 p.m.)—What we have today is a further attempt by the member for New England to discredit the process of commitments under Regional Partnerships during an election campaign. In fact, it is an attempt to discredit the Regional Partnerships process.

The normal assessment process, which he could find out about quite easily if he wanted to, revolves around two different criteria. When a commitment is made in a very normal way during an election it is made on the

basis that it is a project that will achieve those things which Regional Partnerships set out to do: to help that area either in a social way or in an economic way. The social outcomes we look for are things like medical centres, which will have a prolonged, sustainable benefit for the region. In terms of economic outlook, we are looking to create jobs. If it is an election promise then—as I am sure the member for New England is totally aware—it still has to go through due process and it still has to meet the criteria for government programs.

The motivation we have here—and I will go into that a little later—of the member for New England is not about the Regional Partnerships program; it is a totally political motivation. The normal practice, the procedure by which regional partnerships happen during election campaigns, is to make that commitment that due diligence will be done following the election—before the project is funded and before it is signed off. Then it is finally approved; it is a straightforward, open and totally accountable process for communities and regions. As I said, it is about delivering economic growth and sustainable, long-term community outcomes. This government is very proud of the record of regional partnerships. There probably has never been a better program to help communities which have problems of isolation or lack of funding.

This is an attempt by the member for New England to get himself out of a hole. He mentioned just a while ago that during the election he made an attack on the person who is probably second to none in this parliament for his reputation for integrity, honesty and trustworthiness. So strong is his reputation that the media and even the opposition know full well that the Acting Prime Minister is not subject to acts of corruption or acts of bribery and is probably the most honest person in this House. He is, without

doubt, a paragon of propriety and integrity, and I have no doubt the member for New England is well aware of that, but he made allegations off the cuff to the media during the election and then tried to laugh it off when he realised he had perhaps started something he could not stop. When the Labor Party then demanded that the AFP look into it, he thought, 'How do I get out of this?' What he did then was to go on the attack. He picked the wrong person to attack. When he really fell flat on his face was, first, when the person he alleged to be the carrier of this alleged corruption refuted it in the open in Tamworth and then again when, lo and behold, the AFP looked at the situation and said there was no case to answer.

What was the member for New England to do at that point? He had made a fool of himself; he suddenly realised that the media—everybody—knew he was attacking a man who nobody believed for one second was guilty of any of the things that the member for New England accused him of. What did he do then? He decided, 'I'll attack Regional Partnerships. I'll try to make out that there's a corrupt political basis by which these are done.' There is no political or corrupt basis involved here. It is a very straightforward, clear process by which these programs are put forward and signed off. They are done by an area consultative committee, a department and the proponent themselves.

If you look at the way in which these projects are put around Australia, they go to opposition seats, they go to independent seats and, yes, they go to government seats. Probably the main reason why the majority of the projects go to government seats is that most regional seats are held by the coalition government. So I think mathematics proves that what should happen does happen.

I think that what the member for New England has done in attacking one of the

better programs the government has ever come up with—simply because he was trying, under privilege of the House, to attack a man whose integrity has never been questioned—is probably one of the lowest things I have ever seen in three years in this House. That is why he is in trouble: he did it and he knows it was wrong. I think the constituents of New England have a lot of questions to ask a member who, instead of doing his job in representing them and trying to get projects for them, has stooped to attacking the Acting Prime Minister, who, as I have said and will repeat in any forum, has an integrity that is respected by everyone in this House, with the possible exception of a couple of independents.

I have to say, too, that in this last week the member for Calare has questioned the propriety of the Regional Partnerships program. I find that strange. I find it strange that he and, in some sense, the member for New England are aware of the program at all. The Acting Prime Minister, the parliamentary secretary previously assisting the Minister for Transport and Regional Services and me, in the short time I have been in this role, have never seen one letter of support from either the member for New England or the member for Calare for any Regional Partnerships program in their electorates. I think they would be far better off to get around, look after their electorates, support their ACC and support the proponents who are looking for projects to help their communities either socially or economically, rather than try to bring down somebody whose integrity has never before been questioned in his 15 or 16 years in this House.

I suggest that the member for New England and the member for Calare go back to their electorates and do their jobs. That is what the member for New England would do if he were going to be serious after pulling one of the lowest acts we are ever likely to

see in this place—using parliamentary privilege and not waiting for the finding of the AFP when he could have quite easily done so; but, no, he wanted to get out there and try and besmirch someone whose reputation he can only aspire to.

I have to say that rural and regional Australia is very well served by a program which has stood the test of some 18 months. Like its predecessor, the Regional Solutions Program, it is delivering to country Australia. It is a great pity that one member in particular is putting a desire to see himself on the front pages of newspapers over the top of decency and over the top of a program which has already helped his electorate some nine times in the last 18 months and helped Australia to the tune of over \$100 million so far.

I will mention one other thing, which the member for Calare was talking about during this debate: regional aviation. This government has done an incredible amount to help regional aviation, including capping landing charges at Sydney airport, quarantining landing slots, exempting small regional airlines like Rex from en route air traffic control charges and subsidising regional charges. Rex airlines itself acknowledges that without this government's assistance there would be no Rex. This government will look at the recommendations of the regional aviation summit, but it is wrong to suggest, as the member for Calare does, that all problems can be fixed by more and more regulation.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Corporations and Financial Services

Committee

Appointment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. K.C. Beazley)—Mr Speaker has received a message from the Senate concurring with the resolutions of the House and transmitting a proposed variation to paragraph (a) of the

resolution of appointment of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services.

Ordered that the message be considered at the next sitting.

Joint Committees

Appointment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. K.C. Beazley)—Mr Speaker has received a message from the Senate concurring with the resolutions of the House relating to the appointment of the following joint committees:

Australian Crime Commission;

Electoral Matters;

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade;

Migration;

National Capital and External Territories;

Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund; and

Treaties.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (5.52 p.m.)—Mr Deputy Speaker Beazley, may I say what a privilege it is to see you in this august position.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. K.C. Beazley)—You may say that anytime you like.

Mr SNOWDON—Congratulations on your elevation. I am sure you will continue to use your experience and that you will do this job with a great deal of professionalism and aplomb.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Thank you very much.

Mr SNOWDON—I am looking forward to the wise decisions which you will make.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—That is right, and I will sack you at the drop of the hat if you give me any trouble at all.

Mr SNOWDON—Prior to the debate being interrupted, I was privileged to be in the chamber at the end of the contribution from new member for Wentworth. I received a standing ovation as I stood up—or at least I thought I did. But then it dawned for me that it really was for the member for Wentworth and what he had to say and that the 400 invited guests who had come down from Sydney to hear his speech were not, in fact, applauding me—which was a great disappointment to me—but him. I am not disillusioned, however, because I know they are still around and there is time for conversion.

I did point out to them, and I hope they go back to the electorate of Wentworth knowing, that there is a very valid expectation on my behalf and that of others on this side of the chamber that the member for Wentworth will occupy that seat he sits on on that side of the chamber for only a short time, three years, and then, unless the government determines it wants to have an election before then, we will see the member for Wentworth experience the vagaries—if I might describe it in that way—of the opposition benches. I am sure he will have a long and successful political career, but I hope that the electors of Wentworth will not be too disappointed when he is not in government after the next election.

I want to raise some issues about the election result and in particular the result in my own electorate. I described my electorate in my previous short contribution. I compared it to the member for Wentworth's electorate. I do not know the area of the Wentworth electorate, perhaps the clerks could tell me, but I suspect it is less than 100 square kilometres; perhaps it is a lot less than that. My own electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker, as you well

know, is diverse, disparate, dispersed and 1.34 million square kilometres. It comprises Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean, with which you are familiar, and all of the area of the Northern Territory except Darwin and Palmerston. A major element of the electorate of Lingiari is that in excess of 40 per cent of its constituents are Indigenous Australians. It is a unique electorate in that respect, if for no other reason; but its geography and demography make it unique in any event.

I want to thank the people of Lingiari for endorsing me again as their representative in this chamber. I would point out that I am one of the few people on this side of the chamber who achieved a reasonably significant swing. I am now sitting on almost 58 per cent—57.7 per cent—which is, for me, a reasonable luxury compared with the margin I have been used to. From my own perspective, it was a significant result. In the seven elections I have now contested, this is the first time I have won the vote in Alice Springs. It is significant that, of the 24 static booths in the electorate, I achieved swings in 18. Across the 270 mobile polling places our average vote was 79 per cent, almost 80 per cent, and that itself was a swing to us. In any event, it showed the confidence not only of the people in the bush and remote communities but also of people in the towns who voted for us and gave us their support. I am very grateful and, indeed, thankful for it.

I want to thank all of those people who contributed to the campaign—the campaign workers, the volunteers, my family and all the others, too many to name, who make an election possible in terms of a candidate's success or otherwise. It is absolutely true in my case that without the work of dedicated volunteers, many of whom took in this last election more than a week off work to do the mobile polling, I would not win. It is just physically impossible to get around and do

all the things you need to do with the turnout to a poll. It is a taxing exercise in the electorate and I would never be successful were it not for the commitment of those people, and I want to place on the record my thanks to them.

But I also want to point out that the people of Lingiari had a very good reason not to vote for the government. Part of that was our positive plan and vision for Northern Australia. It is clear that they wanted major improvements in infrastructure. They wanted and still want the government to keep Telstra in majority public ownership and to force Telstra to focus on the telecommunications needs of remote towns and communities.

Again I will juxtapose my electorate with the member for Wentworth's. The telecommunications difficulties that confront people who live in remote Australia are probably incomprehensible to most of the electors of Wentworth. I think this is a problem the Liberal Party has. It is clear that The Nationals understand the implications of this proposed sale of Telstra and are concerned about it. It is a fact that individuals from cockies corner who are members of that party have been brave enough to stand up and say on a number of occasions to the party, 'We don't want you to pursue the full sale of Telstra.' I will be pushing that issue strongly. Whilst the government can argue all it likes about what it believes its mandate might be, I know the directions I have from the people of Lingiari—and they are to oppose vehemently the further sale of Telstra.

Of course, there are other significant issues, such as the shocking state of the Territory's roads. I have raised that in this chamber on many occasions, and I will not go through the details of it now. I will just note that the previous speaker in this place, the member for Parkes, was talking about the statements made about government pork-

barrelling. Let me be very clear that the funding for roads through the last parliament was skewed monumentally towards government electorates. My own electorate, which arguably has the worst roads in Australia, was very underresourced in comparison to those other electorates—and I name particularly the member for Gwydir's electorate, because under the Roads to Recovery program an electorate one-tenth the size of the seat of Lingiari received over twice the funding for roads. There are in the seat of Lingiari 9,000 kilometres of roads on unincorporated land—dirt roads that link small, remote, isolated communities, and at many times during the year, particularly in the wet season, many of these communities cannot use the roads. This compounds the cost of living in these places and places an additional burden on the communities. This is not something the government has thought through, and I maintain the view that this has been an exercise in pork-barrelling. The funding has been skewed. The government has used the formula, but the funding has been skewed monumentally towards government electorates—principally National Party electorates.

Then there is the neglect of public health and bulk-billing. Mr Deputy Speaker Beazley, you live in a very fine city. I imagine that you could drive from your home and within five or six kilometres come to a bulk-billing doctor. In my electorate of 1.4 million square kilometres, there is only one private bulk-billing medical practice in the top end of the Territory. We pay the highest fees for consultations of anywhere in Australia. The average consultation fee is \$52. The minister for health and the government come in here saying what they are doing for the bush. I can tell you what they are not doing: they are not delivering accessible health services—and parents are choosing not to take their children or themselves to the doctor because

they simply cannot afford it, because they do not have access to bulk-billing private medical practices. That is another reason why the community was not going to vote for the government and was pleased to support me.

Then there is the question of schools, both public and private, being resourced at a level which will give kids in the Northern Territory the same learning opportunities as those enjoyed by other Australian children. I will address that issue in another debate in this place which is coming up in the next day or so, because the absolute disadvantage suffered by Indigenous Territorians in terms of public education is largely a direct result of the neglect of governments. I want to make a point about the member for Goldstein's contribution earlier today. I know we are not allowed to interject during members' first speeches, but his very simplistic analysis of the concerns of Indigenous Australia and the need for public policy in Indigenous Australia needs some detailed comment. If I do not have time today, at some later point I will address that in great detail. What it demonstrated was the sort of ignorance that is perpetrated by the conservatives in this country about the state of Indigenous affairs. His comment was—and it is worth while reading this bit:

The chilling fact is that the very fabric of a proud and fascinating culture, many thousands of years in the making, has been brought to its knees in less than 30 years by well-intentioned but seriously misguided policy.

I do not know where this bloke comes from, but he is clearly ignorant of Australian history and has no understanding of the history of Australian public policy, of the concerns and aspirations of Indigenous Australians or of what they have been saying to successive governments over the last 30 years. If he had any knowledge whatsoever, he would say that the reason these people are in such dire poverty is not only because of poor public

policy but also because of the failure to accept the legitimate demands made by Indigenous Australians on the Australian community to have their citizenship rights recognised. One of the real problems is that those citizenship rights are not properly recognised. In many parts of Australia, and certainly in my own electorate, where there is a \$850 million shortage of housing in the bush, where people live 20 or 30 people to a home, and where there are no high schools or employment opportunities, people like the member for Goldstein choose to blame the victims. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you understand that that is a foolish way to go.

I lastly want to address very quickly the question of the redistribution. We had a redistribution before the last election, and it was said that the seat of Lingiari and the seat of Solomon would need to be combined into one seat. As a result of an inquiry by the Joint Committee on Electoral Matters in this place, it was agreed to make a recommendation that they should look at the way in which the quota was applied to ensure that the Northern Territory would maintain two seats for the last election. I have had the Parliamentary Library look at the result of the election and what the determination might be for any future redistribution based on the projected population figures for June 2005. Sadly, we have something which deeply concerns me and will come as no surprise because, on the population figures that are being estimated, we will again be facing the prospect of one seat for the whole of the Northern Territory. That will be a tragedy. I note that the member for Solomon is not in the chamber, but let me make it very clear to him that, on the basis of the last election, if you combined the votes of the seats of Solomon and Lingiari I would still be the member for the Northern Territory and the member for Solomon would not be gracing us with his presence.

Mr Kelvin Thomson interjecting—

Mr SNOWDON—That is right. If we go back to one seat, I anticipate he will not be here. So I imagine the government members, and not least the member for Solomon, will be considering ways in which they can secure the two seats. The only way I think they can do it is to guarantee by legislation that the Northern Territory has a minimum of two seats. That is the only way. In my view, they cannot validly argue, using the criteria which are established under the electoral act, that we can fiddle with the statistics in a way which could give us two seats, even though we have grave concerns about the accuracy of that data.

I want to place on the record my deep concern that the possibility of us going back to one seat is really on the agenda. That is something that should challenge the minds of the people of the Northern Territory and indeed the Northern Territory government—which I am sure it will. I can imagine the member for Solomon ferreting away to make sure that he can maintain the two seats. I want the two seats, but I am not afraid of going back to one seat because, if we go back to one seat, there will be one member here, and it will not be him.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SNOWDON—I am pleased to see that I have the support of my colleagues. I am glad they are here. Normally they would not front. I stood up to give this speech and I was applauded. I have come in here and I have a crowd. The gallery is almost full. I have come in here and they are back to support me again. That is a great privilege. *(Time expired)*

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the honourable member for Prospect, I remind honourable members that this is his first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Mr BOWEN (Prospect) (6.08 p.m.)—From the high rises of Fairfield to the farms of Kemps Creek, Prospect is a diverse and exciting community. It is the community that I grew up in, and it has given me enormous opportunities. It is an honour to represent my community in this House as the third member for Prospect.

In 1788 Captain Arthur Phillip and Watkin Tench stood on a hill west of the settlement at Sydney Cove. They agreed that the area that they could see from the hill was fertile and had good prospects. Accordingly, the hill and the region that they surveyed came to be known as Prospect. Governor Phillip was right about the area having good prospects, but I am sure he would not recognise the multicultural city that has developed in its fields. Families who have lived in Prospect for six generations have welcomed recent arrivals who have struggled over oceans to get here and make our area their home.

It is appropriate tonight that I pay tribute to the second member for Prospect, the Hon. Janice Crosio. Janice was a larger than life figure in our electorate. She had a remarkable knack of reading the mood of her constituents and representing their views here in Canberra with a loud, booming voice to make sure that they were heard. I am not Janice Crosio, and I will not attempt to be. I am a different person with a different style. But if I can read the views of the electorate and represent their views here as well as she did over so many years, I will be doing well as a member of this place.

I thank the people of Prospect for their support on 9 October. I said all through the campaign that I did not take their support for granted and that I would be treating the seat like it was marginal. This was not spin and it remains my approach. I do not, and never will, take the support of the people of Prospect for granted, and I will be working to

retain and increase their support over the coming years.

I thank the men and women of Labor—the members of Fairfield, Greystanes, Smithfield and St Clair Colyton branches who worked hard on election day, many of them all day. I am sure the House will not mind me acknowledging just a few people who worked above and beyond the call of duty in the lead-up to the campaign: Rolando Atienza, Rodolfo Dimitui, Ninos Khoshaba, Bill Dumbrell, Gino Coeira, Tim McPhail, Jim Hanna and Albert Mooshi. I also thank the senior vice-president of the New South Wales branch of the ALP, Bernie Riordan, the general secretary, Mark Arbib, and John Azarias, Paul Binsted and Gabbie Trainor for their support. My gratitude also goes to some of my new colleagues who lent me advice and assistance. I thank the Leader of the Opposition, the members for Barton, Perth, Lilley, Hunter, Fowler and Chifley and also Senator Conroy.

My involvement in politics did not begin when the six-week campaign began. I joined the Labor Party 17 years ago and was elected to Fairfield Council in 1995. Over that time, there were three people in particular who have taken every opportunity to support me and to urge me on to eventually become the member for Prospect. I did not need much urging. However, I do very much appreciate the support of Anwar Khoshaba, Claro Cruz and Carl Scully. Three more fiercely loyal individuals you could not hope to meet. Anwar Khoshaba will not mind me saying that he often drives me to distraction with his views on many issues, but I will always appreciate his passionate loyalty to me. The Hon. Carl Scully has also been a constant supporter and confidant over those years. I had the pleasure of being his chief of staff for the last four years. He knows the stresses and strains on somebody who hopes to represent their area in parliament. He has been a

great friend and supporter, and I am glad he could join us in the gallery tonight.

In politics, as in life, personal friends can provide emotional sustenance in the bad times and share the joy in the good times. I have been fortunate to have a group of friends who have been a wonderful support. It is an honour to call them friends. Some of them are political, some very definitely are not. Tonight in my first contribution to this House, I would like to place on record my thanks to Chris Russell, Brent and Tessa Thomas, Charlie Monti, Greg Lozelle, Robert, Peter Presdee, Chris Minns, Anna Collins and Matt Brown.

In addition, there is one other friend I would like to mention. For many years I shared my hopes and aspirations with Ed Husic. We compared notes, we shared disappointments, we celebrated victories and we helped each other. We debated policies and we incubated ideas to improve the lot of Western Sydney. My one regret tonight is that he listens from the gallery and not from the chamber. He will one day join us in this parliament, and Australia will be the better for his contribution.

I of course want to make mention tonight of my parents. Ross and Christine Bowen taught me many things. They taught me not by lessons or homilies but simply by example. They taught me to avoid pretension, to work hard and to do what I believe to be right, regardless of the personal consequences. They tell me they are proud of me, and tonight I tell the House that I am proud of them.

The final person I want to mention tonight is my wife, Rebecca. We met at a New South Wales conference of the Labor Party, but our life has grown to encompass so much more than politics. She has been a wonderful supporter. We are now building a house together in Smithfield, at the foot of Prospect Hill,

and we are soon to bring a little girl into the world. Rebecca has supported my aspirations in every way possible, and I am looking forward to spending the rest of my life with her.

As a new Labor member of this House, I see my role as being a voice for the people who have no other voice in the national political debate. Australia is one of a small number of states throughout the world that is constituted as a Commonwealth. The term 'Commonwealth' was chosen not only to represent that the government was based on the common consent of the people but also to represent those almost unique Australian attributes of fairness and tolerance.

I welcome the debate on moral values in this House and across the country. I am happy to stand behind the moral values of fairness and tolerance, and to argue for them vigorously. I say this about the morals debate: bring it on. It is not enough to talk about family values. Fixing things like the family debt trap, and providing more incentives for people to go from welfare to work, are important too. I am happy to argue that we can be, and must be, an efficient and modern economy which still has fairness and tolerance as the basis of our Commonwealth. We can be a productive economy which has protections built in for people who have been unfairly dismissed. We can be a nation that trades successfully with different nations across the world, but that does not mean we cannot stand up and be counted against abuses of human rights.

We need to create more wealth, and we need to share it fairly amongst the people who have contributed to its creation. I have long had a policy interest in wealth creation through Australia becoming a leading-edge country in the field of research and development. Between 1983 and 1994 our national levels of research and development trebled. In the decade prior to that, research and de-

velopment had been declining, and our levels of R&D are only now returning to the levels that we had when the Keating government lost office. The increase in R&D during the Hawke and Keating years did not just happen. This is one example of where government programs can have a remarkable impact. The 150 per cent research and development concession and the R&D syndication program had a real benefit and a beneficial impact on our levels of research; but more than that, they had a real impact on our economy. We can strengthen our trading position, embracing high value added goods that cushion us against future downturns in our terms of trade.

I am always amazed by the skills the Australian people possess. There is absolutely no reason why we cannot compete with any other country in the world when it comes to our technological skills. Australian research has traditionally been very strong in the fields of environmental science and biology. This stands us in good stead to capitalise on the growth in the emerging field of biotechnology. I fear that an ideological culture that opposes government involvement in the economy may see us miss many more opportunities in this field. We need to support our universities as they incubate talent and ideas.

Recently I was concerned to read of an idea floated by the Minister for Education, Science and Training to establish universities without research departments. A university is not there just to communicate knowledge; it is there to create knowledge. It is there to foster a culture of innovation and excellence in the national interest. And that is not just our traditional universities in the capital cities. Some of the best research universities in the world are not in the capital cities but in the regions. Good research at universities that can be considered amongst the best in the world is not some elite distraction from the main game of the economy; it is essential

for a modern, cutting-edge economy, which Australia can become.

I represent an area of blue- and white-collar workers, farmers and small business people. This nation's industrial relations policy must strike a balance between a modern, highly productive economy and protection for people who are in an unequal bargaining position with their employer—people struggling to find a voice. What we have seen introduced into the industrial relations system over the last eight years has not always meant more choice. I have seen, first-hand, levels of intimidation and an unequal bargaining system which does not promote a more productive and cooperative Australia. I support a decentralised bargaining system that empowers the enterprise—it was, after all, Labor which pioneered this approach—but it must be the enterprise that is empowered, and not one half of the bargaining unit over the other.

I mentioned earlier that I represent in this House many small business owners. In the 12 months leading up to the election, I door-knocked nearly 10,000 houses throughout my electorate. Of course, in that project I came across many small business people. Small business people are working families struggling just like any other working family. Not one small business owner raised with me the need to provide them with an exemption from the unfair dismissal laws. None of them said to me, 'Can I please have the power to sack somebody unfairly?' However, many raised with me the need to reduce the onerous burden of the GST and other paperwork compliance costs. They also raised with me the need for support in their dealings with franchisers and landlords. Many small business owners find themselves in unequal bargaining positions, just like other members of the work force. I include small business people in the category of people struggling to find a voice in the national debate. I will be

paying particular attention to the interests and aspirations of small business people during my time in this House.

Inequity is not just a matter of economics. As mayor of Fairfield, and then as president of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, I spent a lot of time dealing with the concept of 'place'. A community can have its spirit lifted and its quality of life improved by an effort to improve its urban environment. We often hear of our more affluent areas being described as 'leafy', but there is no reason why an area that could never be described as 'affluent' should not be described as 'leafy'. There is no reason why our public spaces and shopping centres cannot be places for cultural enrichment, instead of unattractive and barren wastelands. Our experience in Cabramatta has shown that the urban environment is important. Law enforcement experts have said that the work of Fairfield council in improving place management and the urban amenity has been a vital factor in reducing crime in Cabramatta. Of course, it was not this alone that reduced crime: a very significant police effort has been the main focus. But the Australian people have consistently identified law and order as their major concern, and any steps which make a contribution to reducing crime must be welcomed.

I do not regard this as exclusively a matter for local government. I believe that state and federal governments can do more when it comes to the urban environment. When I was mayor, I saw first-hand how much can be achieved with a relatively small outlay of money, but I also saw how hard it is, for a council struggling with so many commitments, to find that money. This nation desperately needs the re-establishment of a federal department of urban affairs and a return to federal involvement in urban affairs, along the lines of the previous government's successful Better Cities Program.

As to being a voice for those without a voice, I believe a particular obligation falls on me—along with my friend the honourable member for Fowler—as the representative of the most culturally diverse area in Australia. Members of various cultural groups who have settled in the seat of Prospect have taught me more than any textbook ever could about the preciousness of human rights. To talk to someone who has had all three of his daughters executed gives you a very keen appreciation of the need to take a robust approach to human rights. A breach of human rights anywhere is an attack on human rights everywhere. To paraphrase Elie Wiesel: when human rights are under attack we must interfere. As an opposition backbencher, I do not have any illusions that I will be able to make a great material difference in this regard. However, I do want to make this one pledge: I will never be silent. Quiet and diplomatic representations in the corridors of the House will sometimes be the most appropriate way of dealing with a matter. At other times, perhaps, a louder approach will be necessary. Either way, I will not be silent.

Members of all religions or philosophies should be able to practise their beliefs in freedom. I include in this a group like Falun Gong, which has as its creed truth, forbearance and tolerance. They do not deserve to be tortured for espousing such basic beliefs as these. I will not be silent on the unspeakable suffering and heartache that is occurring in the Darfur region of Sudan. This suffering receives almost no attention in the Australian media but it is the biggest humanitarian crisis of the last 10 years. In an area as large as France, 70,000 human beings have lost their lives to a combination of hunger, disease and murder. If an event even 10 per cent as horrendous as this occurred in a Western country we would see massive coverage and massive action from the governments of the world.

Recently in Prospect we have received our latest round of migration refugees from the Sudan. It gives me an enormous sense of pride as I walk around Fairfield to see small Sudanese children in the uniforms of Fairfield Primary School. These children have endured far more in their little lives than most of us will have to endure if we live to old age. Yet, they are relatively lucky; hundreds of thousands of others are not. I will not be silent on human rights in places like Vietnam or Myanmar or anywhere else in the world. To have somebody imprisoned for a crime of 'disrespecting democratic freedoms' for expressing their democratic view is something I can never be silent about. I believe Australia and individual members of this House need to keep open the lines of communication with the governments of all nations. But we must have human rights as our highest priority in these discussions. As a nation we must say: 'Here we stand; we can do no other.'

When my time in this House comes to an end I hope it will be judged to have been a success. The definition of success that I will be applying when I come to judge my time in this House is one that was written a long time ago by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was at one stage Chaplain of the House of Representatives of another commonwealth—that of Massachusetts. These are words that I have found inspiring for a long time and I would like to share them with the House tonight:

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

This is the test that I will apply to myself when my time in this House comes to an end. I thank the House for its courtesy.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the honourable member for Hasluck, I remind honourable members that this is his first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Mr HENRY (Hasluck) (6.26 p.m.)—The word 'privilege' is often used too easily. But as I sat down to write this first speech, and now as I stand here to deliver it, I can think of no better word. If it is, as I believe, a privilege to be an Australian citizen, I am deeply conscious of what a privilege it is to be elected to our parliament. So it is with great pride and gratitude that I embark on my new role representing the community that my family and I have called home for 20 years, and which our electoral system now calls the seat of Hasluck. In my sense of gratitude my thoughts have turned to many of the people who have contributed to my presence here today. First of all, may I pay tribute to the family and to all of the values associated with it in Australian life. In particular, I pay tribute to my family. My everlasting appreciation goes to my late parents for their support and for their many sacrifices in bringing into this world my two brothers and me. I wish they could all be here today as I know that they would be bursting with pride. Sadly, my mother passed away less than one year ago.

This memory provides some poignancy as I stand here today in Parliament House. Over 62 years ago, as a young, vibrant woman, my mother worked in Canberra as a typist in the Attorney-General's Department. My father, like very many young men and women of the time, left school and enlisted to serve his country. During that time of war, he experienced being torpedoed off Cyprus, being wounded by a landmine in Borneo and he

suffered his share of hardships in New Guinea. My father was uncomplaining, in spite of his experiences. He got on with the job of securing a future for himself and his young family. He and my mother were typical of their time. They were both committed to ensuring that their three sons had the best opportunities in education and life—perhaps that is something that I did not fully appreciate at the time. With commitment and persistence my father's ambition to be a solicitor was realised after he achieved the age of 50. For me, his efforts have been a guiding light. His commitment and persistence—those qualities of never giving up—have also sustained me in the course of my life. I also recognise the wonderful influence of my two brothers, Robert and Keith, in shaping my early life and, more recently, in shaping their respective families.

I am also sincerely thankful for the support of many people who gave freely of their time, expertise, experience and kindness from preselection and along the path to election. There are too many people to thank them all in this speech but I must specifically mention Helen Leslie, who gave so selflessly of her time and energy for several long months. My campaign committee were second to none, led by Barry MacKinnon and ably supported by Andrew Reynolds, Helen Morton, Graeme Harris, Nick Braining, Sue Wood, Heather Gilmour, Norm Haywood and Peter Stewart. I send a very special thank you to the many helpers—some 400—on election day and all those from the Hasluck division for their support.

A real stalwart was Senator elect Judith Adams, who worked tirelessly for many months on my behalf. Senator Alan Eggleston, as patron senator for Hasluck, was also available to lend an ear and provide practical support. Thank you, Alan. Thanks also to Senators Ellison and Campbell for their support and encouragement during the

course of the campaign and a special thanks to Senator Ross Lightfoot, who encouraged me to throw my hat in the ring and run for preselection, for his ongoing support.

Most of all, however, my gratitude and my sense of living a truly privileged life is always due to my four wonderful daughters, Nellandra, Hannah, Harriette and Hillary, and the love of my life, Mary, my wife. I am pleased to acknowledge them in the gallery today. The path to standing here as a member of parliament would have been very different indeed without their generosity of spirit, unfailing support and invaluable sense of humour.

The seat of Hasluck lies to the east of Perth, encompassing a unique mix of outer metropolitan suburbs. Hasluck first became a federal seat at the 2001 election and was named after the highly respected and influential Liberals Sir Paul and Dame Alexandra Hasluck. Dame Alexandra was a noted historian and Sir Paul succeeded in several careers, including as a journalist, diplomat, academic and bureaucrat, before being elected as a federal member of parliament in 1949. During his time in successive Menzies' governments he held the portfolios of Territories, Defence and External Affairs. The Haslucks were known to people of all political persuasions as deeply intelligent and compassionate people.

Sir Paul was appointed Governor-General in 1969 and served until 1974. His standing in public life and his reputation was as a well-informed, thoughtful man of enormous integrity. He is fondly remembered by all who knew him in and out of parliament and on both sides of the House. These themes of contribution to the local and national communities in which I belong and of honourable partisanship within the Liberal Party are aspirations for my own service in parliament. If my contribution can be even a fraction of

that of the Haslucks I will be very proud indeed.

The part of the nation I am here to represent is in many ways a true microcosm of Australia. It reaches from the hills suburbs of Lesmurdie, Kalamunda and Gooseberry Hill north-west to the historic township of Midland and Guildford and south to the newer city of Gosnells. It encompasses rural and semirural communities, industrial hubs of yesterday and today, vital transport industries, tourism, hospitality, vineyards, orchards and market gardens. People from over 70 different countries and nationalities live in both charming older residential suburbs undergoing rejuvenation and a wide range of newer residential developments. It is a seat blessed with several important conservation areas, including national parks and state forests, many of Western Australia's most important wetlands and both the major waterways for Perth—the Canning and Perth's signature river, the Swan, flow through Hasluck.

Before the election campaign started I spent almost a year meeting and listening to as many members of the Hasluck community as I could. Devoting myself to this gave me a wonderful opportunity to learn what my community's hopes and concerns really were. People told me of their worries for their businesses, for their children's education, for their health care, for their safety and for their environment. Of particular concern to me were the numbers of people who had found the public sector unresponsive in meeting or addressing their needs. While many of the issues raised were in a personal context, there were many local community examples where concerns for health, welfare and safety appeared to be ignored. I would like to refer to some of these.

The Kalamunda District Community Hospital is an example. Over 95 per cent of the

residents of the serviced area wish to retain maternity and obstetric services at this hospital. It has an exemplary health and safety record, and I am committed to supporting it and the community's efforts to retain the full range of services currently delivered. Other issues include safe school crossings for Wattle Grove and Helena primary schools and ablution blocks for Gosnells and High Wycombe primary schools, just to mention a few. In raising some of these concerns it is important that I also mention the wonderful job being done by so many volunteers on P&C committees, in welfare organisations, in community care groups and in sporting organisations. These volunteers and these organisations make our communities what they are today.

Like Sir Paul Hasluck, I too have enjoyed a diverse career before this new role. I began my working life as a jackeroo and went on to gain unforgettable experiences working on farming properties in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia and in the agricultural industry in general. I then was fortunate to have opportunities to work in the construction industry, establishing my own building and concrete-drilling and sawing company, which in turn led to me becoming involved in a company developing oilfield production technology in the USA.

For the past 18 years I have been working in the building and construction sector with the Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association and the Master Painters, Decorators and Signwriters Association, representing the needs of their respective memberships. This has involved me in the development of the plumbing industry at state, national and global levels. I have gained enormously from these experiences, which have included establishing an award-winning industry based vocational training centre, creating public-private partnerships to promote water and energy efficiency strategies

for our communities and playing a key role in industry reform. I have enjoyed over 40 years working in and with small business.

Far more than being a privilege, being a member of parliament is a responsibility—a responsibility to contribute to the future of our nation, a responsibility not to be squandered. There are many challenges facing the Australian community at the beginning of the 21st century. I hope to contribute positively to as many of these as I can. I wish to take this opportunity to raise those important issues particularly close to my heart: the challenge of how we manage our water resources for future generations and the challenge of how we skill and train ourselves and our people for the future world of work.

I will start with water. The world has only the same amount of water as it did at the beginning of human civilisation, but now our global population is approaching six billion. It is a sobering fact indeed that only a tiny fraction of one per cent of all the water on earth is both suitable and available for human consumption. Our expectations of water use have increased dramatically in recent generations. There are more of us than ever before, and each of us uses more water than our predecessors would have dreamt of. This situation cannot continue and is only exacerbated by changes in rainfall patterns and the dryland salinity now affecting much of the nation's land.

It is now abundantly clear that we as a community must embark on an unprecedented combined national effort addressing how we manage, protect, use and share this most precious of the land's natural resources. There will be no magic bullet, no easy solution, but efforts are starting, and many fresh and worthy new approaches are being proposed. It is well recognised that Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth, ensuring that issues of water supply, management,

use and reuse are a priority on the public policy agenda. It is therefore very pleasing to see that the Prime Minister of this country has identified water as a top personal priority for this term of government.

There is no doubt that water and its provision to our human population will be one of the greatest challenges facing not only Australia but the world in the 21st century. It has been reported that more than 2.6 billion people do not have adequate access to fresh water and sanitation and that thousands of people across the world die on a daily basis as a result of this deprivation and inadequacy. Human life is not possible without fresh water. We in Australia are somewhat more fortunate; although, following a series of droughts and an increasing urban population and demand on our agricultural industries, we are facing a critical challenge to our water supply. It is very gratifying to see that the Australian government has already moved to establish the National Water Commission, which will be charged with driving reform.

We all must ensure that we stimulate our communities and industries to come up with innovations in addressing water use. The Green Plumber program, developed by the Master Plumbers Association, is one example of how industry and community can play a proactive role in this process. We need to look at new ideas and innovation—such as harvesting stormwater from our cities—and reconsider our approach to potable water and its distribution; the quality of water requirements for industrial purposes; recycling and reusing grey water for domestic and industrial use; improvements to irrigation techniques and infrastructure; the active use of aquifers for water storage; and the construction of new water transport facilities.

In Western Australia, these options excite much community interest and support. There are many ideas on the drawing board, such as

in my home state the suggested pipeline from the Kimberleys to Perth and the planned desalination plant for Cockburn Sound, south of Perth. All of these options need to be evaluated—carefully and thoroughly. Rather than being skewed by self-interest, all of these options need to be carefully and thoroughly evaluated, with one eye firmly focused on the needs of future generations, families, business, industry and communities.

Like many with more expertise than I can claim, I have serious concerns about the wisdom of some of these projects. A desalination plant, for example, is extremely expensive to build, has a high energy cost and therefore also has significant greenhouse gas consequences. It also raises the prospect of local environmental degradation through hypersalinity. A pipeline would appear to be expensive, but would today's investment costs be seen that way in 50 or 100 years time? Where would we be today without C.Y. O'Connor's pipeline from Perth to Kalgoorlie, this year celebrating 100 years? I am delighted to now be part of a federal government team that has already been active on this issue. However, I am disappointed that, given the challenges we face in Western Australia with water supply and management, the WA government has chosen to go it alone.

The issue of vocational training may seem unrelated to that of water, but the underlying challenge is how our community chooses to respond. Apprenticeship training has an even longer history than academic institutions and continues to be an invaluable learning tradition and employment pathway in our society. In spite of this tradition, Australia is facing a serious national skills shortage. In my own electorate of Hasluck, we particularly need mechanics, welders, fitters and building trades men and women. Those of us who have an appreciation and empathy for trades

and apprenticeship training and the huge contribution that trades have made to individuals, communities, businesses, employment and indeed our nation were delighted to hear the Prime Minister say, 'I want to see an Australia where a trade apprenticeship is just as valued as a university degree.'

The record of the Howard government in the area of vocational and apprenticeship training speaks for itself: 416,800 new apprentices and trainees in training at the end of the March quarter 2004; 282,800 commencements in the 12 months ending March 2004, up from the previous year; 132,000 completions in the 12 months to March 2004, up a massive 12 per cent from the previous year. These statistics are a clear indication that the policies of the Howard government are working.

The election commitments made by the Prime Minister and the government will also make a significant contribution to further increasing the intake of new apprentices and trainees over the next three years. In particular, the establishment of 24 Australian technical colleges will make a very positive contribution to attracting greater involvement by school leavers in trade training and a greater participation by industry in skilling Australians. The need to create an effective alternative to TAFE colleges in delivering industry specific skills has been demonstrated with the advent some years ago of industry specific training centres. This is an area that I have had some experience in, having been responsible for establishing and operating MPA Skills in Western Australia, specialising in training for plumbing and painting apprentices and skill enhancement programs for trades men and women.

It is fair to say that one of the greatest challenges facing our vocational training system is that of the Commonwealth-state relationship and the bureaucracy associated

with it. At a time of national skills shortages, we simply cannot afford this. Programs such as User Choice which should be providing training options for apprentices and employers alike have been severely curtailed, adding to the confusion and bureaucratic maze employers are expected to work their way through to make a considerable investment in training for the benefit of their business and also for the continued economic sustainability and benefit of Australia. The leadership role of the Prime Minister and his government in introducing Australian technical colleges will go a long way to overcoming this unnecessary impasse in state and Commonwealth funding arrangements for vocational training.

Mr Speaker, I do have a concern that not enough employers are investing in training apprentices. I believe that this is caused by a lack of real incentive, poaching of apprentices, and the real cost of investing in training for individual employers. Perhaps we should consider that, for those employers who invest in skilling Australia, such investments be treated in the same way that we encourage companies to participate in research and development. If it is recognised that research and development is a driver of economic growth, skilling Australians is essential for our continued economic growth. It therefore stands to reason that a tax incentive in the form of a tax concession has the potential to be a more realistic and simple incentive to encourage employers to train apprentices. Without a simple incentive for private investment in education and training, it is probable that we will continue to face skill shortages. Indeed, if we consider our ageing work force across most industry sectors, there is an urgent need to attract greater investment in training.

As well as attracting new entrants to the trades from the school sector, we need to consider reskilling those already in the work

force who are underemployed or facing redundancy from their current employment. As our work force ages, this strategy will only become more important and more urgent. As with all things that should be seen as investments, the sooner we begin, the easier and more effective our efforts will be. While an individual must accept some responsibility for ongoing skill development during their working life, it is not an issue for them alone. The increasing rate of change in technical skills and knowledge and the continuous change in the business environment and workplace suggests the need for ongoing vocational training. Those businesses that adapt more readily to this could achieve a significant competitive advantage. The process of continuous learning and our attitude to lifelong learning needs to move beyond rhetoric to the point that it is built into our workplaces, schools and communities.

In addition, much more needs to be done to ensure the industry relevance, knowledge and skills of trainers and lecturers who play such an important role in influencing the next generation and subsequent generations of Australia's work force. This will require a structured process aimed at ensuring both a consistent industry interface during the course of a trainer's working life and continuous industry specific skills development. In talking about vocational training we should also acknowledge the significant contribution that group training companies have made to the contemporary evolution and development of apprenticeship training and traineeships in this country.

The final challenge I wish to raise here today is the question of how we can better support small business. This is the sector that most truly underpins our economic capacity and, indeed, our Australian way of life. The small business sector is full of some of Australia's most self-reliant, innovative and entrepreneurial people. They create employ-

ment and build both individual and economic capacity from the smallest of our country towns to the biggest of our cities.

Recent figures indicate that Australia now boasts a significant increase in the self-employed. This is a telling statistic, reflecting what individuals are actually looking for in their working lives. It has been predicted that over the next 30 years or so the majority of the work force will be self-employed, yet we still allow excessive regulation and compliance requirements to stand in the way of these people and their aspirations. We oblige people to operate within a regulated labour market with restrictive award conditions that are in nobody's long-term interests, and we leave them vulnerable to unfettered access and disruption by representatives of unions.

In focusing on the tiny number of employers that may not do the right thing, we are systematically and consistently penalising tens of thousands of employers who do. Add to this the fact that the complexity and level of our taxation, including the cumulative effect of many individual taxes on businesses, act as a powerful disincentive to business growth and to employment. Countless people are missing out on jobs that are simply not being created.

What we do about water, training and small business are just three of the important questions facing us as a nation. Each of these is close to my heart and important to my electorate. Each is something I hope to be able to make a positive contribution towards while I represent all the people of the electorate of Hasluck, without fear or favour. It is because of them that I stand here today, indescribably proud to be the federal member for the seat of Hasluck during this, the 41st Australian Parliament. I thank the House for its indulgence.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the honourable member for Braddon, I would

like to acknowledge the presence of the President of the Senate. Before the member for Braddon commences, I remind the House that this is his first speech and I ask the House to extend the usual courtesies.

Mr BAKER (Braddon) (6.51 p.m.)— Mr Speaker may I, at the outset, congratulate you on your election and Mr Deputy Speaker and Mr Second Deputy Speaker on their re-election. It is with a deep sense of pride that I rise in this chamber to address the House. I know I share that feeling with everyone here, especially the recently elected new members on both sides. We have a sense of great privilege at being elected to represent our constituents.

During the great constitutional debates of the 1890s, our founding fathers discussed what to call the main elected chamber of the prospective federal government. A number of names were considered, but the greatest support went to adopting the name 'House of Representatives'. This was a deliberate step. The new Australian parliament could have chosen a neutral term, such as 'house of assembly' or adopted the style of many European parliaments and used 'house of delegates'. Yet the founders had no doubt that the main responsibilities of the members of the new federal house of government were to represent their constituents; their needs, their concerns and their aspirations.

One of those founding fathers was the Tasmanian statesman Sir Edward Braddon. He was a distinguished colonial premier of Tasmania and represented Tasmania at several federal conventions. In 1903 Sir Edward Braddon—who, coincidentally, was at the time a neighbouring farmer of my paternal great-grandfather—was elected the first member for Wilmot, but he died a year later, in 1904. Some public minded local landowners subsequently set aside some land on a vantage point near Forth, a small town be-

tween Devonport and Burnie. This land is called Braddon's Lookout and commands a magnificent view of much of the north-west coast and Bass Strait. The lookout is above Lillico Beach, named after my maternal forebears, who first settled this land in 1865. It is important to remind ourselves of this because we do not often remember those people who got together to write our Constitution, and it is right that we honour them.

From 1903 the north-west federal seat was known as Darwin because Charles Darwin's famous ship the *Beagle* dropped anchor on the north-west coast to replenish supplies of fresh water during its voyage to the Southern Ocean. The first member for Darwin was the flamboyant King O'Malley. O'Malley was the minister for home affairs at the time when Canberra was chosen as the future site of the federal capital in 1913 and was in fact the longest living member of the first federal parliament when he died in 1953. Another prominent member was Sir George Bell, who became Speaker of the House of Representatives and a significant parliamentarian. A beautiful part of my electorate, Bell's Parade, near Latrobe—where I spent many happy hours as a child—is named in his memory.

But perhaps the most famous of my predecessors in this seat is the Hon. Dame Enid Muriel Lyons, widow of the distinguished Tasmanian who became Prime Minister, Joe Lyons. Dame Enid was member for Darwin from 1943 to 1951, when she was forced to retire because of ill health. Dame Enid is well known as the first woman to become a member of this House, representing first the United Australia Party and, when it was founded, the Liberal Party. She was also the first woman to become minister of the Crown, serving in the Menzies government from 1949 to 1951 as Vice-President of the Executive Council. Her late husband had held that same portfolio, and I think this would be the only occasion when a husband

and wife have shared such an achievement. Although her health forced Dame Enid to leave the parliament in 1951, she continued a significant role in public life over the next 30 years, serving as a commissioner of the ABC and fulfilling many public engagements. As a child growing up in Devonport, I have fond memories of watching Dame Enid piloting her grey Humber car through the streets, and of dodging it at times. She was known and loved by many.

In 1955, when Aubrey Luck was the Liberal member, the parliament passed a resolution changing the name of the seat from Darwin to Braddon. Aubrey held many public offices during and after his parliamentary term, including a very important position as a very popular patron of the Devonport Football Club. I played for the club for a number of seasons and was fortunate to be captain, play in two premierships and represent Tasmania. I remember Mr Luck as a supportive presence and a friend of my parents.

Two of my other distinguished Liberal predecessors were Ray Groom, a former prominent footballer who held the seat of Braddon from 1975 to 1984, served as a minister in the Fraser government and later held office as Premier of Tasmania; and Chris Miles, who was the Braddon MP from 1984 to 1998 and was Parliamentary Secretary to Cabinet in the first Howard government. So, as the new member for Braddon, I am very conscious of the legacy of previous federal Liberal parliamentarians who have so ably represented the electorate.

I believe I am fortunate, although some members of my family would say that is debatable, to have some political blood running through my veins. My great-uncle Elliott Lillico was member for Meander in the Tasmanian Legislative Council and then a Liberal senator for Tasmania for 15 years before

retiring in 1974. My maternal great-grandfather was Sir Alexander Lillico, a member of the Tasmanian Legislative Council for some 30 years—a record which still stands today. Sir Alexander entered parliament as an unassuming farmer who, it is recorded, ‘had neither the benefit of oratory nor of high education’. His main quality was integrity, and I believe that is a special asset that is missing in many sectors today.

In 1944 the Labor government wanted the states to transfer certain powers to the Commonwealth. This was supported by each state parliament except the Tasmanian Legislative Council. The Tasmanian upper house was split 10-8, with Sir Alexander Lillico leading the opposition. Dr Evatt was despatched by Prime Minister Curtin to Tasmania to secure support for that bill. This became known as the Evatt versus Lillico affair. Evatt failed to persuade the Tasmanians to change their opposition. Frustrated, he put the powers bill to a referendum. It was rejected by every state except South Australia, where it passed by only a slim margin. This is a lesson well worth recording. The instinct of a small minority to oppose something thought desirable by almost every other parliamentarian in Australia was proven to be in fact consistent with the overwhelming view of the electorate. It is a very important reminder, I believe, that we must always keep in touch with our electors. They are, after all, our employers. I swore the oath of allegiance as the member for Braddon somewhat daunted by the list of predecessors who have held this seat.

I was born in Devonport and raised along with my three elder sisters on the family farm nearby. When attending school in Devonport I was a restless young man who preferred learning by doing rather than in the classroom. Consequently, I left after grade 10 to train as a carpenter and joiner, and obtained a trade certificate at the Devonport Technical College. After a period, and with

counsel from my previous teachers, I decided to further my studies at the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology and later at the University of Tasmania. I completed a Bachelor of Education and subsequently was employed as a secondary teacher in Tasmanian high schools.

I then made a career choice to pursue further studies in commerce and law and move back to the business world in the area of business and financial management. This provided me with opportunities to travel overseas, including to the USA and Canada, and the chance to observe other national financial systems in action. This experience was invaluable, and I met many who were envious of the probity and efficiency of the Australian financial system.

In November 1998, whilst working in Launceston in northern Tasmania, something happened which dramatically changed the course of my life. While crossing a one-way street, I looked the wrong way in a moment of distraction. The result was a traumatic injury and many months in acute care in hospital, followed by well over three years of intensive physical rehabilitation. This placed great stresses on my personal life, and I want to pay tribute to my family—especially to my mother, Margaret Joy, and to my three sisters, Helen, Diane and Peta, who were enormously supportive during this period. I wish to acknowledge two of my sisters, Helen and Diane, who are here in the gallery today. My mother always gave our family unreserved support. She was our guiding light—a beautiful person who had a special and unique relationship with each family member. We were devastated when, after a short illness, she died in the middle of this election campaign. I know she would have been proud to see one of her children standing in this House.

They say that every cloud has a silver lining. On many occasions I could not see anything positive about what happened to me. Yet, that saying is true. I met some wonderful medical and nursing staff at the Launceston General Hospital, and I made some truly inspirational friends amongst my fellow patients. Once I was back on my feet, I resolved to give something back to society. I became involved in the Road Trauma Support Team in northern Tasmania and the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust, and I became a member of the Tasmanian Road Safety Consultative Committee. It is not widely known that for every road death in Tasmania, 30 people are seriously injured in motor vehicle accidents; and it is even worse in some mainland states. These injuries include paraplegia, loss of limbs and serious brain damage. A former Tasmanian Premier, the Hon. Tony Rundle, rightly called this 'the hidden disease'. I am strongly of the view that there should be compulsory driver education in every Australian school, from grade 9 to grade 12. If a school today decided not to offer computer science, maths or English, parents and the community would be rightly astonished. Yet a number of schools either ignore driver education or have ceased to offer it. Irreparable damage can be done by a young, inexperienced driver in charge of a motor car, and governments at all levels have an obligation to prepare young Australians for the nation's roads.

One legacy which the experience of being in that road accident has instilled in me is the highest regard for our public hospital system and for the quality of the people who make it work. That is something I shall never forget. One of the tasks I took on was to become chairman of the Save Launceston General Hospital Committee. In this role I acted as an intermediary for the hospital's medical and other staff and the state bureaucracy. I was astounded to find—having come from a pri-

vate industry background—that no fewer than 32 approvals were needed for an expenditure of \$20,000 or more by the hospital. I am not sure that the system has improved, and it is very important that state governments around Australia tackle the burden of red tape and bureaucracy that is eating up so much of the health dollar.

The electorate that I am privileged to represent is in a beautiful part of the state. I was marvelling last week, yet again, at how rich the agricultural land is in that part of Tasmania. And it will not be surprising for members to learn that 10 per cent of the population of Braddon are directly employed in agriculture. There is a wide variety of farming, including cropping and sheep farming, and it is the state's centre for dairy production. We are also privileged to have other niche markets. We have kelp harvesting and poppy production, we are a world leader in pyrethrum production, and we have a significant tulip estate at Table Cape—which has grown to be so successful that it has become a popular tourist attraction and actually exports products to the Netherlands during the northern winter. We also have a fledgling wine-growing industry in Braddon, which should not be too surprising given that our latitude is the same in the south as Tuscany in the north.

Out of the city of Devonport, the 'gateway to Tasmania', operate the three Spirit of Tasmania ferries—two to Melbourne and one to Sydney. It is important to remind the House that a large measure of the commercial success of these vessels, which have heralded a significant tourism boom in Tasmania and have contributed to lower airfares, came directly from the Howard government's decision in 1996 to establish the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme.

Apart from the 10 per cent who are involved in agriculture, 15 per cent of the adults in the Braddon electorate are employed in some form of manufacturing industry, and a further 25 per cent are employed in construction or trade orientated industries.

I have deliberately set out these statistics to give the House an indication of the profile of the seat of Braddon, which swung to the Liberal Party by a margin of almost 7½ per cent on 9 October this year. That was the strongest swing to the Liberal Party nationwide to gain a seat—an outstanding result for the Liberal Party. That outcome is directly attributable to two things: the hard work of the Liberal Party grassroots members in all of the branches on the north-west coast and the consistent leadership of this country by our Prime Minister. I wish to acknowledge and thank the Tasmanian Liberal Senate team: Senators Calvert, Abetz, Colbeck, Watson and Barnett. Richard Colbeck led the north-west coast ably. I thank you. I also thank the ministers who journeyed down to our great electorate, and I make a special mention of Mr Philip Parsons, the campaign director, and his family, who gave me tremendous support through the election.

As someone working in financial management, I was in no doubt that the hard work undertaken by the Prime Minister and the Treasurer over the last eight years—to first stabilise and then grow our national economy to be a world leader—is the most important achievement. Without a strong economy, no government can do good things for Australia and Australians. More than 70 per cent of people in my electorate own or are currently buying their homes, so they have a clear understanding of the vital importance of managing our \$800 billion economy, of maintaining a budget surplus and of the proper management of interest rates.

I was particularly pleased to see in the Governor-General's speech that His Excellency mentioned the Future Fund, to take account of the ageing of the Australian population. Braddon has one of the older demographics in the country, with 14 per cent of the electorate being aged over 65 years, so I will take a particular interest in the management of the health and welfare sector. One of the most important elements of aged care is allowing people to remain independent as long as they are able, preferably in their own homes. People having to move because of frailty not only dislocates them but can also separate them from family, friends and the network with which they are familiar. I am a strong believer in improved domiciliary care and the development of graded aged care facilities, where a resident can move from an independent-living unit, to hostel type accommodation, to a nursing home—depending upon their personal circumstances and own needs. There are a number of excellent facilities in Braddon, but the ageing profile of our nation means that the private sector will have to work more with the federal and state governments to fulfil this need.

I have been very supportive of the Howard government's support for apprenticeships and for the technical education system nationally. Since 1996 the number of apprentices in Braddon has increased threefold and the government has successfully moved to dispel the myth that vocational education is somehow 'second best' to tertiary study. As someone with a rural upbringing who began his working career with a four-year apprenticeship, then decided to go on to university study and is in the process of completing his third university degree, I believe that I am equipped to remind the House that each career path is as valuable as the other. I commend the Prime Minister for his announcement during the election campaign that 24 new federal technical colleges would be es-

established across Australia if the government were returned.

The mining industry is also a strong contributor to the economy in my electorate. A variety of mining operations flourish in Braddon, such as the Savage River mine. Magnetite ore is mined at Savage River and then pumped along an 85-kilometre pipeline to Port Latta, where it is pelletised. Production in 2002-03 totalled some 5.3 million tonnes and provided employment for 420 people. At Railton, south of Devonport, the Cement Australia plant operates using local limestone. In 2002-03 more than 1.26 million tonnes were produced, the vast majority shipped here to mainland Australia. The cement operation at Railton provides employment for over 170 people. There is a range of other mining operations including mineral sands operations at Naracoopa on King Island and magnesite mining at Arthur River and Main Creek. One of the as yet largely untapped resources is the dolomite resource at Circular Head. I am advised that the reserve of dolomite in that area of Tasmania is the largest concentration in the Southern Hemisphere, and there are a number of exciting possibilities there for future exploration.

Braddon also boasts Australian Paper's Wesley Vale and Burnie mills, where combined annual production is more than a quarter of a million tonnes. Together they employ over 500 people and have ongoing relationships with some 140 local contractors. Braddon also boasts major ports at Burnie and Devonport and a significant port at Stanley. These services not only export manufactured and raw materials but also support a flourishing local fishing industry. Braddon is also where some of the finest cheeses in the world are produced and—this may surprise honourable members—is the location of a growing market in quality chocolates, a benefit of our rich dairy assets. My electorate is also one of the biggest exporters of onions

overseas and provides all of the potato needs to two well-known national takeaway restaurant chains.

Braddon also is a world leader in forestry and associated timber industries. It possesses timbers such as the magnificent Huon pine, blackwood, myrtle, celery-top pine and Tasmanian eucalypt. After the implementation of the Howard government's election policy, over one million hectares of forests in Tasmania will be protected forever. This amounts to some 42 per cent of Tasmania's landmass. This is a unique outcome unequalled in the world today. It is my responsibility to dispel the myth that there are few trees left in Tasmania. In fact, the opposite is true.

Braddon, therefore, is a diverse electorate. It has two significant cities, a number of other substantial towns and no particular central point. This makes it a particular challenge for any federal representative, but I pledge now to represent every part of the electorate from King Island to the far north-west coast, to Savage River and Waratah, Smithton, Burnie, Ulverstone and Devonport. Tasmania is a small state and, perhaps uniquely in Australia, most people know at least one state and/or federal parliamentarian. I fully understand that with that friendly familiarity comes a burden of trust and responsibility that I will strive to fulfil.

In common with many Australians and other honourable members, my family has served our nation in time of war. My grandfather Arthur Horden Baker fought in France with the Australian Army in World War I and paid the supreme sacrifice. My late father, Petre Baker, served as a Squadron Leader in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II, attached to Bomber Command, and participated in a remarkable 60 flights over occupied Europe. He returned to farm on the north-west coast and rarely talked about this

brave service. He was a man of immense character whom I was privileged to have as a father. My brother-in-law Rodney Layton served in Vietnam and my nephew Nathan Layton has continued the family tradition, serving in the Royal Australian Air Force in Iraq in this year. Honourable members can perhaps imagine how proud I am of that. With this family background, I feel it is so important that our nation has been led during these difficult times by a strong and resolute leader. We certainly have such a man in our Prime Minister.

I look forward to contributing to the work of the fourth Howard government. I look forward to being a representative of all the people of Braddon—to listening to their concerns and representing them in the counsels of government. When my great-grandfather died in 1966 at the age of 94, the *Advocate* newspaper said that 'his main asset was his sincerity and he was guided by what he thought would be best for the state'. I do not know if a higher tribute is possible for any parliamentarian. With the support of my colleagues I intend to dedicate myself to working hard and consistently for the people of Braddon and the Parliament of Australia. I thank the House.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (7.13 p.m.)—I will begin rather slowly to allow the member for Braddon, who has just made his first speech, to be congratulated. I take this opportunity of congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your election to the position of Speaker. I welcome your commitment to fairness in your treatment of those on all sides of the House. I also congratulate the honourable members for Page and Scullin on their re-elections as Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker respectively. I believe that the House will be well served by all three senior occupants of the chair. I also congratulate all the new members who have just made their first speeches.

It is a great honour for me to have been returned for a third term as the member for Melbourne Ports, maintaining a Labor tradition which dates back to 1906. The seat has changed beyond recognition since the days of Ted Holloway and Frank Crean, when it was a safe Labor seat. We retained the seat with a negative swing below the national average and well below the Victorian average and for that I thank my constituents in Melbourne Ports very much for their support.

I would like to thank all those who worked on my campaign team, particularly my campaign director, Steve Donnelly. I fear Labor's victory in Adelaide means that Steve will be transferring his loyalties elsewhere, but I do appreciate the hard work he put into the campaign. I would also like to thank my staff, Alex Kats, Tony Williams and Dr Adam Carr, and my campaign committee including Dr Henry Pinski, Bunna Walsh, Tonya Stephens, Alex Hicks, Sylvia Freeman, Donna Walsh, Dror Poleg, Byron Danby, George Droutsas, Natalie Lupton, and all the loyal Labor members and volunteers across the electorate who did so much work to ensure our rather unusual result in Melbourne Ports. I would also like to thank my state parliamentary colleagues Tony Lupton and John Thwaites and my friends at the AWU, MUA, SDA and HSU who gave me their assistance.

The Liberal Party thought they had a serious chance of winning Melbourne Ports at this election, and they chose a candidate whom they thought might appeal to some of my core supporters. The Victorian Liberal Party, the candidate and his family spent an estimated quarter of a million dollars trying to unseat me. They also resorted to some of the most unpleasant campaign tactics we have seen in Melbourne Ports in any of the elections I have participated in, including unauthorised and anonymous leaflets attacking my record, particularly on issues relating

to the gay community, and letterboxed to the homes of Orthodox Jewish families. Another tactic was the use of green how-to-vote cards, handed out by young women in green t-shirts and hats. This was a cheap trick designed to fool first-time voters into voting Liberal in the belief that they were voting for the Greens. Despite all these tactics, the government's candidate was not successful.

Nevertheless, we on this side of the House have to acknowledge that we lost the election and that the Howard Government has a mandate to govern for the next three years. From next July they will also have control of the Senate and thus will have the ability to legislate as they see fit. As we are already seeing with the abortion issue, I fear this means that the government will feel increasing pressure to move further to the right on a range of issues that up till now they have moved cautiously on. The government has a mandate, but history has shown that if they abuse it by putting through extremist measures they will pay a heavy price.

Why did Labor lose this election? The basic answer is that Australia has experienced more than a decade of economic growth, low inflation, low interest rates and falling unemployment, and Australian voters are usually reluctant to vote out a government when they are broadly happy with the state of the economy. The foundations of this economic success were laid by the Hawke and Keating governments, and I think we on this side of the House have not done enough to remind people of that fact. The Prime Minister and the Treasurer have had the good fortune of reaping the benefits of many of the economic reforms that Labor enacted. The Treasurer likes to boast of his record, but so far he has not been tested by external factors. We will see what kind of navigator he really is when the ship of state really hits stormy economic waters.

The second factor was the government's campaign on interest rates, which undoubtedly influenced many voters in mortgage belt suburban seats. This campaign was bogus, as virtually every senior economist in Australia pointed out. If interest rates are going to rise, and I fear they may, they are going to rise regardless of who is in government. In case members opposite have forgotten, this is how free market economies are supposed to work. In their advertising the government campaigned as though we were living in East Germany, with prices and interest rates fixed by the state. You cannot on one hand be a champion of deregulation and market forces and on the other claim that you are able to dictate whether interest rates will go up or down. I thought that was the preserve of the Reserve Bank. The fact remains, however, that Labor was unable to counter the government's scare campaign, which we should have seen coming and will have to be sharper in countering in the future. It is vital that Labor emphasises its strong economic credentials, and I am confident that the shadow Treasurer will put forward an effective analysis and criticism of the government's economic policies and develop policies for the next election which will win the support of the Australian people.

The third factor of our defeat, in my view, was the late release of our key policies on health, education and the environment, all areas in which the Australian people traditionally look to Labor rather than the coalition for answers. I believe our policies in all three areas were imaginative and well intentioned, and some were received well by the Australian people. But their late release meant that we could not mount an effective campaign around them and we could not make a defence against the criticisms that were made in the media by the government and by affected lobby groups. In the area of forest policy, as a prospective beneficiary of

this policy as an inner city member—the Greens polled 14 per cent of the vote in Melbourne Ports and gave me 90 per cent of their preferences—I believe our policy of ending logging in Tasmania’s old-growth forests was a price we paid for those preferences with too high a coin. We would have got their preferences anyhow, and the defeat of two fine Labor members in Tasmania—including the previous member for Braddon; we have just heard the new member make his first speech—the loss of a Senate place in Tasmania and probably our failures in Eden-Monaro, McMillan and Gippsland was a price that was, in my view, too high. The issue of chasing Greens preferences at the expense of working-class voters is an issue which the Labor Party have to face very squarely and, in my view, was an error of judgement. Once again, the possibility of recouping the damage was lost because the policy was released late.

Let me turn to some of the issues that I believe will confront us during this parliamentary term. Recently, on the front page of the *Australian*, we saw a story on the report by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission into Australia’s waterfront, which shows rising costs for exporters, increasing congestion and delays at ports. The report shows that the rate of return for the two existing stevedoring companies—Patrick and P&O Ports—has risen from 10.5 per cent in 1998-99 to over 27 per cent in 2003-04. The ACCC chairman, Graeme Samuel, was quoted as saying:

Higher average revenues—

that is, increased profits for the government’s favoured friends at Patrick and P&O—

mean that users are facing higher charges for stevedoring services.

The government likes to boast that its waterfront reforms have greatly increased productivity in the stevedoring industry, but the

ACCC report shows that Australia’s ports urgently need new investment to increase capacity and reduce costs for exporters. In other words, the cosy duopoly that Patrick and P&O enjoy in the stevedoring industry has allowed them to increase their rate of profit rather than investing some of their income in increased capacity, which would benefit Australian exporters as well as provide greater employment to waterfront communities such as those in Melbourne Ports. According to the article:

... margins in the stevedoring industry had risen in each of the six years since the ACCC commenced monitoring.

The article quotes Mr Samuel:

If the industry is beginning to experience capacity constraints then it is important from a competition perspective to see new investment ... This would expand capacity, alleviate congestion and ensure maintenance of service levels.

In other words, the selfish profit-taking of the government’s corporate mates is starving the industry of investment and pushing up costs for Australian exporters. Since these include our great agricultural exporting industries, I thought we might have heard something from The Nationals about this. Instead over the last few years we have heard from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, who has come in here and rabbitied on about the government’s reform of Australia’s ports. However, the trickle-down effect of his so-called microeconomic reform has not been happening at all, as I and many other members on this side have pointed out to him, as has the Australian shipping and export industry. We will continue to pursue this matter with the government.

In the last parliament, I had the honour of serving as Deputy Chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters under the chairmanship of the honourable member for Kooyong. If I am again a mem-

ber of this committee, which I hope to be, it will be a busy year for us. We have already seen Senator Abetz, the Special Minister for State, indicate that he intends reintroducing the government's electoral legislation which was rejected by the Senate in the last parliament. His bill would, amongst other things, close the electoral roll on the day the election is announced rather than allowing voters a week's grace to update their addresses or to enrol for the first time. We know—this is not a matter of speculation—that this would have the effect of disenfranchising about 300,000 Australians.

I spoke about this matter at length in the last session and no doubt I will do so again. I only want to say now that this is a blatant piece of electoral manipulation by this government. It is designed to keep many young people—there are 70,000 young people amongst those 300,000—and transient and low-income people off the rolls. It is the government's belief—a poll-driven belief, if you ask me—that, integrated with its happiness at the increasing number of people who are voting informally, and its failure to get the AEC to pursue those who do not participate at all, which number has also gone up slightly over the last few years, it will get some electoral benefit out of this. In particular, the prospect of disenfranchising people at the next election is designed on the belief that they would vote Labor rather than Liberal. In doing this, the government is ignoring the unanimous report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters that such a move is not necessary. The supposed concern about the integrity of the electoral system which Senator Abetz cites as the reason for this change is no more than a smoke-screen for the self-interest of the Liberal Party.

It is ironic that, while this government is busy looking for ways to restrict democratic participation in Australia, democratic free-

doms are expanding in other countries. This year more people around the world voted in free elections than at any other time in human history. Amongst them were the long-suffering people of Afghanistan, who in October—to their great credit—at the same time as the Australian elections, elected their first-ever freely elected leader, President Hamid Karzai, who polled 55.4 per cent of the vote. Despite Taliban and al-Qaeda threats, more than 10 million Afghans voted—three million more than were expected. The United Nations believed that Afgans would be too afraid to enrol. But the courage of the Afghan people in enrolling and participating in this election in such a large measure was a great tribute to them. This was a remarkable achievement in one of the world's poorest countries, until recently ruled by one of the most oppressive regimes in modern history. It was striking that the turnout amongst women was nearly as high as amongst men.

This progress in Afghanistan, in which Australian forces played a modest but creditable role, is in sharp contrast to the situation in most of the Islamic world. Although we in Australia are very pleased to see Indonesia has made great strides towards democracy with its first direct presidential election this year, most of the countries in the Middle East still remain dictatorships or absolute monarchies. Last year's parliamentary elections in Iran, for example, were in my view a complete farce. The striking out of many democratic candidates—in fact, sitting members of parliament—by some faceless group of mullahs was a disgrace to Tehran's claim to democracy. Pakistan is ruled by the military behind the facade of a parliamentary government and, unfortunately, the same has happened in what was formerly Soviet Central Asia.

All of this makes the elections in Iraq scheduled for January 2005 extremely im-

portant. Most of the bloodshed in Iraq at the moment is part of a campaign to prevent these elections taking place. This campaign is usually depicted as resistance against the US and allied forces in Iraq. In fact, in my view, it is mainly intended to intimidate the Iraqi people by a minority who have traditionally been able to control that country. Those regimes behind this insurgency minority, particularly the regimes of Iran and Syria, know that a successful election and inauguration of democratic Iraq would be a grave threat to their own hold on power. These are views that I know are shared by the new Iraqi Ambassador to Australia, Ambassador Al Shildu, whom I had the honour to meet at a lunch hosted by the Governor-General following his credentialling. Support for the elections is a view shared by many Iraqi professionals who live in Australia and who work under the Iraqi Forum trying to encourage Australian support for democracy in Iraq.

It is so important that these elections go ahead on schedule, and that democratic countries give Iraq as much help as possible in conducting these elections and establishing a freely elected government. An independent authentic elected Iraq government will be the best way of getting foreign troops out of Iraq. The project of building a democratic Iraq is important for not only the long-suffering people of Iraq but also for the example it will set to the whole region. If it can be done in Afghanistan in the face of enormous difficulties, it can be done in Iraq. I believe Ayatollah Sistani, the Shia leader of the 60 per cent of Iraqis who follow the Shia form of religion, wants the elections to go ahead as scheduled. I believe they should go ahead as soon as possible to enable people to reflect the democratic will of that country. Nothing will do more to diminish the suicide bombings and the terrorism that are taking place there, than a successful election.

The government argued during the election campaign that Australia should stay in Iraq until the job is done and now it has a mandate for that policy. So it is fair to ask what the government is now doing in practice to help the Iraqi people for their first free elections next year. We have great experience in electoral systems and we have assisted our friends and neighbours in East Timor and Cambodia to establish efficient and transparent election systems; we should be doing the same to help Iraq in the run-up to the 2005 elections.

Elections are also scheduled for the presidency of the Palestinian Authority in January. I make no secret of my belief that over the past four years the greatest obstacle to achieving a peace settlement in the Middle East was the obstructionism of the late Yasser Arafat, whose rejection of the Barak-Clinton peace offer in 2000 triggered the current tragic train of events in that small but vital part of the world. His death creates new opportunities to get the peace process moving again. Again it is elections that lead to this possibility—elections in the Palestinian Authority. Many people argue that it is terrorism, impoverishment and Western policy that lead to the extreme politics in that part of the world. I think that when people have the opportunity for a free expression of views they overcome those kinds of extreme political attitudes that we have seen in that region for so long. We should welcome Prime Minister Sharon's plan to withdraw from Gaza, and we should encourage the Palestinians to respond in the same spirit. Australia should do whatever we can to assist both parties to resume negotiations.

During this parliament I will continue to work for the people of Melbourne Ports. I will continue to raise issues such as electoral reform, national security, human rights in many parts of the world and the government's callous treatment of asylum seekers.

The voters have decided that Labor should spend another term in opposition, and we have to accept that verdict. That does not mean, however, that we should not continue to expose injustices as we see them and speak out in this House on behalf of our constituents. Over the next three years we have to work harder to develop policies that will win the confidence of voters at the next election. In the meantime, we will hold this government to account.

I conclude by taking up some of the words of the new member for Prospect, which are very much like Prime Minister Blair's views in the United Kingdom: we have to look at the democratic prospect throughout the world as not just economic development but as a way of—particularly in that troubled area of the Middle East—solving problems as much as creating them. I really look forward to the elections in Iraq as a way of freeing those people in that part of the world, bringing greater human rights to it and undermining the very basis on which a minority of people in that part of the world would deprive their own people as much as us of their freedoms via terrorism. We have a lot of work to do in this parliament, and I hope the government's democratic rhetoric is as valid as it says it is both in its assistance to the people of Iraq and in this country, where there are some moves that it seems to have initiated to limit democratic freedoms.

Mr SECKER (Barker) (7.33 p.m.)—It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Melbourne Ports. He actually makes quite a bit of sense, certainly on foreign affairs matters, and I think this parliament would be much better if he had more influence on the Labor Party's policy when it came to foreign affairs. I certainly think what he said about Iraq, Palestine and Israel made a lot of sense, and anyone who listened to it would have seen that it was a very reasoned argument. So it is always a pleasure to follow him, even

though I may not agree with him on what he said on electoral matters, because I remember many years ago when the Labor Party, under the guise of many different reasons, brought the age for voting down from 21 to 18, and I am sure that was simply a reverse of what the member for Melbourne Ports was saying about young people voting. All I say about that is that perhaps we need to look in mirrors to see what is fair to all concerned.

Before I proceed, I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker Quick, on your rise to this position. It is a pleasure to see someone like you in the chair. I know we will always get a fair deal from you. One thing I can say about this election and certainly the three years before the election is that, time after time, I would go and see people and the big thing they remembered about the Labor Party was the high interest rates. People do have long memories in this country, and signing a big cardboard cheque to say 'we will keep interest rates down' just did not wash. I know many of my friends, and certainly acquaintances, lost farms and businesses, and if they did manage to struggle through it often took them two, three or four years to get over that high interest rate cycle, and they do remember. That was always one of the Labor Party's weaknesses, and I do not think we should apologise as a party for actually saying that people should remember that interest rates have always been higher under the Labor Party.

I noticed in recent weeks a former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, saying that the Labor Party should embrace the goals that he had as Treasurer and Prime Minister to modernise the country. I have often said that they did do some good things, but the big difference between us and them is that in 1996 they would not have made the changes that we made when we came into government. They would not have made the cuts that we made to spending so that we could get the

budget deficit under control. It is a matter of interest in Australian history that in the 90 years since Federation in 1901 we accumulated a total federal debt of \$16 billion. In those 90 years we had two world wars, the Depression, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the building of a national capital and lots of infrastructure to build as a country—yet we only accumulated \$16 billion in debt. But that \$16 billion was increased, on average, by the same amount each year for the next five years.

From 1991 to 1996 federal government debt went from \$16 billion net to \$96 billion. Of course, we have repaid more than \$60 billion of that Labor debt. I do not think anyone in their faintest dreams would have thought that, if a Labor government were elected in 1996, they would have taken that action. They did not have the form. They were prepared to continue to allow our national debt to increase. One of the great benefits of reducing that debt by over \$60 billion—in fact, we have reduced it by nearly \$70 billion—is that as a nation we now have \$5½ billion extra to spend every year forever and ever. We can spend that on health, education and infrastructure. That money will be there forever and ever, unless this country gets another Labor government which starts to run up debt.

The Howard government, with Peter Costello as Treasurer, has continued to reduce debt, has continued to deliver surplus budgets, has got interest rates down, has got unemployment down and has got the dragon of inflation under control. Obviously when a government such as ours does all that, it is hard for any opposition party to make any inroads. But I will leave it to the Labor Party to recriminate about ordinary campaigning and policies which certainly did not work and did not connect with the Australian people.

I want to take this opportunity tonight to share with the House some of the things that I believe led to the re-election of the government and my re-election as the member for Barker. I was very pleased with the swing I received in South Australia in the seat of Barker. I know probably a fair bit of that is due to our government's record, but I am pleased to say that, for the second election in a row, I received the biggest swing in South Australia. That is pleasing personally. We had a mixed result in South Australia. We lost two and we won two, but I am very pleased with the result because I think we were under the gun. There is no doubt that the Rann Labor government in South Australia is reasonably popular, but there was still a half a per cent swing to the coalition in this election. I think the vote we received in South Australia was the second highest vote for the coalition anywhere in Australia. That we can return eight seats out of 11 in a state like South Australia is a pretty good result. We were very close to returning nine out of 11, and it would not take much more to actually return 10 out of 11. That is not through any electoral gerrymandering; it is due to the fact that, in South Australia, we are getting over 55 per cent of the two-party preferred vote. And we do have some very effective and good ministers that come from South Australia. We have the likes of the member for Mayo, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Senator Robert Hill, the Minister for Defence. Senator Amanda Vanstone is another minister.

Dr Nelson—And there is the minister for finance.

Mr SECKER—Of course, Nick Minchin. How could I forget Senator Nick Minchin? We have four members of cabinet—equal membership to New South Wales and Victoria. So we in South Australia are batting above our weight in the Liberal Party. It is

very pleasing that we have some very good representation in South Australia.

Over the past three years, the Howard government has had many wins and has provided much for the Australian people. Within my electorate of Barker, the government's commitment to regional Australia has enabled me as a member of the coalition to deliver beneficial outcomes on a range of issues which have assisted the constituents in Barker. Tonight I will inform the House of these achievements and happenings and also give the House some insight into my plans for Barker over the next term of government.

However, before I do that, I would like to extend my thanks to the hardworking Barker campaign team. Their dedication and assistance helped me to return to serve the people of Barker for a third term as a member of this House. This fantastic team has seen the electorate of Barker returned to the Liberal Party—and returned in fine form, as I mentioned earlier. We experienced a swing of 3.2 per cent in the electorate of Barker. We won 103 of the 108 booths, and I think three of the others were won by The Nationals. So, overall, I think the coalition won all but two booths, and in one of those booths there were about 48 votes in it. For the first time, I am almost pleased to say that I actually came pretty close in the booth of Nangwarry. I do not think we had got much over about 34 per cent since Federation, and Barker is a Federation seat. In this election we had a two-party preferred vote of over 48 per cent. That was an amazing result, but one has to look at why we got that result. Nangwarry is a forestry town, and there is no doubt that they did not like the Labor Party's forestry policy.

The results that we received in the electorate of Barker were the culmination of months of hard work by my wonderful team both prior to and during the election. Their commitment was just fantastic and their loy-

alty was unwavering. I consider myself most fortunate to have such a fantastic team. My campaign manager, the Hon. David Ridgway MLC, worked tirelessly on this campaign. Balancing his commitments as a member of the South Australia Legislative Council with his family commitments and his commitments to the Barker campaign was no easy task. He has been a mate of mine for many years. I have helped him and he helped me this time around. I am very grateful for the effort that he put in. He made himself available at all times and he certainly did take a load off my shoulders.

In our campaign committee we had members from all over the electorate. It is an electorate of 64,000 square kilometres. Mr Deputy Speaker Quick, it is nearly the size of your state of Tasmania, so you can imagine trying to represent that area—the amount of people involved, and trying to coordinate them. I had some fantastic people. There was my FEC chair, Anne Bell, and her husband, Graham. We had people like Roger Saunders from Mount Gambier, Stephanie Martin from the Barossa, Draz Barick and Kent Andrew from the Riverland, and Damien McQueen from Murray Bridge. They were fantastic. There are distances of 500 kilometres between some of those people, so you can imagine the logistics of getting them together.

I would especially like to thank my lovely wife, Sharon, who is the best thing that has ever happened to me. Her positive and vibrant attitude around the place, and her total support and commitment, not only during the campaign but also over the last few years, has been one of those wonderful things. Members of this parliament, when they have that sort of support, know how lucky they are. I have no doubt that Sharon won a few votes for me because she is a very vibrant and attractive person who naturally gets on well with people. She certainly has a lot of

strength, and her support was second to none.

I would also like to thank my staff members Philippa, Vanessa, Leeanne, Karen and Alecia—a couple of them part time—who worked tirelessly throughout the campaign. They were often there at almost daybreak and leaving at midnight. That is the sort of support and loyalty I had from my staff, and I do not think anyone could wish for better.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would be aware, election campaigns come at a great cost. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank those who lent their financial support to my campaign. Their generosity is greatly appreciated. Just as they have demonstrated their faith in me as their parliamentary representative, I would like to express my faith in the businesses and individuals in the seat of Barker.

Lastly, and with incessant appreciation, I would like to thank the Liberal Party branches of Barker. Their assistance, both financially and on the ground, was the lifeblood of this campaign. As I said, Barker is a very large electorate—it has 108 polling booths—so we rely heavily on the loyalty and commitment of our volunteers and party members. I think something like 400 of our members worked on the polls during the day, and they certainly assisted the Liberal cause in Barker. They organised fundraisers, put up corflutes, set up polling packs and even campaigned beside me. Last, but by no means least, they gave up their time on Saturday, 9 October to man those polling booths. I know that all members of parliament rely on that support, but I am amazed at what support they give the Liberal Party. I am sure I speak for all members in saying that the Howard government has been returned to this House for a fourth term as a result of that dedicated support from our supporters.

I think we are a positive, forward-thinking party and that the Howard government was obviously a stable choice for the Australian people. It was a hard-fought election. It was well won by the coalition. I think our election policies reflected the needs of the Australian people. Strong policies and good representation win elections, and we had both of these things. I think the election policies of this government really hit a chord with the voters in my electorate. I was very pleased to get \$219 million committed for road freight under Auslink. Roads infrastructure is very important for an electorate like mine. On top of that, the Roads to Recovery program has been very popular—and I am sure the Deputy Speaker would say the same thing. In South Australia it has probably been more popular than anywhere else in Australia because we got the biggest increase in roads grants funding—118 per cent for every council in South Australia. That meant a huge amount for local roads as well as national highways. I think we need to contrast that with the state government in South Australia. The Commonwealth gives something like \$100 million to local government in South Australia. Even in Western Australia and Queensland the state governments give \$63 million and \$62 million respectively to local governments for local roads. What does the South Australian state government give? A pathetic \$800,000. They are by far the worst funders of roads infrastructure of any state in Australia. You can see many of the roads crumbling before your eyes, because they are not spending money on roads where it needs to be spent.

One of the most important responsibilities of any government is looking after the health and welfare of the Australian people. The coalition has delivered results for Australia—and, more specifically, for my electorate of Barker—through the Medicare safety net introduced in March this year. That is pretty

important for an electorate like mine, which has a low bulk-billing rate because it does not have competition between doctors. One of our problems has been getting doctors out into rural areas. That is one thing I know we have improved quite substantially since we have been in government. But, because we do not have the competition, we do not have doctors giving the bulk-billing rates that some of us would like. As a result of that, the Medicare safety net has been fantastic. I think it has been the most fantastic improvement in the 20-year history of the Medicare system. It is now a stronger, more robust system which protects the Australian people from high medical expenses beyond the door of their local GP.

It certainly has been well received. Over the last eight months over 3,000 of my constituents have benefited from the new system. At last count there were 23,100 families in my electorate who have reached the safety net threshold. I know they had greater peace of mind now that they know most of their medical costs, whatever they are for, will be covered. It gives a lot of peace of mind and security. I think it is very fair for an electorate like mine. One of the things that most grabbed the imagination in my electorate was the technical high schools—everyone wants one. I know there are only two in South Australia, but we want a lot more as well. *(Time expired)*

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand) (7.53 p.m.)—It is very difficult not to respond to the last statement of the previous speaker, the honourable member for Barker, because it is one of the great disappointments of the re-election of the Howard government that there may be some policies that people are keen on, but if the government cannot deliver them in the areas where they are needed—my electorate, the electorate of Barker and others—these big-scale promises are not going to turn into anything much.

This is instead of putting that money into a system that exists, and services our communities, but is underfunded. I do not want to be too distracted, because with this opportunity for the address-in-reply we obviously get to cover a range of issues.

I would like to focus on two things: firstly, some issues for my electorate of Gellibrand and, secondly, some important issues that are going to feature in the ongoing debate of the next three years about the way our government is structured and, in particular, my role as shadow Attorney-General. These are the sorts of things that will become increasingly important in holding the government to account in a range of areas.

I want to take this as my first opportunity to thank the people of Gellibrand for re-electing me for a third time. It is obviously a great honour for all of us to be elected. It shows great trust in us as representatives when communities re-elect us several times. It has been wonderful to listen to a number of first speeches today from new members on both sides of the House. They obviously feel the honour acutely when they rise to speak in this place for the first time. It is something that never leaves us, and it never should, because we have the responsibility of representing over 100,000 people each—it is about 120,000 in my electorate—who see us as their conduit to this national capital. The issues they are interested in and they care about which affect their lives can and must be raised here by us. It is an obligation and an honour that I take very seriously.

It is with some regret in making this speech that I note how strongly the community in Gellibrand endorsed Labor's policies at this election—in particular, I think, our direction on health and education was something that many people in the community could see offered them a great alternative to the system they are currently under and the

pressures they are currently feeling. That we were not elected as a whole across the country is a great disappointment not just for us on this side of the House but also for those many people who voted for us and our policy agenda, who will not see it implemented and will not get the benefits of those policies, as would have happened in my electorate.

In particular, I am disappointed that we cannot deliver on some of the vital services that are much needed in Gellibrand, where we committed to better funding of our schools. I have lots of government schools and low-fee Catholic schools in my electorate, and one independent school with moderate fees. No school in my electorate would have been worse off under our policy, and many of the schools—probably with the exception of one—would have been far better off. Schools from Altona Meadows Primary School to the Maribyrnong Secondary College, to the Footscray City College and Williamstown High School are very good schools that really need some extra resources to be able to give the education of our kids in that area an extra edge.

I am pleased that the Minister for Education, Science and Training is here at the table—quite by chance—while I am delivering my speech, because he would be acutely aware that regions like mine in Melbourne need extra assistance. They need to be able to accommodate students who come from all different ethnic backgrounds, such as those from the very large refugee population who face challenges in English language when they start their schooling and many other challenges that make their lives a little more difficult than others. For example, we have relatively low levels of home Internet usage. These are the sorts of things that affect a student's day-to-day studying capacity but are not being dealt with by the government's funding policy for schools. The government is not putting extra resources into those

schools that need it most. Those schools will continue to do a good job by our kids, but they will do it with one hand tied behind their backs through lack of funding that would have been offered if Labor had been elected at the federal election.

So that is a great disappointment. It is a disappointment that, because of the re-election of the Howard government, the extra \$7 million of funding that would have gone to Victoria University will not. We will not have the better health and bulk-billing services that were promised. In particular, Labor was committed to ensuring that the western region of Melbourne had a rebateable MRI machine for our public health services. It is extraordinary that a section of Melbourne that probably has a third of the population does not within its whole reach have an MRI machine that someone can go to and claim a Medicare rebate for. It means that the people with the most money can pay up front to get those services, and those that cannot have to go on long waiting lists for other public facilities that are often difficult to get to. It is often frail and elderly patients who need these services, who have to travel across town to get them and who often risk some other damage to their health.

When an electorate like Gellibrand has voted for Labor at a ratio of about two to one, it is obviously my strong obligation and commitment, which I reaffirm here publicly today, to continue to fight for those issues—whether or not it is from opposition. There is an important role for us to play in highlighting the inadequacies of the government's policies, particularly for regions like mine, where we have an extra need for some intervention at the federal level and proper resources in areas where there is serious disadvantage.

I know that many in the House are familiar with the type of electorate I live in, but I

want to put some statistics together. Thirty-six per cent of our population speaks a language other than English at home. We have a nearly 20 per cent—19.7 per cent—rate of youth unemployment and a 6.4 per cent general unemployment rate in western Melbourne. Everyone talks about how well the economy is going, but I think it is important to acknowledge that not everyone is yet benefiting from the economy going well and that we do have an obligation to make sure that everyone gets a fair share of the benefits that are flowing through to the rest of the community.

We have had a decline of about 10 per cent in bulk-billing rates in our electorate. Although compared to some other areas it is still relatively high, that is a great difference. A large number of families have local doctors who are now no longer bulk-billing them. We are seeing a growing number of complaints on that issue. The re-election of the Howard government does not mean that these issues and needs can be ignored and my job, obviously, is to make sure that they are not. We must ensure that the government will govern for everyone, and that includes the people in my electorate, many of whom are having a hard time.

My job also reaches to holding the government to its election promises, and one of those promises was made in my electorate. That was a promise made during the election that the Howard government if re-elected would put \$8 million into the Western Bulldogs Football Club to help redevelop the famous Whitten Oval and to make sure that a range of community services could be delivered through that redeveloped facility. The people of the region, who are very passionate about their football and their football club—as am I—were delighted that Mr Howard, in making his first trip out into the west of Melbourne, decided to make this commitment to the club. But I must say that we are a

little bit concerned that since the election there has been deafening silence on this commitment. The club has written to the government, requesting confirmation and seeking advice as to any other processes that now need to be gone through and asking which department is administering the money. I have written to the Prime Minister, trying to find out this information. We have had no response.

I am very concerned that after all the fanfare—and even people who were not in Victoria would have seen the coverage, which was saturation coverage on the night, of commitments being made to our football club—there has actually been no follow through yet. It has made a lot of people in our electorate nervous. I am hopeful that the government will quickly clarify its commitment, acknowledge the advantage it clearly got in the election in many areas and make sure that it holds to its word.

Having sat through question time today, I was obviously also concerned that when Mr Anderson, the Acting Prime Minister, was asked a range of questions about other regional projects he seemed to be suggesting that the election announcements that were made were only step 1 in the process and that the communities now should actually follow some other process as yet unknown to people. He seemed to be suggesting that the money that was promised under regional programs may not actually be there after all for these communities. I have no idea whether or not this commitment to the Western Bulldogs Football Club, in my electorate, is one of those projects. It is extraordinary, really, that a commitment could be made without knowing that. But I am fearful that commitments to projects like mine in the electorate of Gellibrand are going to be broken because the government has got the electoral advantage it was after and has no intention of following through on them.

I am here to tell the government that if they try to do that there will be a riot in the western suburbs of Melbourne. It will be on the front page of every local paper. Every local paper, all of the metropolitan papers and all of the TV stations that followed it will be chasing Mr Howard and Mr Anderson—the Prime Minister and the Acting Prime Minister—around, asking exactly what it was that they had committed to and if they were going to follow through now on the money or not. I am sure that the government intend to honour their commitment. I hope that they do. Like the Bulldogs, we will all be looking very closely at every line in the budget when we get to it next year, to ensure that the money is there for the projects that they committed to.

While I have been talking about pockets of social disadvantage in Gellibrand, I also want to acknowledge that there are areas of new homeowners and people with very large mortgages. In 2001, there were nearly 12,000 mortgage holders in Gellibrand and there are growing numbers of young families. Obviously, with this change and with lots of housing developments under way we are seeing that people with large debts have very real concerns. We must make sure that the government is held accountable on its promise to keep interest rates low. But we also need to investigate more generally the issues surrounding affordability of home ownership. There are also other pressures that grow when you have changing demographics, like the need for child care.

There are a number of other local issues that are going to come up in the next year that I will be following closely, particularly the situation of Tenix and the dockyards at Williamstown. They are still waiting for the government to decide what it is going to do about the future of shipbuilding in Australia. We still cannot get any guarantees that any tender process for shipbuilding will be fair

and open. In my view, that would give Williamstown the best chance of proving that it is the place to build Defence ships in Australia, being the only place where the Anzac frigates had been built over the past 10 years. The sale of the Maribyrnong Defence site is something about which there have been negotiations between the Victorian government and the Commonwealth. We are still waiting for the Commonwealth to sign off on that. We also have growing pressures with our environment—for example, on the rivers, particularly the Maribyrnong River and Kororoit Creek and others, and also on our bay fronts in Williamstown and Altona. That will be something that I will be pursuing in this next term of opposition.

In the time that is remaining I want to talk about the issues in my portfolio, the shadow Attorney-General's portfolio. We have a special role in this area to ensure the integrity of our legal and civic institutions. It is always important to do that, but the government has won control of the Senate and therefore both houses of parliament at this election and so some of the scrutiny that previously occurred in the parliament will actually have to occur outside the parliament. This will show that the strength of our other institutions is very important. Their robustness will be tested.

We have had a lot of important inquiries in the Senate in the past six to eight years, from inquiries into poverty and children in care to others like cash for visas and the 'children overboard' issue. They were important opportunities for allegations to be tested, for important social issues to be aired, for people to give their expertise to the parliament and for us to make recommendations on those issues. I think it is very important that the Senate does not lose that role but in terms of the accountability that the Senate has been able to require from the executive government we may be looking to other arms of government to do that in a different way.

I raise this because one of the things that we took to the last election was significant reform of the Freedom of Information Act. Those commitments are very important and we remain interested in implementing them, but I think we need to go much further than that. We need to look at how else the system should be reformed so that government decisions are transparent, so that the public are aware of all of the information at further elections, or when involved in public debate, and they know the information that should be publicly available—because governments are actually elected to do work on behalf of the public, not to operate as secret think tanks and not provide people with information and ideas that they may have gathered as a government.

I am a little bit fearful of a bill that has been introduced in the other place—because of the timing of the new parliament, it has been introduced in the Senate first rather than in the House—which contains reforms to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. I raise this not to debate the detail of the bill, which will be done at another time, but to say that there are moves, as part of that amendment, to downgrade the role of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and particularly the role of the president. I think this is of concern when you think about the types of matters that come before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

This is where people who have a dispute with the government most often take their complaints. If you have a dispute with the government over a social security issue, appeals from the Social Security Appeals Tribunal go to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. It is the same for a dispute over a Veterans' Affairs matter, a workers compensation issue in Comcare, a child support dispute or a freedom of information request that is contested, and even for a number of issues in the immigration and citizenship area. So,

if members of the general public who are involved in decisions made by governments have a problem, the place where they will most likely have to challenge the decision is the AAT.

I think it is worrying that, at the same time as we see the government gaining control of the Senate, we also see them seeking to have more control of institutions like the AAT by downgrading the role of the president—removing tenure from the president so that they are potentially politically vulnerable if the decisions they make are not favourable to the government. This is something that we will need to monitor very closely. I hope that discussions with the government might lead to some sensible developments in that area, which is why I do not want to go to the provisions of the bill in detail, but I would like to flag that it is something that we regard very seriously as an accountability matter.

We also think that we should have a discussion about a better process for judicial appointments and complaints against the judiciary. People will remember the extraordinary attacks on some of our judiciary by this government in its last term. I think it highlighted the fact that we have no process for quickly dispensing with malicious or vexatious complaints. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that we also have no process for dealing with serious complaints, and I think that is something that should be explored. Again, these are things that I see as strengthening the role of the judiciary, by making sure that each arm of government—government with a small 'g'; the legislature, the executive and the judiciary—can operate to its full strength, free from the influence of the other arms of government.

We also have some questions on issues that have been much debated in the last couple of weeks about the appropriateness of government spending and decision making

that relates to government funding. As allegations by the member for New England have been explored, we have found that a whole range of other funding commitments are starting to unravel before us. The issue of propriety in procedural justice and the processes that are used for allocating federal money are going to come under much closer scrutiny and indeed need to.

I also want to talk about a range of issues to do with access to justice. I have put this on the record before, so I will just give a very short version because I would like to concentrate on a couple of issues. The government have a very poor record on legal aid. They slashed enormous amounts of money from the budget in 1996, and we are only getting back to 1996 levels now, eight years later, but of course with some reductions because inflation was not taken into account.

At the same time we have seen a boom in spending on legal services for the government. We need to much more closely consider how we track the money that the government spends on legal services and whether we can divert some of that money from government expenditure, and use taxpayer money to fund those ordinary mums and dads who need assistance in the courts—not to make sure that the department always has four opinions on the same issue and pays Sydney rates for them. There is no excuse for that. It is extraordinary to us that the government does not know where a lot of its legal expenditure has gone. With modern technology, tracking systems and accounting processes, there is no excuse for that.

I wanted to flag some family law issues, but I think time will defeat me so I am just going to raise an issue about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services. The government has started the first stage of tendering out these services in WA and Victoria. Although there have been some improve-

ments to the extremely damaging tender document that was released earlier in the year, there is still nothing in the tender document that allows the services to be paid for work in Aboriginal communities for the prevention of crime and for community education about legal issues; it is focused only on legal work, case by case. This means that Aboriginal people will lose a range of services that they currently have under the ATSILS program. I think it sets us back a long way if we deal with the problems only when they are already in court rather than in a preventative way, which would be preferable. (*Time expired*)

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (8.13 p.m.)—When I rose in this chamber for my first speech in the early evening of 13 February nearly three years ago, I asked one question: what is our purpose? I indicated that I thought this question would underscore my actions and provide a compass for my journey in this place. Having survived my first term as the second member for Moncrieff, I am pleased to take the time to review the progress that has been made both in my electorate and also nationally under the stewardship of the Howard government.

There can be no doubt that standing for office for a second term is far less daunting than standing for the first time. The campaign in Moncrieff in 2004 was an honest, clean campaign, and I thank my opponents for their contribution in this regard. Although I fiercely disagree with most of them on the path that they desire Australia to travel, I do applaud their commitment to being participants in our robust democracy. I pay particular tribute and give thanks to the electors of Moncrieff. I have a great appreciation for the electors of Moncrieff, for they have certainly placed their faith and their confidence in me with regard to being not only a strong advocate but also a passionate advocate for our part of the world. It is indeed a privilege and

an honour to serve the people of Moncrieff, who live in Australia's fastest-growing city on the Gold Coast.

As a consequence of boundary changes prior to the last federal election, I saw some significant changes in my electorate. I lost the suburbs of Parkwood, Arundel and Labrador, most of Southport and parts of Nerang to the member now to my immediate north, the Hon. David Jull, the member for Fadden. I did, however, pick up nearly 20,000 additional constituents in the suburbs of Mermaid Beach, Mermaid Waters, Miami, Nobbys and north Burleigh. I have been particularly grateful to them, for they have embraced me and my advocacy on their behalf with regard to those parts of the central Gold Coast. Overall, the Gold Coast is a city that faces unique challenges. I have certainly been able to glean a good indication of what a number of these challenges are as a consequence of my regular listening posts and the various works I have done in the community throughout my first term.

I would like to take this chance to thank my campaign team who assisted me throughout the most recent campaign. I must especially thank my incredibly loyal, dedicated and hardworking staff—Marianne McCabe, Tricia Walsh and Mark Powell—who I am sure for quite some time thought an eight-hour day only took you as far as lunchtime. I also have to thank Alastair Mitchell, Jonathon Ellis, Sarah Allard, Peter Cantazariti and the Moncrieff campaign committee for their undying work on tasks which they completed in full because they knew the importance of ensuring all tasks for the campaign were done to put us on the best possible footing to ensure victory.

I also must thank all of the volunteers. They contributed so much towards the campaign. Countless hours of work went into making sure the Liberal Party in Moncrieff

was able to perform to the greatest possible extent. I thank my booth captains and all my prepoll volunteers who worked for the weeks prior to polling day, especially my mother and father, who put in an exorbitant amount of effort in this regard. I also have to thank the nearly 400 volunteers who turned out on polling day to assist not only my campaign but the Liberal Party's campaign. They did so because they have a resolute belief in the good governance of the Howard government and the path we as a government are taking this nation on.

I also want to thank my financial supporters. The reality is that modern day campaigning is notoriously expensive. While some people would obviously desire that politicians not have to incur any campaign donations at all, the reality is that campaigning is expensive and does require financial assistance and support. I cannot thank enough those people who were willing to contribute. Whether it was \$5 or more, each one of them made a significant contribution towards ensuring the Liberal Party performed not only in Moncrieff but also in a number of key marginal seats within Queensland.

Most of all, I cannot ever truly show my appreciation and thanks to my wife, Astra, who truly does give meaning to my life and educates me every single day. Her support, her strength, her humour and her tenacity are certainly inspiring to me, and I am forever grateful for her support and her inspiration.

We saw a 3.8 per cent swing towards the coalition in the seat of Moncrieff, which raises the question: why was that the case? As I foreshadowed earlier, I believe it is fundamentally because I and the Liberal Party have listened, responded and, most importantly, delivered for the Gold Coast. As I outlined, through my community listening posts and my regular work in the community I have on a number of occasions heard people

put forward the key issues that are outstanding in the community. Among them—and perhaps first and foremost, as it was one I raised in my maiden speech—was the absolute need Griffith University on the Gold Coast had for additional university places. It is fortuitous that the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, is in the chamber this evening. I thank him for his tireless efforts and, importantly, his regular visits to the Gold Coast to hear the very sound arguments that were put forward by Griffith University for additional university places.

Dr Nelson interjecting—

Mr CIOBO—I am pleased to hear that the education minister recognised how compelling they truly were, and I was very pleased that, in fact, the highest allocation of new university places across the nation was to the Griffith University Gold Coast campus. There can be no doubt that in Australia's fastest-growing city there is an absolute need for more university places, and whilst we certainly did make a very large dent in the shortfall that exists on a per capita basis there is still much work to be done. I reaffirm in this chamber tonight that I will continue to pursue the allocation of additional university places.

When I was initially elected, there was a shortfall of approximately 3,000 university places that Griffith University required just to bring the Gold Coast up to the Australian average. When compared to other cities such as Wollongong, that deficit rose to approximately 5,000 university places. I have been very pleased to be part of a government that has listened and responded to that cry and demand for new university places. Those 1,500 additional places will certainly go a long way but, as I indicated, there is still some significant work to do in that area, and I intend to continue working on that.

I also highlight that my electors raised with me that they sought a new medical school for the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast for far too long was seen as the inferior cousin to Brisbane. Brisbane had a medical school and the Gold Coast had been attempting to gain a medical school since the 1970s. I must particularly thank the former Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, who together with Dr Brendan Nelson approved a new medical school for the Gold Coast. Coincidentally, today the Australian Medical Council announced that both the Griffith University medical school and Bond University's medical school have received AMC approval. That is a great shot in the arm for our region, and I am particularly excited to see two quite different models of a medical school going forward and coming onto the marketplace in the near future.

I am very excited to watch Griffith University's medical school being constructed. It is a mere 500 metres up the road from my electorate office, and I was pleased to see within the last several weeks the Griffith University medical school logo going up on the exterior of the building. It is a tremendous shot in the arm for our city, and it means we have a long-term solution to the growing demand that exists within our city for access to doctors. Importantly, it also satisfies the very strong demand among young people on the Gold Coast to undertake medical studies at a local campus.

For the residents of Nerang and Highland Park, access to Medicare services was an important priority as well. I sought a new Medicare office for them and, although I was unsuccessful, I was very pleased to announce in my last term the allocation of three new Medicare Easyclaim booths. The sites for these have now been selected, and I am pleased that the tens of thousands of residents west of the M1 motorway will now

have a great deal of access to Medicare through these booths.

Another key component which I spoke on at length in my maiden speech was the fact that the tourism industry is vitally important to the Gold Coast. The Howard government certainly has the runs on the board when it comes to the tourism industry. I was very pleased that the former Minister for Small Business and Tourism, the Hon. Joe Hockey, was able to steer the tourism white paper through both this chamber and the other place. That white paper will see over \$600 million going into the tourism industry over the next four years. The proof that the tourism industry is already reaping significant benefits from this white paper can clearly be seen in the number of inbound tourists to Australia. I was pleased to see numbers released by Tourism Australia which indicated that there had been more inbound international tourists coming to Australia in the past 12 months than for the year 2000 with the Sydney Olympics. This indicates a very strong resurgence and interest in visiting Australia among international tourists, which generates significant export income.

I was also pleased in my last term to see the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism—which is headquartered at Griffith University on the Gold Coast—receive nearly \$30 million of funding from this government. It received this money because it has been producing a number of very significant and commercially attractive applications that the tourism industry has been embracing. We have seen significant runs on the board from this CRC which place it among the best CRCs currently operating in Australia. In the last 12 months I was also pleased that the new international centre of excellence for tourism was placed on the Gold Coast. These institutions not only ensure growing recognition of the important role that the Gold Coast plays as the engine

room for tourism in Australia but also create a link for those in the tourism industry to additional applications, support and research, all of which help them to run their businesses better. At a time when our country is looking for additional opportunities to increase productivity, it is important to recognise that productivity can also occur through efficiency gains realised in service industries like the tourism industry. I am very pleased that both the ICE and the CRC for Sustainable Tourism play very important roles in this regard.

During the campaign it was encouraging to have the Prime Minister visit. The Prime Minister and I, whilst walking along the beach towards Surfers Paradise one day, had the chance to talk about a number of key issues and challenges facing the city of the Gold Coast. Among them was the growing shortage of those who have been vocationally educated, and the announcement during the campaign of the new technical training colleges was a great shot in the arm. I was very pleased that the 24 sites selected included the Gold Coast. I believe that the Gold Coast benefits from having a strong team of four Liberal members, and I have no doubt that the allocation of one of these new sites is a direct consequence of the Gold Coast having these four strong advocates.

Last week I had the opportunity to participate in the first roundtable in our region to discuss options for the new technical training college that will be placed on the Gold Coast, and I was very excited by the discussion of and the enthusiasm for this new facility. It means that across the board young people on the Gold Coast will have the opportunity to participate not only in tertiary education but in vocational education, which is equally as important. They will have access to education in the correct skills for, for example, the construction industry, the tourism industry and the marine industry—

another nascent industry which presents great potential for the future. I would like to see young people embrace the opportunity to undertake studies in the marine industry—whether it be in marine upholstery or fibre-glass—at the new technical training colleges that will be placed on the Gold Coast.

I was also pleased that an extension of the film tax offset to the television industry was put forward as part of the federal government's policy. The film and TV industry on the Gold Coast is rapidly growing. Several hundred people are now directly employed not only in what are called 'runaway productions' from the United States but also in film and television productions indigenous to Australia, with scripts that are written, produced, directed and post-produced in Australia. The new film tax offset and its extension to the television industry will augment the number of incentives that already exist in this industry. I am very confident that this industry has its best days ahead of it and there will be opportunities for new graduates of vocational and tertiary education to undertake roles within this growing industry.

My electorate has the highest number of small businesses per capita in this nation. We have seen a rededication by the Howard government and certainly by me to ensuring that conditions within this country benefit small businesses, which truly are the engine room of our nation. If we did not have entrepreneurs willing to take risks in seeking reward then we as a nation would not be able to meet many of the challenges that face us. We have heard a number of those challenges enunciated today, not least of which is our ageing population. I believe fundamentally that the reforms that we are making in the small business sector—I note in particular the unfair dismissal laws which, under the new composition of the Senate, will finally have a chance to be passed—will remove many of the shackles that the Labor Party

left on the small business sector, enabling it to be more productive and profitable and to employ more people into the future.

I have listed each of these points because I believe that they not only relate to the needs and aspirations of middle Australia but also highlight and demonstrate the way in which the Howard government has delivered very strongly for the people of the Gold Coast. With a population of nearly 500,000, the Gold Coast does continue to face a number of significant challenges. The various points I have raised are some of the challenges but are also, importantly, some of the solutions that this government has highlighted. However, these are not final solutions. There still needs to be more work done, and I will continue to undertake that work. Principal among that work is to address the growing need for additional funding into traffic and transport infrastructure.

I cannot go further on this point without recognising the \$12 billion investment that the Howard government is making under the AusLink proposal and also expressing my extreme concern and disappointment in the Queensland state Labor government. The Queensland state Labor government this year ran a budget surplus of \$2.3 billion. Despite this budget surplus and despite nearly \$1 billion in road funding that was put toward the M1 project, or the Pacific Motorway, that runs over the Tweed border, I was disappointed to see the state Premier, Peter Beattie, announce recently that they would not proceed with additional widening of the M1 between Nerang and the Tweed border unless the federal government was willing to put even more money into the project. I really question the bona fides of the Queensland state government when they run a \$2.3 billion budget surplus and, most importantly, have a \$500 million windfall gain as a consequence of the introduction of the goods and services tax by this government and yet

still cry poor when it comes to important transport infrastructure such as the M1 project. I implore the state Labor members on the Gold Coast to please speak with the Premier and ensure that this very necessary and important road project is completed.

I again thank my campaign team for their efforts in the last election. I also thank those opponents who stood because of their belief in having a robust democracy. I am very grateful to the constituents of Moncrieff; with their good grace I would like to continue serving them throughout the entirety of this next term.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (8.33 p.m.)—I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Capricornia for seeing fit to re-elect me as their federal member. I sincerely appreciate the confidence that my constituents have shown in me by allowing me to continue to serve them. I would also like to take this opportunity to guarantee that the confidence the voters of Capricornia have placed in me will not be taken for granted. I will continue to work hard for them and to bring their issues into this chamber.

Tonight's speech feels a little bit like a de facto first speech because, as of 9 October, my electorate of Capricornia changed dramatically from that to which I was first elected in 1998. When I was first elected, Capricornia extended from the beautiful Capricorn coast to the outback town of Winton, the home of *Waltzing Matilda*, and beyond. The redistribution has almost halved the geographic size of my electorate and has removed much of the outback which I was so proud to serve. Today's Capricornia now extends west only to the town of Clermont and takes in areas to the south-west, including Mount Morgan, Duaringa, Woorabinda and Banana shires. The redistribution of my electorate leaves me with mixed feelings:

sadness at the loss of so many beautiful places and wonderful people in towns like Winton, Longreach, Aramac, Barcaldine, Jericho and Alpha, and renewed motivation as I get to discover and make connections with the newly acquired areas.

Over the past six years it has been a pleasure to make my regular trips to Longreach and the other communities of the central west that are no longer part of my electorate and talk to the residents, face to face, about their issues and their lives. Throughout this time, these people have been struggling through the worst drought they have ever seen, yet they remain determined and committed to life in the bush. I am going to miss these areas on a personal level as well, as they hold a special place in my heart. It was in Barcaldine where I was married to my partner, Craig, and it often feels like a second home to us. These areas also hold great historical and cultural value for Australia—whether they be the birthplace of Qantas or the Australian Labor Party or the site of the penning of *Waltzing Matilda*. It can easily be seen how much I love these places and why I am saddened to be losing them. In particular, I am saddened by the loss of my Longreach electorate office and my staff member in that office, Kelly Wood. In order to better represent the people of the far central west, I opened the first federal member's office in Longreach. I know this was greatly appreciated by everyone in the central west, and I trust that The Nationals' new member for the area will maintain the office I opened and continue to provide that level of service to the people around Longreach and the central west.

Of course, there is another, more positive, side to the redistribution. I am happy to have picked up some new areas that are all interesting, dynamic places filled with people with initiative and a commitment to building on the strengths of our region. I would like to

take this opportunity to welcome the new areas to Capricornia: the shires of Duaringa, Mount Morgan, Woorabinda and Banana. These diverse and wonderful areas will add to the distinct charm of Capricornia and enhance the already strong presence of mining and primary industries in the electorate. Each of the new areas to come into Capricornia is a region of economic and environmental significance, and I am pleased to have them as part of the electorate that I represent. They are a good fit with the other areas of central Queensland that I have represented for the past six years. Together they form a region of growing significance to our nation across a range of activities—industrial, educational and cultural.

Duaringa Shire, taken from the electorate of Maranoa, includes the towns of Duaringa, Blackwater, Dingo, Bluff and Bauhinia. Blackwater is known as the coal capital of Queensland and makes a substantial contribution to Australia's mineral export earnings. Duaringa shire is a strong mining, beef and cropping area which has an abundance of natural beauty and incredible places including the Blackdown Tableland National Park, which is home to hundreds of species of native plants and wildlife as well as examples of Indigenous art.

Mount Morgan is a grand old town, with a history going back over 140 years. In its heyday it was the richest goldmine in Australia. Today, the town is a tourist destination for people from all over Australia who want to catch a glimpse of the past and enjoy the friendly small-town hospitality for which Mount Morgan is renowned. Banana Shire also moves to Capricornia from the electorate of Wide Bay, incorporating the towns of Biloela, Theodore, Baralaba, Moura and more. Banana Shire contains some of the largest commodity production areas in Central Queensland, contributing some \$123 million annually to Queensland's economy.

Woorabinda is an Indigenous community of around 1,600 people located about 170 kilometres south-west of Rockhampton. The people of Woorabinda have strong family and community ties to Rockhampton. I have helped many of its residents on an individual basis in the past; I now look forward to working with the community as a whole to achieve its collective goals. Capricornia has an interesting past and a bright future, which makes it a great place to live, work and watch your family grow. When I talk to local leaders, businesspeople and those involved in the organisations that are the lifeblood of our Central Queensland communities, I hear that there is no shortage of challenges that we have to overcome but also that there are plenty of opportunities to work towards.

What we really need in Central Queensland, and what I have been calling for ever since I got to this place, is a genuine partnership between our region and the federal government. We need a federal government that is truly committed to understanding and working with our region to achieve our full potential. Among other things, that means providing important infrastructure, like the roads to Shoalwater Bay. It means assisting Central Queensland University to build on its capacity to provide top-class educational opportunities to our local students. It also means improving access to essential services, such as health services. Instead, this government has continually implemented policies that work against Central Queensland and, indeed, against rural and regional Australia more generally.

One example of this is the government's policy on the pricing for rescue and fire-fighting services at airports. Under the new pricing structure released by Airservices Australia earlier this year, airlines wanting to run services to Rockhampton Airport, which is already the second most expensive airport to land at in Australia, will cop a doubling of

landing fees over the next five years. The fee to land an aircraft at Rockhampton Airport will increase to almost \$20 per landed tonne, while the same aircraft landing in Sydney or Melbourne will cost less than \$2 per landed tonne. Apparently, the Minister for Transport and Regional Services and Leader of The Nationals thinks it is good policy for the people of Central Queensland, every time they catch a flight from Rockhampton Airport, to subsidise travellers from Sydney and Melbourne.

The government might think that the election result is a resounding endorsement of their policies, but I can assure them that there are many areas in which the Howard government continues to fail to respond to the needs and aspirations of the people of rural and regional areas like Central Queensland. For example, the people of Capricornia certainly did not vote for the Howard government agenda on Telstra. Interestingly, the coalition candidates in Capricornia did not seem to like the Howard government's agenda on Telstra either. They certainly did not spend any time talking about it in the campaign. Instead, they spent the campaign pretending that it was not in fact government policy to sell the remaining publicly-owned share of Telstra. And for good reason—quite simply, the people of Central Queensland do not want Telstra privatised and they have voted that way in the last three elections. They understand, even if this government does not, that a privatised Telstra will mean a reduction in services and jobs in our part of the country.

I was advised that on Friday, 12 November the small community of Mount Chalmers, some 40 kilometres from Rockhampton, lost its telephone service. When advised of this problem, Telstra's response was that they were aware of the problem, as more than 100 telephone services in the area were out of commission. However, as no-one

in the area had a 'diagnosed life threatening illness' everything was okay because services were expected to be resumed by 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday the 17th. So Telstra believes the residents of this small community can do without telephone services for five days. You have to ask yourself what the response would be if people living on the North Shore of Sydney were told the same thing by Telstra. You might well say that if there is a real emergency the residents can use their mobile phones. But there is no mobile phone service at Mount Chalmers. Apparently, this is what the Howard government considers 'up to scratch' when it comes to regional phone services.

I would have thought that The Nationals members in the Howard government would understand that this is taipan country, that farm accidents do occur, that children do fall out of trees and into dams, that illness can strike at any moment and that the most important item in a rural home at the time of an emergency is a working telephone. We are taught at school how Flynn and the pedal radio made it much safer for people to live in rural Australia because his pedal radio provided instant communication in the event of an emergency. Well, here we are in 2004 with the Howard government hell-bent on the full privatisation of Telstra without ensuring that services in regional and rural Australia are at an acceptable level. You would have to say that the people of Mount Chalmers would have been safer 75 years ago with a pedal radio than with the non-existent Telstra service of last week. I appeal to our Nationals colleagues in this place to do what your constituents in rural Australia are asking of you. Stop the sale of Telstra. Stop withdrawing services from rural and regional areas and start standing up for the regions you purport to represent in this place.

To even suggest that Telstra services in regional and rural Australia are up to city

standards is an arrogant disregard for the truth. The Nationals must listen, as I have done, to the people in my electorate and they must stop the further sale of Telstra. As I was talking about the Flying Doctor, it is appropriate that I mention the chronic shortage of doctors in rural and regional Australia. I am sure that those members of The Nationals who are listening to their electorate will know that what I am saying is not just rhetoric. They know that every small town and regional centre is crying out for more medical staff. I have a constant stream of people coming into my office who feel that their lives are at risk because they are on waiting lists due to the shortage of medical professionals in our regional and rural centres.

Just last Sunday night, a constituent of mine fell and badly hurt her leg. As is the way with so many country people, she did not ring for an ambulance because she did not want to occupy them when they might be needed for something more serious. So she made her own way to the local base hospital. She arrived at 11.00 p.m. and left at 3.00 a.m. the following day. Her four-hour experience at the accident and emergency ward has had a profound effect on her. With only one doctor on duty, this woman tells me that two people died, a baby was born in the car park—which I can attest to because it was on the front page of the local paper—and a number of other patients were treated for a variety of other injuries. This is clearly not an unusual night in a regional or rural hospital.

For too long the Howard government has simply ignored the medical needs of our rural people. I guess they hope that foreign doctors will plug the gaps and the people of regional and rural Australia will just accept a second-class health system or one that sees them flying off to Brisbane for everything they need. Those gaps are now gaping holes and, whereas there was a time once when

only young people left the country to find work in our cities, we are now seeing older Australians leaving regional and rural centres to live in our capital cities because they understand that the health services provided in our cities are far superior to what is available to them in the bush. In many cases these people leave behind homes and families and communities where they have spent most of their lives and move to capital cities where they have no social contact and become an increasing burden on the already overstretched public system. I fear this trend will continue and even increase as the Howard government continues to ignore the health requirements of our ageing citizens living in our regional areas.

It surprises me that we do not hear more from The Nationals opposite about this. They claim to represent that 36 per cent of the population which lives in rural Australia, so they must know the statistics—that the 36 per cent of Australians who live in rural Australia die younger and at a higher rate in every age bracket than Australians in our cities. This situation is not helped by the shortage of medical services in rural Australia. The truth is that this government has allowed rural medical services to run down to such an extent that they have now reached a critical level. I understand that the issues are complex, but surely the government is capable of taking one step at a time.

My challenge to the government is to take just that first step by way of ensuring that the doctors who work and live in rural Australia are appropriately recognised. At the moment rural and remote practice is not recognised, and I am saying that it should be badged as a specialist area. I believe this one simple step would get more doctors into rural practice. At the moment it is difficult, and, indeed, some think risky, for young doctors to get the skills they need to feel confident about working in the bush. Existing programs are frag-

mented and obviously not working. Rural doctors need to feel valued, not only by their community but also by their colleagues in the medical profession and by the wider community. I think it is time that the government seriously considers having those doctors working in the bush recognised as rural and remote practice specialists.

On the topic of health services, I would like to mention a commitment that was made by the Labor Party to the people of Central Queensland during the election campaign and urge the government to follow suit now that they are the ones responsible for the health of my constituents. I am referring to Labor's pledge to fund a Medicare eligible MRI machine at the Rockhampton Base Hospital. This announcement was widely welcomed and the service is still much needed by the Central Queensland community. The government is in receipt of two applications from my region—one from Queensland Health seeking to install a Medicare eligible machine at the Rockhampton Base Hospital and one from a private operator, Central Queensland Medical Imaging.

Labor's policy is that MRI services should be available through our public hospitals, and that, of course, remains my preference. However, the bottom line is that we need this service in Central Queensland, so the private applicant has my support for the submission it made to the government if that is the only way we are going to see an improvement in people's access to this important health service in my region. The submissions have been with the government for some months now, so the government should get on and make its decision about the placement of the 20 additional MRI services that the minister announced back in June. Rockhampton has been identified by both the Commonwealth and the Queensland governments as a high priority regional centre, so the need for the service has already been clearly established.

I am calling on the government to just get on with it and make its decision, and I believe that they should announce Rockhampton as one of the recipients of those Medicare eligible MRI machines.

In closing, we have heard quite a lot of comment in the last couple of weeks stemming from the allegations that were made by the member for New England about just who this government seem to think they are working for in this country. I would like to let the government know that I am here working for the people of Capricornia and I expect as a Labor member that the government will take the needs of my constituents just as seriously as those of members sitting on the other side of the chamber.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (8.49 p.m.)—May I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker Jenkins, on your re-election to your position and also, through you, the Speaker on his election. I have served with the Speaker on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics since 1996 and he does have a reputation for being fair and decent and for trying to achieve consensus where possible. I would also like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to several members of the 40th parliament who were not re-elected at the 2004 election: Ross Cameron, Larry Anthony and Trish Worth.

Ross was the member for Parramatta. He was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer at the time of the last election. I think I met Ross in 1996 when we first came in. He was a terrific orator. He made a big contribution in parliament, not least through his convening of the National Student Leadership Forum on Faith and Values, which was a bipartisan affair at which both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition used to speak, as well as a number of members of parliament, the Governor-General and so on.

Larry Anthony was also a member of the class of 1996. He did a great job in his ministerial portfolio. I thank him for finding some funding for a literary festival which we held in Boothby in November. He was a very talented minister and did a great job of representing the electorate of Richmond in this place. One of my neighbours, the member for Adelaide, Trish Worth, held what is a very difficult seat for the Liberal Party in four elections. At three out of four of those elections she had to wait 10 days until finding out whether she had been elected, but Trish also did a great job as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Both Ross and Larry have politics in the blood, as you do, Mr Deputy Speaker Jenkins, and I sincerely hope that their talents will not be lost to politics. Similarly, with Trish, I hope that she will be able to do something in the areas which she is so passionate about: breast cancer, mental health and so on.

I am particularly proud to have been re-elected, for the fourth time now, to represent the electorate of Boothby. Members who have previously held the seat of Boothby include Sir John McLeay, who was the longest serving Speaker of the House of Representatives; John McLeay, who was a minister in the Fraser government; and former Premier Steele Hall. Interestingly, I found a book in a bookstore about another one of my predecessors, Archibald Grenfell Price, who held the seat from 1941 to 1943. The last time we lost the seat of Boothby to the Labor Party was in 1943; it was a disastrous election for us. Archibald Grenfell Price had a big involvement with St Mark's College at the University of Adelaide and so on.

Boothby was redistributed dramatically in the early 1990s so that the seat is quite different from what it was historically. Much of the western part of Boothby was the seat of Hawker, which was held for a long time by Ralph Jacobi. Along the coast much of it was Kingston, which was held variously by Gordon Bilney, Grant Chapman before him, and Richie Gun for the Labor Party during the 1970s. Having campaigned with Grant Chapman, it is encouraging to see that some of the people still recognised him and remembered him from his time as the member for Kingston. It has been a real honour to be re-elected. Boothby is the seat where I went to school and where I worked prior to becoming a member of parliament. It is a great area, the southern suburbs of Adelaide, and it is a real pleasure to represent it.

In reflecting on the election result, one of the key things was the collapse in the Democrat vote. The Democrats made a serious charge in Boothby in 2001. Their vote in Boothby was always about 13 per cent, but in 2001 they actually received almost 20 per cent. In 2004 that fell to two per cent and most of that went to the Labor Party. In reflecting on the result, a group of people who previously voted for the Democrats have now, by and large, gone across to the Labor Party. As the member for Boothby, I have noted that. They are voters who were concerned with things other than the management of the economy, and I am aware of the issues they are interested in.

Looking at the result nationally, I am particularly proud to be part of the team, led by the Prime Minister John Howard, which has been able to win such strong support not only in the outer suburban areas of Australia but also in rural and regional areas. If we reflect on this, this pattern was actually evident at the time of the 1999 republican referendum; you could almost see a correlation between the yes vote and the distance from

the GPO. Now we have seen this reflected in the 2004 election whereby a seat like Adelaide, an inner city seat, fell to Labor. But, of course, Labor has lost seats like Kingston and Wakefield in my own state, Bonner in Queensland, Hasluck and Stirling in Western Australia and so on.

I am also particularly proud that the Liberal Party is now the choice of skilled tradespeople, apprentices and blue-collar workers. Looking at the 2004 election, we can reflect on the difference between the sorts of people that the Liberal Party elects to parliament and those that the Labor Party elects to parliament. The Liberal Party crop of 2004 includes an ophthalmologist, a test pilot for the Air Force, a policeman who worked in counter-terrorism and a policeman who worked in the Star Force in my own state. These people represent the range of occupations right across Australia.

Looking at the Labor Party's personnel, we can see that they are by and large people who have worked as either political staffers or trade union officials. Some people think this is a new phenomenon; I do not believe it is. If you look back to the 1949 election, you will see that pretty much the same sort of people were being elected to represent the Labor Party. In the 1949 election, the great crop for the Liberal Party were by and large ex-servicemen, many of whom were officers, who really did a much better job of representing the community. Where the change has occurred has been observed by Barry Cohen. In 1949, going back to when the Liberal Party was first formed, the Labor Party still elected blue-collar workers to the national parliament. Right now very few people in the Labor parliamentary caucus have ever been blue-collar workers; they are mostly apparatchiks, careerists and so on. Until the Labor Party addresses this problem with their parliamentary personnel, it will con-

tinue to struggle to find relevance with the wider community.

The central question of the 2004 election was: who do you trust to manage Australia's \$800 billion economy? I think now at quiz nights or wherever people always know what the exact size of our GDP is. But the important thing is that almost everyone agrees that the economy is running well: inflation is low, unemployment is low and GDP growth is strong. But this has not occurred by accident; it only comes with discipline and by focusing relentlessly on every single question. The question of forestry versus timber workers really highlighted to me the fact that the Labor Party is not equipped to manage the strong and diverse national economy we have in Australia. Unemployment is at 5.3 per cent; it is the lowest it has been since 1977. There is, of course, more to do. We had two recessions—one in the early eighties and another in the early nineties—and a lot of blue-collar workers lost their jobs. We now have the Minister for Workforce Participation, who will be trying to get more people from these backgrounds back into work.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 9.00 p.m., I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Aviation: Second Sydney Airport

Mr MURPHY (Lowe) (9.00 p.m.)—Tonight I again raise the issue of aircraft noise and Sydney airport. Mr Speaker, you will doubtlessly recall that in the last two parliaments I raised this issue on countless occasions in speeches and questions on behalf of the constituents I represent in my electorate of Lowe. As I found out during the recent election campaign, the Liberal Party in my electorate still believe it is acceptable to break promises, betray the people of the inner west and pretend this issue has gone

away. Not a chance. I will continue to fight for my constituents who are unfairly affected by aircraft noise from Sydney airport.

As I have noted on many occasions, the ministerial direction that brought the Sydney airport long-term operating plan into being back in 1997 stipulates an aircraft movement target to the north of Sydney airport of 17 per cent. It is an appalling indictment on the Howard government that since the introduction of the LTOP not once in seven years has Airservices Australia achieved the target of 17 per cent of all aircraft movements promised to the people living to the north of the airport. On the contrary, residents of the inner west living to the north of Sydney airport have suffered percentages of aircraft traffic movement far in excess of the 17 per cent target. Indeed, the minister's briefing notes on Sydney airport, which provide official data on air traffic movements for Sydney airport, show that aircraft movements to the north of Sydney airport have averaged around 27 per cent of all air traffic movements in a single review period. This means there are nearly 60 per cent more movements to the north of Sydney airport than the residents legitimately expect from the published LTOP targets. In fact, in certain review periods air traffic movements to the north have risen as high as 33 per cent—or nearly 100 per cent higher than the target. This situation is intolerable.

Cynically, the Minister for Transport and Regional Services has repeatedly responded to my questions by saying that the LTOP has been 'substantially implemented'. That is an insult to my constituents. Aircraft noise for my electorate in Sydney's inner west remains one of the major environmental issues confronting Sydney. It is a chronic environmental problem aggravated by the greedy sale of Sydney airport by the government before the aircraft noise problems had been solved. Following the sale of Sydney airport

to the Southern Cross consortium for an absurd \$5.6 billion on 28 June 2002, my electorate can expect an ever increasing, massive increase of aircraft noise and, with it, air traffic. More disturbingly, the higher volumes of traffic mean more pressure to revert to parallel runway operations.

All this is noted in an environment where the government systematically misled the public with the false expectation that the statutory provisions of the Airports Act 1996—in particular, sections 18 through 22 inclusive, as they then were—would ensure that Sydney West airport would be constructed and made operational as part of the strategic solution to Sydney airport's aircraft noise problem. Instead, the Prime Minister abandoned Badgerys Creek and gave the winning bid to Southern Cross consortium and Macquarie Bank—not to mention the PM's former chief of staff, Mr Max Moore-Wilton, who I note is now both the chief executive officer and the general manager of Sydney Airport Corporation Ltd. In this foul sequence of events, the worst case nightmare has unfolded for the people I represent. Sydney airport was sold alone, devoid of any legal requirement on the winning privatised entity to build Sydney West airport. As a result, the government has condemned the residents of Sydney to a single airport servicing a population nearing five million.

Finally, I note that, following the making of the master plan for Sydney airport which projects huge increases in air traffic movements, the SACL exhibited the draft major development plan for Sydney airport's car parking and commercial facilities of the internal terminal precinct in July 2004 and, within a short space of time, the Sydney airport environment strategy. With that draft development plan came a non-renewal of pricing surveillance for parking facilities at Sydney airport. At each and every opportunity the coalition government has adopted an

anarchic, laissez-faire approach: a system of no government is good government. The coalition has given the owners of Sydney airport carte blanche to make as much money as they like with all but no government interference. It is truly repugnant—truly a total abnegation of environmental and governance responsibility. Tonight I again put the government on notice that I will continue to relentlessly pursue it in this House and through the Sydney Airport Community Forum. That is the least my constituents in Lowe deserve. *(Time expired)*

Roads: Roe Highway

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (9.05 p.m.)—I refer to comments made by the member for Fremantle as published in the *Melville City Herald* on Saturday, 27 November. I particularly refer to the comments made by the member that Melville City Council's decision to spend \$300,000 on an advertising campaign to criticise the state Labor government for not fulfilling its end of the bargain in regard to building stage 8 of the Roe Highway and therefore linking the highway to the port of Fremantle, Western Australia's main commercial port, is a waste of taxpayers' money. I also refer to the member's comments that she has received only one email on the topic of the Roe Highway extension and the Fremantle Eastern Bypass and, unsurprisingly, it was in support of state Labor's position. If the member wishes to criticise anyone for wasting taxpayers' money, she should point her finger at her state colleagues: Premier Gallop and the minister for transport, Alannah MacTiernan.

I remind the member for Fremantle of an election promise from her state Labor colleagues to build the Roe Highway to stage 8. This would extend the Kwinana Freeway in Leeming to the end of the proposed Fremantle Eastern Bypass in Beaconsfield. It would provide a safe and efficient regional road

link between the western suburbs of Perth and destinations to the east. Primarily, it would ensure there was a designated heavy haulage route for the container loaded road trains travelling to Fremantle Port. Such commercial traffic would enjoy greater productivity as there would be no lights along the proposed highway, unlike the 27 sets of lights road trains are forced to negotiate while passing along their current route of Leach Highway. Leach Highway passes through the middle of many residences, schools, the largest netball centre in the southern suburbs, a public golf course and many other community amenities whose patrons all have to suffer the constant flow of heavy haulage commercial traffic.

I have received insurmountable support from constituents and community groups who are concerned for their children, for their elderly and for their community if the volume of traffic is allowed to continue and Labor fails to deliver on its original promise to the electorate. However, the promises of the state Labor government will not be fulfilled. They will not be fulfilled, because state Labor cabinet is rezoning the land on which stage 8 was to be built—land that has been set aside for more than 30 years to be used for this very purpose. The state government squandered the good faith of this government and the good faith of taxpayers in my electorate. I remind the member for Fremantle that \$15 million and a projected \$26.32 million were allocated on the promise that state Labor would drop plans to rezone land designated for stage 8. The federal government was very clear that the missing link—the linking of the highway to Fremantle Port—must be completed.

The member for Fremantle commented that Perth has the second highest kilometres of road per person in the world, with the inevitable consequences, according to her, for air pollution and noise. I inform the member

for Fremantle that Perth is not a thriving metropolis with a high population density. Furthermore, I inform the member that it is not the amount of roads but the type of roads and their ability to carry traffic that should be analysed. Perhaps the member for Fremantle could explain to the House why she believes the Melville City Council—the local council that administers many of the suburbs where parents find that their children cannot cross a road due to the continuous passing of container loaded road trains—is wasting taxpayers' money. At the same time, perhaps the member for Fremantle could explain what her state Labor colleagues have wasted some of that \$76 million of taxpayers' money on. It certainly was not used to build stage 8 of the Roe Highway or the Fremantle eastern bypass.

Infrastructure

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (9.09 p.m.)—This evening I would like to talk briefly about the nation's infrastructure needs. It seems that wherever you turn these days people are talking about infrastructure. Whether at school gatherings, at barbecues, over the back fence or even in the many columns in newspapers, we are all talking about it. In my part of the world it has certainly become the real barbecue stopper.

Roads, rail, ports, energy, hospitals, telecommunications and schools all make up the vast network of infrastructure that we all take for granted. But we are becoming increasingly aware of their existence. This can easily be explained by people's understanding that the things they use on a daily basis are no longer meeting their needs and increasingly are becoming unreliable—individual expectations that when you drive to work you will arrive on time, that when you turn on the tap you will actually get some fresh drinking water or that when you turn on a switch you will get some light. This acute

awareness of the things we have taken for granted is the result of a decline in investment in and maintenance of the most essential parts of our society. It is a visible and actual cost to our lives and the liveability of our cities.

There are dozens of reports, many of them recent ones, that inform us of the growing population, particularly in south-east Queensland—or, I should say, the exploding population in that part of the world. It is expected that there will be over one million people moving to Queensland's south-east corner over the next 20 years and there will be a need for some 500,000 new homes to accommodate them. The thought of how to provide for this number of families on our already congested road and rail networks is frightening—let alone thinking about how we will provide enough water and energy to maintain the lifestyles that drive these people to that part of the world in the first place.

Yet, with all the expert reports, the educated opinion, the street talk and the obvious need for investment in infrastructure, it seems to me that there is a less than urgent response from the federal government. It seems that the Commonwealth government is more content to play politics than to provide any real public policy solutions. A great example of the government's drive in this direction is the national land transport plan, or AusLink, as it is commonly referred to as. This policy has been much talked about. We have even heard the Deputy Prime Minister compare it to the great Snowy Mountains Scheme—the great nation-building enterprise of the 1950s.

Prior to and during the recent federal election campaign, the government used every opportunity to sell the benefits of AusLink to the community. It boasted incessantly about how the government was making huge investments in the nation's land transport net-

works. It would go from electorate to electorate and it would promise money to much needed local community projects. And, in some instances, the same bucket of money was promised to more than one project—but that topic is for another time.

One of the fundamental principles of AusLink was the establishment of bilateral agreements between the states and the federal government. While agreements between state and federal governments are essential—including on funding agreements—this should not be interpreted as a green light for the federal government to dump its responsibilities onto the states. AusLink was essentially understood to mean that funding would be a shared responsibility between both levels of government, with the federal government playing an active role. That was pre-election 2004. But, after the election, many of us are now learning that bilateral agreements mean something completely different in the context of AusLink.

In the case of AusLink, it means that the federal government wants to bully the states into reform in other policy areas. So we have the government's level of commitment to AusLink and national infrastructure—its greatest plan since the 1950s Snowy Mountains Scheme—being conditional on other policy areas. AusLink funding in Queensland is now becoming conditional upon industrial relations reform. This is an unacceptable principle in the delivery of the nation's key infrastructure needs. Many people who thought they were going to get the money for infrastructure projects in their local communities are suddenly finding that these promises were conditional, that there were strings attached to the funding of AusLink—something they did not know pre election. It seems we all forgot to read the fine print, if it ever existed in the first place.

A cooperative approach is what is needed to build and maintain the infrastructure that we have become reliant upon and which we all demand as a key economic driver of jobs, of innovation and of growth. What we do not want is the divisive policy, based on ideological nonsense, that we are currently getting from the federal government. Infrastructure development should not descend into an us and them debate or a debate about parochialism between states and the federal government. If it is to be taken seriously, the Howard government needs to rethink its approach to the nation's most important infrastructure needs, in particular the AusLink funding conditions.

Mathwin, Mr John, OAM

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (9.14 p.m.)—I rise to celebrate the life of Mr John Mathwin, OAM. John was born in 1919 and grew up in Liverpool. He died in June 2004, just two days short of his 85th birthday. He was a master painter by trade, and he served with the Royal Engineers 15th (Scottish) Division. He served in the Battle of Britain, was part of the landings at Normandy and was one of the first to cross the Rhine and enter Germany. In 1951 he came to Australia with his first wife, Gladys, who, sadly, died at the age of 42 when John was the Mayor of Brighton. He joined the Liberal Party in 1953, and he was the Liberal candidate for Bonython in 1955. Although he did not live to see it, I know how pleased he would have been that much of the old seat of Bonython is now represented by the Liberal Party for the first time ever. He served as a councillor with the Brighton City Council from 1960 to 1971. Later, after 35 years, he returned to the same council as a councillor from 1994 to 1997, and from 1997 to 2003 he was a councillor and deputy mayor of the merged council, which was named Holdfast Bay.

There was no voluntary group in Brighton that John Mathwin was not involved in. He was involved in the South Australian Good Neighbour Council, Brighton Lacrosse Club, Somerton Surf Life Saving Club, Glenelg Rotary Club, Seacliff Youth Centre and Brighton Probus Club. He was involved in Brighton Meals on Wheels from 1962 to 2000. For much of that time he was a driver and the president of that organisation. He was involved with the City of Holdfast Bay Concert Band. He was involved with the Brighton Senior Citizens Club, and he helped to build their hall, which is now leased from the local council for a peppercorn rent.

John was elected as the state member for Glenelg from 1970 to 1985. That seat was abolished in 1985. He ran for, and was defeated in, the seat of Brighton in 1985.

I would like to share several memories I have of John. I grew up in the seat he represented in the state parliament, so one of my earliest memories of politics was of John Mathwin's posters on large gum trees along Brighton Road. Now we put them on Stobie poles, not on gum trees, because people do not like them being on trees. Even back then it was a problem and, if any 'greenies' complained, John would say that he was giving them their 'three-year iron injections'. In 1995 I was fortunate to have John Mathwin show me around as a candidate. He took me around to local functions to meet with all the community groups. I am sure that all members know how useful it is to have someone like that. He also got me roped in to become a driver with Meals on Wheels and a patron of the City of Holdfast Bay Concert Band.

The Liberal Party branch members, who had been his members for so long, he trained well. If ever I had a function, one of the members, Mabs Pearce, would paint a painting and donate it. When she received my material she would go and doorknock her

street. It was the practice of an older generation of Liberal voters that I never had to ask for anything; they did all these things off their own bat.

To give an example of how long he was involved in the community, I remember being struck by a plaque at the Seacliff Youth Centre which showed that it had been opened by John Mathwin, as mayor of Brighton, in 1965. It would have been 35 years later that I was there, when he was deputy mayor of the successor organisation, the City of Holdfast Bay. I was very proud to be present at the opening of John Mathwin Park in November 2001, the day after the election, and to present him with a Centenary of Federation Medal in July 2003. He always had a good word of advice, and he called everyone 'lad'. When he retired from council in 2003, he was interviewed by the local paper, and he said that he hoped to return to Normandy in June 2004 for the 60th anniversary of the landings. Sadly, he was too ill to travel. I convey my condolences to his five children, John, Stephen, Jeanette, Peter and Kaye, and their families, and to John's friend Cecily, who provided him with so much support. He helped me enormously, and I will miss him.

Indigenous Affairs: Native Title

Mr McMULLAN (Fraser) (9.19 p.m.)—I rise to challenge the Howard government and, in particular, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs to seize an important opportunity to establish the government's bona fides in Indigenous affairs and in native title in particular. Alternatively, the government will reinforce the view that it is trying to unwind previous hard-won gains and return to the paternalistic attitudes of the 1960s.

The Howard government justifies its cuts to Indigenous programs on the grounds that it is eager to support Indigenous Australians to help themselves. I do not disagree with all

the measures it appears the government is going to propose, if we can believe what is in the leaked incoming government brief—for example, the ‘no school, no pool’ policy has brought some positive achievements in some communities—however, the evidence to date indicates more enthusiasm for the stick than the carrot.

I want to outline tonight an opportunity for the Howard government to put its money where its mouth is. I refer to the question of adequate funding for prescribed bodies corporate, PBCs, under the Native Title Act. A PBC holds and manages native title under the Native Title Act. The Native Title Act of this parliament sets out the functions for PBCs, which include managing the interests of native title holders but also negotiating agreements with third parties, such as miners, pastoralists and other developers, who wish to undertake economic activity on the land in question. Both of those parties require well-funded, competent PBCs, and they are both being let down by the government.

PBCs also have costs imposed on them by the Commonwealth, by the proper requirement to meet compliance obligations under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act, but that is expensive, and they get no funding to assist them to do it. Funding for PBCs is not a new problem—it has been an ongoing issue—but it seems to be becoming more acute because of the important statutory roles played by PBCs, the growing number of native title determinations and the lack of funding for PBCs, especially post-registration of native title.

Lack of funding raises important issues irrespective of whether the PBC covers native title holders in remote areas or Indigenous people who hold native title in townships. The issue of resourcing of PBCs was referred to recently in the case of *Nangkiriny v. West-*

ern Australia. In that case, Justice North identified an issue that caused him ‘some concern’, as he called it. It related to the Karajarri Traditional Lands Association Aboriginal Corporation, the PBC for the purposes of section 56 of the Native Title Act on behalf of the Karajarri people in that matter. He said:

It would be an absurd outcome if, after the expenditure of such large sums to reach a determination of native title, the proper utilisation of the land was hampered because of lack of a relatively small expenditure for the administration of the PBC.

The judge considered not making the orders in that matter because of the lack of funding of the PBC, although he subsequently did.

As I said, this issue is not confined to remote areas. There is the case of the Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation which was established as the result of a determination of native title for the Arrernte People in Alice Springs. A Northern Territory government submission to the Joint Committee on Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund outlined the extensive demands being placed on the LAAC to negotiate with a large variety of stakeholders like the Northern Territory government, the Alice Springs Town Council and individual developers. This means that they require resources so that they can conduct that negotiation. At the moment we are missing out on the opportunity. Native titleholders are losing out on the opportunity to achieve broader social, economic and cultural development for their community, despite having a determination that their native title continues to exist.

People who want to use the land, the third party interests who want to conduct what is called future acts under the Native Title Act—developers, miners, sometimes pastoralists and property developers in Alice Springs—cannot get the agreements conducted to get that economic activity under

way on the land because the body responsible does not have the resources. As one of them said, 'I might be a chairman but we cannot afford to buy a chair'. It is literally true in that case.

The Commonwealth has tried to pass the buck to the states but these are bodies created by the Commonwealth to perform functions specified by the Commonwealth and are required to comply with regulation specified by the Commonwealth. The bodies are the responsibility of the Commonwealth and not the states and they are being denied the opportunity of funding. There is a report into this matter which was commissioned by ATSIC, paid for by the taxpayers and provided to the government in October 2002, but the Parliamentary Library cannot obtain a copy for me—even from the consultants who wrote the report. That report needs to be released now. *(Time expired)*

Flinders Electorate: Hastings and Somerville Area Development

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage) (9.24 p.m.)—I present to the House this evening a plan for development of the Hastings and Somerville areas within my electorate of Flinders. Hastings has evolved as an old fishing town. It has become a steel town—a town which is still beginning to change and transform, with younger families coming in. The nature of the town is changing. Somerville is a young family town. Young people have come in from throughout the Melbourne district. It has changed from being an agricultural town.

There are four parts to the development of Hastings and Somerville and the surrounding areas of Tyabb and Baxter which need to be considered. The first part is the question of pride. Hastings produced John Coleman, the greatest full forward in Australian history. A group of people from the Western Port

Chamber of Commerce, led by Peter McCulloch, have put together a plan for the creation of a John Coleman statue. It is about building pride, understanding and a sense of history in the town of Hastings. I commend those who are involved and urge all those who are able to contribute to the funding of the project, costing over \$100,000, to do so.

The second part of the development is for marine education for Hastings and Somerville through the rubric of cooperation between the Dolphin Research Institute in Hastings and the Australian Maritime College. The Australian Maritime College will be setting up a national centre for marine and coastal conservation as part of the proposals at Point Nepean. The opportunity exists and the pledge has been made for cooperation between the Dolphin Research Institute in Hastings and the Australian Maritime College. I believe that practical marine education for maritime skills can exist and be developed in Hastings in cooperation at the secondary and tertiary levels. It is a great opportunity for the young people of Hastings—Hastings has no significant tertiary opportunities either at the TAFE or the degree level—and a step forward in their future, which is tied to the particular elements of Hastings interface and history of dealing with the sea.

The third element which is critical to the development of the region is the creation and fulfilment of the long-held commitment, made in 2002 by the state government, for a Somerville secondary college. The Commonwealth has already allocated \$2 million. That money is there; it is clear; it is on the table; it is banked. It is ready to be used, yet there has been no significant progress. The school has been delayed; the children have been denied. Families which have expected their children to begin in 2005 have been told that their children will not be able to do so and that they should make alternative ar-

rangements. Only in 2006 will families be afforded the privilege of allowing their children to attend a Somerville secondary college in their own town.

Even now that process is being delayed by an extraordinary backflip: the original design—an internationally leading, first-class design—is not good enough. Instead of having a modern 21st century design for a school, the state government are looking at a 1960s cinder block combination built up against residences; multi-stories rather than the interesting and innovative pod arrangement. It is a backflip; a disappointment. It not only delays the opportunity for education for children within Somerville but also denies succeeding generations a national standard school. There is a very simple message: stick with the plan, stick with the original proposal. Do not be dissuaded. I urge the state to do that. The Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, has said there is funding available at the federal level. If it is a funding question, I urge the state government to come back for additional funding.

The final proposal is for a Somerville police station. My commitment remains clear and absolute: to continue to fight for a Somerville police station and in the interim to encourage local residents and the local community to support the idea of a mobile police van for Somerville. It is a great town but it is in need of additional security. This is both a long-term plan for the security of Somerville and a short-term interim measure to help the police, who do a great job, and to ensure that they have the resources. Hastings and Somerville are fantastic areas. We have a clear plan, pride, education and security. I commend this plan to the House. (*Time expired*)

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 9.30 p.m., the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 9.30 p.m.

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Laurie Ferguson to move:

That this House:

- (1) calls on the United Nations Security Council to immediately consider and take appropriate actions to respond to the growing threats posed to the Southeast Asia region by conditions in Burma;
- (2) supports actions implementing the result of 1990 elections in Burma and to support the Committee Representing the People's Parliament for the restoration of Democracy in Burma; and
- (3) records its strong concern about the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and 2000 political prisoners and calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

Mr Brendan O'Connor to move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges 1 December 2004 as World AIDS Day;
- (2) acknowledges that the primary objective of World AIDS Day 2004 is to further enable women and girls to take a primary role in changing the underlying cultural, social and economic barriers which make women more vulnerable to infection;
- (3) acknowledges that women have a central role in educating their families and their wider communities about HIV/AIDS prevention, and in supporting those with the disease; and
- (4) recognises that women and girls are biologically, economically and socially vulnerable to HIV infection and AIDS, and that violence or economic dependence disproportionately increases their chances of contracting the virus.

Mr Randall to move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the profound impact autism has on Australian families and the challenges they face in finding sufficient educational, developmental and respite services to help children and their carers with this life long disability;

- (2) notes that the funding of programs by the States to provide vital support to children with autism is vastly inadequate and causing unnecessary hardship and concern for their families; and
- (3) accepts that while the States have primary responsibility for the provision of disability support services, the Federal Government should play an active leadership role in what is a nationwide issue that affects 1 in 1,000 children born in Australia.

Mr Johnson to move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the importance and value of free trade agreements in strengthening bilateral relations between countries and producing international trade benefits;
- (2) recognises the enormous opportunities for Australia in furthering trade arrangements with the world's fastest growing economy, China; and
- (3) supports the Government's Australia-China Free Trade Agreement Joint Feasibility Study currently underway into the viability of a free trade agreement between Australia and China.

Mr Lindsay to move:

That this House:

- (1) recognises that:
 - (a) passive welfare payments to Aboriginal communities, asking nothing in return from the recipient, have denied them the pride they deserve and the opportunity to shape their own destiny;
 - (b) education is the key to change, and that childhood intervention to improve education will boost employment opportunities and head off longer-term problems; and
 - (c) the leadership capacity of individuals in local communities must be fostered, and that we should support those Aboriginal leaders who want to stand up and 'tell it like it is', rather than dealing with elected or appointed intermediaries who will not be accountable;
- (2) condemns the violence and unlawful destruction of property in Aboriginal communities this

year, which puts the lives of police and others at risk; and

- (3) calls on Aboriginal communities to show the leadership they need to move forward into a more successful future.

Mr Sercombe to move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) international observers, including the International Election Monitoring Mission of the Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), have reported that the recent election in Ukraine has fallen short of international standards;
 - (b) free elections are an essential component of the democratic process which reflects the will of the Ukrainian people;
 - (c) there is a widespread perception in the world community that the conduct of the elections in Ukraine has not achieved democratic norms;
 - (d) the most blatant and widespread abuses of the election process in Ukraine are reported to have involved the manipulation of absentee votes and the uneven and biased access to the government-owned media; and
 - (e) a resolution to the disputed election results can only be achieved through a new election which is conducted in a transparent manner that meets international standards;
- (2) calls on the Government of Ukraine to:
 - (a) ensure the safety and welfare of all its citizens taking part in peaceful demonstrations that exercise their democratic rights; and
 - (b) hold a new presidential election based on democratic principles, which:
 - (i) allows both presidential candidates equal and unbiased access to the mass media of Ukraine in the period leading up to the new election date; and

- (ii) ensures that international observers participate at all levels of the election process to achieve a result that is acceptable to all parties;
- (3) requests the Speaker of the House of Representatives to transmit this resolution to the outgoing President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, the Parliament of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Ambassador to Australia; and
- (4) urges the Australian Government to make further representations to the above effect.

Mr Neville to move:

That this House:

- (1) recognises the role of parents raising profoundly disabled children;
- (2) acknowledges the challenges faced by these parents in respect of caring, respite and funding of special equipment and services;
- (3) calls for a comprehensive re-assessment of the eligibility of parents (generally, though not exclusively, the mother) to a Carer's Allowance or Payment according to the level of disability and dependence; and
- (4) requests an examination of respite services and medical requisites available to parents and their disabled charges.