

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ABOUT THE HOUSE

FOR LOVE OR MONEY

Is the child support
system working?

ISSUE 49 | FEBRUARY 2015

Road to Empowerment

Protecting
the rights of
women and girls

Vale Gough

A tribute to
Gough Whitlam



UP FRONT

About the House is going digital!

After 49 issues, this is the last print edition of About the House magazine. We've listened to our readers' feedback and we know you want more up-to-date news from About the House. Our new digital magazine will use an improved format that means readers can access the latest news from the House more often.

The About the House digital magazine will be available as a free download through RepsApp - the official App for the House of Representatives. In 2015, there will be six editions per year of the digital magazine.

Each digital edition will include several features, the latest news, a one-on-one interview and an interactive quiz.

The new format will also be dynamic. Rather than just words on

a screen, articles will come alive with animations, videos and interactive content. The magazine will still be available on our website.

Thank you to our loyal readers for your support over the past 16 years. We look forward to sharing more great stories from the House of Representatives with you, more often, and in a more exciting way.



Common questions

How do I get the digital version of About the House?

You need to install RepsApp and then download each issue as it becomes available (scan QR code below). About the House will not be sent by email.



What sort of device do I need?

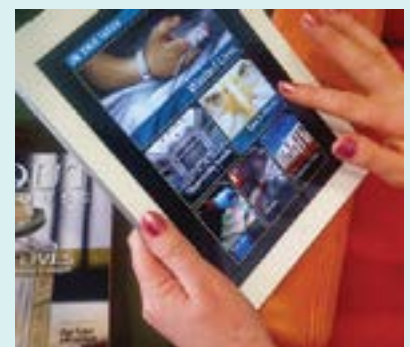
The digital About the House Magazine is only accessible on tablet devices - either iOS or Android devices. It is not available on PCs, laptops or smartphones.

How do I know when a new issue is available?

When you install RepsApp, you can sign up for push notifications so you will be alerted when a new issue is available. Otherwise you can expect an issue approximately every eight weeks.

I don't have a tablet device - is there any way I can still access About the House?

A web version will be available at www.aph.gov.au/ATHMag




How to access About the House digital magazine

1 
You need a tablet device (e.g. iPad or Android tablet)


2 

You need to install RepsApp - the free House of Representatives App
Android users (e.g. not an iPad) need to go to the Google play store; iOS users (e.g. iPad) need to go to the App Store and search for Australia's House of Representatives

3 
Follow the instructions to install the App on your tablet

4 
Library
Once the App is installed, open the App and touch the Library icon. Select which digital issue of About the House you would like to download

5 
You will need a stable WiFi connection to successfully download the magazine

6 
Once downloaded there is a quick guide showing you how to navigate the features of the magazine

7 
Happy reading!

IN THIS ISSUE



For love or money 16



Road to empowerment 22



Vale Gough 29



About the House retrospective 38



My First Speech winners 39

THE LAW

34 Online advertising to stay on Government's most popular website

35 Swiss treaty prevents tax evasion

35 New offence for importing designer drugs

36 Winning the race against doping

REGULARS

4 DESPATCH BOX

5 HILLSIDE

7 NEWSFEED

15 ONE ON ONE

42 HOUSE RULES

42 QUESTION TIME

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Contact:
About the House magazine,
PO Box 6021, Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600
Ph: Freecall 1800 139 299
Fax: (02) 6277 8521
Email: news@aph.gov.au

Editor: Paul Oglethorpe
Deputy Editors:
Joe Italiano
Andrea Close
and Pip Blackwood

Creative Direction:
Prue Beckett, PBMC

Design and Production:
Lisa McDonald,
House of Representatives
Knowledge Management
and Publishing Office

Printing:
CanPrint Communications Pty Ltd
Front cover:
iStock



DESPATCH BOX

A MESSAGE FROM THE CLERK



▶ AT WORK: David Elder, the Clerk of the House sits between Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Speaker of the House the Hon Bronwyn Bishop.

The Australian Parliament is a vibrant institution. Every day in the chamber and in committees, important events and interesting stories are unfolding. Whether it's an inquiry into an issue that impacts over one million Australian children (page 16), a condolence motion for a former Prime Minister (page 29) or an address from a world leader (page 12), there's always something happening in the Parliament and in the 240,000 square metres of Parliament House.

Over the past 16 years About the House magazine has sought to bring these stories into living rooms and libraries around the country.

When the magazine started back in 1999, email was still quite new and internet connections were not common.

Fast forward to 2015 and most Australians are avid internet users, constantly connected to the online world through Wi-Fi enabled smartphones and tablets. Additionally, the rapid expansion of social media means online spaces are now so much more than just websites and email.

The way Australians access information has changed. We need to be able to create and distribute information about the work of the House and the Parliament in a way that's both cost effective and efficient. With this in mind, About the House will transition to a digital magazine in February 2015. As a result of this transition, I am pleased that we will be able to share more stories, more often and with more people.

The digital magazine will continue to have feature articles and the latest news, and it will be enriched with dynamic content that will give greater depth to the story. For example, if you enjoyed the One on One interview (page 15) with UK Speaker, the Rt Hon John Bercow MP, you will be pleased to know that in the digital magazine you will be able to watch a video of the interview too.

Thank you to our loyal readers for your support over the years. I trust you enjoy the article looking back on our best covers (page 37) and you stay with us as we move to a digital format.

David Elder

Clerk of the House of Representatives

2015 SITTING CALENDAR

	M	T	W	Th	F	
FEBRUARY	26	27	28	29	30	
	2	3	4	5	6	
	9	10	11	12	13	
	16	17	18	19	20	
	23	24	25	26	27	
MARCH	2	3	4	5	6	
	9	10	11	12	13	
	16	17	18	19	20	
APRIL	23	24	25	26	27	
	30	31	1	2	3	
	6	7	8	9	10	
	13	14	15	16	17	
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MAY	27	28	29	30		
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	18	19	20	21	22	
JUNE	25	26	27	28	29	
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	8	9	10	11	12	
	15	16	17	18	19	
	22	23	24	25	26	
JULY	29	30	1	2	3	
	6	7	8	9	10	
	13	14	15	16	17	
	20	21	22	23	24	
	27	28	29	30	31	
AUGUST	3	4	5	6	7	
	10	11	12	13	14	
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	31					
SEPTEMBER		1	2	3	4	
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OCTOBER	28	29	30	31	2	
	5	6	7	8	9	
	12	13	14	15	16	
	19	20	21	22	23	
	26	27	28	29	30	
NOVEMBER	2	3	4	5	6	
	9	10	11	12	13	
	16	17	18	19	20	
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DECEMBER	30	1	2	3	4	
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	28	29	30	31		

■ BOTH ■ REPS ONLY ■ ACT PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

HILLSIDE

MH17

Agony persists for MH17 families

The families of MH17 victims have been praised for their endurance, strength and courage by Members who represent them in their various electorates.



On July 17 2014, Malaysia Airlines flight 17 crashed near the Ukraine/Russia border after being shot down, killing all 283 passengers and 15 crew on board.

Nola Marino (Forrest, WA), spoke in the Federation Chamber of Leonie and Bob Maslin, who lost their grandchildren, Mo, Evie and Otis in the crash. She said their suffering is endless.

“For them the day has no end. They never wake up the next day and things are different. It is the same day after day after day for this family and so what an incredible amount of courage the whole family has shown and I cannot put into words the respect I have for all of them, and Leonie and Bob themselves, their courage in this and their willingness to actually try to help those around us, around them, who are also suffering and wanting to offer support.”

Jason Clare (Blaxland, NSW), has forged a relationship with the parents of Victor Arushkin, who died in the crash.

“I didn’t know Victor but I wish I did. It would have been a privilege to know him. I am privileged to know his Mum and Dad, Serge and Vera, and his brothers and sisters. They’re the most wonderful and beautiful people that you could ever meet.”

Mr Clare said the families are also victims of this crime and they live in a nightmare that they can’t wake up from.

“My wife and I are privileged to have been invited into their home. When we were there we saw a loving family, a house filled with family and friends and 10 very loud and affectionate grandchildren,” he said.

“When it was found, Victor’s suitcase was half-full of gifts for these beautiful little children. Gifts can be replaced, but Victor can’t.” ■

HEALTH

Putting an end to polio

Polio remains endemic in a number of countries, including Nigeria, but some MPs are saying now is the time to bring an end to the infectious disease.

Melissa Parke (Fremantle, WA), said progress in eliminating polio in Nigeria over the past year has been promising.

“Especially in Kano state, the main source of polio viruses in the country, there has been real change. Only a few years ago, Nigeria had more polio cases than any other country. Last year, the country saw a 50 per cent reduction compared to the previous 12 months.”

There’s still much to be done to rid the country of the acute, viral disease that spreads from person to person, according to Jane Prentice (Ryan, Qld).

“Although substantial advancements have been made in the efforts of virus eradication, health systems have been weakened by factors such as conflict and of failing to deliver routine immunisation.”

Ms Prentice said the possibility of unimmunised children being exposed to the virus demands a quick response.

“The World Health Organisation has declared polio a public health emergency of international concern,” she said.

“We are therefore responding promptly and as effectively as possible, working alongside the WHO and Rotary International, to further the proud history of support for polio eradication shown by the Australian government.” ■



HILLSIDE



HEALTH

The growing threat of anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a dangerous and deadly condition brought on by allergies to foods such as nuts or seafood.

According to Anna Burke (Chisholm, Vic), it is also the fastest growing chronic disease in Australia, but public awareness of it is low.

The issue was debated in the House by several Members after Ms Burke called for allergy and anaphylaxis to be made a national health priority.

“We have one of the highest rates of food allergy in the world, with one in 10 Australian babies aged 12 months having already had a food allergy. The number of reported life-threatening reactions due to food allergy has doubled in the last 10 years, and in the last 20 years, hospital admissions for food allergy have doubled.”

Russell Broadbent (McMillan, Vic) spoke of his experience with someone who lived with the real risk of anaphylaxis.

“I had a staff member who was allergic, not to nuts, but to one particular nut. Even with an EpiPen, she still ended up in Canberra Hospital.”

Anaphylaxis has played a terrifying role in the family of Tony Zappia (Makin, SA), whose baby granddaughter was diagnosed as being allergic to eggs, after having suffered an episode.

“It was a terrifying experience not knowing how to deal with her at the time, not realising what was happening, and as a result of that, it opened our eyes to the importance of this issue across the spectrum,” he said. ■

JUSTICE

Fighting for gaoled journalist Peter Grete



In June 2013, Australian Peter Grete and two other Al Jazeera journalists were arrested by Egyptian authorities. Charged with reporting news that was damaging to Egyptian national security, they were found guilty and sentenced to seven years gaol.

Laurie Ferguson (Werriwa, NSW), spoke passionately in the Federation Chamber about Australia’s obligations to Mr Grete and the continued effort to gain his release from prison.

“I think the Australian Parliament, regardless of political views, regardless of the level of activity on human rights, regardless of members’ interest in international matters, is united in the need for this to happen. There is some hope, and I call for Australia to raise this matter at every international forum possible.”

Jane Prentice (Ryan, Qld), praised the work of Mr Grete and his colleagues, saying that being a journalist is not a crime and truth is not terrorism.

“Journalism is an honourable profession. We rely on the integrity of journalists as a primary source of our information—information upon which we base judgements and decisions. We rely on the courage of journalists who report from troubled places, who place their lives at risk to report the facts. Peter Grete is a journalist of courage and integrity, and he’s a constant reminder of freedom of speech, particularly in the Middle East.”

(Editor’s Note: Peter Grete was released from prison on 1 February 2015 after spending 400 days behind bars. His two colleagues remain incarcerated.) ■

HEALTH

Lack of awareness on palliative care



Palliative care is an approach to improve the quality of life of people facing life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering. It will affect all of us, whether as a patient, carer, family member, neighbour or friend.

Amanda Rishworth (Kingston, SA), called for an increase in community awareness and understanding about the issue, and assurance of adequate funding for appropriate services.

“As our population ages, the demand for palliative care will increase and the pressure on these front-line services to deliver good, high-quality palliative care will be immense. We need to make sure that we are listening to those around the world who are putting this at the forefront.”

Nola Marino (Forrest, WA), said that palliative care is an important part of the government’s healthcare agenda.

“I am sure that members would be particularly pleased to see the \$52 million that the government announced during National Palliative Care Week, to improve palliative care services and training,” she said. ■

NEWSFEED

www.aph.gov.au/ath

Time to Act on Northern Australia

Australia's North is a region vital to the economic growth of the nation.

Northern Australia is one of the greatest challenges and opportunities facing the country.

This is the view of Parliament's Northern Australia Committee, which has tabled its final report on the development of the region.

The committee took on several tasks, including investigating the potential for development of industries such as mining, energy, agriculture and tourism, and finding ways to address impediments to economic and social growth.

Committee Chair, Warren Entsch (Leichhardt, Qld), said it is time to act on Northern Australia, an area with a small population but large resource potential.

"Northern Australia covers over 40 per cent of Australia's land mass but contains only 4 per cent of the population. It has abundant land, water and mineral resources. It has medical and educational institutions with world class facilities."

Northern Australia sits on the doorstep of Asia and the tropics, which by 2050, will encompass over half of the world's population. Mr Entsch said that development could bring great opportunities.

"The committee has made recommendations to establish a Cooperative Research Centre for northern agriculture, and develop a national institute for tropical sports and sports medicine."

Some of the most important contributions to the inquiry stressed the need for detailed research on the best economic and social development options.

"We might not be the food bowl for Australia but we certainly can put more food on the table, and we can advance



THE GREAT NORTH: Calls for best development options.

the capacity of our Asian neighbours to feed themselves through the pioneering work that has been done in agricultural and horticultural innovation," said Mr Entsch.

Twenty seven public hearings and 15 days of site inspections were held in communities throughout the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. Industry, council, business, Indigenous and community representatives identified what they see as the issues that need to be addressed.

The report makes 42 recommendations with seven priority recommendations:

- The creation of a Department of Northern Australian Development, based in Northern Australia.
- The identification of key roads and the commitment of funding for their upgrade as a matter of priority, subject to relative benefit assessment. Projects to consider include: continued upgrade of National Highways (including the Bruce and Stuart Highways);

Hann Highway; Peninsula Development Road; Tanami Road; Outback Way; and beef development roads.

- Cost-benefit analysis to be conducted on a rail link between Mount Isa and Tennant Creek, and the building of passing lanes on the Darwin to Alice Springs Railway.
- Funding and development of water infrastructure projects that meet scientific and economic assessments and are consistent with national water policy, including: use of groundwater for expanding horticulture, Flinders River Weir, Urannah Dam, Elliot Main Channel, Nullinga Dam, Eden Bann and Rockwood Weirs on the Fitzroy River, Cloncurry Dam, Cave Hill, and

proceeding with the set-up of the Water Project Development Fund.

- Investigation of the potential and practicality of special economic zones.
- Measures to reduce insurance premiums in Northern Australia to affordable levels.
- Continued funding of the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative.

The committee's findings and recommendations will inform a Government White Paper, to be released later this year.

The full report can be found at www.aph.gov.au/jscna ■

LINKS

www.aph.gov.au/jscna

jscna@aph.gov.au

(02) 6277 4162

NEWSFEED

Condolences for victims of the Martin Place siege

A condolence book for the victims of the December 15 Sydney siege was placed in the Parliament House Marble Foyer paying tribute to the victims of the Martin Place siege, in which three people died, including the hostage-taker. Fifteen other hostages survived the ordeal.

The flag atop Parliament House in Canberra flew at half-mast as a sign of respect for the victims.

As a result of the tragedy, Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the Premier of NSW, Mike Baird, established a review.

Prime Minister Abbott said that following the tragic loss of innocent lives, we must learn what we can from this incident and implement any changes necessary at the state and federal level.

“The Commonwealth and New South Wales governments will urgently conduct a review into the Martin Place siege and what lessons can be learned from the events leading up to and surrounding the siege. As our State and Commonwealth law enforcement and security agencies work together to keep Australia safe, the review will identify important lessons for the future.”

“The review will take account of the parallel investigations into the incident including by the NSW State Coroner, NSW Police and Australian Federal Police,” the Prime Minister said.

(Editor’s Note: The review has now been completed and the governments’ response to the report is expected in coming weeks.) ■



Life experience required when handling tax disputes

Commonwealth Ombudsman calls for a triage system when handling complaints



▶ SENIOR TAX OFFICERS: The ATO is trying to boost taxpayer trust.

Senior tax officers with greater life experience need to pay more attention to dealing with complaints from the public, a parliamentary inquiry has been told.

The Tax and Revenue Committee is investigating disputes between taxpayers and the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), in particular in relation to collecting revenue; fair treatment and respect of taxpayers; and efficiency, effectiveness and transparency from the perspective of both taxpayers and the ATO.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman, Colin Neave AM, told the committee that life experience is vital for the proper handling of disputes.


“You really have to have that triage system in place. The most experienced people in an organisation are often the people who should be involved in dealing with complaints, but quite often it is the most junior people who are involved in complaints.


“There are all sorts of problems with things like pay rates, levels and all the rest of it in both the public sector and the private sector. You have very fine young people with terrific education and all the rest of it, but, unless they have seen both sides of the real world, they come up with a slant on something which is not particularly helpful for either party—the complainant or the institution,” said Mr Neave.

Committee Chair, John Alexander (Bennelong, NSW), said, “Through the Committee’s work which will contribute to the Government’s broader agenda on tax reform, the ATO has made clear its efforts to promote taxpayer confidence and trust in the system.” ■

 LINKS

 www.aph.gov.au/TaxRev

 TaxRev.reps@aph.gov.au

 02 6277 4821

NEWSFEED



Freedom of speech in a modern day democracy



University students throughout Australia have been challenged by the Speaker of the House of Representatives in a competition designed to raise awareness of the House among young Australians.

The Speaker's University Challenge encourages students to voice their opinions during a three minute video on a topic chosen by Speaker, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop (Mackellar, NSW).

Last year's challenge, titled "Freedom of speech in a modern day democracy", was won by Patrisha Kay from Griffith University, and first prize included a trip to Canberra to meet her challenger.

Ms Kay argued that there is no real freedom of speech because there are so many restrictions, from defamation to discrimination.

"We are constantly thinking whether our words will be misconstrued, but in this age of mass social media, we aren't really listened to anyway," she said.

Entries were judged upon well-constructed arguments that engage the audience, original and creative ideas and presentation, and demonstrated use of evidence and research. ■

Possible referendum on Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal people



The committee recommended that the House of Representatives and the Senate should each allocate a full day of parliamentary sittings to debate concurrently the three options.

Based on the written submissions and public hearings so far, the committee is convinced of the

benefits of recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution.

Community support for the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is on the rise. According to the progress report of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, community support grew between August 2013 and August 2014.

However, the report showed awareness of the proposed referendum on constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples fell from 42 per cent to 34 per cent during the same period.

It showed that a successful referendum proposal would need to meet three primary objectives:

- recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia;
- preserve the Commonwealth's power to make laws with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
- in making laws under such a power, prevent the Commonwealth from discriminating against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Committee Chair, Ken Wyatt (Hasluck, WA), said that action is needed to focus the nation's attention on, and build momentum towards, what would be a significant change to our founding document.

"A 'circuit breaker' should be rapidly identified to settle the final form of words, and draw debate on the model to a conclusion. This will build a sense of national urgency and provide renewed certainty that the country will proceed to a referendum," said Mr Wyatt.

"Ultimately, a referendum proposal must take the form of a Bill submitted to Parliament, and that Bill must be passed by an absolute majority in both houses. It is imperative that the wording of that Bill be capable of achieving near unanimous parliamentary support." ■

LINKS

www.aph.gov.au/IndigenousAffairs

IndigenousAffairs.reps@aph.gov.au

(02) 6277 4559

FOLLOW HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES NEWS ON TWITTER



@AboutTheHouse

Self-governance fails on Norfolk Island



Norfolk Island is increasingly reliant on handouts from the federal government and its self-governance should be repealed, a parliamentary committee has reported.

The Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories tabled its report, “Same country: different world - The future of Norfolk Island”, making eight recommendations to improve the island’s economic future.

The committee recommended improving infrastructure, enhancing existing tourist products and services and developing new ones, as well as complementary industries.

Committee Chair, Luke Simpkins (Cowen, WA), said economic and governance reform have long been a topic of discussion.

“Norfolk Island is effectively bankrupt and self-governance does not best serve the residents of the island.

“The evidence tells us it is time for change. That change, while challenging, will allow for economic viability and prosperity into the future. This is what must be done for the people of Norfolk Island,” he said.

A road map devised by the federal and local government in 2011

recommended that islanders start paying mainland taxes in return for benefits. Even with such a change, the loss of the island’s semi-autonomous status appears inevitable.

The tiny community was settled by ancestors of the Bounty mutineers in 1856 and increasingly relies on federal government funding. The report says it is an ‘unfortunate economic reality’ that the territory’s model of self-governance, established 35 years ago, has failed the island’s 1,800 residents.

Mr Simpkins says the committee is aiming to ensure residents have the same opportunities as the rest of the country.


“At the moment, we’ve got all sorts of economic problems there and we just want what is best for the people,” he said.

The full report is available at www.aph.gov.au/jscncet ■

LINKS

 www.aph.gov.au/jscncet

 jscncet@aph.gov.au

 (02) 6277 4355

Social media acknowledged in the Chamber

The rapid growth of social media is shaping the way in which Members communicate, in much the same way as the internet and email changed the way they interacted with their constituents.

This is one of the findings in a Procedure Committee report that examined the current regulatory framework regarding the use of electronic devices and the way they are being used by Members in the House.

Issues such as the potential impact on order in the Chamber, respect for the role of the Chair, and the likely status of comments made by Members on social media were examined during the inquiry.

Committee Chair, Don Randall (Canning, WA), said Members can now reach mass audiences instantaneously from their places in the Chamber, and while many Members have adopted this new technology with enthusiasm, they need to be mindful of the rights of others and the need to uphold the dignity of the House and its formal proceedings.

The first recommendation relates to a Privileges and Members’ Interests



NEWSFEED



Committee publication, which provides practical guidelines for Members on issues encountered by them in their correspondence and records, including their status. The Procedure Committee recommended that expansion of these guidelines to address communications made by Members using electronic devices would be advantageous.

The second recommendation is focused entirely on the use of electronic devices by Members in the Chamber, Federation Chamber and committees and proposes that the House adopts a resolution which:

- permits Members' use of electronic devices in the Chamber, Federation Chamber and committees, provided that use of any device should avoid interference or distraction to other Members, either visually or audibly, and should not interfere with proceedings – in particular, phone calls are not permitted and devices should be operated in silent mode;
- devices are not permitted to record the proceedings (either by audio or visual means);
- communication on social media regarding private meetings of committees or in camera hearings will be considered a potential breach of privilege;
- use of devices should be as unobtrusive as possible and should be directly related to the Members' parliamentary duties; and
- notes that communication via electronic devices, whether in the Chamber or not, is unlikely to be covered by parliamentary privilege; and reflections on the Chair by Members made on social media may be treated as matters of order just as any such reflections made inside or outside the Chamber.

The committee received five submissions to the inquiry along with informal feedback from Members. The full report can be found at www.aph.gov.au/proc ■

LINKS

www.aph.gov.au/proc

Procedure.Committee.Reps@aph.gov.au

(02) 6277 4670

AFP and telecommunications targeting online crime

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) says that criminals are constantly looking for opportunities to exploit technology in order to commit crime.



▶ BLOCKING OUT: Online crime.

Should agencies be able to obtain assistance from the telecommunications industry when upholding Australian law in the fight against online crime?

The House Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications is currently investigating the use of subsection 313(3) of the Telecommunications Act 1997, which provides Commonwealth, state and territory agencies with the ability to block access to certain websites.

The AFP uses section 313 to block websites which contain the most severe child sexual abuse and exploitation material. When a user attempts to access one of these sites, they are blocked with a page that provides certain information, including reasons for the block and contact details for any dispute.

Other Commonwealth agencies have also used section 313 to prevent the continuing operation of online services in breach, or potentially in breach, of Australian law, such as online fraud.

Committee Chairman, Jane Prentice (Ryan, Qld), said the committee's inquiry is focusing solely on the use of the subsection for the purpose of disrupting illegal online services.

"The committee is looking at which government agencies can make requests

under the subsection, and what level of authority they should have to make such requests," said Ms Prentice.

"Importantly, we are also focusing on the characteristics of illegal or potentially illegal services that should be subject to such requests, and the most appropriate transparency and accountability measures that should accompany such requests."

Acting Deputy Commissioner Close Operations Support and AFP Assistant Commissioner, Kevin Zuccato, said that online crime is not like traditional crime.

"If I am investigating cocaine importations, I am looking at South America and leveraging off my colleagues in the US. If I am looking at heroin, I am in Asia... but with this type of activity, it could be anybody, anywhere. In a lot of instances, that can be a very sophisticated operation coming out of Russia or it can be a rudimentary set-up coming out of some kid's home in Cooma," Assistant Commissioner Zuccato said.

In its submission to the inquiry, the AFP said that an appropriately senior level of accountability and oversight when using the subsection should be in place, in order to maintain public confidence that blocking powers are being used proportionately and appropriately. ■

LINKS

www.aph.gov.au/pjcis

pjcis@aph.gov.au

(02) 6277 2360

World leaders visit Australian Parliament

The leaders of three of Australia’s largest trading partners addressed special sittings of the House of Representatives in November.

Senators were invited to join Members in the House to hear Prime Minister of the United Kingdom the Rt Hon David Cameron MP, President of China His Excellency Xi Jinping and Prime Minister of India Mr Narendra Modi, who were in the country for the G20 leaders’ summit.

Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, told Parliament the visits were an opportunity to strengthen some of Australia’s most crucial international relationships.

“It’s a chance to showcase our country and to promote jobs and growth with the leaders of the world’s largest and most representative economies. These leaders represent two thirds of the world’s population and some 85 per cent of the world’s gross domestic product,” Mr Abbott said.

UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, said his second visit to Australia as Prime Minister felt like visiting family. He described Australia as a can-do country that wants to shape the world it lives in—not be shaped by it.

He said that each year, more than 600,000 Britons visit Australia and a million Aussies travel to the UK. He also said that our mateship runs deep.

“In almost every major conflict for 100 years, we have fought and bled and died alongside each other—in the Second World War, from the ingenuity of the Dam Busters to the endurance of Tobruk, and in our lifetimes, in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq. Ours is an alliance that has been forged



 UK PRIME MINISTER DAVID CAMERON: Visiting Australia ‘like visiting family’.

in adversity and tested over time,” Mr Cameron said.

The UK Prime Minister stressed that there is no opt-out from today’s struggles and that we must deal with terrorist extremism by addressing its root cause.

“It is not poverty and it is not exclusion from the mainstream. Of course we have more to do, but we are both successful, multicultural democracies where opportunities abound.

“It is not foreign policy. In our democracies, we must never give in to the idea that disagreeing with a foreign policy in any way justifies terrorist outrages. No. The root cause of the challenge we face is the extremist

narrative. So we must confront this extremism in all its forms,” said Mr Cameron.

The UK Prime Minister concluded his speech to the special sitting saying that we should never take our good fortune for granted.

“We live in countries where the press is free, the law is fair, the right to redress is universally available, property rights are universally enforceable and freedom of speech is the foundation of our democracy.

“These things have made our countries great, and if we have the courage to stand by them they will continue to do so now and for generations to come.” ■

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NEWSFEED



“Big guy” China full of opportunity

China’s growth brings further opportunities.



TRADE PARTNERS: Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Chinese President His Excellency Xi Jinping.

China’s President His Excellency Xi Jinping made the first state visit by a President of the People’s Republic of China since 2007 and it coincided with the announcement of a free-trade agreement between the two countries.

China’s remarkable economic development has propelled it to become our largest trading partner and a significant investor, and President Xi said that economic and cultural interactions and cooperation between the two countries are flourishing.

“Two-way trade grew from US\$86 million in the early years of our diplomatic relations to US\$136.4 billion in 2013, and China has been Australia’s biggest trading partner for five consecutive years while also being Australia’s largest source of international students and tourism revenue,” the President said.

President Xi said that his government has set two goals for China’s future development.

“The first is to double the 2010 GDP and per capita income of urban and rural residents and build a society of initial prosperity in all respects by

2020. The second is to turn China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious by the middle of the century,” he said.

President Xi noted that some nations have concerns about China—that as a country of over 1.3 billion people, it is the ‘big guy’ in the crowd.

“They wonder how the ‘big guy’ will move and act and they may be concerned

that the ‘big guy’ may push them around, stand in their way or even take up their place,” he said.

“But while China is big in size, our forefathers realised over 2,000 years ago that a warlike state, however big it may be, will eventually fall.”

It is estimated that in the next five years, China will import more than US\$10 trillion of goods, its outbound investment will exceed US\$500 billion, and Chinese tourists will make over 500 million overseas visits.

President Xi said all this will provide a bigger market, more capital and products, and valuable cooperation opportunities for Australia.

“As the Chinese saying goes, true friendship exists only when there is an abiding commitment to pursue common goals. With our joint efforts, the friendship between the Chinese and Australian people will span over mountains and oceans. Such friendship will withstand rain and storm, and will be as strong and everlasting as the majestic Uluru rock in Central Australia and the Great Wall in northern China.” ■

Inquiry votes NO for electronic voting

At the next election, will we be voting with a pencil and paper or the click of a mouse?

Brazil has used electronic voting machines since 2000 and in Estonia, the electorate votes via a click of the mouse over the internet. Advocates for electronic voting argue that it is a logical next step and potentially more secure.

In Australia, we still vote with a pencil and paper and then the sheets are counted manually.

The Electoral Matters Committee has tabled its second interim report on its inquiry into the conduct of the 2013 federal election: An assessment of electronic voting options. The report reveals that, for the present, electronic voting is not a feasible option in Australia.

Committee Chair, Tony Smith (Casey, Vic), said that our voting system has changed and evolved over the 113 years since the first federal election in 1901, but that electronic voting for the next federal election will not happen.

“In logistical terms, it would be impossible for our electoral authorities to roll it out next polling day, which is less than two years away,” Mr Smith said.

But what about future elections? With electronic voting, the results are known within minutes of polls closing rather than hours, days or weeks, and there would be none of the human error that occurs in the long paper ballot count.

With internet voting, voters would no longer have the expense or inconvenience of physically going to the polling booths and waiting in line.



NEWSFEED



Mr Smith said that for this reason, internet voting seems to be the most attractive options for voters.

“As an election expert from the USA recently said to me: ‘when it comes to voting, folks would rather be online than in line.’”

However, the inquiry found that Australia is not in a position to introduce any large-scale system of electronic voting in the near future, without catastrophically compromising its electoral integrity.

“Over the course of the twenty hearings to date and in reviewing the 207 submissions received, after hearing from a range of experts and surveying the international electoral landscapes, it is clear that internet electronic voting is highly vulnerable to hacking,” said Mr Smith.

“In future, it is likely, given the turbo-advances in technology, that a system of online electronic voting could be delivered with acceptable safety and security.”

Mr Smith said there are other aspects of our voting process that should be brought into the modern electronic world; aspects that will not compromise the security, sanctity and secrecy of the ballot.

“At present, every electorate booth has a paper roll and when you vote your name is crossed off. With an interconnected electronic roll, when your name is crossed off and you are provided with a ballot, it will be simultaneously crossed off at every other booth, reducing the opportunity for multiple voting in your name.

“At the same time, we should start to introduce electronic scanning of ballot papers. This enables an electronic count, the results of which would be delivered minutes after the close of the polls. The same physical count that occurs now would still be performed for verification,” he said. For the full report, see www.aph.gov.au/em. ■

LINKS

www.aph.gov.au/em

em@aph.gov.au

(02) 6277 2374

Sharing more than a love for cricket with India

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi urges the separation of religion and terrorism.



▶ A ROCKSTAR'S WELCOME: Indian-Australians came out to see Narendra Modi.

Narendra Modi made the first visit to Australia by an Indian Prime Minister since 1986 and he received a rockstar's welcome.

Following Prime Minister Tony Abbott's visit to India to continue discussions on strengthening trade and economic links between the two countries, tens of thousands of Indian-Australians welcomed Mr Modi into the country.

His entrance into the House of Representatives was received just as warmly, as Mr Modi described the two countries as united by the ideals of democracy and proud of their many shared values.

“We celebrate the legend of Bradman and the class of Tendulkar together. We are impressed by Australian speed as you are charmed by Indian spin, until, of course, Shane Warne came along!”

“Australia evokes images not just of immense beauty but also of a great quality of life. Today, its cities are alive with the richness of this world's diversity. And it is home to 450,000 Indians, who are as proud to be part of Australia as they are of their Indian heritage,” he said.

Prime Minister Modi sees Australia as a major partner in every area of India's growth, including health and education.

“We will partner to provide skills and education to youth, a roof over every head and electricity in every household, the most affordable health care for the most difficult diseases, the next generation of infrastructure, and energy that does not cause our glaciers to melt.

“In turn, India will be the answer to your search for new economic opportunities and your desire to diversify your global economic engagement,” said Mr Modi.

Like Prime Minister Cameron, Prime Minister Modi spoke of his region's security and said that terrorism has become a major threat for all.

“Terrorism is changing in character and expanding in its reach. It will require a resolve to isolate those who harbour terrorists, a willingness to empower states that will fight them, a social movement against extremism in countries where it is most prevalent, and every effort to de-link religion and terrorism,” Mr Modi said.

“So we stand together at a moment of enormous opportunity and great responsibility.” ■

ONE ON ONE

UK Speaker the Rt Hon John Bercow MP

Digital technology will inevitably play a greater role in how Members of Parliament engage with the community and forge relationships with them, according to the Speaker of the UK House of Commons, the Rt Hon John Bercow MP.

Mr Bercow visited the Australian Parliament recently and met his Australian counterpart, Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP. While in Canberra, he took the opportunity to speak publicly about the Commission on Digital Democracy, which he has set up in the UK to investigate the democratic process in the digital age.

Mr Bercow said the use of social media is so much more widespread amongst the electorate than was the case five years ago, when he became Speaker.

“Within Parliament, there has been an increasing desire for parliamentarians to use modern communication devices, and the approach we’ve taken is that they should be able to be used in the chamber subject to the caveat that their use should not impair decorum.”

Mr Bercow said that Parliament’s challenge is to consider how it presents data in order to make it most accessible, and he cites digital voting as an inevitability.

“My instinct is that online voting in elections will come to the UK and around the world. But if it does come, it won’t be a question of people being instructed to vote that way. It’ll be used as an option, so if you want to vote in a traditional manner with a pencil in a polling booth, of course you should have that opportunity.

“So far, the Commission has received submissions by some against online voting, saying the integrity of the ballot is vital and could be undermined. Some say there isn’t a huge demand for it, that there are privacy issues that may be compromised. Equally, we’ve received some very potent and insistent submissions in favour, citing Estonia as an example, where almost a quarter of the electorate is voting online,” he said.

The UK Parliament is generally regarded as one of the world leaders in the use of social media for promoting engagement with the public but, perhaps surprisingly, Mr Bercow does not have a personal Twitter account.

“It’s partly because I don’t think I’d manage my own site properly in view of the amount of time involved and I’m not keen on sub-contracting to someone else to comment in my name.”

Mr Bercow says the Commission on Digital Democracy came about due to observations of what is happening ‘out there’. He felt Parliament was considerably behind the curve, so far as the deployment of technology was concerned.



OPEN TO NEW TECHNOLOGIES: Speaker of the UK House of Commons, the Rt Hon John Bercow.

“I had noticed, particularly in meetings with young people, just how differently people were communicating. Their natural habitat was through using a technological device to engage or get a message across, or form and sustain friendships. I knew Parliament was not yet part of that world and thought perhaps it needs to be.

“I don’t suggest for one moment that digital technology could constitute some sort of panacea for political disengagement, but as one part of a strategy to revive interest in politics and restore the reputation of the profession, it may be worthwhile.”

Mr Bercow said that, traditionally, communication in politics has been a very lengthy process.

“A letter winging its way through the snail-mail to an MP, who after due deliberation, will consider how to respond—we are not in that world now. We’re in a world of instant communication and I think that just because we can’t arrive at perfect solutions for embracing direct democracy through technology, doesn’t mean we should do nothing.”

Speaker John Bercow’s Digital Democracy Commission will report early in 2015, the UK Parliament’s 750th birthday, and Mr Bercow says he looks forward to seeing the Parliament’s employment of social media to showcase all the colour and celebration of the event.

“We need to grip the issue of technology, how can we use it, how can it help us, what are the dangers, can they be mitigated and, if so, how?”

“I’m not one of those people who believe in the attainment of perfection but I do think that part of a Speaker’s role is to try to achieve a state of affairs that is at least modestly better than the present.” ■



FOR LOVE OR MONEY

Is the child support system working?

Story: Pip Blackwood

Money. Not a topic many people feel comfortable discussing. Add children and ex-partners into the conversation and tensions can start to rise. Child support is an issue where the emotions of relationships and the realities of bank balances collide.

Child support isn't just difficult for people financially. The strain of dealing with the system can take its toll. Complicated assessment processes, conflicting advice, communication breakdown and allegations of system bias make money just the tip of the iceberg. While the focus seems to be on frustrated mums and dads, little attention is given to the children whose needs are the central aim of the scheme.

Some of these frustrations have been spelt out by respondents to a questionnaire on the issue. Reflecting on the negotiation process, one respondent said, "there has been no ease in arranging child support, it has taken many phone calls, arguments and tears to arrange anything". Yet on the other side of the spectrum, another respondent noted their negotiation was "relatively easy due to maintaining a good relationship with my ex".

The questionnaire, which received over 11,000 responses, was conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs as part of its inquiry into the child support system. The inquiry is examining what sort of problems the 1.3 million Australians who pay or receive child support face; including consideration of better ways to manage late payments, the flexibility of the system, and provisions and protections for children in high-conflict families.

Nearly as many children as adults are in the child support system. About 1.1 million Australian children are covered by child support. The majority of these are kids under 12 years of age. The average annual payment is \$4,400 but in over 36 per cent of cases, it's less than \$500.

Introduced in 1988, the Child Support Program (CSP) aims to alleviate poverty of sole parent families and create a fairer balance between the public and private support of children. Administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS), the program aims to ensure that both parents contribute to the costs of their children.

George Christensen (Dawson, Qld) is the committee Chair leading the inquiry.

"The Child Support Program assists families at moments of great stress, and it is designed to focus on the needs and costs of children. The committee wants to look at the way it operates, to ensure that it works for all families and to see if it is flexible and supportive enough to deal with the range of different family situations," he said.

Being such a personal issue, the inquiry committee wanted to hear directly from people with a lived experience of the child support system. The online questionnaire was developed to help the committee hear from a broad range of people and feedback from respondents ranged from reflective to frustrated. Although not a statistical tool, the questionnaire has been useful in illustrating many of the recurring themes of the inquiry: communication between separated partners and communication with DHS, how the system meets the changing life circumstances of users, and whether the system is fair.

One respondent questioned if the payment calculation is ultimately fair on him. He said, "My ex-wife has remarried, and I am still paying the full rate of pay. Why aren't the assets/income of the parent's partner/husband/wife included?"

The committee has heard how both mothers and fathers alike feel the system is inherently biased against them. Committee Chair George Christensen says there have been allegations of DHS favouring the primary carer, who is usually the mother.



Questions from parents about the fairness of the system rarely centre on the children involved.

“There have been allegations where DHS has assessed the paying parent to one standard but not upheld those similar standards to payees,” he said.

Petula Broad from the Hobart Women’s Health Centre disagrees. Her submission calls for a culture change within DHS.

“Single fathers in our culture are seen as heroes, while single mothers are vilified... many women allege

misogyny from both male and female DHS child support workers,” she said.

Claims of manipulative mothers versus deadbeat dads aside, it gets further complicated if a separated parent re-partners. This means parents who have more than one child support case can be a payer in one instance and the payee in the other.

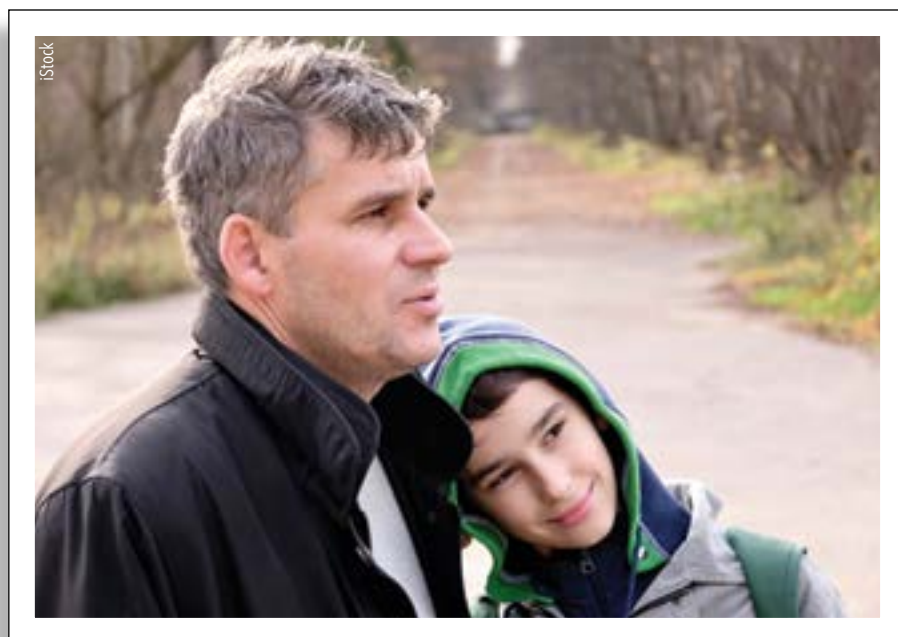
Questions from parents about the fairness of the system rarely centre on

the children involved. Child support, by virtue of its own name, is meant to be payments for children. But the language of the system is very much focused on parents. Many of the submissions have called for a shift in this framework so that the child support system is based on the rights of the child.

Dr Kristin Natalier, a senior lecturer in Sociology at the University of Tasmania, argues that making the best interests of the child the paramount consideration in informing policy and practice is a long standing family law and policy principle.

“Balancing the interests of both parents is an appropriate aim of the child support scheme, but this must always be subordinate to the best interests of the children of the relationship,” Dr Natalier said.

The scheme uses a formula that considers parents’ incomes, the number



► COMMUNICATION:

Communication is a recurring theme in the inquiry not just how agencies communicate with each other but how they communicate with clients who use the system.



About 1.1 million Australian children are covered by child support. The majority of these are kids under 12.

of children and the cost of raising them, and how much care each parent provides for each child.

Parents have two options for how payments are collected. The majority of users opt for private collect. This is where the payee collects the payments directly from the payer. Under a private collect arrangement, DHS issues assessment notices but does not keep a record of what payments have been made or what debt is owed. Alternatively, if a payee is having difficulty with the private collect system, they can have DHS collect payments for them. The payer must make payments to DHS, who then passes them on to the payee. DHS keeps records of all transactions and can take action to enforce payments from payers in arrears.

On paper, the majority of the 1.3 million separated parents that use the scheme have minimal problems. Parents can object to the Child Support Registrar's original decision about payment arrangements. Only 1,900 child support decisions were reviewed in the 2012-13 year by the Social Securities Appeals Tribunal (SSAT). Of these 1,900 reviews only 460 were affirmed, 780 were set aside or varied

and the remainder were withdrawn or dismissed. DHS also systematically reviews general complaints. Around 23,000 complaints were recorded in 2012-13. The majority of these complaints relate to collection and quality of service.

Committee Chair George Christensen says for the most part people find the system to be working effectively.

"But there is a percentage who find it difficult for a range of reasons. Within this percentage who are finding the system difficult, it's often because there's this irreparable breakdown of the relationship between the two parents of the child the system is supposed to be looking after," he said.

Simply put, a minority of people who use the scheme appear to be experiencing the most acute issues.

One of the most concerning aspects of irreparable relationship breakdown is when the payer stops making payments. It is difficult to get a complete picture of this situation because DHS do not capture data relating to private collect arrangements.

However, research by Dr Kristin Natalier shows missing, insufficient or irregular payments create difficult

circumstances for payees and their children.

"Payees (the majority of whom are mothers) cannot rely on child support when planning to meet the on-going costs of raising children, and cannot engage in meaningful short term and long term financial planning to maximise the wellbeing of their children. In practice, payees have an unreasonable level of responsibility for reporting and pursuing child support non-payment, partial payment and irregular payment," explained Dr Natalier.

Some believe the full scope of non-payment is hard to measure accurately, with some parents unwilling to pursue missing money due to threats to their safety and security.

Alina Thomas from Support Help Empowerment (SHE) Tasmania runs a counselling service for women impacted by domestic violence.

"Women will often put their safety and their children's safety before financial security," she said.

"Often women feel that their ex-partners could be using the child support payment as an opportunity to continue or further the abuse, coercion



Child support isn't just difficult for people financially. The strain of dealing with the system can take its toll.

or influence. I think it does open up scope for manipulation, so that women may not feel like they're in control of the situation. It goes back to 'Do I say what I'm supposed to say to keep him happy?' or 'Do I do what's best for my children?'"

In addition to the social impacts of missing payments, there is also a significant impact on the economy. DHS figures show that as at 31 March 2014, there was \$1.35 billion in outstanding child support payments.

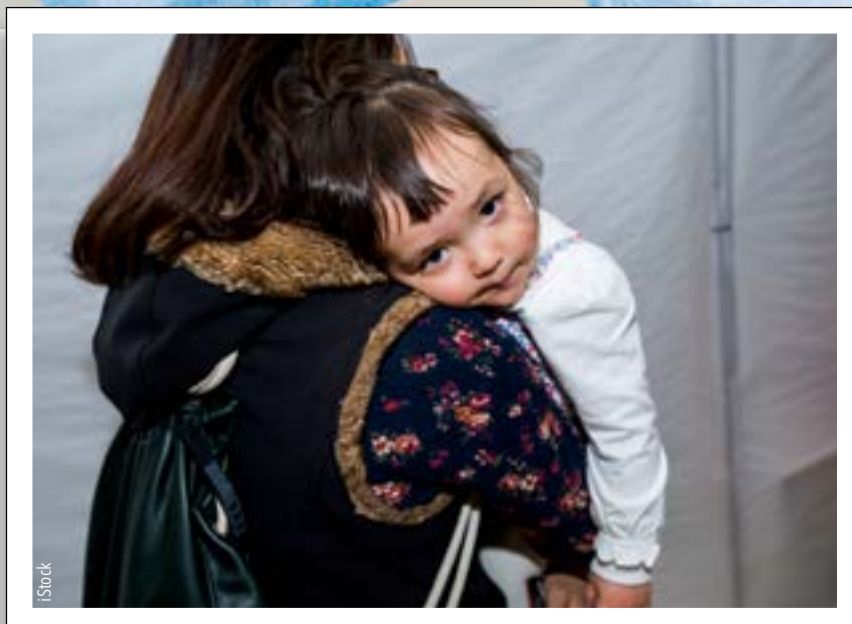
How the government can recoup these missing payments, to benefit both the payees and support the economy more broadly, is connected to how effectively government agencies communicate with each other.

Committee Chair George Christensen agrees there is supposed to be interaction and communication between Centrelink, the Australian Taxation Office and DHS, but many submissions to the inquiry reported this communication is ineffective.

"It's something we're going to have to go back to the departments and ask questions about. If on paper it's all supposed to be open so we get the best outcome, but in reality we're hearing from people engaged in the child support system saying 'it's just not working', we need to find out what the problem is," he said.

Communication is a recurring theme in the inquiry not just how agencies communicate with each other but how they communicate with clients who use the system.

One payer, responding to the online questionnaire, wrote "I earned more



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money, so CSA [DHS] updated my assessment and demanded more money from my employer via an embarrassing letter. This really hurts. Can this please be done in a nicer way? Happy to pay more, talk to us fathers, don't demand from our employers with horrible letters”.

Telephone is the main way child support services are delivered. It's also possible to make a child support application online. A criticism of the system is that it is too complicated for users to understand. One questionnaire respondent feels “It is very common to get multiple, duplicated letters. Phone line operators give conflicting information/advice. Wait times to speak to a phone line operator are extremely long and frequently you are transferred to wrong department or to someone who is not available.”

There have been many suggestions about how the shortfalls of the child support system can be resolved. In tackling the big issues of non-compliance and communication, there have been calls to make the agency take a bigger role in managing payments. This would remove the burden of responsibility from system users. With the agency managing collection and

disbursement, there would be less confusion and stress for both payees and payers.

Going one step further – so payees can engage in more meaningful financial planning – is moving to a guaranteed payments model. Dr Kristin Natalier argues that this guaranteed payment model would be in the best interests of children.

In her submission to the inquiry, Dr Natalier wrote, “The DHS Child Support Programme should ensure the full amount of enforceable child support liability is transferred to payees. This transfer should occur irrespective of the payer's transfer of agreed amounts, and whilst CSA [DHS] pursues the collection of liabilities from the payer.”

Committee Chair George Christensen sees merit in this suggestion, as the scheme is meant to prevent children from living in poverty.

“However, we need to balance it up against how we're going to pay for that – this is something the committee is going to have to agonise over and do the sums on how much it's going to cost. It may be that in certain circumstances a government guarantee is necessary but in all circumstances

▶ FINANCIAL SECURITY:

Women will often put their safety and their children's safety over financial security.


it may just cost too much for the government to afford,” he said.


Any changes to the child support system are still a while away. The committee expects to table its report in early 2015. Just like relationship breakdown itself, the system and its reform can be drawn out and complicated. Mr Christensen reflects that it comes down to real people and how they interact.

“It may simply be that with human systems, something always goes wrong because humans are fallible - you're always going to have mistakes happen. It's how we put systems in place to minimise those mistakes - ultimately a lot of this inquiry is going to come down to this.” ■

LINKS

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 (02) 6277 2358

Road to empowerment

How to protect the fundamental rights of women and girls in two deeply patriarchal societies.

Story: Andrea Close



AFGHANISTAN: When Fatima (11) lost her mother, World Vision's counsellors worked with her father on the benefits of girl education so she could attend a World Vision centre for street children. Fatima now dreams of becoming a doctor. Photographer: Narges Ghafary/World Vision



PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Training participants discuss mother and child health issues in their community. World Vision conducted a three-day Mother and Child Health Peer Education training session attended by men, women and children in Port Moresby. Photographer: Paula Kari/World Vision

When it comes to comparing Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea, it's easy to spot the differences and Australia's relationship with both countries varies greatly.

Afghanistan is a country of 32 million people with cultural and religious complexity. The mountainous, landlocked South-Central Asian nation has been torn apart by decades of war.

Papua New Guinea is a rain-forest covered Pacific island, home to several hundred tribes, and is one of the world's least explored lands.

But they have a tragic commonality. In Papua New Guinea, at least two thirds of women have experienced violence, and one third have been subjected to rape.

Violence against women and girls in Afghanistan is almost at pandemic level, with up to 87 percent of women having

experienced some form of violence, such as physical, psychological, sexual, economic violence, social abuse as well as forced and early marriage.

These are shocking statistics but, according to aid agencies working in the region, denying these women and girls their fundamental rights to live without fear and persecution due to perceived cultural sensitivities is crippling homes, communities and entire societies.

International development agencies such as World Vision and CARE Australia say violence against women and girls is inextricably linked to a lack of economic independence and a lack of women in decision making positions.

The internal dynamics of these countries are important to Australia, not only in humanitarian terms but also for stability, security and economic growth in the region.



“The disempowerment is maintained by structures including culture, religion, laws and policies and they are continually reinforced both by women and men.”



As part of its inquiry into human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific region, the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is hearing evidence of culturally sanctioned violations throughout the region.

The inquiry covers an extensive geographic area on the world map. Connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans through Southeast Asia, it includes a diverse range of countries from eastern Africa, the Middle East and India through to Australia’s closest neighbours in the Asia Pacific.

The committee heard that a woman’s empowerment requires three things - improving her knowledge and skills which can lead to economic benefits, support from those closest to her, and ensuring that her rights are protected by legislation.

Senior Program Officer at CARE Australia, Elizabeth Cowan, says that for too many, the lack of access to justice keeps them silent.

“The disempowerment is maintained by structures including culture, religion, laws and policies and they are continually reinforced both by women and men.”

Julie McKay, Executive Director of the Australian National Committee for UN Women, says the legal framework may exist but making the leap between customary practice and formal justice is fraught with obstacles.

“Women’s access to formal justice systems and also being able to guide the justice they want from a situation rather than having a system imposed on them, can leave them helpless.”



TRAINING:

(left) A participant preparing her presentation. World Vision’s project supports vulnerable children in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Participants learn about the importance of breastfeeding, immunisation, preparing simple healthy meals from the three food groups and reading simple health charts or illustrations on healthy practises. Photographer: Paula Kari/World Vision



PAPUA NEW GUINEA:

(left) Children in traditional regalia at a community celebration on the outskirts of Papua New Guinea's capital of Port Moresby. Photographer: Errol Fontanellaz/World Vision

AFGHANISTAN:

(right) A mother and baby receive support at a nutrition project in Afghanistan, outside Herat City near the Iranian border. Photographer: Chris Weeks/World Vision

"We are looking to develop a partnership to build trust with both men and women"

The vast majority of these women's voices are never heard. Their stories go untold. In a patriarchal system, a man's voice is most powerful.

Therefore, significant attention has been focused on the attitude of the region's men and boys, in particular their attitudes to violence and the real threat of what can happen if the status quo is altered.

In its submission to the inquiry, World Vision says patriarchal systems of belief reinforce the dominance of men and boys over women and girls in all aspects of public and private life. This culture of dominance is deeply entrenched and is accepted by men and women alike.

Policy Adviser at World Vision Australia, Erin Goddard, says it is not surprising that there is resistance to change when gender roles are so entrenched.

"There is clear anecdotal evidence, particularly in Papua New Guinea, that violence increases when a man feels

his power is threatened. Engagement with men and boys to explore the positive aspects of masculine identities is needed," said Ms Goddard.

Human Rights Sub-Committee Chair, Philip Ruddock (Berowra, NSW), said fathers and husbands often feel the pursuit of independent goals can take the woman away from her regular household duties and obligations to her family.

"As you seek to change the status quo, it undermines men's authority and their traditional decision making and they can see this as quite deleterious," Mr Ruddock said.

Paul Kelly, Principal Executive at CARE Australia, says that any program's potential success stems from the initial approach to the community as a whole.

"The important thing is not coming in with a sense of 'We are right and we'll fix things for you.' It is about having a more humble approach," said Mr Kelly.

"We are looking to develop a partnership to build trust with both men and women, understand what the challenges are and what the perspectives of the people we are going to work with are."

Education programs targeting men and boys are underway but cycles of generational abuse are hard to break, according to Julianne Scenna of World Vision.

Bougainville's agents of change

Evidence shows that the end of wartime violence can see the beginning of an increase in gender-based violence. So how do women move from powerless victims to empowered agents of change, particularly when they live in a patriarchal society?

Following a peace agreement between the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) to end the 10 year civil war, the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) was formed, with elections for the first Parliament held in 2005.

Rose Pihei is the Minister for Health and one of three who, since 2010, hold reserved seats for women in the ABG, along with MPs Joan Jerome and Elizabeth Burain.

Bougainville has one of the lowest rates of female representation in government in the world. Credible recognition within the Parliament is of critical importance if political gains are to be made, so what kind of reception did the three women receive once in the Parliament?

"The attitudes from the men were very negative. 'What do you think you are doing? Women can't do anything in politics,'" said Ms Burain.

"Our ideas were not listened to for quite some time," added Ms Jerome. "We had to be persistent."

The three colleagues have much in common. All were heavily involved in brokering peace between warring factions in the lead up to the new government and were reluctant politicians at first, but felt compelled to stand for election.

"These women I had advocated for, these communities needed a leader and they wanted me to speak for them. I could not stand by passively," said Ms Pihei.

Essential to running for office was getting the OK from family, which all three women had to seek. Ms Pihei's husband initially said no when she asked him if she could stand for election but changed his mind after seeing first-hand the plight of the local women.

"Encouraging women to be self-reliant but to work alongside their male



PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM, 2014: (left to right) The Hon Joan Jerome, Minister Rose Pihei, Her Excellency, the Hon. Deborah Stokes and the Hon. Elizabeth Burain.

counterparts is one way of uniting our people," she said.

The three agree that the women of post-conflict Bougainville are suffering more than ever, with a recent UN report showing that 80 per cent of Bougainville men reported using sexual or physical violence against a partner.

"Encouraging women to be self-reliant but to work alongside their male counterparts is one way of uniting our people."

During her time in Parliament, Rose Pihei has been the driver of the Bougainville Gender Policy and the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan but she says gender-based violence in her home country is very bad.

"We have an issue with a 'lost generation' who never went to school or had a job. They would now be aged 30 - 45 and they think that it's normal to fight and be threatening to others."

With more women speaking out for themselves, again the issue of male disempowerment comes to the fore. The parliamentarians are encouraging others to show that women can have power without taking it from men.

Joan Jerome said that mentoring programs are underway and things are looking positive.

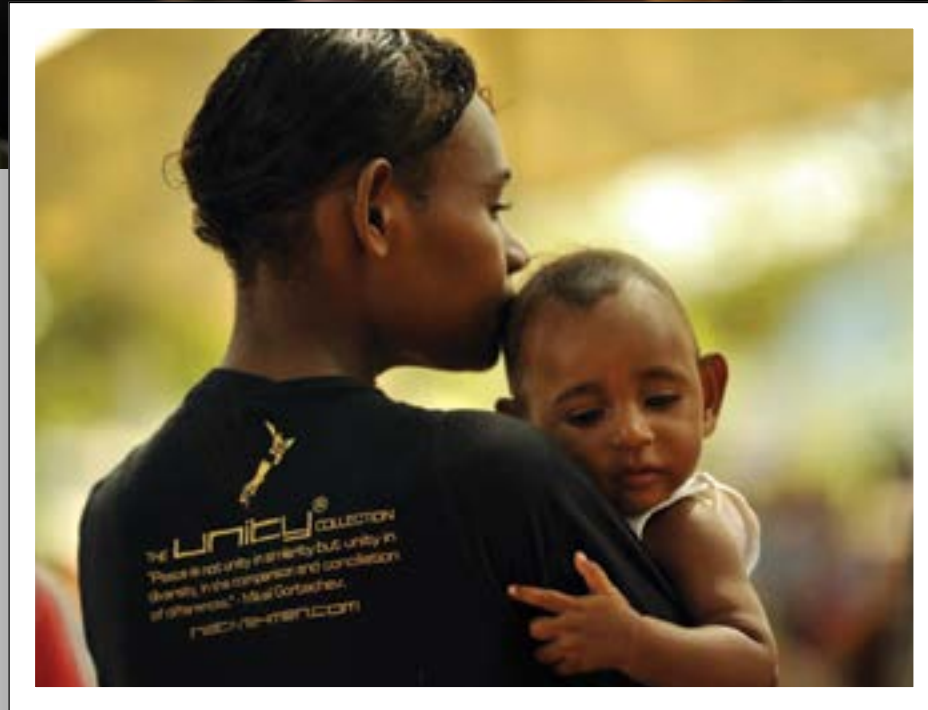
"We have been running workshops and I believe one or two new women will stand in the next elections. Our three positions show others they can do it and we would like to see other women join us."

Ms Burain added that the reserved parliamentary seats are a good start and that being elected representatives gives them the strength to change the thinking of the whole community by showing men need not feel disempowered by a woman's success.

"It's good for us to know that being a politician requires us to be strong for others. We must convince our young women to be active, to have that drive to be leaders of the future.

"Our male colleagues are now beginning to realise and acknowledge publicly that we are performing very well. For a patriarchal society, it has been a great breakthrough."

Women's economic empowerment and access to leadership are intricately tied up with the violence they may face.



AFGHANISTAN:

(above) Feroza, 6, is a student in Gaza, a small village north of Kabul, Afghanistan. CARE funded the construction of a library at the school. Photographer: David Rochkind/CARE

PORT MORESBY:

(left) A mother and her child watch the celebrations in their community, on the outskirts of Papua New Guinea's capital of Port Moresby. Photographer: Errol Fontanellaz/World Vision

“Awareness and education, flyers and posters are good in ensuring that people have a basic understanding of issues but there also need to be safety nets and intervention procedures and frameworks to ensure that people are able to speak out,” she says.

The sub-committee heard that women's economic empowerment and access to leadership are intricately tied up with the violence they may face.

Australia is currently assisting with establishing mobile banking services in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere in the region, to allow women to manage their own finances and gain economic empowerment.

Here is where the approach is so crucial. Women who earn their own income are at risk of experiencing physical and/

or sexual violence, according to Senior Program Officer at CARE Australia, Elizabeth Cowan.

“We work with individual women but we bring them into groups where they are able to undertake collective action of village savings and loans,” she says.

“Before participating in one of CARE's projects in Bangladesh, women were often harassed by men while they were walking to the market. Now, as a result of the increased confidence that they have developed through village savings and loans groups, they are addressing that harassment they have experienced.”

Changing so-called cultural norms and attitudes is a long term commitment. Implementing programs and seeing them bear fruit is likely to take several years and is often seen as a Western import, according to Ms Cowan.



AFGHANISTAN:

Nastura, 9, has been attending school in the village of Burikhil for 3 years. When she graduates, she wants to be able to teach other people too. “I like school - it is the best part of my day,” she says.

Photographer: Kate Holt/CARE

“In reality, we cannot empower a woman. As a white woman from Australia, I cannot go into a country and hand over some empowerment to a woman. That has to come from the woman herself.”

The good news is that there are some heartening stories arising. In Afghanistan, there are more than 8.3 million school students enrolled this year and 40 per cent of them are girls. This compares to only 1 million school children, with almost no girls, in 2001.

Zulaikha Rafiq from the Afghan Women Educational Centre relayed the story of a 28-year-old mother of four from the remote Faryab province in Afghanistan who recently spoke publicly in her country about joining the women’s shura (or consultation group) in her village.

“She took advantage of the literacy lessons and with support from her husband and family, has decided to go to school this new academic session,” she says.

“The woman was literally trembling and she said, ‘I never imagined that one day I would be standing on a stage and talking to people from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and from civil society organisations.’

“With the backing of the international community over the past decade, Afghan women have found their voice and have become a force that cannot be ignored. They now occupy 28 per cent of parliamentary seats as members of the High Peace Council and play a vital role in ensuring that


Changing so-called cultural norms and attitudes is a long-term commitment.

the issues and concerns of Afghan women are not sidelined in any peace process initiated by the government,” Ms Rafiq said.


Access to leadership positions is essential for women to gain more support from the top down (see Bougainville story). That said, the inferior position of women, the sense that they should be subservient to men, that violence within the home is not vulnerable to the laws of the land – these are deeply held views in both countries.

The inquiry continues to hear from various witnesses that it will take consistent, long term commitment from all parties, internal and external, to see real change. ■

LINKS

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 jscfadt@aph.gov.au

 (02) 6277 2313

Vale Gough

1916 - 2014



The House has remembered one of Australia's most iconic leaders. The passing of the Honourable Edward Gough Whitlam AC QC, former Member for Werriwa and Prime Minister (1972-75) was recognised with a condolence motion in the House. Current Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten led the tributes. Many Members have spoken about the legacy of Mr Whitlam's work, reflecting on their interactions with the 'political giant' and the impact of his leadership on Australia and the international stage.

Here are a few extracts of how the House remembered.



5 DECEMBER 1972

25 JULY 1973

31 OCTOBER 1973

8 APRIL 1974



Whitlam is Australia's 21st Prime Minister and leads the first Labor government in 23 years.



The Australian Legal Aid Office is established, with offices in each state capital.



Whitlam is the first Australian Prime Minister to visit China.



Advance Australia Fair replaces God Save the Queen as the national anthem.



Tony Abbott
PRIME MINISTER

After 23 years of coalition government, Australians wanted change. It was time, as the famous campaign song proclaimed—probably the only campaign song that anyone can now remember. Whitlam represented more than a new politics; he represented a new way of thinking about government, about our region, about our place in the world and about change itself. Nineteen seventy two was his time, and all subsequent times have been shaped by his time. His government ended conscription, recognised China, introduced Medibank, abolished university fees, decolonised Papua New Guinea, transformed our approach to Indigenous policy

and expanded the role of the Commonwealth, particularly in the field of social services. These were highly contentious at the time; some of these measures are still contentious; but, one way or another, our country has never been quite the same. Members of his government displayed the usual human foibles, but, support it or oppose it, there was a largeness of purpose to all his government attempted—even if its reach far exceeded its grasp, as the 1975 election result showed. He may not have been our greatest Prime Minister, but he was certainly one of the greatest personalities that our country has ever produced. And no Prime Minister has been more mythologised.

“I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and I put into your hands part of the earth itself as a sign that this land will be the possession of you and your children forever.”

Gough Whitlam
The Gurindji land ceremony
16 August 1975

18 MAY 1974



Labor under Whitlam retains government after the 29th federal (double dissolution) election.

11 JULY 1974



18th Governor-General Sir John Kerr sworn in

11 JUNE 1975



Discrimination on the grounds of race is outlawed through the Racial Discrimination Act.

12 JUNE 1975



The Family Law Act provides for a Family Court of Australia and the introduction of no-fault divorce.



Bill Shorten

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

No other Prime Minister before or since, Gough Whitlam redefined our country and, in doing so, he changed the lives of a generation and generations to come. Think of Australia in, say, 1966: Ulysses was banned, Lolita was banned. It was the Australia of the six o'clock swill, with no film industry and only one television drama, Homicide. Political movements to the left of the DLP were under routine surveillance. Many Australians of talent—Clive, Barry, Germaine, Rupert, Sidney, Geoffrey—as a matter of course, left their home, their native country, to try their luck in England. Yet Gough reimagined Australia, our home, as a confident, prosperous, modern and multicultural

nation where opportunity belonged to everyone. The Whitlam government should not be measured in years but in achievements. Whitlam defined patriotism as seeing things that were wrong about Australia and trying to change them. In 1970, he was referring to our unacceptably high infant mortality rate amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, our immigration policy based on race, our support for the Vietnam War. Whitlam said that a true patriot does not try to justify unfairness or prolong unfairness but to change it, and change it he did. Our country is most certainly different because of him. By any test, our country is better because of him.



newspix

1 JUL 1975



Australia's first national health insurance scheme Medibank is introduced.

16 AUGUST 1975



Whitlam formally gives Vincent Lingiari of the Gurindji people in the Northern Territory title deeds to a part of their traditional lands.

16 SEPTEMBER 1975



Australia grants independence to Papua New Guinea.

11 NOVEMBER 1975



Governor-General Sir John Kerr dismisses Mr Whitlam as Prime Minister.

Julie Bishop

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

His decision to visit China as opposition leader in 1971 revealed the courage of his convictions in what was a path-breaking decision at the time. History records his angst at his decision to travel and whether or not he should send a delegation rather than go himself, but he had first argued in 1954 for the normalisation of relations with mainland China—a position then at odds with Labor’s official policy platform—and so he took the bold political gamble to visit China at a high point in the Cold War. He was vindicated when it was revealed that the United States National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, had also been sent to Beijing by President Richard Nixon.

A clear indication of his approach to foreign policy came in his first press conference as Prime Minister on 5 December 1972, when he said:

The change of government does provide a new opportunity for us to reassess a whole range of Australian foreign policies and attitudes ... the general direction of my thinking is towards a more independent Australian stance in international affairs, an Australia which will be less militarily oriented and not open to suggestions of racism; an Australia which

will enjoy a growing standing as a distinctive, tolerant, co-operative and well regarded nation not only in the Asian and Pacific regions, but in the world at large.

In an earlier speech, in 1968, titled ‘Australia as an Asian nation’, Mr Whitlam showed considerable prescience as he argued strongly for the benefits of economic development and growth to be spread throughout Asia, and particularly South-East Asia, to ensure the peoples of our region were able to feed themselves. He said:

Australia’s road-building teams in Thailand and Indonesia—show what can be achieved for under-developed nations through the application of technical skills in conjunction with relatively minor amounts of capital. This is a form of aid particularly suited to a country which is itself an importer of capital and which is still engaged in major developmental works within its own borders. Australia cannot explore the possibilities of such aid too fully.

This is consistent with the contemporary approach of many aid agencies and governments around the world, including the Australian government, as we seek greater levels of economic growth as a means of alleviating poverty and lifting living standards.



aap



“He changed the way in which politics is conducted in this country, and he can certainly lay claim to being the father of modern campaigning in Australia. His ‘It’s time’ campaign has probably never been surpassed, with its dynamism, vibrancy and momentum.”

Warren Truss
(Wide Bay, Qld)



newspix



Tanya Pibersek
DEPUTY LEADER
OF THE OPPOSITION

Gough's commitment to equality for women was perhaps best embodied in the wonderful relationship that he had with his beloved wife Margaret—a relationship that spanned nearly 70 years of marriage. Gough's reforms for women were landmark. They included the election of the first Labor woman to the House of Representatives, Joan Child, in 1974. His partnership with Margaret was such a driving force in that drive for equality for women. Gough respected her. He listened to her views. He treated her as an equal in every way. When she died, just a few months short of 70 years of marriage, he said: 'We were married for almost 70 years. She was a remarkable person and the love of my life.'

On hearing of Gough's passing today, many people have described Gough as a giant of our nation—and he was. He was, as the Deputy Prime Minister said, a towering figure physically. He also had the ability to deliver soaring rhetoric. But his actions were also very down to earth. He was a very warm person on a one-to-one basis. I remember when my parents first met him. They were almost embarrassed to talk to him, because they admired him so much. He was so incredibly warm and welcoming to them, particularly to my mother. His ability to talk at an international level about issues of enormous complexity and convince an audience on the one hand and speak person to person to any Australian and make them feel respected and included was phenomenal. It was a phenomenal ability.

“Of course, my 26 years as member for Werriwa and three years as the Prime Minister were just flashes compared to the long, warm glow of the other significant anniversary I celebrated this year - 60 years together with Margaret Elaine Dovey.”

Gough Whitlam, Federal Parliamentary
Labor Party Dinner 2002



THE LAW

Online advertising to stay on Government's most popular website

With over 470 million visits a year, it's no surprise that the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website is one of the most popular in Australia.

Whether you're a farmer growing crops, a surfer looking for the best break, or if you just want to know if you can leave the washing on the line, we all love to talk about the weather.

The BOM is renowned for being the leading authority on weather forecasts, warnings and advice and it provides critical information to individuals and organisations responding to the harsh realities of the Australian environment.

The BOM is one of the first federal Government websites permitted to have online advertising.

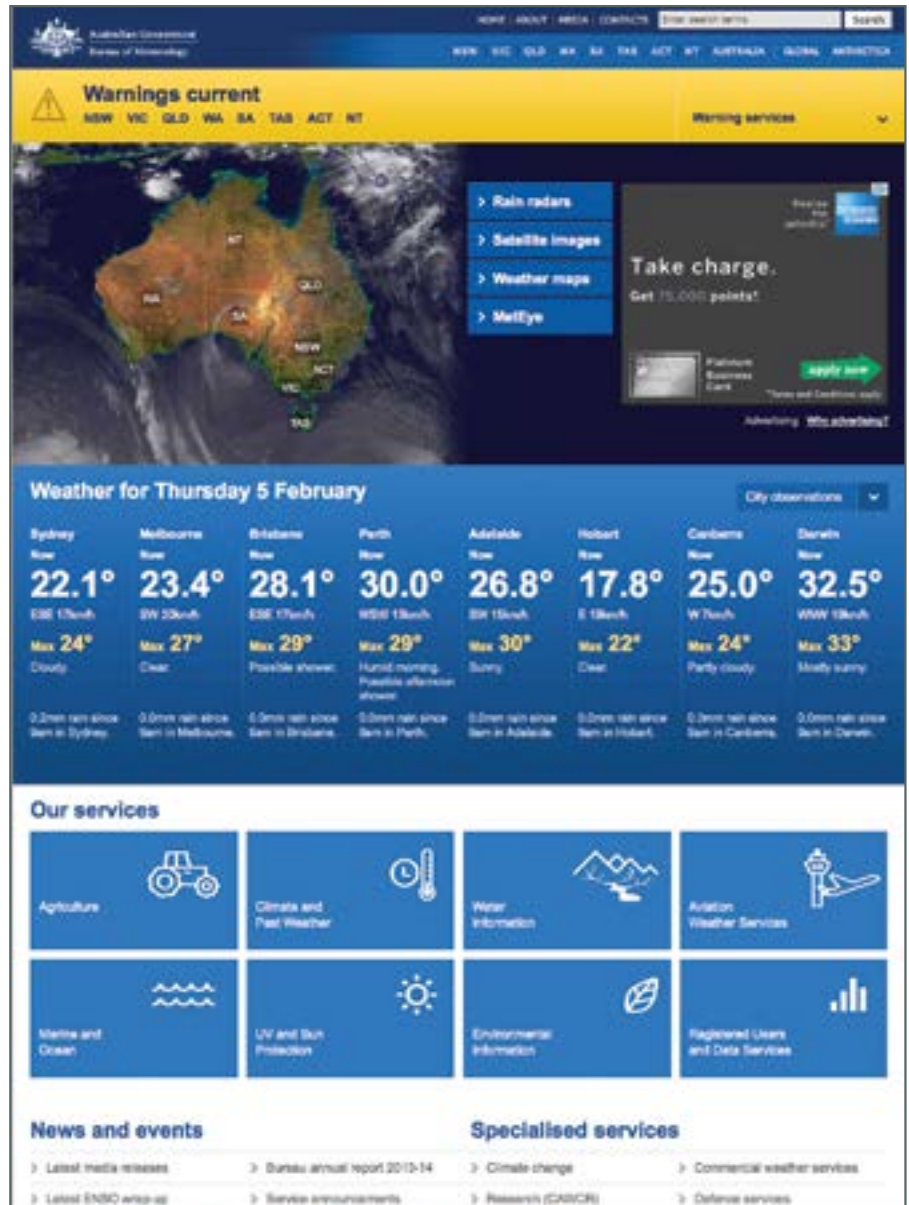
Recouping the cost of delivering this service is possible by selling advertising space on the BOM website. After a successful 12-month trial of advertising, Parliament has allowed the BOM to continue to capitalise on this opportunity.

The Meteorology Amendment (Online Advertising) Bill 2014 requires the BOM Director to develop guidelines on the types of advertising permitted.

Environment Minister, Greg Hunt (Flinders, Vic), said weather-watchers need not worry that the presence of advertisements will affect the quality of the website.

"The Government wants to provide certainty to ensure the Director of Meteorology's powers include advertising in connection with the Bureau of Meteorology services, and determine the types of advertising that the bureau displays," he said.

"This particular Bill ensures that the director has the power to prohibit advertising considered to be not in the Commonwealth's or the bureau's interests—advertising of things such as



▶ BREAK IN THE WEATHER: Online advertising permitted on the BOM.

tobacco, alcohol, gambling, violence and weapons, and advertising that has a sexual content."

Pop-ups over the page or floating ads that can obscure content on screen are not allowed, so that users can still access information quickly in an emergency.

"This Bill will also remove any doubt and make it explicitly clear that the BOM can accept paid advertising. This allows the bureau to further diversify its

sources of funding ... as has been the consistent goal of governments of both persuasions," Mr Hunt said.

The BOM is one of the first federal Government websites to be allowed online advertising.

Although the profitability of accepting paid advertising is yet to be established, this new law may pave the way for other government agencies to use their online spaces to generate income. ■

THE LAW



TAXATION

Swiss treaty prevents tax evasion

The image of Swiss bank accounts as tools for tax evasion is about to be given a shake-up.

New laws amending the International Tax Agreement Act (1953) mean Australia and Switzerland will share information to prevent people evading tax payments or being required to pay tax twice and encourage greater trade and investment between the two countries.

Steven Ciobo (Moncrieff, Qld) says Australia has 44 bilateral tax agreements with different countries.

“Tax treaties facilitate trade and investment by reducing barriers caused by the double taxation of residents in the two countries,” he said.

It is expected there will be a stronger relationship between Australia and Switzerland as a result of the new agreement.

“The new treaty will update the existing bilateral tax arrangements between Australia and Switzerland, to align them with current Australian and international tax treaty policy settings,” Mr Ciobo said.

“This is expected to further encourage bilateral trade and investment.”

The new agreement with Switzerland replaces a previous agreement from 1980.

The establishment of effective exchange-of-information arrangements with Switzerland is expected to discourage the use of Swiss banks to conceal untaxed income and assets.

“The new treaty will also modernise the bilateral taxpayer information sharing arrangements and permit, for the first time, the exchange of



▶ SWISS BANKS: No longer a safe haven.

taxpayer information for the purpose of preventing tax evasion. This greater transparency includes access to Swiss bank information that could help Australia better enforce its tax laws,” Mr Ciobo said.

Asked about the extent of tax evasion between Australia and Switzerland, the Australian Taxation Office acknowledged the difficulty of placing a dollar figure on the issue but told the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties that over 188,000 transactions took place between the two countries during the 2012-13 financial year involving over \$41 billion.

Sharing information will lead to better transparency and enable both countries to better enforce their own tax laws.

The new agreement will also create a more reliable tax framework for business between Australia and Switzerland. This certainty is expected to encourage economic growth and job creation as investors can better plan for their businesses. ■

DRUG LAWS

New offence for importing designer drugs

Alternative illicit drugs, sometimes marketed as “legal highs”, will be subject to seizure if imported into Australia.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) is a term used to describe drugs that fall outside international drug treaties, according to Justice Minister Michael Keenan (Stirling, WA).

“NPS are designed to mimic the psychoactive effects of illicit drugs, however their chemical structures are not captured by existing controls on those drugs,” Mr Keenan said.

Often described as synthetic or designer drugs, NPS create a challenge for governments around the world. This is because once an NPS is banned, manufacturers can quickly create a new, alternative substance that has similar features but is not on the prohibition list.

The Justice Minister said when substances are presented as “legal highs”, it creates an improper assumption that they are safe.

“These substances are potentially very dangerous. They have been directly linked to deaths and serious injury. They are untested chemical compounds which masquerade as illicit drugs but are presented as being legal analogues of those drugs,” Mr Keenan said.



THE LAW



www.aph.gov.au/ath

The current regulatory system has been proven to be inadequate, as Australia has struggled with the increasing number of NPS available.

Under the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Psychoactive Substances and Other Measures) Bill 2014, Australian Customs and Border Protection Services, officers will be able to seize NPS and substances presented as alternatives to illicit drugs.

The Justice Minister said the onus will then be on the defendant to prove that the substances are not prohibited or that they qualify for an exemption.

“It will be up to a person whose goods have been seized on suspicion of being a new psychoactive substance, to show why they should be returned to them. If an importer cannot do this—for example, by showing that the goods have a legitimate use—their goods will be destroyed,” Mr Keenan said.

The new law will not apply to psychoactive substances that are imported for a legitimate purpose. Foods, medicines, and industrial, agricultural and veterinary chemicals are examples of psychoactive substances that would be exempt from the new law.

States and territories will cooperate with the Commonwealth to stop the sale of NPS. Health, law enforcement and education initiatives will align across jurisdictions to complement the national framework for NPS that the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council announced on 4 July 2014.

“The Bill will stop people from importing these dangerous chemicals for use as alternatives to illicit drugs and pretending they are legal or safe. In combination with state and territory initiatives under the national framework, we can prevent [NPS] from becoming as great a challenge as other illicit drugs,” Mr Keenan said. ■



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SPORT

Winning the race against doping



▶ WINNING THE RACE: Athlete support staff subject to sanctions.

Australian legislation has now aligned with the World Anti-Doping Code (WADC), ensuring athletes are treated under the same rules everywhere, regardless of nationality or sport.

Sports Minister, Peter Dutton (Dickson, Qld), said the Australian Government is committed to clean sport.

“Not only is doping a serious risk to an athlete’s health and wellbeing, it is fundamentally about cheating and debasing all that is good about sport, which we hold close to our hearts—from improved health through physical endeavour to the pursuit of athletic excellence and the values it teaches,” he said.

The Australian Government is also a party to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)’s International Convention against Doping in Sport, which requires signatories to implement conditions imposed under the WADC.

The Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Amendment Bill 2014 will address the requirements of the WADC by focusing on athlete support personnel who are involved in doping by imposing longer periods of competition ineligibility for athletes caught doping, and by placing an additional emphasis on information management and investigation of drug cheats.

The Sports Minister said athlete support staff involved in doping will be subject to Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs).

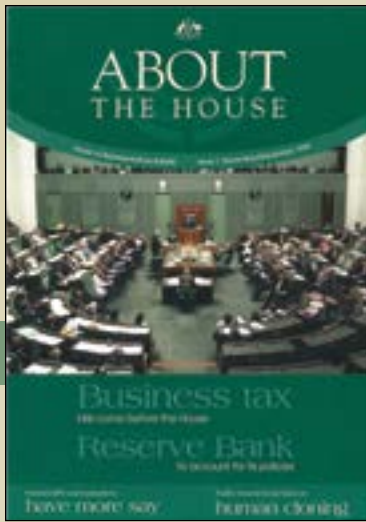
“Appropriately, athletes or athlete support personnel who are found to have committed anti-doping rule violations are subject to sanctions such as ineligibility to compete and disqualification of results from sporting competitions,” Mr Dutton said.

“The international anti-doping community has agreed that it is time to take action to protect sports from those support persons who orchestrate systematic doping programs.”

Mr Dutton said the new law is also intended to encourage better information-sharing across sports administration bodies.

“With investigations and intelligence-gathering now forming an integral element of any strategy for detecting doping, the revised code emphasises the need for effective information flows between government agencies, sporting bodies and anti-doping organisations. Accordingly, amendments to the information-sharing provisions in the act are proposed to ensure clarity and simplicity,” Mr Dutton said.

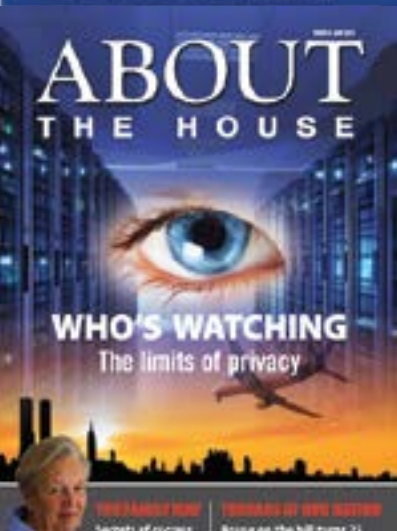
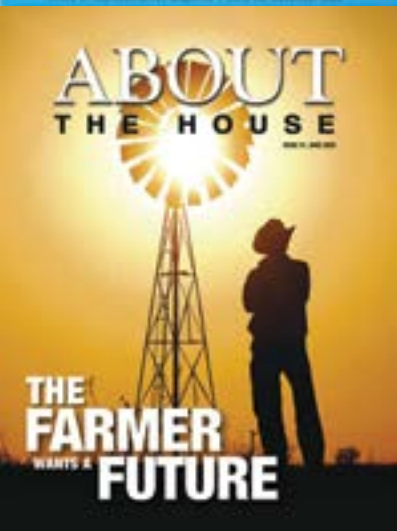
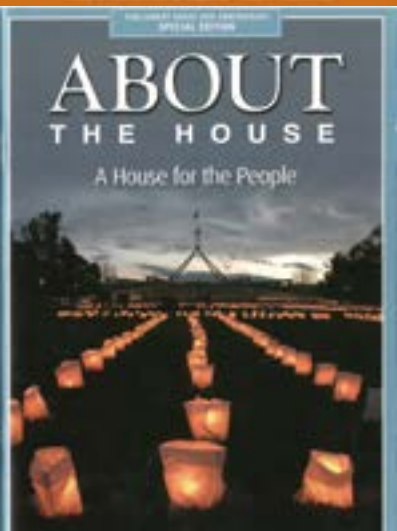
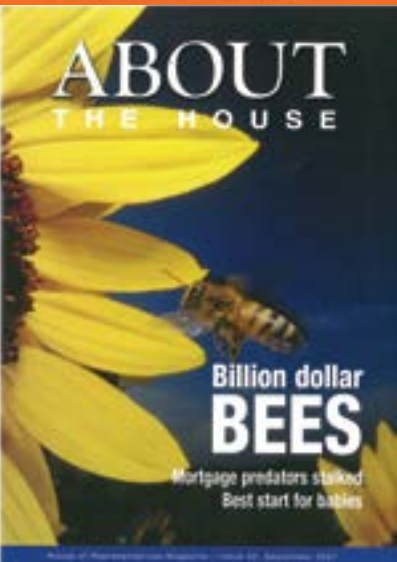
(Editor’s Note: Sussan Ley (Farrer, NSW) is now Minister for Sport.) ■



ABOUT THE HOUSE

A retrospective

The About the House magazine was first printed in December 1999 and there have been 49 issues including this one. The magazine was introduced as a way of reporting the work of parliamentary committees, legislation before the House of Representatives and other stories from the parliament in an interesting and engaging format. Take a look back at some of the covers of About the House magazine and the issues that have been tackled by the parliament over the years.



STAYING IN TOUCH WITH ABOUT THE HOUSE

How to access About the House digital magazine

1



You need a tablet device (e.g. iPad or Android tablet)

2



You need to install **RepsApp** -the free House of Representatives App
Android users (e.g. not an iPad) need to go to the Google play store; iOS users (e.g. iPad) need to go to the App Store and search for Australia's House of Representatives

3



Follow the instructions to install the App on your tablet

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Once the App is installed, open the App and touch the Library icon. Select which digital issue of About the House you would like to download

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You will need a stable WiFi connection to successfully download the magazine

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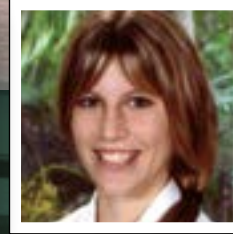
Once downloaded there is a quick guide showing you how to navigate the features of the magazine

7



Happy reading!

My first speech



Does the thought of public speaking scare you? How about standing up so the whole country can hear you?

High school students across Australia took up the challenge - entering a competition that asked them to imagine themselves as a newly elected MP making their very first speech in the chamber.

Story: Pip Blackwood



WINNERS OF MY FIRST SPEECH:

(Top, left to right)

Chay Conaglen (Rockhampton, Qld)

Courtney Sinclair (Elimbah, Qld)

Zachary August (Waverley, NSW)

When we see our politicians on the news, they're often shown in passionate debate in the House, seasoned legislators who seem at home in the chamber. But before they become caught up with committees and get busy with bills, new Members must make their first speech to the House. This is the theme for the My First Speech competition, an event run by the Department of the House of Representatives. High school students were asked to imagine themselves as a newly elected Member of Parliament and write and deliver a speech on issues they are passionate about.

A Member's first speech, previously referred to as a maiden speech, is a tradition that originated in the British House of Commons. It is a significant occasion and an opportunity for a new Member to outline to Parliament what they hope to achieve.

Members' first speeches are as diverse as the people they represent in their electorates. Many Members choose to express their political views and goals in their first speeches while others thank their supporters or speak about personal experiences. Members may also mention specific issues affecting the people in their electorates, such as health or education, or speak about financial or economic matters.

There is a convention in the House that a first speech is heard without interjection or interruption, and the Chair normally draws the attention of the House to the fact that a Member is making a first speech. In return for this courtesy, the Member must follow a few conventions. This includes keeping their speech succinct and uncontroversial, so as not to provoke interjection.

The winner of the 2014 My First Speech competition is Chay Conaglen from Rockhampton, Queensland. Chay's heartfelt delivery won the judges over as he spoke about his own personal story, Australia's economic policy, the climate change debate and our relationships with India and China.

Second and third placed in the competition were Courtney Sinclair of Elimbah in Queensland and Zachary August from Waverley in NSW.

All three were flown to Canberra to meet the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop (Mackellar, NSW), and present their speeches live at Parliament House in front of many MPs.

Over 150 students entered the competition. All of the 2014 entries are featured in a public exhibition at Parliament House running to March 2015. ■

2014 My First Speech Competition - 1st place

Chay Conaglen, Rockhampton, Qld



Chay Conaglen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I remember back to when I was a little boy seeing this great big green room on the television screen, I didn't know what it was or why it was on my TV screen, but I remember staring at it in sheer amazement of its grandness. I now know what this place is, and what it represents, yet it still astounds me. This great building, Parliament House, represents the Australian people, it represents democracy at its greatest and most purest form and I am so humbled to have been given the opportunity to represent the people of Capricornia in this great place.

Like many Australians I am from humble beginnings. I was raised by my beautiful mother and shared my childhood with my little brother and sister. My family and I have been through some tough times along the way, but we have always come out shining. My mother did her best to give us kids a great upbringing, and she did this in the face of domestic violence and poverty. My mother has taught me everything I know and everything I wish to be. My past has shaped me into a true, hardworking and committed Australian, and I believe my life is a clear illustration of

how anyone, irrespective of their background, can achieve in life.

Our nation requires strong economic policy and planning if we wish to see our economy prosper into the future. We must do this by strengthening our relationships with the emerging powers of Asia, such as China and India. We must ensure that we take an active stance on climate change, and do our best to ensure the health of this planet for generations to come. We must also ensure that we continue to create opportunities for all Australians by investing wisely in education, training and infrastructure.

I will work to the best of my ability to ensure all Australians can benefit from our great economy. We can do this because we are Australian, and together the things we can achieve are simply astounding. If you put your mind to it you can do anything, because our nation is a great place, and it doesn't matter where you are from, or how disadvantaged you have been in life, because opportunities are sprouting up everywhere for all Australians to grab a hold of. And as long as I am a member of the Australian parliament the Australian people can be assured that this will never ever change.

Famous firsts



William Groom *Australia's first First Speech*

Publican. Newspaperman. Convict.

William Groom was all three. When the Australian Parliament opened for the first time in 1901, Mr Groom moved the address-in-reply to the Governor-General immediately prior to delivering his speech. There are a number of references to it being the first 'substantial' speech made in Parliament, and it can be considered as the first 'maiden' speech (as it was then known).

So what did Mr Groom talk about?

Australia had just become a Federation. He was concerned there wouldn't be enough money to run the country (he felt the cost estimate fell two million pounds short). A White Australia, the end of kanaka labour from the South Sea Islands and the introduction of German-style pension schemes also all rated a mention.

Although Mr Groom was initially worried about Federation he was hopeful about the new system and the way the members of the House would behave, closing with:

"I feel assured, however, from what I know of my fellow members, that every matter coming before us will receive the gravest consideration and the most matured deliberation, and I fervently hope that upon all occasions our deliberations and discussions will be of such a character that people may point to us with pride, and say that we are worthy of the great charter which Great Britain has conferred upon us."



Julia Gillard *Australia's first female Prime Minister*

Julia Gillard is famous for being Australia's first female Prime Minister. But, like all politicians she had to start somewhere. Ms Gillard was elected to the seat of Lalor, Victoria in 1998. Although a backbencher to begin with, many of the themes Ms Gillard touches on in her first speech to Parliament are issues she remains passionate about today - such as women in leadership and the importance of educational opportunities.

It would be over a decade before she became PM herself yet Ms Gillard references the work of previous prime ministers from her party - reflecting how their policies helped both her personally and the community she represents.



Ken Wyatt *Australia's first Indigenous MP*

In 2010, Ken Wyatt became the first Indigenous Member of the House after he was elected to the WA seat of Hasluck. Mr Wyatt wore a bookha, the traditional cloak of the Nyungar people made from kangaroo skin.

During his speech, which was witnessed by Aboriginal elders, Mr Wyatt said he stood in the House as an equal to all other MPs with 'deep and mixed' emotions.

He also paid tribute to his constituents for creating the historic moment which saw him elected and spoke about the path that led him to federal parliament.



Terri Butler *The most recent First Speech*

Holding the seat of Griffith on Brisbane's south-side (the electorate of former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd) Terri Butler is the most recent MP to have made a first speech.

Ms Butler spoke of her grandparents and parents, her upbringing and her belief that our pathway to future prosperity is built on the foundations of education and training.



HOUSE RULES

Is it a joint sitting?

There are two Houses of Parliament - the House of Representatives and the Senate. They each have their own rules, standing orders and procedures, dictated by the Constitution. Each has its own Presiding Officer and each meets separately, at dates and times separately determined.

However, there are some occasions when the two Houses come together in the one chamber. The recent visits by the UK Prime Minister, the President of China and the Indian Prime Minister are examples. Some in the media call these occasions 'joint sittings', but that is incorrect.

While the House and Senate used to have 'joint meetings' to receive addresses by foreign heads of state, since 2004 such meetings have occurred as sittings of the House to which Senators have been invited. In order to arrange for these addresses, a resolution is agreed to by the House to set the order of business for the sitting and invite Senators to attend as guests. Prior to 2004, the House and Senate, concurrently rather than in joint session, would meet in the House of Representatives Chamber to hear addresses.



The Constitution provides for joint sittings of members of both Houses for the resolution of disagreements between the Houses over legislation, if disagreements persist following a double dissolution. Only one such joint sitting has been held - following the 1974 double dissolution. Never before or since has this method been used to

overcome a deadlock between the two chambers.

The Houses have on several occasions had other 'joint meetings' which are not provided for in either standing orders or the Constitution, but are instead determined by both Houses agreeing on a procedure for such joint meetings to be followed. ■

QUESTION TIME

There go the bells

Have you ever wondered how Members know when they need to be in the Chamber?

All over Parliament House there are special clocks. On each clock, green lights flash to indicate a call for Members of the House of Representatives and red lights are used to call Senators. The lights flash when the bells are ringing - it's pretty noisy when they both ring at once!

It's the job of the Clerk of the House (who sits just below the Speaker) to ring the bells using a special button built into the desk. At the same time, one of the sandglasses on the Clerk's desk is flipped over to count down to when the bells stop.

The bells ring for five minutes prior to the time fixed for the meeting of the House. Bells are also used before any division or ballot is taken. For most divisions, a four minute



sandglass is used. This timeframe was introduced in 1988 when Parliament moved up the hill to the 'new' - and much larger - Parliament House. It was recognised that Members needed a bit longer to make it to the Chamber on time, since they now had to navigate a 240,000 square metre Parliament House which is spread over four levels. ■



*The Department of the
House of Representatives*

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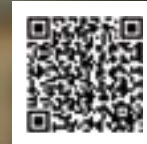
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