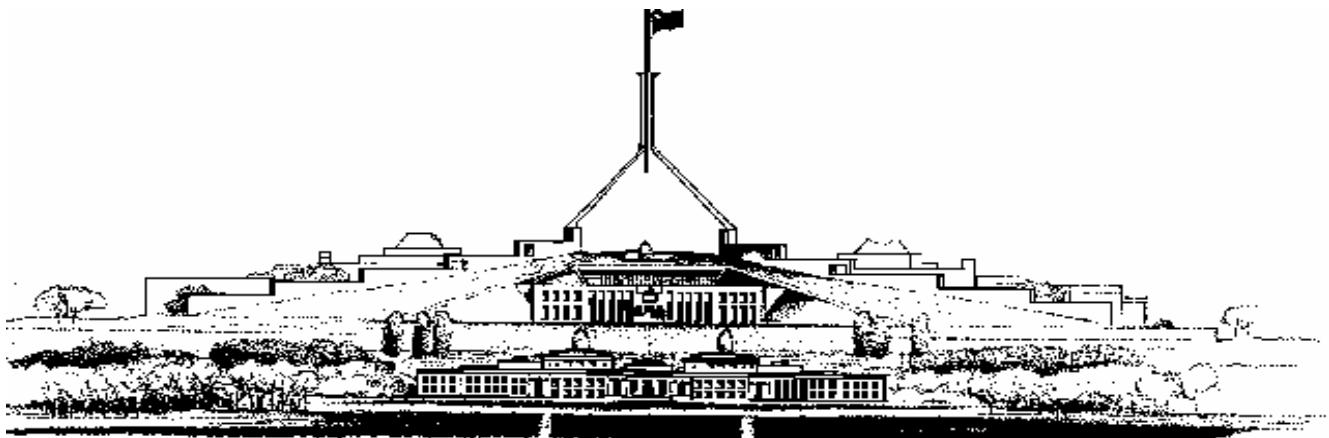




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**



# **House of Representatives**

## **Official Hansard**

**No. 11, 2007**

**Tuesday, 7 August 2007**

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION—TENTH PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



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## SITTING DAYS—2007

Month	Date
February	6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 26, 27, 28
March	1, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29
May	8, 9, 10, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31
June	12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21
August	7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16
September	10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20
October	15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25
November	12, 13, 14, 15, 26, 27, 28, 29
December	3, 4, 5, 6

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

**Governor-General**

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

**House of Representatives Officeholders**

*Speaker*—The Hon. David Peter Maxwell Hawker MP

*Deputy Speaker*—The Hon. Ian Raymond Causley MP

*Second Deputy Speaker*—Mr Henry Alfred Jenkins MP

*Members of the Speaker's Panel*—The Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams, Mr Phillip Anthony Barresi, the Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop, Ms Ann Kathleen Corcoran, Mr Barry Wayne Haase, Mr Michael John Hatton, the Hon. Duncan James Colquhoun Kerr SC, Mr Harry Vernon Quick, the Hon. Bruce Craig Scott, Mr Patrick Damien Secker, the Hon. Alexander Michael Somlyay, Mr Kim William Wilkie

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

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

*Manager of Opposition Business*—Mr Anthony Norman Albanese MP

*Deputy Manager of Opposition Business*—Mr Robert Francis McMullan MP

**Party Leaders and Whips**

Liberal Party of Australia

*Leader*—The Hon. John Winston Howard MP

*Deputy Leader*—The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP

*Chief Government Whip*—Mr Kerry Joseph Bartlett MP

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

The Nationals

*Leader*—The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP

*Deputy Leader*—The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP

*Chief Whip*—Mrs Kay Elizabeth Hull MP

*Whip*—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

Australian Labor Party

*Leader*—Mr Kevin Michael Rudd MP

*Deputy Leader*—Ms Julia Eileen Gillard MP

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

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives

## Members of the House of Representatives

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

## Members of the House of Representatives

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

## Members of the House of Representatives

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

## Members of the House of Representatives

Member	Division	Party
Wakelin, Barry Hugh	Grey, SA	LP
Washer, Malcolm James	Moore, WA	LP
Wilkie, Kim William	Swan, WA	ALP
Windsor, Antony Harold Curties	New England, NSW	Ind
Wood, Jason Peter	La Trobe, Vic	LP

## PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

## Heads of Parliamentary Departments

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

## HOWARD MINISTRY

Prime Minister	The Hon. John Winston Howard MP
Minister for Transport and Regional Services and Deputy Prime Minister	The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MP
Treasurer	The Hon. Peter Howard Costello MP
Minister for Trade	The Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Minister for Defence	The Hon. Dr Brendan John Nelson MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs	The Hon. Alexander John Gosse Downer MP
Minister for Health and Ageing and Leader of the House	The Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Attorney-General	The Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Minister for Finance and Administration, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council	Senator the Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Deputy Leader of the House	The Hon. Peter John McGauran MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	The Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP
Minister for Education, Science and Training and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues	The Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs	The Hon. Malcolm Thomas Brough MP
Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources	The Hon. Ian Elgin Macfarlane MP
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service	The Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP
Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate	Senator the Hon. Helen Lloyd Coonan
Minister for the Environment and Water Resources	The Hon. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP
Minister for Human Services	Senator the Hon. Christopher Martin Ellison

(The above ministers constitute the cabinet)

## **HOWARD MINISTRY—*continued***

Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation and Manager of Government Business in the Senate	Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz
Minister for Small Business and Tourism	The Hon. Frances Esther Bailey MP
Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads	The Hon. James Eric Lloyd MP
Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer	The Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP
Minister for Workforce Participation	The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy Stone MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence	The Hon. Bruce Frederick Billson MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. Gary Roy Nairn MP
Minister for Ageing	The Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP
Minister for Vocational and Further Education	The Hon. Andrew John Robb MP
Minister for the Arts and Sport	Senator the Hon. George Henry Brandis SC
Minister for Community Services	Senator the Hon. Nigel Gregory Scullion
Minister for Justice and Customs	Senator the Hon. David Albert Lloyd Johnston
Assistant Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	The Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP
Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources	The Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister	The Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services	The Hon. De-Anne Margaret Kelly MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer	The Hon. Christopher John Pearce MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration	Senator the Hon. Richard Mansell Colbeck
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources	The Hon. Robert Charles Baldwin MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs	The Hon. Gregory Andrew Hunt MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	The Hon. Sussan Penelope Ley MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training	The Hon. Patrick Francis Farmer MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence	The Hon. Peter John Lindsay MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing	Senator the Hon. Brett John Mason

## SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition	Kevin Michael Rudd MP
Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Shadow Minister for Social Inclusion	Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for National Development, Resources and Energy	Senator Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Communications and Information Technology	Senator Stephen Michael Conroy
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Water and Manager of Opposition Business in the House	Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Shadow Minister for Homeland Security, Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs and Shadow Minister for Territories	The Hon. Archibald Ronald Bevis MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Revenue and Competition Policy	Christopher Eyles Bowen MP
Shadow Minister for Immigration, Integration and Citizenship	Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Shadow Minister for Industry and Shadow Minister for Innovation, Science and Research	Senator Kim John Carr
Shadow Minister for Trade and Shadow Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean MP
Shadow Minister for Service Economy, Small Business and Independent Contractors	Craig Anthony Emerson MP
Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Shadow Minister for Urban Development and Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs	Laurence Donald Thomas Ferguson MP
Shadow Minister for Transport, Roads and Tourism	Martin John Ferguson MP
Shadow Minister for Defence	Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Heritage and Shadow Minister for the Arts	Peter Robert Garrett MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Shadow Minister for Defence Science and Personnel and Shadow Special Minister of State	Alan Peter Griffin MP
Shadow Attorney-General and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate	Senator Joseph William Ludwig
Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, Shadow Minister for Health Promotion and Shadow Minister for Local Government	Senator Kate Alexandra Lundy
Shadow Minister for Families and Community Services and Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation	Jennifer Louise Macklin MP
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs	Robert Bruce McClelland MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Carers	Senator Jan Elizabeth McLucas

Shadow Minister for Federal/State Relations, Shadow Minister for International Development Assistance and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House	Robert Francis McMullan MP
Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry	Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O'Brien
Shadow Minister for Human Services, Shadow Minister for Housing, Shadow Minister for Youth and Shadow Minister for Women	Tanya Joan Plibersek MP
Shadow Minister for Health	Nicola Louise Roxon MP
Shadow Minister for Superannuation and Inter- generational Finance and Shadow Minister for Banking and Financial Services	Senator the Hon. Nicholas John Sherry
Shadow Minister for Education and Training	Stephen Francis Smith MP
Shadow Treasurer	Wayne Maxwell Swan MP
Shadow Minister for Finance	Lindsay James Tanner MP
Shadow Minister for Public Administration and Accountability, Shadow Minister for Corporate Governance and Responsibility and Shadow Minister for Workforce Participation	Senator Penelope Ying Yen Wong
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Af- fairs	Anthony Michael Byrne MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. Graham John Edwards MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Heritage	Jennie George MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Treasury	Catherine Fiona King MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education	Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition	John Paul Murphy MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Industrial Relations	Brendan Patrick John O'Connor MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation	Bernard Fernando Ripoll MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia and Indigenous Affairs	The Hon. Warren Edward Snowdon MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition (Social and Community Affairs)	Senator Ursula Mary Stephens

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*Tuesday, 7 August 2007*

**The SPEAKER (Hon. David Hawker)** took the chair at 12.30 pm and read prayers.

**BUSINESS  
Rearrangement**

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (12.31 pm)—On behalf of the Leader of the House I move:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the routine of business for this sitting being as set out in the document presented to the House this day by the Leader of the House.

I present a document setting out the proposed order of business for this sitting.

*The document read as follows—*

Government Business (until 2pm)—

- (1) Introduction of the following bills with debate on each bill to be adjourned until a later hour today and the resumption of debate to be a cognate debate covering these bills—  
Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007;  
Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007;  
Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Bill 2007;  
Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 1) 2007-2008;  
Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 2) 2007-2008; and
- (2) Orders of the day—Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007—Resumption of

debate on second reading, cognate debate with orders of the day relating to the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007; the Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Bill 2007; the Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 1) 2007-2008; and the Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 2) 2007-2008.

At 2 p.m.—Order of business for the remainder of sitting as per Tuesday component of standing order 34.

Question agreed to.

**SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(WELFARE PAYMENT REFORM)  
BILL 2007**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Brough**.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (12.32 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 is another important step in the government's reform of the national welfare system.

Australians are rightly proud of the strong safety net provided by our income support system.

The fact is that the vast majority of people receiving welfare use this support wisely, in the interests of themselves, their partners and, very importantly, their children.

Sadly, however, this is not true of everyone.

The government believes that the right to welfare comes with obligations.

It is only reasonable to expect those who receive this support to meet some basic obligations to society in return.

Over the last decade, the Howard government has moved to tackle the scourge of passive welfare and to reinforce responsible behaviour through the establishment of our mutual obligation framework.

We have strengthened the important principle that those on welfare who can work should seek work, and asked those receiving welfare for longer periods to re-engage through Work for the Dole.

This bill builds on these important directions by extending the mutual obligation framework and reinforcing an appropriate balance between entitlements and responsibilities in our society.

One of the most important obligations a person can have is responsibility for the care, education and development of children.

Welfare is not for alcohol, drugs, pornography or gambling. It is for priority expenditures such as secure housing, food, education and clothing—things that are considered a child's basic rights.

This bill outlines five welfare reform measures to promote socially responsible behaviour aimed at protecting and nurturing the children in our society and offering them the opportunities that a supportive family, a solid education and a healthy and safe environment can provide.

In developing this approach, it has become clear we are facing two very different situations in Australia.

For most of the country, the parental behaviour the government is concerned about

occurs relatively infrequently and is limited to a relatively small number of families.

The behaviour of these parents is clearly against normal community standards and is a focus of child protection and other state authorities.

To address this circumstance, the government will introduce three nationwide measures that link the receipt of income support to school attendance and enrolment, and which assist state and territory child welfare authorities in the prevention of child neglect.

Parents who fail to provide for their children will have their payments income managed, to ensure that priority needs are met and to encourage better parenting behaviours.

These measures are a step forward in Commonwealth-state relations and offer an additional tool that will be of assistance to states and territories in meeting their responsibilities for child welfare and schooling.

The second situation involves some remote Indigenous communities where normal community standards and parenting behaviours have broken down.

In these communities, there is little economic activity and welfare is by far the most common form of income.

The combination of free money (in relatively large sums), free time and ready access to drugs and alcohol has created appalling conditions for community members, particularly children.

Our emergency response in the Northern Territory, including the welfare reform and the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program changes included in this bill, is targeted at this second context.

The bill also provides for the implementation of our recently announced Cape York welfare reform trial, which is based on a

comprehensive plan developed in partnership with Mr Noel Pearson's Cape York Institute.

As with the national measures, income management will be applied in both cases to ensure that priority needs are met and to encourage better social and parenting behaviours.

### **Income management model**

While there are differences in the approaches to each of the measures outlined in this bill, there are common elements to the way we will apply income management.

The bill outlines the broad framework under which the management of a person's welfare payments is to occur.

While the government is ensuring welfare payments are spent on the priority needs of a person and his or her family, its objective is for the person to take responsibility for their own welfare and for the welfare of their family.

This bill makes it quite clear individuals will not lose any of their entitlements.

All managed income will initially be placed into an individual's income management account, and will be for use by the relevant person only.

To ensure this, it will be special public money under section 16 of the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997.

This arrangement ensures the money is regarded as having been paid to the person, so that there is no unintended change to taxation or child support liabilities.

People will be fully aware of what funds are available to them.

Individuals will receive statements of the credits and debits to their account and of the balance of their account.

The government wants individuals to take control over their lives.

It wants individuals to work with Centrelink to identify their expenses and manage their priority needs.

This bill establishes as priority needs things such as food, clothing, housing, health, child care and development, education and training, employment and transport.

It enables a person to receive an amount of discretionary cash and there are no restrictions placed on how that amount can be spent.

However, Centrelink must ensure the remaining managed income is used to meet the current and reasonably foreseeable priority needs of the person and their family.

If Centrelink becomes aware of unmet priority needs, it must take action to address those needs.

Once Centrelink is satisfied current and reasonably foreseeable priority needs are met, it cannot unreasonably refuse a person access to their entitlements for another purpose, provided the funds will not be used to purchase excluded items—alcohol, tobacco, gambling and pornography.

The bill provides flexibility in the methods available to meet people's priority needs.

The mechanisms include vouchers, stored value cards, the payment of expenses, payments to various accounts (including stores, debit cards and bank accounts).

The government will be working to establish appropriate mechanisms in Northern Territory communities in the short term and then more generally throughout Australia to support the national income management measures contained in this bill.

### **Child abuse and neglect**

The abuse and neglect of children is not new and occurs in all societies, but that does not mean as a society we have to accept it.

Every child has the right to health and wellbeing and a life free from violence.

Preventing child abuse and neglect is everyone's responsibility.

Neglect includes failure to provide adequate food, shelter, suitable clothes, medical attention or education.

The Australian government is greatly concerned about the continuing increase in the number of children being reported as neglected or abused.

The main data available on child abuse and neglect in Australia is for children who have come to the attention of child protection authorities in each state or territory.

These figures are likely to represent only a proportion of the true prevalence of abuse and neglect.

Over the last five years, the number of child protection notifications in Australia has almost doubled from 137,938 in 2001-02 to 266,745 in 2005-06.

Some of this increase reflects changes in child protection policies and practices in different jurisdictions.

It could also reflect a better awareness of child protection concerns in the wider community and more willingness to report problems to state and territory child protection services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are clearly overrepresented in the child protection system, being almost five times more likely to be the subject of a substantiated case than other children.

Australia wide, 29.4 out of 1,000 Indigenous children have been the victims of substantiated abuse or neglect compared to 6.5 out of 1,000 non-Indigenous children.

The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is over seven times the rate of other children.

We know that young children who are exposed to violence, abuse or neglect are among the most vulnerable of children and likely to experience problems later in life.

Their developing ability to trust and enter into mature, healthy relationships is damaged.

Stressful events during the early years, such as abuse and neglect, have also been shown to adversely influence nervous system responses to stress for the rest of a child's life.

Abuse and neglect can leave children with lasting physical damage, health issues, and developmental and emotional delays and problems.

Responsibility for child protection services rests primarily with each state and territory government.

Notwithstanding this, there is no doubt the best outcomes for children will be achieved if the Australian government and the state and territory governments work together.

The measures being introduced in this bill will provide another tool to be used by the child protection authorities in states and territories.

State and territory governments will be given the option of notifying the Commonwealth that a person be placed on income management where a child is found to be at risk of neglect.

Under income management, up to 100 per cent of a person's welfare support payments can be set aside and directed to appropriate expenditure.

This approach will help ensure income support is used to provide shelter, food and clothing for children at risk of neglect.

Income management will remain in place for the family until the child protection authority withdraws or revokes the notice requesting income management.

We will work with each of the states and territories to establish agreements guiding the operation of this tool, with the aim of commencement from 1 July 2008.

#### **School attendance and enrolment**

There is a clear and unequivocal link between educational outcomes and other important life outcomes such as employment, income and community participation.

Education greatly increases a child's chances of future success and helps them develop important skills and attitudes.

Helping to ensure children reach their full potential at school will also help reduce the risk of longer term welfare dependence.

The arguments for adopting an early intervention approach in cases where children are not enrolled at or attending school are irrefutable.

Children and young people who are chronically absent or excluded from school are severely educationally disadvantaged.

Research commissioned by the Dusseldorf Skills Forum shows a correlation between school nonattendance and underachievement at school, criminal activity, poverty, unemployment and homelessness.

Strong literacy and numeracy skills are critical foundations for school completion and longer-term, lifelong success.

The importance of literacy and numeracy achievement has been highlighted in a Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) research report that looked at the relationships between literacy and numeracy achievements in junior secondary school and a range of education, training and labour market outcomes at age 19.

Job seekers with weak numeracy and literacy skills are also more likely to experience long-term unemployment.

More generally, poor literacy skills impact on a person's capacity to be a productive worker in today's workforce.

The government will tackle the social risks of poor education via two measures, both of which target school enrolment and school attendance.

Income management of up to 100 per cent of payments will be used as a tool to assist state and territory governments to meet their responsibilities in relation to these two key areas.

In relation to school enrolment, if a parent is receiving income support, has care of a compulsory school-aged child and the child is not enrolled at a school, then both parents should be subject to income management.

If children are not enrolled at school, Centrelink will notify parents and carers that they need to take action to enrol their children and provide proof of enrolment within a specified period with a warning of the consequences of a failure to do so.

Centrelink will consider any 'reasonable excuse' for a failure of a parent to provide the documentation (such as events beyond the person's control, changes in the level of care which might relate to particular children and foster care arrangements) and, where no reasonable excuse exists, a period of income management could be immediately applied.

Both parents can also be subject to income management if their child does not attend school sufficiently and there is no reasonable excuse as to why the child is not attending school.

The government is proposing a national benchmark for attendance of not more than five unexplained absences each school term.

Before parents are subject to the income management regime due to exceeding the national benchmark, parents will be given a formal warning.

Parents and carers who do the right thing, consistent with community expectations, by enrolling their children and getting them to school will not be affected by income management.

It is not much to ask of a parent or a carer to get their child to school.

For those who do not, the measure will serve to encourage them to take more responsibility for, and be more involved in, their children's education and their future.

These measures will come into effect in the following phases:

- The school enrolment and attendance measure will commence as soon as possible in the Northern Territory to support the government's emergency response.
- From the start of the 2009 school year, the school enrolment and attendance measure will be implemented nationally for parents of primary school aged children. That is for all Australian school-aged children.
- From the start of the 2010 school year, the school enrolment and attendance measure will be implemented nationally for parents of high school aged children.

For this to occur, the support of the states and territories and the non-government school sector is needed to assist in providing the necessary information, and the government will be undertaking consultations to achieve this.

These measures will provide an additional support to states and territories to help them meet their responsibilities for, and our common goal of, improving the educational outcomes of Australian children.

### **Northern Territory**

In the Northern Territory, as the recent *Little children are sacred* report made clear,

there is a national emergency confronting the welfare of Aboriginal children.

In these cases, the provision of welfare has not had the desired outcome. It has become a trap instead of a pathway.

Normal community standards, social norms and parenting behaviours have broken down and too many are trapped in an inter-generational cycle of dependency.

The government's emergency response aims to protect children and make communities safe in the first instance and then to lay the basis for a sustainable future for Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory.

The welfare reforms outlined in this bill will help to stem the flow of cash going towards substance abuse and gambling and ensure that funds meant to be for children's welfare are used for that purpose.

Fifty per cent of the welfare payments of all individuals in the affected communities will be income-managed for an initial period of 12 months during the stabilisation phase.

This broad-based approach is needed to address a breakdown in social norms that characterises many of our remote Northern Territory communities.

In particular, this approach is essential to minimise the practice known as 'humbugging' in the Northern Territory, where people are intimidated into handing over their money to others for inappropriate needs, often for alcohol, drugs and gambling.

If certain groups, such as the young and old, are excluded from this measure, it could leave them potentially even more vulnerable.

Income management will be introduced in the Northern Territory on a progressive basis across communities as part of the Australian government's emergency response to the crisis confronting the welfare of Aboriginal children.

Several factors will be taken into account before commencing income management, including stability and security in the area and opportunities for individuals to discuss the operation of income management with Centrelink, including their expenditure needs.

The availability of suitable payment mechanisms for people to buy food and groceries will also be taken into account.

With some very limited exceptions, all individual residents in a community who receive income support payments will be subject to income management at the same time.

Any individuals who move into the communities will become subject to income management when they move there.

Income management will generally apply in communities for an initial period of 12 months.

The amount to be set aside for income management will be 50 per cent of income support and family tax benefit instalment payments.

Advances, lump sums and baby bonus instalments will all be subject to 100 per cent income management.

The new arrangements may follow an individual even if they move out of the prescribed community, to ensure they cannot easily avoid the income management regime.

Income management will continue until the initial declaration of 12 months expires or until it is revoked.

The government's intention is to transition communities to the national welfare reform measures over time, as communities are stabilised and normalised, so a consistent approach exists across the country.

It is important to acknowledge that this bill will not take one cent of welfare from individuals or families in these Indigenous communities, but simply limits the discretion

that individuals exercise over a portion of their welfare and prevents them from using welfare in socially irresponsible ways.

It should also be noted that we have developed a comprehensive and integrated plan in the Northern Territory.

The welfare reforms just outlined are supported by the legislative reforms that will provide improvements to community stores for people living in affected communities.

This will assist in ensuring payments can be used to buy quality goods from reputable stores.

Changes to the CDEP program which will be implemented in the Northern Territory are included in this bill.

The *Little children are sacred* report found that lack of employment opportunities has had a significant negative impact on self esteem and personal relationships and created an environment of boredom and hopelessness.

While CDEP has been a major source of funding for many Northern Territory communities, it has not provided a pathway to real employment, and has become another form of welfare dependency for many people.

Instead of creating new opportunities for employment, it has become a destination in itself.

It has also in too many cases been used as a substitute for services that would otherwise be the responsibilities of governments—services that should be provided through full-paid employment.

To support the Australian government's Northern Territory emergency response, the CDEP program in the Northern Territory will progressively be replaced with real jobs, training and mainstream employment services.

CDEP participants will be assisted to move into real jobs, to training or onto income support, through Work for the Dole or other appropriate benefits instead of CDEP payments.

In the coming months, the Australian government will work with CDEP providers across the Northern Territory to develop a comprehensive plan for each CDEP organisation to implement these changes.

Participants will progressively transition to the new arrangement. The transition will be completed across the Northern Territory by 30 June 2008.

These changes will support the current emergency intervention in the Northern Territory and support the improvement of services and the creation of new jobs within those Northern Territory communities.

The Australian government will work with all government agencies to turn CDEP positions, which are substituting for government services, into real jobs.

In addition, an audit of job opportunities in 52 Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory conducted by the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) identified 2,955 current real jobs, only 44 per cent of which are occupied by Aboriginal people.

Training will be provided to capture these jobs for these local people.

The phasing out of CDEP participant payments will happen on a community by community basis.

To ensure that there is no financial loss for some individuals moving from CDEP to income support, existing CDEP participants in the Northern Territory may be eligible to receive a Northern Territory CDEP transition payment.

Centrelink will calculate the payment on an individual basis.

This payment will make up the difference between the average earnings on CDEP and the payments made under income support arrangements and will be available till 30 June 2008.

The payment will assist participants to manage any changes in income and will be capped at the maximum allowable CDEP earnings.

The payment is directed at current participants. New participants who join CDEP after 23 July 2007 will not be eligible for this transition payment.

Changes to the taxation law will allow for the Northern Territory CDEP transition payment to be subject to the beneficiary tax rebate, as is the case with current CDEP participant payments.

Where income support payments are to be subject to income management, so will the Northern Territory CDEP transition payment.

Moving CDEP participants on to income support will allow a single system of income management to apply to welfare payments.

The level of funding currently provided to the Northern Territory through CDEP will not diminish under the new arrangements.

The appropriation bills also introduced in this package provide the funding required for these initiatives in 2007-08 for the stabilisation phase of the response, and the government will be developing a longer-term approach with costs in the next budget process.

#### **Cape York**

The Australian government has committed to support and fund a proposal by the Cape York Institute to trial a new approach to welfare in four Cape York Indigenous communities: Hope Vale, Aurukun, Coen and Mossman Gorge.

This bill provides the platform for this to occur.

The government's decision is a response to the recommendations of the report by the institute, *From Hand Out to Hand Up*, provided to the government on 19 June 2007.

This report contained a comprehensive plan to tackle welfare dependency in the Cape York region.

It is backed by strong on-the-ground leadership from the Cape York Institute, particularly Noel Pearson.

A major feature of the trial to be introduced in Cape York is the introduction of a set of obligations which welfare recipients would be expected to meet.

As for the other national welfare measures, these obligations include requirements that parents send their children to school and protect them from harm and neglect.

There will also be reforms to tenancy arrangements, and obligations on tenants to comply with lease conditions.

The bill provides for the recognition of a new body to be established under Queensland law.

This body will have authority in relation to the income management of welfare payments to encourage compliance with the obligations.

Subject to state legislation, the body will have the authority to obtain information from state child protection authorities, courts and schools to assist it to determine whether there has been a breach of one of the obligations.

This new body may issue a notice to Centrelink, requiring that some or all of a person's welfare payments be subject to income management.

The body will work with families and communities to deal with issues such as drug and alcohol dependency, violence, child neglect and truancy, gambling, and poor money management.

The body will also work with the communities participating in the trial to rebuild social norms and ensure welfare money is not misused to fund alcohol, drugs or gambling.

Subject to the support of the communities and the passage of legislation by the Queensland government, it is intended that the trials will commence at the beginning of the 2008 school year and continue until the end of the 2011 school year.

The trials aim to promote engagement in the real economy, reduce passive welfare and rebuild social norms, particularly as they affect the wellbeing of children.

This initiative is an expression of the desire of people in Cape York to ensure their children grow up in a safe home, attend school and enjoy the same opportunities as any other Australian child.

The Australian government will be providing funding of \$48 million for the trials.

The Australian government's commitment includes significant funding for complementary initiatives to support the trials and assist people to meet their obligations.

In addition, the Australian government will contribute \$5 million towards the cost of employing case managers who will support people referred to the commission and provide a fund from which they will be able to purchase specialist services for families, for example, relationship or violence counselling.

The trials will provide a vehicle to assess the effectiveness of such an approach, which may offer lessons for the future and inform our approach to tackling Indigenous welfare dependency.

The Australian government will work together with the Cape York Institute and the selected communities throughout the duration of the trials.

The leaders of Cape York should be commended for their determination and commitment to improve their lives and the lives of their families and their children and to provide a safe and prosperous future to all people who live on Cape York.

### Conclusion

These changes are designed to benefit Australia's children.

They are practical and targeted responses to real issues within our society.

The government's aim is to extend the principle of mutual obligation beyond participation in the workforce to a range of behaviours that address, either directly or indirectly, the welfare and development of children.

None of the measures outlined in this bill will result in a reduction in entitlements, and they will only apply to the minority of people who are behaving inappropriately.

The vast majority will remain unaffected by these changes. But a better future will be provided for those children who will now have their basic rights to things like food, shelter and an education met.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Macklin**) adjourned.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE BILL 2007

### First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Brough**.

Bill read a first time.

### Second Reading

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (1.01 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill, the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007, and the other bills introduced in the same package are all about the safety and wellbeing of children.

When confronted with a failed society where basic standards of law and order and behaviour have broken down and where women and children are unsafe, how should we respond? Do we respond with more of what we have done in the past? Or do we radically change direction with an intervention strategy matched to the magnitude of the problem?

Six weeks ago, the *Little children are sacred* report commissioned by the Northern Territory government confirmed what the Australian government had been saying. It told us in the clearest possible terms that child sexual abuse among Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory is serious, widespread and often unreported, and that there is a strong association between alcohol abuse and sexual abuse of children.

With clear evidence that the Northern Territory government was not able to protect these children adequately, the Howard government decided that it was now time to intervene and declare an emergency situation and use the territories power available under the Constitution to make laws for the Northern Territory.

We are providing extra police. We will stem the flow of alcohol, drugs and pornography, assess the health situation of children, engage local people in improving living conditions, and offer more employment opportunities and activities for young people. We aim to limit the amount of cash available for alcohol, drugs and gambling during the emergency period and make a strong link between welfare payments and school attendance.

We have been able to do some things immediately, without legislation.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce has been established. Magistrate Dr Sue Gordon chairs this small group of distinguished and dedicated Australians. Major-General Dave Chalmers is in charge of the operational command headquartered in Alice Springs.

We have begun to provide extra Federal Police to make communities safe. The states have committed to provide police and the Australian government has agreed to cover all their costs.

All 73 townships that have been identified for intervention have been visited by advance communication teams. The follow-up survey teams have visited 47 townships. These visits are meant to explain to local people the steps being taken, to listen to their views, to answer questions and to assess the state of play in terms of infrastructure and services.

Almost 500 health checks have been conducted for Aboriginal children under 16. Not surprisingly, some cases have been referred to child protection authorities and the results of some initial tests have been referred for further testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

This is a very encouraging start after a few short weeks. But Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory will never be safe and healthy without fundamental changes to the things that make communities dangerous and unhealthy places.

We need to dry up the rivers of grog. We need to stop the free flow of pornography.

We need to improve living conditions and reduce overcrowding. More houses need to be built and we need to control the land in the townships for a short period to ensure that we can do this quickly.

We need to make sure money paid to parents and carers by the government for feeding children is not used for buying grog or for gambling.

We need to make sure local shops stock good, affordable food for growing children.

We need to show people that there is hope of a life beyond welfare so that going to school is seen to be worthwhile.

We need to show people that it is possible to own and control your own house, which can only happen when you have a lease over the land that it is built on.

The government has faced a lot of questions since the announcement of the intervention. Some people have asked how the various parts of the response are connected to the welfare of children and to each other.

With no work and no hope of getting a job, many Aboriginal people in these communities rely on passive welfare.

In an environment where there is no natural social order of production and distribution, grog, pornography and gambling often fill the void.

What do viable economies and jobs have to do with preventing child abuse? Unemployment and welfare dependency may not cause abuse, but a viable economy and real job prospects make education meaningful and point to a life beyond abuse and despair.

Currently, there are too few jobs in these communities and land tenure arrangements work against developing a real economy. The Community Development Employment Projects program has become the destination for far too many. It is where people end their working lives, not where they start it.

Banks will not lend money to start up small businesses because a committee decides what tenure arrangements will apply. People cannot even borrow to buy their own home because they cannot own or lease a

block of land. And, to cap it all off, these towns have been closed to outsiders because of the permit system.

After consultation the government has decided on balance to leave the permit system in place in 99.8 per cent of Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.

But in the larger public townships and the road corridors that connect them, permits will no longer be required.

Closed towns mean less public scrutiny, so the situation has been allowed to get worse and worse.

Normally, where situations come to light that are as terrible as the child abuse occurring in the Northern Territory, solutions are pursued relentlessly by the media.

But closed towns have made it easier for abuse and dysfunction to stay hidden.

Closed towns also prevent the free flow of visitors and tourists that can help to stimulate economic opportunities and create job opportunities.

These are among the reasons why it is not enough only to turn off the grog.

Our response in the Northern Territory means making important changes which simply cannot happen under current policy settings.

The living conditions in some of these communities are appalling. We cannot allow the improvements that have to occur to the physical state of these places to be delayed through red tape and vested interests in this emergency period.

Under normal circumstances in remote communities, just providing for the clean-up and repair of houses on the scale that we are confronted with could well take years if not decades. The children cannot wait that long. To deal with overcrowding we need to remove all the artificial barriers preventing change for the better.

Without an across-the-board intervention we would only be applying a bandaid yet again to the critical situation facing Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory, when what is needed is emergency surgery.

The interventions proposed will work together to break the back of violence and dysfunction and allow us to build sustainable, healthy approaches in the long term.

The measures in this bill generally apply in Northern Territory communities as follows:

- land scheduled under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976;
- community living areas which are located on a form of freehold title issued by the Northern Territory government to Aboriginal corporations;
- town camps in the vicinity of major urban areas, held by Aboriginal associations on special leases from the Northern Territory government; and
- other areas prescribed on advice from our expert task force.

#### **Alcohol restrictions**

The authors of the *Little children are sacred* report described alcohol abuse as the 'gravest and fastest-growing threat to the safety of Aboriginal children'. I will say that again: the quote from the *Little children are sacred* report is that the gravest and fastest-growing threat to the safety of Aboriginal children is from alcohol abuse.

One of the key measures in this bill provides for widespread alcohol restrictions. The government was not satisfied that the proposals put forward by the Northern Territory government were anywhere near adequate.

A number of these communities have already been declared dry. But, despite that,

large quantities of alcohol continue to pour into these very same communities. Much more needs to be done.

The restrictions enabled by this bill will help stabilise communities and give them a chance to recover.

When it comes to a choice between a person's right to drink and a child's right to be safe, there is no question in my mind which path we must take.

To dry up the lethal rivers of grog, this bill will enable the government to introduce a general ban on people having, selling, transporting and drinking alcohol in prescribed areas.

At the same time our measures apply tougher penalties on people who are benefiting from supplying or selling alcohol to those in these communities.

Through very harsh penalties, and more police, we are sending a clear message that, if you run grog into these vulnerable places and put the lives of women and children at risk, you will face a very severe penalty.

This bill will require people across the Northern Territory to show photographic identification, have their addresses recorded and be required to declare where the alcohol is going to be consumed if they want to buy a substantial amount of takeaway alcohol. This requirement is a small impost on Territorians during the emergency period but will be their contribution to solving this long-running problem.

This will allow us to identify where people are buying up grog to take back to communities where bans are in place, and to investigate and prosecute as needed.

Some licensed premises on Aboriginal land will still be able to operate, but only if they have strict alcohol management rules in place. These licences will be reviewed within one month of proclamation. Current permits

to consume alcohol on Aboriginal land will also be subject to review.

#### **Computer audit**

I turn to computer audits and to the destructive impact pornography can have on the lives of children, which has already been mentioned.

A ban on the possession and dissemination of prohibited pornographic material is addressed in another bill in this package.

But sexually explicit and other illegal material can be accessed using the internet through misuse of publicly funded computers as well. This bill includes a requirement to undertake regular audits of publicly funded computers and to provide the results to the Australian Crime Commission. Failure to undertake these audits will be an offence.

The Australian Crime Commission will be able to use the results of an audit or may pass it on to a relevant law enforcement agency where investigation of a possible criminal offence is necessary.

An audit must also be undertaken if there is a suspicion that a computer may have been misused, and the outcomes will be provided to the Australian Crime Commission.

#### **Five-year leases**

This bill provides for the Australian government to acquire five-year leases over townships on land rights act land, community living areas and over certain other areas.

It provides for the immediate and later acquisition of these leases to correspond to the rollout of the emergency response.

The acquisition of leases is crucial to removing barriers so that living conditions can be changed for the better in these communities in the shortest possible time frame.

It must be emphasised that the underlying ownership by traditional owners will be pre-

served, and compensation when required by the Constitution will be paid.

This includes provision for the payment of rent. Existing interests will be generally preserved or excluded and provision will be made for early termination of the lease, such as when a 99-year township lease is granted.

This is not a normal land acquisition. People will not be removed from their land.

The areas to be covered by the five-year leases are major communities or townships, generally of over 100 people, some of several thousand people.

These communities are not thriving; some are in desperate circumstances that have led to the tragedy of widespread child abuse.

The leases will give the government the unconditional access to land and assets required to facilitate the early repair of buildings and infrastructure.

The most significant terms and conditions of the leases are provided for in the legislation. However, additional terms and conditions will be determined, and these will be in place when the leases start.

The area of land for the five-year leases is minuscule compared to the amount of Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. It is in fact less than 0.1 per cent. There are no prospects for mining in these locations.

This is no land grab, as some have tried to portray the emergency response. It is only a temporary lease, and just compensation will be paid for that period. We are not after a commercial windfall here—there is simply none to be had.

It must be stressed that any native title in respect of the leased land is suspended but not extinguished.

It is important to mention that there is provision for the five-year leases to be terminated early.

If the Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce reports that a community no longer requires intensive Commonwealth oversight, then the minister can decide that the lease over the community should end.

The Australian government looks forward to working with the land councils of the Northern Territory in the implementation of this important measure.

#### **Town camps**

The bill also provides for the Australian government to exercise the powers of the Northern Territory government to forfeit or resume certain leases, known as 'town camps', during the five-year period of the emergency response.

Improved living conditions in the town camps are important to the success of the emergency response.

The poor living conditions in these camps have made many of them places of despair and tragedy. Alice Springs has been described as the murder capital of Australia.

It is Australian government policy that these camps should be treated as normal suburbs. They should have the same infrastructure and level of services that all other Australians expect. Second best is no longer good enough.

We will not accept that the major urban centres in the Northern Territory continue for another 30 years to be fringed by ghettos where Indigenous people receive second- or third-class local government services.

The Northern Territory government has announced that it will not resume or forfeit the town camp leases. It has again walked away from its responsibilities for the Indigenous citizens of the Territory. That is why this bill provides for the Howard government to do what the Northern Territory government has shamefully refused to do.

When land tenure is settled, the Howard government will begin the process of improving housing and infrastructure dramatically.

The bill also provides an option for the government to make a long-term investment beyond the period of the emergency response in improving town camps and, if necessary, the Commonwealth can acquire freehold title over town camp areas.

If the government acquires town camp property, then compensation required by the Constitution will be paid. Native title will not be extinguished.

The government has been in negotiations with the Alice Springs town camps for some time, and we remain hopeful that they will agree to sublease the housing areas of their land to the Northern Territory for 99 years to be run as normal public housing. Negotiations currently underway in Tennant Creek are very promising.

The bill also provides for regulations to remove listed town camp land.

This will enable town camp leases to be exempted from Commonwealth action to forfeit the leases, or resume or acquire the land, where the association subleases all, or a substantial part, of its lease for 99 years.

### **Government business managers**

This bill contributes significantly to improving the way communities are governed, by providing appropriate powers to support the appointment of government business managers, who will manage government activities and assets in the selected communities.

Government business managers will work with local people to help things run smoothly, implement the emergency measures and ensure government services are delivered effectively. Local people will be able

to talk to the Australian government directly, where they live.

Powers introduced to support their role include powers:

- to terminate or vary Commonwealth funding agreements;
- to give directions on the carrying out of government-funded services and the use of assets to provide those services;
- to give an authorised person a position as a non-voting observer on bodies carrying out functions or services; and
- to place certain bodies in external administration for failures relating to the provision of government-funded services.

Government business managers will work cooperatively with communities and existing organisations within these communities, as well as the Northern Territory government.

It must be stressed that powers in the legislation for government business managers will be exercised only as a last resort in situations where normal processes of discussion and negotiation have failed, or where community organisations are unable, or unwilling, to make the changes that are necessary to benefit their community and their children.

These are serious and important powers and will be delegated only to senior departmental officers or held by the minister.

These powers will apply to any further areas over which the government takes a five-year lease under the legislation and will only be exercised for the five-year period of the Northern Territory emergency response.

### **Bail and sentencing**

In 2006, the Council of Australian Governments, COAG, agreed that no customary law or cultural practice excuses, justifies, authorises, requires, or lessens the serious-

ness of violence or sexual abuse. All jurisdictions agreed that their laws would reflect this. COAG also agreed to improve the effectiveness of bail provisions to support and protect victims and witnesses.

The Commonwealth implemented the COAG decision through bail and sentencing legislation in relation to Commonwealth offences. This bill ensures that the decision of COAG will also apply in relation to bail and sentencing discretion in the Northern Territory.

It is the government's intention that, if the Northern Territory enacts sufficiently complementary provisions, the bail and sentencing provisions contained in this bill will be repealed.

### **Community stores**

The community store is a central amenity for any small community, and the store operator is a critical member of the community in remote Australia.

Poor quality food is a major contributor to poor health.

There are examples of stores that are serving a good range of products and where the people who use the store are treated with respect.

But there are, unfortunately, many cases where the store operator pays no attention to the need for healthy food and has little or no training in how to run a retail business. Some make unreasonably high profits at the expense of local consumers who have no choice but to purchase from the one store available in their community.

Our community survey teams have found that stores in some quite sizeable communities have closed, which often forces the residents to get whatever food they can from the nearest roadhouse, or to travel large distances to another community or commercial centre for the basic necessities of life.

Over two-thirds of the communities surveyed have either no store or have a store that has poor retail practices or which does not sell quality healthy food.

Bad store practices will undermine the government's efforts to improve the lives of Aboriginal people, and especially children, in the Northern Territory.

That is why we want to put more emphasis on stores meeting certain basic criteria around food quality and financial integrity. The introduction of income management for welfare recipients makes this all the more important.

A substantial slice of welfare payments will be quarantined for food and other necessities during the emergency period. If a store wants to participate, they will be required to be licensed to do so, meaning that they will need to meet certain standards. Otherwise, they will face the prospect of competition from other retailers, including from 'Outback Stores'—an initiative of the Australian government.

The small number of stores that are known to have appropriate financial and retail practices will be considered for a six-month licence shortly after the bill has been enacted.

In other cases, it will be necessary to undertake a detailed assessment against each of the assessable items before a licence can be issued.

### **Conclusion**

The government is committed to protecting the children of the Northern Territory and is prepared to spend the money necessary to achieve this goal.

The appropriation bills also tabled provide the money required in 2007-08 for the stabilisation phase of the response.

The need is urgent and immediate and the government is stepping up to the plate to

provide the necessary funding now for additional police, for health checks, for welfare reform and for other measures necessary to achieve these outcomes.

But we also recognise that longer-term action is required to normalise arrangements in these communities. Funding for housing in remote communities received a major boost in this year's budget. Separate funds will be provided for other longer-term measures in the next budget process.

Funding for existing programs will also be examined for ways to use money more effectively to provide greater benefit to Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. For example, we have announced that CDEP will be replaced with more effective employment services in the Northern Territory.

The money is important but it is not enough on its own. It is not by itself the answer. Success will be determined by the extent to which the local people are engaged in tackling their own problems. Our approach is fundamentally about empowering local citizens, releasing them from fear, intimidation and abuse. The overwhelming majority of these people desperately want the best for their children, and we must encourage them every step of the way so that they can begin to hope for a better future.

The government has been tremendously encouraged by the overwhelming support for this emergency response from ordinary Australians. There have been hundreds of people volunteering to help. Police across Australia are volunteering their services. The Australian public want to see real change and are willing to put their shoulder to the wheel when they feel that can finally help to improve the lot of their fellow Australian citizens—the First Australians.

This is a great national endeavour. It is the right thing to do, and now is the right time to do it.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Macklin**) adjourned.

### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)**—On behalf of the members of the House of Representatives here in Australia I welcome the Rt Hon. John Spellor, a member of our mother parliament, the House of Commons, in England.

**Honourable members**—Hear, hear!

### **FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2007**

#### **First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Brough**.

Bill read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr BROUUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (1.25 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill complements the new principal legislation introduced by the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007 and the welfare reform amendments provided by the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007.

In introducing the principal legislation, it has been noted that the government's emergency response in the Northern Territory is all about the safety and wellbeing of children.

This bill deals mainly with banning certain pornography, issues to do with increased policing, Commonwealth and Northern Ter-

ritory infrastructure, and access to Northern Territory Aboriginal land.

This is an emergency situation in the Northern Territory and we need to act quickly. Each and every day, children are being abused. We need strong powers so that we are not weighed down by unnecessary red tape and talkfests, and can focus on doing what needs to be done and doing it now.

The cycle of unemployment and welfare dependency, alcohol abuse and violence needs to be broken so that we can go on to build sustainable, healthy communities.

Each of the interventions in the emergency response package is a critical component of the integrated response to the situation facing these Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory.

The measures in this bill generally apply to the same prescribed areas covered by the measures in the principal bill. Banning prohibited pornographic material is one of the key issues.

This bill contains measures which ban the possession of pornographic material and advertisements in the prescribed areas.

The *Little children are sacred* report revealed that the availability of pornography in Northern Territory communities is a factor contributing to child sexual abuse—being used to groom children for sex, and desensitizing children to violence and inappropriate sexual behaviour; grooming children so that they become so used to seeing this that they do not see it as abhorrent, dangerous or offensive against their person.

Put simply, this measure in the bill is intended to prevent children being exposed to pornography, by removing this material from homes and preventing it from entering communities. For the purposes of this bill, ‘pornographic material’ is described as ‘prohibited material’ and is defined as:

- X18+ classified films;
- category 1 restricted and category 2 restricted publications;
- films and publications that are refused classification;
- unclassified films and publications that, if classified, would be refused classification or X18+ or category 1 or category 2 restricted publications; and
- prohibited advertisements.

The bill makes it an offence to possess or control prohibited pornographic material in the identified communities.

Unlike existing offences in the Northern Territory, the complete ban also applies to possessing prohibited material without the intention to copy or sell the material.

Make no mistake: this government is hell-bent on doing everything it can to protect these innocent children. Children should never be exposed to this sort of material as they are on a regular basis in some of these communities.

To make sure that the ban on possession will be effective, this bill will also ban delivering or sending prohibited pornographic material into these areas.

And this ban applies no matter where material is being sent from—from within the Northern Territory or from other parts of Australia, such as the ‘adult’ DVD industry based in the Australian Capital Territory.

We have to stop this material at its source, by preventing mail order companies sending material into a community, as well as residents or visitors sending or taking material into the communities.

Of course, Australia Post and other operators of postal and parcel services who inadvertently transport prohibited material into a prescribed area during the normal course of service will not be committing an offence. But those who use postal or parcel services

to send prohibited material into a prescribed area will be subject to criminal penalties.

The Howard government also wants to ensure heavy penalties are imposed on those who are caught 'trafficking' pornography to at-risk communities.

This bill provides for heavier penalties for the supply of five or more items of prohibited material—the quantity is considered likely to indicate a commercial transaction rather than material solely for personal use.

These measures are about targeting the material and removing it, so police will have appropriate powers to seize material found in an identified community where a police officer suspects on reasonable grounds that it is prohibited. This will mean material can be immediately removed from these communities.

Seized material will be returned, on application, if the responsible officer, or a magistrate, is satisfied on reasonable grounds that it is not prohibited material.

Repeal of certain provisions may be necessary, for example, if the Northern Territory government enacts legislation prohibiting possession of some or all of the material which is dealt with by the Commonwealth provisions.

Therefore, this bill provides for the minister, by legislative instrument, to repeal some or all of the new provisions, without the delay involved in enacting repealing legislation.

We hope and expect the new rules to do their job in helping to stabilise the communities by the end of the five-year intervention, as announced by the government.

Therefore, these rules will end after five years through a sunset clause in this bill.

#### **Re-establishing law and order**

A top priority of the emergency response is to re-establish law and order so people can

feel safe from the threat of violence, perpetrators of sexual abuse can be apprehended and prosecuted, and the new bans on alcohol and pornography can be enforced.

We have increased police numbers, including through secondments from the Australian Federal Police and the states, which will enable police to live and work in communities, or visit regularly.

This bill ensures AFP members deployed in this role, and appointed as special constables of the Northern Territory police service, can exercise all the powers and functions of the local police service.

Further amendments will allow the Australian Crime Commission board to authorise the national intelligence task force into violence and child abuse in Australia's Indigenous communities to have the commission's full coercive powers, and capacity to access relevant information held by state agencies, to support the operations of the task force.

#### **Retaining government ownership of facilities constructed on Aboriginal land (infrastructure)**

This bill also provides for the Commonwealth and Northern Territory to have continuing ownership of buildings and infrastructure on Aboriginal land which are constructed or upgraded with government funding.

Each year, the Australian and Northern Territory governments provide millions of dollars for the construction and upgrade of buildings and infrastructure on Aboriginal land across the Northern Territory.

In the past, the Australian government has not usually retained ownership of the buildings and infrastructure, nor has it obtained an interest in the land on which they are constructed.

This has meant the government has been unable to protect its investment and has also

led to very poor outcomes for those whom these assets were meant to help.

For example, despite massive investment in public housing in the Northern Territory, today there are fewer houses in the Indigenous housing stock than there were five years ago—fewer public houses in the Territory today than there were five years ago.

The Howard government is no longer prepared to invest public money in buildings and infrastructure on private land unless it can have a continuing interest over them.

The bill ensures that, in the future, the Commonwealth or the Northern Territory will own buildings and infrastructure which are constructed or substantially upgraded with their funding.

Any construction or renovation will be undertaken with the consent of the relevant land council under the processes of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Land Rights Act, which require traditional owner consent.

#### **Access to Aboriginal land**

The permit system for people entering Aboriginal land will be retained but permits will no longer be needed to access common areas in the main townships and the road corridors, barge landings and airstrips connected with them.

The current permit system has not prevented child abuse, violence or drug and alcohol running. It has helped create closed communities which can, and do, hide problems from public scrutiny.

Improving access to these towns will promote economic activity and help link communities to the wider world.

It will also allow government services to be provided more readily—essential for the recovery of these communities.

The current permit system will continue to apply for the vast majority, or about 99.8 per cent, of Aboriginal land in the Northern Ter-

ritory, including homelands. Sacred sites will continue to be protected.

In the townships and the road corridors where the permit system no longer applies, the Northern Territory government will be given the power to restrict access, temporarily, to protect the privacy of a cultural event or to protect public health and safety.

The government has been considering changing the system since it announced a review in September 2006 and the changes follow the release of a discussion paper in October 2006 and the receipt of almost 100 submissions.

Over 40 communities were visited during consultations following the release of the discussion paper. It was disturbing to hear from officials conducting the consultations that numerous people came up to them after the consultations, saying that the permit system should be removed. They were the same people who said during the formal discussions that it should stay. They were afraid to say this in the public meetings. They were intimidated by other members of their communities.

The permit system in some communities has been used to help create a climate of fear and intimidation, which should not exist in Australian society.

Residents have not felt comfortable to report abuse because of the fear of retribution.

A proper police presence, which is at the core of the stabilisation phase of the emergency response, will give people the confidence to report to the appropriate authorities sexual abuse and other violence.

A real police presence cannot be replaced by a piece of paper that determines who can come into the community.

The permit system has not stopped bad people coming into communities.

Visitors, including tourists, have been discouraged, leading to limited contact and no involvement with the real economy and the financial support that can be derived from tourists attending these communities and buying from the various arts outlets and from other economic activities that can flow from it.

More open communities will give people the confidence to deal with the outside world. An open town is a safer and more prosperous town.

Closed communities can create an environment where behaviours, including antisocial and criminal behaviours, attract little public attention. This is not healthy in any society.

The bill provides for the removal of the need for permits for common areas of the major towns.

Common areas are the places in a town that are generally used by everyone. Visitors will also not need a permit to go to shops that are open or to visit residences if invited.

Government officials and members of parliament will be able to enter and remain on Aboriginal land without a permit to do their job.

People will be able to attend court hearings on Aboriginal land without a permit.

Both land councils and traditional owners can currently issue permits and revoke permits issued by another party.

This has led to confusion and conflict.

The bill therefore provides that land councils and traditional owners cannot revoke permits issued by another party.

The bill provides for temporary restrictions to the public access to common areas and access roads to protect the privacy of a cultural event or to protect public health and safety.

The Northern Territory government is provided with the power to make laws on these matters.

The Howard government will use the time before the commencement of the changes to further explain the changes to the people of the Northern Territory.

We will explain to Aboriginal people the nature and extent of the changes to counter the hysteria and fear that has been unnecessarily provoked by a few.

The government will explain to the wider Northern Territory community that the changes only apply to common areas in towns, and access to those towns is not in any way a licence to wander over the vast bulk of Aboriginal land without a permit.

The permit changes are limited to areas that are in effect country towns and are not a threat to sacred sites or the Aboriginal estate more broadly.

#### **Other land rights and lease amendments**

Schedule 5 to this bill provides for several miscellaneous amendments to the land rights act, including several minor changes to clarify some of the arrangements for township leases.

The land rights act currently provides that, where there is a township lease in place, subleases may be granted. Since there will be circumstances where the grant of a licence is more appropriate than a sublease, the amendments clarify that licences may also be granted.

The amendments will also ensure that a township lease can only be transferred in accordance with the terms and conditions of the township lease.

The bill will have the effect of disapplying the Lands Acquisition Act 1989 to dealings related to township leases.

The bill also provides that the definition of estate or interest in land for the purpose of

sections 70 and 71 of the land rights act includes certain types of licences as well as the statutory rights that are conferred under the new infrastructure provisions in schedule 3 to the bill.

This bill will also extend the defence in relation to entering or remaining on Aboriginal land that is covered by a township lease to land that is covered by a five-year Commonwealth lease, which will enable people who have a valid reason for entering land subject to a five-year Commonwealth lease to do so without a permit.

The bill contains provisions that clarify the operation of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and other antidiscrimination laws.

The provisions of the bills for the Northern Territory national emergency response are drafted as ‘special measures’ taken for the sole purpose of securing the advancement of Indigenous Australians.

The impact of sexual abuse on Indigenous children, families and communities requires decisive and prompt action. The Northern Territory national emergency response will protect children and implement Australia’s obligations under human rights treaties.

The government’s response will allow Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory to advance and enjoy the same human rights as other communities in Australia.

### Conclusion

The Australian government has made clear that it will do what needs to be done to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory.

This bill is an important element of tying our measures together into a coherent package to break the back of the violence and dysfunction in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Macklin**) adjourned.

## APPROPRIATION (NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE) BILL (No. 1) 2007-2008

### First Reading

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Bill presented by **Mr Brough**, and read a first time.

### Second Reading

**Mr BROUSSH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (1.40 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

There are two supplementary estimates appropriation bills being introduced as part of the government’s national emergency response to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory. They are the Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill Nos 1 and 2. I shall introduce bill No. 2 shortly.

These supplementary estimates bills follow on from the appropriation bills that were introduced into the House on the occasion of the 2007-08 budget. They seek appropriation authority from parliament for the additional expenditure of money from the consolidated revenue fund, in order to implement the first stage of the emergency measures to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory from abuse and give them a better, safer future. The measures in the emergency response aim to protect and stabilise communities in the crisis areas. This is the first stage in a longer term approach to improve the welfare of Aboriginal children and their families in the Northern Territory.

The bills are required to facilitate timely implementation of the emergency response initiatives.

The total appropriation being sought through the supplementary estimates bills is in excess of \$587.3 million. The total appropriation being sought in emergency response bill No.1 is almost \$502 million.

I now outline the major items provided for in the bill.

An increase of \$91.25 million will be provided to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to implement a range of employment and welfare reform measures in the Northern Territory as part of the emergency response. This includes expediting the removal of all remote area exemptions across the Northern Territory by 31 December 2007. This will provide that all Indigenous people in the Northern Territory with the capacity to work are taking part in activities that will improve their ability to gain employment. Accelerated removal of remote area exemptions is also required to ensure that:

- clean up activities related to the Northern Territory emergency response are available and that job seekers can be compelled to participate in these activities; and
- job seekers take advantage of job opportunities already available in the Northern Territory.

Failure to remove remote area exemptions within this time frame will mean many job seekers in the Northern Territory will not be required to look for work or be able to be compelled to participate in activities in return for their income support payment.

This funding will also provide for Community Development Employment Projects to be replaced progressively with jobs, training and mainstream employment services across the Northern Territory. Support will be provided to existing Community Development Employment organisations to ensure

they can continue to play a role in their communities. This measure includes a transition payment to maintain income levels for former CDEP participants as well as support to create jobs from current placements and new places in employment services. The move from CDEP to training and mainstream employment services will result in offsetting savings of \$76.3 million to the overall costs of this measure. These savings are not reflected in this bill.

In addition an amount of \$24.21 million is being provided to Indigenous Business Australia for investment and community initiatives in the Northern Territory, which includes \$18.9 million to provide for an expanded network of outback stores as well as support for existing community stores in conjunction with welfare payments reform. An additional \$10.1 million is also provided to Centrelink to fund the activities for the implementation of welfare payments reform, including the deployment of staff to the targeted communities.

A total amount of \$212.3 million is being provided to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to implement a wide range of measures in support of the government's Northern Territory emergency response, including welfare payments reform, housing and land, additional services for families and children, law and order and administrative and logistics support for the response.

This funding also includes an alcohol diversionary program to support young people, primarily aged 12 to 18, living in remote communities to provide an alternative to drinking and other forms of substance misuse.

The government will also provide funding for land surveying and upgrades to essential utility services infrastructure in the targeted communities.

The federal government is making a range of other financial commitments, which will ensure that the services that we need are fully funded, such as:

- the Australian Crime Commission will receive an additional \$4 million to gather intelligence and analyse Indigenous child abuse information in Australia;
- \$15.5 million to the Department of Defence for logistics support for the initial rollout; and
- \$10.5 million to the Attorney-General's Department to fund additional legal services for Indigenous people and additional Night Patrol programs in 50 communities through the Indigenous Solutions and Service Delivery program.

As can be seen, this is a very large sum of money. It exceeded our initial estimates. It proves beyond a shadow of a doubt the Commonwealth government's—the Howard government's—commitment to provide not only the human resources but also the financial resources needed to ensure that we can actually fulfil our commitments to protecting the children of the Northern Territory. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Macklin**) adjourned.

**APPROPRIATION (NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE) BILL (No. 2) 2007-2008**

**First Reading**

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Bill presented by **Mr Brough**, and read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the

Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (1.47 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 2) is the fifth bill that we are introducing today and it completes the package of bills that the Commonwealth is introducing to meet the need for the measures contained within the *Little children are sacred* report and our intervention into the Northern Territory. This bill provides additional funding to agencies for expenses in relation to grants to the Northern Territory, and capital funding.

The total additional appropriation being sought in this appropriation bill is \$85.3 million.

The major components of the bill include:

An additional \$14.5 million to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to provide grants for the employment of child protection workers in the Northern Territory, and the provision of safe places for families escaping domestic violence.

In addition, the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs will also be provided with an equity injection of \$34.3 million to address the short-term accommodation requirements of Australian government and other staff in support of the response.

Total capital funding of \$17.7 million is provided for Indigenous Business Australia, which includes funding of \$10.2 million to provide for an expansion of outback stores as well as provide support for existing community stores, in conjunction with welfare payments reform.

Finally, Centrelink will receive capital funding of \$14.3 million to enhance its information technology and service delivery

capacity to implement welfare payments reform.

The remainder of the amount in Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 2) relates to other minor measures associated with the response.

Before commending the bill to the House, I would like to make a couple of brief closing remarks. Today is a momentous occasion. Today is an occasion where the nation stands up and says that as a nation—not as a government—it will answer the call for Aboriginal children in the Territory. There will be those who will disagree with elements in these bills, but they cannot doubt our sincerity to act—to back up our words not just with legislative instruments and cash but also with deeds, people and real commitment.

The children of the Northern Territory deserve nothing less than an intervention of this size. This dramatic intervention will help them in the way that is necessary. Any Australian that has the misfortune to be in the place of those children or to know about their circumstances firsthand could do nothing less than say that this must be done. We as a nation have to take this opportunity to remove this blight from Australian society—and that is what it is. For too long we have tried—all sides of government, all ministers have tried for many years—to do something about it in the traditional forms and normal ways that we attack these problems and it just has not worked. We have to accept that it has not worked. We have to accept that, if we have failed, we have failed those children. Every day we delay, we can be sure that, as a result of our delay, more children will be hurt. That is a sad statement of fact. The fact that we now have people in Western Australia requiring us to do the same thing in the Kimberley shows that this does not finish at the Northern Territory border.

I hope that the leadership and the commitment that the Howard government have shown and presented here in the form of these bills—this financial commitment—show all of our state colleagues that they too should take this issue equally as seriously and make it their No. 1 priority and, in doing so, ensure that Australian kids—regardless of their cultural background, the colour of their skin or where they live—actually have a future. You do not have a future if you are fearful every night of your life and if your fear is turned into the horror of child sexual abuse. That is the horror of the lives that these children live—and it should stop.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Macklin**) adjourned.

**SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(WELFARE PAYMENT REFORM)  
BILL 2007**

Cognate bills:

**NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE BILL 2007  
FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES  
AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND  
OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2007  
APPROPRIATION (NORTHERN  
TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE) BILL (No. 1)  
2007-2008**

**APPROPRIATION (NORTHERN  
TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE) BILL (No. 2)  
2007-2008**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed.

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (1.51 pm)—Six weeks ago when the Prime Minister and the Minister for Families, Community Ser-

vices and Indigenous Affairs announced the details of a federal response to help stop child abuse in the Northern Territory Indigenous communities, Labor gave in-principle bipartisan support. Our in-principle support was given because the chronicle of abuse that Pat Anderson and Rex Wild detailed in their report into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse in the Northern Territory compelled action, as did the litany of reports that preceded *Little children are sacred*. But to lament that action should have been taken sooner does not lessen the imperative to act now; nor is the reality that child abuse occurs in all communities reason to sit on our hands in the face of this report.

Our in-principle support six weeks ago was given in good faith. We were told by the government that they would bring forward practical measures, both a short-term response and long-term solutions, to end the cycle of abuse. For some that article of faith was hard to accept, given the government's previous track record. The manner and style with which the government began this intervention did not help allay these concerns, nor did some elements of the response package, which over a short period of time have changed significantly into the propositions we see before the House today.

Throughout the last six weeks, Labor have articulated a simple test when assessing a government proposal: will it improve the safety and security of our children in a practical way? We have applied that test and, on balance, the opposition will support these bills. There are elements of the bills which we do not fully agree with, and I will be moving a few substantive amendments to reflect our concerns. I certainly hope that the minister will recognise that those amendments are also offered in good faith.

In the last few hours, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Lingiari, Senator

Crossin and I have met face to face with Aboriginal leaders from Central and Northern Australia to hear their views on these bills and the range of measures contained within them. In these matters, open dialogue directly with the Aboriginal people concerned is critical.

Just days ago, I attended the Garma Festival in Arnhem Land and heard the views of Aboriginal leaders. I heard their passion for their people and their land, as well as their resolute determination to always stand up for these two bedrocks of community. In the past few weeks, I have travelled to communities in Central Australia and listened to the stories of the mothers and grandmothers who are raising children. They want to give their children safe, healthy and happy lives. To live and grow, these children must be safe. The mothers and grandmothers who care for them must also be safe. It is a fundamental obligation of government to provide this safety and security.

One of my trips coincided with the arrival of the first medical team to hit the ground in Hermannsburg. It is fair to say that, in the days and weeks immediately after the government's first announcement, before the survey and medical teams arrived, there was a great deal of trepidation and uncertainty in the communities. This apprehension was generated by the nature and style of the announcements and by the lack of a clear and consistent government position on key measures such as the health checks. Trust from the communities must be earned and valued. This is an important element of the first recommendation of the Anderson-Wild report, which notes:

It is critical that both governments commit to genuine consultation with Aboriginal people in designing initiatives for Aboriginal communities.

Labor's approach is to move forward with trust in a reciprocal partnership with Indigenous Australia.

But consultation cannot be an end in itself, nor can we allow it to substitute for or stand in the way of action. The first recommendation by Anderson and Wild is that:

Aboriginal child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory be designated as an issue of urgent national significance by both the Australian and Northern Territory governments.

Labor believe that addressing child abuse and neglect in Aboriginal communities is rightly designated as an issue of urgent national significance. We believe that federal, state and territory governments have obligations to take both immediate and sustained action to improve the lives of all children, especially those in Aboriginal communities. Protection of children must be paramount when their vulnerability has been laid bare.

For those who believe in a compassionate, progressive society, is there a more fundamental obligation than ensuring protection of the vulnerable when it is within the powers of government to act? Why have a government with abundance and plenty if these resources cannot be applied to overcoming poverty and disadvantage, providing all with safety, security and freedom from neglect and abuse? The heart of any compassionate and progressive response to need must be to do all in our power to help and provide. There cannot, in my view, be a more responsible course of action.

One month before this intervention, on the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum, the Leader of the Opposition outlined Labor's commitment to Indigenous children. He spoke of Labor's commitment to make real and lasting progress in partnership with Indigenous Australians. He spoke of our need for new national bipartisan goals—goals that are achievable, goals that are measurable and

goals that fulfil the spirit of the referendum. We need to begin with the next generation of Indigenous children, those being born today.

Forty years after the 1967 referendum, Labor have committed to eliminate the 17-year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation, to at least halve the rate of Indigenous infant mortality within a decade, to at least halve the mortality rate of Indigenous children aged under five within a decade and to at least halve the difference in the rate of Indigenous students at years 3, 5 and 7 who fail to meet reading, writing and numeracy benchmarks within 10 years. These long-term goals were underpinned by a \$260 million funding commitment—a plan that is sustained, planned and comprehensive. We all know that rights cannot be enjoyed unless there is safety and security.

In relation to safety and security for children in the Northern Territory, the statistics are telling. Between 2001-02 and 2005-06 there was a 78 per cent increase in the number of notifications of abuse or neglect received by the Northern Territory department of family and children's services, with an average growth in notifications of 14 per cent a year.

**The SPEAKER**—Order! It being 2 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with the resolution agreed to earlier. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

#### MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

**Mr HOWARD** (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (2.00 pm)—Mr Speaker, I inform the House that the Minister for Health and Ageing will be absent from question time today. He is interstate on official business. The Minister for Ageing will answer questions on his behalf.

**An opposition member**—Is he in Tasmania?

**Mr HOWARD**—Yes, he is in Tasmania.

#### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

##### Housing Affordability

**Mr RUDD** (2.00 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister aware of new data released by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority which shows mortgage insurance claims by lenders whose customers have defaulted has surged by 329 per cent over the year to December 2006, the largest increase of any insurance class? Does the Prime Minister still maintain that Australian working families have never been better off?

**Mr HOWARD**—I am aware of that data. I am also aware that—to use an expression I have heard often—when it comes to working families, a lot can be said about the conditions for working families in Australia at the present time. Let me preface these general remarks by acknowledging that not all Australian families enjoy the sorts of things that I am about to describe. I acknowledge that some Australian families are missing out and some Australian families are not realising as much as the great bulk of Australian families are.

The first thing I can say is that there are more Australian families working now than ever before. The Leader of the Opposition uses the expression ‘working families’ as a given. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that, when his party was last in office, it was not a given that families could get work. In fact, it was the norm for over a million Australians that they could not get work. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that unemployment in Australia—the greatest measure of the dividend of economic policy—is now at a 33-year low. I remind the Leader of the Opposition—and this affects working families all over Australia—that

interest rates under this government for housing have averaged 7½ per cent over the last 11½ years, compared to 12¾ per cent under the previous government, a clear difference of five percentage points. On an average mortgage of \$235,000, a homeowner would have paid, on average, \$1,416 a month in mortgage payments under the current government, compared to \$2,497 a month if the average interest rate under the Labor Party still applied.

I remind the Leader of the Opposition that real wages of Australian workers have increased by 20.8 per cent over the last 11½ years, compared to a fall of 1.8 per cent under the former government. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that only the top 40 per cent of Australian households pay net income tax and that research by the OECD shows Australia has one of the fairest and most redistributive tax and income support systems in the OECD.

On the issue of housing affordability, which is clearly the basis of the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, I draw his attention to the report released yesterday by the Urban Development Institute of Australia, which identified 16 factors contributing to declining housing affordability, three of which it examined in detail: supply issues, approval delays, and costs and charges. The report had this to say:

It is acknowledged that the vast majority of steps that need to be taken (and in some jurisdictions are being taken) are at local government and state government level.

The report’s assessment of housing affordability in Sydney demonstrates the damaging effects of state government policies on homeownership. On land supply, the report had this to say:

In the mid 1990s the New South Wales Government adopted a largely ideologically driven and widely contentious policy experiment with urban consolidation.

...     ...     ...

The policy has had an unprecedented impact.

...     ...     ...

The lack of housing supply has led to dramatic price escalation in Sydney and New South Wales. ... house building costs have remained remarkably consistent over the 30 year period whereas land has increased markedly so that it now represents almost 80 per cent of the cost of buying a house and land package.

I would say to the Leader of the Opposition: the impact of all of these things on working families in Australia is significant. Working families in this country have been uppermost in our mind over the last 11½ years, and that is why we have pursued policies during that period of time demonstrably to their benefit and for their support.

### Economy

**Mr HARDGRAVE** (2.05 pm)—My question is also addressed to the Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister outline to the House how strong and disciplined economic management helps keep Australia prosperous?

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—They can laugh all they like; they are looking at their policies when they laugh!

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The member for Moreton has the call.

*Mr Martin Ferguson interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The member for Batman! The member for Moreton will commence his question again.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—Would the Prime Minister outline to the House how strong and disciplined economic management helps to keep Australia prosperous, and what risks threaten this strong and disciplined economic management?

**Mr HOWARD**—As I said in answer to the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, the most important measure, the most significant human dividend of strong economic management, is low unemployment. Nothing goes to the heart of the well-being and welfare of working families in this country more than low levels of unemployment. As the former British Prime Minister famously said, 'Fairness in the workplace starts with the chance of a job.' On that measure, fairness in Australia is now at an 11½-year high, because we now have the lowest unemployment levels for 33 years.

The reason we have low unemployment is that we have a strong economy. We have a strong economy because this government, with no help from the Labor opposition, took all of the economic decisions that were necessary to get the Australian economy back in shape. The former Labor government not only left us with a \$96 billion debt but their colleagues at a state level have now committed themselves to increase their debts over a five-year period by \$70 billion. And, to add insult to injury, having left us with this appalling economic legacy, the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues voted against every single measure that this government introduced in order to get the Australian economy back on its feet. They now take as their starting point for the political debate in Australia the strong economy we now have—which they tried to prevent.

At every point those who sit opposite us frustrated our endeavours to get the Australian economy back on track. I do not think there is any argument that the prosperity, low unemployment, strong economic conditions and high levels of business investment we now have are the products of 11½ years of careful economic management and, in a number of areas such as taxation and industrial relations, courageous economic reform.

The member for Moreton asked me, 'Are there any threats?' Yes, there are a number of threats, and they all sit opposite. Every single one of them represents a threat. I pose a simple rhetorical comment: if you want to know what federal Labor would be like in government have a look at what state Labor is like in government. If you want a character reference for a federal Labor government look no further than the report cards on state Labor governments. If you want a model of how a federal Labor government would treat its opponents have a look at what the Queensland Premier is doing today in Queensland to people who happen to disagree with his policy on local government amalgamations. If you want to know how fiscally responsible the Leader of the Opposition would be if he were in government, have a look not only at what he has done in opposition by opposing our fiscal responsibility but at the \$70 billion of state government debt that his colleagues are going to run up over a period of five years.

Another threat, of course—and a very specific one—is a return to a centralised wage fixation system. If Labor win the next election they will dismantle our industrial relations system and they will replace it with a union dominated system. That will result in a flow-through of wages from those sectors of the economy that can afford them to those that cannot. As a result there will be inflationary pressures and much greater pressures on the levels of interest rates. I conclude by quoting some comments made by the Governor of the Reserve Bank on 21 February 2007, when he spoke of the role of flexible labour markets in containing inflationary pressures. He said:

We are not getting today what we might once have gotten had we had a shock like this—the late 1970s resource boom or earlier occasions. On those occasions, the strong sectors would get a big pay rise and, through the centralised wage

setting system, that would flow through to everybody else, through the Arbitration Commission. That does not happen any more.

If there is a change of government it will happen again, and the benefits of the resources boom will be lost and squandered for future generations of the Australian people.

#### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER** (2.11 pm)—I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon a parliamentary delegation from the Kingdom of Morocco, led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, His Excellency Mr Abdelwahad Radi. On behalf of the House I extend a very warm welcome to our visitors.

**Honourable members**—Hear, hear!

#### **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

##### **Advertising Campaigns**

**Mr RUDD** (2.12 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the government's Barbara Bennett Work Choices advertisement about young workers, which the government was forced to withdraw overnight. Will the Prime Minister inform the parliament how much the production and broadcast of this advertisement has cost Australian taxpayers? Prime Minister, how can the government spend \$37 million of taxpayers' money on IR ads when many working families are struggling to make ends meet?

**Mr HOWARD**—I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Those information ads are very effective; those information ads will continue. The fact that they are being attacked by the Leader of the Opposition, the ACTU and the Public Sector Union demonstrates just how effective they have been. The Leader of the Opposition, as we know, famously comes from the state of Queensland—might I say the great state of Queensland. I am proud of the fact that there are more Queenslanders on this side of the

House than there are on the other side of the House. What is more, we intend to keep it that way. The Leader of the Opposition comes from the great state of Queensland and, never to be outdone, the good old Queensland Premier has a mate here who will be a colleague of his if the Labor Party wins the next election. While the Leader of the Opposition is up here complaining about government advertising, his colleague in Queensland has absolutely no shame about a 14-page colour booklet released in the *Sunday Mail*. It is great advertising for the Queensland newspaper. I do not want to knock that fine organisation. They will take business from anybody—that is fair enough—even the Queensland government. Here we have page after page, and what is the explanation?

**Mr Swan**—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The Prime Minister was asked how much the ads cost. How much, Prime Minister?

**The SPEAKER**—The member for Lilley will resume his seat. The Prime Minister is in order.

**Mr HOWARD**—We are invited to believe that this is a public information campaign. Do you know why? Because it has been run by a Labor government. It has nothing to do with the content of the campaign.

*Dr Southcott interjecting—*

**Mr HOWARD**—I see my colleague, the member for Boothby, and he reminds me—I apologise for what I am about to say—of the South Australian Premier, because the South Australian Premier after the last budget put out a full-page advertisement extolling the virtues of his budget. They have absolutely no shame when it comes to this. Let me inform the Leader of the Opposition of two things: firstly, the ‘Barbara Bennett advertisements’, as he calls them, are legitimate information campaigns; and, secondly—not

only that—they are completely in accordance with the values of the Public Service Act, as certified by none other than the Public Service Commissioner, Lynelle Briggs. I am informed that to date the information campaign in relation to the fairness test has cost in the order of \$23 million. There will be further expenditure. I do not disguise that; I make no apology for it. I think the provision of legitimate information on the fairness test is justified.

If we are talking about the use of government resources to run a political campaign, I also have in my possession a circular from Mary Kelleher, the senior director of the Human Resources Branch of Queensland Health. The circular is dated 11 July 2007 and it has the heading ‘Your Rights at Work campaign’. This is on the letterhead of Queensland Health. It is not the union. What it has to say is:

The Queensland Council of Unions is coordinating the Your Rights at Work campaign on behalf of all unions. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness about the impact of the federal industrial relations laws on all workers, including those in the state system, and the need to remove the laws by removing the current federal government.

This is Queensland Health. Presumably this is legitimate. Presumably this is an information campaign. It is directly political. There is nothing in the Barbara Bennett ads that in any way attacks the Labor Party, in any way attacks the trade union movement or in fact provides other than factual information on the operation of our policies. In those circumstances, our expenditure is totally legitimate. The ads will continue.

### Economy

**Dr SOUTHCOTT** (2.17 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer outline to the House the government’s fiscal policy and debt strategy? Is the Treasurer aware of policy from other governments which runs counter to this?

**Mr COSTELLO**—I thank the honourable member for Boothby for his question. He would know that it is the policy of this government to run the budget in surplus—that is, not to spend more money than we raise but to keep our expenditures within our revenue envelope, a revenue envelope which we in fact cut in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

It was not always the case, of course, that the Commonwealth government lived within its means. When I first became Treasurer the budget was \$10 billion in deficit. The year before that it was \$13 billion in deficit. The year before that it was \$17 billion in deficit. The year before that there was a deficit of four per cent of GDP. If we had a budget deficit of four per cent of GDP, as Labor had in the mid-nineties, it would be a deficit of over \$40 billion for one year. So by running a budget in surplus we have been able to pay down debt, and in fact we have now reduced to zero the net debt of the Commonwealth. Over the next five years, to 2010-11, we estimate that the Commonwealth government will save over \$60 billion. The state Labor governments will go out and borrow \$70 billion over the next five years. In other words, whilst the Commonwealth is adding to savings, the states collectively are borrowing \$70 billion. Far from running their budgets balanced, the states collectively are running budget deficits from now until 2010-11.

If you want to see an illustration of the difference between a coalition government and the Labor Party, which cannot be trusted with money, you will be able to see it in the states' records between now and 2010. The former Governor of the Reserve Bank, Ian Macfarlane, when he retired, was asked whether fiscal policy had ever been a problem for him. Listen to what he said, on 12 August 2006:

I have been lucky—for most of my time, fiscal policy has consisted of small surpluses. So the

movement in the government account has not been big enough to be important in the consideration of monetary policy.

Listen to this:

It might become an issue because the states are now part of the equation.

That was the Governor of the Reserve Bank in August of 2006.

**Mr Tanner**—That's a killer quote!

**Mr COSTELLO**—It is a killer, I am afraid. The socialist member for Melbourne interjects: 'That's a killer.' It is, and it kills you, old son, to hear that the Governor of the Reserve Bank in August of 2006 said that what had emerged as an issue was that the states had moved from surplus to deficit, and they now have plans to borrow \$70 billion.

What is also a killer—a killer in the comedy stakes—is whenever you see the member for Lilley, Mr Swan, being interviewed on TV. It was one of those vintages with David Spears yesterday, on 6 August 2007. He was asked this question: 'How does state borrowing not put upward pressure on interest rates?' That is not a bad question, is it?

**A government member**—No. It is a good question.

**Mr COSTELLO**—And what was his answer? He said that the states do borrow—they borrow for infrastructure and they have been doing it for 100 years—and borrowings are necessary to keep our economy strong. That was his answer. How does it not put pressure on interest rates? His answer was that it does not put pressure on interest rates because it is the Labor Party that is borrowing—'Labor borrowing good; coalition surplus bad!' This is one of these whitebread politicians that Gary Gray used to complain about. He practises his doorstops for the day in the mirror. Remember the day we caught him with his press secretary mouthing the words—they had been practising all morn-

ing—‘Labor borrowing good; coalition surplus bad.’

There is one level of government that is saving money and living within its means. It is the coalition. There is another level of government that is in deficit and that is borrowing and it is the Labor Party. It always was thus. You cannot trust Labor with money. You cannot trust them at the state level and when they were last in government you could not trust them at the federal level either.

#### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** (2.23 pm)—I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon Mr Allan Morris, a former member for Newcastle. On behalf of all members I extend to Mr Morris a very warm welcome.

**Honourable members**—Hear, hear!

#### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

##### Economy

**Mr SWAN** (2.23 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to the Treasurer’s last answer on prudent economic and financial management. I also refer to the Treasurer’s complaints in a recently published book that the Prime Minister ‘was a failure as Treasurer in the early 1980s’ and ‘has caused the government to seriously overspend to buy elections’. Has the Treasurer sat down with the Prime Minister—perhaps over dinner at Kirribilli—to discuss the substance of these allegations?

**Mr COSTELLO**—I have lived through the best of times and the worst of times, as William Shakespeare once wrote.

**An opposition member**—It was Dickens.

**Mr COSTELLO**—Oh, I am sorry, it was Charles Dickens. I thought he wrote ‘now is the winter of our discontent’. I am reminded to quote the member for Lilley—I am reminded of that famous Australian poet,

Banjo Paterson, was it not, who wrote those immortal words: ‘Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, oi, oi, oi!’ This is someone who would not know his Shakespeare from his Dickens or his Paterson from his soccer chants. He purports to want to become the Treasurer of Australia. All I can say is: some mothers do ‘ave ‘em.

#### Local Government

**Mr CAMERON THOMPSON** (2.26 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister advise the House how the government assists local councils to provide services to Australians? Are there any alternative approaches?

**Mr HOWARD**—I thank the member for Blair for his question. I can say in reply that the government I lead does have a proud record of achievement in supporting local government. In the current financial year, we will provide about \$2.1 billion in direct assistance to local government. That is \$1.7 billion in local government financial assistance grants and \$307.5 million in the very well received and strong Roads to Recovery program. These untied grants deliver a lot of services to Australians, which people especially but not only in regional areas come to expect: that is, waste collection and recycling, libraries and community centres and sport and recreation facilities. These grants have increased by more than 50 per cent since the government came to office in 1996.

Unfortunately, not all levels of government share our attitude to helping local councils in delivering these services. Right at the moment, in the great state of Queensland, the Beattie Labor government is ripping the heart out of local democracy with the dramatic slashing of council numbers from 156 to 72. This is being done without so much as a semblance of consultation with the people who live in these areas. Yet this is the Premier who, when I intervened on behalf of this government to help the people of Queen-

sland who have been denied a service from the state government, accused me of riding roughshod over the rights of the state of Queensland. He is the man who is riding roughshod over the rights of people who not only sit on local government bodies in Queensland but are serviced by those local government bodies. This plan by Mr Beattie will slash thousands of jobs in regional communities and threaten the viability of many hundreds of small towns throughout Queensland. I fear that it is a harbinger of what might come if you remove the final check and balance against the excesses of state Labor governments—that is, a federal coalition government. We need checks and balances in our democracy and one of the great checks and balances is that you should from time to time have different parties in office at the different levels of government. Let me say to the people of Queensland who are unhappy with what their Premier is doing: within the limits of the Constitution we will do what we can to force the Queensland government to consult the people of Queensland and, if necessary, to shame the Queensland government into consulting the people of Queensland.

As the House will know, the Australian Electoral Commission conducts all federal elections and all federal referenda. The Australian Electoral Commission also undertakes a wide range of other activities. These include the provision of all election and ballot services for the trade union movement in Australia at a cost in the last financial year of about \$6.2 million. This is not a fee-for-service arrangement; that \$6.2 million bill is footed by the taxpayer. It is meant to ensure free and fair elections and ballots in the trade union movement. But at least on this occasion the trade union movement is going one better than Mr Beattie: it is actually allowing ballots to take place; Mr Beattie is not allowing the ballots to take place. What I am an-

nouncing today is that the government has decided to allow the Australian Electoral Commission to undertake any plebiscite on the amalgamation of any local government body in any part of Australia. Mr Beattie has threatened to sack councils if they dare to dabble with democracy. What Mr Beattie has said is: 'If you dare to have a vote, we will threaten your jobs; we will threaten your livelihood.' That is what Mr Beattie has said. Let me say back to Mr Beattie that, on behalf of the people of Queensland who are being denied a democratic choice, the Australian Electoral Commission will conduct free of charge, at the expense of the Commonwealth, referenda or plebiscites about the amalgamation proposals of the Beattie government in any of the local government areas. Within the limits of our constitutional power, we do not intend to remain idle and silent while the wishes of people in these local government areas are denied. We do not take sides; we simply—

**Mr Kerr**—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The Kennett government undertook the same—

**The SPEAKER**—The member will resume his seat. That is not a point of order.

**Mr HOWARD**—Let me return to the scene of the crime and the Beattie government. What the Beattie government is doing is riding roughshod over the wishes of the people of many parts of Queensland. We are not trying to compel a ballot in every shire and every council area. We are saying that, if you want a vote, the AEC will conduct it and we will pay for it. I challenge the Premier of Queensland to let the people speak on his amalgamation proposal. Let the people of Queensland decide. Let this be a reminder that, if you remove the checks and balances in our system and have Labor governments at every level, this sort of behaviour will become the norm.

### Workplace Relations

**Ms GILLARD** (2.33 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to the following sentence in his recently published biography:

One cabinet minister specifically recalled Andrews—

that is, Minister Andrews—

explaining to Howard and the rest of the cabinet that there was no getting around some workers losing out under the proposed legislation—the Work Choices legislation. Prime Minister, don't the losers include young Australians who can still be given an Australian workplace agreement which cuts award conditions like notice of a change of roster which could change their start and finish times? Isn't it the case that the only thing parents can do about protecting their child from an AWA that allows changing hours and late finish times is to tell their child not to take the job?

**Mr HOWARD**—The particular allegation in the book is wrong. I have made that clear, as has the former Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. As to the other matters, let me point out to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the workers, generally speaking, are better off under our policies than they were under the former policies. There are more of them in jobs, strikes are fewer, wages are higher and the economy has benefited from the flexibility extended by these changes.

### Economy

**Mr TICEHURST** (2.34 pm)—My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer inform the House of the recent data regarding developments in the Australian economy?

**Mr COSTELLO**—I thank the honourable member for Dobell. I can inform the House that this morning the ACCI and St

George Bank released their business expectations survey, which shows that business conditions improved significantly in the June quarter and are at their highest level in eight years. The index improved from 58.5 points to 60.5 points. Expectations also rose strongly to near record levels, which, the ACCI noted, indicates excellent conditions ahead. The survey showed that investment in plant and equipment rose strongly and is at its highest level since the survey began. This comes along with the NAB quarterly business survey, released for the June quarter, which shows that business conditions rose three points and expectations for the three months ahead are now at record levels.

What is significant about this is that this is coming at the end of the longest period of continuous growth in the Australian economy ever recorded. We are now in the longest continuous growth period ever recorded and yet business is still reporting near record expectations. This long expansion in the Australian economy is responsible, along with the government's economic reforms, for 2.1 million additional jobs having been created in this country and for inflation during this long period of expansion being within our band of two to three per cent. In fact, the consumer price index to June was 2.1 per cent higher.

The major contributor to that increase in the consumer price index was fuel prices, coming off record world oil prices. But the good news is that the average petrol price in July was lower than the average price in June, meaning that petrol is now at its lowest price in four months—and, far from contributing to inflationary pressures, as it did in the June quarter, the fall in petrol prices, if it continues for the remainder of this quarter, should actually detract from the consumer price index.

The government's policy, which has been to balance the budget, pay off debt, reform the tax system, improve industrial relations, improve the productivity on Australia's wharves and improve the welfare system to encourage people out of welfare and into work, has now contributed to the longest period of economic expansion in Australian history, job creation at a level we have never seen and unemployment now at 33-year lows—and it has been done consistently with a low inflation rate of two to three per cent.

This does not mean that there is not more to be done—of course there is more to be done. But this is the government that pioneered those reforms that have got us to where we now are and this is the government that will take us on to those reforms in the future.

#### Advertising Campaigns

**Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR** (2.38 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, is it a fact that Crosby Textor research prepared two reports in June 2007—one for the Liberal Party leadership and one for the proposed BCA-ACCI campaign? Prime Minister, is it also a fact—

**Mrs Bronwyn Bishop**—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Under the standing orders that question does not relate in any way, shape or form to the responsibilities in relation to which the member is permitted to ask questions.

**The SPEAKER**—The member for Gorton has not completed his question. I am listening carefully. I call the member for Gorton.

**Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR**—I will start again. My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister. Is it a fact that Crosby Textor research prepared two reports in June 2007—one for the Liberal Party leadership and one for the proposed BCA-ACCI campaign? Prime Minister, is it also a fact that

both of these in-depth reports discussed community attitudes across the nation and specific policy issues by region, and advocated a pre-election industrial relations advertising campaign? Will the Prime Minister give a straight question a straight answer—no tricks, no blame, no spin?

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The Prime Minister is not responsible for the first part of that question, but I call the Prime Minister.

**Mr HOWARD**—If you want to know who that organisation prepared reports for, ask them.

#### Workplace Relations

**Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON** (2.40 pm)—My question is addressed to the bingo-playing Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Is the minister aware of any allegations of employers breaking the workplace relations laws? Minister, would you inform the House what measures can be taken to punish employers who do the wrong thing by their employees?

**Mr HOCKEY**—I thank the member for Bass for his question and note that I had a very enjoyable time in Tasmania last week. I visited the member for Bass, the member for Franklin and a number of others. I did not happen to catch up with Kevin Harkins, though, which was a little disappointing.

There are more than one million employers in Australia—and, whilst the vast majority of employers do the right thing by their employees, there will inevitably be bad employers out there, just as there are bad employees. This government has put in place very strong protections. The fairness test ensures that penalty rates cannot be traded away without proper compensation. The Workplace Authority checks all the new agreements. That does not happen with the Labor Party's 45c-an-hour contracts. The Workplace Ombudsman goes after employers who do the wrong thing, but there will

always be some bosses who try to get away with breaking the law.

My attention has been drawn to the transcript of an interview on the ABC late on Friday night. It was a very interesting interview, I might say. It was an interview with Cassie Whitehill. Cassie Whitehill said:

It was the last working day before Christmas, so it was a Friday. It was the day after our Christmas dinner and I got a call to the office. ... I went in with my friend ...

But her boss:

... asked her to leave the premises while he spoke to me for two minutes and I went into his office and he closed the door and just said, "I'm terminating your employment."

I said, "Why?". He said, "I don't have to give you a reason. Don't try and back me into a corner."

I said, "What are the reasons?". He said, "I'm not telling you why. That's just the way it is."

He said, "I want you to resign on the spot."

I said, "I'm not going to resign."

He said, "I want you to sign a deed of release to say that you won't bad mouth us or sue us or anything."

I said, "I'm not signing anything."

Then he went on to offer a week's pay and she said, 'I'm not signing.' What sort of boss would treat an employee like that? The boss was not from the Lilac City Motor Inn—we remember what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did to them—or a painter on a government ad or something. Who was this boss who sacked this employee and would not give her reasons? It was the secretary of the Australian Services Union. And you know what, Mr Speaker? That man, Sean Kelly, is the President of the Labor Party in Tasmania. So the president of the Labor Party in Tasmania goes and sacks an employee, gives no reason and tells her to get her friend out of the office so there is no record. The ABC interviewer went on to ask

whether Cassie went to the union's head office. Cassie said yes. The interviewer asked, 'You were not offered union support to be in the office with you?' Cassie said no. The interviewer continued: 'Or any other workplace support? And you were told you were sacked on the spot and no reason had to be given?' Cassie said, 'Yes, that's right.' It is an alarming case. Cassie Whitehill has had a pretty tough time. Her mother was terminally ill in palliative care, and a few days afterwards, very sadly, she lost a child through a miscarriage. The ABC pointed this out. The interviewer asked: 'So in December last year you lost your job, you lost your baby and you lost your mum?' She said, 'Yes, all in the space of five days.'

Cassie called Simon Cocker, the head of the union's peak body, Unions Tasmania. She said:

The same day I was dismissed, I phoned Unions Tasmania and spoke with Simon Cocker and he advised me there wasn't much he could do but if I wanted to I could take it to the anti-discrimination tribunal ...

Mr Cocker said the union has no role in the internal affairs of any other unions. I found that hard to believe. The head of the ASU is sacking one of his employees, but I thought, 'If she goes to the ASU, she might get a response.' So I did not go to Kevin07 this morning; I went to the ASU website. I wondered, 'What do they do when it comes to unfair dismissal?' The ASU website says:

The ASU handles many cases of unfair dismissal each year. Generally we obtain a better outcome ...

That is what the ASU say. They did not lift a finger for Cassie.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr HOCKEY**—It is under state law as an incorporated organisation. Unions Tasmania did not lift a finger for Cassie. Cassie went on to say:

I wasn't going to go down without a fight. I emailed the national secretary of the ASU. He didn't respond at all. I emailed Kevin Rudd. He did respond and said he was passing the matter on to Julia Gillard, but I didn't hear anything back from her either.

**Dr Nelson**—She's been closed down.

**Mr HOCKEY**—That is right; she has been closed down. So we have Cassie, who feels as though she has been unfairly dismissed and may be subject to duress—according to Peter Patmore in the same interview—and subject to bullying. And what happens? She goes to the union and they do not want to know about it because she is not a member. She goes to Unions Tasmania and they do not want to know about it. The state government responsible for these laws in Tasmania did not want to know about it. She goes to the Leader of the Opposition and he does not want to know anything about it, and she goes to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and she does not want to know anything about it.

We have in place the Workplace Ombudsman. We are prepared to stand up for the workers. We will not be intimidated by the Labor Party and their dirty tricks campaign. We will stand up for individual workers, and we will investigate this case. The Labor Party, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, should put aside their hypocrisy and get rid of the President of the Labor Party in Tasmania, who has acted in this deceitful way. The Leader of the Opposition should change his policy so that he is not beholden to the union thugs.

#### Workplace Relations

**Ms GILLARD** (2.47 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. I refer the minister to his statement today that the Workplace Ombudsman would investigate allegations made

by a young worker, Mr Gebert, that he was underpaid—

*Mrs Bronwyn Bishop interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER**—Member for Mackellar!

**Ms GILLARD**—I will start again. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I refer the minister to his statement today that the Workplace Ombudsman will investigate allegations made by a young worker, Mr Gebert, that he was underpaid by an actor in the government's Work Choices ad about young people. Is the minister aware of new allegations made by another worker, Mr Graham, about the same actor in the government's Work Choices ads? Is the minister aware of the matters raised by Mr Graham's father, which include:

It would amount to filling the boys with alcohol and then not having the money to pay them for wages. This went on—not paying them the full amount of money for the hours worked that they should have been paid for.

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The member will come to her question.

**Ms GILLARD**—I am. Mr Graham also said that when the son went looking for his underpayment he was frightened. Minister, will you investigate through the Workplace Ombudsman these allegations about the actor in your Work Choices advertisements?

**Mr HOCKEY**—We will investigate all allegations, including Cassie's, under state labour laws, where the unfair dismissal laws would apply to the union movement. We are happy to investigate these matters, and we do it responsibly. When an allegation is made, about any individual, we will have the matter investigated. That is why we set up the Workplace Ombudsman.

The Labor Party do not have a policy on anything. They do not have a defence policy, a health policy, an education policy, a trade policy, a tax policy, a small business policy, a climate change policy or a finance policy. They do not have any policy, apart from their

half-baked industrial relations policy framework, which says nothing about a workplace ombudsman. In fact, they say that they are going to abolish the Workplace Ombudsman. Where would Cassie go to get help then? Where would the children involved in these allegations go to get the matter thoroughly investigated? The Labor Party have a policy to abolish the Workplace Ombudsman. Do you know why? It is because they want to channel everyone through the union movement, so that the union bosses are the only arbiters of fairness in the workplace—the union bosses that represent only 15 per cent of the private sector workforce, the union bosses that are represented by the 70 per cent of the Labor Party frontbench who have come out of the union ranks.

The Labor Party are so hypocritical when it comes to these issues that they are prepared to stand up for the people in their own ranks who have potentially been breaking the law, yet they are prepared to go after other individuals in this forum and outside of the chamber.

#### Rural and Regional Australia

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT** (2.51 pm)—My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Can the Deputy Prime Minister advise the House how this coalition government is working with other levels of government to provide local answers to local problems in regional areas? Are there any alternative approaches?

**Mr VAILE**—I thank the member for Maranoa for his question. The member for Maranoa recognises only too well, given the diversity of his electorate, the importance of the relationship that has been established between our government—the federal coalition government—and local authorities across Australia, particularly in the electorate of Maranoa in Queensland, where we have

worked very closely in delivering to local communities the sorts of services that they need. This includes programs like Regional Partnerships, which is directly targeted at addressing local issues and helping to strengthen the local economic and social fabric. A lot of the Regional Partnerships program is actually delivered by local government. Since Regional Partnerships was established there have been 1,350 projects funded to the tune of \$311 million across Australia, \$140 million of which has gone to local governments that have applied for funding under that program. It is interesting—and the member for Hotham might listen to these statistics—that Regional Partnerships projects have attracted \$969 million in cash contributions from other participants in the program and \$106 million in kind. So well over \$1 billion has been spent on Regional Partnerships projects, a lot of them in local government areas—1,350 projects for an investment of \$311 million by the Commonwealth.

But it does not end there. In 2001 we recognised the need and the ability of local authorities to get money directly onto the ground to benefit local communities. We announced the establishment of the Roads to Recovery program. We have been funding that program since 2001 and, as the Prime Minister indicated, that is \$307 million a year to local authorities across Australia. We announced in the budget this year that we are going to take that up to \$350 million a year for the term of AusLink 2, from 2009 to 2014, to give certainty to local governments across Australia. Many of the projects have been funded under the AusLink Strategic Regional Roads Program, \$470 million having been spent on this program in recent years, with a lot of that money going into much needed road projects in local government authority areas.

No wonder we are concerned at the way that the Beattie Labor government in Queensland is trashing democracy, and local government democracy, in Queensland with its ham-fisted approach to the forced amalgamations in Queensland. We are in there trying to help local government. We are holding up our end of the deal, delivering every cent we give on the ground to local communities, and the Beattie Labor government is going to trash that. This afternoon it is introducing legislation to reduce the number of local government authorities in Queensland from 156 to 72. There are 45,000 Queenslanders employed in local government in Queensland. All their jobs are now being put at risk because the Beattie Labor government in Queensland does not care about democracy or about those 45,000 people who work in local government. There is outrage throughout Queensland, from Noosa on the coast to Longreach in the west and right up into the Cape. They are marching in the streets in Queensland because they have been ignored. Just like the Leader of the Opposition turns his back in question time, he has turned his back on local government in Queensland and the 45,000 people who are employed by local government in Queensland.

We have continued to say that the risk of a Rudd Labor government here in Canberra is that it does not know how to manage money—and that is right. We know that he will be a patsy to the union movement. Last week he confirmed, and he confirms again today, that he is just going to be a patsy to the Labor premiers. He has been making all the nice noises about being concerned about amalgamation of local government in Queensland, but he has not done anything about it. He has not got the guts to get on the phone to Premier Beattie and tell him to back off and respect those 45,000 jobs that are in local government in Queensland. It is proof positive of why, last week, the Labor Party

announced that it was going to remove all conditions of specific purpose payments to state governments. He is just going to be a patsy to Labor premiers right across Australia. Australia cannot afford to have coast-to-coast Labor governments or there will be a lot more of this sort of ham-fisted approach to democracy as we know it in Australia.

#### Howard Government

**Mr ALBANESE** (2.57 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to his statement in the House on 21 June—the same day that Mark Textor provided the leaked polling report to the Prime Minister—that Mark Textor's advice has been reasonably accurate over the years. Does the Prime Minister accept Mr Textor's finding that the Howard government has become arrogant, complacent and reactive?

**Mrs Bronwyn Bishop**—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I refer you to standing order 98(c), which sets out specifically what may be asked about and what may not be asked about. That was clearly out of order, and I would ask you to rule that way.

**The SPEAKER**—I have been listening carefully to the Manager of Opposition Business. Parts of that question will certainly be out of order, but he has not completed his question.

**Mr ALBANESE**—Does the Prime Minister accept Mr Textor's finding that the Howard government has become arrogant, complacent and reactive? Does the Prime Minister also accept the accuracy of Mr Textor's finding that there is 'significant disillusionment with Liberals on the issue of broken promises and dishonesty'? Prime Minister, what are the broken promises that Mr Textor is talking about in his report?

**The SPEAKER**—In calling the Prime Minister, I point out that he is not responsible for someone else's work; nonetheless, parts of that question are in order.

**Mr HOWARD**—I analyse all the advice I get and I will extend the same courtesy to that question.

#### Indigenous Communities

**Mr TOLLNER** (2.58 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Would the minister update the House on the progress of the Commonwealth emergency response to protect children in the Northern Territory?

**Mr BROUUGH**—I thank the member for Solomon for his question and his obvious interest in the children of the Northern Territory. It has been nearly six weeks since the government announced its intervention into the Northern Territory. Of course, that was a response to the *Little children are sacred* report, with the one goal, the one aim, to protect the children of the Northern Territory. Much work has been done in that six-week period. I can report to the House that we have formed a task force headed by magistrate Dr Sue Gordon, a woman who is, unfortunately, too accustomed to hearing these sorts of things in her work in the children's courts of Western Australia. She is currently living in Alice Springs and is moving around the Territory talking with, consulting with and reassuring the broader community, women in particular, of what the government is achieving and what our aims and objectives are.

Major General David Chalmers, who is the task force's operational commander, is doing a wonderful job. He too is in Alice Springs with his team. They have visited all sites and made an assessment of some 47 of them. To date, 41 advanced communications teams have taken visits. Thus, a lot of work has been undertaken in that first phase. The reality is that there was a fair bit of misinformation, with people suggesting that the military were coming in to steal children and

to shoot dogs, which of course never occurred. It was great to see the military getting out of the vehicles and young fellas running up to the soldiers and playing footy with them. That was in stark contrast to some of the media reports that filtered through in the early days.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the volunteers. Over 400 medical professionals and doctors volunteered to go to the Territory to assist with this humanitarian work. Without their efforts it would simply not be possible to get the necessary health checks—so far 440 children have had health checks. Unfortunately I also report to the House that there have been referrals to authorities in relation to child abuse, and further testing of these children for sexually transmitted diseases has been undertaken. That is sad, but it is much sadder if the abuse goes undetected and the sufferings of those children are not brought to the surface.

Policing has been a key issue. The Australian Federal Police have been trained and have been sworn as special constables into the Northern Territory police force. They are on the ground in a number of communities, including Imampa, Mutitjulu, Santa Teresa and Haasts Bluff. An additional 10 AFP officers are undergoing training at the moment, and they will be deployed shortly. I am told that by the middle of this month the Queensland police will be ready to deploy. They will then undergo training and move into the communities.

There is much to be done today. I have introduced five bills into this House, including two appropriation bills for a total of over \$580 million of additional Commonwealth expenditure. That is the commitment in financial terms. The Defence Force and our department are putting the human capital in place so that we have managers on the ground. These are the practical measures that

are giving expression to our response to protecting the children in the Northern Territory. I bring to the attention of those who think the Commonwealth did not need to act, or thought that the Northern Territory would act, the comments by the Chief Minister in the last day. Ms Martin said:

The compulsory acquiring of town camps has nothing to do with protecting children.

This shows how out of touch she and her government are on this matter. I visited the town camps task force in Alice Springs last year, and they advised me that there was an average of one murder per month in Alice Springs and that Alice Springs had one of the world's highest rates of stabbings. In May this year, two women were murdered in separate instances in the town camps. The legendary Australian artist Albert Namatjira's 15-year-old great-granddaughter was raped and murdered.

In June last year Ms Martin said that housing was the critical issue, which highlights the challenges we face. Albeit that we get words of comfort from the Northern Territory government, it is very difficult to move forward and help these children when people still hold those sorts of attitudes. I will leave the last comments to the local Catholic priest, Father Raass, who said of the town camps:

These appalling conditions have led many people to despair and expose children to risk.

We have to stop that risk. This is why the government is moving. This is why the legislation is before the House. This is why the Howard government sees the urgency in protecting all Australian children at this time, particularly those in the Northern Territory.

#### Liberal Party

**Ms KING** (3.04 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the finding of the Prime Minister's pollster that there is significant disillusionment with the Liberals

on the issue of broken promises and dishonesty. Does the Prime Minister now regret breaking his promises to keep interest rates at record lows, to protect workers' entitlements and to keep Australian troops in Iraq for months, not years, or were there other specific broken promises Mr Textor was referring to?

**Mr HOWARD**—Can I just pick up the reference made to interest rates. What I promised, and what I repeat here today in front of this dispatch box, was that in Australia interest rates will always be lower under a coalition government than under a Labor government. It ought to be reinforced by the fact that the Labor Party has policies—namely, a return to a centralised wage-fixing system—that guarantee that there will be more upward pressure on interest rates under a Labor government than under this government. I would remind the member for Ballarat that, throughout the debate in 2004, that was the principal forward argument that I put in advance of the argument that interest rates would always be lower under us than under Labor.

I pointed to Labor's record in government. They do not like this, but my argument about interest rates—and I am very happy you asked me this question—is based on: Labor's performance when last in federal government, when interest rates hit 17 per cent for housing; their behaviour at a state government level; the fact that the government was left with a very large amount of debt in 1996; and a comparison of our industrial relations policy with that of the Labor Party. Those who sit opposite want to go back to the days of a centralised wage-fixing policy—where, if you paid a big wage increase over here, it flowed through to the rest of the economy, it put upward pressure on wages everywhere and therefore upward pressure on inflation and, thereby, interest rates. We have broken that connection. The only thing that threatens

to reconnect those two things is the election of a Labor government.

I am fascinated that the opposition should ask me about people who do focus group work, because I am reminded of something that somebody said about those who advise the Leader of the Opposition about the attitudes of the Australian public. I do not normally draw on this source, but I will make an exception on this occasion because the comment was so good.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr HOWARD**—Here we see the Leader of the Opposition's back again. Of course, I am referring to the description given by my immediate predecessor in the office I now hold, former Labor Prime Minister Mr Paul Keating, when he spoke of those who advise the Leader of the Opposition. He had a lot of things to say about them, but the best of all is this:

The Labor Party is not going to profit from having these proven unsuccessful people around who are frightened of their own shadow and won't get out of bed in the morning unless they've had a focus group report to tell them which side of bed to get out.

If ever that description fitted anyone, it fits the shadow Treasurer, the honourable member for Lilley. They do not eat a morsel of food without getting a focus group report first. They are the most poll-driven group. They talk about Crosby Textor; Hawker Britton would leave them for dead.

#### National Security

**Mr LAMING** (3.09 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on recent developments in countering terrorism in the region, and what lessons can be drawn from these developments?

**Mr DOWNER**—First, I thank the honourable member for his question and for his interest. I was in Manila last week at the

ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. A significant focus was counter-terrorism and three or four issues came out of those meetings. The first was that all the delegations recognised that we must have tough laws to counter terrorism effectively. To use a phrase that the House will have heard in recent times, it is better always to be safe than to be sorry. The second issue is that this government has focused on building bilateral links with ASEAN countries in the area of counterterrorism. No link is more important than the bilateral memorandum of understanding on counterterrorism that we signed with Indonesia and the subsequent Lombok Treaty signed by the Indonesian Foreign Minister and me in December last year. That has underwritten excellent work in the field of counterterrorism undertaken by Australia and Indonesia with consequences that have been very important to the security of this country.

Honourable members may not know, but the opposition says that we should downgrade bilateral relations and upgrade multilateralism. That is the opposition's hypothesis. Members opposite say that we should place greater emphasis on the United Nations and less emphasis on these bilateral relationships. With the greatest of respect to the United Nations, I do not think that as an institution it would have been able to do anything like the work we have been able to do bilaterally with Indonesia in South-East Asia.

My third point flows from my second point. I do not mind saying this in the teeth of what Mr Beattie said about the Australian Federal Police, but I think the Australian Federal Police have done an outstanding job. I know that honourable members opposite do not agree, but the Australian Federal Police have done an outstanding job in countering terrorism in South-East Asia. It is my view that the work of the Australian Federal Police

in South-East Asia on counterterrorism has saved many lives. These people deserve more respect than being called Keystone Cops. It surprises me that the Leader of the Opposition is not big enough to stand up to the Premier of Queensland and say that he completely rejects that analysis. That is a shame, because if Labor wins the next election this country will have a Prime Minister who has not repudiated those appalling remarks made by Premier Beattie.

My final point is that since 9-11 this government has invested a further \$450 million in counterterrorism measures. The Labor Party, in the form of the honourable member for Melbourne's 2 March press release, says that it will cut \$32 million from the part of my department's budget dealing with counterterrorism.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr DOWNER**—I would be quite happy to have a policy debate with the Labor Party on these issues. The best that the Leader of the Opposition offers is not a policy debate of substance but a T-shirt competition and some sort of stunt on cyberspace. I think this country deserves a Leader of the Opposition with substance, not stunts.

#### **Hospitals**

**Ms ROXON** (3.12 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, are you aware of an AMA press release saying the following:

The rationalisation of hospital services in the north west coast is the only way that Tasmanians in that area will be likely in the future to see modern, properly resourced hospital services in their area to match those in the rest of the state.

Unfortunately, maintaining a number of small hospitals is not only expensive but it precludes residents of the region from getting access to modern medical technologies and attracting a broader range of specialist services in particular.

Prime Minister, was Brendan Nelson right?

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The honourable member should refer to ministers by their by title.

**Mr HOWARD**—On this occasion, no, he was not. But he has considerably improved with the opportunity and experience of being a member of my government. I take this opportunity to address the substance of the issue. I am interested to learn that the opposition is opposed to the government's plan to keep the hospital open.

**Mr Albanese**—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. The defence minister was once with the Labor Party, now he is with the—

**The SPEAKER**—The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

**Mr HOWARD**—It is the second killer blow of this question time! That is a real revelation! It suggests that you were in the Labor Party, Brendan. I have never heard that before!

Could we go back to the Mersey hospital? I think what the people of Devonport and the people of Northern Tasmania would like to know is: where does the Leader of the Opposition stand on this issue? Does he want to keep this hospital open, or does he effectively want to downgrade it to a subclass facility? He was asked this by Fran Kelly on three occasions yesterday morning and he said, 'Oh, I'm waiting on all the details.' But all the details are there.

There comes a time when you can no longer sit on the fence and you can no longer keep all of your options open. We are for the people of Devonport. We are for keeping this hospital open as a full public hospital facility. We believe in looking after the interests of 70,000 Northern Tasmanians—and they would like the Leader of the Opposition to get off the fence and say where he stands.

### Workplace Relations

**Mr McARTHUR** (3.15 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. Would the minister inform the House of what protections are in place for employees under the workplace relations laws? Is the minister aware of any alternative policies?

**Mr HOCKEY**—I thank the member for Corangamite for his fine question. Our policy is very clear. We believe in putting in place in law the appropriate protections for employees and also—indirectly for employees—in making sure that employees are able to get on with the job without having union thugs come onto the work site to try to close it down. What does this mean? In the case of the government, we were the government that introduced changes to the building code. We introduced the Building Code itself and set up the Australian Building and Construction Commission, which has delivered real dividends not only for the people who are buying homes and purchasing office space but also, importantly, for workers in the building industry.

The ABCC commissioned an Econtech report into the benefits of having set up the Building Code in the ABCC. The Econtech report found that, if the independent building watchdog were to be abolished, as the Labor Party want to do, it would have a dramatic impact not only on inflation but also on housing prices. In fact, Econtech found that, by curbing unwarranted and vexatious union strike action and acts of thuggery, the ABCC has reduced inflation by one percentage point. Just think about the impact on interest rates should the Labor Party's industrial relations policy be implemented and the union thugs and the CFMEU were to go back onto the work site and close down housing construction, certainly making it more expensive.

In fact, Econtech found that the cost of a house in Australia is now three per cent lower, thanks to our industrial relations laws. On a \$300,000 home, that is nearly \$10,000—and the Leader of the Opposition, me old china here, says that he is worried about housing affordability! For new entrants the biggest barrier to housing affordability is the Labor Party and their industrial relations laws changes. The biggest impediment to cheaper housing is an inflexible workplace relations system. The only policy the Labor Party have released—and it is only part of a policy; it is a working document—is their industrial relations policy. They still do not have a policy on health. They do not have a policy on education. They do not have a policy on foreign affairs. They do not have a policy on defence. They do not have a policy on small business. They do not have a policy on transport. They do not have a policy on immigration. We are waiting for the policies—and the election is around the corner. But do you know what? They have a policy on T-shirts.

I was wondering why they would have a policy out there on industrial relations. Why did they go so early on industrial relations, when they have not come out with any other policy? I came across a letter on the union intranet from the Finance Sector Union, the FSU. It is a standard pro forma letter that the FSU sends out. It says:

In my view—

that is, in the union's view—

the key principles of Labor's policy are similar to those outlined in the policy adopted by the ACTU at its congress of 2006.

So we had the hypocrisy of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who went on the John Laws program and said:

I've already had some disagreements with the trade union movement. The policy we produced was not the policy they wanted.

Yet here, the unions are running around saying that, in fact, the Labor Party's policy is the policy that the union bosses wanted. Do you know what, Mr Speaker? This says everything about the Labor Party and everything about their hypocrisy. They go out there and say one thing to the general public, but behind closed doors they are doing these shady deals with the union bosses—because it is the union bosses that are funding the Labor Party, it is the union bosses that are supplying the candidates for the Labor Party, it is the union bosses that make up 70 per cent of their frontbench and it is the union bosses that will be back in control on the dark day that a Rudd Labor government gets elected.

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

#### PARLIAMENTARY SITTINGS

**Mr HOWARD** (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (3.21 pm)—Mr Speaker, I ask for the indulgence of the House. The House will recall that I informed it on 28 May that I had invited His Excellency Mr Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister of Japan, to address a joint sitting of the parliament. I regret to inform the House that the Prime Minister rang me a few days ago to say that, although he would be proceeding with his visit to Australia in September for APEC, domestic political commitments precluded his continuing on to pay a bilateral visit to Canberra.

*Mr Swan interjecting—*

**Mr HOWARD**—This is unfortunate—and I think it will be a matter of regret to the House, despite the rather stupid interjection of the member for Lilley, who has no courtesy or respect for the Prime Minister of Japan. I hope that at some time in the future the Prime Minister of Japan will have the opportunity of addressing a joint sitting of this parliament, because I think it would indeed have been a historic moment for the Prime Minister of Japan to have taken up that offer. I

look forward to meeting him at the APEC gathering.

I am delighted to confirm that the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr Harper, has accepted the invitation to address a joint sitting. In light of the changes to Mr Abe's program, I have offered the Canadian Prime Minister the option to make his address to parliament one day earlier than previously planned and I expect that will now be on Tuesday, 11 September.

#### QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

##### Parliamentary Sittings

**Mr PRICE** (3.23 pm)—Mr Speaker, when the Prime Minister indicated that Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Harper would be visiting and that there would be a joint sitting of the houses on Monday the 10th—Monday is the day of the sitting week when private members' business is conducted—the sitting scheduled for that day was cancelled. It was listed as a sitting day and then removed from the sitting program. Can you advise the House and honourable members whether or not Monday the 10th will be put back into the program and private members' business will continue?

**The SPEAKER**—I thank the Chief Opposition Whip. As he would be well aware, those decisions remain with the Leader of the House. I suggest that he direct that question to the Leader of the House.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

**Mr HARDGRAVE** (Moreton) (3.23 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—On hundreds of occasions, Mr Speaker, but I will only hold the House for three.

**The SPEAKER**—Please proceed.

**Mr HARDGRAVE**—Firstly, on 23 June the *Weekend Australian* newspaper published a story under the headline ‘Sacked minister, MP face rorts charges’. This article, which was written by Michael McKenna, said the Australian Federal Police had handed over a brief to the Director of Public Prosecutions in the previous two weeks. This story was wrong, and I am advised that the AFP Commissioner told a press conference yesterday that a brief went some time after that article was published. Further, on Saturday, 14 July, an article in the *Weekend Australian*—again written by journalist Michael McKenna—reported that a staff member was sacked by me after talking to the AFP. This story was also wrong. The staffer left for other reasons. Finally, today’s *Courier-Mail* headline reads ‘Print rorts case firms: DPP examining brief of evidence against Queensland Libs trio’, with my picture prominently placed in the banner space. I have not even been required for an interview by the AFP in the 5½ months since this matter began.

#### QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

##### Questions in Writing

**Mr GARRETT** (Kingsford Smith) (3.25 pm)—Mr Speaker, I seek your assistance under standing order 105(b) in relation to question 4982, which first appeared on the *Notice Paper* on 7 December 2006. Would you write to the relevant minister and seek the reason for the delay in responding to this question?

**The SPEAKER**—I thank the member for Kingsford Smith, and I will follow up his request.

##### Questions in Writing

**Mr MURPHY** (Lowe) (3.25 pm)—Mr Speaker, I too seek your assistance under standing order 105(b) regarding questions 5716 and 5718 on 9 May, questions 5730 and 5735 on 10 May, questions 5759 and 5762 on 22 May, questions 5765 through to 5768

on 23 May, questions 5778 through to 5782 and 5784 through to 5789 on 24 May, questions 5841 through to 5843 on 29 May—

*Mr Crean interjecting—*

**Mr MURPHY**—and—yes, Simon, on my birthday, 31 May—questions 5901, 5902, 5903 and 5904. Mr Speaker, I would grateful if you could round up those indolent ministers and get answers from them because it is getting late in the day for this parliament. It is unsettling for my constituents that they have not got answers.

**The SPEAKER**—I thank the member for Lowe and I will follow up his request.

#### Questions in Writing

**Ms GEORGE** (Throsby) (3.26 pm)—Mr Speaker, under the same standing order, could you please expedite a reply to my questions 5322 and 5325 of 6 February.

**The SPEAKER**—I thank the member for Throsby and I will follow up her request.

#### AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS

##### Reports Nos 48 to 53 of 2006-07 and Nos 1 to 3 of 2007-08

**The SPEAKER** (3.26 pm)—I present the Auditor-General’s Audit reports Nos 48 to 53 for 2006-07 and Nos 1, 2 and 3 for 2007-08, entitled *No. 48—Performance audit—Superannuation payments for contractors working for the Australian Government: Follow-up audit; No. 49—Performance audit—Non-APS workers; No. 50—Performance audit—The Higher Education Loan Programme—Department of Education, Science and Training; No. 5—Financial statement audit—Interim phase of the audit of financial statements of general government sector agencies for the year ending 30 June 2007; No. 52—Performance audit—The Australian Taxation Office’s approach to regulating and registering self managed superannuation funds—Australian Taxation Office; No. 53—Performance audit—Australian Federal Po-*

lice overseas operations; No. 1—Performance audit—Acquisition of the ABRAMS Main Battle Tank—Department of Defence—Defence Materiel Organisation; No. 2—Performance audit—Electronic Travel Authority follow-up audit—Department of Immigration and Citizenship; and No. 3—Performance audit—Australian Technical Colleges programme—Department of Education, Science and Training.

Ordered that the reports be made parliamentary papers.

#### DOCUMENTS

**Mr McGAURAN** (Gippsland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (3.27 pm)—Documents are tabled as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings* and I move:

That the House take note of the following documents:

Customs Act—Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations—Report to Parliament on the export of human embryos—1 January to 12 June 2007.

Department of Defence—Special purpose flights—Schedule for the period July to December 2006—Errata.

Department of the Environment and Water Resources—Second review of the National Environment Protection Council Acts (Commonwealth, State and Territory), June 2007.

Family Law Council—Report—Relocation, May 2006—Government response.

Productivity Commission—Report No. 38—Waste management, 20 October 2006—Government response.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Albanese**) adjourned.

#### MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

##### Advertising Campaigns and Workplace Relations

**The SPEAKER**—I have received a letter from the honourable the Deputy Leader of the Opposition proposing that a definite mat-

ter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government's inappropriate use of funds and process in advertising industrial relations reform while failing to protect fairness in Australian workplaces

I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

*More than the number of members required by the standing orders having risen in their places—*

**Ms GILLARD** (Lalor) (3.28 pm)—Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. It is nice to be back with you in the House of Representatives. Since this parliament last sat, the Howard government has had a flood of polling—all of it bad. How do we know that? We read about it every day in the newspaper. It is becoming a new ritual for Australians: you get up in the morning, you get your newspaper, you turn to the back pages for the sporting results, you look on the quiz pages for the solution to yesterday's crossword, and you turn to the front of the paper and read the Howard government's polling research. It is happening each and every day for Australians. You would have hoped that the response of a government to those clear messages from the Australian community about how stale it is and how much it has lost touch with the needs of working Australians would have been to get on with the job of governing in the hope of governing well so that it could demonstrate to Australians that it had a vision for the future.

What has been this government's response? Well, it has been no vision for the future—we know that; no new ideas—we know that; and no pretence of governing well—we know that as well. Instead, this government has lurched for the advertising campaign and it has lurched for the politics of blame. We saw the blame game on display

in this parliament throughout question time today. In answer to every question, a government minister or the Prime Minister got up and basically said: 'It's someone else's fault.' The politics of blame are undoubtedly going to be pursued every day between now and the next election.

What we have also seen in the period that this parliament has been in recess and what we continue to see on our TV screens is this government's desperate attempt to convince Australians that its extreme Work Choices laws, which have hurt so many Australian families, are actually good for them. These Work Choices advertisements are everywhere you go. They are at saturation coverage on TV. You cannot turn on the TV to watch your favourite program without having these ads. You cannot open up a newspaper without having these ads in your face. You cannot sit in a bus shelter without having these ads beside you. Indeed, they are in local newspapers—so much in local newspapers that, in one edition of my own local newspaper, two separate pages had these advertisements.

The audacity of the government when it comes to these ads not only runs to the blanket coverage but goes to the fact that the theme of them is: 'Know where you stand'. Well, Minister, sitting at the table there, if you believe that people are entitled to 'know where they stand', then I would like some challenges set for you in this MPI, because Australians are entitled to 'know where they stand' when they are judging this government at the next election—which we all know, in the ordinary cycle, will be in October. So, Minister, when it comes to telling Australian voters where they stand, we want, today, the following simple questions answered—the things you have covered up, to date; the things you have hidden from Australia. Of course, the trickiness of this government runs deep, and these things have not

been exposed in the public domain. The first of them is the cost of this campaign. I was absolutely intrigued when the Prime Minister today jumped up at the dispatch box and said the amount of money that has been spent, to date, on these advertisements is \$23 million. Of course he did not tell us how much is going to be spent in total—

**Mr Hockey**—We do not know.

**Ms GILLARD**—but it is \$23 million to date. The minister at the table is helpfully saying, 'I don't know,' because what they are going to do is monitor these ads in the polling research, which we may or may not read in the pages of our newspapers, and it is only when they see a kick-up in that that they will lift the—he is nodding his head! It is going to be determined by the polling!

*Mr Hockey interjecting*—

**Ms GILLARD**—Thank you very much for that admission, Minister. The minister at the table has just admitted that the coverage of these ads, the expenditure of taxpayers' funds, is wholly related to the polling prospects of the Howard government.

**Mr Hockey**—Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is going to verbal me, I will correct it. That is entirely untrue.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)**—Order! There is no point of order. The minister has other opportunities to address that.

**Ms GILLARD**—Apart from that startling admission that these ads are wholly hostage to the political fortunes of the Howard government, and we will see more of them if those political fortunes do not turn around, the interesting thing about the Prime Minister's admission today is it is a complete contradiction—indeed, a complete repudiation—of what this minister said to this House on 22 May about the costs of these advertisements.

On that day, when he was asked about the costs of these advertisements, the minister decided to belittle the Labor Party as if it could not read the budget papers.

I asked him what the government was going to spend on these advertisements, what the expenditure was going to be, and with a condescending tone he said: 'Oh, get out the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. Check in there the allocations for the public awareness services of the Office of Workplace Services and the Office of the Employment Advocate. If you cared about this, you should have asked about it at the time the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook was tabled. How could you not know that that is the source of the funds?' This was the demeanour of the minister on that day, 22 May. Well, Minister, you have got a problem, and the problem is this: in your own words, the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook says that the government will provide \$20.5 million over four years to raise public awareness of the services of the Office of Workplace Services and the Office of the Employment Advocate, now renamed the Workplace Authority and the Workplace Ombudsman.

Today in question time, Minister, the Prime Minister gave you up, because that statement cannot be true if the statement of the Prime Minister at the dispatch box today was true. One of you in this House has not accurately told the Australian people the truth about the expenditure on these ads. Honestly, you do not need to be a marketing guru to know that the saturation of these ads has been more than \$20.5 million over four years—it would be \$20 million in the last month! Indeed, the Prime Minister has confirmed that. So the minister on 22 May misled this parliament about the cost of these advertisements and, through this parliament, misled the Australian people. That is undeniable—it is undeniable on the *Hansard* re-

cord. And that is just the start of the trickiness and deceit when it comes to this campaign. Of course it does not end there, because the minister is going to get up and say: 'This is an information campaign. This is about telling Australians what their rights and entitlements are at work.' But we know that is not true either. This campaign was wholly revealed on Friday in the *Australian* newspaper as the product of polling, pure and simple.

When this parliament last sat, we knew that there was polling. Now we know more. There was an Open Mind preliminary research report on 20 April. There was another report on 24 April for developmental research for communications purposes. There was another report on 3 May. There was another report on 4 May—a final report. And there are two more reports that we do not know the dates of, but they are for the evaluation of the so-called 'fairness test'. But what we now do know in the public domain about this research is that it is the polling that led to the advertising campaign. It was not the need to inform Australians about what their rights or entitlements at work were that led to this campaign; it was the polling. So express is this—it is so naked; it is so transparent—it is just remarkable. The polling report that was leaked indicates that advertising agencies were given the chance to suggest a marketable person to head the Workplace Authority. The report says:

Identifying an appropriate figurehead for this organisation will be critical.

It continues:

This is very much a public role, requiring an individual with a strong reputation for independence, commonsense and an empathy/understanding of the average Australian circumstances.

Then it canvasses names—Allan Fels, Bernie Fraser—of the kinds of people who could front this organisation. So we have not only a

purpose designed advertising campaign to sell the government's research but a purpose designed authority. The authority is not about helping people with their rights and entitlements. The ads are not about helping people understand their rights and entitlements. It is all about the foundation stone for an advertising campaign. This, pure and simple, has been disclosed in the pages of our newspapers as the product of the government's polling research—nothing else. Nothing else was operating on the government's mind when it came to this campaign. And once again, Minister, you know that it cannot be denied that it was a product of the polling.

Then there was the content of the campaign, because it was entitled 'Know where you stand'. Minister, if Australians were going to know where they stood, wouldn't you make sure that you had messages out there in the advertising like the following? An employee can still be offered a take-it-or-leave-it AWA as a condition of employment or promotion. Know where you stand, Minister. That is right, isn't it? An employee can still be sacked for no reason or any reason and not have an unfair dismissal remedy. That is certainly true for people in businesses of under 100 employees. That is right, Minister; tick that box.

If a young worker is given an AWA that cuts award conditions—and they still can—then the parents can do nothing about it except tell their child not to take the job. That is true, Minister, isn't it? Know where you stand. An employer can ask an employee to work on a public holiday and the employee cannot simply say no. They have to say why it is not reasonable for them to have the day off. Well, know where you stand, Minister; that is true as well. If every employee in a workplace wants a collective agreement the employer can just refuse and employees have no say. Know where you stand, Minister; that is true as well.

The so-called fairness test does not guarantee any compensation for employees losing important award entitlements like redundancy pay or rostering protections that help them balance work and family life. Know where you stand, Minister; that is true. The Workplace Authority has not made a dent in the pile of 55,000 agreements waiting to be assessed. Know where you stand; that is also true. Even though an employee might get a so-called fact sheet about the so-called fairness test, if they signed an AWA that stripped them of penalty rates, rostering and overtime last year, then you would do nothing about that. They are marooned. They are on that contract. Indeed, you encouraged employers to offer those sorts of AWAs through your Work Choices propaganda and, particularly, the example of Billy, who had a minimum wage job and lost all of his conditions for not one cent of compensation.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER**—Order! The deputy leader will refer her remarks through the chair.

**Ms GILLARD**—So there we have it. Tell us about cost. Tell us what explains your comments versus the Prime Minister's. Tell us about polling. Admit that this campaign is all about the polling. Tell us about content. Come clean on the things the campaign does not tell you about—the simple truths of your Work Choices law. Then, Minister, explain today, to us and the Australian people, how your campaign has gone from being a tricky, desperate, political manoeuvre by the government and degenerated into farce—because that is what has happened overnight. It was revealed overnight that one of the participants in the campaign—

*Mr Hockey interjecting—*

**Ms GILLARD**—This has been taken from your website. One of the participants in your campaign—a participant in an advertisement that is supposedly about the enti-

tlements of young workers—stands accused today, from two sources, of not properly paying wages. Your campaign has degenerated into farce. What you did in the face of that was to pull this advertisement overnight. It is off the TV screens and off the website. It will be out of the newspapers. You pulled this advertisement in view of this gross embarrassment.

Minister, having not told Australians the truth about this campaign, and still refusing to tell the truth—I doubt you are going to do it today—and having had it degenerate into farce overnight, why doesn't the government simply do the right thing today? Doing the right thing is not a predisposition of the Howard government but why don't you try and do the right thing today, and instead of just pulling this one advertisement why don't you pull all of them off the TV screens? You have admitted that you are going to keep them on in the desperate hope that they impact on your polling. Why don't you do the right thing—pull these advertisements off the TV screens, out of the newspapers and out of the bus stops? If you want to have party political propaganda on the TV screens then pay for it. Pay for it through the Liberal Party. Why don't you do the right thing and, in this MPI today, tell us the history of the cost and the polling, and tell us the truth about the content? Acknowledge that this, today, has degenerated into farce and get it off our TV screens. (*Time expired*)

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)**—Order! Before calling the minister, I remind members on both sides that this is not a discussion across the table. The matter of public importance will be debated, like all other debates, through the chair.

**Mr HOCKEY** (North Sydney—Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service) (3.43 pm)—You could

see the faces of those in the Labor Party drop today when the Leader of the Opposition got up and said \$37 million and the Prime Minister responded with \$23 million. All of a sudden they lost all the helium in their balloon. That is because they talk it up. They want to convey a sense of outrage. They are doing everything they can, through their paid-up lackeys in the union movement, to run fear and innuendo. Appropriately, the government is responding. The media buy, I am advised, from 20 May to date, is \$23 million. That is entirely consistent with what the Prime Minister said and with what I have said.

The first phase of the campaign ran from the 20th to the 28th. There has been advertising from 4 July providing information about, in particular, the workplace relations fact sheet, which under the law has to go out to every employee in the federal system. So far, one million fact sheets have gone out from the Workplace Authority. More than 100,000 fact sheets are being downloaded from the Workplace Authority internet site. Calls to the Workplace Infoline have increased from around 15,000 a week before the campaign to over 20,000 a week now—in fact, in some cases there are above 5,000 a day. Overwhelmingly, the calls are for information. The largest number of calls is from employees checking their wages and conditions. Of course, the Labor Party wants the union bosses to be the only place where employees can go, and the only way you can get information or help from a union boss is by paying a fee. Referrals to the Ombudsman from the Workplace Infoline have increased. Since the introduction of the fairness test, nearly 90,000 AWAs, more than 1,000 collective agreements and 862 union collective agreements have been lodged.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition feigns outrage. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition wants us to pull out factual ads so they can be substituted not only with

ACTU ads which are untrue, misleading and full of lies and innuendo but also with ads from the Victorian government or the Western Australian government—state Labor governments that are using state taxpayers' money to run a campaign against the federal government on federal laws. And you know what? The state governments and the Labor Party are full of hypocrites. They could recall the power from the Commonwealth at any time—they could revoke their referral of power on the Corporations Law to the Commonwealth. But they are cowards and hypocrites. They are not prepared to tell the truth to the Australian people, not only about the laws as they stand but, significantly, about their alternative policies.

We had a good look at the ACTU ads. It is estimated that between January 2005 and June 2007 the ACTU spent in excess of \$15 million creating fear and telling lies about the government's laws. That is in addition to the over \$3 million in production costs the ACTU have spent. That does not include the recent CFMEU campaign or the ETU advertisements on radio in Queensland. Old Dean Michell from the ETU—kissy, kissy!—is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's good friend. The Victorian advocate recently admitted to spending \$1.3 million on advertising, and the Western Australian minister for industrial relations would not in any way disclose how much the Western Australian government has spent.

Imagine if just before a state election the federal government funded ads telling people it was okay to drink and drive in Western Australia or it was okay to do 80 in a 60 zone in Victoria. That is what the state governments are doing with federal laws, our workplace relations laws. They are telling people that you can get away with what is unlawful activity. If we were advertising before an election in Victoria saying it was okay to do 80 in a 60 zone or in Western Australia say-

ing it was okay to drink as much as you wanted and get on the road, the Western Australian and Victorian governments would be rightly outraged. That is what the state Labor governments, who are accruing \$70 billion of debt, are spending their current taxpayers' money on—running ads against the federal government on laws that they could claw back at any time in order to run a fear campaign that creates uncertainty in the community. And when we go to correct the facts, the hypocrites in the Labor Party tell us to stop.

Let us focus a bit on hypocrisy. Section 150B of the Workplace Relations Act says:

(1) The functions of the Workplace Authority Director are as follows:

(a) to promote an understanding of Commonwealth workplace relations legislation ...

So the Labor Party voted for a bill that directs the Director of the Workplace Authority to go out and promote the laws and now they criticise her for doing it. In fact, a cowardly Labor MP who refused to be identified engaged in smear and innuendo against a damn hardworking public servant, to the shame of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Gillard**—What are you talking about?

**Mr HOCKEY**—It is here. I am happy to table the 'Profiles' section of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. An unidentified Labor MP said:

"Barbara's a talented woman but she's got about eight years above herself with this ... post.

"Obviously you only get such a leg-up if you give something in return."

That is outrageous. What that smear and innuendo suggests—

*Ms Gillard interjecting*—

**Mr HOCKEY**—They do not have the guts, because they are a bunch of cowards, to put on the record their allegations against a dedicated, loyal, hardworking public servant.

Instead they go around the corner and ‘background’ journalists about a public servant doing something that is entirely within the Public Service Code of Conduct. At the same time they vote for the legislation that directs this woman to go out there and promote the workplace laws, and they come into this place like a bunch of hypocrites and say to all and sundry that somehow we are acting deceitfully in complying with the law.

A bit of truth needs to be put on the record here about the union advertisements which are running about Annette Harris and Spotlight. What people do not know about that ad is that Annette Harris—quite properly, because she was not happy—rejected the AWA that was offered. And do you know what? Annette Harris kept working at Spotlight. The ad suggests that Annette Harris was done over by her employer and forced onto an AWA. That is just untrue, because she rejected the AWA, rightly, and then continued to work for Spotlight for a number of months.

How about the ‘AWA cuts conditions’ ACTU ad? It says: ‘In the job contract they cut my pay by over \$1,000 to do the same job.’ That may very well be unlawful. But is it legal to force an existing employee onto an AWA? That is the second ACTU ad that is untrue. The third ACTU ad is set in the boardroom. It says that we can cut all these wage rates for employees. Again, it is untrue. The fairness test ensures that an individual agreement that simply trades away penalty rates, overtime pay, shift allowances and public holiday rates is not legal. You must be compensated under the fairness test. In the fourth ACTU ad—dispelling the myths—a boss forces an AWA onto an employee. It is illegal to force an existing employee onto an AWA. The fifth ad: boss forces AWA—No. 2. The ad says: ‘I have been here for 15 years. If you think Australian workers and their families will be better off on individual

contracts, think again.’ Well, I will tell you what: not if you are employed at WorkDirections. They offered 45c an hour as a trade-off for penalty rates. That is the Labor Party’s policy—individual contracts. They say it is okay to offer 45c an hour. You will be hearing a bit more about that in the lead-up to the election.

In the next ad—dispelling the myths—a boss sacks a mother because her children are sick. Again, it is against the law. But don’t let that stop the ACTU from running the ad. It is unlawful to sack someone because they are upholding their family responsibilities. In the next ad—dispelling the myths—a boss sacks a mum, No. 2. Again, it is unlawful to sack someone because of their family responsibilities. Boss sacks a mother in an additional ad from the ACTU—additional ad No. 3. All emotion and no fact and it is against the law.

‘Costing families’ is the new ACTU ad. All these ACTU ads—it is amazing. The ad goes on to say that John Howard’s IR laws are starting to bite. Higher wages, more jobs and the lowest strike level since records were first kept in 1913. It is damn right that our laws are biting. They are delivering more jobs at higher wages. Another ACTU ad is ‘Real people’. It will be interesting to see this. It features an abattoir worker at Cowra. The Workplace Ombudsman investigated the case of the abattoir worker and found that the ACTU’s representation of these workers did not add up. Again, it did not tell the truth.

And how about the ‘sitting ducks’ ACTU ad. It says that the Howard government said that the IR laws will not affect you—unless of course you have lost your unfair dismissal rights. Tell the President of the Labor Party that—you have given an individual contract. Tell the workers at WorkDirections that. Are you going for your first job? Your employer is cutting costs—you change your job. Again, in the last 15 months 365,000 new

jobs have been created. Over 90 per cent are full time.

How about the ‘three generations’ ad. Again, it does not tell the truth. It talks of getting \$11 an hour with no penalty rates, no public holiday rates and no protection from unfair dismissal. You cannot lose your penalty rates under the Howard government laws. Then there are the building industry laws. The CFMEU is running an ad saying that you can be fined up to \$110,000. Workers cannot be fined or jailed for taking action because of concerns about an imminent risk to their health or safety. The CFMEU is lying.

In the Victorian Labor government ads on the workplace advocate, real Victorians talk about how they have been hurt by the federal government’s Work Choices laws. The Victorian government have not got the guts to take back power for workplace relations. Instead, they run ads in which they have a sham advocate. It is all part of the battle. The irony of it is that the Labor Party vote for us to have promotional campaigns and then they come into this place and go outside to the media and feign their outrage. The Labor Party is so concerned about the actors in the workplace relations ads that one of their own members, the President of the Labor Party in Tasmania, has allegedly sacked a worker against Tasmanian state laws. And no-one in the Labor Party, particularly the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, has lifted a finger to help that worker. If it were someone who had been sacked by a small business, or by the Lilac City Motor Inn, or by some other organisation such as Spotlight, you can bet that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would be out there crying to the world that it is outrageous that Work Choices has done that.

Then there is Sharan Burrow. Every time she goes on TV I say to myself ‘Amen’. Thank God for Sharan Burrow—she does

not let us down. She is the new face of modern unionism. You can bet your bottom dollar that there will be a Sharan Burrow in every workplace on the dark day that the Rudd Labor government comes into power. Sharan Burrow and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will be out there in every workplace, followed by Kevin Reynolds, Kevin Harkins, Greg Combet, Bill Shorten and Dean Mighell. We want to keep the ETU candidates in the field. We want Kevin Harkins to stay as the Kevin Rudd endorsed candidate in Franklin so that the people of that electorate get to see who will control Kevin Rudd in government. For all the zero tolerance in the Labor Party, Joe McDonald is still proudly a member of the Labor Party and in fact renewed his membership only a short time ago. When it comes to these union thugs the Labor Party and the Labor leadership are weak, hypocritical and indecisive. They cower to the union bosses and the union thugs. That is why the Labor Party is built, owned and operated by the people who represent only 15 per cent of the private sector workforce.

**Ms KING** (Ballarat) (3.58 pm)—That was quite a rant from the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. I would like to add a question to the minister on top of those from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that he failed to answer. Minister, if you are so proud of these ads and you are so convinced that you are right, why don’t you front these ads yourself? Why don’t you have the courage not to hide behind a public servant and get out there and front these ads yourself? You are no more believable than you were in this chamber today. That is what you are worried about.

Over the course of the past few weeks we have again been bombarded by this government’s propaganda on the Work Choices legislation. Rather than recognise that they have got it wrong and gone too far with this legislation and rather than recognise that they

have got the balance wrong, they are at it again—using taxpayers' funds to try to convince people that it is not the government that got this legislation wrong. We could not possibly believe that this soft, cuddly, lovely government could be out there hurting workers. It is not the government that got it wrong; it is those nasty, bullying union bosses who have tricked the Australian public into believing that this legislation is wrong.

We see in this current Work Choices advertising how desperate this government has become, how desperate it is to turn the tide of opinion against the Work Choices legislation and just how willing it is to use taxpayer funds to do it. People across Australia have a right to be cynical about this government's Work Choices message. They have a right to ask: 'If this government is so proud of its Work Choices legislation—so convinced that it is the right thing to do—why aren't they fronting the ad themselves and why aren't they paying for the ad themselves?' The Work Choices ads are a public relations campaign, not an information campaign. They are a public relations campaign for the Liberal Party, nothing else, and they should not be funded by taxpayers. Australian taxpayers did not ask for these laws. They should not have to bear the cost of advertising them.

The government has spent millions on advertising to sell these bad laws and its own research is showing that it is a complete waste of money. The reality is that no amount of government spin, no amount of money and no amount of PR can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. They are bad laws. They are hurting ordinary working Australians. They provide less protection for vulnerable workers, including young people, and they do exactly what the government intended them to do: drive wages down. No matter how many taxpayer dollars go into

this campaign, the government will never convince Australian families that the laws are good for them, because they are not.

The current round of advertising has come particularly under the spotlight. First, there has been the controversial use of a senior public servant to front the ads. Not willing for the minister to be the front person for his own ads—the minister, perhaps, is concerned that people see him as too untrustworthy—the government is using a senior public servant to spruik its lines. Second, it has also been exposed this week that it is not the need to spread information about the new laws or a desire to ensure people know what their rights are under this legislation—limited as they are—but internal Liberal Party polling that has driven it to put these ads together. They are clearly party political ads based on party political polling. Today, we have seen a third issue raised with these ads. Accusations have been raised—and I note that at this stage they are just accusations—that one of the actors in the ad trying to convince parents that Work Choices does not make young people vulnerable to exploitation has been underpaying young workers. I understand that the government has rapidly pulled this ad from circulation, and so it should have. But what about the other ads? This pulled ad is frankly no more dishonest than the rest of them.

What I would like to see are the ads that never quite made it, the ones that were left on the cutting room floor. I would like to see the one where the government tries to reassure a worker in a business employing fewer than 100 people that he really cannot be sacked for operational reasons and that he still has rights to appeal against unfair dismissal. Where is that ad? Oh, that's right: Work Choices does allow that so, oops, we had better not have that ad out there. Where is the ad that says that if you earn over \$75,000 it is unlawful for your employer to

deliver you an AWA that trades off significant entitlements for no compensation or compensation of only \$1? Where is that ad? Again, the Work Choices legislation not only allows that but encourages that to happen. That is not an ad that the government wants to show.

The current debacle with these ads goes beyond the blatant waste of taxpayer funds. We now see that the government has hired somebody who is alleged to have underpaid a young worker. The government urgently needs to review this situation and determine whether it still believes that this person is an appropriate pin-up boy for its Work Choices legislation—although, when you think about it, perhaps he is exactly the perfect pin-up boy for this advertising campaign as he accused of engaging in exactly the sorts of activities this government was warned about when it first introduced the legislation.

This government has ceased to govern in the interests of working families. The Prime Minister has embarrassingly had to ask his cabinet: ‘Is it me?’ Prime Minister, it is you, but it is not just you; it is you and what you and your government have done to hard-working Australian families. These laws are a very large part of it. What do you expect hardworking Australian families to do? They trusted you with their livelihoods and trusted you not only to keep interest rates low but to protect them in their workplaces. Did you expect Australian families to praise you, Prime Minister, as you stripped them of their entitlements and conditions? Did you expect them to thank you when you took away their bargaining power and what limited protection they had? Did you really expect that they would cheer when you took away any remaining fairness and balance left in the industrial relations system? Why is the Prime Minister so surprised that people are unhappy with the Work Choices legislation?

The government did not need to commission Mark Textor to tell it that it is out of touch with Australian families. All it has to do is walk down the street of any suburb or town in this country and Australian families will tell it that. They will tell the government that they are worried about the impact of rising health costs on their ability to ensure their kids are getting access to the best health services, with GP costs doubling under this government; worried about what the rising costs of education means for the future of their kids; and worried about their children being placed in a vulnerable position as they enter the workforce for the first time.

Families are now struggling with record household debt. Australian household debt is now over \$1 trillion. Australian households are now spending a record 9.3 per cent of their disposable income simply paying off the interest on their mortgage. Basics such as grocery bills have increased by around nine per cent over the past two years and are impacting on family budgets. And this government’s sole great economic reform this term—designed to boost the economy and make life better for working families—has been Work Choices, and when it failed to convince people they will be better off under the Work Choices legislation it did not do anything to fix it but, instead, went on a massive taxpayer funded marketing campaign. Work Choices, we understand, has in total cost \$75 million so far, when we take into account the costs allocated to the Office of Workplace Services and the Office of the Employment Advocate, which has now changed. The initial round of week-long advertising after the introduction of the so-called fairness test cost around \$25,000 an hour. On top of this, there has been advertising for private health insurance costing \$27 million, advertising for superannuation costing \$69 million and advertising for regional

telecommunications costing \$6 million—and the list goes on.

While the Howard government spends like a drunken sailor on advertising, Australian families have a right to question what else this money could have been spent on. In my own district there is the \$90 million required to secure our water supply, which would avoid \$180 extra per year on the water rates for Ballarat families. Families struggling to cope with record healthcare costs would have appreciated the relief. I am sure that those families who have their overtime and penalty rates cut will be asking why the government is telling them that they have to make a financial sacrifice for the good of the economy when the government is now the nation's second biggest advertiser, outspending Harvey Norman, Woolworths and Nestle. I am sure families struggling to find the HECS fees for their kids this semester would appreciate increased government funding for university students. Investment in tertiary education has declined by around seven per cent under the Howard government, while student debt has tripled since 1996 to \$13 billion. Is the Howard government really surprised that people think it is out of touch when it continues to spend millions of dollars of ordinary working families' money on political advertising?

Simply put, the government's Work Choices legislation is bad law. It does not provide protection to Australian workers; it removes protection. And now this government is wasting hard-earned taxpayers' dollars in political advertising rather than reintroducing fairness into the workplace. The reality is that hardworking Australian families know that these laws are bad—they know that their penalty rates and take-home pay have been cut, and no amount of government spin will cover up the fact that the Howard government has got it wrong on workplace laws. Work Choices is bad for

Australia, it is bad for the economy—but, more importantly, it is bad for working families in this country.

**Mr BARRESI** (Deakin) (4.08 pm)—I am pleased to enter into the debate on this matter of public importance. I have to say that the minister, in his reply to the MPI, outlined the case quite strongly, certainly in terms of the hypocrisy of the arguments that have been put by those on the other side and of the importance of having an adequate information campaign out there. The only reason we have this MPI today is that the government's campaign to refute the misinformation, the lies, the distortion and the apprehension that has been created by the ACTU and the labour movement campaign is being effective. That is the only reason we are having this MPI: the Labor Party have come back after five or six weeks away and they have realised that the government's campaign is biting through, that it is having an effect in countering the arguments of the union movement.

It is good to see that the member for Lalor is back in the chamber and raising the issues that are pertinent to her portfolio, but you would be hard pressed to know that she was out there during the six-week recess. She had been mothballed.

**Mr Hartsuyker**—She was hidden away!

**Mr BARRESI**—She was hidden away, while the presidential style campaign and the caravan was rolling along from state to state.

*Mr Byrne interjecting—*

**Mr BARRESI**—I know that it did go to the member for Holt's electorate during the break.

**Mr Byrne**—Is it coming to yours, mate?

**Mr BARRESI**—I'm sure it will. The ALP today are criticising the government for funding a community education campaign on industrial relations reforms even though these reforms affect all working Australians.

If you have legislation that affects all working Australians—and, more importantly, you have made amendments to that legislation in the form of the fairness test, which was passed in this chamber with the support of the other side—then you have the responsibility to make sure that you inform the public of the changes that have taken place. We know that the ACTU's misinformation campaign did take hold. There is no question about that: it did take hold and there has been fear created by the union movement's campaign. We have introduced a fairness test that has addressed some of the issues that have been out there. And it is important for us to get that information out there. I will detail in a while why it is important to do that.

Unlike the misinformation campaign, which has been funded by the unions for the ALP, the government's ads are factual and do advise people of their rights. As the ALP well knows, we did introduce a fairness test, we did introduce protections and obligations, and it is important for employees and employers alike to understand their rights, their protections and their obligations.

The ALP clearly do not want people to know the truth about these reforms. We only have to go back to some of the heavyweights in the ALP to know why they do not want us to know the truth. Graham Richardson, an ALP stalwart, admits that they would do whatever it takes to get into power, including spreading lies and fear in the community. John Della Bosca, the New South Wales education minister, said, 'I think this is a fight to the death, to the last drop of blood, and we have to do whatever we can'—in other words, whatever it takes by those on the other side to make sure that they create fear and apprehension out there in the community.

When questioned about the IR campaigns on the *Insiders* program the shadow Treas-

urer was asked, 'Do you accept that the government does have a responsibility to explain the changes?' Mr Swan's response was, 'It's outrageous and not justifiable at all.' He is clearly of the opinion that employees and employers alike do not deserve to be informed of their new rights and obligations under the new legislation. There is a lot of misinformation and a lot of myths in the community about workplace relations. This is deliberate, as the minister showed earlier when he went through all the union ads, including the Annette Harris story, and outlined where the myths and misinformation lie within those ads. So it is beholden on any government to make sure that that is rectified.

Most of the fear that we see out there has been generated by the ACTU and, in more recent times, by the state Labor governments—state Labor governments that are spending their state taxpayers' funds on a campaign that has to do with federal law. They are running one of the most expensive and misleading scare campaigns in Australian political history. The ACTU are spending tens of millions of dollars trying to deliberately mislead employees about their rights. This is probably way out of date by now but we know that the ALP and union election war chest is around \$100 million, which can be detailed: union campaign fund, \$30 million; union finances, \$27 million; ALP's projected spending, \$20 million; state government spending, \$12 million; and projected donations from the union movement towards the ALP's election war chest, \$9 million. They have \$100 million to spend, and they expect us to lie down and allow this misinformation, these lies and distortions, to be perpetuated. There is no way we are going to do that. We have a responsibility to the Australian community to outline the changes and the protections that are there. They claim that employers can just take away penalty rates

without providing any compensation. That is not the case. Their ads say that it is okay to mistreat working Australians and claim there is nobody who can do anything about it. That is not true.

During the break I tested in my electorate some of the reasons that we need to have these advertising campaigns. I put out a small business survey. One small business person, a fairly educated individual who runs a pharmacy in my electorate, said:

I'm deeply concerned by the ideologically driven agenda which is designed to benefit small business owners at the expense of their employees. I value and respect my employees too much to make them sign AWAs.

If he had read the fact sheet he would know that he does not have to offer AWAs. If he had read the fact sheet he would also know that, if he did offer an AWA and it did not have reasonable compensation, it would be investigated by the Workplace Authority and would be unlawful. If a person of such an educated background can have this distorted view of what the legislation is all about, it is important for us to be out there and to make sure that we correct the information. These ads are essential to counter the lies and innuendo that have been put out there. But the Labor Party are not interested in having us correct the misinformation; instead, they want to see a situation continue where workers and business owners are deceived in Labor's winner-take-all campaign.

Labor are willing to slag off public servants, teachers, students and anyone who might rock their ACTU campaign. But, like so many things with the ALP, you need only to scratch beneath the surface to find the real hypocrisy within. In question time today we heard one of these hypocritical examples when the Prime Minister got up in answer to a question from one of the opposition members regarding the Queensland education department. In Queensland, in the seat of

Moreton, we recently saw a senior public servant, a paid public servant—unlike the Barbara Bennett case of a paid public servant—threaten teachers with sacking if they attended a function at their school with the Prime Minister. The same civil servant was also the convenor and chair of a public forum on the Your Rights at Work campaign. I have the poster here with me. It says: 'The forum will be chaired by Patrea Walton, executive director, schools, south-east Brisbane.' This was a senior civil servant in the education department—not in her capacity as a member of the union, though I am sure she is a member of the union, or in her capacity as a community representative but as a senior public servant in the education department—convening and chairing a public forum on the Your Rights at Work campaign.

The hypocrisy of those on the other side who have had a shot at Barbara Bennett, Director of the Workplace Authority, for appearing in the ads astounds me. They are willing to attack this public servant, Barbara Bennett, for appearing in the advertisements. She is a respected, independent authority on this issue. And, unlike the members opposite, she is there to help. It is disgraceful that those on the other side have been attacking her. Barbara Bennett and her staff are there to help employees and employers with advice and support. As long as the union bosses continue to deceive working Australians, we will need people like her out there. (*Time expired*)

**Ms BIRD** (Cunningham) (4.18 pm)—I want to take the opportunity in supporting this matter of public importance to tell the House what the reality is for young people, as opposed to the reality portrayed in the government's extraordinarily expensive and extensive advertising campaign. Members of the House may be aware that, during the break, in my electorate there was a case, known as the Chili's case, exposed in the

national media. In this case, the young people working at the Chili's restaurant were required to do some quite extraordinary things, including bringing their own cash float for their shift. Also, on arriving for their shift, they were told to sit and wait, unpaid, until the store manager had decided that there was enough business going on for them to proceed to undertake their shift. There was also a requirement that, if someone had left the restaurant without paying, they were to reimburse the cost of those meals.

This case drew a lot of attention, not surprisingly. It seems quite extraordinary that young people—and these were, by and large, university students, trying to supplement their income by undertaking work—could be exploited in such a way. Given so much coverage in the media, the Workplace Authority undertook an investigation of this case. This highlighted for me, and for the young people in the area, a point that was made following the case raised by the member for Adelaide about a young gentleman in her electorate who had been poorly treated in a service station—that is, that the reality of the protections in this legislation is that, if you can get yourself national media coverage, you will get attention from the Workplace Authority.

Since the Chili's case was exposed, I have had a number of other local examples brought to my attention that have resulted in very different outcomes. One example was that of a young woman who works for a video outlet who had been subjected to the exact same conditions as those experienced by the Chili's workers—the only exception being that she was not asked to bring a float to work. When I talked to her parents about what was happening, it became clear to me that this case was identical in terms of turning up for shifts and then being told that there was not enough work and that she should go home or sit around unpaid. I said to her parents that they should raise their

case, as the government's advertising had suggested, with the Workplace Authority. And here is the big difference between saying that you have a protection in place and the reality of the operation of that protection. What do you think the parents said to me when I made that suggestion to them? They said, 'But she still wants to work there, and we know that, if we make any complaint, if we ring the Workplace Authority and they identify the fact that we have made a complaint, she will be sacked.' That may come through the form of, 'Sorry, there are no more shifts available for you,' but, to all intents and purposes, for that young person, it is a sacking. So I could not get them to make a complaint. That is the lie in the government's ad. To say that there is a phone number you can ring to get protection is a lie when you know that protection of their right to complain has been removed. Young people and their parents know full well that, if they undertake those processes, those young people will not get continuing work with their employers.

The other example that came to my attention was that of a young person who, in fact, was sacked. He and his parents made contact with my office. What had happened with them? They had followed the advice of the ads and contacted the Workplace Authority. What was the outcome for him? He was advised by the Workplace Authority that it had nothing to do with them and he would have to undertake a case through the Industrial Relations Commission. It is a pity it took them so long to reply to him that it was outside the allowable time to register a case with the Industrial Relations Commission, because the authority itself had taken so long to provide that advice to him. I have indicated to him that he should still put in for a case and explain that the reason for the delay was that the Workplace Authority could not even give him enough protection to get an

answer back so that he still had time under the guidelines to go to the Industrial Relations Commission. *(Time expired)*

**Mr HARTSUYKER** (Cowper) (4.23 pm)—I welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue of fairness in the workplace in this matter of public importance today because, to me, it is the peak of hypocrisy that the ALP should claim that this government has failed to protect fairness in the workplace. It is certainly the peak of hypocrisy for the ALP to believe that if they somehow dance to the tune of a union thug, or they dance to the tune of the ACTU, they will miraculously create fairness in the workplace. Since coming to this place I have been focused on creating opportunities for my region and the people who live within it. The figures show that we have succeeded in creating eight consecutive quarters of falling unemployment. What is unfair about that? What is unfair about eight consecutive quarters of falling unemployment?

In my electorate under Labor unemployment in 1994 hovered around 20 per cent. Who was protecting fairness then? The member for Cunningham talked about the reality for young people. I can tell you that in 1994 the reality for young people was sitting in the gutter with no opportunity. You would walk down the street and you would see young people in despair, young people with no hope of a job and young people with no idea about the possibility of a career. There was no protection by the Australian Labor Party and their industrial relations regime for those young people who felt abandoned by the Keating government and by the system.

I am pleased to say that those sorts of situations are being reversed. In my electorate today there is a much brighter outlook for our young people, and it is brighter because this government has put the settings in place that make it possible for employers to em-

ploy young people and older workers. It is encouraging employment, and that is what we are about—encouraging opportunity.

When you look back to 1994 and the 90s there were a million people unemployed nationally and 20 per cent unemployment on the coast. Does the Australian Labor Party think it is fair that the unemployment rate was 20.3 per cent in Bellingen, 19.8 per cent in Kempsey, 18.7 per cent in Coffs Harbour or 17.2 per cent in Maclean? That is the way it was in 1994. That is the way it was under the Australian Labor Party's industrial relations regime. How did that protect workers? How did that engender fairness? Apparently, according to the Labor Party, this government is being unfair by reducing unemployment in Grafton, for example, to 6.7 per cent, or in Coffs Harbour to 7.7 per cent. If we look back to 1994 we had 18.7 per cent; now it is 7.7 per cent, and we still have more work to do. We still want to create more opportunities. We still want to get more people into work. When this government came to power there were only 710 apprentices in the entire electorate, and probably most of them were working for mum and dad. Now there are 2,200 apprentices—a 300 per cent increase. Apparently that is unfair. It is unfair, apparently, to triple the number of apprentices. Labor claimed these industrial relations changes would cause mass sackings. We know what the truth is. Like the truth in the government ads, this government has created mass hirings by its industrial relations changes—mass hirings nationally and mass hirings across the region which I represent. The removal of those job-destroying unfair dismissal laws has given small business the confidence to employ, to create jobs and to create opportunities.

More flexible AWAs mean that it is possible for firms to provide better services to the people that they serve and, therefore, create more jobs. Let us look at wages. Wages have

gone up under this government by about 20.8 per cent in real terms, yet they fell by 1.8 per cent in real terms under Labor. Falling wages under Labor is apparently fair. Over 13 years of Labor, to reduce wages by 1.8 per cent in real terms is somehow fair. This is the peak of hypocrisy.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)**—Order! The time for the discussion has concluded.

**NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT  
(PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS  
SCHEME) BILL 2007**

**Returned from the Senate**

Message received from the Senate informing the House that the Senate has agreed to an amendment made by the House to the National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Bill 2007 in place of Senate amendment (3).

**WHEAT MARKETING AMENDMENT  
BILL 2007**

**TAX LAWS AMENDMENT  
(SIMPLIFIED GST ACCOUNTING)  
BILL 2007**

**FISHERIES LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**FISHERIES LEVY AMENDMENT  
BILL 2007**

**CORPORATIONS LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT (SIMPLER  
REGULATORY SYSTEM) BILL 2007**

**CORPORATIONS (FEES)  
AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**CORPORATIONS (REVIEW FEES)  
AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL  
RESEARCH AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**AGED CARE AMENDMENT  
(RESIDENTIAL CARE) BILL 2007**

**SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENT  
(APPRENTICESHIP WAGE TOP-UP  
FOR AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICES)  
BILL 2007**

**MIGRATION (SPONSORSHIP FEES)  
BILL 2007**

**FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES  
AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILD  
CARE AND OTHER 2007 BUDGET  
MEASURES) BILL 2007**

**GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE  
PARK AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY  
DEPARTMENTS) BILL (No. 1) 2007-2008**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1)  
2007-2008**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)  
2007-2008**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 5)  
2006-2007**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 6)  
2006-2007**

**Returned from the Senate**

Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

**GOVERNANCE REVIEW  
IMPLEMENTATION (SCIENCE  
RESEARCH AGENCIES) BILL 2007**

**CORPORATIONS (NZ CLOSER  
ECONOMIC RELATIONS) AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
BILL 2007**

**LIQUID FUEL EMERGENCY  
AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**MIGRATION AMENDMENT  
(STATUTORY AGENCY) BILL 2007**

**HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT  
(INAPPROPRIATE AND PROHIBITED  
PRACTICES AND OTHER MEASURES)  
BILL 2007**

<b>VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (2007 MEASURES No. 1) BILL 2007</b>	<b>ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS (NORTHERN TERRITORY) AMENDMENT (TOWNSHIP LEASING) BILL 2007</b>
<b>TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2007 BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2007</b>	<b>FORESTRY MARKETING AND RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES BILL 2007</b>
<b>TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (PERSONAL INCOME TAX REDUCTION) BILL 2007</b>	<b>FORESTRY MARKETING AND RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (TRANSITIONAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2007</b>
<b>INDIGENOUS EDUCATION (TARGETED ASSISTANCE) AMENDMENT (2007 BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2007</b>	<b>APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2007-2008</b>
<b>TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2007 MEASURES No. 2) BILL 2007</b>	<b>APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2007-2008</b>
<b>TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2007 MEASURES No. 3) BILL 2007</b>	<b>APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS) BILL (No. 1) 2007-2008</b>
<b>TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (SMALL BUSINESS) BILL 2007</b>	<b>CORPORATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SIMPLER REGULATORY SYSTEM) BILL 2007</b>
<b>DEFENCE FORCE (HOME LOANS ASSISTANCE) AMENDMENT BILL 2007</b>	<b>CORPORATIONS (FEES) AMENDMENT BILL 2007</b>
<b>FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILD SUPPORT REFORM CONSOLIDATION AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2007</b>	<b>CORPORATIONS (REVIEW FEES) AMENDMENT BILL 2007</b>
<b>HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT (DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING ACCREDITATION) BILL 2007</b>	<b>EVIDENCE AMENDMENT (JOURNALISTS' PRIVILEGE) BILL 2007</b>
<b>APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 5) 2006-2007</b>	<b>FINANCIAL SECTOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RESTRUCTURES) BILL 2007</b>
<b>APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 6) 2006-2007</b>	<b>FAMILY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILD CARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2007</b>
<b>AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2007</b>	<b>HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (2007 BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2007</b>
<b>AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (2007 MEASURES No. 1) BILL 2007</b>	
<b>AUSTRALIAN WINE AND BRANDY CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) 2007</b>	

**SCHOOLS ASSISTANCE (LEARNING TOGETHER—ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY) AMENDMENT (2007 BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2007**

**FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILD CARE AND OTHER 2007 BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2007**

**SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENT (APPRENTICESHIP WAGE TOP-UP FOR AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICES) BILL 2007**

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**FISHERIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**FISHERIES LEVY AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**WORKPLACE RELATIONS AMENDMENT (A STRONGER SAFETY NET) BILL 2007**

**FOOD STANDARDS AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**GENE TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**MIGRATION AMENDMENT (REVIEW PROVISIONS) BILL 2006**

**WHEAT MARKETING AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**AGED CARE AMENDMENT (RESIDENTIAL CARE) BILL 2007**

**MIGRATION (SPONSORSHIP FEES) BILL 2007**

**NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT (PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS SCHEME) BILL 2007**

**TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (SIMPLIFIED GST ACCOUNTING) BILL 2007**

**COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CONTENT SERVICES) BILL 2007**

**NATIVE TITLE AMENDMENT (TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2007**

**Assent**

Messages from the Governor-General and the Deputy of the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.

**INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS (NOTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT) AMENDMENT (COSMETICS) BILL 2007**

**Report from Main Committee**

Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.

Ordered that the bill be considered immediately.

Bill agreed to.

**Third Reading**

**Mr PEARCE** (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (4.30 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**INTERNATIONAL TAX AGREEMENTS AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) 2007**

**Report from Main Committee**

Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.

Ordered that the bill be considered immediately.

Bill agreed to.

### Third Reading

**Mr PEARCE** (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (4.31 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### COMMITTEES

#### Corporations and Financial Services Committee

##### Report

**Ms BURKE** (Chisholm) (4.31 pm)—On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services I present the committee's report, incorporating a supplementary report, on the inquiry into the structure and operation of the superannuation industry, together with the evidence received by the committee.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

**Ms BURKE**—by leave—Whilst I welcome this very important report into superannuation, I am a bit perplexed that we are tabling it at this time, given the importance of the legislation before the House. I am going to eat into that time, and I am also going to eat into my ability to make relevant comment on such a large report that has no fewer than 31 recommendations. In early 2007, total superannuation assets reached the \$1 trillion mark, backed by strong equity markets and a guaranteed flow of money that some researchers estimate could double in size by 2015. This figure is up from \$761.9 billion in June 2005, and it is four times the value of superannuation assets in June 1995. So a huge amount of money is under the control of superannuation funds. The future of all of us is in the hands of the industry, and we need to ensure that the law is precise, rigorous and very easily understood.

This inquiry found that a common thread running through evidence from peak industry associations and other stakeholders is that laws and regulations governing superannuation have become too complex and onerous and, in some instances, have not kept pace with industry developments. Some in the industry expressed a view that the legislation is repetitive, clumsy and ambiguous and contains unnecessary definitions. There were calls for comprehensive change to improve the law. The committee shares these concerns. It believes that the legislation needs to be as clear and as concise as possible and should fit the current policy environment for superannuation.

The committee found that, whilst superannuation is something that most people rely on for their retirement, the law is clumsy and difficult and needs to be more clear and concise so that ordinary Australians can understand it. The committee found that the role of financial advice was at the forefront of the committee's inquiry. Evidence reflected that financial advice needs to be clear, concise, affordable and easily accessible. Overcoming legislative barriers to cost-effective advice is difficult, with advisers not willing to give up their patch and the superannuation industry being hampered in its ability to give simple advice in respect of superannuation. Remuneration is an issue of great concern, as are portability of superannuation, exit fees and loss of superannuation.

Whilst the Labor Party welcomed the report and its recommendations, and we were very impressed by the submissions and by the number in the industry who came along to the hearings, we believe that there were some shortcomings in the recommendations. Labor members of the committee generally believe that the overall governance regime of the Australian superannuation system is very sound. Since the introduction of compulsory superannuation by the Hawke-Keating gov-

ernment in 1987, the size of industry and the funds saved have increased dramatically. The industry has been governed through the trustee system, with sound, effective management of the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act and other regulations and improvements over the last 20 years. Nevertheless, there can be improvements in some key areas. Key data, including international comparisons, needs improvement. Much existing law and regulation can be consolidated and simplified. For 5.7 million accounts to be lost, out of a total number of 31 million, is a significant structural failure. Compensation in the event of theft, fraud and employer insolvency—which, although small in the context of total systems, significantly harm the individuals impacted upon; if your super fund is not there when you retire, it will have a huge impact—needs to be improved. There is also significant room for improvement in the self-managed funds sector, where governance regulation and information require upgrading. The Labor Party is on the whole supportive of the report, although there are several recommendations that we do not support.

Finally, Labor was disappointed at the overall emphasis by the chairman, Senator Chapman, on his dispute with Mr Garry Weaven. Indeed, it did seem at times that the whole purpose of the inquiry was to have a go at super funds. It would seem that industry funds—which, on the whole, are governed by employees and employers in a trustee arrangement—are totally abhorrent to the government and in particular to the chair of our committee, Senator Chapman. This coloured the whole committee inquiry. Senator Chapman's personal dispute with Garry Weaven overflowed to the extent that a reference to a nonresponse to questions is appropriate. However, to attach as an appendix *Hansard* exchanges from 2004 on related matters detracts from the balanced considera-

tion of the issues by the committee and from the report as a whole. No committee inquiry should be used as a personal vendetta against one individual out there in the super industry, particularly Mr Garry Weaven, who has done so much for the superannuation industry as a whole. To continue to have a go at industry funds that are performing so well and doing so well in their regulation seems puerile. Superannuation is very important—it deserves more time than I have available to me today—and I commend the report to the House.

**NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT  
(NATIONAL HPV VACCINATION  
PROGRAM REGISTER) BILL 2007**

**CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT  
BILL (No. 1) 2007**

**CORPORATIONS AMENDMENT  
(INSOLVENCY) BILL 2007**

**SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT (TRUSTEE BOARD  
AND OTHER MEASURES)  
(CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS)  
BILL 2007**

**FEDERAL MAGISTRATES  
AMENDMENT (DISABILITY AND  
DEATH BENEFITS) BILL 2006**

**CLASSIFICATION (PUBLICATIONS,  
FILMS AND COMPUTER GAMES)  
AMENDMENT (ADVERTISING AND  
OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2007**

**Referred to Main Committee**

**Mr BARTLETT** (Macquarie) (4.38 p.m.)—by leave—I move:

That the bills be referred to the Main Committee for further consideration.

Question agreed to.

**SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(WELFARE PAYMENT REFORM)  
BILL 2007**

Cognate bills:

**NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE BILL 2007  
FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES  
AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND  
OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2007  
APPROPRIATION (NORTHERN  
TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE) BILL (No. 1)  
2007-2008**

**APPROPRIATION (NORTHERN  
TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE) BILL (No. 2)  
2007-2008**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed.

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (4.39 pm)—Indigenous children in the Northern Territory are 4.8 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be the subject of a substantiation report. However, the Northern Territory's substantiation rate for Indigenous children is the third lowest in the nation despite a doubling of the rate to 15.2 substantiations per thousand children since 1999-2000. The Anderson-Wild inquiry stated that sexual abuse of Aboriginal children is common, widespread and grossly underreported. I am pleased that additional funding will be allocated to boost the number of child protection workers to increase their capacity to enforce legislation and to protect children.

Underreporting is attributable to many factors. Nonreporting of abuse is common across Australia and the factors behind it are complex. But what is critical if we are to

encourage reporting is for there to be someone to whom to report the abuse. Police officers need to be visible and accessible. Child sexual abuse is a crime and perpetrators must be punished with the full force of the law. If more police officers are needed, then let us get more on the ground. Labor supports the provision of additional police officers in the Northern Territory intervention and thanks the states that have seconded officers. However, we need a long-term strategy to train more police officers and to place them in these communities permanently. That is one reason that Labor has committed to training an extra 500 AFP officers and to an Indigenous recruitment strategy.

Labor also supports the measures designed to clean up publicly funded computers, to get rid of internet pornography and to use filters to keep it out. In addition, Labor supports the new controls on supply and possession of pornographic material in prescribed areas. It also strongly supports the measures designed to stop the rivers of grog flowing into and around Aboriginal communities. The scourge of grog is well documented. The many inquiries that have been conducted into family violence and child abuse consistently identify alcohol as a major contributing factor to family violence. Alcohol can facilitate or incite violence by providing a socially acceptable excuse for negative behaviour. It can also act as a disinhibitor, allowing people to do things they would not normally do when sober. Grog cultures can and do develop a force of their own, perpetuating disastrous cycles for communities. Alcohol control is critical to achieving community stability. Many Aboriginal communities recognise this and have taken action in the past to declare their towns dry, but it is clear from experience that these are not easy solutions. The measures in this bill are another necessary addition to the task of stopping grog, especially the targeting of

grog runners with higher penalties for offences that include an intent to sell.

The link between adequate housing and child safety has also been comprehensively made. Overcrowded housing is linked directly to children's exposure to sexualised behaviour, family violence and vulnerability to abuse. The significant housing shortfall in the Northern Territory is well documented, so any additional resources that the Commonwealth provides for remote housing through its changes to the Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation program will be welcome. However, the opposition is concerned that the bulk of the additional money does not come on stream until after next July.

The government's intervention plan to reform housing arrangements by establishing market based rents for public housing with normalised tenancy requirements are welcome provided they are accompanied by improved housing stock. Facilitating better housing and infrastructure has been central to the government's argument for needing five-year leases over townships in Aboriginal communities. The government has argued that taking on the responsibility as the effective town landlord is necessary to quickly improve vital infrastructure in these communities—which is necessary for better housing and improved economic development. The Anderson-Wild report noted:

Given the extent of overcrowding in houses in Aboriginal communities and the fact this has a direct impact on family and sexual violence, the Inquiry strongly endorses the government's reform strategy of critical mass construction in targeted communities, and recommends the government take steps to expand the number of communities on the target list for both new housing and essential repairs and maintenance in light of the fact that every community needs better housing urgently.

Temporary intervention is proposed to repair and improve infrastructure for Indigenous

people in these communities. This intervention is required because governments from both sides of politics have consistently failed to invest for many years. The government promises that years of underinvestment will now be replaced by a period of rapid upgrades and new construction. It needs to be.

Labor remains 100 per cent committed to land rights for Indigenous Australians. The land rights journey in Australia has been a journey that Labor has walked together with Indigenous Australians. Our party's commitment to land rights has held strong for well over 30 years and it holds strong today. Underlying title in the land remains in Aboriginal hands and that is where it should stay. The proposed lease is limited to five years, unless terminated sooner. Rent is guaranteed by the bill and just terms compensation can be independently determined by a court. At the end of the lease, title will revert to communal title and the control of the lands trust. Importantly, any major works or commercial development that will outlive the five-year lease will have to have the consent of the relevant land council.

The Commonwealth has given a commitment to invest in housing and infrastructure, although we are still waiting to see the detail. The Commonwealth will retain an interest in the buildings beyond the five-year lease only where construction or major upgrade is undertaken with the consent of the land council. The land council may only consent where it is satisfied that the traditional owners, as a group, consent and any affected Aboriginal communities or groups have been consulted. These provisions protect ongoing consultation for land councils and traditional owners during the five-year lease period. Further, grants of other leases beyond the five years, such as under existing provisions in section 19, must allow normal consultation and consent procedures.

Labor will make sure that the rights of Aboriginal people to use the land, in accordance with 'traditional purposes' guaranteed by section 71 of the Aboriginal land rights act, are not affected by these five-year leases. This lease process will be new and untried and it could cause concern and confusion if not handled sensitively by the federal government. If the process works cooperatively, it could deliver significant benefit.

The bill also gives the Commonwealth minister new powers in relation to town camps. These powers place him in a position, in relation to town camp leases, as though he were the Northern Territory minister. I ask the minister to detail in the parliament the guidelines he will follow in dealing with the town camp leases. Specifically, he should act only if leases have been breached or if they have been determined after a due process in accordance with natural justice. He should also make sure that the assets are reserved for affordable homes for disadvantaged Aboriginal people. Just six weeks ago, the minister said that he wanted to reach agreement with Tangentyere council over the future of its town camps. I certainly hope that the minister will continue to work to get this agreed outcome.

Labor bring to this endeavour a determination to improve housing and infrastructure, but we also want to see improvements in economic development in these townships. That is why we will move an amendment to require a review to assess, after 12 months, progress in establishing infrastructure, housing and economic development in both the townships and the town camps. If the situation has stalled or become mired in legal process and is not delivering outcomes and we are in government, we will act to fix it.

Labor proposed a test for dealing with this legislation: it would get our support if it improved the security and safety of children in

a practical way. In their current form, we do not believe that all the proposed changes to the permit system satisfy that test. Vince Kelly, President of the Northern Territory Police Association, has said:

These communities aren't like anywhere else in Australia, otherwise the Federal Government wouldn't be intervening in this matter.

So to simply roll up the permit system I think is going to lead to problems that have probably been identified by Indigenous people around the Northern Territory.

... ... ...

It does give both the police and the local communities the ability to exclude certain people from the community, people who are possibly offenders in relation to sexual abuse and physical abuse of Aboriginal women and children ...

But more importantly, offenders in terms of running grog and running drugs into these communities. Clearly, the permit system can be used to prevent access.

Labor will move to oppose the removal of the permit system on roads and common areas in the towns. We believe that the safety of children in these communities will be reduced if the government's measures proceed, as they will allow for greater access by sly-grog and drug runners and by paedophiles. However, we do recognise the need to allow for greater access by certain classes of individuals. Labor will move substantive amendments to expand the categories of permit exemptions across Aboriginal land for people engaged as agents of the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments in order to enable them to access these communities. We will also advocate an exemption for journalists. We do recognise the need, especially during this intervention, for people engaged by the Commonwealth as agents, such as doctors, to be able to go easily into communities. We believe that these changes assist delivery of important services and, most importantly, the safety of Aboriginal people.

nal communities, without opening them up to the risk of unfettered access by sly groggers or paedophiles.

The other significant bill included in today's debate deals with welfare reform to enable income management of welfare payments in certain circumstances. There will be four basic triggers for income management: for parents where referred by state or territory child protection authorities because of instances of child abuse or neglect, for parents where school attendance or enrolment requirements are not met, for income support recipients living in a prescribed area of the Northern Territory, and for those potentially affected by the Cape York Institute's proposed welfare trial.

Labor has already announced that it would apply income management for parents who are referred by state or territory child protection authorities, so it is pleasing to see that the government's approach mirrors ours regarding income quarantining in child protection cases. In relation to Northern Territory specific measures, Labor will move to review the operation of income management at the end of the first period of 12 months. I just want to mention that I am concerned that there is no appeal mechanism for decisions that affect individuals to be included within the income management regime in the Northern Territory.

One of the critical issues in the Anderson-Wild report was the need to make sure that children go to school to guarantee both their safety and their future education. There are at least 2,000 Indigenous children in these remote parts of the Northern Territory who are not even enrolled to go to school. There are also far too many other children who do not attend school. This has to change.

Labor will provide additional funding to the Northern Territory government to contribute to the cost of the additional teachers

who will be needed to make sure that these children get the education that they deserve. The Northern Territory government will also have to make sure that there are additional classrooms and that teacher housing and teacher assistance are provided so that children get the education that is needed.

Labor's preference is for welfare reform to encourage responsibility and to reward positive behaviour. The Cape York Institute's policy paper that was released in June outlines the sort of positive approach that Labor believe should apply to income management regimes. We want to use these tools not punitively but to encourage individual responsibility. The move from passive welfare will only be fully accomplished when individuals take responsibility for their future and for their children's future. They must be assisted in this task by government, with support services such as alcohol treatment services and through stimulating real economic development. We have previously indicated our support for the Cape York initiatives and indicated funding for them as well.

The last and very important point that I want to address today concerns the operation of the Racial Discrimination Act. The Racial Discrimination Act is a very important legacy of a previous Labor government and protects against racial discrimination by legislative, administrative or other means. Consistent with the international conventions on all forms of racial discrimination, the act recognises that sometimes it is necessary to make laws or to take actions that are special measures for the advancement of a particular racial group. Labor believe, as does the government—based on the briefings we have received—that these laws are such special measures. We believe that these laws are designed to protect especially vulnerable Aboriginal children, to help rid Aboriginal communities of the scourge of alcohol abuse and to provide much needed infrastructure

and housing improvements to remote Aboriginal communities.

The importance of this intervention also requires that the community have confidence in parliament's belief these are in fact special measures to benefit Aboriginal people. Therefore, we believe that it is unhelpful and unnecessary that there is a blanket exemption from part II of the Racial Discrimination Act, and Labor will move amendments to remove this exemption from three of these bills.

I return to the point where we began: will this legislation improve the safety and security of our children in a practical way? Protecting children requires all of us to take responsibility to act. Responsibility has to be taken by individuals for them to take positive action for themselves, for their communities and especially for their children. Responsibility also lies with governments to provide community safety, health services, education and, most importantly, employment and economic development. All of these things are necessary to enable Indigenous children to grow up healthy and happy. This is what we want for our children, and we want nothing less for Indigenous children. I move the second reading amendment circulated in my name:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"whilst not declining to give the Bill a second reading, the House notes that:

- (1) the protection of children from harm and abuse is of paramount concern to all Australians;
- (2) the documented instances of child abuse within Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory are of such gravity as to require an urgent and comprehensive response to make children and the communities they live in, safe;
- (3) these legislative measures taken together represent a major challenge for Territorians and a change to current arrangements;

- (4) we will not succeed in our goal of protecting children without the support and leadership of Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory; the Commonwealth must gain their trust, engage them and respect them throughout this emergency and beyond;
- (5) the work of strong and effective Indigenous community members and organisations must continue to be supported during this emergency;
- (6) it is important that temporary measures are replaced in time with permanent reforms that have the confidence and support of Territorians, and short term measures aimed at ensuring the safety of children grow into long term responses that create stronger communities that are free of violence and abuse;
- (7) In the case of town camps effective partnerships with lessors and negotiated outcomes should obviate the need for compulsory acquisition;
- (8) this includes stimulating economic development and more private sector partnerships to secure greater self-reliance;
- (9) both levels of government must work in partnership; there must be political accountability at the highest level—with the Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs;
- (10) program funding must hit the ground through evidence-based delivery; there must be relentless focus on best-practice and rigorous evaluation by all parties set within specific timeframes;
- (11) practical measures must include;
  - (a) police to keep every community in the Territory safe, particularly children, women and elders;
  - (b) safe houses that provide a safe place for women and children escaping family violence or abuse built using the direction and leadership of local Indigenous women;
  - (c) night patrols that provide important protection;

- (d) community law and justice groups that play an important role in the effective administration of justice;
- (e) appropriate background checks for all people providing services in communities who work in proximity to children;
- (f) comprehensive coverage of child and maternal health services are essential to give children the best start;
- (g) comprehensive coverage of parenting and early development services for Indigenous parents and their babies;
- (h) an effective child protection system in the Northern Territory;
- (i) all children enrolled and attending school and governments to deliver teachers, classrooms, teacher housing and support services (eg Indigenous teacher assistants);
- (j) investment in housing construction and maintenance to reduce the shortfall in Indigenous homes and infrastructure; and
- (k) reform of the Community Development and Employment Program, including transitioning participants who are employed in public sector work into proper public sector jobs and ensuring participants are not left without sufficient income or participation opportunities”.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)**—Is the amendment seconded?

**Mr Snowdon**—I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

**Mr WAKELIN** (Grey) (4.57 pm)—The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 and related bills is important legislation. I give my full support to the minister and the government for the very strong effort that they have put in over recent weeks to deal with the emergency in Aboriginal communities. The Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs introduced the bills—which I do not intend to

revisit—into the House this morning. This is a very complex and large undertaking, and the amount of money required to deal with this emergency is approaching \$600 million.

Most of us have been aware of these issues for a very long time, and so we should not be surprised that the national government felt provoked to respond to them in a broad-ranging way. However, I am sure that we all feel some frustration and some disappointment with the states and the territories, as they have really struggled to come to terms with these issues. I did some research in this place some years ago on sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities. I know this is one part of the problem, but it is a significant part of it. The research, which I brought out of my archives yesterday, is dated June 2003. When I looked through it, I saw that the public information available on this issue goes back at least a decade. Of course, when you represent an electorate like the one I do, you know of these issues of violence. They are spoken about quietly, often late in the evening at social functions held in various locations. We have all lived in hope that these problems would be resolved, but we know now that they were only getting worse.

I can only repeat—not verbatim, but fairly accurately—the sentiment I felt while driving through my electorate, which borders the southern Northern Territory through to Darwin. When I was in Darwin, an Indigenous person who I respect said: ‘We can’t quite see it all at the moment. It is such a complex and comprehensive response.’ She went on to say: ‘I know one thing. We can’t keep going the way we were going, and therefore I’m prepared to give it significant support.’ This person was not particularly political. My guess would be that she was probably not a supporter of the government. But these things are way beyond party politics.

In responding to the shadow spokesperson on three or four of the issues, as far as the lack of appeal by Indigenous people within Centrelink goes, I bring to the attention of the House that there is an authorised review, the ARO response. There is the ability to have the case tested by the authorised review officer. Certainly it does not go, as I understand it, to the SSAT, the Social Security Appeals Tribunal. I well understand why, in the initial stages, you would not have that, because you would simply block up the system. This is quite new and quite different but there is an ARO there.

I think that there is something very important to note in dealing with the Racial Discrimination Act. I am not a lawyer and I am not pretending to interpret what that was all about many years ago, but I know one thing: the Australian people want to discriminate against violence. They want to discriminate in favour of care and justice and a decent life.

I appeal to every Aboriginal leader—and there are many distinguished leaders throughout Australia. To the Aboriginal leadership I say: never before has this total Australian community needed your support like it needs it now. This is an opportunity to move forward and overcome one of the very dark parts of Australia's social system and one of its glaring social justice challenges within the nation. Not for the first time I pay tribute to Warren Mundine. In the paper yesterday—and I am sure that many would have seen it—and in the editorial in the *Australian* again today he referred to the government's plan. In yesterday's *Australian* Warren Mundine, for whom I have the utmost respect, said he was:

... 'disgusted' that people are describing the federal Government's intervention in the Northern Territory as an invasion and has called on the Labor Party's left wing to get 'real' and accept the plan.

This is a distinguished Aboriginal leader, an immediate past president, I think, of the Australian Labor Party in that shared process that the Labor Party has, and he is saying in a very clear way: please support the plan, that some of the nonsense around the old ideological approach to this issue needs to be challenged. Thank you, Warren Mundine, and I thank every other Aboriginal leader who comes on board. It does not mean that this is not without challenge. Debate will not be suppressed in any way. There will be a full and open discussion about this, and so there should be in our system. There is no doubt in my mind that the basics of it are right and that the problem is so drastic and challenging that it had to come to this.

It is worth going to a few generalisations. The minister has referred to them quite often in the last few weeks but I will go to them anyway. The government strategy has three components: stabilisation, normalisation of services and infrastructure and, in the longer term, support. It is going to cost the taxpayer in the first 12 months, as I understand it, something approaching \$600 million.

The question is asked: why has the government acted now? I have established some of those reasons but perhaps I should establish a few more. The brief in front of me reminds me that the Commonwealth convened a summit last year and provided \$130 million, which included support for additional policing and alcohol rehabilitation in remote communities. I can remember it in my own electorate. I can remember the issues and the discussions with the states. We tried to work with the states in the old way but it did not provide the urgent response necessary. We know why. We know the report that came out of the Northern Territory government. That was the response. It sat for six or eight weeks until the federal government felt provoked to respond. That report was known as the *Little children are sacred* report.

The task force is led by magistrate Dr Sue Gordon, who in her own right had her own committee in Western Australia some years ago after some horrific incidents over in urban Perth. She has been a leader in the whole business. The task force includes a very significant number of very distinguished Australians. The rollout is occurring and the ICC manager within my electorate has been seconded to the Northern Territory, and I wish him well with the work that he is involved in there now.

The police will be under the Northern Territory Police Force command and will have normal Northern Territory policing powers. Even more importantly, police and government officers are being supported by the Australian Defence Force, including NORFORCE—we have seen a few cartoons and almost cheap shots at what is an incredibly serious issue—which will provide communications, transport and other logistics. NORFORCE is well known and well respected. This will ensure that people can stay in the communities to work and to provide services for Indigenous people.

I have been going to Indigenous communities in my electorate for over 15 years, as a candidate and then as a member. I go through for a couple of days every few months. It is all right for me: I camp or I bludge a bed off somebody, but it is a challenge to live out there without proper logistical support. There is no motel just down at the corner; there is no rental accommodation just up the street. Accommodation is a very practical part of it.

I agreed with the minister when he spoke today about goodwill. I have been to Palm Island and to Oak Valley in my own electorate where the Army were involved with the previous program, ACAP. You could just see the goodwill with the way the young responded to the fellows and young women in uniform. They are out there doing an impor-

tant job. It is not about the nonsense that we see in smart alec cartoons. They are out there supporting this effort. Once safety is established, arrangements will be put in place to respond to the identified needs of each community. We are still working through that.

The permit system is well defined by the minister. It is affecting 0.2 per cent of the Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. Let us be really clear about this. Land acquisition is to be done under just terms. Health checks, alcohol, welfare reform and income management are to be done under just terms. The hotline—perhaps this has not come out that much in the last few days—is set up for people who want to find out more about the Australian government's national emergency response to the Northern Territory. People who would like information or wish to volunteer should call the national emergency response hotline on 1800333995.

We heard the minister say—it may have been during his second reading speech—that up to 400 people have registered as volunteers. Overall—and I do not think any Australian is going to disagree with this, other than those who are the perpetrators of serious crime—the safety of children is any government's top priority. In this case it just happens to be the Australian government. We do this in the interests of the children and in the interests of the communities in which these children live. Children cannot live in isolation. These children live with adults, with parents, grandparents and brothers and sisters. We do it because it is simply the right thing to do.

We could look back over the last 20 or 30 years to see the lost opportunity but there is no point in that—it is done; it is over. We have an opportunity now to do something about this. I welcome the government's legislation and wish it speedy passage through what will be a long-term, difficult and chal-

lenging matter. This is a very brave and committed start. I thank the House.

**Mr SNOWDON** (Lingiari) (5.12 pm)—I participate in the debate on the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 and cognate legislation with mixed feelings. Firstly, the announcement of a national emergency was made six weeks ago. Secondly, it is clear from the contribution of the member for Grey that the pesky rights that people might have are just so pesky that we cannot allow them to have an appeal to an independent tribunal outside the social security system. We will have an internal review of any decisions but not an independent review externally. That says a lot to me about the way in which some in this place approach these measures. At a later point, I will address some elements of what the member for Grey has said and indeed what the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs said during his contribution. I do not want anyone in this place or anyone who may be listening to misunderstand the concern out in the Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory about what the government is doing. They need to understand very clearly that there is great concern.

Six weeks ago, on a Thursday, there was a press conference at 1.30 pm, finishing at 1.40 pm, then there was question time, and then decisions and announcements were made. Then came a whole range of measures which were put in place to focus the national attention on this national emergency which, you will recall, included at that point compulsory medical checks for children under 16. That, thankfully, is no longer the case. Sanity has prevailed and it is clear that these medical checks are voluntary, and indeed people are thankful for them. But after six weeks there are still communities in the Northern Territory who have not had a visit from an officer of the Commonwealth to

explain to them what the government's national emergency is about.

On the Monday after the national emergency was announced I rang the minister's office and I said to the person in the minister's office, his principal adviser on these matters: 'You need to understand there is legitimate concern in the community because of misinformation, misunderstanding or whatever it might be. There is genuine fear in some places that this is all about taking the kids away.' I later heard a story from a person in a community in the Barkly region of the Northern Territory—and recall that all of the communities which are affected by this legislation are in my electorate of Lingiari; 40 per cent of my electorate is Indigenous people and all of them are affected by this legislation. That person in Barkly said she was concerned because she thought the Army was coming to take her young boys away so they would fight in Iraq. Of course, that was absurd, but such was the misinformation and lack of communication which came out of this government after this decision was made that people were left confused and dismayed—and I might say many are still confused and dismayed because they lack information.

I go to the fact that a week ago I attended a meeting of the Central Land Council at a property adjoining Hamilton Downs in the Northern Territory, the McCormack place. I listened to a presentation made by two members of the task force: the chair of the task force, Magistrate Sue Gordon; and General Chalmers. What I found illuminating from that presentation was the lack of information they were able to provide. They could not answer so many basic questions. The response from Magistrate Gordon at one stage was, 'We're working on the details as we go.' Is it any wonder that people are left confused, dismayed and concerned? They do not know what is being proposed.

Yesterday 600-odd pages of legislation—if you include the appropriation legislation it is probably closer to 700 pages—and 350 or 400 pages of explanatory memoranda were given to us in the opposition and to the general public at late morning. We got them, I think, at about 11 am. We were then supposed to digest all of that information and come up with an informed position so that we could debate the legislation here this afternoon and have it out of this place later tonight. I have to say that is an abuse of due process. What that does is show the contempt that this government has for bringing people into the tent, sharing information with them and showing them exactly what it is proposing.

We made the decision at the time this was announced to give it in-principle bipartisan support, because we share the concern about kids being abused. But isn't it strange that the people who were left to go out and canvass the case, who were talking to communities around the Northern Territory—the advance party, if you like—were not Commonwealth government officials but in fact Labor members of the Northern Territory legislative assembly? They included front-benchers Marion Scrymgour and Elliot McAdam and backbenchers Alison Anderson, Barbara McCarthy, Karl Hampton and Matthew Bonson—all of whom are Indigenous. They went out, not particularly liking what was announced but nevertheless going out there because of their concern that their communities, the people they represented, were not being given information. I want to thank them greatly for the work they did.

I attended a few of the meetings that they attended. At one of those meetings there were 120 people and at another meeting 150. One was at Milngi and one was at Ramingining on the same day. I remember these meetings vividly. Here we were, announcing the government's proposals and being asked

to respond to questions about government policy and about the details of what the government was proposing. We did not have information—as it turns out, neither did the task force nor anyone else—but what we were able to say was: 'Don't worry. This is not going to be the end of the world, at least in terms of the arrival of the police and the Army and such like. That is not going to happen. You should relax about that.'

What was very clear in every one of the meetings—it was reported on by each of those members of parliament and by me and my colleague Senator Trish Crossin—was the absolute concern that was being expressed about the proposals to amend those parts of the legislation which address the permit system and those parts which address land issues. What these people saw was the *Little children are sacred* report, released a few days prior to the Howard government's announcement, and they said, legitimately: 'Hang on—what's this all about? We appreciate the need to address the recommendations in this report, but we do not see the relationship between those land and permit issues and this report.' This report does not mention those things and, subsequent to this report being released, both of its authors have condemned the government's position on the issues of land and permits. They say it does not relate to what they were on about.

Frankly, I have a concern about this. It goes to the understanding that people may or may not have about what the relationship between Aboriginal people and country and culture means. If you take from people their ability to live on their land, if you remove them or relocate them, for whatever purpose, or if you do not give them the capacity to retain their cultural identity, you will create severe difficulties for those people and the communities in which they live—difficulties which, no doubt, will lead to family pressures, particularly on children. The psycho-

logical wellbeing of Aboriginal Territorians has not been addressed in any way, shape or form by the proposals put forward by the government.

I am conscious of the arguments put by the member for Grey in his response to the shadow minister. But let me make it very clear: no-one with any background or experience in Indigenous affairs in the Northern Territory, with any deep knowledge of these matters—the police, the churches and government workers—supports the idea of removing permits in the way in which the government proposes. Communities themselves find it abhorrent. The Central Land Council, on more than one occasion, has been forced to withdraw the permits of people. What sort of people? Let me give you one example, among many: a storekeeper living in a remote Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory trading in art. What was he doing trading in art? You might say it is not an inappropriate thing to trade in art. He was trading art for Viagra. What is the relationship between art and Viagra? I might ask the same question. You can imagine the implications for the women and children in that community of trading art for Viagra.

This government now proposes to remove the ability of the land councils to remove those permits. In this particular instance, as soon as the land council became apprised of this person's activity, they had him out of that community within 24 hours by withdrawing the permit. These are the dodgy people, whom my colleague the shadow minister referred to, who would get great joy out of this. Only recently I was talking to a policeman in Maningrida. He said: 'Can you imagine if this town were an open community and no permits were required to enter? You could drive along the street, take photographs of nude kids and then that afternoon post them on the internet.' That is true. I have seen some real scumbags in Aboriginal

communities—people whom I have no time for—but I have also seen some very good people. It is the scumbags we want to keep out of these communities, and that is why the permit system is so important. Never mind the tommyrot which is coming from the government—we know why the permit system is important, we know why the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory want to retain the permit system and that is why the opposition intends to move an amendment which will ensure its retention largely in the form that we have it.

I briefly want to talk about a number of other elements of the package, not necessarily about things which have been addressed in these proposals, although I do want to go to one matter. The Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in his second reading speech on the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007, referred to the issue of town camps. The minister said that the Northern Territory government has announced that it will not resume or forfeit the town camps. He says that it has walked away from its responsibilities. Remember the portrayal he gave in the House at question time of the town camps around Alice Springs and the way in which he illuminated his presentation by commenting on people being attacked and violated. The reason why we have this legislation, to the point where the government now wants to step in the shoes of the Northern Territory government and resume the special purpose leases of the town camps around Alice Springs, is no other reason than the incapability of this minister to negotiate a deal. He set unacceptable preconditions on the negotiations of that deal.

These people in the town camps are not stupid. They, more than the minister, more than any one of us—more than any person who does not live in those town camps—want the improvements that would come

from investment of \$60 million in the town camps. Let it be clear: they want it. They understand what it means for them and their families, yet this minister says that, because he cannot do a deal, because he cannot negotiate a set of arrangements, because the Northern Territory government says it respects the views of those people, he will override their interests and give himself the power to resume those leases, despite their concerns. I think that says a lot about this minister. But it also portrays some of the issues which we have yet to illuminate in this discussion.

We have heard much about welfare reforms, but the lengths to which this government has gone to put more than 8,000 Aboriginal people out of work and on the dole to facilitate quarantining have not been widely publicised. That has been done by the abolition of CDEP. It has knowingly put CDEP workers—most of them engaged in positive things—out of work, work such as ranger work and community enterprises, work in shops and work in schools and health centres. The government wants to place them into the STEP program or Work for the Dole and, if we are very lucky and we support this, a transition into real jobs. We want them to have real jobs. And those people on CDEP in jobs—which ought to be paid for by the Commonwealth government, the Northern Territory government or local government—should be paid their wage entitlements by that respective level of government. But the immediate impact on communities and community programs will be dramatic. It will spell the death knell of many programs, it will see the erosion of the effectiveness of night patrol community safety efforts, it will erode the profitability of community stores and therefore jobs in the stores, it will make it difficult for homeland outstation support and enterprises generated by CDEP will have no guarantees of continued support. There is

a range of impacts with this. The link between CDEP wages and child abuse and substance abuse is spurious and, indeed, insulting, and there is no solid reason for abolishing CDEP.

Most remote area communities have no immediate local economy. They do not have large mines in their vicinity. There is very little in the way of job markets to tap into—and that is one of the issues here. There is no real appreciation of these small area labour markets by anyone in the government, least of all the minister. Community management is funded at least in part by CDEP. What happens to the jobs of tradespersons and other specialists, accountants and administrators, who are currently working because of the \$4,000-plus that is paid into CDEP for each participant?

This is a very important issue and it is something which we think might mean that people relocate away from outstations, for example—and this could well be a purpose behind this—to major communities, and perhaps from major communities, towns and cities. What will that do? It will create enormous pressure on those towns and cities like Alice Springs, Darwin and Katherine, where people are concerned genuinely about anti-social behaviour, where people are concerned about the conditions in which people live.

We need to understand that some of the implications of these decisions, which in this case are not part of the legislation, make it very difficult for people to comprehend the motives behind what the government is doing. We share, as I said at the outset, the intention of the government to ensure we address the issue of children who are abused. But isn't it funny? There are people in this chamber—a person in this chamber and a person in the other chamber—who very recently travelled to the Tiwi Islands aboard a

boat. The Tiwi Islands is a restricted area. You are not allowed to take alcohol onto the islands. In this particular instance, Senator Scullion; a minister in a portfolio, Minister Brough; the member for Solomon; and a Northern Territory member of parliament, a CLP member, among others, got off the boat and drank on the land. They then put an esky on a bus. The bus was driven through the community to an airstrip. Two of them, the member for Solomon and the other CLP member from the Northern Territory, were observed drinking bottled beer. They put the empty beer bottles in a bin. Not only is that illegal because it is a restricted area but they have not told us the truth.

There is a real issue here because this legislation, among other things, aims to ban alcohol completely from many communities across the Northern Territory, and here we had a circumstance where alcohol was already banned. *(Time expired)*

**Mr HAASE** (Kalgoorlie) (5.32 pm)—This evening sees the culmination of a great deal of hard work that I have put into this place on behalf of my Indigenous constituents. This evening gives me the opportunity to speak to the legislation that has emerged because the Prime Minister and the minister responsible for Indigenous affairs, the Hon. Mal Brough, have taken a decision on behalf of all of the people of Australia to be ratified by the members of this parliament to make a difference in Indigenous communities—Indigenous communities that I have the pleasure of representing in very large numbers. From the northernmost part of the Kimberley, both east and west, down through the Pilbara, down into the goldfields, through the Murchison, through the Gascoyne, into the Esperance region and through the wheat belt, I represent Indigenous people living in mainstream towns and living in communities that are incredibly isolated. I have the whole gamut of people in my electorate, including

the whole gamut of Indigenous people working in a huge range of positions across my electorate and enjoying, in many cases, all of the rewards that are offered to Australians living in this wonderful country. But, unfortunately and all too often, so many of them are living in absolute Third World conditions that provide no safety or security whatsoever, and members of these communities have no hope, no aspirations, to achieve education to go out and get employment to contribute to this society. There is absolute rampant despair. This legislation in the main is aimed at like people in like circumstances across the Northern Territory.

The member for Lingiari quite rightly speaks for the people of the Northern Territory. He has a great deal of experience; therefore, he cannot be accused of being ignorant as to the affairs that exist in the communities across the Northern Territory. Yet he takes to task the members of this government that have been responsible for the drawing up of legislation to address these issues. He says that they ignore due process. The member for Lingiari is concerned about due process. He says nothing about the fact that, whilst one pontificates, whilst one spends weeks, months and possibly years—13 in the case of the last Labor government—whilst members of this House and members of a previous government drag their feet and talk about due process, the tiny, the most vulnerable and the least able to defend themselves by definition in these communities are abused. They are abused physically, psychologically and sexually to the point where irreparable damage is done. These children so often grow up and as adults indulge in exactly the same sort of behaviour.

It is not acceptable, and for a member of the opposition to stand in this place and talk about the abuse of due process when this government is endeavouring as quickly as possible to get legislation in place that just

may save one more fragile individual from abuse, is, I believe, absolute hypocrisy. What is important is that we get this legislation in place, that we get it to all corners of all the communities across the Northern Territory, and start making a difference. Mere dollars have not made a difference. We have put some \$3.367 billion each year into Indigenous affairs across Australia and still the whole system is riddled with problems of all sorts of dimensions, so money is not the answer. Resources, vision and tenacity make up the combination that will make a difference in Indigenous communities.

The Prime Minister and the minister responsible for Indigenous affairs have acted in an appropriate way—much later, of course, than I would have liked, in my humble opinion. We have also had the involvement of Noel Pearson, a very courageous leader in Indigenous affairs, the participation of Dr Sue Gordon and the handing down of her report, *Little children are sacred*. With that report being handed down and knowing the content of it, this government was correct in taking immediate action and declaring a national emergency which had to be addressed. That was approximately six weeks ago, and in those six weeks the most complex of problems has brought together the best minds to consider the legislation necessary to address those problems, in a manner outlined in this place those six-odd weeks ago. They are complex problems and require a great deal of legislation. Unfortunately, through the media generally, I have heard much about how this strategy would be flawed, how the legislation would be inappropriate, how modifications would need to be made to the legislation and how so many aspects that would be addressed by the legislation were not being considered appropriately.

We hear so much from the member for Lingiari about the removal of the permit system across communities of the Northern Ter-

ritory. I know about the permit system in the Northern Territory, I know the humbug it creates and I know the ramifications of that humbug, because some people are allowed into communities while others are not. One would like to think that those access permits were awarded on the basis of some lofty ideal and that consideration was always in the best interests of the community. They are not. The permit system is abused time and time again. You cannot have the intervention proposed by this legislation being foiled by the existence of a permit system that would prevent the people responsible for the enactment of the legislation from carrying it out. That is nonsense. You cannot be credible if you talk about having in place a system where those who are responsible for carrying out the legislation cannot gain access. We know the problems, and so many more Australians know the problems, that exist in these communities today. There are so many more than were prepared to recognise the problems some six or seven weeks ago, before this report was handed down.

In travelling from Adelaide to Perth on the Thursday evening that this legislation was proposed, I had the good fortune to spend time with Dr Sue Gordon, a woman whose credentials are immaculate in relation to her knowledge of what happens in Indigenous communities. We discussed at length her findings during the preparation of the report, her previous knowledge, her understanding and her depth of passion about the necessity for solutions to be found. I must say that she exhibited understanding and she exhibited the passion and the determination required to come up with solutions that would be part of a long-term strategy to make a difference.

All manner of strategies have been put in place in the past, with all manner of dollar resources from governments, but still the problems have persisted. One must ask oneself: why have the problems continued to be

exacerbated in the lives of Indigenous people? So many people, so many good brains, have put their minds to solutions over so many decades. Why do the problems still exist? Let's look at the mainstream style of life in Australia and see what some of the foundations of that in-the-main cohesive, motivated, socially acceptable community is like. It relies on a few cornerstones. It relies on education, it relies on the acceptance of personal responsibility, it relies on the security that comes through the knowledge that the law will be upheld by an ever-present police force and, of course, it relies on a judiciary in the situation of dispute. Many of those cornerstones of our mainstream society are non-existent in so many of the Indigenous communities across Australia.

I remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I know about those communities. I have in excess of 200 of them in my electorate and I visit them frequently. I know the problems that exist and I know the services that do not exist. One primary service that does not exist and has not existed in so many communities for so long is a reliable, consistent, permanent presence of law enforcement. If there is no law enforcement present in a community, and there is booze and drug-taking and evidence of sexual abuse of young children, and that is a generational situation, then what motivation for change is there for the community?

It is all very well for us to discuss the niceties of mainstream law and order and social norms in our community, in mainstream Australia; it is absolutely inappropriate to consider the values we hold dear while the day-to-day existence in so many Indigenous communities continues without the presence of that cornerstone of law enforcement. For decades it has been ignored by state governments. For decades they have turned their backs on the problem, saying—and I hear it so many times from those responsible for

community stability, advancement, law enforcement, education, job training et cetera—'We don't need to have our sights set high; they're only blackfellas.' It is sickening.

If the same attitudes existed with regard to mainstream society in Australia, the perpetrators of those comments would be exposed and thrown out and replaced with people who would take responsibility. But time and time again those that are given the responsibility of assisting Indigenous people in communities simply lower their sights when they move into the job because their expectations are so poor. They say: 'It doesn't matter what I do or what I don't do; I'm going to get paid to do the job. I'll tick the boxes to fulfil my budget expectations, I'll see out my time and I'll move on.' It is a major tragedy and it has contributed to the situation today.

A good education is a cornerstone of our mainstream society and it is provided for in communities. There are of course some tiny communities that are poorly resourced as far as education is concerned, but, in the main, communities that are stable and perhaps have in excess of 60 or 70 people, with a proportionate number of children, are provided with a school and the hardware and the staffing required to provide a good level of education. But there is so much lack of faith in the education system. There is so much despair. There is so much social disorder in those communities that there is a total disrespect for education. Unless parents, children and educators alike share the passion for an education, the provision of the infrastructure necessary for an education is an absolute waste of time.

It is not fair to name communities specifically on the basis of their performance in any one particular area, but I know of a community where there are 65 students registered and funded by the federal government. I have visited it on a number of occasions and

have never found more than 15 students in attendance. Why? Because of so many responsibilities for the parents of those children. They have to attend to law. I accept and respect the fact that Indigenous law is a very demanding process, but it is overdone. An unacceptable number of children are denied continuity of education simply because, with modern communications, people know about occasions that are happening 2,000 kilometres away, for example, and will take their children out of school, in the name of culture, and not bring them back for four or five months. This is unacceptable and needs to be modified.

If one destroys the future of one's race in the name of promotion of the culture, isn't that an enigma? Aren't we in fact recognising what is eventually effectively genocide and condoning it by saying, 'You pursue your culture. You might be denying an opportunity for your children, for your future generations, but you are doing so in the name of continuity of culture.' It is a conundrum. I could not honestly look at the situation and suggest it is appropriate.

So we need to have children attending these facilities that provide an education so they can go on and get a job. With that job will come all the benefits of employment, of financial independence, of self-esteem. Many people will say, 'We know much more about Aboriginal culture and the expectations of Indigenous people than you do, Haase.' They will say, 'What's the good of an education and expectations of a job if you're living in a community and there is no real employment in that community?' I have not been to a community yet where there was not employment that could very easily deserve a solid wage—not a CDEP wage, not a half-wage, not a furphy wage, but a real wage. Those jobs need to be funded by the appropriate organisations. That would give self-esteem to those individuals, coupled with the

responsibility of doing a job on a regular basis. But no. Too often we see—and the member for Lingiari raised the point—CDEP being abused. CDEP simply becomes a process.

I say to children in high schools: 'What are you going to do with yourself when you leave school? You'll have an education and you'll be equipped to get job training; what are you going to do?' 'Mr Haase, I'm going to go on CDEP.' CDEP was never intended to be a permanent job. CDEP was meant to be a process that made people job ready and allowed them to get out into the community. So many situations exist in communities that would be totally unacceptable in mainstream society today. This government has had the gumption, the vision and the determination to put solutions into place across the Northern Territory, and it is now going through the legislative process. Hopefully we will have parallel legislation enacted by the states to make sure that that effect takes place right across Australia. I commend these bills to the House.

**Mr McMULLAN** (Fraser) (5.52 pm)—I support the amendment moved by the shadow minister and the position which she outlined in her remarks. I have some serious concerns about the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 and cognate legislation, notwithstanding the proper and necessary decision that we, as an opposition, have made to support it—hopefully with some amendments. But in the realistic knowledge that the government will never accept amendments we reluctantly support the bill as it is.

Why do I have these concerns? First and foremost it is not that I am concerned that the government is endeavouring to act on the issue of child abuse but that the manner of the action means that it is likely to fail. That

is my primary concern. There is a lot of detail and I will come to it. My first concern is that the flawed conception at the genesis of this legislation has created a process—let us give the government the benefit of the doubt that it is a well-intentioned process—that is doomed to fail.

My second concern—and it is closely related to that first concern—is that this is legislation which contains no long-term plan for the future. Some of the initiatives that have been taken are useful and I support them. Indigenous communities have been chronically short of good medical services and support from the police. To the extent that this initiative is generating more medical services and more police for those communities that is welcome. If, as a consequence of this legislation and the associated appropriations, we get more money for housing, health and education in these communities, that is overdue but welcome, but there is nothing in this legislation that creates the framework for a long-term solution.

My third concern is that the initiative of which this legislation is part was triggered by the Wild-Anderson report but the legislation and the program do not implement the strengths of that report; they go in quite a different direction—a direction that the Wild-Anderson report recommended we did not go in. My fourth concern is that after report after report—for 10 years—we now have this rushed, flawed job on the eve of the election.

My fifth concern is that this legislative package goes beyond child abuse related issues to implement an extreme ideological agenda, particularly as it relates to land and the permit system. My sixth concern is that this legislation undermines the integrity of the Racial Discrimination Act.

So, with all of those concerns, why am I supporting this legislation? Because our first

responsibility is to assist children facing abuse, women facing violence and old people in danger—and there is no alternative package. If we are successful in amending this package it will do the job better, but more will still need to be done. Under this government we know there will be no alternative package; if we do not support this legislation there will be no legislation. If we do not support this package there will be no package. So we cannot ignore steps that will help to deal with the problem of child abuse so starkly illustrated by so many reports over the years, even if it might be uncomfortable for many of us to be supporting some aspects of this legislation.

Why is this legislation before us now? That is a very interesting question, because for the last 30 years—not just the last 10 years, to be fair to the government—there have been many reports on Indigenous communities and their health. They have made similar recommendations to the recommendations that came out of the Wild-Anderson report. For example, at COAG on 13 April this year, child abuse in Indigenous communities was on the agenda. It did not come as a shock to the Prime Minister as a result of the report that there was a problem; COAG had been talking about it in April. And COAG, in its communique, referred back to what seems to have been forgotten. It is as if people have come across this stunning revelation that there is terrible violence in Indigenous communities.

There was an intergovernmental summit on violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities on 26 June 2006, talking about the National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force, joint strike teams and the accelerated rollout of Indigenous child health checks, and agreeing that the levels of violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities warranted a comprehen-

hensive national response. The summit communique said:

- everyone has a right to be safe from family violence and abuse;
- preventing family violence and child abuse in Indigenous families is best achieved by families, communities, community organisations and different levels of government working together as partners;

It emphasised the need to address underlying causes.

That analysis has been around for a long time. It is not a case against acting now but it might make one cynical about why the government has just discovered this problem and announced it with fanfare on the eve of the election, when it has had report after report after report. I said before and I say again: as profound as this government's shortcomings have been in this area in the last decade, not just regarding Indigenous child abuse but Indigenous affairs generally, where all the data shows that internationally we are at world's worst practice where in other areas of policy we aspire to world's best practice, previous governments have failed as well—governments of my political party and previous coalition governments. It is not a unique thing; none of us has done enough. That something needs to be done is clear, and this step to do something deserves our support—because Indigenous children continue to be overrepresented in substantial cases of child abuse and neglect.

But a number of people have been urging the government to do something for a long time, and the government has studiously ignored that advice until the eve of the election. Tom Calma, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, said in December 2006 that he had published a book entitled *Ending family violence in Indigenous communities*, which talked about the 'complex policy responses necessary to address family violence and sexual abuse in

communities', and he listed 10 challenges for addressing family violence and sexual abuse in Indigenous communities. I wish the government had taken up his report or the Anderson-Wild report rather than taking the course of action that it has taken. I will refer to Tom Calma's first two challenges, as I do not have time to go through them all. They were, firstly:

What we need is concerted, long term action—from governments. And, secondly:

This action must be based on genuine partnership with Indigenous peoples and with our—

Tom Calma says as an Indigenous person—full participation ...

None of that is reflected in this package. There were very good recommendations from Mr Calma and others, but they are not reflected in this legislation.

So why am I concerned that this package will fail? There is no long-term plan and it does not address fundamental causes. It is okay to react to symptoms, but the symptoms will recur unless you deal with the causes—and this package does nothing to deal with the causes. After the short-term response and the welcome addition of medical and police services into communities, what happens? There is nothing that goes to the fundamentals of the problems, and the shadow minister for Indigenous affairs outlined that before.

I will now turn my attention to the area in which I have said the bill goes too far and implements an ideological agenda that is not related to the issue of child abuse. I want to particularly focus on the permit system. It was extraordinary to hear the member for Kalgoorlie saying that somehow or other the continuation of the permit system, particularly in the manner that we wish to amend it, would prevent the people whose job it is to implement this program from going into communities. He either knows that is not true and said it or should know it is not true

and should not have said it. It is clearly and demonstrably untrue. The current permit system specifically allows almost all the categories of people who might be called on to implement the program to go into the communities—probably all, but let us for the moment say ‘almost all’. The system reflected in the amendments proposed by the opposition would allow everybody who is in the business of implementing this program and other people as well, including the media, to go into these communities and implement this program. What the member for Kalgoorlie said is demonstrably untrue.

I am not unhappy about a review of the permit system and some changes to it, and I welcome the changes reflected in the amendments that the shadow minister has given notice of, but I do not think we should abolish the permit system. We run the serious risk of making child sexual abuse worse. There are some other potential problems too, but I will talk about that risk first, because this is supposed to be a package of measures to deal with the issue of child abuse. Let me talk about the Amoonguna community in the Northern Territory, which recently won a local government award for good governance. The health centre manager there, David Evans, said recently that the community had taken a strong stand on sexual abuse and had recently banned a convicted paedophile from entering. How were they able to do that? They were able to do that because of the permit system. What are they going to do now? They will lose the capacity to protect themselves in that way—and that is a serious mistake. That is reflected in the views of the Northern Territory Police Association, who said that the permits help them in the bush with their efforts to keep alcohol and drugs out of communities that are supposed to be dry. Vince Kelly, President of the Northern Territory Police Association, said:

The Federal Government, in my view, has not yet made it clear what the connection is between the Aboriginal land permit system and the sexual abuse of women and children in these communities.

Mr Kelly went on to say:

The police officer at Maningrida expressed a view that they’re battling a drug problem out there ... and clearly they have some control at the moment—

because of the permit system. I am slightly paraphrasing for the sake of time. Anyone who wants to can read the transcript on the ABC website. He went on to say:

... to simply remove the permit system would mean that people ... there’d be no requirement for anyone, any monitoring of what goes on, so it’d be open slather, so to speak.

So the police are concerned. The evidence is clearly there. The Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, the member for Nhulunbuy, Syd Stirling, talked about the possibility that the better Indigenous communities could be swept up and treated like child abusers as well as the worst communities. Where is the incentive for better performance? He was talking at the Yilpara community. He also said:

I know that there are dysfunctional communities, but Yilpara is not one of them. The kids here are looked after by their families and taken to school every day. It is safe for children and all of us to develop as a community.

It is important that we do not threaten that.

I have just received a copy of a media release made today by NAVA, the National Association for the Visual Arts. It expresses their concern that Aboriginal art may be further under threat as a result of the proposal in the legislation that is currently going through federal parliament to remove the permit system. The executive director of NAVA, Tamara Winikoff, said: ‘We are very worried that the removal of the permit system will

increase the ability of unscrupulous art dealers or art purchasers to gain access to Indigenous communities and their artists for the purpose of exploitative practices.' That is a very real and serious concern and it is right for NAVA to raise it. It would be tragic if the government were to ignore it. If they had not been in such a rush and had developed this properly and with a bit of consultation, organisations like NAVA could have come forward and put their propositions to the government. Some modification of the permit system could have been developed that kept its strengths and dealt with its weaknesses. But that is not what has happened.

These proposals are not implementing the Wild-Anderson report and this is one of the things that leads to my concern that the program may fail. I will now deal with the recommendations of that report. The report says:

In the first recommendation, we have specifically referred to the critical importance of governments committing to genuine consultation with Aboriginal people in designing initiatives for Aboriginal communities, whether these be in remote, regional or urban settings.

The report then quotes the following statement by Fred Chaney:

... one of the things I think we should have learned by now is that you can't solve these things by centralised bureaucratic direction.

... ... ...

... you can have programs that run out into communities that aren't owned by those communities, that aren't locally controlled and managed, and I think surely that is a thing we should know doesn't work.

In a subsequent recommendation on page 26, the report recommends:

That the Northern Territory Government work with the Australian Government in consultation with Aboriginal communities to:

(a) develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to build a strong and equitable core service

platform in Aboriginal communities, to address the underlying risk factors for child sexual abuse and to develop functional communities in which children are safe.

In an open letter to Mal Brough signed by my friend Mick Dodson and a lot of other distinguished Australians, including former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and leaders of the Indigenous community, the letter's authors support a commitment to tackle violence and abuse and they support the fact that urgent action is required. But they said that it needs to be a longer term plan and that in their present form these proposals miss the mark and are unlikely to be effective. These are not people who are criticising the government for taking action. They are saying, 'What you are doing will not work.' That is exactly one of my serious concerns about this package.

There is goodwill for a national response and it is appropriate to give priority to assisting victims of abuse. The great pity with this package of legislation is the way in which the government has chosen to act. It has been unnecessarily divisive and it has been disappointingly short term. It has set up a process with much too high a risk of failure. For now it is all there is and, given the government's majority in both houses, this legislation will pass. It will pass when the government wishes and it will pass in the form the government wishes. Therefore, the best we can do is seek to amend it and to improve it and to point out to the government the risk of failure and the risk of counterproductive consequences. People like Jackie Huggins, Mick Dodson, Patricia Anderson, Rex Wild and Syd Stirling and organisations like NAVA, the Northern Territory Police Association and the community from Amoonguna have been saying that there is a risk of counterproductive consequences from this initiative, which we will give the benefit of the doubt to as being well intentioned.

All that we as an opposition can do is say that if there is no alternative way of getting assistance to the victims of abuse we will support this package. We will try to outline an alternative long-term view, and the shadow minister has done that. We will try to amend the legislation to make it better. That will come forward in the committee stage. But we know that this government does not listen to anybody. All we can say is: let us hope that this package and these initiatives do some good for some of the people in need, and we hope that we can do better in future.

**Mr SOMLYAY** (Fairfax) (6.12 pm)—I will speak very briefly on the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007. I have been asked to keep my remarks short as the speaker's list is quite long. I do not have a large Indigenous population in my electorate on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland but I do have quite a long history of association with the Northern Territory. That goes back to 1975-76 when I was chief of staff for the then Minister for Northern Territory, the late Hon. Evan Adermann, who was charged with the carriage of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978. I was widely involved in writing that act and in its passage and implementation, which brought the Northern Territory to self-government. As well as that I was also involved with the Northern Territory land rights act, which had been introduced by the previous government under Prime Minister Whitlam. It was carried on by the Fraser government, by the Hon. Ian Viner, who was the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

I feel very passionate about this. I can remember my first visit to the Northern Territory with the minister. We went by RAAF plane to a number of communities, including Snake Bay on Melville Island, where these problems existed 31 years ago. The member

for Fraser talked about this problem not being new. I will not say that it has been swept under the carpet by any government, but it has never been addressed. When is it the right time to do what we have to do here now? It seems to never be the right time, but the right time is now. We visited these communities. A good community at that time was Port Keats. That was a Catholic mission community which is now known as Wadeye. We have heard the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs speak about the problems at Wadeye. So over 31 years things have not been improved. Health in Aboriginal communities is still a disgrace in Australia.

Why is the government doing this in the Northern Territory? I remind the House that in 1998 when I was minister for territories in the first Howard government we had a referendum in the Northern Territory on statehood. Those opposite opposed that. That referendum was unsuccessful and statehood did not happen for the Northern Territory. It remained a territory, and the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act still applies. The Commonwealth has under that act certain powers to override territory legislation. If it had become a state back in 1998 I do not think that we would be standing here now.

I am pleased to participate in this debate because I believe that history will show this to be the most important legislation ever introduced by the Howard government. The package of bills being debated tonight will provide the framework to ensure that there is a future for Aboriginal children of the Northern Territory. These children are living with the consequences of the breakdown of communities from the abuse of alcohol and the commonality of the abuse of pornography. This government did not stand by while the Territory thought about committees and reports and more reports and more inquiries. There comes a time when government has to

act. Now is that time. The safety of children is at stake.

This legislation will ensure that everyday items that we should take for granted, such as food and basic consumables, are available to families and children in these remote communities. Children in Australia in the 21st century should not be going without these basic needs. The very first recommendation of the *Little children are sacred* report into the protection of Aboriginal children from child abuse in the Northern Territory recommended:

That Aboriginal child sexual abuse in the Northern territory be designated as an issue of urgent national significance by both the Australian and Northern Territory Governments ...

This government acted on this recommendation to ensure the protection of Aboriginal children from harm. No Australian could possibly stand by and continue to do nothing, and this government moved urgently and decisively. The legislation shows how serious the government is about tackling this problem and tackling it now. This legislative package in the House tonight includes two appropriation bills that provide in excess of \$500 million in 2007-08.

I said that I would keep my remarks short. I will not go into the details of the bills, because the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and other speakers have, but I want to put on record my total support for these bills. After 31 years, it gives me great personal gratification to see that this problem is being finally addressed and that the people of Australia are facing up to the problem. I commend the bills to the House.

**Mr MELHAM** (Banks) (6.19 pm)—We are currently debating five bills. They come to 537 pages in total. There are also 196 pages of explanatory memoranda. With regard to the opposition's ability to scrutinise

these bills, the public should appreciate that the shadow spokesperson was only given copies midmorning yesterday and they filtered through all the way into the evening. The ultraspeedy passage of these bills is clearly designed to avoid public scrutiny, not least from Aboriginal communities but also from other community bodies with legitimate concerns about the government's proposals.

But the Government still appears to see any critic as an enemy that needs to be demonised and Parliament as a rubber stamp. The arrogance of the Government is palpable.

Those are not my words. They are the words of the Law Council President, Tim Bugg, who criticised Minister Brough's proposal to rush the legislation through the House of Representatives today and the minister's expressed intention to conclude Senate debates by week's end. That press release was issued by him today.

It is important to go to when this saga began. Shortly before question time on 21 June 2007, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs held a press conference. The Prime Minister opened by saying:

Well ladies and gentlemen, Mr Brough and I have called this news conference to announce a number of major measures to deal with what we can only describe as a national emergency in relation to the abuse of children in indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

He went on to say that he was unhappy with the response of the Northern Territory government to the report by Rex Wild QC and Pat Anderson. The interesting thing is that their report contained 97 recommendations, and I am advised that while this government has relied on their report for this intervention it has only partially picked up five out of their 97 recommendations.

I am a bit suspicious. I think it is a ruse, when one looks at the permits that are being dealt with in this legislation and the compul-

sory acquisition of land. I do not think those provisions have anything to do with the abuse of children, because historically the minister has put on the record that he wants to do away with the permit system. But he has been rebuffed by the communities and the Northern Territory government. Indeed, he has been rebuffed in relation to a number of communities and his 99-year leases. They have been picked up in this legislation. The abuse of children is a cover to do a number of things that do not need to be done.

In a national emergency one would think that the Prime Minister, if he were acting in a proper fashion, would involve the opposition. In my view that would make him look prime ministerial; it would elevate him. One would think that he would advise the Northern Territory government, in particular the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. None of that was done. The Prime Minister in his press conference did say that he tried to contact Clare Martin, but we know from the press that Mr Brough managed to contact Noel Pearson and tell him what was happening 15 minutes before a press conference. If this issue is to be above politics then it should not be politicised by the government trying to sideline the opposition. I would have thought that involving the opposition, but in particular involving the communities, would mean that you would have a better chance of success.

We are told now that this measure will cost \$580-odd million, more than \$200 million of which, I am advised, will go into administration. That is just for 12 months. That is not what the Prime Minister said when asked by a journalist at the press conference on 21 June: 'Are there estimates of the total cost?' He said:

No, no, no, I mean it will be some tens of millions of dollars. It's not huge but there could be some costs in relation to the extra police.

The timetable is important for the Prime Minister because he has a pending election. This is about trying to get him kudos in the lead-up to the election. It is the Kath and Kim approach to politics—'Look at me, look at me.' There is a bit of shock and awe in the intervention in the Northern Territory. It has not been properly thought out. That is why it has taken them to this point in time to also produce the legislation, when we were promised a special sitting of parliament. I have to say that I am a bit cynical when it comes to this Prime Minister's motives, particularly in relation to Aboriginal people, because he has form.

The other thing that I find quite bizarre is that, when he was asked by a journalist: 'But is this a problem in Aboriginal communities elsewhere?' he said, 'Yes, it is, but we have the power to do something in the Northern Territory.' And further down he says: 'We don't have the power to do these things in other parts of Australia.' That is just not true. I know he is a suburban solicitor from Wollstonecraft, but he has been involved with the Racial Discrimination Act since he came into this parliament—indeed, as a junior back-bencher he led the charge in the debate in the House of Representatives in 1975, particularly in relation to the removal of the racial hatred provisions that were then in the Racial Discrimination Bill.

A special measure in relation to Indigenous communities can be spread across boundaries. The surveyors lines do not stop a special measure, if it is truly a special measure, applying to Indigenous people in Western Australia, Queensland or New South Wales, where there have been a number of reports on this. So this disingenuous approach by the Prime Minister in saying, 'We've only got the power in relation to the Northern Territory,' is wrong—and I challenge him to come into this parliament and provide the legal advice that says I am

wrong, because he cannot. If it were a special law then the other power that he could rely on in relation to other communities is in effect the referendum power, the race power, section 51(xxvi). That could apply to Indigenous people in the states. But the Northern Territory has been picked for a particular reason: to quarantine your fight, to bash up the Northern Territory Labor government, to try and save the skin of the member for Solomon and to in effect try to undermine the member for Lingiari. That is all that one can conclude from the way the government have conducted themselves—the ambush, the secrecy in relation to the legislation.

There is one point I now want to concentrate on: the way the operation of the Racial Discrimination Act interacts with three of these bills. Today on *AM* Melinda James said:

Among the visitors to Garma this year was the nation's longest-serving Federal Court judge, now retired, Murray Wilcox QC.

The retired judge assessed the Federal Government's emergency response legislation yesterday afternoon on a laptop in a stringybark forest on the edge of Arnhem Land, and he's not impressed.

Murray Wilcox says:

Well, I think it's constitutionally valid, but it's extremely discriminatory legislation, that is actually acknowledged by the legislation because it specifically excludes the operation of the Racial Discrimination Act and the Anti Discrimination Act legislation of the Northern Territory. In other words, the Government is saying this is racially discriminatory legislation but nonetheless it is to be regarded as valid.

We were promised it would be a special measure. And in each of the three bills the government asserts in the relevant clauses that it is a special measure. But it does not have the courage of its convictions, because clauses 4(2) and 4(3) of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 state:

- (2) To the extent that this subsection applies, the provisions referred to in paragraph (1)(a), and any acts referred to in paragraph (1)(b), are, for the purposes of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, special measures.
- (3) To the extent that this subsection applies, the provisions referred to in paragraph (1)(a), and any acts referred to in paragraph (1)(b), are excluded from the operation of Part II of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

It then goes on to purport to say what some special measures are for the purposes of the Racial Discrimination Act.

In the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007 it is clause 132 which says:

- (1) The provisions of this Act, and any acts done under or for the purposes of those provisions, are, for the purposes of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, special measures.

However, it then goes on:

- (2) The provisions of this Act, and any acts done under or for the purposes of those provisions, are excluded from the operation of Part II of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

Then, in the third act, it is clause 4 of the Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Bill 2007 that goes on to do the same thing. It attempts to assert in 4.1 that the provisions are for the purposes of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 special measures and then goes on in subsection 2 to exclude the operation of part II of the Racial Discrimination Act.

In my view it is unacceptable to racially discriminate against any Australian citizen in this age. The Racial Discrimination Act was enacted in 1975 and was consistent with the racial discrimination convention. It is the basis upon which Aboriginal people have won historic victories in Mabo and Wik and it has been the basis of other High Court

challenges. For example, *Koowarta v Bjelke-Petersen* was upheld four to three, I think, when Bjelke-Petersen basically acquired Mr Koowarta's land.

The reason it is being excluded in this case is that the government knows that some of its actions are very dodgy. Under a special measure, providing the balance of what you do is beneficial and a temporary measure and is about advancement, you can have positive and negative measures in your package and it can still constitute a special measure and not be deemed to be racial discrimination.

Why do I know a bit about this, Madam Deputy Speaker? The previous Labor government had this debate as well when it had to enact the Native Title Act in response to the High Court's decision in *Mabo* and people were running around thinking that their backyards were not safe. The legal advice to the then Labor government was that the only way through the impasse was to suspend the Racial Discrimination Act and to act in a racially discriminatory way to assure people that their backyards were safe.

The Labor government refused to do that and there was some internal discussion, and to his eternal credit the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, embraced the Racial Discrimination Act in the solution that his government brought down. It had in it positive measures in relation to Indigenous people with the promise of a land fund and a social justice package, but there were negative provisions in relation to Aboriginal people in terms of validation of titles. The preamble—and I read these out so that you can compare and contrast, because they are chalk and cheese—of the Native Title Act said:

The law, together with initiatives announced at the time of its introduction and others agreed on by the Parliament from time to time, is intended, for the purposes of paragraph 4 of Article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Ra-

cial Discrimination Act 1975, to be a special measure for the advancement and protection of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and is intended to further advance the process of reconciliation among all Australians.

In terms of the provision in the Act clause 7(1) said:

- (1) This Act is intended to be read and construed subject to the provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- (2) Subsection (1) means only that:
  - (a) the provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 apply to the performance of functions and the exercise of powers conferred by or authorised by this Act; and
  - (b) to construe this Act, and thereby to determine its operation, ambiguous terms should be construed consistently with the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 if that construction would remove the ambiguity.

We acted in a non-discriminatory way, whereas this government in a deliberate fashion—I have not seen such blatant clauses as the ones I have read out in the 17½ years I have been in this parliament—has basically overridden the Racial Discrimination Act. Not only has it overridden the Racial Discrimination Act, because a later federal act can override an earlier federal act—and this government has got form on that in relation to the Native Title Amendment Act and also the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act—but for the first time the government has been specific. It knows its actions are targeted at Indigenous people in a racially discriminatory way.

This is a lazy government. This is an arrogant government. This is a Prime Minister with one thing on his mind: saving his own skin. He understands that out there in the community most people will not be across this legal argument. I say that a decent government, a good government, could legislate

to protect Aboriginal people from the calumnies that have been exposed without doing it in a way that could be seen to be racially discriminatory. If this legislation is truly a special measure, if it is truly beneficial for Indigenous people, then as an overall package it could stand up. In any event it could still be—and would be in my view and I am sure in Murray Wilcox's view—very unlikely to be overturned by the High Court because of the referendum power, the races power, the special laws that parliament has the power to make. That is my concern in relation to this. I am not going to be lectured by the Prime Minister or by this Aboriginal affairs minister or any other member of the government as if they have the high moral ground on this. You do not, and the way you have dealt with the Racial Discrimination Act shows it.

I do not sheet that home to all members of the government because the truth is that these responses are determined by the leadership invariably on both sides of the House. I do not say that there are not concerns on this side of the House, but there are a number of amendments that the Labor Party will be moving in the committee stage of this debate which deserve support, particularly one relating to the Racial Discrimination Act.

I am disturbed because it means something to me. I do not accept the argument that to save children we have to act in a racial discriminatory way. Your legislation should involve the Racial Discrimination Act. It should embrace it like the original Native Title Act of the Keating government did and, through doing that, our international reputation is protected; it is not trashed for the sake of base politics with an election pending and a Prime Minister and government in trouble. That is what you are remembered by. As I said, I do not have a lot of confidence in this Prime Minister when it comes to Aboriginal people. His first act in his budget of 1996

was to rip \$470 million out of ATSIC, which turned over a lot of remote communities and the support structures they had. I would like to spend the \$580 million within existing structures in a partnership way, not wasting a lot of that money on administration but having it benefit Indigenous people.

Those are my concerns about this bill. I would like the Prime Minister or the minister to come in and tell me I am wrong about the Racial Discrimination Act and put up the legal advice. I know I am right. *(Time expired)*

**Mr TOLLNER** (Solomon) (6.39 pm)—I strongly support the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 that is before us today. This is not a grab for power by the federal government or a blow to Territory self-government. All the action at the national level is designed to ensure the protection of Aboriginal children from harm and to prevent further abuse.

Small survey teams made up of government departmental representatives and, in some cases, police have commenced community engagement and area surveys in a number of communities to assess the resources they need. A task force made up of child protection experts is already in place. The emergency measures to protect children already announced are the first step towards providing a stabilising influence in communities.

These initiatives only came about because of the inability of the Martin Labor government to deal with the problem and act accordingly. However, the Northern Territory is not alone. Labor state governments in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia have adopted a similar tardy approach to dealing with abuse problems in their communities. The time for sitting on reports is now long over. Tough measures are

needed, but the federal government is not imposing draconian measures or throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Nor will we victimise Aboriginal communities as it is only a minority of people who have transgressed the law.

Welfare reforms will stem the flow of cash going toward substance abuse and ensure funds meant for children's welfare are used for that purpose. It is vital that school attendance is also enforced. As part of the immediate emergency response, most state police forces agreed to send officers to the Territory along with the AFP. Volunteers from all walks of life are also coming to these Indigenous communities requiring assistance. This will make communities safer.

By the inaction of state and territory governments, the Howard government was forced to act immediately to protect Aboriginal children and tackle these problems. It is clear that, after the historic announcement, the policy has the widespread support of the Australian community. The *Little children are sacred* report detailed the shocking extent of child abuse and family violence in Indigenous communities in the Territory. The magnitude of the problem has been known for some time and, while there have been some attempts to address it, this has been clearly insufficient.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce recognises the urgent need for immediate intervention to prevent child abuse in communities. I am heartened by the speed with which the task force settled its terms of reference and moved to establish its operational priorities. Ensuring communities are safe and government services are up to scratch is the first step. Commander of the task force's operational group, Major General Dave Chalmers, and his team are currently assessing infrastructure, housing, health services, income support and policing

arrangements while working closely with communities and carrying out surveys with experienced survey teams. Government business managers will operate in prescribed townships after the surveys are completed, and they will ensure that services in the community are coordinated and assets are being properly managed. State governments have pledged policing support and other assistance to the Northern Territory Police and, as I said, police are already on the ground.

The federal government is now implementing a number of complementary parts of the emergency relief effort, including measures to support school attendance and welfare reform and measures designed to provide for the healthy wellbeing of children backed up by medical checks. Health teams include not only medical practitioners but also child protection officers and interpreters. As part of the federal intervention process, the government will be changing the law to remove the requirement for people to get a permit to enter Aboriginal townships. Permits will be scrapped in relation to the common areas of townships, as well as roads into these townships, and airstrips. Common areas are those parts of a township that are normally accessible to everyone, such as public buildings and facilities, shops, art centres and the like.

I personally do not think this measure goes far enough, but it is a good first step. I personally think that the whole permit system should be done away with and normal laws of trespass should apply. Why should people need a permit or, in other words, a visa, to visit Aboriginal land? Aboriginal people may look different and many may speak a different language, but they are Australian and the land which they occupy is part of Australia. However, contrary to my view, the permit system will continue to apply to the vast majority of Aboriginal land in the Territory, including homelands. Improv-

ing access to townships will promote economic activity and help link communities to the wider world. Removal of the permit system will also enable normal scrutiny of activities in Aboriginal townships and access for all people, including police, media, doctors and other essential service providers. It will also lead to improved housing, help get kids to school and enable people working to improve their own circumstances.

In May this year the federal government introduced the first 99-year lease over a township on Aboriginal land. This historic agreement with local people for the lease of the town of Nguui on the Tiwi Islands will enable them to have real property rights—to buy a home, to own a piece of land, to start businesses and to have the same opportunities as other Australians. It is impossible to find an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory that has a market garden, a greengrocer, a hairdresser, a restaurant, a clothing shop, a shoe shop, a bakery or a butcher shop. Who out there honestly believes that Aboriginal people should not have access to these services in their townships that other Australians enjoy? After 30 years, the permit system has not stopped the carpetbaggers, the drug pushers, the grog runners, the abusers and the corrupt. We can no longer allow the situation where children are being abused and where crimes are being perpetrated on people who have little or no protection. We should not segregate one part of Australia from another just because of a person's skin colour.

As I mentioned, Nguui on the Tiwi Islands is the first community to take advantage of 99-year leasing, which offers the chance of private home ownership and business enterprise development on Aboriginal land. This is what the federal intervention in Indigenous communities is all about. The Howard government wants to break that cycle of despair. It wants to encourage land councils to work

proactively towards engaging Aboriginal people with private enterprise and economic development. A good example is the federal government's offer earlier this year of \$60 million to Tangentyere Council, in Alice Springs, to upgrade town camps in Alice Springs. Tangentyere should have accepted the offer. There is an urgent need to improve conditions in the town camps in Alice Springs and to impose the rule of law on areas one of my parliamentary colleagues described as 'ghettos of despair'. Town camps have become associated with Third World living conditions: poor hygiene, extreme violence, alcohol abuse and child sexual abuse.

The Territory government has done too little since 2001 to remedy this situation or to improve the lot of Aboriginal town camp dwellers. Its response was the Alice Springs Town Camps Review Task Force report, which was published in 2006. It reviewed infrastructure, services and living conditions in town camps. The report highlighted the urgent need to bring power, water, sewerage, roads, rubbish and rates into line with standard arrangements for other parts of the town. This would build a healthier and safer community for residents of the town camps, as will the proposed alcohol courts. All town camps have historically experienced poor infrastructure and service provision. These federal government initiatives offer a normalisation solution for town camps and communities as well as providing private homeownership opportunities, in contrast to the neglect shown by the Northern Territory Martin Labor government.

The Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs highlighted in question time today the latest comments from Clare Martin about the Northern Territory national emergency response. He also explained the need for federal government intervention. For Ms Martin to say that compulsorily acquiring town camps has nothing

to do with protecting children shows just how out of touch with reality the Northern Territory government has become. In 2006 Ms Martin—and her Alice Springs Town Camps Review Task Force report—said that housing was of critical importance because of overcrowding and that its resultant stress and poverty were key factors in child abuse. In their first meeting, the federal Indigenous affairs minister heard from Clare Martin that the Alice Springs town camps were her highest priority because of alcohol and drug fuelled violence, abuse and overcrowding. How can she now turn around and say that the government's measures have nothing to do with protecting children? This hypocrisy is astounding and underlines more than anything the appropriateness of the Howard government's intervention in the Northern Territory.

The release of the third *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage* report earlier this year also reinforced the need for a new approach to tackling Aboriginal issues in the Territory. Just about every indicator shows that Aboriginal Territorians are well below the national average and are disadvantaged. While some progress has been made in achieving falling rates of infant mortality and in increasing educational opportunities, a lot more needs to be done. Indigenous housing is one area which needs improvement. There needs to be more choice and opportunity for Aboriginal people in the Territory that allows them to realise the economic potential of their land. There needs to be changes to the land tenure in Aboriginal townships, streamlined processes for land development and improvement in the accountability of land councils and royalty bodies. Federal intervention now holds out that hope.

Central to the current intervention debate is the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, which was passed by both houses of the Commonwealth parliament and im-

posed exclusively upon the Northern Territory in 1976. At the time, pressure was building for land rights, and the political climate was ripe for change. At the time, the Aboriginal affairs minister, Ian Viner, picked up on a central theme while introducing the legislation. He waxed lyrical about Aboriginal spiritual connection with the land and the Dreamtime. He said that ancestors left in each country certain vital powers that made that country fruitful and ensured a good life for people forever. He said, 'An Aboriginal's country, no matter how stricken a wilderness it may seem to others, is, to him, a Canaan.' He stated his belief that there had been a fundamental change in social thinking in Australia, recognising that within our community there are some people, the Aborigines, who live by a unique and distinct system of customary law. Therefore we can see the intent of the land rights act—to establish rights, to protect the country and its inhabitants from intruders, to create inalienable title in perpetuity for a people who lived differently and thereby to ensure a good life for people forever.

The purpose of the land rights act was to establish a sanctuary, a preserve of living prehistory within modern Australia. Spurring on this mood were the Commonwealth's deep suspicions about the intentions of the embryonic Territory government: the legislative council. To defend Aboriginal Territorians from their future government, the act stipulated that the Territory parliament could not acquire Aboriginal land for public purposes. At the time, Canberra genuinely believed that, given half a chance, the Territory council would repossess Aboriginal land en masse and Ian Viner felt compelled to tell the Commonwealth parliament that he had had assurances that the Territory legislative assembly was prepared to cooperate. In fact, there was uncertainty, resentment and a lot of division in the Territory, not so much about

Aboriginal land ownership but more to do with the way the land rights act was imposed exclusively upon the Territory from above. It seemed hypocritical—and it was—to impose upon a Territory a land regime that was applauded by the same people who would not have a bar of it in their home states.

Some years ago I argued, in a paper to the Bennelong Society Conference, that the Aboriginal land rights legislation was, in a sense, a rights act, not a land management act. It was about putting things right, about appeasing the national conscience and international opinion in the only place that the Commonwealth could, in the Northern Territory. I argued that it was not about good land management, land administration or planning for the future exploitation and productivity of the land; it was about the protection of land as a right, the preservation of culture, defending Aboriginal people and their land from the intrusion of outsiders, be it pastoralists, miners, tourists or anyone without a permit—even their own future Territory government.

The land rights legislation has left the Territory a legacy that has soured relations between the Northern Territory government and the land councils ever since. To defend the rights of Aboriginal Territorians, the act stipulated that the Territory parliament could not acquire Aboriginal land for public purposes for fear that a Territory government would repossess Aboriginal land en masse. So the legislation was, as I said, imposed exclusively from above.

Today, almost half of the Northern Territory is under Aboriginal title. The Commonwealth act prohibits any compulsory acquisition of land under the act by the Territory government. The power of the land councils has grown in equal measure. Land council administration costs have eaten up mining royalty moneys, and whatever little is left

has gone to benefit some Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. But, despite this protection, many Territory Aborigines today are land rich and dirt poor, trapped in a welfare dependency status. The reality is that it is difficult to find a functional Aboriginal community anywhere. The federal Indigenous affairs minister has highlighted this problem in the past year or so. Sexual assault, domestic violence and other violence, antisocial behaviour and drunkenness are all too common today in many communities.

Some years back, the then minister for Indigenous affairs, Philip Ruddock, produced an options paper for the future of the land rights act. One option was repatriation of the act to the Northern Territory government. That would have meant at least some control by the Territory government of over 50 per cent of the lands in the Northern Territory. As history shows, the offer was ignored by the Northern Territory government, by Chief Minister Clare Martin and by the land councils. It was a missed opportunity.

The land rights act has failed because, while it has created Aboriginal owned land, it has also reduced Territory Aborigines to a welfare dependency status. The royalty flow from mines located on Aboriginal land has been used by land councils to fund the administration costs of a powerful bureaucracy, and an elite Aboriginal leadership has emerged. Moneys have been distributed to select groups and individuals on a grace-and-favour basis, with little flowing down to those at the bottom. Decision makers in the royalties distribution business have in many cases been beneficiaries themselves in the process. Many of these people are the very same people who are now screaming the loudest about the introduction of these reforms.

My view is that the leasing provisions in this legislation will right some of these

wrongs, but the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act should be repatriated to the Northern Territory as soon as possible, with its new provisions being discussed today but also with the Commonwealth installing some safety clauses to guarantee some of its provisions, as it sees fit. It is central to the current debate on the federal intervention in the Northern Territory. The government are not forcing this act on the Northern Territory government; we are not forcing the Territory government to manage this act. They do not want it. They have said that in the past. They are not prepared to govern for all Territorians and that is why the federal government are intervening now and that is why I support the legislation before the House today.

**Mr GARRETT** (Kingsford Smith) (6.58 pm)—I also rise to speak on the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007, the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 and associated legislation before the House. I acknowledge the remarks of the member for Solomon, in particular his assertion—which, to me, was perhaps ironically put—that in some way the provision of land rights for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory has been a major contributor to the social and physical difficulties that they have faced in communities. I simply say to the member, as he departs the chamber—and he may not be in the chamber for a great deal longer, in any event—that the contribution by his own party and the Labor Party, in advancing the prospects for Indigenous communities which are seeking to reassert and regain access to land which was theirs, which they owned and occupied for millennia, should still be seen as one of the significant accomplishments of this parliament, notwithstanding the many grave issues and difficulties that Indigenous communities, particularly in the Top End, face.

It makes a travesty of recollecting history to take the bits that suit as opposed to the bits that do not, in trying to maintain an argument that in some way those who sought to see the introduction of land rights—the legislation that came through this parliament and the associated court cases, which I will refer to later—contributed to the kinds of issues that are addressed in the legislation before us. In relation to the determination or otherwise of where funds go, including royalty funds and funds in the Aboriginals Benefit Account, I hardly think that this member nor, indeed, the minister who brought this legislation into the House have much to tell us.

On 27 May 40 years ago, Australians at a referendum empowered the Commonwealth to make laws for Indigenous Australians. The majority of Australians supported that referendum overwhelmingly. Today we debate legislation introduced into the parliament that, in part, aims to directly address ongoing and indisputably harrowing incidents of abuse of Aboriginal children in communities not only through the Top End but also in Queensland. That abuse is sometimes occasioned by high levels of overcrowding, the lack of provision of suitable and adequate housing. Oftentimes it is as a consequence of alcohol abuse, the conspicuous gap in educational attainment and, additionally, the incidence of ill health common amongst some Aboriginal people in the Top End of Australia. However, I would assert very strongly, it is not occasioned by the fact that Indigenous people have been able to ultimately assert and gain some access to and control over land that was previously theirs.

Labor supports this legislation—with amendments that have been introduced by the member for Jagajaga in a second reading amendment, which I support strongly—because any measures that protect Indigenous children in the Top End deserve to be supported. There is primacy with the rights

of children that they be able to begin their journey through life without threat of abuse, without harrowing experiences of violence or sexual abuse—because, after all, it is those early experiences that so determine the progress and the journey that people have in later life.

However, in between the referendum of 1967 and the introduction of this intervention legislation today, there has been an extensive history. It is a history of political and social struggle. It has been played out against the backdrop of governments of both political persuasions, at both the state and the federal level, endeavouring to address some of the consistent and ongoing issues of disadvantage that Aboriginal communities face. To that extent, it is the rights and interests of Indigenous people that have formed a common thread when we consider, first, the legislation that proposed the referendum and, second, subsequent legislation that has come into this House, including that occasioned by the Keating government and subsequently amended by the Howard government, of which we ought to be aware and should be noting as we debate this legislation. We also ought to note that the early campaigns for land rights were blocked by those opposite; that the court cases occasioned by that blockage, which saw the highest court in the land recognise the rights that Aboriginal people had to their land, were blocked and opposed by those sitting opposite; and that it was recourse to the highest courts of the land, particularly with the Wik and Mabo decisions that resulted from that action, that saw the beginning, only in the nineties, in Australian history of what was then an appropriate recognition and an appropriate provision of an entitlement to land that Aboriginal people had so long yearned for.

It is the case that the Howard government, from the beginning of its term, has taken a strongly ideological position on the question

of Aboriginal people's rights and entitlements. It is also the case that the 10-point plan saw an attempt, which was partially successful, by this government to diminish the rights originally established and identified by the court. It is the case that the Prime Minister's refusal to say sorry has hamstrung the reconciliation endeavour. It is the case that the isolation of Indigenous leaders who do not accept the current assimilationist ideology of the government has been common. It is the case that there has been an underlying decrying of claims of attachment to land and the importance of culture and an assertion that these things are of no consequence as long as we have social disadvantage and, in particular, issues relating to sexual abuse, particularly of minors and of the young, which everybody in this House and those listening to this debate know to be a matter of the gravest consequence for us all. Yet at the same time the government has had no shortage of reports—no shortage of people from communities telling them of the level of concern about abuse and no shortage of recommendations and direct approaches, both to the Prime Minister and to senior ministers in the Howard government, pleading for the opportunity to be heard and for the opportunity for the government to act. The government has acted—but, in acting, it has chosen not to consult widely with the Aboriginal community. I think, more than anything else, that is an issue that Aboriginal people now feel great hurt about.

When introducing the legislation, the minister said that the *Little children are sacred* report confirmed what the government had been saying for some time. In fact, it did no such thing. The 'Sacred Children' report confirmed what child abuse experts, health professionals, women in Aboriginal communities and a series of reports by those who had looked at this issue had been saying for some time, which this government had taken no

action on. Not only that, but the 'Sacred Children' report made a series of recommendations that the government has chosen not to accept. The government may be surprised that Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal leaders are somewhat concerned about this legislation coming into the House, but why wouldn't they be? Six weeks ago, we had a press release. Then we had comment by the Prime Minister that parliament may have to resume in the winter break in order to make some determinations about legislation that was to be brought forward—

**Mr Murphy**—That was a stunt.

**Mr GARRETT**—The member for Lowe makes the point that that was a stunt. I think he is absolutely right: it was a stunt. But it was a stunt at the expense of the psychological wellbeing of people in Northern Australia. Today we find ourselves with the situation where, without any opportunity whatsoever for any member on this side of the House to adequately or thoroughly consider some 500 or more pages of legislation and associated explanatory memoranda, we are debating this legislation as it is rammed through the House. People all around Australia—Aboriginal leaders and people involved in Aboriginal organisations, health organisations and community organisations as well as those many Australians who care greatly about the prospects for Aboriginal communities to be self-sufficient and healthy and about the fact that there is abuse in these communities—are not part of this discussion at all. It is a total betrayal of the democratic process by this government. It is a total betrayal by the minister, who has travelled to these areas and who knows full well that it is all about consultation.

I will quickly read an extract of a resolution that has come from the health forum at the Garma Festival 2007. Aboriginal community leaders, health professionals and

other concerned Australian community leaders who met at the Garma Festival health forum at Gulkula, Arnhem Land, call on the Australian government to abandon this legislation. They point out that there has been 'no negotiation, courtesy or respect shown to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members and health professionals'. They are 'particularly concerned that there are no evidence based reasons given for the changes to the land permit system and the Northern Territory Aboriginal land rights act'. They specifically say that the government does not have to destabilise communal rights to land to effectively address sexual abuse, social dysfunction or poverty. These Aboriginal leaders point out that the proposed measures bear no resemblance to the 'Sacred Children' report that the minister has referred to and that, as such, they have no confidence in their effectiveness. Finally, I note the authors of the *Little children are sacred* report itself said, 'The thrust of our recommendations is for there to be consultation and ownership of the community.' These views then are entirely understandable, given the way that this legislation has come into the House and the reaction from Aboriginal communities to such a heavy-handed process.

Notwithstanding that, I want to make some comments about the legislation itself, particularly in relation to welfare reform and the Cape York trials, which have been championed and supported by the government, Noel Pearson and the Cape York Institute. Like a number of people in this House, I have had the opportunity to visit Cape York. I know Noel Pearson's and the institute's work well. I think it is absolutely appropriate for both sides of the House to acknowledge the contribution that Mr Pearson has made. It may be the case that some members and some Aboriginal leaders take exception to some of the views that he has put. That is to be expected when someone is putting views

in a debate of this kind. But I think it needs to be put on the record—and I am more than willing to do this myself—that he has shown significant courage and honesty within his own community to stand up and confront the issue of alcohol that bedevils Aboriginal communities. Those of us who have travelled to and spent time in those communities recognise that alcohol is an intractable problem that significantly lessens people's opportunities to reach their potential and that it contributes to some of the terrible child abuse that we have witnessed.

To that extent, the measures that are identified in this legislation are supported by Labor. Certainly, we recognise that alcohol control is critical but, at the same time, we say very clearly that, ultimately, what is needed is a long-term strategy. That long-term strategy devolves to a number of other areas—and there has been particular neglect of them by both the Northern Territory government and the federal government—that relate to the adequate provision of housing, health facilities and education. All the evidence from other countries where Indigenous communities have struggled with a history of dispossession and have aimed to get themselves back on their feet and build right-livelihood for themselves shows that, unless you provide substantial and additional resourcing that is targeted at education, including affirmative action policies—which has been the case in some parts of the United States and Canada—and unless you provide substantial and additional investment, particularly in housing and health, the likelihood is that the social disadvantage that we have seen visited on young Indigenous people in particular, particularly where there is overcrowding, will continue. That is the bottom line here. Let us be under no misapprehension at all: that is the bottom line.

Labor support the measures contained in this intervention legislation. We hope they

will help arrest the terribly high levels of abuse of young children. But those measures in and of themselves will not and cannot deal with the ultimate question of responsibility, which has to be enacted by the community that has the power, the capital and the capacity to exercise the distribution from the federal budget and those communities who in some parts of Australia still live with shocking life expectancy and health statistics and very poor educational prospects. Years and years of underinvestment in Aboriginal communities must be reversed, and it must be done by this parliament.

The test of this legislation is whether it improves the safety of children. The member for Jagajaga made that clear in her remarks. That is something which Labor both accepts and understands as being absolutely critical. There is an additional test for this legislation, and that is to recognise those parts of it which do not go to the question of securing better protection for young Indigenous Australians as they grow up. Those matters that have been identified in the second reading amendment, including seeking exemption from the application of the Racial Discrimination Act, the removal of the permit system and so on, are exceptions. It seems that they have been included not fully recognising the consequences. The implications of the removal of the permit system are very clear. The police have said and anyone who has travelled in these regions knows that the likely exposure to risk, including from white and black abusers and perhaps paedophiles, is greater if we remove the permit system than if we do not.

In addition, the compulsory land acquisition identified in this legislation goes to the heart of the contempt with which the government on occasions approaches these issues and deals with Aboriginal communities. Why have the negotiations between the town camps and the minister broken down? Corre-

spondence has been sent and models have been suggested to the Prime Minister about community owned land, but there has been no response whatsoever. The government's ideological cast does not allow it to enter into negotiations of that kind, particularly in a time of crisis. It much prefers to introduce legislation—which we have not had the opportunity to properly or thoroughly consider—and only recognise without any reservation the need to address questions of abuse and associated issues.

The Labor Party supports the legislation with the amendment it has moved. Labor is committed to land rights for Indigenous people and the Racial Discrimination Act—it is an important piece of legislation. We are also committed to consultation and specifically to closing—indeed, to eliminating—the life expectancy gap that many Indigenous people suffer. We are particularly committed to tackling the rate of Indigenous infant mortality and diseases such as rheumatic heart fever and others. We are committed, I hope more than anything else, to examining the measures that we should consider in this parliament, both in opposition and in government, to deal not only in the short term with the social abuse issues affecting young kids but overall with the prospects for our Indigenous people to have good livelihoods and the benefits of economic and cultural sustainability into the future. That means listening to and working with Indigenous people and providing the sorely needed long-term commitment genuinely espoused through this House. *(Time expired)*

**Mr CAUSLEY** (Page) (7.19 pm)—In my 23 years in politics I think this is the most serious debate I have participated in, and I have participated in hundreds of debates over the years. The member for Gwydir, the Hon. John Anderson, wished to speak tonight, but he has deferred to me. He represents a large portion of western New South Wales and has

been deeply involved in a work program at Bourke that has shown significant results for Aboriginal people. I put that on the record and the fact that I understand and accept that he has allowed me to speak in this debate.

I should provide some background to my contribution to the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 and cognate bills. My family first went to the Clarence River in about the 1860s. My great-grandmother was one of the first white children born on the Clarence River. She lived her adult life on the Esk River across from a group of Bundjalung people who lived in their native state. I still know the people of that tribe five generations down the track. I know how their customs were enforced, and they were different from what we are talking about tonight. Some of the laws were very strict and even brutal, but there was none of the sexual abuse or assaults that we hear about today. In fact, the tribe that my great-grandmother knew segregated the males and females at puberty, they never married within their tribe and they were protected by the tribe. That is quite different from what we are talking about today.

I have heard members of the Labor Party say that they support this legislation, but I have been straining to hear their support. Most of their contributions have been an attack on the government. This is a very serious problem and it does not exist only in the Northern Territory; it exists across Australia. I heard the member for Lowe interjecting. The same thing occurs under his nose in Redfern, and I know that he would not approve of that.

Why do I say this? Some nine years ago, Aboriginal women with whom I went to school, played sport and worked and whom I have employed—I know the wonderful Aboriginal people of the Lower Clarence very

well—came to see me secretly to tell me what was going on in their communities. The group represented a cross-section of the community. The elderly women I know are grandmothers and elders of the tribe. One woman I know very well and whom I respect enormously said: 'Ian, we have come to you because we know you and trust you. We are frightened to come publicly, but we want to tell you what is going on in our community.' This woman said to me, 'Ian, no female of any age is safe in our community.' That is a very, very strong statement about something I abhor. I said to the lady: 'Look, you don't have to put up with that. The law doesn't allow that.' And she asked: 'What do we do? If we report these things it goes to court, the judges give a tap on the wrist or three months in jail and the perpetrators come back and bash the hell out of us.' The women were scared. They do not report these things because that is what is going on.

I reported this to Senator Herron—and obviously this was the start of the changes that are taking place at the present time—but the federal government has no jurisdiction over states; only in the territories can the federal government have some say in what is going on in these communities. Absolutely no-one would approve of what was said to me—and I do not think they should. I could give you more, and more terrible, stories of what is going on. People, and sometimes they are the leaders of the community, are perpetrating crimes but nothing is being done.

One of the problems is that the deaths in custody inquiry has stifled our courts. We have laws that can stop this but the courts are reluctant to put people—Aboriginal people in particular—in jail because the deaths in custody inquiry showed that Aboriginal people have a propensity to hang themselves in jail. This is causing problems within the community. We are not getting results. The

women in the communities say to me, 'The law does not protect us.'

I listened to the member for Lingiari and I never heard once in his speech any recognition of the problem. I am not saying that the problem exists entirely in the Aboriginal community—it does not—but the problem occurs more in the Aboriginal community than in the wider community. The New South Wales government have had reports including *Breaking the silence: creating the future*. The New South Wales government have the same reports that I am referring to and the same reports that the member for Gwydir would have referred to, about Toomelah and other areas. The reports have done very little. The report to the parliament was that the New South Wales government were going to deal with it through their traditional agencies, but I know, through my discussions with the Aboriginal people in New South Wales, that they do not see any results coming from the traditional agencies. They do not see results for the problems that are occurring in these communities. I do not think that the white society would approve of what is going on; I am sure we would not. I am sure that if the people out there, including the church groups who are proclaiming that this is an injustice, knew exactly what was going on in the communities they would not approve of it either. I am absolutely certain they would not approve of it but they do not realise what is going on.

One of the people I know in my community is probably a leader in the Aboriginal community. He actually married a Caucasian girl, and they are quite happy, but certain groups within that community waited until he was away and raped her. I put to you: are we in this parliament prepared to accept that? I am sure it is not acceptable. What are we going to do about it? Are we going to sit here, as we have done for decades, and do

nothing or are we going to try to do something about this?

I am not pretending that this is easy; it is not. I am not pretending that Aboriginal people have not been dispossessed; they have been. I am not pretending that Europeans have not interfered in their culture; they have. But we are in Australia today and there is no going back to the nomadic life that the Aboriginals led in the past. These are Australians who have the same rights as every other Australian, and they should be protected like every other Australian. This parliament has a responsibility—as other parliaments have a responsibility—to protect these people. I think we have let these Aboriginal communities down in a very big way.

As I said, there is not a simple answer. I believe the great disadvantage in the Aboriginal community starts with education. I know that successive governments have tried very hard to get Aboriginal children an education. It is difficult because they have a different culture. I think we have to work even harder with the parents to try to instil in them the need for an education. We all know that it does not matter where you come from in this society in Australia—it does not matter whether you are Caucasian, Aboriginal or from another nationality—an education is the very basis of life. If you get an education and you can get employment then you can overcome some of the problems that we see in these communities.

Where do the problems come from? The problems come from the fact that these people are not employed. They are not employed because they do not have the education or the skills to get employment. Some do, but a vast majority of them do not. I do not care whether you are black, white, Chinese, Vietnamese or whatever, if you have plenty of time on your hands and you are not working then you will get yourself into trouble. That

is where the alcohol abuse comes in. Once alcohol comes into it, then there is assault and rape. That is the real problem in these areas, so we have to start at the base and ask: how are we going to overcome these problems? I see the member for Kennedy is in the chamber. He was a minister for northern development and Aboriginal affairs in the Queensland government, and I would be interested to hear what he has to say.

But the fact is that you have to start right there: with education. We heard the member for Kingsford Smith mouthing words about disadvantage and health et cetera. Well, it is the same thing. These people do not have the education; they are not getting good food. So the health problems start there—because they are not getting decent food. And from there on—again, it does not matter whether you are in the Caucasian society or the Aboriginal society—the same things will happen.

There is a lady in my electorate who is very well educated in this area. Dr Judy Atkinson is an Aboriginal woman, and I take my hat off to her. She said to me: 'I woke up one morning under a tree in the Kimberley, after being bashed by my husband, and said: "Life's got to be better than this. I am going to get an education." So she went and got an education and she is now a professor at Southern Cross University in Lismore, northern New South Wales. She is doing something that I believe can help in this regard, because we can have the federal government intervention, we can have the money—we can have all these things—but the core of it is that you have to get some results at the end of the day. Professor Judy Atkinson goes into communities and gets the confidence of the community. She picks out people she believes to be leaders in the community and works with those leaders in the community to change the results. She tries to get through to them that things have to change within the community—that they

cannot have these assaults and rapes and that there must be an education. She works with the people in the community to get that result, and she has runs on the board as far as those results are concerned. At present she runs a course at the university and is getting graduates from the university. Those graduates will go out and work in the community. It is a process that has to be helped, because obviously there are not enough graduates at present.

At the core of this is the fact that you must start there: in the communities, at the grassroots. You cannot impose these things on the community; you have to get them to understand the right thing to do within the community and get the community to accept that. That is the long-term goal. It is a hard one to win; it is not going to be easy. But you cannot sit back and accept that this can continue. I think that most Australians cannot accept this. Most Australians believe that Aboriginals in this country have the same rights as other Australians. They are Australians like everyone else and they have the same rights. I believe that over the years governments of both persuasions have tried very hard to give them opportunities but, to this stage, we have failed. I am not going to sit back and accept that women in Aboriginal communities can accept this abuse. As I think the Prime Minister said when the minister first saw this, if this were happening in Canberra there would be a hue and cry that you would never be able to put out. That is true. But do not kid yourself that this is happening just in the Northern Territory. This is right across Australia, and state governments are failing in their responsibility to deal with it. It is not easy, I know, but they are failing to deal with it and we must take responsibility. We have to take responsibility for the good of the children and the women, because they are the people who are being abysmally abused.

**Mr RUDD** (Griffith—Leader of the Opposition) (7.34 pm)—Look through the eyes of an Aboriginal child of the Northern Territory and, for many, all you will see is violence, lawlessness, poverty and despair, because looking through the eyes of an Aboriginal child frames a bleak and depressing picture in many circumstances. Most recently, this picture was animated by the *Little children are sacred* report. This report follows more than a dozen or so reports over the last 30 years which have illuminated the often appalling conditions in which the First Australians live, and the toll that that takes on their health, their wellbeing and, often, their ability to survive. The bulk of these reports have been delivered over the last decade or so. Not much has been done on the basis of these reports. In turn, a number of these reports have dealt explicitly with the abuse of children. Not much has been done about them either. It is worth recalling the remarks of our former parliamentary colleague Fred Chaney, who wrote tellingly last year:

Governments will come and go, shocked ministers will come and go. What needs to change is how Australia moves beyond serial crisis intervention to take the systemic, long-term action consistently called for by fellow Australians living the horror. Consistent application by all parties, including governments, is the test of their sincerity.

That was Fred Chaney, a former Liberal minister. This report, *Little children are sacred*, demands a response. It demands a systemic response and a continuing response, not an episodic response. The measures we are discussing today will not be universally welcomed; nor are they seen as remedies for every problem encountered by Aboriginal communities across Australia; nor are they seen as a panacea for the state of misery which often prevails in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. But I believe

the report that I referred to before presents us all with a duty and a responsibility to act, and to do so without delay.

Neither side of politics has a track record worth trumpeting when it comes to Indigenous Australia. Could the Northern Territory government have done more to protect Indigenous children? Almost certainly, as Pat Anderson's and Rex Wild's report shows. The same could be said of most state and territory governments—be they Labor or Liberal—over recent times. Moreover, both sides of this House are not absolved of past failures. But today is not the day for blame and shame—it is a time for action. That is why, in a spirit of bipartisanship in tackling child abuse and giving these kids a chance, we will support the passage of this legislation. We hope it will assist in reducing the incidence of child abuse in these communities.

From the outset I offered to work with the government to construct a bipartisan way forward, and I reaffirm that commitment today. Our concern from the outset has been the protection of Indigenous children. In the five years to 2006 notifications of abuse and neglect of Indigenous children in the Northern Territory grew at more than three times the rate of that for non-Indigenous children. Between 2005 and 2006 Indigenous children in the Northern Territory were five times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be the victims of child abuse on the basis of substantiated reports of that abuse. Furthermore, of all sexually transmitted infections diagnosed in Aboriginal people in the Territory, eight per cent occurred in children under the age of 16. That is nearly three times the infection rate for non-Aboriginal children. These statistics, grim as they are, require us all to act and to act in a new way. Accordingly, our overriding concern with these bills is that any action arising from them must establish a clear nexus between

the proposed course of action on the one hand and the protection of Aboriginal children on the other.

We also recognise that these bills can be improved. In a continuing spirit of bipartisanship, Labor has proposed three areas for the government to consider: (1) the proposed operation of the permit system, (2) the application of special measures under the Racial Discrimination Act and (3) the need for a review of the effectiveness of the housing and welfare provisions of the legislation after a 12-month period of their implementation.

To our enduring shame and disappointment as a nation too many children in Australia today are subjected to abuse or neglect. How we care for our children is one of the tests of our society. Our failure to provide safety, security and dignity for all of our children diminishes our claim to be a civilised, humane and prosperous nation. The reality is that today the scourge of child abuse, including that in Indigenous communities, represents a great hole in the heart of our nation. As I said, these are failures that belong not to one political party or to one individual or to one generation. But from these failures we have all come to this place now to act. Between 1999-2000 and 2004-05 the number of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect nationally almost doubled from 24,732 to 46,154. These are terrible figures that require action for the nation. In most states the rates of Indigenous children who are the subject of child protection substantiation are above 20 per thousand, whereas for non-Indigenous children the rates are below 10 per thousand. Again, this requires action.

It is for these reasons that we have announced that we will work with the states and the territories to develop a national child protection framework. It is also why we continue to offer our bipartisan support for this

legislation. The bills before us today represent a difficult challenge for many Indigenous Territorians. All Australians, and particularly Indigenous Australians, have a deep emotional attachment to their land. If we can work together in a cooperative, consultative and respectful manner, I believe that we can achieve real improvements in housing and other infrastructure in towns and in town camp land. We have argued that the proposals contained in the legislation must make plain the link between their elements and the protection of children.

If you study the *Little children are sacred* report, it is clear that housing and infrastructure have a direct bearing on the safety of children. In some communities overcrowded housing puts children in close proximity to alcohol, violence and pornography. The report by Rex Wild and Pat Anderson recognises the risk this places on children. It notes children's exposure to pornographic material—in particular videos and DVDs—and argues that this occurs as a result of poor supervision, overcrowding in houses and acceptance of normalisation of this type of material. If temporary leases are backed by a commitment from the government to housing and infrastructure improvements that provide some measure of security for children, they are worth supporting. On the subject of permits, it is vital that those who are playing a part in the emergency intervention, as it affects children, are not impeded from gaining access to communities. We also must be careful about those who are coming and going.

Vince Kelly from the Northern Territory Police Association argues that the government has failed to make a case about the connection between sexual assault in Indigenous communities and the permit system. On ABC radio last month, Mr Kelly said the following about the permit system:

It does give both the police and local communities the ability to exclude certain people from the community, people who are possibly offenders in relation to sexual abuse, and physical abuse of Aboriginal women and children, but more importantly offenders in terms of running grog and running drugs into these communities.

I believe we should extend the class of people who can access communities under the existing permit system by all means, but we should retain those elements that prevent those who are a potential threat to children.

I will also suggest another protection—that is, to require people coming into communities to have a Working with Children check. I understand that the Territory government is about to implement a strengthened regime. I believe it should be used as an added means of protecting Indigenous children from abuse. I urge the government to think about this approach in improving the overall protection regime for children.

We will also support the government's proposals in relation to the quarantining of welfare payments. We recently committed to work with the states and territories to develop a national child protection framework underpinned by an ability to quarantine payments for the benefit of a child in cases where child protection experts have confirmed that there is need to direct money so that it reaches the child. This is particularly a concern when it comes to parents who are abusing drugs. Money can be channelled away from necessary household resources and into sustaining parents' drug use. As a result, a child's material needs for food, shelter, clothing, hygiene and medical care may well be neglected. The Victorian Department of Human Services reported that in 2000-01 about a third of parents of children and young people entering foster care reported having problems with alcohol abuse and a third had other substance abuse problems. It was also suggested that increasing levels of

substance abuse was one of the main reasons for the increasing numbers of children entering the child protection system.

Labor's child protection framework will be designed to promote positive parenting and the best interests of children. Under this national framework, child protection authorities will be given the power to require parents who neglect their children to spend part of their family and welfare payments on essentials, such as food, rent, electricity and gas for the home, and school uniforms and books. I do not believe that it is substantially different from the government's proposals.

Federal Labor has also endorsed the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership's welfare reform plan for the Cape York communities. We have agreed to fund and implement a range of initiatives to make family and welfare payments and housing conditional on school attendance and the proper care of children. Another key recommendation is to establish the first four family responsibilities commissions—local statutory bodies which will ensure that welfare payments go towards the benefit of children. We support this model of reform for the Cape communities. We are pleased to see it given voice in the legislation before us today.

We would also like to say that we give support to the government's proposal to quarantine a portion of income support payments in designated areas in the Northern Territory, subject to proper review after the first 12 months. There are two core reasons for supporting an initial quarantining of all income support payments in the Territory. First, the authors of the *Little children are sacred* report point out that the Northern Territory child protection system, which might be expected to recommend which parent should be eligible for quarantining, is hampered in its ability to respond effectively to child sexual abuse and other child maltreat-

ment. This is because small, geographically isolated communities—affecting up to 50 per cent of the Territory's population—generally have limited access to health, welfare, education and other support services. In addition, while most other state and territory jurisdictions can call upon a substantial network of NGOs to provide child and family support, there is a general lack of child and family support infrastructure across the Territory which is particularly evident in the most remote Aboriginal communities. It is our view that at present a targeted quarantining regime therefore may not be effective in the Territory for this initial period. We need to consider a more targeted quarantining regime similar to that proposed for other areas in the longer term, subject to the outcome of the 12-month review which we have foreshadowed.

The second reason for our acceptance of the Northern Territory welfare payment quarantining provisions is a concern that the behaviour of adult members of often overcrowded houses has a direct impact on children's safety and wellbeing. We need parents to be responsible at a whole-of-community level, but that is not all we need. In the short term, it does no good to have two members of a household avoiding expenditure on alcohol, for instance, when other adults can continue to bring it in. For the sake of the children, I believe that this short-term measure is justified. But we should be careful to review its success or otherwise in dealing with the core issue of child safety. We must be hard-headed about these reforms, and that means measuring their effectiveness within a reasonable period of time. That is why a Labor government would review their application after 12 months of operation.

The government have indicated in briefings to the opposition that they are confident that their legislation does not offend the Racial Discrimination Act. Nevertheless, we

have sought advice in the limited time available, and on the basis of that advice we share the government's confidence. We also think that it is important to ensure that the Indigenous people of the Northern Territory are in no doubt that these measures are for their benefit. As legislators, we should be sending a clear message that we have confidence in this plan, we have confidence that it will be of benefit to the people of the Northern Territory and we have confidence that it will achieve results against the aim that has been set for it, which is the protection of our children. In doing so, we must observe the integrity of the Racial Discrimination Act. This is a basic principle for this House, a basic principle for this country and a basic principle for the Indigenous community of this country.

The current emergency plan does not provide detail on the longer term strategies required to lift Indigenous communities out of their current situation. In fact, the *Little children are sacred* report contained 97 recommendations in all, and they bear further examination by both levels of government. Pat Anderson and Rex Wild have produced a comprehensive report which places the protection of children at the centre of government responsibilities. As a result, they propose reforms that touch on almost every aspect of community life and that have implications for every area of government: housing, child protection, education and infrastructure. These 97 recommendations should be the subject of intensive examination by government in terms of providing a long-term systemic response to the totality of the problem faced in the Northern Territory.

Governments require a long-term vision for the protection of children and a plan which therefore has some basis of long-term success. Therefore, once we have dealt with the immediate task of protecting children we must turn our minds to the reforms and in-

vestments required to provide long-term hope for these children and the wider Indigenous community. The measure of our success in Indigenous policy is the health, wellbeing and economic participation of Indigenous peoples. We know today that, on almost any measure you choose, we are failing. There must be concerted action for the future. Indigenous children's literacy and numeracy skills are substantial worse than those of other Australian children. According to the *2005 National report on schooling in Australia*, the number of Indigenous children who meet the reading benchmarks falls from 78 per cent in year 3 to 63 per cent in year 7. The number of Indigenous children who meet the numeracy benchmarks falls from 80 per cent in year 3 to 48 per cent in year 7. Indigenous school retention rates for year 10 through year 12 were 45 per cent in 2005, compared with 76 per cent for non-Indigenous students—and these figures exclude the 10 to 20 per cent of Indigenous students who did not complete year 10.

Life expectancy at birth for Indigenous men is 60 years compared with 77 years for all Australian males. For Indigenous women life expectancy at birth is 65 years, whereas for all Australian females it is 82 years. Infant mortality rates for Indigenous children are unacceptably high. Indigenous babies are 3.5 times more likely to die in their first year than non-Indigenous babies. In 2007 that is a disgrace. During 2004-05 Indigenous people were more than four times as likely to be in hospital for alcohol related mental and behavioural disorders than other people. The national imprisonment rate for 100,000 Indigenous adults in 2005-06 was 2,030 compared with a rate of 118 for non-Indigenous adults. In May this year, at the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum, I said that these figures represented a blight on the nation's soul. We must simply do bet-

ter, and on this side of the House we are committed so to doing.

On the day the Prime Minister announced his intention to intervene to protect the children in the Northern Territory I said that we would offer our in-principle bipartisan support. Let us be blunt: this emergency plan is far from perfect. We are, however, prepared on this side of the House to give it a go and we commend the proposals we have put to the government by way of amendment for their serious consideration. The attitude we bring to bear to this problem in the Northern Territory is one of wanting to fix the problem and to identify solutions that work, rather than engaging in the perpetual blame game between the Commonwealth, the states and the territories on the one hand and between our two sides of politics on the other. It is time for action on behalf of all Aboriginal people, in particular Aboriginal children subject to abuse. *(Time expired)*

**Mr FAWCETT** (Wakefield) (7.54 pm)—I rise tonight to speak to the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 and related bills. I welcome the Leader of the Opposition's comments that leadership is required and I welcome the leadership that has been shown by the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in this area—the strong leadership he has shown to make progress where many governments of all persuasions previously have not managed to do so.

I do not plan to speak at great length about the Northern Territory and the events there, because that has been well canvassed by many members in this place who have talked about the great need for change, the great need to protect children in that environment. What I wish to focus on specifically tonight is the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill

2007, particularly schedule 1, which deals with the income management regime. The reason I would like to focus on that is that it has a broader application than just the Northern Territory. It affects people all around Australia who fall into a category of requiring assistance.

To illustrate that I bring to the House a couple of examples of families I know in the seat of Wakefield, lest we kid ourselves and believe that these problems are confined to Indigenous communities. There are problems that go to the care for children in all of our communities. There is a family that I am aware of comprising a single mum raising a young boy, with a partner in the home. Due to a number of issues surrounding substance abuse, particularly crystal meth and alcohol, and gambling addictions, essentially pretty much all of the welfare payment this mother receives goes through the poker machines in one day. The conditions in the home have deteriorated to the point where the majority of their furniture and other assets have been hocked off. This has affected the young boy in terms of his whole outlook on life and what is normal. When he goes out with extended family members they report being horrified by his attitude in shops as to whether something should just be nicked to make up for what is not at home. It also has an impact on his schooling, on the willingness of the parent to take the child to school on a regular basis, which has a flow-on effect to this child and his view on the world, his capacity to engage in the world. The really disturbing part is that the mother in this case is in complete denial that there is an issue. There is complete denial about the fact that she has some responsibility or that she in fact has the capacity to make choices that could improve the situation for her and her child. So whilst the abuse is not necessarily of a physical kind, this child is being placed in an

extremely precarious position because of the poor choices of the mother.

So where does that lead to down the track? I come to another case, of a man whom I spoke to just last weekend who described to me how, as a young boy and through to a teenager, he was repeatedly physically, psychologically and sexually abused by his father to the point where he ran away from home. Again, many of the issues were the same in terms of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pornography et cetera.

These issues are not constrained to the Indigenous communities, so I welcome this income management regime, which is not intended to create a nanny state in Australia, a state that seeks to micromanage the Australian community, but which recognises that there is a small subset within our community who, for whatever reasons, have not developed the life skills, the motivation or the ability to manage their own circumstances and the circumstances of those whom they have responsibility for. These measures recognise that there is not only an obligation on behalf of the government to support these people in terms of providing them with the means to live but also an obligation to the broader society to make sure that this money is spent for the purpose for which it is intended.

To go to some of the detail of the income management regime, division 1, 'Simplified outline', highlights that an income management regime is being set up for recipients of certain welfare payments. A person may be subject to the income management regime because a child protection officer of the state or territory requires the person to be subject to that regime, the person or the person's partner has a child who does not meet school enrolment requirements, or the person or person's partner has a child who has unsatisfactory school attendance. Those are not ex-

haustive measures of the wellbeing of a child, but they are powerful indicators as to whether a parent is taking their responsibility seriously. It is a little bit like removing the permit system in the Northern Territory, in that, by exposing the child to an environment where there is a broader public review on a day-to-day basis of the behaviour, the attitude and the wellbeing of that child, there is a level of accountability that is inherent. By sending the child to school, there is an independent check and balance that provides the opportunity to review the wellbeing of the child and to provide that duty of care and reporting. So, whilst it is not a perfect measure, school attendance is certainly a powerful measure in assessing whether a child has needs and whether the parent needs some support or management to help get to the point where that child is given the start in life, the life skills and the very substance of the things that they need to grow and flourish in life.

The person who ends up becoming subject to the income management regime will have an income management account. Essentially, amounts will be deducted from the person's welfare payments and credited to that income management account. The reason for that is obviously to allow for the management. Centrelink is not going to do this immediately there is an issue. There will be periods in which people can verify enrolment or attendance or challenge issues around their suitability as parents. Even if they are found to have, for example, not had the child attending school for whatever the benchmark is—for example, five days in a term—there is an opportunity for them to make good that standard. But, should it be found that that is not the case, they will have up to 100 per cent of their welfare payments put into an income management account.

The other option is if a written notice has been received from the state child protection

authority requesting that a person be placed in income management following a child having been found at risk of neglect. This is an area where I would encourage the state governments to work with us to make sure that their state departments who look after child welfare issues are adequately resourced. In the example I described before, the extended family have for some time seen the train smash coming. They have spoken with the school, they have spoken with Centrelink and they have spoken with the state welfare authorities. But nobody at this stage has been able to take action because none of the thresholds have actually been crossed. So I welcome the wording that talks about a child having been found at risk of neglect. So, rather than waiting until the damage is well and truly done, we can start to work with people when those warning signs are very clearly there and those people have been engaged in a meaningful and constructive way with both state and federal authorities. We will be able to hold them to account and give them the opportunity to explain the situation, to develop or change their ways or, if need be, to come under this management regime so that the children are given the chance of a change in their circumstances rather than waiting until the damage is done and is identifiable before any of these measures can be taken.

All of the advances, lump sums, baby bonuses *et cetera* are going to be managed. I believe that is a welcome development. The welfare payments will be placed in a person's income management account. This account will essentially be public moneys, but not for the use of the government. It will not alter the tax liabilities or the child support liabilities *et cetera* of people. Individuals will not lose any of their entitlements. They will get regular statements of credits and debits and balances. They will also need to meet with Centrelink to discuss their needs and

their patterns of expenditure. This requirement for consultation recognises that, whilst everybody has core needs, there are differing circumstances that must be met. These funds will be applied to the known priority needs of each person, their partner, their children and other dependants. The priority needs will include things like food and clothing, housing, health, child care and development, education and training, employment and transport and even things like funerals. Centrelink will not be able to unreasonably refuse access to funds for other purposes if all of these other priority needs have been met. But there will be certain excluded goods, such as tobacco, alcohol, gambling and pornography.

On that point, whilst I welcome the measures in the Northern Territory to ban X-rated, 18-plus pornography going into those communities, I think it is interesting to note that, since the 1980s, that material has been banned around Australia in other states. If we believe that damage is being done in the Northern Territory through this material—and given the weight of evidence around the world about the impact of pornography on people, both adults and children—I think it would be appropriate to look at completely banning that material in Australia. I would welcome further moves from the government to have a common alignment across all the states and territories in terms of that material.

Turning to the management of the actual finances, the bill will provide flexibility and methods to meet people's priority needs, whether this is through things like vouchers or stored-value cards, expense payments or payments to various account types—for example, stores, debit cards or bank accounts. It also provides some option for discretionary cash, subject to the involvement of the people managing the account and a legislative instrument. Individuals will have standard appeal rights in relation to their income. Importantly, also, the bill recognises that there

are a number of different circumstances, and it makes exceptions, for example, for people who have no requirement under the state law for their children to be at school. For example, somebody who chooses to home school their child and has that approved by the relevant state authority will obviously be exempted from these requirements.

These things are not happening in isolation. I welcome in particular, both nationally and in Wakefield, the input of groups such as the family relationship centres, which are seeking to be not only a gateway into the family law system where families are not coping or have decided to separate but also, importantly, a gateway to a broad network of resources to help young couples, young parents and couples who have been married for some time to gain support to make good relationships even stronger and better. I encourage people who are service providers in the family relationship centre network to look at how they could also offer services to help people who find themselves in a situation requiring this kind of intervention on behalf of the government.

We also need the cooperation of the states. I am aware that there is already some concern from education departments and some schools about the provision of attendance and enrolment data. I believe it is important, if we are to truly protect these children from the sorts of consequences we have talked about, that we see cooperation. There has been a lot of talk recently about the fact that the Australian government needs to be cooperating with the states. On just about every measure that you care to name, whether it is roads, water or disability—issues such as these interventions; there has been a whole range of areas—the Commonwealth has invited interaction with the states so that we can work with them. Interventions generally only come when we get to the point where the need is so pressing and the cooperation

has not been forthcoming. But here is an opportunity for us to work together in the best interests of children. So I would welcome measures by the state governments to make sure that we can get those enrolment and attendance figures from the schools and that adequate resourcing is placed into their departments looking after families and children so that, where extended families, schools or other concerned appropriate people make reports about the welfare of the child and the children who are identified as being at risk of neglect, early intervention can occur, as opposed to waiting until it is far too late in the child's life experience.

I support this bill, which is one of a number of bills in this measure, which not only addresses the issues in the Northern Territory with our Indigenous communities but also specifically seeks to address similar problems that affect many of our communities across Australia. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KATTER** (Kennedy) (8.10 pm)—There have been a number of speakers who have been honest enough to get up and say that we, as a nation, do not have a very happy record in dealing with the First Australians. When I was minister I psyched myself into concentrating on the positive. We say that we have not been able to get it right. I will read out a document presented to the House when I was minister on the economic achievements of Queensland Aboriginal and Islander communities from 1984 to 1989. In 1984 community stores went from a \$200,000 loss to a \$900,000 a year profit. Cattle turnover rose from 965 to 5,800. The increase in crayfish turnover was from 0.3 million to around seven million. The turnover at the Massey freezer for the fishing industry rose from 14,000 to 291,000. The number of businesses went from three to 52. Twenty per cent of public servants were replaced by community workers—for that,

read people of European descent as opposed to people of Aboriginal descent. And the building program went from 40 people of Aboriginal descent employed to 288 people.

We did not, regrettably, keep figures on trauma rates in the Aboriginal communities in Queensland, but I remember Matron Gray, who is now a lecturer at the university in Townsville. She is the wife of the very famous Roy Gray, who was a big contributor and architect of this success story. She said that the trauma rates at Yarrabah had simply ceased to exist. Where they had handled 50 to 100 trauma cases—that is people who had been bashed up basically as a result of alcoholism—the vast bulk of those figures had gone to virtually nothing. I remember the figures on Palm Island. The crime rate there dropped clean in half. The honourable member for Page said the crime rate is due to boredom and that they have nothing to do there. They are incredibly boring places. The rifles and guns have been taken away so you cannot go shooting. Most of the rivers in Queensland in these areas have been closed off to fishing because the rivers have been declared 'wild rivers'. There is no career path. Virtually all of the council clerk positions have been taken by whitefellas and not given to blackfellas. There is no business opportunity because you cannot own land.

If you impose those conditions upon the people of Canberra or Brisbane, I dare say that your social statistics that were so capably espoused by the Leader of the Opposition—and I pay him tribute—would be the same for these areas as well. Add to that what may be one of the better addresses I have ever heard in my life by Noel Pearson to the Canberra press club, where not a single member of parliament bothered to turn up. He talked about an inherited capability. He said that people in this room have inherited capabilities. My family knew how to run businesses. You were teetethed on running

businesses. Other people knew how to be tradesmen. Other people knew how to get jobs on the railway. These people had none of those inherited or given-to-them capabilities. They have nothing to do; no career opportunities and no businesses opportunities.

I pay the minister a tribute because he is determined to do something. That is more than I can say for any other federal minister I can remember. A lot talked, waffled and wandered all over the place, but this minister has a steely determination to deliver something. For that, we pay him tribute.

Having said that, I simply cannot see how you can force parents to send their children to school. Our options have been taken away from us. We cannot force children now; it is not longer an option available to us. You cannot belt your child. If you do, someone will come along and take the child from you. You cannot threaten to take away their food or to lock them up in their rooms. They were punishments that many of us suffered in our youth, and quite deservedly, but parents cannot do that now. There is no capacity to discipline people. There is no use flogging the parents because they simply cannot force their children to go to school.

I will provide a perspective on that. In Camooweal there are two wonderful school-teachers. One would go in the front of the houses and the other would go around the back. As the kids would run away, at nine o'clock in the morning, the bloke at the back would grab them all and put them on a bus. They were literally kidnapped and taken to school, but those kids got an education. However, we passed laws to prevent that, and now many kids do not get an education at Camooweal.

With all due respect, no society on earth has succeeded in banning alcohol. I said, when it was done in Queensland, that people would die as a result of that decision—and

people did. A person was killed on Palm Island. I felt terribly sorry for the person that died, but I also felt terribly sorry for the policeman. Clearly, if you try to take grog away from people who are drinking they will get very mad indeed. There will be a fight and someone will get hurt. I ask the government to name a single society on earth that has succeeded in prohibition. The Americans tried it, and it was a pretty sorry old experiment.

In respect of welfare payments, the government is saying they should not be able to just get the money and not work. I do not know how this mechanism will deliver that. We cannot hold a gun at their heads, and we cannot flog them with whips. If in a mustering camp you decided not to get on the horse, someone would go over and give you a knuckle sandwich and you would get on the horse, I can assure you. And that is the way things were done up until very recently.

Let me just say what needs to be done. The minister has moved in this direction, although not as far as the government should have moved—he should have given them a simple piece of paper, the same as anyone else in Australia holds. It is called a freehold title. Do not talk about tribes and tribal relationships with the land. Heavens! Dozens of people I know really well have shot themselves rather than be run off their farms by the banks. It happens every six weeks in the sugar industry and every four days in the dairy industry. This is not a characteristic of people of Aboriginal descent. Give them title to the land. This is the ridiculous nature of the Aboriginal question: if you look at a map of Australia and you will see that some 40 per cent of the surface area is owned by people of Aboriginal descent because they are of Aboriginal descent, yet if you go to Yarrabah the chairman of the council will bang the table and say that the only place on earth where you cannot own your own home is at

Yarrabah—or at any other Aboriginal community in Queensland. That is sadly and regrettably true.

Think about it. If you want to open a service station or to start up a cattle run or a fishing operation you have to get money from somewhere to do it. How do you get the money? I do not know anyone who started up in business by saving his pennies and putting his saved pennies into the operation. You have to get it by borrowing money from a bank, and a bank will not lend you money unless you have ‘mortgageability’. That is where we have failed dismally; we have not provided the ‘mortgageability’. There was the tremendous success story that I read out here. Two text books have been written on what we did in respect of Aboriginal affairs in Queensland which are set in university courses throughout Australia, and the television show *60 Minutes* ran two stories on what we were doing in Aboriginal affairs in that period of time. However you looked at it, it was an amazing success story. But the first thing we did was to provide freehold title to the land. Regrettably, very little of it got out in that period, but it was enough to set up nearly 100 businesses, most of which are still running today.

To overcome the boredom that the honourable member for Page referred to, we started a rugby league competition. We started rodeo training. We started country music festivals. This is the culture of black Australia, the First Australians, and it is most certainly the culture of rural country Australia. These people are no different from anyone else. Very few of the people in most of our country towns are not purely white—including me, I might add—and very few of them are perfectly black.

The social welfare is to be replaced by a voucher system, and I think that is a very good move. You just cannot give people tax-

payers' money and allow them to spend it on grog and let their kids go hungry.

My first impression of what it meant to be a Christian was at a meeting with the local Catholic priest about YCW. He said, 'You have to go now because I've got to feed all these little kids.' He had to feed 15 kids, and the stairs leading up to his house were very dangerous. He was a very poor man, but he fed these 15 kids because they were not being fed during the day. Their idea of being 'fed' was their parents giving them money to buy coca-cola and chips, usually, when they started crying late in the day.

On the subject of housing—the honourable Leader of the Opposition and other speakers mentioned this, and it is very relevant—if you pack 12 or 15 people into a house, someone is going to get killed. People living that close together, grating upon each other, is just not going to work. When I was minister, the average house occupancy was 11½ people. The average occupancy for the other welfare housing in Queensland was below two people. So we used it, unashamedly, as a social tool. All contractors of European descent were removed; all building of houses in Queensland—and I had about \$40 million or \$50 million to spend per year—was to be done exclusively by First Australian labour. It took us a long time to get agreement on that but we did. Then the brother of the famous Noel Pearson came up with the idea that we use CDEP money so that we could get through these 11 houses a year in Doomadgee. They now build two houses every three years with the same amount of money at Doomadgee.

We put a block-making machine there, so the blocks were made locally. The houses were erected with CDEP labour and, amazingly, people started looking after their houses, even in the worst communities. Some of the things that the minister has done

are very good. But, Minister, you cannot force people to do some things. Force will not work. It is clear that you are seriously trying. That is what characterises and separates you from all of your predecessors, in my parliamentary lifetime, anyway.

The time allocated to me has been curtailed, which I have agreed to. If you have any doubts about these people's ability, with respect to getting 6,000 head of cattle behind wire, where there are no fences at all, then just look at Jackson Shortjoe, and particularly Eddie Holroyd, as they did at Pormpuarraaw. Watch Travis Fraser at Doomadgee, where they have won three premierships in a row, where they have to travel 2,000 kilometres to get a game—that is, if we can hold the other teams upright in the competition. Look at Colin Saltmere. He took many people—some of them very drunken people—and got them to build a magnificent bridge at Camooweal. Speak to Leon Yeatman at Yarrabah—I think the minister has gone there—and you will see they are a great community, a beautiful community, clean and well presented. Speak to Joseph Elu at Seisia—one of the greatest commercial success stories in the country—who has now had his right to self-management taken away by the Beattie government, or to Eric Law and Lester Rosendale. They, to a large degree, are the architects of what we did in Queensland. Any of those people will tell you where to go and, please, have a look at a successful model: Queensland in the 1980s.

**Mr BROUUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (8.25 pm)—I thank all honourable members from both sides who have participated in today's debate, a historic debate in the parliament in this time in our nation's history. It is a time when, hopefully, we can, once and for all, make a real improvement in the lives of the

First Australians and, in particular, the children. That is what these bills are about. That is the expression that we hope to achieve. They are the practical outcomes and the objectives that we strive for.

Before closing the debate, I briefly make a few comments to clarify a couple of points. The first one is about the timing of this bill. The opposition, in fact, used a political opportunity to say that the government are arrogant by not providing the bills in time. I can assure the member for Jagajaga that the commentary and the thoughts of the task force in Alice Springs were asked for on Thursday night last week. There were still amendments up to one o'clock on Sunday afternoon. We simply did not have a bill to give you any sooner, so I find it disappointing that you would make that comment. We have tried our hardest to give it to you, as and when we could. You in fact received these bills before my party room did, before the government's party room did and before our backbench committee did. It was to help you, the opposition, deal with your own party room. We were misled by your staff, who said there was a meeting of your caucus last night. In fact, that meeting was today. Be that as it may—

**Dr Emerson**—We had a meeting last night and today.

**Mr BROUGH**—I can inform the honourable member we were actually told that the caucus meeting in relation to this was yesterday.

*Dr Emerson interjecting—*

**Mr BROUGH**—That is fair enough. Whilst trying to get bipartisan support, there has been that political overtone that the government somehow was trying to give you detail late or not give it to you. I can assure you that we have given it to you at the earliest opportunity that it was available all the way through, including the explanatory

memorandum, the appropriation bills. The amendments, which I have been asked by the opposition to consider seriously tonight, I received 15 minutes before coming into the chamber. I have taken advice and will discuss those, once you have had something to say about them.

Some issues were raised by the opposition about communications, and the best communications on issues like this are face to face. We have now visited all 73 communities and explained to them what the intervention is about and, as I said earlier on today, more than half of those communities have now had the assessment done, with more detailed information. We all know—and I know the member for Jagajaga travelled to Hermannsberg and knows only too well—that some people deliberately misinformed for their own purposes. I am not suggesting you; I am not suggesting that at all if you think that was the inference. But there were people there, we have that information, we know what they did and we know why. Some of those people are actually paid, employed, to work in and assist these communities. You ask yourself: what could their motivation be to spread rumours to people that their children were going to be taken away by the military or their dogs were going to be shot when they knew that was without basis?

With respect to the other issue of communications and working closely together, this will be the first time that many of these communities have actually had a federal government officer on the ground that they can interact with one on one—who does not fly in and out or drop in for the day but is living there. That one-on-one location will make an enormous difference to people. It will also ensure that the money is properly spent. It will ensure that gatekeepers who, unfortunately, in too many communities do not get that opportunity, do so.

The accusation that this is top down and not based on consultation could not be further from the truth. The genesis of this legislation has come from comment and consultation, if you want to call it that. However, it has been about me talking to people one on one. It was from community consultation in Kalumburu, Western Australia—well before this latest break-out of charges, where 15 of the population of 90 males in that community were charged for child sex offences and similar activities—that I was told that virtually nobody in the community could work in a voluntary capacity in the school because they could not get the appropriate passes and, in addition, that the community had a huge problem with cash: ‘What can you do to reduce the amount of cash in the community?’ I linked the two. In the same way, people in Wadeye told me that they had problems with people using the cash for drugs and grog and also told me: ‘Treat us like whitefellas and not like separate citizens. If our kids don’t go to school, let there be a cause and effect. Let’s have police here so that, when crimes are committed, things are dealt with.’ All of these things came from those community consultations that I have had over 18 months; that is where these things got their expression. So the accusation that we have not consulted could not be further from the truth. We have consulted over and over again. To do more would be to delay and, in doing so, more children would be hurt. That is just a statement of unfortunate fact.

These are momentous bills. They now need not just the commitment but also the will of many workers on the ground, whose efforts we must applaud. Many of them are away from their families—the police, the managers in these communities, other departmental officials, volunteers—but they want to see a better future. We should not forget them in this exercise of trying to pro-

tect the children of the First Australians. That has to be first and foremost in our minds at all times. I thank all members for their contributions to the debate. I question the commitment some of those indicated to these particular measures. I do not dispute their motivation of wanting to prevent child abuse in any way, shape or form, but I certainly did not detect the genuine support that would be necessary for these measures to be ongoing should there be a change of government. I commend the bill to the House.

Question put:

That the words proposed to be omitted (**Ms Macklin’s amendment**) stand part of the question.

The House divided. [8.36 pm]

(The Deputy Speaker—Hon. IR Causley)

Ayes.....	74
Noes.....	<u>54</u>
Majority.....	<u>20</u>

#### AYES

Anderson, J.D.	Andrews, K.J.
Bailey, F.E.	Baird, B.G.
Baker, M.	Baldwin, R.C.
Barresi, P.A.	Bartlett, K.J.
Billson, B.F.	Bishop, B.K.
Bishop, J.I.	Broadbent, R.
Brough, M.T.	Ciobo, S.M.
Dutton, P.C.	Elson, K.S.
Entsch, W.G.	Farmer, P.F.
Fawcett, D.	Ferguson, M.D.
Gambaro, T.	Gash, J.
Georgiou, P.	Haase, B.W.
Hardgrave, G.D.	Hartsuyker, L.
Henry, S.	Hockey, J.B.
Hull, K.E. *	Hunt, G.A.
Jensen, D.	Johnson, M.A.
Jull, D.F.	Keenan, M.
Kelly, D.M.	Kelly, J.M.
Laming, A.	Ley, S.P.
Lindsay, P.J.	Macfarlane, I.E.
Markus, L.	May, M.A.
McArthur, S. *	McGauran, P.J.
Mirabella, S.	Moylan, J.E.
Nelson, B.J.	Neville, P.C.
Pearce, C.J.	Prosser, G.D.

Pyne, C.	Randall, D.J.
Richardson, K.	Robb, A.
Ruddock, P.M.	Schultz, A.
Scott, B.C.	Secker, P.D.
Slipper, P.N.	Smith, A.D.H.
Somlyay, A.M.	Southcott, A.J.
Stone, S.N.	Thompson, C.P.
Ticehurst, K.V.	Tollner, D.W.
Truss, W.E.	Tuckey, C.W.
Turnbull, M.	Vale, D.S.
Vasta, R.	Wakelin, B.H.
Washer, M.J.	Wood, J.

## NOES

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Bevis, A.R.	Bird, S.
Bowen, C.	Burke, A.E.
Burke, A.S.	Byrne, A.M.
Corcoran, A.K.	Crean, S.F.
Danby, M. *	Edwards, G.J.
Elliot, J.	Ellis, A.L.
Ellis, K.	Emerson, C.A.
Ferguson, L.D.T.	Fitzgibbon, J.A.
Garrett, P.	George, J.
Gibbons, S.W.	Gillard, J.E.
Grierson, S.J.	Griffin, A.P.
Hall, J.G. *	Hatton, M.J.
Hayes, C.P.	Irwin, J.
Jenkins, H.A.	Kerr, D.J.C.
King, C.F.	Livermore, K.F.
Macklin, J.L.	McClelland, R.B.
McMullan, R.F.	Melham, D.
Murphy, J.P.	O'Connor, B.P.
O'Connor, G.M.	Owens, J.
Plibersek, T.	Price, L.R.S.
Quick, H.V.	Ripoll, B.F.
Rudd, K.M.	Sawford, R.W.
Sercombe, R.C.G.	Smith, S.F.
Snowdon, W.E.	Swan, W.M.
Tanner, L.	Thomson, K.J.
Vamvakinou, M.	Wilkie, K.

\* denotes teller

Question agreed to.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

### Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (8.45 pm)—by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) to (3):

- (1) Clause 4, page 2 (lines 21-28), omit subclauses (2) and (3), substitute:
- (2) To the extent that this subsection applies, the provisions referred to in paragraph (1)(a), and any acts referred to in paragraph (1)(b), are, for the purposes of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, special measures and are consistent with Part 2 of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- (3) To the extent that this subsection applies, the provisions referred to in paragraph (1)(a), and any acts referred to in paragraph (1)(b), are not laws as described by subsection 10(3) of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- (2) Clause 6, page 4 (lines 33-34), page 5 (lines 1-2), omit subclauses (2) and (3), substitute:
- (2) Any such implementation, or other acts, are, for the purposes of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, special measures and are consistent with Part 2 of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- (3) Any such implementation, or other acts, are not laws as described by subsection 10(3) of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- (3) Page 6, after clause 7 (after line 27), insert:

### 8 Review

The Minister must cause to be conducted, as soon as practicable after the first anniversary of the day on which this Act receives the Royal Assent, a review of the provisions of Part 3 B of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* regarding the application of income management to persons by reason of their being persons in a relevant Northern Territory area.

Given the time limitations on this debate, I will speak very briefly. Amendments (1) and (2) relate to the Racial Discrimination Act. These amendments clarify that the measures in the bill are special measures under the Racial Discrimination Act and are therefore

consistent with the act. It is the opposition's opinion, and I understand that it is the government's opinion as conveyed to us in a briefing yesterday, that these are special measures under the Racial Discrimination Act. Given that they are special measures to benefit Aboriginal people, in our view it is unhelpful and unnecessary that there be a blanket exemption from part 2 of the Racial Discrimination Act. This amendment will remove that blanket exemption. Proposed section 10(3) will confirm that these laws are special measures consistent with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Amendment (3) relates to one of the reviews that we believe would help the operation of this intervention. This amendment requires that a review be conducted after a year of the operation of the welfare reform and income management systems specific to the Northern Territory. So it relates only to the welfare payment arrangements that the bill proposes for the Northern Territory. The review will examine only that issue for people living in prescribed communities; it is not intended to examine the broader income management issues relating to child protection or school attendance.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. IR Causley)**—Order! There is too much conversation in the parliament. The honourable member for Jagajaga has the call.

**Ms MACKLIN**—When this intervention was announced, the Prime Minister and Minister Brough said that income management for people in prescribed Northern Territory communities would be for an initial period of 12 months. This amendment affirms the government's initial intention of 12 months of operation for these laws. In the opposition's view, it is sensible to review the effectiveness of the Northern Territory specific welfare payment laws after 12 months. In par-

ticular, we want to assess their effectiveness at stabilising the communities and to see how they are interacting with the broader income management systems.

**Mr BROUUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (8.49 pm)—I have looked at the amendments dealing with the Racial Discrimination Act. What the opposition is seeking to do with these amendments is in line with what the government is doing. We believe that our measures fully cover the issue of special measures and therefore that the amendment adds nothing. We believe that the government's legislation handles the issue in the best possible way. In relation to the review of special measures, the government has already stated that the task force headed by Dr Sue Gordon can at any time recommend to the minister that a community no longer requires those special measures. That review process is ongoing and, again, the amendments are unnecessary and the government does not support them.

Debate interrupted.

## BUSINESS

**Mr BROUUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (8.49 pm)—by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent debate on the question—that the House do now adjourn—continuing for a period not exceeding 30 minutes after the motion is moved.

Question agreed to.

**SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(WELFARE PAYMENT REFORM)  
BILL 2007**

**Consideration in Detail**

Consideration resumed.

Question put:

That the amendments (Ms Macklin's) be agreed to.

The House divided. [8.53 pm]

(The Deputy Speaker—Hon. IR Causley)

Ayes.....	54
Noes.....	74
Majority.....	20

**AYES**

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Bevis, A.R.	Bird, S.
Bowen, C.	Burke, A.E.
Burke, A.S.	Byrne, A.M.
Corcoran, A.K.	Crean, S.F.
Danby, M. *	Edwards, G.J.
Elliot, J.	Ellis, A.L.
Ellis, K.	Emerson, C.A.
Ferguson, L.D.T.	Fitzgibbon, J.A.
Garrett, P.	George, J.
Gibbons, S.W.	Gillard, J.E.
Grierson, S.J.	Griffin, A.P.
Hall, J.G. *	Hatton, M.J.
Hayes, C.P.	Irwin, J.
Jenkins, H.A.	Kerr, D.J.C.
King, C.F.	Livermore, K.F.
Macklin, J.L.	McClelland, R.B.
McMullan, R.F.	Melham, D.
Murphy, J.P.	O'Connor, B.P.
O'Connor, G.M.	Owens, J.
Plibersek, T.	Price, L.R.S.
Quick, H.V.	Ripoll, B.F.
Rudd, K.M.	Sawford, R.W.
Sercombe, R.C.G.	Smith, S.F.
Snowdon, W.E.	Swan, W.M.
Tanner, L.	Thomson, K.J.
Vamvakinou, M.	Wilkie, K.

**NOES**

Anderson, J.D.	Andrews, K.J.
Bailey, F.E.	Baird, B.G.
Baker, M.	Baldwin, R.C.

Barresi, P.A.	Bartlett, K.J.
Billson, B.F.	Bishop, B.K.
Bishop, J.I.	Broadbent, R.
Brough, M.T.	Ciobo, S.M.
Dutton, P.C.	Elson, K.S.
Entsch, W.G.	Farmer, P.F.
Fawcett, D.	Ferguson, M.D.
Gambaro, T.	Gash, J.
Georgiou, P.	Haase, B.W.
Hardgrave, G.D.	Hartsuyker, L.
Henry, S.	Hockey, J.B.
Hull, K.E. *	Hunt, G.A.
Jensen, D.	Johnson, M.A.
Jull, D.F.	Keenan, M.
Kelly, D.M.	Kelly, J.M.
Laming, A.	Ley, S.P.
Lindsay, P.J.	Macfarlane, I.E.
Markus, L.	May, M.A.
McArthur, S. *	McGauran, P.J.
Mirabella, S.	Moylan, J.E.
Nelson, B.J.	Neville, P.C.
Pearce, C.J.	Prosser, G.D.
Pyne, C.	Randall, D.J.
Richardson, K.	Robb, A.
Ruddock, P.M.	Schultz, A.
Scott, B.C.	Secker, P.D.
Slipper, P.N.	Smith, A.D.H.
Somlyay, A.M.	Southcott, A.J.
Stone, S.N.	Thompson, C.P.
Ticehurst, K.V.	Tollner, D.W.
Truss, W.E.	Tuckey, C.W.
Turnbull, M.	Vale, D.S.
Vasta, R.	Wakelin, B.H.
Washer, M.J.	Wood, J.

\* denotes teller

Question negatived.

Consideration interrupted and progress reported; adjournment proposed and negatived.

Bill agreed to.

**Third Reading**

**Mr BROUH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (9.01 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE BILL 2007**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed, on motion by **Mr Brough**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

**Consideration in Detail**

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (9.02 pm)—by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) and (2):

(1) Page 9, after clause 5 (after line 14) insert:

5A Review of operation etc of Part 4

The Minister must cause to be conducted, as soon as practicable after the first anniversary of the day on which this Act receives the Royal Assent, a review of the operation and effectiveness of Part 4 (Acquisition of rights, titles and interests in land).

(2) Clause 132, page 93, (lines 12-17), omit sub-clauses (1) and (2), substitute:

(1) Subject to subsection (3), the provisions of this Act, and any acts done under or for the purposes of those provisions, are, for the purposes of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, special measures and are consistent with Part 2 of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), the provisions of this Act, and any acts done under or for the purposes of those provisions, are not laws as described by subsection 10(3) of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

Amendment (1) relates to the requirement we seek that a review be conducted one year after the commencement of part 4 of this bill. The review would examine part 4 only: namely, the sections dealing with the acqui-

tion of rights, titles and interests in land. This relates principally to the new five-year leases over township areas but also includes the town camps.

The government has indicated, and we agree, that there is a need to facilitate better housing and infrastructure. The government has also argued that the five-year leases over townships in Aboriginal communities will facilitate the rapid improvement of housing and infrastructure. The government argues that taking on the responsibility as the effective town landlord is necessary to quickly improve the vital infrastructure in these communities that is necessary for better housing, and we would argue that it would also be very helpful for improved economic development.

The lease process, of course, is going to be new and untried. We think it will need to be handled very sensitively, and we understand that, if it does work well, it could deliver significant benefits. Through this review, we want simply to examine how effective this has been in operation and to assess the progress in establishing infrastructure and housing in both the townships and the town camps. If the situation became stalled or mired in any sort of legal process and were not delivering the outcomes then we would want to fix it. The review will give us a progress update so that we do not get distracted from the main goal of fixing infrastructure in these communities.

Amendment (2) moves the same amendment as I moved earlier in relation to the Racial Discrimination Act, so I will not repeat my remarks.

**Mr KATTER** (Kennedy) (9.05 pm)—I support the opposition spokesman, the honourable member for Jagajaga, on these amendments and urge the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to adopt them. I think they are emi-

nently sensible. There are a lot of things in here that give me cause for concern. I have had discussions with Bev O'Brien and Maureen Power, two very sensible and intelligent ladies from North Queensland, and I agree with their position that there are a lot of things here that are worrying. A review in a year's time seems to me eminently sensible and I urge the minister to accept the proposal.

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (9.05 pm)—I have two quick comments. Firstly, it is the preserve of any government to review any of its legislation or provisions within that legislation at any time. Secondly, with regard to the request to have a review after 12 months, the leases are going to be done in three blocks. Some of them may not happen for six months, in which case it would be totally inappropriate, within the short period from when they have been enacted or empowered, to expect to see the sorts of changes that we are looking for. For that reason the government rejects the opposition's amendments.

Question put:

That the amendments (**Ms Macklin's**) be agreed to.

The House divided. [9.10 pm]

(The Speaker—Hon. David Hawker)

Ayes.....	55
Noes.....	74
Majority.....	19

AYES

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Bevis, A.R.	Bird, S.
Bowen, C.	Burke, A.E.
Burke, A.S.	Byrne, A.M.
Corcoran, A.K.	Crean, S.F.
Danby, M. *	Edwards, G.J.

Elliot, J.	Ellis, A.L.
Ellis, K.	Emerson, C.A.
Ferguson, L.D.T.	Fitzgibbon, J.A.
Garrett, P.	George, J.
Gibbons, S.W.	Gillard, J.E.
Grierson, S.J.	Griffin, A.P.
Hall, J.G. *	Hatton, M.J.
Hayes, C.P.	Irwin, J.
Jenkins, H.A.	Katter, R.C.
Kerr, D.J.C.	King, C.F.
Livermore, K.F.	Macklin, J.L.
McClelland, R.B.	McMullan, R.F.
Melham, D.	Murphy, J.P.
O'Connor, B.P.	O'Connor, G.M.
Owens, J.	Plibersek, T.
Price, L.R.S.	Quick, H.V.
Ripoll, B.F.	Rudd, K.M.
Sawford, R.W.	Sercombe, R.C.G.
Smith, S.F.	Snowdon, W.E.
Swan, W.M.	Tanner, L.
Thomson, K.J.	Vamvakinou, M.
Wilkie, K.	

NOES

Anderson, J.D.	Andrews, K.J.
Bailey, F.E.	Baird, B.G.
Baker, M.	Baldwin, R.C.
Barresi, P.A.	Bartlett, K.J.
Billson, B.F.	Bishop, B.K.
Bishop, J.I.	Broadbent, R.
Brough, M.T.	Causley, I.R.
Ciobo, S.M.	Dutton, P.C.
Elson, K.S.	Entsch, W.G.
Farmer, P.F.	Fawcett, D.
Ferguson, M.D.	Gambaro, T.
Gash, J.	Georgiou, P.
Haase, B.W.	Hardgrave, G.D.
Hartsuyker, L.	Henry, S.
Hull, K.E. *	Hunt, G.A.
Jensen, D.	Johnson, M.A.
Jull, D.F.	Keenan, M.
Kelly, D.M.	Kelly, J.M.
Laming, A.	Ley, S.P.
Lindsay, P.J.	Macfarlane, I.E.
Markus, L.	May, M.A.
McArthur, S. *	McGauran, P.J.
Mirabella, S.	Moylan, J.E.
Nelson, B.J.	Neville, P.C.
Pearce, C.J.	Prosser, G.D.
Pyne, C.	Randall, D.J.
Richardson, K.	Robb, A.
Ruddock, P.M.	Schultz, A.

Scott, B.C.

Slipper, P.N.

Somlyay, A.M.

Stone, S.N.

Ticehurst, K.V.

Truss, W.E.

Turnbull, M.

Vasta, R.

Washer, M.J.

\* denotes teller

Question negatived.

Bill agreed to.

### Third Reading

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (9.15 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2007

#### Second Reading

Debate resumed, on motion by **Mr Brough**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

#### Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (9.17 pm)—by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) to (6):

(1) Clause 4, page 3 (lines 11-17), omit sub-clauses (1) and (2), substitute:

(1) Subject to subsection (3), the provisions of this Act, and any acts done under or

Secker, P.D.

Smith, A.D.H.

Southcott, A.J.

Thompson, C.P.

Tollner, D.W.

Tuckey, C.W.

Vale, D.S.

Wakelin, B.H.

Wood, J.

for the purposes of those provisions, are, for the purposes of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, special measures and are consistent with Part 2 of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), the provisions of this Act, and any acts done under or for the purposes of those provisions, are not laws as described by subsection 10(3) of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

(2) Schedule 4, item 9, page 39 (after line 24), after paragraph (g) insert:

(ga) in performing functions as an agent of the Commonwealth government or of the Northern Territory government on official business; or

(3) Schedule 4, item 9, page 39 (after line 24), after paragraph (g) insert:

(gb) in performing functions as a journalist in their professional capacity; or

(4) Schedule 4, item 9, page 39 (after line 35), insert:

*journalist* means a member of a professional organisation recognised by the regulations for the purposes of this subsection.

(5) Schedule 4, item 12, page 41 (line 13) to page 53 (line 5), omit proposed sections 70B to 70F (inclusive).

(6) Schedule 4, item 14, page 53 (after line 29), at the end of proposed section 74AA insert:

(2) A land council may, by writing, request that the Minister revoke a permit issued to a person under subsection 70(2BB) where there are, in the opinion of the council, reasonable grounds to believe that the person is of bad character.

Amendment (1) is the same as the amendment that we moved to the other two bills that would clarify that the measures in the bill are special measures under the Racial Discrimination Act, so I will not repeat the remarks that I made earlier. Amendments (2), (3), (4) and (5) relate to the permit system. Amendment (5) opposes the government's

removal of the permit system on roads and common areas in towns. We believe that this removal of the permit system by the government will reduce the safety of children in these communities by allowing greater access for sly groggers, drug runners and paedophiles. Labor has proposed a test for dealing with this legislation: it would get our support if it improved the security and safety of children in a practical way. It is our view that in their current form the government's proposed changes to the permit system do not satisfy that test.

We are supported in this view by the Northern Territory's Police Association. Vince Kelly has made it very clear that in his view the permit system gives both the police and the local communities the ability to exclude certain people from the community. He goes on to say that these are people who are possibly offenders in relation to sexual and physical abuse of Aboriginal women and children. As he says, more importantly, they are possibly offenders in terms of running grog and drugs into these communities. It is the Police Association President's view that the permit system can be used and has been used to prevent access by sly groggers and paedophiles. It is for that reason that we are moving this amendment. We think that the permit system helps to protect children and that the government's move will make it less safe for children.

Nevertheless, we recognise the need to allow greater access for certain types of people. Amendments (2), (3) and (4) expand the categories of permit exemptions across Aboriginal land for people engaged as agents of the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory government to enable them to access these communities. This will certainly help the government in its service delivery through this intervention. Our amendments also provide for an exemption for journalists working in their professional capacity. We

think that that is important for open public transparency. We believe that these changes will assist in the delivery of important services and most importantly in ensuring the safety of women and children in Aboriginal communities without opening them up to the risk of unfettered access by sly groggers or paedophiles.

In the bill, the government proposes to give the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs the power to issue permits, which we do not oppose. The section also limits the revoking of permits to the entity which issued the permit. What we are trying to do with amendment (6) is to give the land councils the right to ask the minister to revoke a permit if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person to whom he has issued a permit is of bad character. It would enable the minister to take advice from the land councils if they have information that should lead to the revocation of a permit.

**Mr BROUUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (9.21 pm)—I will talk to the amendment dealing with permits and to schedule 2 of the amendment. This amendment is actually superfluous. It is already covered by existing legislation and is in fact covered under section 72AA relating to a person who is in the service or employment of the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory or an authority—that is a definition of a person who is an officer, and they are covered.

Amendment (3) would mean that journalists would in fact be able to range over the 48 per cent of the Northern Territory that is Aboriginal land rather than just communities. This would be an issue in terms of privacy and sacred sites, the very views that our exclusion of removing the permit system for

99.8 per cent of the Territory would seek to respect. For that reason we oppose that.

Amendment (4) relates to subsection (3). On (5), this would actually be returned to the permit system or to one of the closed communities. To take issue with Vince Kelly: is he seriously telling anyone that the rivers of grog, the pornography, the drug running and the sexual abuse has not occurred with the permit system now? It has not helped whatsoever. But I would ask him to have a look at Daly River, where there is no permit system and which is a far cleaner, healthier, more secure community. So the proof is in the pudding. I say to him and to you that there is no substitute for police. That is our commitment: to give people genuine policing, not hide behind a permit system that has simply failed communities.

Finally, in relation to the powers of the minister, why is it that you are requesting only that the minister issue a permit to a person or revoke a permit to someone who may be of bad character?

*Ms Macklin interjecting—*

**Mr BROUGH**—Just let me clarify what is in the bill, in case we are at cross-purposes. The ability to issue permits includes the ability to revoke permits. We reject the amendments as they are placed.

Question put:

That the amendments (**Ms Macklin's**) be agreed to.

The House divided. [9.28 pm]

(The Speaker—Hon. David Hawker)

Ayes.....	55
Noes.....	74
Majority.....	19

AYES

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Beazley, K.C.	Bevis, A.R.
Bird, S.	Bowen, C.

Burke, A.E.	Burke, A.S.
Byrne, A.M.	Corcoran, A.K.
Crean, S.F.	Danby, M. *
Edwards, G.J.	Elliot, J.
Ellis, A.L.	Ellis, K.
Emerson, C.A.	Ferguson, L.D.T.
Fitzgibbon, J.A.	Garrett, P.
George, J.	Gibbons, S.W.
Gillard, J.E.	Grierson, S.J.
Griffin, A.P.	Hall, J.G. *
Hatton, M.J.	Hayes, C.P.
Irwin, J.	Jenkins, H.A.
Kerr, D.J.C.	King, C.F.
Livermore, K.F.	Macklin, J.L.
McClelland, R.B.	McMullan, R.F.
Melham, D.	Murphy, J.P.
O'Connor, B.P.	O'Connor, G.M.
Owens, J.	Plibersek, T.
Price, L.R.S.	Quick, H.V.
Ripoll, B.F.	Rudd, K.M.
Sawford, R.W.	Sercombe, R.C.G.
Smith, S.F.	Snowdon, W.E.
Swan, W.M.	Tanner, L.
Thomson, K.J.	Vamvakinou, M.
Wilkie, K.	

#### NOES

Anderson, J.D.	Andrews, K.J.
Bailey, F.E.	Baird, B.G.
Baker, M.	Baldwin, R.C.
Barresi, P.A.	Bartlett, K.J.
Billson, B.F.	Bishop, B.K.
Bishop, J.I.	Broadbent, R.
Brough, M.T.	Causley, I.R.
Ciobo, S.M.	Dutton, P.C.
Elson, K.S.	Entsch, W.G.
Farmer, P.F.	Fawcett, D.
Ferguson, M.D.	Gambaro, T.
Gash, J.	Georgiou, P.
Haase, B.W.	Hardgrave, G.D.
Hartsuyker, L.	Henry, S.
Hull, K.E. *	Hunt, G.A.
Jensen, D.	Johnson, M.A.
Jull, D.F.	Keenan, M.
Kelly, D.M.	Kelly, J.M.
Laming, A.	Ley, S.P.
Lindsay, P.J.	Macfarlane, I.E.
Markus, L.	May, M.A.
McArthur, S. *	McGauran, P.J.
Mirabella, S.	Moylan, J.E.
Nelson, B.J.	Neville, P.C.
Pearce, C.J.	Prosser, G.D.

Pyne, C.	Randall, D.J.
Richardson, K.	Robb, A.
Ruddock, P.M.	Schultz, A.
Scott, B.C.	Secker, P.D.
Slipper, P.N.	Smith, A.D.H.
Somlyay, A.M.	Southcott, A.J.
Stone, S.N.	Thompson, C.P.
Ticehurst, K.V.	Tollner, D.W.
Truss, W.E.	Tuckey, C.W.
Turnbull, M.	Vale, D.S.
Vasta, R.	Wakelin, B.H.
Washer, M.J.	Wood, J.

\* denotes teller

Question negatived.

Bill agreed to.

### Third Reading

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (9.32 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### APPROPRIATION (NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE) BILL (No. 1) 2007-2008

#### Second Reading

Debate resumed, on motion by **Mr Brough**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

#### Third Reading

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (9.32 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### APPROPRIATION (NORTHERN TERRITORY NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE) BILL (No. 2) 2007-2008

#### Second Reading

Debate resumed, on motion by **Mr Brough**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

#### Third Reading

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (9.34 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Mr BROUGH** (Longman—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs) (9.34 pm)—I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

#### Climate Change

**Mr DANBY** (Melbourne Ports) (9.34 pm)—Five years ago this month I spoke on the issue historically at the core of the climate change debate that has become more important and more visible in the intervening period, and that is the issue of Australia's participation in the Kyoto accord. Speaking of milestones, it is now a decade since the treaty was first negotiated, and Australia, under this government, remains one of the few hold-outs on this vital initial framework designed to combat climate change. Regardless of the Howard government's climate

change scepticism, it is fair to say that the climate change debate is bigger than just Kyoto and this government's failure to ratify the protocol.

That a Rudd Labor government would immediately ratify the Kyoto protocol is not the point; Labor's approach under the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Kingsford Smith has been decisive and clear and has demonstrated that we are willing and able to approach the problem from different angles. The first national climate change summit, held on 31 March this year, was initiated by the member for Griffith, the Leader of the Opposition. Early in his tenure as federal Labor leader, and in an election year, he made a concerted effort to bring together stakeholders concerned over the government's inaction in failing to address climate change, with business and community groups as well as state and territory governments taking part.

The Liberals' hollow refrain that an overlap of Labor governments is an obstacle to solving problems of national significance contrasts with Labor's collaborative approach to addressing this key issue of climate change. A Rudd Labor government would be in a unique position to effect real results through working with state Labor governments to address common problems, rather than playing the blame game where private political polling deems it expedient, as the Prime Minister has done, as outlined in their leaked polling to that effect. Climate change was a key issue for the ALP well before it became an issue that mattered to the government—and even then only because it came up in polling. I have viewed it as a vital issue for many years and have spoken repeatedly in this House on the need for more practical and far-reaching approaches to reducing emissions than the weak stop-gap alternatives put forward by those opposite. In my electorate of Melbourne Ports, there ex-

ists a widespread concern over the failure of the government to act and, equally, a concern about how to reduce emissions while protecting the livelihoods of working families.

Labor's long-term goal for reducing emissions is pragmatic and achievable. The 60 per cent reduction on the 2000 carbon emissions by 2050 to be made on the election of a Labor government is based on CSIRO figures on what needs to be done to avoid devastating environmental consequences. The time frame for the reduction also ensures that any hardship for Australian businesses and equally for their employees will be kept to an absolute minimum. Economic modelling undertaken by the Business Roundtable on Climate Change demonstrates that this target can be achieved alongside strong economic growth. A widely supported national emissions-trading scheme is also required to achieve this, an initiative fully supported by Labor.

Labor's commitment to research and development of Australian renewable energy technology—over \$100 million to be spent on the development of solar and geothermal energy—is part of the progressive approach that our party has adopted on all levels through the increasing use of renewable energy resources by the states. Labor's support of research and development of clean coal technology symbolises our readiness to explore all the alternatives. We are anything but climate sceptics, unlike the current Prime Minister, who until recently identified himself as one. At the same time we are not going to put all our eggs in one basket by just going down the geothermal route. There are many other technologies that we need to consider.

The threat posed by climate change is such that there is no one way to combat it. That is why we have identified these and many other ways in which we should address

this problem. The threat is far bigger than the threat of winning or losing an election. Failure to take decisive action now will impact on future generations of Australians subjected to increasing temperatures, rising sea levels and, most concerning of all for one that exports primary products, more frequent and severe droughts. As a member whose electorate is on the coast, obviously the issue of rising sea levels is of concern.

The choice is clear. A Rudd Labor government will act decisively and responsibly to protect Australians from this threat both now and in the future while those opposite continue to question whether that most obvious challenge in this area even exists. I cannot think of an issue, apart from Work Choices, which has changed the views of the Australian people about who is fit to run this country. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister identified 92 per cent of Australians who thought the government should be doing more about climate change. (*Time expired*)

**Sir Robert Norman OBE**

**Mr ENTSCHE** (Leichhardt) (9.39 pm)—I rise tonight to recognise the very special contribution of a very eminent Australian and a great benefactor of the people of Cairns and North Queensland. The person I refer to is Sir Robert Norman OBE, who sadly passed away in Cairns on 3 April 2007 at the age of 93. During his early years Sir Robert trained as a pilot with the RAAF as part of the Empire Training Scheme. After graduating he was posted to 459 Squadron of the RAAF, operating in the Mediterranean. He served in this squadron with distinction, rising to the rank of flight lieutenant.

On completion of his wartime service Sir Robert and his wife returned to Cairns, where, together with his two brothers and his wife, he established a dry-cleaning business, but aviation was forever in his blood. He

helped to establish the North Queensland Aero Club and later founded the airline Bush Pilots Airways in 1952. In 1958 Sir Robert was awarded the OBE for his work in preventing loss of lives during and after Cyclone Agnes, which devastated much of Far North Queensland. In 1976 Sir Robert wrote *Bush Pilot*, recounting his early experiences and those of the airline. Bush Pilots Airways grew from humble beginnings to become a major regional carrier in Northern Australia until it was eventually absorbed into Australian Airlines, later becoming part of the Qantas group. With great pride, too, my uncle Ron Entsch was very much part of it. He was a manager of Bush Pilots in the early stages and in the transition to Australian Airlines.

After a very active aviation career, Sir Robert turned his attention to other commercial interests. As chairman of the family owned company, Norman Enterprises Pty Ltd, he guided the company to many years of commercial success in Far North Queensland. Sir Robert's community involvement spanned many decades. He acted as the co-ordinator of the Cairns and district celebrations during 1976 and actively participated in many other community organisations. Sir Robert acted as the honorary pilot for the Cairns Aerial Ambulance for 25 years.

Sir Robert is perhaps best remembered for his tenacity and determination to have a campus of James Cook University established in Cairns. In spite of being told by bureaucrats that there would never be a stand-alone university campus in Cairns, Sir Robert persevered and eventually raised \$1.25 million to purchase land for the Cairns campus of James Cook University. Sir Robert and Lady Betty Norman personally donated \$250,000 towards the target of that \$1.25 million.

Mr Speaker, you have seen the success of James Cook University since its inception.

We now have a very successful medical school in Far North Queensland. We also have a veterinary school and an agricultural science school associated with the Cairns campus, and more recently we have been looking at establishing a dentistry school. All of this has come about because of the vision of people like Sir Robert all those years ago. He also played a very significant role in the establishment of the Cairns Regional Art Gallery. To this day, there stands in the gallery, in pride of place, a magnificent painting of Lady Betty Norman, painted by a very eminent artist in Cairns, Dorothy Gauvin.

Sir Robert was created a Knight Bachelor in 1989 in recognition of his outstanding community service. He also received an honorary Doctor of Letters from James Cook University.

Sir Robert will be certainly missed by his family, his surviving children, Robert, Wendy, Lindy and Julie, and their families, and the community of Cairns and Far North Queensland.

#### Interest Rates

**Mr HAYES** (Werriwa) (9.44 pm)—In a little over 12 hours from now, the Reserve Bank is set to announce its decision on interest rates. Tomorrow's interest rate announcement is probably the most keenly awaited announcement in many years. Of course, it is not just mortgage holders, those with personal or credit card debt and business owners who are awaiting this decision—tomorrow, those most keenly anticipating the Reserve Bank decision will be members of the Howard government. I raise the issue of tomorrow's interest rate decision not in the light of the obvious impact on family budgets of constituents in the electorate of Werriwa and elsewhere but in the context of the most recent interest rate falsehood that has been perpetuated by this government and by members of this government.

In the last few weeks, and particularly in the last few days, the Prime Minister has attempted to blame state governments for interest rates. In the words that the Assistant Treasurer used earlier today, 'This myth is nothing short of a load of'—I will not finish that quote, Mr Speaker, but I think you have the gist of what I was about to say. The suggestion that state government borrowings over the next four years will have any discernible impact on interest rates of today or tomorrow is simply laughable. While it might fit the Crosby Textor election campaign manual, we know it does not fit with reality. As the ANZ Chief Economist, Saul Eslake, said:

There is very little direct linkage between borrowings by governments and interest rates.

Let us take a look at the facts. The combined deficits of state governments are less than one per cent of GDP. While the Prime Minister may have missed it, the Hawke and Keating governments deregulated the finance sector, expanding considerably the pool of available funds from which Australians could borrow. Accordingly, the suggestion that a borrowing requirement of less than one per cent of GDP will have an impact on the trillions of dollars available through the global capital markets is unbelievable. As Steven Keen from the University of Western Sydney said:

It's like saying that somebody dropped a pebble in the ocean and that caused a tsunami.

Another fact is that the Commonwealth budget surplus for 2005-06 was 1.5 per cent of GDP and in 2007-08 it is projected to be 0.9 per cent of GDP. This change in budgetary position results in a 0.6 per cent stimulus, which is broadly equivalent to the stimulus provided by the states over the same period.

The biggest risk to future interest rates is the profligate spending of this government in the lead-up to the election. To date the coali-

tion has committed to \$7.5 billion in pre-election spending promises, and the spending promises will continue to increase right through to polling day. If interest rates rise tomorrow, the Howard government must accept responsibility for that rise. The Prime Minister cannot lay claim to low interest rates without taking responsibility for rising interest rates.

Despite the fact that the Howard government is responsible for upward pressure on interest rates and for squandering the benefits of the resources boom, the Prime Minister continues to try to dupe Australians with aggregate economic figures as he sticks to the claim that working Australians have never been better off. Well, working Australians in south-west Sydney have a message for the Prime Minister: he has never been so wrong. It is an insult to the intelligence of the Australian public for this government to think that people are willing to reward the government for good economic news and to simultaneously believe that it should be devoid of any responsibility for the bad economic news. Australians know that this is the desperate behaviour of a desperate government led by a desperate Prime Minister. The editorial in today's *Canberra Times* summarised the issue most succinctly:

... the biggest threat to underlying inflation is the Howard Government itself. In its increasingly desperate attempt to rein in the Opposition, it has resorted to pork-barrelling of the most egregious kind. On this evidence, the Coalition's mantra that it is a responsible economic manager is sounding very hollow.

*(Time expired)*

### Local Government

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT** (Maranoa) (9.49 pm)—I rise in the adjournment debate tonight to speak on the proposal put forward by the Queensland Labor government to force amalgamations on local shires across Queensland without giving them their de-

mocratic right to a say in that process. This week, the Queensland Labor government will introduce legislation into the House to force amalgamations of shires across Queensland. They have gone about this process in a very sneaky and underhanded way. The case has not been made by the Labor government in Queensland to suggest that councils need to amalgamate with others—against their will, without a say and without an opportunity for local mayors and councillors to have input into that process.

The councils across Queensland were going through a process called a size and sustainability process. Perhaps as a result of that there would have been some adjustments to local government boundaries in Queensland. There may have been some total amalgamations in other areas, but it would have been done on the basis of what is good for those communities in respect of the size of those councils and the sustainability of their proposals. But all that was denied by the Queensland Labor government. Towards the end of that process, when councils were about to make their recommendations to the Labor minister in Queensland, Minister Fraser said: 'No, we're not going to accept all that work you've done. I am going to go into the parliament and bring forward legislation that will strip the right of councils across Queensland, including the people of Queensland, to conduct a referendum on any proposed boundary change that may be proposed by councils or by government.' He took that out of the legislation, thereby denying the people of Queensland their democratic right to have a say in how they shape their councils and their communities into the future.

Local government is the first tier of government in this country. It plays a very important part in the efficient and smooth operation of so many communities across Australia. If the legislation goes through the Queensland parliament this week, my elec-

torate of Maranoa, which has 36 local councils, will end up with 20. I will end up with 16 local councils amalgamated with other councils. They will all be abolished without the right of appeal by those communities against those decisions.

Do we have an interest in local government in Queensland or in any part of Australia? You bet we do. We provide financial assistance grants to local governments to provide services at a local level. We provide money for roads through the Roads to Recovery program to local councils to support the construction of local roads and bridges and to improve those roads in those communities. One of the great successes that we have had in road funding in this country is Roads to Recovery. Funding bypasses the state government and goes direct to local councils, which spend every dollar on building better roads in their community.

Rural transaction centres is another program under the Regional Partnerships program. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, who is in chamber now, would be well aware of that program. I highlight what that has meant for a small community in the Aramac shire. This shire will be amalgamated with two other shires and the local council will be removed as a result of this process and will no longer be located in the Aramac shire. The Aramac shire, through our rural transaction centres program, established a rural transaction centre and through that process was able to attract a bank back into town. That council puts its \$7 million of rate revenue through that bank every year. That is what helps keep the bank in that town. The Beattie government is going to abolish that shire. What will happen? The bank will go, because all that revenue will go to where the headquarters of this larger supershire will be located. So there goes the bank. Next will go the schools and then the hospitals. There will

be a slow disintegration of so many rural communities that have been kept together. The glue that keeps them together, the local leadership that keeps these communities together, will be abolished by the state Labor government. I commend the Prime Minister on saying in the House today that the government will fund a referendum through the Australian Electoral Commission, and I urge councils to take up that offer. *(Time expired)*

#### **Housing Affordability**

**Ms OWENS** (Parramatta) (9.54 pm)—Six weeks ago I left the federal parliament and I think I could be forgiven, having heard the number of words about Queensland coming from the government today, for believing that I have accidentally returned to the Queensland parliament and I am faced with the Queensland opposition on the other side of this House. One might be forgiven for thinking that the federal government believe that there is nothing left on the federal agenda and that all they now have to do is worry about state issues because their job is done. Let us hope that, after the election, that is the case because there are real problems out there. Families are under enormous pressure, yet we do not hear from the government about working on solutions. Instead, what we heard in question time today was a government frontbench whipping themselves into a frenzy of self-congratulation on anything they think might have gone okay and thrashing about finding somebody to blame for anything that remains undone or might be going wrong. They even tried in the last few days to blame the states in advance for any interest rate rise that might be forthcoming. But many experts jumped on that theory for the nonsense that it is. Make no mistake: the government know full well that it is nonsense, just as they knew that their claims about interest rates in the last election campaign were nonsense. In doing this, they treat the voters with contempt.

This government, even now, with reports and figures coming out daily, is confirming what anybody who gets out a bit already knew: that families, individuals, people with children and retirees are doing it tough. This government is not looking for answers but is looking for a way to spin itself out of trouble and back into office. There was very little governance in question time today, just politics, and let me tell you that my community needs much more than that from its government. They need a government prepared to take the responsibility and do the work, even in an election year. Out there, faced with rising costs in petrol, child care, food and health and with rising interest rates and rents, families are well and truly stretched to breaking point. Thirty-three per cent of renters in the Parramatta electorate are facing rent stress—that is, they are spending more than 30 per cent of household income on rent. The average mortgage payment has increased by over 50 per cent in the last five years from \$867 to \$1,300.

Labor's Family Watch Survey has revealed that one in seven families ranked interest rates and housing affordability as their No. 1 financial concern. The new census data shows that back-to-back interest rate hikes under John Howard are taking their toll, with one in four households with a mortgage now financially stretched. In my electorate, mortgage repayments now eat up over 35 per cent of household income, compared to 24.5 per cent in 2001. The situation is likely to have deteriorated further, as the figures were produced after the first six back-to-back interest rate rises and there have been two more since then.

This government has so lost touch with ordinary Australian families that, in spite of the financial pain out there, it introduced workplace laws—the bill previously known as Work Choices—which ripped away at the wages and conditions of working Austra-

lians, at the very time when families already faced incredible financial pressure. Just a few months ago, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, the Prime Minister was still saying that working families have never had it so good. We on this side of the House believe that every Australian deserves secure, affordable housing and we will work hard to help Australians achieve their housing aspirations.

Since the summit on housing affordability, Kevin Rudd has made a commitment that, in government, federal Labor will set up a \$500 million housing affordability fund to tackle the undersupply of new residential housing, cut down on holding charges and contribute to infrastructure. Federal Labor will establish a national housing supply research council to analyse the adequacy of land supply across the nation, as well as rates of construction, negotiate a national affordable housing agreement with Australia's eight state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association and appoint a cabinet level minister who will be responsible for federal policy on housing. When it comes to affordable housing, my community deserves and expects much more than blame shifting and spin from their government; they deserve the government's care and attention and the hard work necessary to help Australians achieve their housing aspirations.

**Wakefield Electorate: Balaklava  
Eisteddfod Finale Concert**

**Mr FAWCETT** (Wakefield) (9.59 pm)—In this House there are numerous debates and discussions on issues of national importance, many of which seek to underpin the ability of our communities to give their children a future and to have a community that is strong and thriving. I wish tonight to draw the attention of the House to a community in the electorate of Wakefield that is doing exactly that.

On Sunday I had the pleasure of attending the 11th Balaklava Eisteddfod Finale Concert, which draws young people from across South Australia, particularly from the Wakefield area, to come for a whole weekend of musical events across a whole range of genres and brings together the Combined Mid North Primary Schools Festival of Music Choirs. It involves young people who have come from the primary schools of Balaklava, Clare, Kapunda, Mallala, Owen and Hamley Bridge. This is a significant time because not only is a huge amount of talent on show during this weekend but also this event highlights the incredible value of volunteers in our community.

More than 150 volunteers took part to make this event happen, right from the patrons of the event, Mayor James Maitland and his wife, Prue, through to the Balaklava Eisteddfod Society Executive—Bronwyn Cottle, Margaret Baker, Sally Cowan, Lenice Cox, Trish Goodgame, Kathryn Mahony, Jo May and Di Spence—who worked tirelessly to bring this event together. A whole raft of people were involved in everything from stage management, lighting, sound et cetera through to the parents who took their children along each week to practices for their own individual instruments or activities and then brought them to the eisteddfod. Also necessary were the schoolteachers who coordinated the choirs and trained the children. Again, there was Bronwyn Cottle, who was also the choir coordinator and took a large role in convening the whole eisteddfod, along with Jan Borlace from Clare, Elizabeth Fahlbusch from Kapunda, Carol Lee and Stephanie Radowicz from Mallala and Sandy Wandel from Owen and Hamley Bridge. Not only were the people from the eisteddfod committee and their volunteers involved; the whole town turned out to provide venues and support. Nearly all of the suitable venues—whether they were community, church or

other venues—throughout the town made available their equipment, their people and their time so that all of the heats could culminate in the finale concert, which was held in the town hall on the Sunday afternoon.

There were also a number of sponsors from the area; they really put lie to the idea that many regional towns are fast disappearing. Balaklava and the Mid North are an area of the Adelaide Plains that is really growing. We have seen just recently approval for things like the Wakefield Waters development to go ahead at Port Wakefield. Providing much employment for the people in the area, we have seen a decision by Primo to reinvest some \$28 million in the abattoir that was burnt down. In addition, we have seen sponsorship of things like the strong community programs by groups like Balco. I certainly thank Malcolm and Jo May for their strong community leadership in Balaklava and the region, through Balco and the employment they provide, but also for their sponsorship of things like the eisteddfod. My thanks go also to Balaklava Engineering, individual families such as the Manuel family, Geoff and Di Spence, Ms Terri Hughes and the Fyfe family of Yelmah Holdings, who are regional suppliers of pigs and pork into that industry. In addition, my thanks go to groups such as the Adelaide Plains Male Voice Choir, represented on the day by Noel Richardson, which sponsor and provide scholarships to young people to encourage them in their musical ability.

I draw the attention of the House to this event because, to my mind, it demonstrates the strong underpinnings of community in Australia. In addition, it demonstrates that our young people have a future because parents and community are prepared to invest their time and effort into positive and constructive activities, like music, and to the celebration of it in things like the Balaklava Eisteddfod.

Question agreed to.

**House adjourned at 10.04 pm**  
**REQUESTS FOR DETAILED**  
**INFORMATION**  
**Parliament House Security**

**Mr Bevis** to ask the Speaker:

In respect of electronic detection units at Parliament House that scan for traces of bomb-making materials:

- (a) how many units are there,
- (b) what make and model is each unit,
- (c) where is each unit located,
- (d) when was each unit purchased and at what price,
- (e) how often is each unit calibrated and by whom,
- (f) how many staff are currently trained to operate the units,
- (g) how often are staff given refresher courses in the operation of the units, and
- (h) how many days in the last year was each unit used; and
- (i) if the units are not operated regularly, why not.

**NOTICES**

The following notices were given:

**Mr McGauran** to move:

That:

- (1) so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended in relation to proceedings on the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Testing) Bill 2007 such that, at the conclusion of the second reading debate, not including a Minister speaking in reply, or at 1 p.m. on Wednesday 8 August 2007, whichever is the earlier, a Minister be called to sum up the second reading debate and thereafter, without delay, the immediate question before the House be put, then any question or questions necessary to complete the remaining stages of the Bill be put without amendment or debate; and
- (2) any variation to this arrangement be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

**Mr Hockey** to present a bill for an act relating to the public holiday appointed in metropolitan Sydney to facilitate the holding of an APEC meeting on 7 September 2007, and for other purposes. (APEC Public Holiday Bill 2007)

**Mr Turnbull** to present a bill for an act to make provision for the management of the water resources of the Murray-Darling Basin, and to make provision for other matters of national interest in relation to water and water information, and for related purposes. (Water Bill 2007)

**Mr Turnbull** to present a bill for an act to deal with consequential matters in connection with the Water Act 2007, and for related purposes. (Water (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2007)

**Mrs De-Anne Kelly** to present a bill for an act to amend maritime legislation, and for other purposes. (Maritime Legislation Amendment Bill 2007)

**Mr Fawcett** to move:

That the House:

- (1) notes that:
  - (a) over 242,000 British pensioners living in Australia have their pensions frozen in value and thus not increased when the pensions in the United Kingdom (UK) receive annual increases; and
  - (b) this practice of freezing these pensions is wholly unfair and discriminatory: many UK pensioners living overseas do have their pensions increased annually, as expected, given their lifelong mandatory payments into the national UK scheme and in contrast, Australia fully indexes the pensions of its expatriate pensioners living in the UK;
- (2) calls on the Australian Government to take this issue to the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Kampala in October 2007 and to urge the UK Government to end the unfairness in the current indexation of overseas UK pensions.

**Mr Rudd** to move:

That the House:

- (1) affirms its recognition of the sacrifices made by Australia's veterans;
- (2) accepts its obligation to ensure that veterans' sacrifices are acknowledged and that benefits earned by veterans are paid to them on a just and fair basis;
- (3) acknowledges in particular the plight of our most severely disabled veterans;
- (4) acknowledges that the value of the Special Rate Disability Pension (TPI and TTI), Intermediate Rate and Extreme Disablement Adjustment Pensions have eroded under the Howard Government; and
- (5) supports Labor's policy to index the remaining portions of the above general rate disability pensions to movements in male total average weekly earnings, in recognition of the more severe work and lifestyle effects suffered by the recipients of these entitlements.

## QUESTIONS IN WRITING

### Commonwealth Own Purpose Outlay (Question No. 2992)

**Mr Tanner** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, in writing, on 7 February 2006:

- (1) Will the Minister list all the Wage Cost Indexes and the weighting between Safety Net Adjustments (SNA) and Consumer Price Index adjustments for each Commonwealth Own Purpose Outlay (COPO) in each Portfolio.
- (2) For each COPO identified in part (1) and for (a) 2001-2002, (b) 2002-2003, (c) 2003-2004, (d) 2004-2005, and (e) 2005-2006, what was the (i) percentage and (ii) amount of the indexed increase.
- (3) For each COPO identified in part (1) and for (a) 2006-2007, (b) 2007-2008, and (c) 2008-2009, what is the projected (i) percentage and (ii) amount of the indexed increase.
- (4) What indexation arrangements and guarantees will be put in place to ensure programs are no worse off once the SNA are abolished.

**Mr Costello**—The Minister for Finance and Administration has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (1) Comprehensive information that covers all individual programmes or COPOs across portfolios, identifying the specific Wage Cost Indexes (WCIs) and their weightings applied to individual programmes or COPOs, is programme information for the internal use of the government and is not publicly released.
- (2) and (3) Increases in individual programme or COPO expenditures arising from indexation is internal programme information and is not publicly released.
- (4) The absence of Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) SNA decisions means that they are not available as a component of the WCIs. The Government decided in May 2006 that the wage component of the WCIs would instead be based on the Australian Fair Pay Commission's (AFPC's) minimum wage decision, as this decision will give the measure of wages growth that most closely corresponds to the AIRC's SNA decision.

As in previous budgets, the 2006-07 budget estimates included indexation of funding based on wage and price parameters. For the purposes of indexation in the 2006-07 Budget, it was assumed that the minimum wage movement is equivalent to that from the AIRC SNA decision of June 2005, which granted an increase of \$17 per week (across the pay scales).

On 26 October 2006, the AFPC determined that minimum wages across pay scales will rise by \$27.36 per week for pay scales up to \$700 per week, and by \$22.04 per week for pay scales above \$700 per week. The increases were effective from 1 December 2006. This decision explicitly took into account the period since the last AIRC SNA (June 2005).

The AFPC's October 2006 decision translated to an annual movement in minimum wages equivalent to that assumed in the 2006-07 Budget. In effect, the AFPC's decision was factored into the expenditure estimates for 2006-07 and the forward years.

The next decision of the AFPC is expected in mid-2007. In line with the practice of previous budgets, the indexation included in the 2007-08 Budget was based on the assumption that the annual minimum wage movement will be equivalent to that in the October 2006 AFPC decision.

**Treasury: Informal Clearance Process**  
**(Question No. 3111)**

**Mr Fitzgibbon** asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 27 February 2006:

- (1) How have merging parties and big business responded to the streamlining of the current informal merger clearance process.
- (2) What concerns does big business have regarding the new streamlined informal merger clearance process?
- (3) Is the current informal clearance process working well.
- (4) Have the concerns from big business which led to the Dawson Committee recommendation for a new formal clearance process been dealt with by the ACCC.
- (5) Is the fixed 40 day time limit too short for the ACCC to consult properly and respond to a complex merger such as the proposed Toll takeover of Patrick Corp.

**Mr Costello**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Government passed the Trade Practices Legislation Amendment Act (No 1) 2005 on 19 October 2006.

Merger parties now have three main avenues available to them to ensure a proposed merger will not breach the Trade Practices Act 1974:

- informal merger clearance;
- a new formal clearance system, which operates in parallel with the existing informal merger clearance system; and
- a streamlined authorisation process, under which merger parties apply directly to the Australian Competition Tribunal to obtain immunity from section 50 of the Trade Practices Act.

More information can be found in Press Release 112 (2006), available from <http://www.treasury.gov.au>.

**Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme**  
**(Question No. 3406)**

**Mr Melham** asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 30 March 2006:

- (1) How many PBS prescriptions were filled during (a) 2003-2004, (b) 2004-2005; in (i) NSW, and (ii) the electoral division of Banks.
- (2) How many PBS prescriptions were filled during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in the postcode area (i) 2196, (ii) 2209, (iii) 2210, (iv) 2211, (v) 2212, (vi) 2213, (vii) 2214, (viii) 2222, and (ix) 2223.
- (3) How many PBS prescriptions were filled for concession card holders during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in (i) NSW and (ii) the electoral division of Banks.
- (4) How many PBS prescriptions were filled for concession card holders during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in the postcode area (i) 2196, (ii) 2209, (iii) 2210, (iv) 2211, (v) 2212, (vi) 2213, (vii) 2214, (viii) 2222, and (ix) 2223.
- (5) How many PBS prescriptions were filled for persons who did not hold a concession card during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in (i) NSW and (ii) the electoral division of Banks.
- (6) How many PBS prescriptions were filled for persons who did not hold a concession card during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in the postcode area (i) 2196, (ii) 2209, (iii) 2210, (iv) 2211, (v) 2212, (vi) 2213, (vii) 2214, (viii) 2222, and (ix) 2223.

(7) How many PBS prescriptions were filled for scripts that cost the consumer a maximum of \$23.70 during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in (i) NSW and (ii) the electoral division of Banks.

(8) How many PBS prescriptions were filled for scripts that cost the consumer a maximum of \$23.70 during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in the postcode area (i) 2196, (ii) 2209, (iii) 2210, (iv) 2211, (v) 2212, (vi) 2213, (vii) 2214, (viii) 2222, and (ix) 2223.

(9) How many PBS prescriptions were filled for scripts that cost the consumer a maximum of \$3.80 during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in (i) NSW and (ii) the electoral division of Banks.

(10) How many PBS prescriptions were filled for scripts that cost the consumer a maximum of \$3.80 during (a) 2003-2004 and (b) 2004-2005 in the postcode area (i) 2196, (ii) 2209, (iii) 2210, (iv) 2211, (v) 2212, (vi) 2213, (vii) 2214, (viii) 2222, and (ix) 2223.

**Mr Abbott**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) (3), (5), (7) and (9)—

(i) New South Wales - PBS data at a state level is reported on a financial year basis, with updates available on the department website ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)).

	(a) 2003/04	(b) 2004/05
(1) Total PBS Prescriptions	57,522,388	58,612,737
(3) Total Concessional	47,654,911	48,772,111
(5) Total General	9,867,477	9,840,626
(7) General Non-Safety Net*	7,790,195	7,546,226
(9) Total Concessional Copayments*	37,853,942	38,101,650

\* The \$3.80 and \$23.70 amounts noted in the question are 2004 figures for general and concessional copayments. Since 2004, the concessional copayment has increased to \$4.90, and the general copayment has increased to \$30.70. PBS co-payments are indexed annually in-line with movements in the Consumer Price Index.

(ii) Banks Electorate - PBS data at the electorate level is available on a calendar year basis.

	(a) 2004	(b) 2005
(1) Total PBS Prescriptions	1,266,700	1,249,800
(3) Total Concessional	1,074,200	1,075,700
(5) Total General	192,500	174,100

Notes to the data:

\* Prescription volume excludes Drs bag

(7) and (9) The Government does not report this information at the Commonwealth Electoral Division level.

(2) (4), (6), (8) and (10) The Government does not release information by postcode area. The smallest geographical area for which the Government routinely produces statistics is the Commonwealth Electoral Division (CED).

### Investing in Our Schools Program

#### (Question No. 3800)

**Mr Georganas** asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 8 August 2006:

(1) Which public schools in the electorate of Hindmarsh were unsuccessful in securing funding under the 2005 *Investing in Our Schools Programme* in (a) Round One, (b) Round Two or (c) both Round One and Round Two, and for what reasons was each school's application rejected.

- (2) Did she or her department receive any request(s) for advice on how to complete a successful application for, or clarification of the rules pertaining to, 2005 Round Two funding from schools which were unsuccessful in 2005 Round One and, following the receipt of advice, were also unsuccessful in 2005 Round Two; if so, what was the nature of the advice or clarification requested; and what advice or clarification was offered.
- (3) Will the Minister guarantee that each school that has had its application for both 2005 Round One and Round Two funding rejected will receive (a) a full account as to why its applications failed, (b) advice as to how its applications must be amended to meet departmental application guidelines, and, as a matter of priority, (c) full project funding in the 2006 round.

**Ms Julie Bishop**—The answers to the honourable member's questions are as follows:

- (1) (a) There were no unsuccessful state government schools in the electorate of Hindmarsh in Round One of the 2005 *Investing in Our Schools Programme* (IOSP).  
(b) A total of 19 state government schools from the electorate of Hindmarsh applied for funding for a total of 27 projects under Round Two of the 2005 IOSP. However, seven of these schools with a total number of 10 projects did not receive funding under Round Two of IOSP.  
It is inappropriate to publicly disclose details of unsuccessful applications. Such disclosure may have an adverse affect on schools' reputation in their local communities.  
(c) As per questions 1(a) and 1(b), a total of seven state government schools were unsuccessful in the electorate of Hindmarsh in Rounds One and Two of the 2005 IOSP. These seven schools were all unsuccessful in Round Two of the Programme.
- (2) As stated in (1) (a) all the state government schools from the electorate of Hindmarsh that applied for funding in Round One of 2005 IOSP were successful. Therefore, no requests for advice or clarification of the rules were received.
- (3) (a) See 1(a)  
(b) Advice is provided to all successful and unsuccessful applicants.  
(c) I cannot guarantee that a school will receive funding. For applications which are deemed 'Not recommended' by the State-based Assessment Advisory Panel (SAAP), school communities would need to resubmit applications in a subsequent funding Round. The SAAPs comprise a combination of parent and principal representatives who receive technical advice from a State Government Advisor (SGA) and convene at meetings to make recommendations to the Australian Government of projects for consideration and approval. I make my decision shortly after receiving the SAAP recommendations.  
Funding allocated under the IOSP occurs on a competitive basis. For the purpose of allocating funds, I may approve funding for government school projects within a state according to an order of merit determined by the independent SAAP, until funds are exhausted for that round.

#### **Crosby Textor Contracts**

##### **(Question No. 4036)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, in writing, on 4 September 2006:

- (1) What contracts, if any, were granted to Crosby/Textor by the Minister, or by any departments or agencies in the Minister's portfolio, in (a) 2004-05 and (b) 2005-06.
- (2) What contracts, if any, have been awarded to Crosby/Textor for (a) 2006-07 or (b) 2007-08.
- (3) In respect of each contract referred to in Parts (1) and (2), (a) what was, or is, the cost and (b) what work was, or will be, carried out by Crosby/Textor pursuant to that contract.

**Mr McGauran**—The Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (1) No contracts were awarded to Crosby/Textor in (a) 2004-2005 or (b) 2005-06.
- (2) No contracts were or are to be awarded to Crosby/Textor in (a) 2006-2007 or (b) 2007-08.
- (3) Not applicable.

**Media Monitoring and Clipping Services**  
**(Question No. 4123)**

**Mr Bowen** asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 7 September 2006:

- (1) What sum was spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by the Minister's office in 2005-06.
- (2) What was the name and postal address of each media monitoring company engaged by the Minister's office.

**Mr Abbott**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) \$30,280
- (2) Media Monitors  
PO Box 2110  
Strawberry Hills  
NSW 2012

Rehame  
PO Box 537  
Port Melbourne  
Victoria 3207

**Media Monitoring and Clipping Services**  
**(Question No. 4130)**

**Mr Bowen** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, in writing, on 7 September 2006:

- (1) What sum was spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by the Minister's office in 2005-06.
- (2) What was the name and postal address of each media monitoring company engaged by the Minister's office.

**Mr Turnbull**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) My office does not engage media monitoring and clipping services, but uses the same media monitoring service engaged by the Department of the Environment and Water Resources.
- (2) The media monitoring company employed by the Department of the Environment and Water Resources is Media Monitors Pty Ltd. The postal address for the Canberra Media Monitors office is: 131 Canberra Ave, Griffith, ACT, 2603. The postal address for the national Media Monitors office is: Level 3, 219-241 Cleveland Street, Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012.

**Media Monitoring and Clipping Services**  
**(Question No. 4152)**

**Mr Bowen** asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 7 September 2006:

- (1) What sum was spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by the department and agencies in the Minister's portfolio in 2005-06;
- (2) Did the department or any agency in the Minister's portfolio order newspaper clippings, television appearance transcripts or videos, radio transcripts or tapes on behalf of the Minister's office in 2005-06; if so, what sum was spent by the department or agency on providing this service.

**Mr Vaile**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) In the 2005-06 year, the sum spent on media monitoring and clipping services was:  
\$751,379 for the Department of Transport and Regional Services;  
\$59,360 for the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA);  
\$149,378 for AirServices Australia;  
\$17,210 for the National Capital Authority; and  
\$23,100 for the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.
- (2) Yes. The total cost of providing the services in 2005-06 was \$71,595.

**Media Monitoring and Clipping Services**  
**(Question No. 4153)**

**Mr Bowen** asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 7 September 2006:

- (1) What sum was spent on media monitoring and clipping services engaged by the department and agencies in the Minister's portfolio in 2005-06;
- (2) Did the department or any agency in the Minister's portfolio order newspaper clippings, television appearance transcripts or videos, radio transcripts or tapes on behalf of the Minister's office in 2005-06; if so, what sum was spent by the department or agency on providing this service.

**Mr Abbott**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) \$949,164.
- (2) Yes. However, the Department's financial system does not break down the cost of media monitoring and clipping services to the level required to provide details of transcripts, tapes, etc. that were provided to the Ministers' offices.

**Richmond Electorate: Programs**  
**(Question No. 4305)**

**Mrs Elliot** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 12 September 2006:

- (1) What programs have been administered by the Minister's department in the federal electorate of Richmond since October 2004.
- (2) In respect of each project or program referred to in Part (1), (a) what is its name, (b) by whom is it operated and (c) what are its aims and objectives.
- (3) What grants have been provided to individuals, businesses and organisations by the Ministers' department in the federal electorate of Richmond since October 2004.

**Mr McGauran**—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio administers a number of funding programs that could potentially benefit organisations and individuals in the electorate of Richmond, if they meet eligibility requirements. Details of these funding programs, including links to the Department's Annual Report, Portfolio Budget Statements, and Portfolio Agencies, are available at [www.dcita.gov.au](http://www.dcita.gov.au).

**Richmond Electorate: Programs**

**(Question No. 4315)**

**Mrs Elliot** asked Minister representing the Minister for the Arts and Sport, in writing, on 12 September 2006:

- (1) What programs have been administered by the Minister's department in the federal electorate of Richmond since October 2004.
- (2) In respect of each project or program referred to in Part (1), (a) what is its name, (b) by whom is it operated and (c) what are its aims and objectives.
- (3) What grants have been provided to individuals, businesses and organisations by the Ministers' department in the federal electorate of Richmond since October 2004.

**Mr McGauran**—The Minister for the Arts and Sport has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio administers a number of funding programs that could potentially benefit organisations and individuals in the electorate of Richmond, if they meet eligibility requirements. Details of these funding programs, including links to the Department's Annual Report, Portfolio Budget Statements, and Portfolio Agencies, are available at [www.dcita.gov.au](http://www.dcita.gov.au).

**Prime Minister and Cabinet: Credit Cards**

**(Question No. 4392)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

- (1) How many credit cards have been issued to employees of the Minister's department and agencies in each financial year since 1 July 2000.
- (2) Of the credit cards identified in Part (1): (a) how many have been reported lost; (b) how many have been reported stolen; (c) have any been subject to fraud; if so, what was the total cost of each fraud incident; (d) what is the average credit limit for each financial year; (e) what was the total amount of interest accrued; and (f) have any employees been subjected to criminal proceedings as a result of credit card fraud.

**Mr Howard**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) I am advised that the total number of cards that have been issued to the employees of my department and agencies as at 30 June each financial year since 1 July 2000 are as follows.

Year	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Department	93	115	178	230	278	378
Agencies	102	109	123	118	118	187
Total	195	224	301	348	396	565

- (2) (a) I am advised that for the financial year 2005-06, two credit cards were reported lost from the department and agencies. Further, in financial years 2000-01 to 2004-05, there were two cards

reported lost from portfolio agencies. The department is unable to provide details for this period.

- (b) I am advised that for the financial year 2005-06, two credit cards were reported stolen from the department and agencies. Further, in financial years 2000-01 to 2004-05, there was one card reported stolen from portfolio agencies. The department is unable to provide details for this period.
- (c) I am advised that from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2006, no credit cards have been subject to fraud.
- (d) I am advised that the average credit limit for each financial year since 1 July 2000 is as follows:

Agency	2000-01 \$	2001-02 \$	2002-03 \$	2003-04 \$	2004-05 \$	2005-06 \$
Department	15,000	14,783	11,449	9,324	8,225	7,368
Agencies	10,255	10,877	10,398	9,211	10,210	8,398

- (e) I am advised that from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2006, the total amount of interest accrued is \$27.59 for the department and agencies.
- (f) Not applicable.

**Education, Science and Training: Credit Cards**  
**(Question No. 4408)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

- (1) How many credit cards have been issued to employees of the Minister's department and agencies in each financial year since 1 July 2000.
- (2) Of the credit cards identified in Part (1): (a) how many have been reported lost; (b) how many have been reported stolen; (c) have any been subject to fraud; if so, what was the total cost of each fraud incident; (d) what is the average credit limit for each financial year; (e) what was the total amount of interest accrued; and (f) have any employees been subjected to criminal proceedings as a result of credit card fraud.

**Ms Julie Bishop**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

**Department of Education, Science and Training**

- (1) The following credit cards have been issued since 1 July 2000:

**Cards Issued**

Financial Year	Diners Cards	ANZ VISA	AMEX
2000-01	1,101		
2001-02	426		
2002-03	311		
2003-04	338		
2004-05	357	102*	30***
2005-06	507		
2006-07	44	1,334**	

\* ANZ VISA cards were used solely as purchasing cards prior to 2006. An annual breakdown on year of issue is unavailable.

\*\* In 2006 the Department changed travel card providers from Diners to ANZ VISA.

\*\*\* A limited number of AMEX cards were used prior to 2006. An annual breakdown on the year of issue is unavailable.

(2) (a) and (b) A separate record is not maintained separating lost and stolen cards. Overall 94 cards have been identified as either lost or stolen.

(c) The table below details the total cost of each fraud incident.

Financial Year	No. of fraud Incidents	Cost/incident (\$)
2000-01	2	Not available
2001-02	1	1,914.48
2002-03	1	300.00
2003-04	4	1,393.85
		959.67
		210.00
		79.00
2004-05	3	25.00
		30.20
		297.65
2005-06	1	203.70
2006-07	2	359.00

(d) No credit limit was place on Diners cards for the period 2000-2006. The average credit limit for other cards was \$12,600.

(e) Payment arrangements and departmental policy is that payments are made by the specified due date so that no interest payment is incurred.

(f) Yes, there was 1 incident in 2001-02.

#### Questacon

(1) The following credit cards have been issued since 1 July 2000:

Financial Year	Cards Issued
2000-01	13
2001-02	12
2002-03	19
2003-04	16
2004-05	28
2005-06	27
2006-07	6

(2) (a) One card was reported lost in 2003-04 and two reported lost in 2006-07.

(b) One card was reported stolen in 2004-05.

(c) No cards have been subject to fraud.

(d) The table below details the average credit limit:

Financial Year	Credit limit (\$)
2000-01	3,923.08
2001-02	2,583.33
2002-03	3,421.05
2003-04	2,500.00
2004-05	4,178.57
2005-06	3,740.74
2006-07	3,000.00

(e) The table below details the interest accrued:

Financial Year	Interest accrued (\$)
2000-01	10.80
2001-02	2,139.97
2002-03	0
2003-04	1,253.99
2004-05	729.42
2005-06	0
2006-07	0

(f) No employees were subject to criminal proceedings as a result of credit card fraud.

**The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies**

(1) The following credit cards have been issued since 1 July 2000:

Financial Year	Cards Issued
2000-01	10
2001-02	10
2002-03	15
2003-04	16
2004-05	20
2005-06	19
2006-07	21

(2) (a) One card was reported lost in 2002-03 and two reported lost in 2003-04.

(b) One card was reported stolen in 2003-04.

(c) No cards have been subject to fraud.

(d) The table below details the average credit limit:

Financial Year	Credit limit (\$)
2000-01	5,000
2001-02	5,000
2002-03	15,000
2003-04	15,000
2004-05	17,500
2005-06	25,000
2006-07	32,500

(e) No credit cards accrued interest.

(f) No employees were subject to criminal proceedings as a result of credit card fraud.

**The Australian Institute of Marine Science**

(1) AIMS currently have 105 cards in use by employees. A record for each financial year is not available.

(2) (a) One card was reported lost.

(b) No cards were reported stolen.

(c) No cards have been subject to fraud.

(d) The average credit limit for each financial year is \$6,300.

(e) AIMS pays the accounts within the time limit, hence the Institute does not normally incur any interest charges.

(f) No employees were subject to criminal proceedings as a result of credit card fraud.

**The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation**

(1) The following credit cards have been issued since 1 July 2000:

**Cards Issued**

Financial Year	VISA	AMEX
2000-01	21*	0
2001-02	14	0
2002-03	17	62
2003-04	118	75
2004-05	61	71
2005-06	109	212
2006-07	69	77

\* Information other than actual card numbers for the year 2000 is an estimate only as data for that year is previous to current electronic record keeping system

(2) (a) There were 13 AMEX and 6 VISA cards lost.  
 (b) There were 6 AMEX and 4 VISA cards stolen.  
 (c) No cards have been subject to fraud.  
 (d) The average credit limit for each financial year is \$10,000 for AMEX and \$4,000 for VISA (\$2,000 in 2000 for VISA).  
 (e) The total amount of interest/overdue fees accrued was \$3,400.  
 (f) No employees were subject to criminal proceedings as a result of credit card fraud.

**The Australian Research Council**

(1) The following credit cards have been issued since 1 July 2000:

**Cards Issued**

Financial Year	Diners	Westpac
2000-01	Not applicable (the ARC was not established as a separate agency until 1 July 2001)	
2001-02	Credit cards issued by DEST under Memorandum of Understanding. No records held by ARC.	
2002-03	54	5
2003-04	60	6
2004-05	60	7
2005-06	61	8
2006-07	58	7

(2) (a) One card was reported lost in 2004-05.  
 (b) No cards were reported stolen.  
 (c) No cards have been subject to fraud.  
 (d) There is no credit limit on the Diners cards but expenditure is limited to air fares, accommodation, meals and incidentals, taxis and hire cars only. The average credit limit on Westpac cards is \$20,000.  
 (e) No interest has been accrued.  
 (f) No employees were subject to criminal proceedings as a result of credit card fraud.

**The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation**

(1) The following credit cards have been issued since 1 July 2000:

**Cards Issued**

Financial Year	Diners	ANZ VISA
2000-01	502	5003 VISA cards were issued between
2001-02	508	2001 and 2007. ANZ was not able to pro-
2002-03	548	vide a break up of the 5003 cards by fi-
2003-04	455	nancial year. However as at April 2007,
2004-05	526	there were 4663 active cards in use.
2005-06	657	
2006-07	453	
		(as at April 2007)

(2) (a) & (b) 120 Diners and 282 VISA cards have been reported to Diners and ANZ respectively as lost or stolen over the period 1 July 2000 to 30 April 2007.  
 (c) No cards have been subject to fraud.  
 (d) The average credit limit is \$3,000.  
 (e) No interest has been accrued because CSIRO pays its accounts by the due date.  
 (f) No employees were subject to criminal proceedings as a result of credit card fraud.

**Media Monitoring and Clipping Services****(Question No. 4416)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 14 September 2006

For each financial year since 1 July 2000, what was the total cost of all media monitoring services for the Minister's departments and agencies.

**Mr Vaile**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Comparable information for 2000-01 and 2001-02 costs for media monitoring services is no longer available.

Information for 2002-03 to 2004-05 has previously been provided in response to House of Representatives Question in Writing 1303, asked on 11 May 2005. For 2005-06, the information is provided in the response to House of Representatives Question in Writing 4152, asked on 7 September 2006.

**Commonwealth Cars: Fuel Costs****(Question No. 4430)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

For each financial year since 1 July 2000, what was the total cost of fuel purchases for all Commonwealth cars operated by the Minister's department and agencies.

**Mr Howard**—I am advised that the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Not all agencies within the portfolio are able to source this data from in-house systems. The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) and the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) were required to source their data from the Fleet Monitoring Body, which is only available by calendar year.

For the department and all portfolio agencies, except the ANAO and the APSC, the cost of fuel by financial year is as follows:

Year	2000-01 \$	2001-02 \$	2002-03 \$	2003-04 \$	2004-05 \$	2005-06 \$
Department	104,648	73,322	74,023	67,718	73,012	75,998
Agencies	32,796	39,138	39,873	44,038	59,053	85,586

Year	2000-01 \$	2001-02 \$	2002-03 \$	2003-04 \$	2004-05 \$	2005-06 \$
Total	137,444	112,460	113,896	111,756	132,065	161,584

The cost of fuel for the department varies from year to year due to the number and size of the various task forces that are located within the department, for example the Sydney 2000 Games Coordination and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting task forces in 2000-01. The increase in cost of fuel for portfolio agencies from 2004-05 is largely due to the creation of the National Water Commission.

For the ANAO and the APSC, the cost of fuel by calendar year is as follows:

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
\$	48,675	42,909	32,733	21,103	26,477	27,170

The decrease in costs from 2001 is largely due to the ANAO moving to arrangements where senior executives were provided with cash in lieu of an executive vehicle.

#### Attorney-General's: Departmental Liaison Officers

##### (Question No. 4514)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

In respect of the secondment to the Minister's office of a Departmental Liaison Officer (DLO), what is the (a) average, (b) shortest and (c) longest period of secondment and (d) what is the total number of DLOs that have been employed in the Minister's office since 1 July 2000.

**Mr Ruddock**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) 11.1 months.
- (b) 5.8 months.
- (c) 19.5 months.

(These figures do not take into account the short periods when an officer temporarily acted in the position).

- (d) A total of 12 officers have been employed in the two DLO positions within my Office since 1 July 2000.

#### Human Services: Departmental Liaison Officers

##### (Question No. 4524)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

In respect of the secondment to the Minister's office of a Departmental Liaison Officer (DLO), what is the (a) average, (b) shortest and (c) longest period of secondment and (d) what is the total number of DLOs that have been employed in the Minister's office since 1 July 2000.

**Mr Brough**—The Minister for Human Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The information provided below is based on the period from October 2004 (when the office of the Minister for Human Services was created) to end of March 2007.

- (a) Average period of secondment of Departmental Liaison Officers employed in the office of the Minister for Human Services: 11 months.
- (b) Shortest period of secondment of a Departmental Liaison Officer employed in the office of the Minister for Human Services: 14 weeks.
- (c) Longest period of secondment of a Departmental Liaison Officer employed in the office of the Minister for Human Services: 26 months.

(d) Since October 2004, there have been a total of 8 Departmental Liaison Officers employed in the office of the Minister for Human Services. (Note: there are 3 Departmental Liaison Officers employed concurrently in the Minister's office.)

**Foreign Affairs and Trade: Logo**  
**(Question Nos 4527 and 4529)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

In respect of any change to the logo of the department and agencies that report to the Minister, (a) when was the most recent change, (b) how many such changes have taken place in the past five years, (c) what was the reason for the change, and (d) what was the total cost of the change, including (i) signage, (ii) stationery, (iii) associated advertising and (iv) website design.

**Mr Downer**—On behalf of the Minister for Trade and myself, the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

**DFAT**

(a) Common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies was introduced in June 2003 and coordinated by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

(b) One.

(c) The common brand was introduced to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

(d) The total cost of the change to the logo for the department was minimal. Implementation of common branding took place over many months and any additional costs that might be attributable to the change were not separately identified in the department's administrative expenditure. Costs associated with changes to signage were minor. Stationery stocks were allowed to run down before new orders were placed. No advertising was undertaken by the department to introduce the new logo. The new logo was introduced to the department's website in a redesign carried out internally as part of ongoing development. The resources required to search for and identify the costs attributable to branding cannot be justified as it would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

**ACIAR**

(a) Common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies was introduced in June 2003 and coordinated by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

(b) One.

(c) The common brand was introduced to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

(d) The total cost of the change to the logo for ACIAR was minimal. The resources required to search for and identify the costs attributable to branding cannot be justified as it would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

**AusAID**

(a) Common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies was introduced in June 2003 and coordinated by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

(b) One.

(c) The common brand was introduced to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

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(d) The total cost of the change to the logo for AusAID was minimal. The resources required to search for and identify the costs attributable to branding cannot be justified as it would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

**Austrade**

(a) Common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies was introduced in June 2003 and coordinated by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

(b) One.

(c) The common brand was introduced to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

(d) The total cost of the change to the logo for Austrade was minimal. The resources required to search for and identify the costs attributable to branding cannot be justified as it would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

**EFIC**

(a) Common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies was introduced in June 2003 and coordinated by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

(b) One.

(c) The common brand was introduced to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

(d) The total cost of the change to the logo for EFIC was minimal. The resources required to search for and identify the costs attributable to branding cannot be justified as it would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

**Finance and Administration: Logo****(Question No. 4530)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

In respect of any change to the logo of the department and agencies that report to the Minister, (a) when was the most recent change, (b) how many such changes have taken place in the past five years, (c) what was the reason for the change, and (d) what was the total cost of the change, including (i) signage, (ii) stationery, (iii) associated advertising and (iv) website design.

**Mr Costello**—The Minister for Finance and Administration has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:

**The Department of Finance and Administration (Finance)**

(a) In June 2003, when common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies was introduced and coordinated by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C).

(b) One. See (a) above.

(c) The common brand was introduced to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

(d) The cost of the logo change is approximately \$4,730.

(i) \$3,180 for building signage and marketing material.

(ii) Costs for changing stationery have been negligible, approximately \$1,000, as Finance's letterheads are largely template-based, not pre-printed. Once existing stocks of printed materials, such as envelopes and business cards with the old logo were exhausted, replacement stocks with the new logos were ordered.

(iii) Nil.

(iv) \$550 for logos on the Finance internet site.

**Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)**

- (a) A new AEC logo was announced in November 2006.
- (b) One. See (a) above. The AEC is exempt from the common branding.
- (c) As part of significant organisational renewal, the AEC is updating its corporate look and feel, and will progressively roll out the new logo in 2007. This will be in conjunction with the AEC's new communication strategy, with revision or development of AEC products and publications related to amendments to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* made in both 2006 and 2007.
- (d) Total cost of the logo change as at 23 February 2007 is \$73,821. This expenditure relates specifically to logo design, market testing, graphic design and style guide development. As per (c) above, the logo change is being rolled out progressively as new communication products are developed and stocks of existing ongoing products require replenishment.
  - (i) Nil. It is expected that most AEC shopfronts will carry the new logo by the end of 2007. This will be undertaken as part of an overall review of AEC office signage.
  - (ii) Nil. The additional cost is expected to be minimal. Stationery and forms templates will be updated electronically. The new logo will be included in the new enrolment forms required for the introduction of the new Proof of Identity requirements that will commence from 16 April 2007. The logo will be applied to other stationery as stocks require replenishment.
  - (iii) Nil.
  - (iv) Nil. The new logo will be incorporated in a planned redevelopment of the AEC website which is currently underway.

**Australian Reward Investment Alliance (ARIA)**

- (a) 1 July 2006.
- (b) One. See (a) above. ARIA is exempt from the common branding.
- (c) The Public Sector Superannuation Scheme Board (PSS) and the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme Board (CSS) in accordance with the *Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Board and Other Measures) Act 2006*, combined to form ARIA. Consequently a new logo was required.
- (d) The total cost of the new logo was approximately \$77,500. This figure includes the design, development and registration of the logo, as well as the components in (i) – (iv).
  - (i) \$3,500 for signage.
  - (ii) \$20,000 for stationery.
  - (iii) Nil.
  - (iv) \$20,000 for website.

**ComSuper**

- (a) The most recent change occurred in June 2003, when common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies was introduced and coordinated by PM&C.
- (b) There have been two changes for the period in question, the most recent as outlined in Part (a). In 2002, ComSuper changed its corporate logo to the four part Diamond.
- (c) The change of logo in 2002 was an update to the corporate image. The reason for the most recent change, in 2003, followed the introduction of the common brand to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

(d) The corporate logo change in 2002 cost approximately \$17,558, incorporating costs for the design of the logo. The changes relating to the government directive in 2003 cost approximately \$5,057.

(i) 2002: Approximately \$10,000 to change internal and external building signage.  
2003: The change occurred at the time when the current office premises, Unit 4 Cameron Offices, was being refurbished and therefore, the cost of the internal and external building logos was incorporated as part of the construction cost. ComSuper is unable to divert the intensive resources required to identify the included signage cost component.

(ii) The cost associated with changing stationery was minimal as stationery is ordered on a just-in-time basis as reflected in the management reports for the years in question. There was a minimal cost to update general stationery such as envelopes, letter heads, and business cards utilised for every day use. The estimated cost is approximately \$5,000 for each change.  
2002: Nil.  
2003: Nil.  
2002: Nil.  
2003: Nil.

**The Commonwealth Grants Commission**

(a) In June 2003, common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies was introduced and coordinated by PM&C.

(b) One. See (a) above.

(c) The common brand was introduced to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

(d) The total cost of the new logo was approximately \$5,000.

(i) Nil.  
(ii) \$5,000 for business cards and envelopes.  
(iii) Nil.  
(iv) Nil.

**Future Fund Management Agency (FFMA)**

(a) to (d) Since the establishment of the FFMA in April 2006 there have been no changes to the logo.

**Industry, Tourism and Resources: Logo  
(Question No. 4537)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

In respect of any change to the logo of the department and agencies that report to the Minister, when was the most recent change;

(a) how many such changes have taken place in the past five years;  
(b) what was the reason for the change; and  
(c) what was the total cost of the change; including  
(d) signage;  
(i) stationery;  
(ii) associated advertising; and  
(iii) website design.

**Mr Ian Macfarlane**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) The only change to the Department's logo has been the introduction of the common branding for Australian Government departments and agencies which was introduced in June 2003 and coordinated by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Tourism Australia changes occurred on 1 July 2004, when Tourism Australia was established, bringing together the functions of international marketing (the Australian Tourist Commission), domestic tourism marketing (See Australia) and tourism research (the Bureau of Tourism Research and Tourism Forecasting Council).

(b) The only change for the Department has been the common branding for the Australian Government departments and agencies.

The Australian Tourist Commission did not change its logo over the period specified prior to the establishment of Tourism Australia on 1 July 2004.

(c) The common brand was introduced to improve recognition of the many policy initiatives, programmes and financial services delivered across the Australian Government.

The reason for the Tourism Australia change was the establishment of a new entity as recommended by the Australian Government's *Tourism White Paper A Medium to Long Term Strategy for Tourism* which was issued in November 2003.

(d) The Department had no additional costs incurred as old stocks were used until they were finished. The new logo replaced the old in the production of new stock.

The following administrative costs were incurred by agencies:

**Geoscience Australia:**

Signage – \$4,540 to refurbish signage at Geoscience Australia Building, Symonston (this includes removal of logo, repair and refurbishment of concrete pillar, installation of new 'Coat of Arms' sign) in September 2003; \$1,958 for installation of new signs at Map Warehouse, Fyshwick in December 2003; and

Stationery – \$7,000 (estimated) for new business cards.

**Tourism Australia since the formation as a new entity in 2004:**

Legal fees for the purchase and registration of the corporate name and the performance of due diligence – \$367,000;

Trade mark registrations – \$135,000;

Recruitment – \$122,000;

Stationery – \$107,000;

Consultancy for the establishment of systems, processes and related documentation – \$208,000; and

Other miscellaneous costs – \$83,000.

The initial development costs for the new Tourism Australia identity and Brand Australia identity, which included all corporate and consumer facing materials was \$312,000.

**IP Australia:**

Signage – \$700; and

Stationery – \$18,300.

Please note: The IP Australia organisation descriptor was changed in 2005 to include Plant Breeder's Rights. This resulted in a change of building signage in April 2006 at a total cost of \$18,630.

**Finance and Administration: Consultancy Services**  
**(Question No. 4569)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

For each financial year since 1 July 2000:

- (a) which employment agencies has the Minister's department engaged.
- (b) what was the total cost of engaging employment agencies, and
- (c) how many employees were placed by these agencies and, of those, which were employed on (i) an ongoing and (ii) a non-ongoing basis.

**Mr Costello**—The Minister for Finance and Administration has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (a) The employment agencies used by Finance in each financial year since 1 July 2000 are outlined below.

**2000-01**

Adecco Australia  
Altus Consulting Pty Ltd  
Catalyst Recruitment Systems Ltd  
Effective People Pty Limited  
Hudson  
Interim HR Solutions Pty Ltd  
Outsource Australia Pty Ltd  
Recruitment Management Company Pty Ltd  
TMP/ Hudson Global Resources  
Wizard Personnel & Office Services

**2001-02**

Adecco Australia  
Effective People Pty Limited  
Hays Personnel Services  
Hoban Recruitment  
Insight Management Consultants Pty Ltd  
Key People  
Professional Careers Australia P/L  
Quadrat Solutions  
Recruitment Management Company Pty Ltd  
Staffing & Office Solutions

**2002-03**

Adecco Australia  
Client Focussed Consulting Pty Ltd  
Drake Overload Pty Ltd – Melbourne  
Effective People Pty Limited

Hays Personnel Services  
Kelly Services (Australia) Pty Ltd  
Professional Careers Australia P/L  
Quadrat Solutions  
Recruitment Management Company Pty Ltd  
Smalls Recruiting  
Staffing & Office Solutions  
TMP/ Hudson Global Resources  
Wizard Personnel & Office Services

**2003-04**

Adecco Australia  
Client Focussed Consulting Pty Ltd  
Effective People Pty Limited  
Ernst & Young  
Green & Green Group P/L  
Hays Personnel Services  
Hudson  
Icon Recruitment Pty Ltd  
Peoplebank Australia Pty Ltd  
Professional Careers Australia P/L  
Recruitment Management Company Pty Ltd  
Recruitment Solutions Limited  
Staffing & Office Solutions  
Verossity

**2004-05**

Adecco Australia  
Burnbax Consulting  
Careers Unlimited  
Chandler Macleod Consultants Ltd  
Client Focussed Consulting Pty Ltd  
Effective People Pty Limited  
Green & Green Group P/L  
Hays Personnel Services  
Hudson  
Kelly Services (Australia) Pty Ltd  
Manpower Services (Aust) P/L  
Paper Shuffle Pty Ltd  
Paxus People  
Peoplebank Australia Pty Ltd

Professional Careers Australia P/L  
 Recruitment Management Company Pty Ltd  
 Recruitment Plus ACT  
 Recruitment Solutions Limited  
 Select Australasia  
 Staffing & Office Solutions  
 The Empower Group  
 The Public Affairs Recruitment Company  
 Verossity  
 Wizard Personnel & Office Services  
**2005-06**  
 Affinity IT Recruitment Pty Ltd  
 Allstaff Australia  
 Careers Unlimited  
 Chandler Macleod Consultants Ltd  
 Client Focussed Consulting Pty Ltd  
 Effective People Pty Limited  
 Frontier Group Australia Pty Ltd  
 Green & Green Group P/L  
 Hays Personnel Services  
 Hudson  
 Kelly Services (Australia) Pty Ltd  
 Manpower Services (Aust) P/L  
 Paper Shuffle Pty Ltd  
 Peoplebank Australia Pty Ltd  
 Professional Careers Australia P/L  
 Recruitment Management Company Pty Ltd  
 Ross Human Directions Limited  
 Verossity  
 Wizard Personnel & Office Services

(b) The total cost of engaging employment agencies in each financial year since 1 July 2000 is outlined below.

Financial Year	Cost
2000-01	\$49,555.24*
2001-02	\$124,848.97*
2002-03	\$468,976.23*
2003-04	\$398,611.48*
2004-05	\$452,665.37*
2005-06	\$558,700.14*

\* Figures do not include the cost of engaging consultancies.

(c) The number of employees placed by these agencies and employed by Finance on an ongoing and non-ongoing basis for the period in question, is not captured centrally. The cost of collecting this information would be excessive.

**Prime Minister and Cabinet: Unauthorised File Access**  
**(Question No. 4603)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

- (1) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, on how many occasions have departmental employees accessed files or records without proper authorisation.
- (2) In each instance identified in Part (1), (a) what action was taken against the employee and (b) if the unauthorised access involved customer records, in how many instances was the customer notified.
- (3) Are employees able to access personal or customer files without (a) being detected, or (b) leaving a record of their access.
- (4) What auditing procedures exist to monitor employee access to files and records.

**Mr Howard**—I am advised that the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Files containing personal information are managed by the human resources and security areas of the department and access is limited to those employees who require access for the performance of their duties. These files are stored in appropriate security containers in accordance with the Protective Security Manual.
- (4) Files containing personal information are registered on the department's record keeping system. Any change in custody or the current location of the file is maintained on the system. Some personal information is also recorded in the department's electronic HR system. Audit logs capture details of persons accessing these files and records.

**Prime Minister and Cabinet: Staffing**  
**(Question No. 4641)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

- (1) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, (a) how many employees were engaged in the communications section of the Minister's department and (b) what was the total cost of salaries for those staff.
- (2) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, how many media advisors were employed in the Minister's office and (b) what was the total cost of salaries, including personal staff allowances, for those staff.

**Mr Howard**—I am advised that the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Government Communications Unit, excluding AusPic, staff numbers and staff costs since 1 July 2000, up to and including 5 April 2007 are:

Financial Year	Number of Staff ^	Total salary costs
2000/01	9	\$532,435
2001/02	12	\$651,292
2002/03	10	\$715,041

Financial Year	Number of Staff ^	Total salary costs
2003/04	11	\$749,510
2004/05	11	\$931,888
2005/06	10	\$880,310
2006/07 *	11	\$909,069

<sup>^</sup> Number of staff are as at 30 June for each Financial Year EXCEPT for 2006/2007, which are at 5 April 2007.

\* 2006/2007 salary costs are for the period 1 July 2006 up to and including payday 5 April 2007. For the other financial years they are for the whole year.

(2) The Minister for Finance and Administration will respond to this part of the question.

**Foreign Affairs and Trade: Staffing**

**(Question No. 4642 and 4644)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

- (1) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, (a) how many employees were engaged in the communications section of the Minister's department and (b) what was the total cost of salaries for those staff.
- (2) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, how many media advisors were employed in the Minister's office and (b) what was the total cost of salaries, including personal staff allowances, for those staff.

**Mr Downer**—On behalf of the Minister for Trade and myself, the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) The following table provides employee and salary figures for staff in the Media Liaison Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Financial Year	Salary costs	Staff numbers
2000/01	\$421,839	5.6
2001/02	\$450,758	5.3
2002/03	\$496,658	3.9
2003/04	\$555,700	4.3
2004/05	\$565,042	4.0
2005/06	\$643,652	5.7

- (2) The Minister for Finance will respond to this part of the question.

**Treasury: Staffing**

**(Question No. 4643)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

- (1) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, (a) how many employees were engaged in the communications section of the Minister's department and (b) what was the total cost of salaries for those staff.
- (2) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, how many media advisors were employed in the Minister's office and (b) what was the total cost of salaries, including personal staff allowances, for those staff.

**Mr Costello**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Treasury does not have a dedicated communications area.

(2) The Minister for Finance and Administration will respond to this part of the question.

**Finance and Administration: Staffing**  
**(Question No. 4645)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

- (1) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, (a) how many employees were engaged in the communications section of the Minister's department and (b) what was the total cost of salaries for those staff.
- (2) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, (a) how many media advisers were employed in the Minister's office and (b) what was the total cost of salaries, including personal staff allowances, for those staff.

**Mr Costello**—The Minister for Finance and Administration has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:

	Part (a)	Part (b)
2000-01	Not applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not applicable
2001-02	Not applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not applicable
2002-03	5 - Several of these positions were vacant for part of the year.	\$237,000
2003-04	6 - Several of these positions were vacant for part of the year.	\$294,000
2004-05	5 - Several of these positions were vacant for part of the year.	\$273,000
2005-06	5 - Several of these positions were vacant for part of the year.	\$335,000
2006-07	5	\$208,000 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Communications and Public Affairs team was established in the 2002-03 financial year. Prior to this, contractors were engaged to provide public affairs services.

<sup>2</sup> 2006-07 figure as at 31 December 2006.

On behalf of all Ministers, the preparation of an answer to these questions would involve a significant diversion of resources, and in the circumstances, I do not consider that the additional work can be justified. The practice of successive governments has been not to authorise the expenditure of time and money involved in assembling such information on a general basis.

**Transport and Regional Services: Staffing**  
**(Question No. 4646)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

- (1) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, (a) how many employees were engaged in the communications section of the Minister's Department and (b) what was the total cost of salaries for those staff.
- (2) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, how many media advisors were employed in the Minister's Office and (b) what was the total cost of salaries, including personal staff allowances, for those staff.

**Mr Vaile**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, the number of employees engaged in the communications section of the Minister's Department and the total cost of salaries for those staff is as follows:

Financial Year	Employee Numbers (Full-time equivalents)	YTD Amount (Salary only)
2000-2001	12.0	\$505,288.00
2001-2002	15.9	\$746,927.00
2002-2003	12.9	\$885,434.00
2003-2004	10.9	\$615,316.00
2004-2005	14.8	\$653,099.00
2005-2006	14.6	\$818,073.00
1 July to 30 September 2006 (2006-07)	13.6	\$172,813.00

(2) The Department does not maintain records of ministerial staff employed by the Minister, and refers you to the Department of Finance and Administration which administers the Members of Parliament Staff (MOPS) Act.

**Industry, Tourism and Resources: Staffing**

**(Question No. 4652)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

(1) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, (a) how many employees were engaged in the communications section of the Minister's department and (b) what was the total cost of salaries for those staff.

(2) For each financial year since 1 July 2000, how many media advisors were employed in the Minister's office and (b) what was the total cost of salaries, including personal staff allowances, for those staff.

**Mr Ian Macfarlane**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) (a) 1 July 2000 - 30 June 2001 - Total number of employees: 15  
       1 July 2001 - 30 June 2002 - Total number of employees: 15  
       1 July 2002 - 30 June 2003 - Total number of employees: 12  
       1 July 2003 - 30 June 2004 - Total number of employees: 11  
       1 July 2004 - 30 June 2005 - Total number of employees: 14  
       1 July 2005 - 30 June 2006 - Total number of employees: 17  
 (b) 1 July 2000 - 30 June 2001 - Total salary cost: \$690,555  
       1 July 2001 - 30 June 2002 - Total salary cost: \$1,156,512  
       1 July 2002 - 30 June 2003 - Total salary cost: \$791,416  
       1 July 2003 - 30 June 2004 - Total salary cost: \$736,518  
       1 July 2004 - 30 June 2005 - Total salary cost: \$1,255,401  
       1 July 2005 - 30 June 2006 - Total salary cost: \$1,464,875

(2) The Minister of Finance will respond to this part of the question.

**Legal Advice**

**(Question Nos 4660 to 4678)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked all ministers, in writing, on 14 September 2006:

For each financial year since 1 July 2000, what sum was spent by the Minister's department and portfolio agencies on external legal advice.

**Mr Ruddock**—On behalf of all ministers, the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) Total expenditure on external legal services for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, the Australian Taxation Office, ComSuper, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts, the Department of Defence, the Department of Education, Science and Training, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Department of Finance and Administration, the Department of Health and Ageing, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Health Insurance Commission for the financial years 1999-2000 to 2003-2004 were published in Appendix 1 of the Australian National Audit Office's Audit Report No 52, Legal Services Arrangements in the Australian Public Service.
- (b) Details of external legal services expenditure for the 2002-2003 financial year have previously been given in answers to Questions on Notice numbers 3178 to 3195 asked by Ms Nicola Roxon MP on 1 March 2004.
- (c) Details of external legal services expenditure for the 2003-2004 financial year have previously been given in answers to Questions on Notice numbers 262 to 279 asked by Ms Nicola Roxon MP on 2 December 2004.
- (d) Details of external legal services expenditure for the 2004-2005 financial year have previously been given in answers to Questions on Notice numbers 2691 to 2709 asked by Ms Nicola Roxon MP on 28 November 2005.
- (e) In relation to the 2005-2006 financial year, I advise that all Departments and portfolio agencies have already published records of their legal services expenditure, as required by paragraph 11.1(ba) of the Legal Services Directions 2005.

To provide information on legal expenditure beyond that previously provided (for example, for other agencies for 2000-01) would require an unreasonable diversion of resources.

**Human Services: Fraud**

**(Question No. 4773)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 16 October 2006:

- (1) What publicly announced anti-fraud measures and programs are currently in place within the Department of Human Service and its agencies and, in respect of each measure, what is (a) the date at which it became operational, (b) the estimated dollar value of the fraud to be prevented or captured and (c) the dollar value of the fraud prevented or captured to date, showing the extent to which (i) projected estimates, and (ii) calculated preventions and captures, overlap.
- (2) What prospective anti-fraud measures are planned for each service or benefit type provided by his department and, in respect of each, what is (a) the date at which the measure will become operational and (b) the estimated dollar value of the fraud to be prevented or captured, showing the extent to which (i) projected estimates, and (ii) calculated preventions and captures, overlap.

**Mr Brough**—The Minister for Human Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question as follows:

- (1) Anti-fraud measures have been introduced by successive governments. These include, but are not limited to, data-matching, targeted field investigations, publicity campaigns and Tip-off facilities. These measures remain in place until they are rescinded or lapse. As successive governments become aware of possible weaknesses in the system, new measures are introduced.

Data reporting systems are not designed in a way that allows retrieval of information for all publicly announced anti-fraud measures and programmes. In addition, the results of many of these measures are likely to be underestimated as it is difficult to quantify the deterrent effect of many preventative measures that are in place.

(2) Any prospective anti-fraud measures would be brought forward for Cabinet's consideration and be subject to the normal Cabinet-In-Confidence provisions.

**Prime Minister: Visit to Vietnam**

**(Question No. 4927)**

**Mr Melham** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 29 November 2006:

(1) What sum was spent by the Commonwealth Government on (a) travel, (b) accommodation, (c) security and (d) all other expenses for his visit to Vietnam from 16 to 21 November 2006.

(2) Who accompanied him on this journey.

**Mr Howard**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) (a), (b), (d) I am advised that not all accounts have been received by all the departments involved with the visit. When the accounts have been finalised the information will be made available for the public record. (c) The Australian Federal Police does not provide detail on security arrangements or protection costs for the Prime Minister, as doing so may breach the Prime Minister's security.

(2) See below.

**ACCOMPANYING PARTY**

The Honourable John Howard MP

*Prime Minister*

Mrs Janette Howard

**Prime Minister's Office**

Mr Tony Nutt

*Principal Private Secretary*

Mr Nick Warner

*Senior Adviser (International)*

^Mr David Luff

*Senior Media Adviser*

#Mr Andrew Kefford

*Senior Adviser (Government)*

Ms Suzanne Kasperek

*Private Secretary to the Prime Minister*

^Ms Susan Bruce

*Special Adviser*

*(Programme and Event Management)*

Ms Sue Cox

*Personal Secretary*

Mrs Julie Roberts

*Personal Secretary*

^Ms Marnie Gaffney

*Assistant Adviser**(Programme and Event Management)*

Mrs Nicole Chant

*Assistant Media Adviser***Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Dr Peter Shergold AM

*Secretary*

Mr Hugh Borrowman

*First Assistant Secretary**International Division*

^Ms Ruth Adam

*Visits Coordinator**Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch*

Mr Peter West

*Official Photographer**AUSPIC***Medical Officer**

Squadron Leader Glenn Pascoe

**Royal Australian Air Force**

Flight Lieutenant Dave Jackson

*Staff Officer VIP Operations*

Flight Lieutenant Arnie Morscheck

*Assistant Staff Officer VIP Operations*

^ In advance

# In advance, Hanoi only

**Prime Minister: Visit to Fiji****(Question No. 4928)****Mr Melham** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 29 November 2006:

- (1) What sum was spent by the Commonwealth Government on (a) travel, (b) accommodation, (c) security and (d) all other expenses for his visit to Fiji from 23 to 25 October 2006.
- (2) Who accompanied him on this journey.

**Mr Howard**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a), (b), (d) I am advised that not all accounts have been received by all the departments involved with the visit. When the accounts have been finalised the information will be made available for the public record. (c) The Australian Federal Police does not provide detail on security arrangements or protection costs for the Prime Minister, as doing so may breach the Prime Minister's security.
- (2) See below.

**ACCOMPANYING PARTY**

The Honourable John Howard MP

*Prime Minister*

Mrs Janette Howard

**Prime Minister's Office**

Mr Nick Warner

*Senior Adviser (International)*

Mr Ben Mitchell

*Media Adviser*

Ms Suzanne Kasprzak

*Private Secretary to the Prime Minister*

^ Ms Jodie Doodt

*Assistant Adviser*

*(Programme and Event Management)*

Ms Kathryn McFarlane

*Assistant Media Adviser*

Ms Julie Roberts

*Personal Secretary*

**Medical Officer**

Dr Graeme Killer AO

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Mr Hugh Borrowman

*First Assistant Secretary*

*International Division*

^ Mr Geoff Brough

*Visit Co-ordinator*

*Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch*

^ Ms Rebecca Christie

*Visit Co-ordinator*

*Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch*

Mr Michael Jones

*Official Photographer*

*Auspic*

**Royal Australian Air Force**

Flight Lieutenant Dave Jackson

*Staff Officer VIP Operations*

^ in advance

**Prime Minister: Visit to Malaysia  
(Question No. 4960)**

**Mr Melham** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 6 December 2006:

- (1) What sum was spent by the Commonwealth Government on (a) travel, (b) accommodation, (c) security and (d) all other expenses for his visit to Malaysia from 29 November to 1 December 2006.
- (2) Who accompanied him on this journey.

**Mr Howard**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a), (b), (d) I am advised that not all accounts have been received by all the departments involved with the visit. When the accounts have been finalised the information will be made available for the public record. (c) The Australian Federal Police does not provide detail on security arrangements or protection costs for the Prime Minister, as doing so may breach the Prime Minister's security.
- (2) See below.

**ACCOMPANYING PARTY**

The Honourable John Howard MP

*Prime Minister*

**Prime Minister's Office**

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*Principal Private Secretary*

Mr Ben Mitchell

*Media Adviser*

Ms Suzanne Kasperek

*Private Secretary to the Prime Minister*

^ Ms Marnie Gaffney

*Assistant Adviser*

*(Programme and Event Management)*

Ms Sue Cox

*Personal Secretary*

Ms Kylie Jacobson

*Media Assistant*

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Mr Hugh Borrowman

*First Assistant Secretary*

*International Division*

^ Ms Judi Holgate

*Visit Co-ordinator*

*Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch*

Mr David Foote

*Official Photographer*

*AUSPIC*

**Medical Officer**

Dr Graeme Killer AO

**Royal Australian Air Force**

Flight Lieutenant Dave Jackson

*Staff Officer VIP Operations*

Flight Lieutenant Justin Dickie

*Assistant Staff Officer VIP Operations*

^ In advance, joins in Kuala Lumpur

**Members of Parliament: Staffing****(Question No. 5008)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Special Minister of State, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

For the financial year 2005-06, what was the (i) number, (ii) office, (iii) designation and (iv) position of each staff member employed under the terms of the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984.

**Mr Nairn**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(i) to (iv) The number, office and classification of all Part III staff is regularly tabled at Senate Estimates Hearings. Staffing arrangements are clearly set out in the Senators and Members' Entitlements handbook.

**Whaling****(Question No. 5013)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

Will the Navy's new powers to protect Australian marine interests, which he described during Question Time on 6 December 2006, extend to the protection of whales in waters adjacent to the Australian Antarctic Territory which Australia has claimed as an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and declared to be a whale sanctuary; if so, does he intend to protect whales in Australia's Antarctic EEZ.

**Dr Nelson**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

On 6 December 2006, I advised that I had approved Rules of Engagement for use by the Royal Australian Navy during maritime border protection operations. No new legislative powers were announced at that time. These rules of engagement enable ADF members to counter non-compliant behaviour by foreign fishing vessel crews, specifically those foreign fishing vessels within the Australian Fisheries Zone.

The exclusive economic zone (EEZ) adjacent to the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT) is not part of the Australian Fisheries Zone but is by definition within the Australian Whale Sanctuary in accordance with section 225 of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. There are, however, a number of issues that affect our ability to take enforcement action within the waters of the AAT EEZ.

Any activities conducted must be consistent with Australia's obligations under the Antarctic treaty, which includes a prohibition on any measures of a military nature.

Japan's whaling activities in the Southern Ocean, including at times in waters off the AAT within the AAT EEZ, raise unique international legal issues. Due to the special legal and political status of Antarctica under the long standing Antarctic Treaty system, it is for the Government of Japan to regulate the activities of its nationals in Antarctic waters. Enforcement action in those waters risks undermining important cooperation over the rest of the Antarctic.

Japan regards these waters as the high seas and not subject to the jurisdiction of any nation. Action against Japanese vessels engaged in whaling, in what we regard as Australian Antarctic waters, may also have serious implications for the Antarctic Treaty system and Australia's long-term interests in the region. Further, although we find it objectionable, scientific whaling is permissible under the *International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling*. Provocative action, such as taking enforcement action against Japanese whaling vessels, may only serve to make resolution of this issue more difficult.

I note that there are fundamental differences between regulating Japan's scientific whaling in Antarctica and illegal fishing in Australian waters. Illegal fishing and whaling are managed under different international legal regimes and involve different factual and legal contexts.

#### **Education, Science and Training: Telephone Costs**

##### **(Question No. 5090)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

- (1) For each financial year from 1 July 2004, what was the total cost to the Minister's department of all (a) landline and (b) mobile telephone calls.

**Ms Julie Bishop**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) Landline calls:

FY2004 – 05: \$645,808.41.  
FY2005 – 06: \$670,235.30.  
FY2006 – to May 07: \$616,753.74.

- (b) Mobile Telephone calls:

FY2004 – 05: \$218,876.42.  
FY2005 – 06: \$263,197.87.  
FY2006 – to May 07: \$240,257.64.

#### **Human Services: Trespass**

##### **(Question No. 5129)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

For each financial year from 1 July 2004, how many instances of trespass have been recorded by the Minister's department, and for each instance of trespass, (a) what type of trespass occurred, (b) what action was taken against the offender and (c) what action was taken to prevent a future occurrence.

**Mr Brough**—The Minister for Human Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

##### **The Department (excluding CSA and CRS Australia)**

The Department of Human Services was created in October 2004. Since that time, in the Department, there has only been one instance of trespass, which occurred in March 2006 at the Burns Centre.

- (a) The type of trespass that occurred was a break-in.
- (b) The break in was reported to the police and an investigation was commenced. As a result of that investigation the offender was arrested.
- (c) Access Control system and CCTV system were updated.

##### **Child Support Agency**

There has been no reported instance of actual trespass for any financial year from 1 July 2004.

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**CRS Australia**

For each financial year from 1 July 2004, the following instances of trespass have been recorded by CRS Australia:

- (a) 2004-2005: 5 instances of trespass:
  - 3 break-ins; and
  - 2 attempted break-ins.
- 2005-2006: 7 break-ins.
- July 2006 December 2006: 4 instances of trespass
  - 1 break-in; and
  - 3 attempted break-ins.
- (b) In all instances, the offenders were not identified, therefore no action was taken against them.
- (c) In all instances of break-ins and three out of five of attempted break-ins, the incident was reported to the police. Additional security measures were discussed and implemented where appropriate and Protective Security Risk Reviews were conducted as required.

**Attorney-General's: Missing Property**  
**(Question No. 5138)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

- (1) For each financial year from 1 July 2004, what was the total cost to the Minister's department of departmental property reported missing.
- (2) For the financial year 2005-06, what items of property were reported missing and what was the cost of each.

**Mr Ruddock**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Departmental property with a total approximate cost of \$3190.00 was reported missing in financial year 2004-05. Departmental property with a total approximate cost of \$32,700.00 was reported missing in financial year 2005-06.
- (2) Details of the missing property for financial year 2005-06 and approximate item cost is as follows:
  - 16 x desktop computers valued at \$1719.00 each.
  - 11 x monitors valued at \$300.00 each.
  - 1 x laptop valued at \$1896.00.

**Industry, Tourism and Resources: Missing Property**  
**(Question No. 5142)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, in writing, on 6 December 2006:

- (1) For each financial year from 1 July 2004, what was the total cost the Minister's department of departmental property reported missing.
- (2) For the financial year 2005-06, what items of property were reported missing and what was the cost of each.

**Mr Ian Macfarlane**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1)

Financial Year	Missing Property \$	Stolen Property \$	Total Cost \$
2004-05	5,800	25,000	30,800

Financial Year	Missing Property \$	Stolen Property \$	Total Cost \$
2005-06	4,600	3,500	8,100
1 July 2006 – 31 Mar 2007	3,200	9,600	12,800

(2)

Items of Property	Missing Property \$	Stolen Property \$	Total Cost \$
Mobile Phones	2,700	400	3,100
Camera	1,150	-	1,150
Electronic Diary	760	-	760
Laptop	-	3,090	3,090
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>8,100</b>

### Education, Science and Training: Missing Property

#### (Question No. 5147)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

- (1) For each financial year from 1 July 2004, what was the total cost the Minister's department of departmental property reported missing.
- (2) For the financial year 2005-06, what items of property were reported missing and what was the cost of each.

**Ms Julie Bishop**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

#### Property Reported Missing

- (1) The total cost of departmental property reported missing for the Minister's department for each financial year from 1 July 2004 are:
  - for the 2004-05 financial year \$45,109.00
  - for the 2005-06 financial year \$16,870.18
- (2) The items of property reported missing and the cost of each for the financial year 2005-06 is at Attachment A.

In this response "cost" has been taken to mean the retirement book value of the item. The retirement book value is calculated using the fair value (also known as the market value) of the item minus its accumulated depreciation.

#### Attachment A

#### DEST Property reported missing for the 2005-06 Financial Year (including Questacon)

No.	Category	Asset description	Cost
1	Camera	Pentax camera	0.00
2	Digital Camera	Canon digital camera	0.00
3	Digital Camera	Panasonic digital video camera	0.00
4	Disc Grinder	Makita disc grinder	0.00
5	Drill	Makita cordless driver drill	0.00
6	Drill	Metabo electric hammer drill	0.00
7	Drill	Ryobi cordless driver drill	0.00
8	Drill	Ryobi drill and screwdriver Set	0.00
9	DVD Player	Samsung DVD/VCR	172.00
10	Fluke	Fluke scope metre and access	0.00

No.	Category	Asset description	Cost
11	Glue Gun	Bosch glue gun	0.00
12	Heat Gun	Arlec heat and strip gun	0.00
13	Laptop	Dell laptop	2277.00
14	Laptop	Dell laptop	0.00
15	Laptop	Dell laptop	253.00
16	Laptop	Dell laptop	1495.00
17	Laptop	Dell laptop	2220.00
18	Laptop	Dell laptop	1781.00
19	Laptop	Dell laptop	1875.00
20	Laptop	Dell laptop	252.92
21	Laptop	Toshiba laptop	233.79
22	Laptop	Toshiba laptop	252.92
23	Mobile Phone	Kyocera mobile phone	0.00
24	Modem	Dynalink modem	0.00
25	Modem	Netcomm modem	0.00
26	Modem	Netcomm modem	0.00
27	Monitor	Applevision colour digital monitor	0.00
28	Multimetre	Dick Smith multimeter	0.00
29	Multiplexer	Sensormatic duplex multiplexer	0.00
30	Office Equipment	AVT Transmitter including vertical display	0.00
31	PC	Dell desktop	0.00
32	PC	Dell desktop	25.00
33	PC	Dell desktop	25.00
34	PC	Dell desktop	25.00
35	PC	Dell desktop	175.00
36	PC	Dell desktop	25.00
37	PC	Dell desktop	275.00
38	PC	Dell desktop	789.00
39	PC	Dell desktop	1604.00
40	PC	Pentium desktop	162.55
41	PDA	iPAQ Pocket PC	0.00
42	PDA	Toshiba Palm PC	0.00
43	Phone	mobile phone	0.00
44	Printer	Canon colour printer	0.00
45	Printer	Canon colour printer	0.00
46	Printer	Canon colour printer	0.00
47	Printer	EPSON printer	0.00
48	Printer	Hewlett Packard printer	0.00
49	Printer	Hewlett Packard printer	0.00
50	Printer	Hewlett Packard printer	0.00
51	Printer	Hewlett Packard printer	0.00
52	Printer	Hewlett Packard printer	0.00
53	Printer	Ricoh Aficio printer	977.00
54	Projector	Dell projector	1975.00
55	Projector	NEC projector	0.00
56	Safe	Class B Safe	0.00
57	Safe	Class B Safe	0.00
58	Safety Equipment	EPIRB personal locator beacon	0.00
59	Safety Equipment	EPIRB personal locator beacon	0.00

No.	Category	Asset description	Cost
60	Solder	Weller solder station	0.00
61	Solder	Weller solder station	0.00
62	Soldering Rod	Electric soldering rod	0.00
63	Sound Level	TES sound level metre	0.00
64	Speakers	Etone box speakers	0.00
65	Stereo	Sharp stereo system	0.00
66	Toolbox	Big Jim plastic tool box and assorted handtools	0.00
67	Torch	Makita torch	0.00
68	Transmitter	Samson transmitter and case	0.00
69	TV	Panasonic television	0.00
70	TV	Panasonic television	0.00
71	TV	TEAC television	0.00
72	TV	TEAC television	0.00
73	VCR	NEC VCR	0.00
74	VCR	Panasonic VCR	0.00
75	VCR	Panasonic VCR	0.00
76	VCR	Panasonic VCR	0.00
77	VCR	Panasonic VCR	0.00
78	VCR	TEAC TV/VCR	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>16870.18</b>

**Attorney-General's: Stationery****(Question No. 5176)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

- (1) For each financial year from 1 July 2004, what was the total cost of paper purchased by the Minister's department.
- (2) Does the department have policies relating to duplex printing; if so, what are those details.

**Mr Ruddock**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) 2004/05 - \$123,734
- 2005/06 - \$144,298
- 2006/07 (until April 2007) - \$104,699

Figures are GST inclusive.

- (2) My Department's standard printers are all capable of printing in duplex mode and are set to duplex printing by default. Particular areas may elect to print a document single-sided if there is a specific operational need. A small number of individual departmental printers do not have the facility to print duplex but the volume of printing on these devices is negligible.

**Human Services: Stationery****(Question No. 5186)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

- (1) For each financial year from 1 July 2004, what was the total cost of paper purchased by the Minister's department.
- (2) Does the department have policies relating to duplex printing; if so, what are those details.

**Mr Brough**—The Minister for Human Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The Department (excluding the Child Support Agency and CRS Australia)

(1) 2004/05 - \$ 6,847.68<sup>1</sup>

2005/06 - \$19,795.99

2006/07 - \$26,245.50<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Period used 26 October 2004 to 30 June 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Period used 1 July 2006 to 31 January 2007.

(2) The Department does not have a policy in place, however, staff are encouraged to use duplex printing wherever possible and appropriate.

Child Support Agency

(1) 2004/05 - \$ 90,049.96

2005/06 - \$119,405.82

2006/07 - \$ 82,127.38<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Period used 1 July 2006 to 7 March 2007.

(2) The Child Support Agency does not have a policy relating to double-sided printing, staff are encouraged to use duplex printing wherever possible and appropriate.

CRS Australia

(1) The detailed information required to answer the question is not readily available. To obtain this information would be highly resource intensive and cannot be justified.

(2) CRS Australia's IT printing policy is published on the CRS intranet and says in part: Duplex printing, where supported by the equipment, must be used as the default for all printing. Simplex must be used only to meet special needs, or where business convention dictates (for example, for letters.)

**Advertising Campaigns**

**(Question No. 5259)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 7 December 2006:

(1) What advertising campaigns are being currently conducted by the Minister's department, and for each campaign identified, (a) what was the commencement date, (b) when will it conclude, (c) what is its purpose and (d) what is its total estimated cost, including market research and analysis, direct mailing, public relations, creative, call centres, media placement and all other costs.

(2) What advertising campaigns are planned for commencement before 1 July 2007, and for each campaign identified, (a) when will it commence, (b) when will it conclude, (c) what is its purpose and (d) what is its total estimated cost, including market research and analysis, direct mailing, public relations, creative, call centres, media placement and all other costs.

**Mr Howard**—I am advised that the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) (a) to (d) The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is not currently conducting any advertising campaigns.

(2) (a) to (d) The Department is not able to comment on possible future communications projects.

**Defence: Missing Weapons**  
**(Question No. 5296)**

**Mr Fitzgibbon** asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 6 February 2007:

- (1) Since February 2006, how many Freedom of Information requests have been made in relation to weapons missing from Australian Defence Force facilities and what are the details.

**Dr Nelson**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Defence has received four requests. The details of the requests are set out below:

**Request A**

My request concerns loss of weapons and ammunition by the ADF.

- (1) For the most recent three year period where records are complete, the number of rifles, pistols and other weapons unaccounted for by the ADF.
- (2) For every weapon referred to in 1.), brief details for every unaccounted for weapon, including the type of weapon, the location where it went missing from, the explanation for the disappearance (i.e theft) and whether there was any resulting disciplinary action against a staff member.
- (3) For the same three period, all ammunition unaccounted for by the ADF.
- (4) Brief details of any criminal action taken as a result of theft of weapons or ammunitions from the ADF.

**Request B**

I seek details of weapons and ordnance unaccounted for by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) either through loss or theft since 1 February 2004

Application is made for access to documents showing details of:

- (a) the type and number of weapons and/or ordnance lost or stolen
- (b) date lost or reported as missing
- (c) the location and Service from which the weapons and/or ordnance went missing
- (d) which specific weapons and/or ordnance are lost or stolen
- (e) items recovered
- (f) results of any criminal or disciplinary action

In dealing with this application I do not require access to all relevant documents but to sufficient documents that would disclose the information sought.

**Request C**

I seek access, under the Freedom of Information Act, to Defence Department reports concerned with the discovery of weapons and ammunition found in the possession of [sic] artillery sergeant [name deleted] at Seymour and Puckapunyal in December 2006.

The documents I wish to access are those concerned with assessments of how the department-owned materiel was removed from military bases, over what period this occurred and what subsequent audits have revealed about what other weapons and ammunition are missing from the department's bases.

I also seek access to reports concerned with the security of military hardware on bases in Australia.

I note that this episode is proceeding as a criminal matter involving Sgt [name deleted], however, I stress that my interest is with the departmental assessments of security breaches and not with the prosecution of the named individual.

**Request D**

Under the Freedom of Information Act 1982, I request documents which list the number and type of Australian Defence Force weapons, ammunition and equipment which have been unable to be located, and/or are presumed stolen, since 2000.

(2) All of the above requests are under consideration by Defence.

**Ipswich Careers Link****(Question No. 5299)**

**Mr Ripoll** asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 6 February 2007:

In respect of Ipswich Career Links (formerly known as the Ipswich Regional Schools and Industry Links, or IRSIL):

- (a) what sum is provided to the organisation each year by the Commonwealth Government;
- (b) are there any conditions attached to Commonwealth funding; if so, what are the details;
- (c) how many years has the organisation received Commonwealth funding and, for each of those years, what are the details of dispersal of those funds;
- (d) has the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) ever received committee planning details from the organisation, including business and strategic plans;
- (e) for the years 2002-2006, will DEST provide a breakdown of all income and expenditure of Commonwealth funding by the organisation;
- (f) for the years 2002-2006, what employment outcomes has the organisation achieved;
- (g) how many job placements have been made through the organisation;
- (h) how does the number of job placements made by the organisation compare with the number of placements made by other similar organisations in the area and what are the details;
- (i) does DEST have specific performance indicators or expectations for employment organisations; if so, what are the details;
- (j) has DEST received any complaints about the Ipswich Career Links from any of the 19 schools served by the organisation;
- (k) has DEST received any complaints about the organisation from clients or constituents in the Ipswich area;
- (l) how many similar organisations in the Ipswich area have applied for DEST funding;
- (m) how many of the organisations identified in Part (l) received funding and what are the details of those organisations;
- (n) does DEST have, or has DEST ever had, concerns about the Ipswich Career Links; if so, what is, or was, each cause for concern and how is it being, or how was, it addressed;
- (o) has DEST ever issued a formal warning to the organisation; if so, has the reason for the warning been addressed; and
- (p) has the Member for Blair ever provided a letter of support, or put himself forward as a referee or in any other capacity, for the Ipswich Career Links; if so, how many letters has he submitted and how many of the supported funding submissions have been successful.

**Ms Julie Bishop**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) has funded Ipswich Careers Link (formerly known as the Ipswich Regional Schools and Industry Links, or IRSIL) as a Local Community Partnership as follows:

\$76,185.10 in 2004;  
 \$128,529.00 in 2005; and  
 \$224,595.04 in 2006

(b) To be eligible for funding as a Local Community Partnership (LCP), proponents must be:

1. incorporated;
2. not-for-profit; and
3. community-based and locally operated; and have a governing body (LCP Management Committee) with representatives from the following five specified stakeholder groups.
  - Employer/industry groups;
  - Government schools;
  - Non-government schools (Catholic and Independent);
  - Parent groups; and
  - Young people (aged 15-24 years)

For more information on LCPs visit: <http://www.connecttoyourfuture.dest.gov.au/>

(c) DEST provided the following funds over 3 years from 2004 to 2006 to Ipswich Career Links (formerly known as the Ipswich Regional Schools and Industry Links):

YEAR	FUNDING PURPOSE	FUNDED
2004	Structured Workplace Learning	\$61,185.10
2004	Capacity Building as a Local Community Partnership	\$15,000.00
2005	Structured Workplace Learning	\$62,379.00
2005	Increasing Vocational Learning Opportunities for Indigenous Students	\$66,150.00
2006	Structured Workplace Learning	\$80,453.18
2006	Career and Transition Support	\$108,343.34
2006	Adopt a School	\$35,798.52

(d) Yes. The Ipswich Career Links Management Committee provided its three year Strategic Plan and an annual Business Plan in April 2006.

(e) DEST can make available LCP Programme Financial Reports, upon request, for Ipswich Career Links (formerly known as the Ipswich Regional Schools and Industry Links) for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and the interim Financial Report for the year 2006 up to 30 June 2006.

(f) to (i) Parts of the question relate to employment outcomes and job placements which fall within the responsibility of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

(j) Yes.

(k) Other than the concerns expressed at (j) above, DEST is not aware of specific complaints about the organisation from clients or constituents in the Ipswich area.

(l) Three other organisations lodged Applications for Funding as part of the procurement process to operate as a Local Community Partnership in the Ipswich LCP Service Region.

(m) None of these organisations receive funding through Career Advice Australia programmes.

(n) Concerns have been raised with DEST by some schools in the service region. The Department seeks to support local community organisations to overcome difficulties they may face delivering effective support to schools, parents and others key stakeholders. The Funding Agreement with Ipswich Career Links was executed in April 2006, and a meeting was held in July 2006 ahead of the regular Programme Monitoring Meeting. At the Programme Monitoring Meeting in November performance issues were identified, and these were pursued in writing with Ipswich Career Links within the week.

(o) DEST informed Ipswich Career Links in writing on 21 November 2006, 24 January 2007 and 5 February 2007 that performance requirements under the contract had not been met.

(p) No.

**Finance and Administration: Infrastructure**  
**(Question No. 5310)**

**Mr Martin Ferguson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, in writing, on 6 February 2007:

For each financial year from 1999-2000 to 2005-2006, what sum was expended on infrastructure by each Commonwealth department.

**Mr Costello**—The Minister for Finance and Administration has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:

This information is available in the financial statements published in the annual reports of individual Commonwealth departments.

**Members of Parliament: Entitlements**  
**(Question No. 5315)**

**Mr Laurie Ferguson** asked the Special Minister of State, in writing, on 6 February 2007:

- (1) What is the estimated cost of the additional personal computer to be allocated to each Senator and Member for the additional declared staff position announced in Min. 2007/04.
- (2) In respect of the decision announced in Min. 2007/02 to include a DVD featuring the national anthem of Australia in the list of items Members and Senators may present to constituents: (a) who requested that this entitlement be made available to Members and Senators; (b) when was the request made; and (c) what is the estimated cost of this entitlement for a full financial year.
- (3) In respect of the decision of 11 July 2007 to allocate an additional full-time Electorate Officer staff position to all Senators and Members: (a) when did he request that the Department of Finance and Administration cost the proposal and when did he receive these costings; (b) who was consulted in determining that the additional position be created; (c) when was this issue taken to Cabinet and when did Cabinet decide to allocate the additional position; and (d) what is the estimated itemised cost of the decision from 22 February to 30 June 2006, and for each financial year from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011.
- (4) In respect of his announcement of 18 January 2007 (Min. 2007/01) permitting Members and Senators to install a commercial music on-hold player (the DP-200) in each electorate office, (a) who made the request for this entitlement and (b) what is the cost of each player and the estimated cost of the entitlements of each Member and Senator who chooses to install the equipment.

**Mr Nairn**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) The estimated average annual cost of each PC is \$1,642.
- (2) (a) and (b) It is not usual practice to discuss the internal deliberations of the Government. (c) The level of constituent demand, and therefore the total cost, is not known at this stage.
- (3) (a) to (c) It is not usual practice to discuss the internal deliberations of the Government. (d) This information is available in the 2007-08 Budget Papers.
- (4) (a) It is not usual practice to discuss the internal deliberations of the Government. (b) The level of demand from MPs, and therefore the total cost, is not known at this stage. Unit costs can be found at [www.musiconhold.com.au](http://www.musiconhold.com.au).

**Investing in Our Schools Program**  
**(Question No. 5321)**

**Mr Georganas** asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 6 February 2007:

- (1) What is the procedure for notifying Members about federal funding to schools in each Member's electorate.
- (2) Following the most recent announcement of federal funding to schools (a) which members were notified (b) when were they notified; and (c) did any members receive prior notification; if so (i) which members; and (ii) why.

**Ms Julie Bishop**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) There is no single procedure for notifying Members about federal funding to schools in each Member's electorate.
- (2) In regard to the announcement of the Round Three funding of the Investing in Our Schools Programme:
  - (a) All members of the House of Representatives were notified.
  - (b) Since the inception of the Investing in Our Schools Programme, it has been the administrative arrangement that all correspondence for advising Members is dispatched by the Minister's office through the Parliamentary Secretary's office after the Minister announces the outcomes of applications from each round of funding.
  - (c) The Parliamentary Secretary receives advice prior to other Members due to the administrative arrangement explained in (2b).

**Throsby Electorate: Programs**  
**(Question No. 5378)**

**Ms George** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 8 February 2007:

- (1) In respect of the federal electorate of Throsby, will the Minister provide details of the programs administered by his/her department and relevant agencies under which community organisations, business or individuals can apply for funding.
- (2) In respect of each Commonwealth-funded program identified in Part (1), (a) what sum was allocated, in total, to eligible participants in the federal electorate of Throsby in (i) 2005 and (ii) 2006; (b) what is the name and address of each of the funding recipients and (c) what sum was allocated to each of them in (i) 2005 and (ii) 2006.

**Mr McGauran**—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio administers a number of funding programs that could potentially benefit organisations and individuals in the electorate of Throsby, if they meet eligibility requirements. Details of these funding programs, including links to the Department's Annual Report, Portfolio Budget Statements, and Portfolio Agencies, are available at [www.dcita.gov.au](http://www.dcita.gov.au).

**Prime Minister: Visit to the Philippines**  
**(Question No. 5428)**

**Mr Melham** asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 14 February 2007:

- (1) What sum was spent by the Commonwealth Government on (a) travel, (b) accommodation, (c) security and (d) all other expenses for his visit to the Philippines on 14 and 15 January 2007 to attend the East Asia Summit.
- (2) Who accompanied him on this journey.

**Mr Howard**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a), (b), (d) I am advised that not all accounts have been received by all the departments involved with the visit. When the accounts have been finalised the information will be made available for the public record. (c) The Australian Federal Police does not provide detail on security arrangements or protection costs for the Prime Minister, as doing so may breach the Prime Minister's security.
- (2) See below.

**ACCOMPANYING PARTY**

The Honourable John Howard MP

*Prime Minister*

Mrs Janette Howard

**Prime Minister's Office**

Mr Andrew Shearer

*Senior Adviser (International)*

Mr Ben Mitchell

*Media Adviser*

Ms Suzanne Kasprzak

*Private Secretary to the Prime Minister*

# Ms Jodie Doodt

*Assistant Adviser*

*(Programme and Event Management)*

Ms Vanessa Kimpton

*Personal Secretary*

Ms Nicole Chant

*Assistant Media Adviser*

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Mr Hugh Borrowman

*First Assistant Secretary*

*International Division*

# Mr Frank Leverett

*Assistant Secretary*

*Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch*

Mr David Foote

*Official Photographer*

*AUSPIC*

**Medical Officer**

Dr Graeme Killer AO

**Royal Australian Air Force**

Flight Lieutenant Justin Dickie

*Staff Officer VIP Operations*

# In advance

**Medical Workforce**

**(Question No. 5503)**

**Mrs Elliot** asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 1 March 2007:

- (1) Why has he not yet granted an exemption under the Government's District of Workforce Shortage determination for Panorama Plaza Medical Centre in West Tweed Heads.
- (2) Is he aware that Panorama Plaza Medical Centre requires an exemption under the Government's District of Workforce Shortage determination to attract a doctor and to meet the health needs of the local community; if so, when will he grant such an exemption.

**Mr Abbott**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) The Panorama Plaza Medical Centre is located within the Tweed (A) – Pt A Statistical Local Area (SLA). This SLA is not currently a district of workforce shortage as it has a doctor to population ratio better than the national average.
- (2) I have been informed by my Department that should the practice be able to provide evidence that it services particular population groups such as the aged and also services adjoining rural areas as part of its patient catchment, the Department would re-consider the practice's request for approval to engage an overseas trained doctor. I have asked my Department to contact the Panorama Plaza Medical Centre to discuss their specific requirements.

**Defence: Greenbank Training Area**

**(Question No. 5520)**

**Mr Ripoll** asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 20 March 2007:

In respect of land at Greenbank in the federal electorate of Forde that is currently designated for army use: (a) to what use does the Government intend to put the land; (b) what are the (i) short-term and (ii) long-term future plans for use of the site or any part of the site; (c) does the Government intend to (i) change the use of, or (ii) sell, the site or any part of the site; and (d) have there been inquiries from any other Government department or from private or public sector parties who are interested in acquiring the site or any part of the site; if so, what are those details.

**Dr Nelson**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) The land at Greenbank Training Area is currently designated for Defence Training, with significant use by Army units from Enoggera and Air Force personnel. Greenbank Training Area is identified as an enduring property for Defence requirements.
  - (i) Defence will continue to use all of the Greenbank Training Area for military training.
  - (ii) For the longer-term Defence will undertake a review of all its training areas to consider their future requirements and to ensure they meet Defence capability requirements. Greenbank will be included in that review.
- (c) (i) Defence has no intention of changing the use of the property; and

(ii) Defence has no intention of selling the site or any part thereof.

(d) Yes. The following enquiries have been received:

- (i) The then Senator Santo Santoro on behalf of Staines Memorial College Ltd - 21 November 2003;
- (ii) Chairman of the Board of Directors, Staines Memorial College, Mr Grahame Kerr - April 2005;
- (iii) Mayor City of Ipswich, Cr Paul Pisasale on behalf of Staines Memorial College - April 2005;
- (iv) The Hon Gary Hardgrave MP, on behalf of Staines Memorial College - June 2005;
- (v) The Hon Cameron Thompson MP, on behalf of Staines Memorial College - August 2005; and
- (vi) The Hon Cameron Thompson MP, on behalf of Staines Memorial College - March 2006.

### **Autism**

#### **(Question No. 5521)**

**Ms Macklin** asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 20 March 2007:

Does the Minister's department provide any funding to support children with autism; if so (a) what is the nature of the funding program/s, (b) what sum is allocated under each program (i) for the current Budget year and (ii) across the forward estimates period and (c) for each program identified, what sum has already been spent or committed.

**Mr Abbott**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department of Health and Ageing supports health interventions for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) through the medical and pharmaceutical benefits schemes.

During the period 2000-2007, the Health Portfolio, through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), provided \$5,428,583 for fourteen grants involving research into ASD. The total spending each calendar year during this period was as follows:

Year	Total Funding Expenditure
2000	\$379,574
2001	\$461,309
2002	\$704,015
2003	\$717,512
2004	\$871,726
2005	\$519,250
2006	\$891,175
2007	\$884,022*

Note: 2007 figure is expected expenditure for the whole year, including allocations still to be spent.

In addition to autism-related research, the NHMRC provides substantial research funding into mental health and neurosciences which may, in the long term, benefit those suffering from a range of conditions including autism.

The Department of Health and Ageing provided \$50,000 in 2005-06 for a research review on the most effective early intervention programs for children with ASD and a brochure for parents that provides best practice guidelines for early intervention for children with ASD. These are available on the department's website at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-child-aut>

Please note that the Australian Government also provides a range of assistance to autism sufferers and their families through the Department of Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Department of Education, Science and Training.

**Autism**  
**(Question No. 5522)**

**Ms Macklin** asked the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in writing, on 20 March 2007:

Does the Minister's department provide any funding to support children with autism; if so (a) what is the nature of the funding program/s, (b) what sum is allocated under each program (i) for the current Budget year and (ii) across the forward estimates period and (c) for each program identified, what sum has already been spent or committed.

**Mr Brough**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government makes a substantial contribution to the wellbeing of children, including those with autism, through a range of mainstream and targeted programs.

The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs funds three time limited projects that directly target children with autism, through the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) 2004-09.

The project details are available on the department's website at:

<http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-sfcs.htm>

**Sudan**  
**(Question No. 5525)**

**Mr Danby** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 20 March 2007:

- (1) Is he aware of the recent visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao to Sudan, in which he provided significant aid to the Sudanese Government by cancelling US\$80 million of Sudanese debt; if so, does he accept that Chinese aid could be used to assist the Sudanese Government in the violation of human rights in Darfur.
- (2) Can he confirm that during the recent visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao to Africa, Hu Jintao promised the Sudanese Government that Beijing would provide an interest-free loan of several hundred million dollars to build a presidential palace in Khartoum; if so has the Minister held discussions with relevant Chinese authorities to ensure that China's aid to Sudan is provided to Sudanese people in greatest need.
- (3) What is the Government's position on Australia's trading partners providing aid to countries that commit human rights violations.
- (4) Has he raised the issue of Chinese support for Sudan with the relevant Chinese authorities.
- (5) Has Australia asked China to pressure its Sudanese clients to accept a UN protection force mandated by Security Council Resolution 1706; if not, why not.

**Mr Dower**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) I am aware of media reports regarding Chinese President Hi Jintao's visit to Sudan.
- (2) I am aware of the reports regarding China's proposed aid package to Sudan, but cannot confirm them. I have not held discussions with the Chinese Government regarding Chinese aid practices in Sudan specifically, although I regularly raise issues of good aid practices with my Chinese counterparts, and my Department does the same at officials' level. Australia has urged China to adhere more closely to international best practice in aid delivery, including the OECD's "do no harm principle".

- (3) Australia's aid program supports the advancement of human rights. It is a matter for other sovereign governments as to the objectives pursued through their aid program, in accordance with applicable international and domestic law.
- (4) No.
- (5) Australia supports efforts to build a stronger peacekeeping mission in Darfur, and we have made these views known at senior levels to the Government of Sudan, and will continue to do so. We have also made representations to key members of the African Union and the Arab League asking them to encourage Sudan to agree to the deployment of an international force.

**China: Human Rights****(Question No. 5526)**

**Mr Danby** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 20 March 2007:

- (1) Is the Government aware that a prominent Chinese reporter Qin Zhongfei, who put his thoughts into verse, was jailed by Chinese Communist Party officials.
- (2) Does the Government acknowledge that (a) this incident shows that the Communist Party is determined to control information and opinion among the Chinese people and (b) that the Chinese Government maintains tight censorship over radio, television, newspapers, movies, fine arts and literature.
- (3) Is the Government aware that the Chinese Government continues to control the provision of information to the Chinese people; if so, what attempts has the Government made to raise these issues with the Chinese Government through the Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue; if the Government has not raised these issues with the Chinese Government, why not.

**Mr Downer**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) The Government is aware of media reports regarding the detention of Qin Zhongfei.
- (2) (a) Incidents of official censorship in China are well documented. (b) Incidents of official censorship in China are well documented.
- (3) I am aware that official censorship is widespread in China. I regularly raise issues of freedom of expression, including press freedom, with my Chinese counterparts, and my Department does the same at officials' level. During the last round of the Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue, held in Canberra on 25 July 2006, Australia raised its full range of human rights concerns, including freedom of expression. Freedom of expression, including media freedom, is indispensable to discussions on civil and political rights at the dialogues.

I also raised human rights issues, including media freedom, with the Chinese Foreign Minister, Li Zhaoxing, and with the Minister of China's State Council Information Office, Cai Wu, during their separate visits to Australia in April 2006.

**Defence: Office Accommodation****(Question No. 5538)**

**Mr Martin Ferguson** asked the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 20 March 2007:

- (1) At what stage is the construction of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HJOC) and what is the expected completion date of the project.
- (2) How many people are expected to be employed at the HJOC and what provision has been made for car parking.
- (3) Has his department undertaken a study into the potential impact of the HJOC on the King's Highway and will the department be making a financial contribution to the upgrade of the King's Highway to accommodate the increased traffic flow and potential impact of the facility on road safety.

**Dr Nelson**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) The private financing contract with Praeco Pty Ltd (a consortium comprising Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd and ABN AMRO Australia Limited) calls for the construction of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) by Praeco Pty Ltd to be complete in July 2008. Praeco advises that construction is scheduled to meet this milestone. Photos of construction can be viewed on the Project's internet site at <http://www.defence.gov.au/id/hqjoc>.

Construction of the facility will be followed by the installation by Defence of command, control, communications, computing and intelligence systems. The movement of staff into the facility is programmed from November 2008.

The Project will be complete once the facility becomes operational following staff transition and assimilation. It is anticipated that the Project Team will not stand down until all the administrative aspects of the Project are completed in the first half of 2009.

(2) The new Headquarters facility is designed to provide normal working arrangements for approximately 750 Defence staff, noting that some of these staff will be shift workers. In addition to these Defence personnel, Praeco Pty Ltd has estimated that there could be about 40 to 50 of their staff employed in facilities management roles as part of the 30 year private financing arrangement.

The car park on the HQJOC site is designed to cater for 700 private vehicles, 20 Commonwealth vehicles in undercover parking, and a further 25 spaces for motorcycles. In addition, provision is made for VIP/executive vehicle parking for 10 vehicles in a separate car park.

(3) The Department of Defence through the HQJOC Project commissioned a traffic study into the Kings Highway which was included as a report in the Project's Environmental Impact Statement (2003 draft report and 2005 final report). That study used the original 1,185 Defence staff numbers for the HQJOC facility which was subsequently reduced in late 2005. The Project has commissioned another traffic study which will use the reduced Defence staff numbers, and include contractor site support staff. The results of this study will be available later this year and are required to be presented to Government as part of the environmental conditions of approval for the Project. The traffic study results will also be released to the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority and Roads ACT.

The Commonwealth's position regarding funding for upgrades to local roads remains as that provided in the February 2006 Estimates Hearing, that is, it is principally a state and local government responsibility.

#### **Higher Education**

#### **(Question No. 5545)**

**Mr Murphy** asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 20 March 2007:

- (1) Is a participation rate in higher education of 22 per cent in the 17-21 age group conducive to the level of labour-force skills and productivity needed for Australia to compete successfully with other highly developed economies in the global marketplace; if so, how; if not, will the Government implement a new target for a higher education participation rate.
- (2) What initiatives will the Government undertake to increase the participation of young Australians in higher education, particularly among those least likely to be attracted to attending university on a full fee-paying basis.

**Ms Julie Bishop**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) The Australian Government does not set targets for participation in higher education. However recently published findings from the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) show that 49% of young people in the study had attended university by the age of 24. Attainment rates in higher education in Australia are above average by international standards. According to figures published in Education at a Glance, 2006, Australia had the sixth highest attainment rate for 'Type A' tertiary education (closest equivalent to our higher education) out of thirty OECD countries in 2003. Australia outperformed the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan.

(2) The Australian Government's reforms to the system have contributed to increased participation. There were 717,000 domestic students at Australian universities in 2005. Domestic undergraduate commencements rose 6% in 2005. Commonwealth supported students make up about 97% of all domestic undergraduate students in public universities.

The Australian Government is providing funds for an additional 50,000 new Commonwealth-supported university places by 2011 through the Backing Australia's Future reforms and other initiatives. This will further increase opportunities for university study, especially in areas of skills shortage.

Universities Australia released its report on unmet demand (Report on Applications for Undergraduate University Courses 2007) on 26 April 2007. Universities Australia estimates that unmet demand for undergraduate university places has fallen by 7% this year, from 14,200 in 2006 to 13,200 in 2007. Unmet demand has fallen 63% since the peak in 2004 and is now lower than it has been at any time since 2001 (2001 is the first year of the current time series for unmet demand due to a change in methodology by the Universities Australia).

This year, 92% of eligible Year 12 applicants who applied for an undergraduate place in their home state received an offer of a place. This is the highest figure on record.

In January this year, Professor Gerard Sutton, Chair of Universities Australia, stated that 'this government have put in enough new places to effectively cancel any unmet demand ... effectively, nation wide, unmet demand no longer exists'.

Research has found that the main reason most students miss out on a place is their tertiary entrance performance. Year 12 applicants who missed out on a place had an average ENTER score of about 54 (Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth, Research Report 46).

Australia's student financing system is internationally recognised as fair and equitable. The income contingent repayment arrangements under HECS-HELP ensure that students are not prevented from participating in higher education if they are unable to pay their student contributions up-front.

In addition, the Australian Government is committing more than \$400 million over 5 years to 2009 through more than 43,000 Commonwealth Learning Scholarships to assist students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

**Argentina: Terrorist Attacks**  
**(Question No. 5563)**

**Mr Danby** asked the Attorney-General, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

In respect of the recommendation made by Interpol's Office of Legal Affairs that international law enforcement agencies arrested and detained five officials of the former Iranian regime for planning the 1994 bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) Jewish Cultural Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in which 86 people were killed: (a) has the Government approached Interpol regarding progress on this matter; and (b) has the Government stressed to Interpol the need for resolution of this matter to be expedited in order to prevent unrestricted travel by officials of the former Iranian regime.

**Mr Ruddock**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) No.
- (b) No.

**Telstra**

**(Question No. 5570)**

**Mr Katter** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that Telstra services are inadequate in many communities in Far North Queensland under normal circumstances, but upon the impact of a disaster such as Cyclone Larry or a heavy wet season they become infinitely worse.
- (2) Is the Minister also aware that (a) satellite telephones are unreliable in some remote localities, (b) despite the present Government subsidy, the balance of the cost of any such emergency telephone plan remains beyond the reach of many fixed-income recipients and (c) the lack of access to emergency communications has resulted in the death of vulnerable and disadvantaged persons in remote communities.
- (3) Is the Minister aware that Telstra Countrywide has stated that a mobile telephone with a car phone kit would function in most locations in remote Far North Queensland; if so, will the Government provide appropriate emergency telephones and car kits to the vulnerable and disadvantaged in remote situations in rural Australia.

**Mr McGauran**—The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (1) Telstra has advised that telecommunications services in Far North Queensland are subject to difficulties due to seasonal variation, in addition to natural disasters such as Cyclone Larry. For example, the dry season may cause cracks in cables, which are then penetrated by moisture in the wet season, causing faults in service provision. Telstra has advised that it has a program for replacement and/or upgrade where the network is performing below expectation.

The Government has put in place the Network Reliability Framework (NRF) to monitor and improve the reliability of telephone services provided by Telstra, both in regional and metropolitan areas. The NRF came into effect on 1 January 2003 and requires Telstra to meet reliability standards, particularly in relation to multiple faults, for its seven million residential and small business customers.

The NRF works at three distinct levels – the regional, local and individual service levels. Under the NRF, Telstra is legally required to report regularly to ACMA on regional performance and to fix poorly performing local areas and individual services.

On 12 September 2006, amendments were made to Telstra's carrier licence conditions to strengthen the NRF so that recurrent faults in Telstra's network are fixed more effectively and efficiently.

At the local level, Telstra is now required to automatically remediate at least 480 of the worst performing cable runs each year, with minimum quotas for smaller exchange areas which are mostly in regional areas. Remediation here means more than just normal repair work – it must also address the root cause of recurrent problems with a view to eliminating them. To assess Telstra's success with this, its remediation activity on a cable run must result in a minimum 90 per cent reduction in the number of faults, otherwise it will be required to do further investigation and remediation.

At the individual service level, Telstra must take action to prevent an individual service from experiencing more than three faults in a 60 day period or more than four faults in a 365 day period. If these faults levels are exceeded, Telstra must investigate and remediate the service, subject to su-

pervision by ACMA. The new arrangements have improved the post-remediation monitoring arrangements for individual services, to ensure that recurrent and post-remediation faults are effectively targeted and promptly fixed.

(2) Satellite phones are a good means of mobile communication in areas of Australia where terrestrial mobile phone services are not available. Satellite phones work across 100 per cent of the Australian landmass and external territories – however, the user must have a clear unobstructed view of the sky. The reliability of the coverage from any one service provider is dependant on the reliability of the service provider's network of satellites, which is very much the commercial responsibility of the service provider.

The Minister is aware that satellite mobile phone handsets are more expensive than other mobile phone handsets. It is for this reason that the Government put in place the Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme to make mobile communications more accessible and affordable for people living or working in the most remote parts of Australia.

Since the Scheme's inception in 2002, funding of more than \$10.5 million has supported the purchase of almost 9000 phones by Australians living or working in rural, regional and remote areas. Under Mobile Connect, this Scheme has received additional funding and has now been extended to June 2009 to enable even more people living in remote areas to benefit.

The operation of the Scheme has added to volumes in the satellite phone market and coincided with a reduction in satellite phone operating costs. It is expected that the market will continue to grow and competition increase over the life of the Scheme.

The Government is aware of the growing importance of mobile telephony to Australians – because of the financial and social benefits, as well as for personal safety. It was for this reason that the Government has made around \$175 million available since 1998 to further extend mobile phone coverage and to implement the Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme to make satellite mobile handsets more affordable.

While terrestrial mobile phones and satellite phones are an excellent means of communication, they would not be able to provide assistance in all emergency situations. Where a need exists for emergency communications that are not reliant on fixed or mobile phone services, the use of a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), an Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) or an Emergency Position Indicator Radio Beacon (EPIRB) is recommended. The Australian Government operates the Rescue Coordination Centre within the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to coordinate the response to emergency situations notified via a PLB, ELT or EPIRB. While these units need to be purchased, there are no monthly call charges.

(3) The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that those living in regional, rural and remote Australia continue to receive improvements to their telecommunications services, and has put in place a number of initiatives to achieve this outcome.

On 17 August 2005, the Government announced communications initiatives totalling \$1.1 billion, including \$30 million for the Mobile Connect initiative to extend terrestrial mobile phone coverage in regional and rural areas and to continue satellite handset subsidies for more remote areas.

Under the Mobile Connect initiative, mobile phone coverage will be extended in smaller regional communities and along highways where a case for strategic location or economic importance can be established and where services will have ongoing commercial viability.

While the use of a car-kit will extend the range where terrestrial mobile phone signals can be received, the sparse population and difficult terrain makes it difficult to establish the business case to substantially increase terrestrial coverage in this region. In areas that are sparsely populated or have little passing traffic, the only commercially viable option for mobile phone services is via satellite.

People living in areas that do not receive terrestrial mobile phone coverage may wish to consider purchasing a satellite mobile phone, particularly as they may be eligible for assistance under the Government's Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme.

This Scheme has been extended until June 2009 as part of the Mobile Connect initiative. During 2006–07, this subsidy is improving affordability by providing up to \$1200 towards the cost of a satellite phone handset to eligible people who live or operate a business in an area without terrestrial mobile phone coverage, and up to \$900 to other eligible people if they spend significant time in such areas. As such, the subsidy represents a potential discount of around 60 per cent on the cost of a typical satellite phone handset.

Additionally, the \$2 billion Communications Fund was established by legislation in 2005 to ensure that regional, rural and remote Australia's future telecommunications needs are secured. It forms part of the Government's ongoing commitment to continuing improvements in telecommunications in regional, rural and remote Australia.

The Communications Fund has been invested to provide an ongoing income stream which is projected to reach approximately \$400 million every three years and can only be spent implementing the recommendations of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee.

The Government will shortly announce the formation of the first independent Review Committee with the inquiry to get underway this year and subsequent reviews every three and a half years thereafter.

These arrangements will assist services to keep pace with those in other parts of the country and provide a level of certainty for regional, rural and remote Australia into the future.

### **Investing in Our Schools Program**

#### **(Question No. 5576)**

**Mr Murphy** asked the Minister for Education, Science and Training, in writing, on 21 March 2007:

- (1) Has she read a press release titled 'Delivering round one of the \$1 billion investment in school capital works', issued on 21 October 2005 by the former Minister for Education, Science and Training; if not, why not.
- (2) Does this press release state that 'schools are eligible to receive up to \$150,000 in funding' from the Investing in Our Schools program and that 'school communities that have not received funding in this round will have until 2008 to benefit from the programme'; if not, why not.
- (3) How does she reconcile the apparent conflict between this statement and a statement issued to school principals by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister that schools 'will be able to apply for projects which will take their total approved grants from all rounds of the Investing in Our Schools program up to a maximum of \$100,000'.

**Ms Julie Bishop**—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The overwhelming positive response to IOSP in its first year of implementation demonstrates how successful the Australian Government has been in responding to the needs of school communities. This high demand from school communities led to the 2008 Programme year funding being brought forward into the 2006 Programme year. The Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004 was amended by Parliament in April 2006 to facilitate this reposition. In February 2007, the Australian Government announced a further \$127 million would be made available to allow state government schools that have received grants below \$100,000 or none at all to apply for funding grants.

It has never been stated in any Programme Guidelines that funding application periods will be open up until the end of 2008.

The Investing in Our Schools Programme does not absolve state governments of their responsibility to properly fund schools which they own and manage.

(3) While the funding limit for any one school was nominally \$150,000 over the life of the Programme, there was never any guarantee that every state government school would receive this amount. It is a competitive grant programme. Given there are around 7,000 state government schools and the initial IOSP funding pool for these schools was \$700 million, the average total grant was inherently going to be \$100,000. Of the original \$700 million funding allocated to state government schools, the Investing in Our Schools Programme has already expended \$656.2 million on more than 15,100 projects in 6,166 state government schools across Australia. Already around 90% of state government schools have been successful in receiving funding from the Programme. Due to the success of the Investing in Our Schools Programme, an additional \$127 million has been committed for state government schools, bringing the total funding to \$827 million. This additional funding ensures that school communities which have received little or no funding to date will be able to benefit from the Investing in Our Schools Programme.