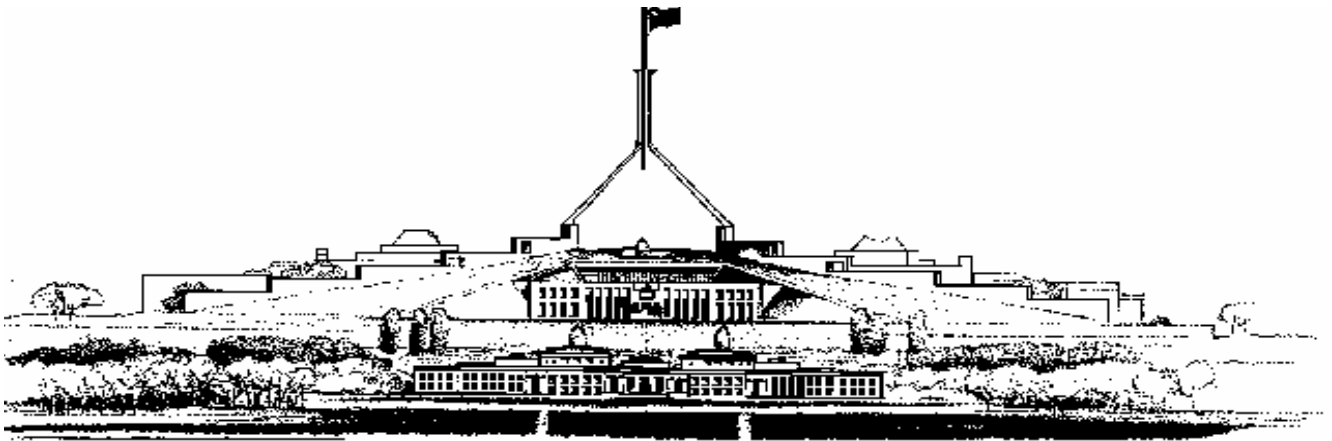




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 1, 2011

Tuesday, 8 February 2011

FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

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SITTING DAYS—2011

Month	Date
February	8, 9, 10, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28
March	1, 2, 3, 21, 22, 23, 24
May	10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31
June	1, 2, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23
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August	16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25
September	12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22
October	11, 12, 13, 31
November	1, 2, 3, 21, 22, 23, 24

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

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Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia

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Second Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP

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Leader of the House—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP

Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Stephen Francis Smith MP

Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

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Deputy Leader—Hon. Wayne Maxwell Swan MP

Chief Government Whip—Hon. Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP

Government Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP

Liberal Party of Australia

Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP

Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Warren George Entsch MP

Opposition Whips—Mr Patrick Damien Secker MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals

Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP

Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP

Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives

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Andrews, Karen Lesley	McPherson, QLD	LP
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Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel	Curtin, WA	LP
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Broadbent, Russell Evan	McMillan, VIC	LP
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Buchholz, Scott Andrew	Wright, QLD	LP
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Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher	Port Adelaide, SA	ALP
Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael	Holt, VIC	ALP
Champion, Nicholas David	Wakefield, SA	ALP
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Christensen, George Robert	Dawson, QLD	Nats
Ciobo, Steven Michele	Moncrieff, QLD	LP
Clare, Hon. Jason Dean	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Cobb, Hon. John Kenneth	Calare, NSW	Nats
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Coulton, Mark Maclean	Parkes, NSW	Nats
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Danby, Michael David	Melbourne Ports, VIC	ALP
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Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, QLD	LP
Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
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Forrest, John Alexander	Mallee, VIC	Nats
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Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
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Gash, Joanna	Gilmore, NSW	LP
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Haase, Barry Wayne	Durack, WA	LP
Hall, Jill	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Hartsuyker, Luke	Cowper, NSW	Nats
Hawke, Alexander George	Mitchell, NSW	LP
Hayes, Christopher Patrick	Fowler, NSW	ALP
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Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew	Flinders, VIC	LP
Husic, Edham Nurredin	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Irons, Stephen James	Swan, WA	LP
Jenkins, Harry Alfred	Scullin, VIC	ALP
Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey	Tangney, WA	LP
Jones, Stephen Patrick	Throsby, NSW	ALP
Jones, Ewen Thomas	Herbert, QLD	LP
Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, QLD	Ind
Keenan, Michael Fayat	Stirling, WA	LP
Kelly, Hon. Michael Joseph, AM	Eden-Monaro, NSW	ALP
Kelly, Craig	Hughes, NSW	LP
King, Hon. Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, VIC	ALP
Laming, Andrew Charles	Bowman, QLD	LP
Leigh, Andrew Keith	Fraser, ACT	ALP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Livermore, Kirsten Fiona	Capricornia, QLD	ALP
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McClelland, Hon. Robert Bruce	Barton, NSW	ALP
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Macklin, Hon. Jennifer Louise	Jagajaga, VIC	ALP
Marino, Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Markus, Louise Elizabeth	Macquarie, NSW	LP
Marles, Hon. Richard Donald	Corio, VIC	ALP
Matheson, Russell Glenn	Macarthur, NSW	LP
McCormack, Michael	Riverina, NSW	Nats
Melham, Daryl	Banks, NSW	ALP
Mirabella, Sophie	Indi, VIC	LP
Mitchell, Robert George	McEwen, VIC	ALP
Morrison, Scott John	Cook, NSW	LP
Moylan, Hon. Judith Eleanor	Pearce, WA	LP
Murphy, Hon. John Paul	Reid, NSW	ALP
Neumann, Shayne Kenneth	Blair, QLD	ALP
Neville, Paul Christopher	Hinkler, QLD	Nats

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Oakeshott, Robert James Murray	Lyne, NSW	Ind
O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick	Gorton, VIC	ALP
O'Dowd, Kenneth Desmond	Flynn, QLD	Nats
O'Dwyer, Kelly Megan	Higgins, VIC	LP
O'Neill, Deborah Mary	Robertson, NSW	ALP
Owens, Julie Ann	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Parke, Melissa	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Perrett, Graham Douglas	Moreton, QLD	ALP
Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Prentice, Jane	Ryan, QLD	LP
Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice	Sturt, SA	LP
Ramsey, Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Randall, Don James	Canning, WA	LP
Ripoll, Bernard Fernand	Oxley, QLD	ALP
Rishworth, Amanda Louise	Kingston, SA	ALP
Robb, Hon. Andrew John, AO	Goldstein, VIC	LP
Robert, Stuart Rowland	Fadden, QLD	LP
Rowland, Michelle	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Roxon, Hon. Nicola Louise	Gellibrand, VIC	ALP
Roy, Wyatt Beau	Longman, QLD	LP
Rudd, Hon. Kevin Michael	Griffith, QLD	ALP
Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell	Berowra, NSW	LP
Saffin, Janelle Anne	Page, NSW	ALP
Schultz, Albert John	Hume, NSW	LP
Scott, Hon. Bruce Craig	Maranoa, QLD	Nats
Secker, Patrick Damien	Barker, SA	LP
Shorten, Hon. William Richard	Maribyrnong, VIC	ALP
Sidebottom, Peter Sid	Braddon, TAS	ALP
Simpkins, Luke Xavier Linton	Cowan, WA	LP
Slipper, Hon. Peter Neil	Fisher, QLD	LP
Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn	Casey, VIC	LP
Smith, Hon. Stephen Francis	Perth, WA	ALP
Smyth, Laura Mary	La Trobe, VIC	ALP
Snowden, 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, Hon. Wayne Maxwell	Lilley, QLD	ALP
Symon, Michael Stuart	Deakin, VIC	ALP
Tehan, Daniel Thomas	Wannon, VIC	LP
Thomson, Craig Robert	Dobell, NSW	ALP
Thomson, Kelvin John	Wills, VIC	ALP
Truss, Hon. Warren Errol	Wide Bay, QLD	Nats
Tudge, Alan Edward	Aston, VIC	LP
Turnbull, Hon. Malcom Bligh	Wentworth, NSW	LP
Vamvakinou, Maria	Calwell, VIC	ALP
Van Manen, Albertus Johannes	Forde, QLD	LP
Vasta, Ross Xavier	Bonner, QLD	LP
Washer, Malcom James	Moore, WA	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Wilkie, Andrew Damien	Denison, TAS	Ind
Windsor, Anthony Harold Curties	New England, NSW	Ind
Wyatt, Kenneth George	Hasluck, WA	LP
Zappia, Tony	Makin, SA	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—A Thompson

GILLARD MINISTRY

Prime Minister	Hon. Julia Gillard MP
Deputy Prime Minister, Treasurer	Hon. Wayne Swan MP
Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government	Hon. Simon Crean MP
Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations and Leader of the Government in the Senate	Senator Hon. Chris Evans
Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth	Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate	Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Hon. Kevin Rudd MP
Minister for Trade	Hon. Dr Craig Emerson MP
Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House	Hon. Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Leader of the House	Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for Health and Ageing	Hon. Nicola Roxon MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	Hon. Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities	Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Finance and Deregulation	Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research	Senator Hon. Kim Carr
Attorney-General and Vice President of the Executive Council	Hon. Robert McClelland MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Manager of Government Business in the Senate	Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig
Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism	Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP
Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency	Hon. Greg Combet AM, MP

[The above ministers constitute the cabinet]

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Minister for Social Inclusion	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information	Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Minister for Sport	Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Special Minister of State for the Public Service and Integrity	Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Assistant Minister to the Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation	Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare	Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development	Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel	Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Minister for Defence Materiel	Hon. Jason Clare MP
Minister for Indigenous Health	Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing	Hon. Mark Butler MP
Minister for the Status of Women	Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness	Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Special Minister of State	Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Minister for Small Business	Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice	Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Minister for Human Services	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Cabinet Secretary	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister	Senator Hon. Kate Lundy
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer	Hon. David Bradbury MP
Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations	Senator Hon. Jacinta Collins
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Digital Productivity	Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Parliamentary Secretary for Trade	Hon. Justine Elliot MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs	Hon. Richard Marles MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence	Senator Hon. David Feeney
Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship	Senator Hon. Kate Lundy
Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing	Hon. Catherine King MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers	Senator Hon. Jan McLucas
Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services	Hon. Julie Collins MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water	Senator Hon. Don Farrell
Minister Assisting on Deregulation	Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, MP
Minister Assisting the Minister for Tourism	Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP

SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition	Hon. Tony Abbott MP
Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Shadow Minister for Trade	Hon. Julie Bishop MP
Leader of the Nationals and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport	Hon. Warren Truss MP
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations	Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for the Arts	Senator Hon. George Brandis SC
Shadow Treasurer	Hon. Joe Hockey MP
Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training and Manager of Opposition Business in the House	Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Deputy Leader of the Nationals	Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Water and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate	Senator Barnaby Joyce
Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction and Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee	Hon. Andrew Robb AO, MP
Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources	Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP
Shadow Minister for Defence	Senator Hon. David Johnston
Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband	Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing	Hon. Peter Dutton MP
Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services	Hon. Kevin Andrews MP
Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage	Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Shadow Minister for Productivity and Population and Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	Mr Scott Morrison MP
Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry and Science	Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP
Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security	Hon. John Cobb MP
Shadow Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs	Hon. Bruce Billson MP

[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]

SHADOW MINISTRY—*continued*

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Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection	Mr Michael Keenan MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation	Senator Mathias Cormann
Shadow Minister for Childcare and Early Childhood Learning	Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Universities and Research	Senator Hon. Brett Mason
Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House	Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Development and Employment	Senator Marise Payne
Shadow Minister for Regional Development	Hon. Bob Baldwin MP
Shadow Special Minister of State	Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP
Shadow Minister for COAG	Senator Marise Payne
Shadow Minister for Tourism	Hon. Bob Baldwin MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel	Mr Stuart Robert MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson
Shadow Minister for Regional Communications	Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing and Shadow Minister for Mental Health	Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells
Shadow Minister for Seniors	Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP
Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate	Senator Mitch Fifield
Shadow Minister for Housing	Senator Marise Payne
Chairman, Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee	Mr Jamie Briggs MP
Shadow Cabinet Secretary	Hon. Philip Ruddock MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition	Senator Cory Bernardi
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance	Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Regional Transport	Mr Darren Chester MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General	Senator Gary Humphries
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tax Reform and Deputy Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee	Hon. Tony Smith MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Education	Senator Fiona Nash
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia	Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government	Mr Don Randall MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray-Darling Basin	Senator Simon Birmingham
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Materiel	Senator Gary Humphries
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Defence Force and Defence Support	Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Healthcare	Dr Andrew Southcott MP

SHADOW MINISTRY—*continued*

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health Services and Indigenous Health	Mr Andrew Laming MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Supporting Families	Senator Cory Bernardi
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women	Senator Michaelia Cash
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment	Senator Simon Birmingham
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Settlement	Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration	Senator Michaelia Cash
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Industry, and Science	Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry	Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Fair Competition	Senator Scott Ryan

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Tuesday, 8 February 2011

The SPEAKER (Mr Harry Jenkins) took the chair at 2 pm, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

CONDOLENCES

Maunsell, Mr Charles Ronald

The SPEAKER—I inform the House of the death on Friday, 17 December 2010 of Charles Ronald ‘Ron’ Maunsell, a former senator. Senator Maunsell represented the state of Queensland from 1968 to 1981. As a mark of respect to the memory of Ron Maunsell, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER—I thank the House.

Atkinson, Corporal Richard Edward

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (2.02 pm)—I move:

That the House record its deep sorrow at the death, on 2 February 2011, of Corporal Richard Edward Atkinson while on combat operations in Afghanistan, and place on record its greatest appreciation of his service to our country, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

On behalf of the government and on behalf of the people of this nation—this very proud and very grateful nation—I rise to honour Corporal Richard Atkinson, who gave his life last week in the cause of a safer world. Corporal Atkinson was a brave young man on his first deployment to Afghanistan. He was a young man, 22 years old. He was soon to be married and he had so much of his life ahead of him. He died serving our nation, he died alongside his mates, he died for his country; and his sacrifice was not in vain.

Today the loved ones of Corporal Atkinson mourn: his mum and dad, Ross and Kate, his brother, James, and sister-in-law, Sumah,

and his fiancée, Dannielle. I have spoken to Ross, his father. He is a man of great dignity and he is struggling with some very great grief. Ross told me that he takes comfort from the fact that the last few times he spoke to Richard, the last few times that he called home, he talked about how much he enjoyed being in the Army. He talked about how much he wanted to be there serving the nation in Afghanistan.

Our thoughts are with Richard’s mother and father and his brother and sister-in-law, but they are also very much with a very young woman, Dannielle, his fiancée. Dannielle is a young woman who has now lost the man she loves, a young woman whose dreams of having Richard’s children are now shattered. Her pain, I believe, is almost beyond our imagining and we should not pretend that the uttering of words of condolence in this chamber today will ease that pain. But today we honour her sacrifice and we are united in wishing her the courage and the strength she will need for the future. Today we also mourn with Richard’s colleagues in the 1st Combat Engineer Regiment and the wider Australian Army. They have lost a mate.

Corporal Atkinson’s death is the 22nd loss our nation has faced in Afghanistan. It is, as I warned last year, a hard road—a road that will bring more bad news before the job is done.

In the same incident a comrade of Corporal Atkinson’s was wounded and we hold him in our hearts today as well. He is receiving the best care we can provide him and we wish him well in the days of recovery that lie ahead. One hundred and sixty-eight ADF personnel have been wounded in Afghanistan, many grievously. All of them have our support; all of them have our thanks. We will not let go and we will not forget.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (2.05 pm)—I rise to support the gracious words of the Prime Minister because Australia is today—and has been for the past week—mourning the death of another brave soldier, Corporal Richard Atkinson, who has been killed in action by a roadside bomb. Our hearts go out to his family and to his friends and especially to his grieving fiancée, as our hearts go out also to his comrade wounded in the same incident and to his comrade's family and friends.

Yes, we know nothing we can say here today will dull their grief, but we hope what we say here today is of some comfort to them, as we hope what we have said in this parliament on earlier occasions is of some comfort to the families and friends of the 22 Australians killed in action and the 168 wounded in action. Yes, this is a dangerous task—a very dangerous task indeed. We are trying to build a more humane Afghanistan. Our soldiers are trying to make the world safer from terrorism. It is very dangerous, but it is absolutely necessary. This work cannot be abandoned, and it does have the full support of the coalition.

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (Perth—Minister for Defence) (2.07 pm)—I rise to associate myself with the remarks of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on our condolence motion for Corporal Richard Atkinson. Corporal Atkinson's death was a blow to our nation and a tragedy for his family. Our thoughts, as they have from the first moment, go to his fiancée, Dannielle, and also to his father and mother, Ross and Kate. As Minister for Defence, I have had the great privilege of speaking both to Dannielle and to Ross, and at this moment of terrible grieving they are conducting themselves with great stoicism and with great pride and honour at the service that Richard paid to his country.

At 22 years of age he became our 22nd fatality in Afghanistan. Whilst our thoughts are with Dannielle, Ross, Kate and the rest of their family, this is also a time when, for 21 other families, it will be a terrible reminder of their own tragic loss. Our thoughts go with them, as they do to Sapper Rose, wounded in the same improvised explosive device explosion, and to his family, together with the families and friends of the over 160 who have been wounded in the course of our commitment and contribution in Afghanistan.

Corporal Atkinson was a fine young soldier. He served in Indonesia in 2009 on Operation Padang Assist, seeing the two great arms of Australian Defence Force personnel contribution: military, defence and national security; and humanitarian intervention and disaster assistance. Members would have seen from the ramp ceremony in Tarin Kowt over the weekend, telecast into Australia, the sorrow in the eyes of his mates but the great pride in which he was held—the respect and the regard.

As the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have said, this has of course occurred in the course of our contribution to Afghanistan. Richard's family should understand that he died pursuing our nation's national interest and that he died pursuing Australia's contribution to the international community's efforts to stare down international terrorism. Our thoughts, our prayers and our thanks are with them at this point.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (2.10 pm)—I rise to join the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister for Defence here in this great hall of democracy to honour the fallen Corporal Richard Atkinson—22 years old, short-haired, fit, strong, healthy, the world seemingly at his feet—who under normal circumstances would be considered a young man, yet to us here is a

warrior old beyond his years—old enough to serve his country; old enough to die for it.

The English poet and Great War veteran Siegfried Sassoon said:

Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin
They think of firelit homes, clean beds, and
wives.

It is profoundly sad that Corporal Atkinson will never realise his dream of marrying his fiancée, Dannielle, or spending another holiday with his parents, Ross and Kate, his brother, James, and his sister-in-law, Sumah. To them and his wider family and friends, we offer our most sincere condolences.

Corporal Atkinson epitomised all that is great about the volunteer Australian soldier. He was tragically killed in action because he would not ask his men to do anything that he himself would not do. Selfless, spirited and professional to the very end, he has set an enduring example, leading from the front, caring for his mates and staring down adversity with grit and determination.

This is a selfless act that we cannot forget. He fell on a battlefield that is the front line in the fight for our very way of life. He fell fighting for freedom for the Afghani people and freedom for all Australians that dream of a life where the insipidly cowardly act of terrorism is a mere byword. He and his family have paid a high and exacting price for the freedom we enjoy.

For 110 years, Australia's military have watched zealously over our national freedoms. They have stood in the watchtowers of our national conscience and have borne the brunt of our national demands. Over 100,000 Australians have fallen, sealing this commitment with their blood, and Corporal Atkinson has now joined their hallowed ranks, his name added to those of 21 other Australian soldiers tragically killed in action in Afghanistan.

Corporal Atkinson never asked for anything in return for his service except our friendship and our understanding. It is incumbent upon us to remember him always, for he has richly earned our respect and enduring admiration. He knew service above self and demonstrated so ably that there is no greater love than this: to lay down your life for your friends. If the price of freedom is eternal vigilance then let us steel ourselves once again for the fight ahead; let us recommit anew to care for our fighting men and women and those left behind; and let us honour Corporal Atkinson's sacrifice. He is the epitome of the modern-day Anzac, and he has truly made us proud.

The SPEAKER—As a mark of respect, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

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

MAIN COMMITTEE

Atkinson, Corporal Richard Edward

Reference

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (2.14 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the following order of the day be referred to the Main Committee for debate: Death of Corporal Richard Edward Atkinson—Copy of the condolence motion moved by the Prime Minister—Motion to take note of the Paper: Resumption of Debate.

Question agreed to.

ROBERTS-SMITH, CORPORAL BENJAMIN, VC, MG

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (2.15 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence, whilst we reflect on the very great sacrifices and burdens that are borne by the men and women of the Australian Defence Force it does seem an appropriate time to also cele-

brate a moment of very great courage and to celebrate particularly the courage shown by Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith, who on 23 January was awarded the Victoria Cross in recognition of extreme devotion to duty and the most conspicuous gallantry. In receiving that award, the highest award our nation can give, he becomes the 98th Australian to ever receive it, the third still living, and the first from Western Australia since 1945.

Ben Roberts-Smith has been called a hero, a legend and a role model, and he is all of these things. But he is also a human being, a husband and a father who grew up in Perth, went to school and played sport just like every other Aussie kid. But when he joined the Army 15 years ago he took on new risks and new responsibilities; risks and responsibilities that most of us will never comprehend. The greatest of these responsibilities and the core of the Anzac story is to look after your mates. On that day in June last year when our Australian forces came under insurgent attack, Ben did what he needed to do to bring his comrades safely home. As he would say later on—and put so simply—‘You don’t let your mates down.’ He did not.

I have had the opportunity now to talk to Ben on three occasions and on each of them I have been struck by his unassuming nature. He is a humble man who wants nothing more than to return to his unit and to return to his mates. Ben, who was quickly dubbed by the newspapers ‘Big Ben’—you have got to love a headline like that—is a man of very big stature, but very big in character as well. If you have seen him, as I have, with his wife, Emma, and their baby twin girls, Eve and Elizabeth, you are struck by his gentleness and the depths of his love. If you have met his remarkable family—father, Len, mother, Susan, and his brother Sam, who is an opera singer—you are struck by their close bonds and abundance of different talents. Ben is a

remarkable Australian from a remarkable family.

Ben’s award and the award to Mark Donaldson two years ago show that the VC tradition lives on in a new generation, a generation as brave and as selfless as those which have gone before. I honour Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith, and gratefully commend his valour to this House and to this nation.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (2.18 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence, I am very pleased to rise and echo the words of the Prime Minister. What we have just witnessed in the House today shows that the war in Afghanistan is not without its successes while it has its fair share of tragedy.

The Victoria Cross is the highest and most respected military award that can be given by our country. The highlight of the ceremony of conferral of the Victoria Cross on Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith was the salute that he took from the Chief of the Defence Force. Metaphorically today we all salute him, as every Australian metaphorically salutes him for the rest of his life.

The Victoria Cross is not so much a celebration of martial prowess as of selflessness in time of war. Every Victoria Cross winner has put his life on the line for his mates. Ben Roberts-Smith risked his life to relieve his comrades who were under withering machine-gun fire at the time, just as a couple of years earlier Trooper Mark Donaldson risked his life to rescue an Afghan interpreter who otherwise would certainly have been killed. These remarkable men are great heroes, but they are human beings too. We cannot all be soldiers but we can all be our best selves. May Ben Roberts-Smith’s example and that of his mates inspire every Australian to do more for other people.

MAIN COMMITTEE

**Roberts-Smith, Corporal Benjamin,
VC, MG**

Reference

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (2.20 pm)—by leave—I move:

That further statements by indulgence in relation to Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith VC, MG be referred to the Main Committee.

Question agreed to.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (2.20 pm)—I inform the House that we have in the gallery today Lord Lasike, Speaker of the Tongan Legislative Assembly. He is accompanied by his Deputy Speaker. I am sure that the House would wish me to give them both a warm welcome and wish them every success in the reform of the Tongan parliamentary democracy after the recent elections.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

CONDOLENCES**Australian Natural Disasters**

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (2.21 pm)—I move:

That the House:

- (1) acknowledge with great sadness the devastation occasioned by this summer's natural disasters, including unprecedented floods, Cyclone Yasi and bushfires;
- (2) extend its deepest sympathies to the families of those who have lost loved ones;
- (3) record its profound regret at the impact of this summer's natural disasters on the economic and social wellbeing of affected communities;
- (4) record its admiration for the courage shown by so many in the face of these disasters;
- (5) acknowledge the enormous efforts of defence personnel, emergency workers, and so many volunteers in responding to these disasters; and

- (6) pledge the full support of the Australian parliament and community to assist affected areas to recover and rebuild.

Yesterday we commemorated the two-year anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires which took 173 lives. Around Victoria, communities have been coming together to remember the dead and share the stories of that day of hell and the journey of rebuilding since. I shared such a moment of coming together on Sunday and had the opportunity to talk to a number of survivors, who are still missing those who are lost and who are still healing. For me Sunday was a powerful reminder of how hard it is and how long it takes for individuals and communities to recover from devastating natural disasters.

Here today it is with very great sorrow that I offer words of condolence to Australians who are now facing this hard journey and I assure them that they will not travel that hard journey alone. We will not let go, Mr Speaker, we will not let go.

This summer will always be remembered for the force and scale of the natural disasters the nation has endured. This summer will always be remembered for the many times we turned to each other and said, 'It's bad, but the worst is behind us now,' only to find that there was a new horror ahead. This summer will always be remembered for the way Queensland suffered floods of unprecedented proportions, an inland tsunami so powerful that it swept away lives and shattered communities and the most powerful cyclone the nation has ever seen. Australia has watched in horror as day after day a new chapter in natural disaster history has been written.

This summer will always be remembered for the way that suffering of already unimaginable and unprecedented proportions in Queensland was joined by suffering in other parts of the nation. Flooding continues in

New South Wales and Victoria. Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia have not been spared either and, while so much water has done so much damage and caused so much despair, the nation has also been called on to fight fire in our west.

We can talk about what we have lost this summer in terms of cold, hard, economic facts and the reality is that we must. But, after the roads are rebuilt, businesses are back to full strength and people are back in a place they can again call home, those whom we have lost in this tragedy will still be lost and that is a cost that cannot be measured. The unprecedented and unexpected severity of the Queensland floods paid no heed to the sanctity of human life. There are hundreds of Australians who are mourning the loss of the 35 people who have died in the Queensland floods since 30 November or who are waiting anxiously on news of the people who remain missing. Across our nation there are others who mourn. Those are not just names on a list—they are somebody's brother or sister, somebody's parent or grandparent, somebody's child, somebody's friend. Those deaths have left people behind who now live with an empty gaping chasm. No insurance payout is going to fill that, no financial assistance payment is going to fill that and no rebuilt house will fill that. We offer those loved ones our deepest sympathy.

We come together as a parliament to mourn those who have died, to share our stories of the horror and grief, to describe the devastation, ultimately to rise in our places in silence, and so we should. Healing great pain requires both coming together as human beings and lonely moments of quiet reflection. I urge that this summer, when we write its history, we should make sure that the history written into the books and into our hearts is more than the history of a time of loss and grief. We should also remember this summer as a summer of courage.

I have brought with me today a mud splattered, tattered Australian flag and I want to show it to the House. It was recovered from the area of Murphys Creek by the crew of a Defence Force helicopter and I want to thank Major Scott Summers, Captain Lachlan Thornley, Sergeant Dean O'Cass and Corporal Steven Abbot who gave it to me. These four men, joined by others, showed persistence and bravery. They worked alongside people from the Queensland emergency services; they flew helicopters through the dark and dangerous night when waters crashed through the Lockyer Valley to save literally dozens and dozens of lives. Many who flew helicopters that night, some of them who had been flying for more than 20 years, said to me that it was the worst weather they had ever taken a helicopter up into. Yet, despite that, they continued and they saved lives. These helicopter crews continued with their search and rescue in the days to come and they found this flag.

I was honoured when they gave it to me. It was muddy and it was soaking wet. They did so because it was a powerful symbol for them of what it means to face the elements, of what it means to be hurt, of what it means to endure, of what it means to be Australian. It spoke to them of courage—the courage it takes to keep filling sand bags even when your back is breaking; the courage it takes to hold your nerve in the dark as a cyclone races around you; the courage it takes to tell your children to run across the railway line knowing it is dangerous, knowing they could fall, but knowing it is their only hope of getting to safety; the courage it takes for a young boy, 13-year-old Jordan Rice, to say to his rescuers, 'Take my brother first.' Before that brave rescuer could return, Jordan and mum, Donna, were taken by the flood, but the legend of Jordan's amazing courage will go on—a hero in the purest sense of the word.

There are other heroes, like Mark Kempton and his helicopter crew from Emergency Management Queensland, a crew that winched 28 people to safety over a period of 2½ hours. They should be patting themselves on the back and saying, 'Job well done,' to each other. Instead, Mark is haunted. He is haunted by every human face of this disaster: a woman he rescued who wept uncontrollably as she was pulled into the helicopter. In a media report, Mark said:

I looked over my shoulder and saw her sitting on the floor of the aircraft, and she was just devastated. It was heartbreaking.

What Mark was witnessing was a young, pregnant mother who, just seconds before the chopper had arrived, had had her young child wrenched from her weary arms by the floodwaters. She finally succumbed to the terrifying power of nature that night. How do you tell Mark to rejoice in thinking of the people he saved, when that young mother can think of nothing except the child she lost?

I say to these heroes—and they are heroes—for every one person you saved, there are hundreds, even thousands, of people who are not grieving today. They are people who do not know you, but without your skills, your bravery, your willingness to put your life on the line, their loved one would not be here today. Your devotion to your task is humbling. I pay tribute to every police officer, every emergency services worker, every health worker, every Defence Force member, every local council worker, every community services worker—everyone who made such a difference to their fellow Australians this summer.

In speaking on and remembering the courage of this summer, I also want to record the nation's admiration for the courage shown by Premier Bligh, who, hour after hour, informed, reassured and provided the leader-

ship that the people of Queensland needed; for the courage of the local mayors, who did the same for their own communities; for the courage of those who spent long, weary days in evacuation centres, without complaint and often with a smile on their face and a quick joke on their lips; for those who have returned to devastation and found the courage to clean up. It has been a great privilege over this summer to meet with so many Australians of courage: the young girl, sitting laughing in an evacuation centre, wearing her Hello Kitty pyjamas—the only clothes she had left; the small child who told me about her terrifying night on the roof, waiting to be rescued; the pastor whose church became an evacuation centre for frail, aged Australians; the people with tears prickling in their eyes, who cleaned up their homes and businesses.

Across the ages, millions of words have been written trying to define courage, and we will never reach a satisfactory definition. But this summer, tens of thousands of Australians found deep within themselves the ability to do something they thought they would never be able to do. That is courage. This summer will always be remembered for it. And it will be remembered for the extraordinary display of Australian mateship. We pay tribute to the mateship shown by every trained volunteer who flocked to help: SES, Red Cross, Lifeline, and the list goes on. We pay tribute to every Australian who came to help their fellow Australians—with a mop and a bucket, a barbecue and bottle of sauce, a smile and endless goodwill. We pay tribute to the businesses and the unions who saw a need and got in and met it. We pay tribute to every Australian who has donated to help their fellow Australians in a time of need.

I have travelled around Queensland, in New South Wales and in Victoria, and I have been so touched by the stories of bravery, of courage and of mateship that I feel an obliga-

tion to honour these wonderful Australian traits. I have sought approval from the Queen to introduce honours for Australians who have gone out of their way to extend the hand of mateship during times of crisis. Next Australia Day, I am confident we will present our first awards to those who have performed heroic and selfless acts and volunteered their services across Australia in times of crisis. We will backdate those awards to include those who reached out to each other during Black Saturday.

We mourn for the loss. We ache for those whose lives have been turned upside down and we will not let go. We will rebuild. We will not succumb to the misguided notion that once floodwaters recede, once the debris strewn by the cyclone is removed, once the camera crews pack up and the focus of the nation turns to something else, life somehow magically returns to normal for those who have suffered at the hands of natural disasters. It does not. The Queensland community in particular have a long and arduous road of recovery ahead, and they will need the rest of Australia's support. We will work with the Queensland government, as we are working with the governments of Victoria and New South Wales, to provide a range of assistance measures to individuals, businesses and primary producers who have been hit by these floods. These include personal distress and hardship assistance to individuals in the worst affected areas, concessional interest rate loans and freight subsidies to businesses, and recovery grants for primary producers and small businesses. We are providing extra Centrelink support. We have also increased access to mental health services because we know that the victims of this trauma will need ongoing support for weeks and months to come. We as a nation are facing a long-term task. We will rebuild.

In our many hours of need this summer Australia has been deeply touched by the

support from around the world. We have received messages of sympathy, offers of assistance and donations from more than 100 countries and international organisations—from our friends in the United States, in China, in Japan, in the United Arab Emirates, to our close neighbours and regional partners of New Zealand, East Timor, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore and Samoa. What people should notice about that list is that countries who have so much less than us have still been willing to help.

The outpouring of international support has sent a clear signal, a message to us that we were not alone. We thank the international community from the bottom of our hearts. As our days of crisis have been reported around the world so has our nation's response. The world has marvelled at the way we have pulled together. We should be so proud that there is something uniquely Australian about the way we go about helping our neighbours. It is understated, it is done with humour and humility and it signifies a strength of character that is etched deeply within our nation's DNA. It is a character that ensures that our darkest hours are always followed by our finest as we work together to help each other to not let go, to begin the healing.

To the victims of the catastrophes of this summer we offer our sincere condolences. We cannot replace the precious things that people have lost and we cannot replace the lives. We cannot replace the doorjambs full of pencil marks that recorded a child's height as they grew from toddler to teen. We cannot replace an elderly lady's letters written to her by a wartime beau. We cannot replace the baby photos that have been lost. We cannot take away the grief from those who mourn anymore than we can bring back the loved ones who are gone, but we can face this together as a nation and we can support those who have lost so much. We can listen to

them and ensure that they feel the warm embrace of the Australian community. We can and we will. We will hold onto each other as we grieve, recover and rebuild. We will always remember the days of despair and the days of courage we have lived through this summer. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (2.39 pm)—I rise to support the motion so eloquently moved by the Prime Minister. We have lived through a summer of disaster, of flood, storm and fire, and it is right that this parliament should pause at some length to reflect on that, to mourn the dead, to offer words of comfort to the suffering, to congratulate everyone who has responded to this with courage, professionalism and good old-fashioned Aussie grit and also to congratulate the Prime Minister for the effort that she has made over recent weeks and again today to be with the victims of the floods. Whatever political disagreements we might have, she has shown a decent heart.

This disaster crept up on us. It began in December in New South Wales with floods in our west which destroyed vast expanses of wheat, cotton and other crops, causing enormous financial loss and much mental stress for people who have just suffered through a decade of drought. Then, in early January, the floods hit Central Queensland, severely damaging the towns of Bundaberg, Emerald, Dalby, Rockhampton and smaller settlements such as Theodore and Condamine. Hundreds of homes were inundated at that stage, dozens of major businesses were left out of action and thousands of head of stock were drowned, but it just got worse as the summer went on. Floods hit the Gascoyne region of Western Australia. Floods hit central and northern Victoria and floods extended into northern New South Wales. Then we had the inland tsunami: the almost explosive floods

that hit Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley, particularly the town of Grantham and the settlement of Murphys Creek. More than 20 people were killed and, tragically, nine are still missing. We can scarcely imagine the horror of having a loved one plucked from your arms and we can scarcely imagine the terror of seeing safety recede, and yet we try to stand with the people who have been through that. Many of us were with them in the field in the aftermath of these tragedies and all of us stand with them today. Then there was Cyclone Yasi, arguably the worst in 90 years to cross the Queensland coast. There was more flooding in Victoria and, finally, there were the fires in Western Australia.

We know that this is a land of droughts and flooding rains. We have had floods before; we will have them again. We have had cyclones before; we will have them again. But this has been a summer of epic proportions. I am just trying to remember the electorates which, one way or another, have been impacted. I do not claim this list is exhaustive but in Queensland it would seem to me that the electorates of Leichhardt, Kennedy, Dawson, Capricornia, Flynn, Wide Bay, Maranoa, Hinkler, Longman, Petrie, Ryan, Brisbane and Wright, most of all, were impacted. In New South Wales, the electorates of Richmond, Page, Cowper, Parkes and Riverina; in Victoria, the electorates of Murray, Mallee, Wannon and Flinders; and in Western Australia, the electorates of Durack, Canning and Pearce were all impacted. Every local member has stood by his or her people in this tough time. It is our duty to stand by our people in tough times. Members of this House have risen to their duty in these tough times.

If I may, I want particularly to mention, not because they have done more than others but because their work has impacted on my consciousness, four members of this parlia-

ment for their work during the flood. I want particularly to mention the member for Maranoa for ensuring that Centrelink guidelines, this time, have been as generous as previous guidelines. I want to thank and congratulate the member for Groom for his badgering of insurance companies to try to ensure that, wherever possible, the fine print did not deny people the payouts they believed they were entitled to. I want to congratulate the member for Ryan. Weeks before her electorate was directly impacted she was working as a Red Cross volunteer in Emerald, without any publicity. Finally, I want to acknowledge the work of the member for Wright. I think all of us know that at times the work of a local member is not so different from that of a parish priest. I want to say that in their local member the people of Wright found a friend, a counsellor, a comforter and an organiser par excellence over these recent difficult weeks.

As the Prime Minister mentioned, there have been many acts of heroism. Mother Nature has been at her worst, but human nature has largely been at its best over this summer. Like the Prime Minister, I congratulate everyone who rose to this occasion, particularly the police, the firefighters, the health workers and the SES volunteers, who have responded with their customary professionalism to difficult circumstances. There have been a host of local heroes. I imagine that most members will, at some point in time, mention the local people who have performed far above and beyond any call of duty in these last weeks. I want to particularly mention, as a representative of hundreds of others, Andrew O'Brien, who helped to organise the recovery centre at Gatton, and Peter Souter, a recently retired Army major, whose own property was cut off but who, once he was able to join local people, took on the job of organising the recovery centre at Murphys Creek.

But, of all the acts of heroism, there was none more emblematic of the Australian spirit than that of Jordan Rice, who I think should be to this generation what Simpson and his donkey were to earlier generations: a reminder of the height of selflessness to which individuals can rise. Obviously, it is for others to decide on an appropriate honour to confer upon this young man, but I hope that the Honours Secretariat will at least consider the possibility of a posthumous Cross of Valour for this person who rose so magnificently to a terrible crisis.

Hundreds of thousands of Australians now face the future after a summer of unanticipated difficulty. I acknowledge and thank the government for its response to the flood, storm and fire emergencies. It is right that the government properly instituted Centrelink payments. It is right that business recovery grants, business recovery loans and income support payments should be put in place. I have every confidence that the officers of government will do their best to ensure that these programs are administered competently, humanely and swiftly. In a spirit of helpful bipartisanship, I say to the Prime Minister that we will be here to do our best to ensure that that occurs. I suggest humbly, again in a spirit of bipartisanship, that the government look at whether some of the precedents from Cyclone Larry and the relief effort after that event could similarly be adopted this time.

Like the Prime Minister, I want to assure the Australian people that, in the days and weeks and months ahead, when the attention of our nation has perhaps drifted elsewhere, when they face ruined houses which are slow to be rebuilt and perhaps recalcitrant insurers or bankers, when their infrastructure is perhaps not restored quite as quickly as they would like, we will not forget them—they will not be alone.

Like the Prime Minister, I have done my best in recent weeks to try to be with as many people as I have been able to who have been impacted by these floods. Just on the weekend, I was roundly abused by a man at Tully who had lost his house in Cyclone Yasi. It is right that that citizen of this country should have had the opportunity to abuse a member of parliament. That is an important safety valve in every democracy. We should hear those complaints, and I assure you we will hear them in the weeks and months ahead. But I also think it is right that as many of us as possible, including members whose electorates were not affected, should do their best to visit those electorates that were affected, because, if we do not go, we will not understand and, if we do not understand, it is difficult to respond.

Finally, let me say that, for the vast majority of Australians touched by these disasters, they have been at their best. When our country is on trial, government, politicians and political parties should also be at their best. We have seen the best from the Australian people; I hope that in the weeks and months ahead they will see the best from us. We in the opposition will be doing our best.

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Treasurer) (2.51 pm)—There are many stories of tragedy, heroism and community spirit which come from the floods of recent weeks and the cyclones in North Queensland and Far North Queensland. Today we have heard many of those stories from the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. We have seen the pictures, we have heard the voices on television, we have read about it in the newspapers and we have read about it online. I am sure there are many Australians watching today who are part of these stories. Of course, this devastation has not been limited to Queensland. We have seen it in New South Wales and Victoria and, most recently, in Western Australia. Mother Nature has indeed been

cruel over this summer. As somebody who has lived in Queensland all of his life, I have felt particularly deeply the damage that I have seen, not just in the south-east corner of the state but right across the state.

But what has been most inspiring about these events in my home state has been the response of the rest of Australia. Queenslanders very much appreciate the extent to which Australians came to their aid—the extent to which our fellow Australians responded to their immediate need. People simply jumped in cars and drove from Sydney, Melbourne or the Central Coast of New South Wales to end up in a town they had probably never been to before and to occupy houses with people they did not know. This response right across the country has been truly inspiring.

It is also the case that many in this House have been deeply involved in that effort. Many have been up at all hours of the night checking the weather reports, making phone calls, talking to the SES and trying to organise further support for their communities. This has truly been a whole-of-community effort, because the horror that has unfolded has simply been extraordinary.

I have seen the devastation at Grantham. I have been along the corridor right through the south-west and up to Toowoomba. Along with Premier Bligh and Major General Slater I saw firsthand the devastation the morning after Cyclone Yasi hit. Despite the cyclone having moved on something like 12 hours earlier, the weather was still so savage you could not fly a helicopter through it. It defeated the military; such was the savagery of the weather conditions that followed that cyclone in North Queensland.

One defining image for me was the image of the local church in Cardwell, where only the floor was left unmoved. The pews were still there and hymn books were scattered

around but nothing else was left. A local woman told me it was the loudest noise she could remember—like one continuous freight train that kept coming and coming and coming. But Queenslanders, like all Australians, are resilient. Another local pointed out to me when I was in the main street of Cardwell that the ‘barra burger’ sign had been spared although the takeaway food shop had been completely removed—the irony of that image!

I remember vividly being choppered into Tully. It was simply extraordinary. You would have sworn that you were looking at a rainforest that had been napalmed with bombs. It was a landscape where all of the trees had simply been stripped. It looked as if the rainforest had suffered a very savage bushfire. I saw the devastation of the crops—the sugar cane and the bananas. The challenge we now face as members of parliament is to do justice to the sacrifices of all those who have been touched by these disasters. How do we do justice to the outpouring of community spirit that remains long after the winds have died down and the waters have receded?

What we have seen—as the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have said today—is a great coming together of our communities. I have never in my life seen the community spirit that has surfaced across this country and manifested itself, in the volunteer effort in particular, in our local communities. I remember vividly in my electorate, on day 2 of what was going on in South-East Queensland, going around a corner in Zillmere and finding 200 to 300 volunteers filling sandbags in an area that simply had not been flood affected. The mobilisation of people was absolutely extraordinary. People went to communities such as Goodna, to stay there—to camp out—and to cook food for weeks on end for local communities that had

lost all of their houses and simply had nowhere to go.

The business community chipped in as well. This sort of extraordinary effort that was going on across communities was unprecedented. The degree of corporate donations as well as business-in-kind support has also been important. The donations to the Premier’s appeal fund have been particularly impressive. They have also been very important. All of this has indicated that the Australian spirit of mateship is alive and well in all of our communities.

As the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, there was the story of Jordan Rice, the 13-year-old from Toowoomba. He told his rescuers to save his little brother first. We know the story, but just think about it for a moment. Here was a young man saying to his rescuers: ‘Save my little brother first. Save my little brother first.’ I think Jordan’s family must have taught him something very special in his short life—that life is not just about grabbing something for yourself; it is about courage, selflessness, looking after family and looking after community. Of course, we cannot bring Jordan back, much as we wish we could, but we can look to that example—the values and the character that was on display in that young man.

Thousands of Queenslanders and Victorians are cleaning up. Of course a clean-up now goes on in Western Australia as well. Our armed forces are very much involved in this endeavour. We should never forget the vital role that they are playing and will continue to play for some time to come. But of course governments have a vital role to play as well—particularly in investing in community infrastructure. That is going to be very important, not just in the next few months but for the next few years.

We know the human cost of natural disasters—we know that it is incalculable and that it can never be made good—but we can make good by investing in our communities to make sure the very essence of what makes those communities tick over is replaced so that those communities can fully function again. This will involve a very big call on our economy. The call on the budget will be large. We have announced our initial estimates and, of course, we have come up with a plan to fund the rebuilding of affected regions. That has rightly attracted much community debate. We can debate that plan, including the levy—we will do that later this week in a robust way—but we all remain committed to making that investment to ensure that these communities get what they are entitled to and deserve.

So today is a day to recognise and pay tribute to the courage of the thousands of people in our community who put themselves forward to help their neighbours. As the waters rose and debris flew, our immediate instinct was the right one. It spoke of who we are and the sort of country we have created. We stuck together. We joined our efforts. We thought first of our children, their younger brothers and sisters, then our neighbours, our towns and our cities. This is no more evident than in the work of our SES, the Army and of course our police force, who have all been terribly important in the response in Queensland. All of them are showing bravery and self-sacrifice, particularly the helicopter pilots the Prime Minister was talking about before, and there are many, many more.

What was also so special about the response was that a new generation joined in using social networking to save others and organise their response. Younger Australians, many of whom had never volunteered before, stepped up to play a major role, and I think we should acknowledge that today. The

result has been an example of common purpose from all generations and it shows the way forward for our country.

We have seen in the past few weeks our country rise to the challenges presented by the devastation of flood and cyclone. We have heard heartbreaking stories of heroism and self-sacrifice and we have seen the best in people. It was demonstrated best, I guess, by the stunning fact of a state running out of gumboots simply because too many people wanted to help. The stories of generosity have resonated not just locally but globally, showing the rest of the world the values and virtues that we as Australians hold, and as we continue through this difficult period of rebuilding a state, of mourning the loss and counting the huge cost of lost possessions and livelihoods, let us continue to live up to the values of all of those who have made such sacrifices during this period. Most of all, let us harness all that is best about Australians. All of that makes us stronger together so that, when the wind dies down and the waters recede, our commitment to each other never dies down and never recedes.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (3.02 pm)—I am pleased to support the Prime Minister's motion and the words of previous speakers—words that I am sure are supported by all members in this House—in mourning the loss of people and property in floods, cyclones and fires since our parliament last met. In particular we extend our condolences to the families and friends of the almost 50 Australians who have died since this weather event began in late November. There has been flooding in every state and fires in Western Australia. The image that we have of our country at Christmas is essentially of sunny beaches and cool rainforests, of Australian Open tennis and of winning the Ashes. Not much of that happened this Christmas-New Year. Indeed, we are reminded that our country's

climate can also be very harsh, as Dorothea Mackellar pointed out in her immortal poem. Australia can be a country that also experiences brutal weather.

We have had 10 years of drought. Indeed, some people were beginning to wonder whether it would ever rain again. But like all El Nino events, it was eventually followed by La Nina, and that is what we have had this year. Just as the big drought events were broken in 1974 by flooding, in 1955 by flooding and in earlier years, this drought also has now been broken through extensive rainfall across all Australian states. The reality is that our rivers are full, our water supply systems are replenished, and that is certainly encouraging. But we are reminded that coming with this replenishment there has been a great deal of damage, heartbreak and trouble. These past few days have reminded us again of the greatness of being a part of the Australian people and how we work together with one another. We stand together. We try to repair the damage. We comfort one another and we look for ways to do things better in the future.

I spent four days visiting flood affected areas in central and southern New South Wales a couple of weeks before Christmas. That was just an introduction; the floods then moved to all other states. And as a reminder of the events of two years ago, we now have significant bushfires in Western Australia.

These events will leave us with many memories and images that will stay with us forever: the raging floodwaters through Toowoomba and Grantham, the epicentre of the horror of this event, I guess. The floodwaters that were resting in Rockhampton and other flood plain cities and towns across the nation, often for weeks before people could gain access to their homes. The pile of boats in Hinchinbrook Harbour certainly packed a powerful message. The banana production

plantations trashed so soon after the last time the same plantations were destroyed. If there is an image of Australia it is that our two biggest banana production areas on the very extremities of our continent have both been destroyed in the space of a couple of weeks. There are the stories of people on buses reporting for work in the clean-up. There is the heart-wrenching story of the young lad who said, 'Take my brother first,' but the rescuers were not able to return in time. There were the homes flooded with people sitting on the roofs, the ruined possessions piled up waiting for someone to collect them and take them to the tip. All of those images will be with us for a long time. We stood with grieving families, people afraid for the future, people wanting to know what they could do to help or where they could go. We stood in the paddocks with farmers who had just lost the best crop they had ever seen after 10 years of drought. All of these things will certainly leave lasting memories for me.

There was also the destruction of our natural environment. We saw the pictures of the destruction around Mission Beach and in particular the Cassowary Coast, and it has been suggested that the environmental damage in that area may threaten the very future of the cassowary. All of those things are very important to us as Australians.

There are also the classic stories of communities that have endured more than their share. Think of the town of Theodore, the first town in Australia to be entirely evacuated because of the threat of the flood's arrival. Then there was the town of Condamine, which went through it all twice. The people there were lifted out the first time in the middle of the night by Black Hawk helicopters, and then they had to go through it all again. There was destruction in Cardwell and Dunk Island, a place where many Australians have spent wonderful holidays. To see that

place the way it is now demonstrates the huge power of these weather events.

In my electorate there is a little town called Woollooga. There are only three major buildings in the main street—the hotel, the shop and the hall. An unexpected raging torrent in the middle of the night went through the hotel, destroyed everything in the shop and took the hall off its foundations. This is the kind of impact that some towns have had to live with.

Just last week I was in Charlton, in Victoria, a little town of about 1,500 people, where the whole central business area went under water. Their hospital has been flooded, along with their aged persons complex and health centre. It could be a year, or maybe three years if they have to rebuild the hospital, before these facilities will be available for the community. Their aged people have had to go to other towns to continue to receive care. Their doctor has set up a temporary medical centre, but will he wait for another three years until all these things are rebuilt? This little town is not a wealthy town, and it needs this kind of community support. It can ill afford a tragedy of this nature. And its shopkeepers are trying to rebuild their premises and open up for business, even though it is obvious that the pain and hardship associated with this will be very difficult for them to bear.

While we were there a bus arrived from Melbourne, with a busload of workers from the National Bank who had come up to help the people of Charlton with the cleaning up. As I said when I was there, it would have been better if they had opened up their branch, which had been closed a little while ago. Nonetheless, these people were there to help. As I wandered around the streets of Charlton I noticed that all the landscaping in the streets had been refurbished. I was told that staff from Bunnings had come up and

done this as a volunteer service to the community. So, we saw tragedy and hardship but we also saw Australians who were prepared to travel to help their fellow Australians in need.

There have been losses. Families have been broken up and people's hopes and aspirations have been dashed. There is lost property. There are stories of remarkable survival. Wes Judd, the leader of the dairy industry in Queensland, found much of his dairy herd 40 kilometres downstream but still alive. There are stories of people who endured great difficulties, who were thought to be lost but then, like a miracle, were found safe and well.

As we have travelled around I have been somewhat shocked by the damage done to infrastructure, particularly roads. Many bridges survived, only to have their approaches washed away on both sides. The repair task is going to be enormous. The losses from the closure of the coalmines in Queensland will be significant economically. To get these businesses back into operation you have to not only get the water out of the mines but rebuild the railway lines, some of which have been completely trashed. These were the strongest and heaviest load-carrying lines in the state but they have been twisted like they were playthings.

I suspect that the losses in agriculture may end up being the greatest of all because they cannot be replaced. They are gone for all time. There is a loss of value in the wheat crop and in the horticultural industry. I have mentioned bananas, but there are countless other horticultural crops as well. There are those who were not able to plant their summer crops at all because of excess rainfall or inappropriate weather conditions and, of course, there has been the loss of livestock. A funny story was identified last night on *Media Watch* about a report that 30,000 pigs had been washed down a river. In fact, the story

should have said there were '30 sows and pigs' washed down the river. It was a humorous story, though I acknowledge it was not too good for the 30 pigs. But certainly there have been livestock losses quite extensively, and it is going to take a long time to rebuild.

Let me also say that many of the farmers who have been affected are still receiving exceptional circumstances aid following the drought. In many cases, that expires next month. I appeal to the government to look sympathetically at whether those benefits should be terminated at this time. Clearly their recovery period, which is supposed to be part of the EC arrangements, has not happened or has been seriously set back and they are going to need more help to rebuild. There will be some places as well whose EC declarations have recently expired, and we need to look again to them and what can be done.

Can I acknowledge some of the people who have played a wonderful role in ensuring that our response to these events has been as complete as it should have been. Many have mentioned the state emergency service personnel, the rescuers, those who endangered their own lives to protect the larger population. I also acknowledge the police. Can I mention the electricity authorities and the gas and water suppliers. They have had to go in and disconnect power and then go back, in quite dangerous situations, often with extreme winds blowing, to reconnect the electricity supplies. I acknowledge the council workers who had to go out in the middle of the night to close roads because of unexpected flooding. Many of the councils in my area ran out of signs because there were so many roads closed. They also had to go out and quickly fill the potholes so that when the roads were able to be reopened they were at least trafficable. The repairs were only temporary, and most of the pothole repairs have already broken up, but at least the roads

were trafficable when we needed to get important supplies through.

I acknowledge the tradesmen, carpenters and electricians who have been there to help people in the rebuilding. Others have already mentioned the role of the Army and the military forces. You have no idea how cheered a town is when it sees a few soldiers come to town with a bit of equipment. They really do feel that people are interested and care for them. Even if those Army personnel were just helping with the clean-up and the repairs, they were especially appreciated and the sight of the defence forces—particularly when they bring a helicopter or some serious hardware of that nature—has certainly cheered whole communities.

I also acknowledge those employers who gave their employees time off so that they could care for their own houses and their own communities and those employees who went to work—even though they had their own homes to look after—because they knew that so much needed to be done for their fellow citizens. I mention the counselors and the Centrelink staff who have really been run off their feet. I saw the pictures of three blocks of people queuing at Cairns, wanting to pick up their thousand-dollar payment. This is another area we need to look at a little further, in the future.

I also want to say a kind word about the banks—something I do not do too often. They seem to have been very willing to reassure their customers that they will stand behind them in these difficult times. Let me also acknowledge the ministers and others who have visited flood-affected areas for the interest that they have taken and the offers of help that they have given. That is appreciated, particularly when they are from the opposite side of politics. I acknowledge that this was an occasion when members of parliament needed to stand together so that

members themselves could stand by their people and make sure the appropriate benefits were provided.

I notice the Queensland government is going to have an inquiry, and I think that is appropriate, into the aftermath of the flood. We need to also look at whether there are some things we can do better. As I travelled around flood-affected areas, there were frequent criticisms about the lack of warning coming from the Bureau of Meteorology and the fact that there are not enough warning stations in many of the rivers. I heard of one story where a river gauge was so surrounded by floodwaters that nobody could get in to read it. In other cases a lot of the equipment seemed to be damaged and not working. In my own electorate, in the river between my home and my electorate office, the readings were over 12 hours old—and in a rapidly rising river that is simply not good enough. Emerald was severely flooded. Over half of the rainfall gauges in the whole Central Highlands area were not recording rainfall at the time this flooding was occurring. So we need to look at why there were so many weather stations not working and why there were not more flood gauges.

There has also been criticism that the weather bureau's forecasts were not very accurate. Usually they overestimated the size of the flood, and I guess that is a good thing, but there were some spectacular cases—particularly in the central Burnett—where the floodwaters were much higher than predicted and arrived many hours earlier than expected. That, of course, is a serious problem. At Mount Mowbullin, where there was a severe rainfall event that was credited with one of the Dalby floods and flooding in Kingaroy, the rainfall gauge has not been working for over a year. We do need to make sure that we deal with that sort of thing. In Swan Hill the people are still waiting for the flooding that was forecast more than two weeks

ago. These are issues that we need to look at. Finally, I want to mention the flooding in Brisbane as an example. The weather bureau predicted a 5.4 metre flood. It came out at only 4.5 metres—that is a lot to be out by. I am glad they were out on the high side; otherwise tens of thousands more houses would have been flooded.

I want to mention the radio and television coverage of the floods. Particularly in Brisbane, that coverage was extensive. This was a holiday period and so a lot of journalists were away. I know a lot came back and we appreciate their role. But the local ABC, in particular, was caught short. I was interested to turn on my local ABC on a morning when I was desperate to get local flood information. The broadcast was coming from another town, many hundreds of kilometres away. The announcer came on saying: 'Welcome. I am actually up here from New South Wales. Now I can't pronounce the names of the towns, so ring me up and tell me.' It was nice that he had come, but that could have been a problem—having someone giving advice about what action you should take who does not understand the local geography. Indeed, when we did get an ABC crew to my town, when the minister was visiting, the journalists were from Hobart and Victoria. It was nice to have the visitors but the lack of local knowledge is a bit of a problem when you are claiming to be 'Your local ABC'. As far as the commercial radio is concerned, their programs are so aggregated these days that most of them do not have any local presence. Some managers came in to give occasional announcements and we were grateful for that but our warning system is not what it used to be in relation to relying on local radio.

I want to finish with a good news story, a really pleasant story from my electorate. There is a historical railway in my area, run by volunteers. They maintain the track, steam engines and a range of historic railway

carriages, mainly for tourist purposes, between Gympie and Imbil. During the floods the roads were blocked, vehicles could not get through and people were stranded in the Mary Valley. The volunteers from the Gympie Mary Valley railway line fired up the steam engines and rail cars and ran regular food drops to the people of the Mary Valley. It brought back memories of the story of Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer. When the modern technology could not get through the volunteers were able to do so. At a time when Q-Rail was not able to run freight trains, for whatever reason—I do not quite understand—up the main line to deliver food to the major cities, the local historic railway was providing a service to the community.

That is the spirit of Australia. That is the thing we learned about our fellow citizens, again. This is a great country to live in. Our climate can be harsh. It is changeable. It is unexpected. But we need to work together. Even as the memories fade and the TV screens move to some other images, we cannot forget those who are struggling to rebuild following this flood event. There are thousands of them, thousands of our fellow Australians, who have a long road and path yet to follow before their lifestyles return to normal. As members of parliament, as representatives of those people, we must do what we can to make sure they have the resources and facilities to encourage them with that task and to rebuild their lives just as soon as they can.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (3.22 pm)—Firstly, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for moving this motion of condolence so poignantly and for allowing those of us who represent the worst affected communities to speak on behalf of our constituents and indeed all Australians, because the events of the last months have touched us all. Thank you also to all those who have expressed, and who will express, their sympathy

and support in speeches this afternoon, as the entire parliament stops to offer our condolences for those who have lost their lives and to pledge our ongoing support for those who have experienced heartbreak and hardship at the hands of these natural disasters.

This is one of those moments when the parliament is given the chance to live up to the expectations of the people who have sent us here. It is one of those moments when we are united in a common purpose and do our best to reflect as an institution the solidarity, generosity and compassion that we have witnessed in our own communities. I do not know about other members here but I find that challenge deeply humbling. In fact, when I think about the terrible events of the summer just passed and the way that my fellow Australians, our fellow Australians, have either faced them directly or been there to lend support and pick up the pieces, that humility does not seem out of place. We have all been humbled by the tragic reminders of nature's ferocious power. I know I have been humbled by the displays of courage and selflessness that we all love to think of as part of the Aussie fighting spirit that might be there for us too if ever we need to call on it.

It is our sad duty in this condolence motion to particularly remember those who have lost their lives in this series of disasters that have struck our country. All of those deaths are tragic and all happened in circumstances too distressing for most of us to contemplate. As I speak to this motion I know that the people of my electorate would want me to say on their behalf, as they said to me constantly throughout our flooding emergency, that even in the midst of their own trials they know where the real suffering took place. It continues today in those families and communities in Toowoomba, the Lockyer Valley, Far North Queensland and other places across Australia for whom life will never be the same again. I extend my

sympathies and those of my constituents to all those who knew and loved the victims of these terrible events.

I also acknowledge that there are families in my own electorate who are grieving loved ones killed in road accidents during the extreme weather conditions that preceded the flooding of early January. Flooded creeks and torrential rain took a terrible toll on people who were just trying to travel to work or reunite with their family.

The story of the disasters that we have experienced across the country, and especially in Queensland, has taken on an epic quality. The quantities of water, the expanse of the country inundated, the scale of the damage and the cost of recovery are measured in thousands, millions and billions. The pain of losing a family member, the stress of evacuating your house and the overwhelming job of cleaning up and rebuilding, however, are things that are felt and have a deep impact on a very personal and individual level. The people of Rockhampton and the communities surrounding our city have been dealing with all of those emotions and challenges since the rain started falling after Christmas, and we knew that the water that had created havoc and destruction in places like Theodore and Emerald was heading our way.

The Fitzroy River is a magnificent natural asset for our city. With the biggest catchment on the east coast of Australia, the Fitzroy sustains a huge area of Central Queensland before flowing through the heart of Rockhampton. But no-one should ever forget that she floods, and she floods big—over 10 metres in 1918, 9.4 metres in 1954 and 9.3 metres in 1991. Luckily for us, our city had plenty of warning as the deluge made its way towards the coast, and we had the lessons and experiences of previous floods to guide us. That made the management of the situation easier for the authorities. But, unfortu-

nately, that is small comfort for the actual people affected as they packed up their homes, secured their possessions and moved out—not knowing for sure how high the water would go and for how long their lives would be turned upside down.

In the end the river peaked at 9.2 metres. Everyone in Rockhampton can rattle off centimetre by centimetre what that meant for the city as the water rose. The suburbs of Depot Hill and Port Curtis bore the brunt of the flooding but many others, including Allentown, West Rockhampton, Park Avenue and Kawana, were impacted on as well. Our airport closed for three weeks. The Bruce Highway, the Capricorn Highway and the railway line were closed for a similar period, causing major disruption to supplies of foods, pharmaceuticals and other essentials. People in many towns and rural communities around Rockhampton were cut off from their jobs, from their business and from services like the Rockhampton hospital. There were 3,000 properties in and around the city affected and 200 of those suffered inundation. Five hundred people were forced to evacuate their homes to stay with family and friends or shelter at the evacuation centre at Central Queensland University.

That is the picture of the Rockhampton flood that everyone here would be familiar with from the media coverage—the city cut off and the old Queenslanders of Depot Hill struggling to stay above the brown floodwaters. I had the privilege of being there with the community through that time, and I am proud to say that the real story of the floods is the way that the city rose to the challenge and just got on with what had to be done to keep people safe, to support one another and to get back on our feet.

The thank-yous are many—so, so many. Once again, the sheer number of people, organisations and businesses involved should

never obscure the fact that it was the personal commitment of each and every individual who gave time, expertise, a donation or just a smile that made the difference. The people of Central Queensland are very grateful for the attention and support they received from all levels of government, including the defence forces, and from people across the country during our time of need. I know that they would be with me in putting aside our local concerns momentarily, not because they have disappeared but because we know others are doing it tougher than us. Our hearts go out as Australians to those who have lost their homes and most especially to those families in mourning, who are walking the hardest road of all.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin) (3.29 pm)—The terrible beauty of this vast and unyielding continent of ours truly tested the Australian people over this summer. With the benefit of the phenomenon of 21st century technology and comprehensive news coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the reality of the natural disasters in various parts of the country touched us all so deeply wherever we were. The morning newspapers, the evening news, the daily radio and the blogosphere were filled with tragic stories, minute-by-minute accounts of the unfolding disasters, photographs and film and video footage of the devastation now so graphically etched into our collective memory.

While this real-time coverage brought it home to us all, the actual reality was terrifying, shocking, overwhelming for those facing floods in Queensland, in New South Wales, in Victoria and in the Gascoyne in Western Australia, around Carnarvon in particular, or the cyclone in North Queensland or the bushfires in the suburbs surrounding Perth. When I was at primary school I learned that great Dorothea Mackellar poem, *My Country*. Time and time again over this summer the

middle verse of that poem came back to me, as it did for so many others:

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror—
The wide brown land for me!

That is Australia.

I express the deepest sympathy to those who lost loved ones in these natural disasters. Words cannot replace the loss, heal the hurt, erase or even dull the pain, but it may comfort those who are suffering to know that our thoughts and prayers are with them and that we pledge our ongoing support for them. So many people have lost their homes, their belongings, their property, their businesses—in some cases replaceable, in many irreplaceable.

Across the country Australians pulled together helping each other out in the face of great adversity. We are a courageous, heroic, stoic people when faced with natural disasters and we are concerned, caring, compassionate and determined in the aftermath. The character of the Australian people was on display this summer, as is so often the case when confronted with adversity, including the massive challenges that are associated with the natural disasters that afflict our country on an annual basis: the bushfires, drought, floods, storms, cyclones.

I saw the very best in the national character as I was privileged, as were a number of us here, to work alongside some of our colleagues as they worked in their electorates with members of their local communities who were preparing for the onslaught of the floods or cleaning up afterwards. With John-Paul Langbroek, the Queensland opposition

leader, I visited the Lockyer Valley. The scene has been described as an inland tsunami, and as we drove from the town of Gatton to what was left of the town of Grantham I could understand why. The fields on either side of the road were strewn with upturned cars, parts of houses and buildings and farm machinery, a light plane upended, trees. In some instances they had been carried over many kilometres by the surging floodwaters. The devastation was simply astounding. In the town of Grantham the scene was heart-breaking. Having grown up in a small country town I could readily identify with the intimacy and the sense of family that exist in a small town.

The town of Grantham lost some of its residents as the sheer speed and ferocity of the floodwaters overwhelmed them. At the time of our visit a number of deaths had been confirmed and a number of people were still reported as missing. The community sadness was deep and profound. As we stood in the main street of Grantham, a convoy of Army trucks with defence personnel aboard rolled into the town. It must have been one of the most reassuring sights imaginable in those dark days. The efforts of our Defence Force, our emergency services and the thousands of volunteers who came to help—in fact, came to help wherever disaster struck across Australia this summer—deserve our everlasting gratitude.

After Queensland I visited Carnarvon in the mid-north of my state. While we are all so thankful that there was no loss of life, the description of how the floodwaters in the days before Christmas rose so suddenly, giving no time to escape, no time to prepare, was so eerily familiar.

Across this great nation, from the depths of our hearts, we mourn the loss of life. From the loss, the devastation and the suffering we shall draw the means of survival and we will

work together to rebuild the shattered lives of our fellow Australians.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom) (3.36 pm)—On behalf of the people of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs, I offer my condolences to those in our community who have been hit with the hardest force by this incredible display of nature over the last few months. Most importantly, our thoughts today are with the people who lost their loved ones or who suffered injury and also with the many people whose businesses, homes, cars and precious personal belongings were damaged beyond recognition or lost during the events of Monday, 10 January 2011 and later that week.

January 2011 has delivered a summer of extreme weather in all parts of our state—in fact, most parts of Australia. While many hundreds of thousands of people have been affected in eastern Australia, not least of all in Queensland's capital, it has been the incredible images of my home town of Toowoomba that have most eloquently and most vividly illustrated the devastating impact of the flood. I am sure that all members have seen the extraordinary images of a powerful current sweeping aside cars and bridges and turning Toowoomba's CBD into a raging river. For those of you who have visited Toowoomba before and seen the sedate nature of East Creek and West Creek, these images have been particularly shocking.

Those images have put human faces on an extreme act of nature and a force never seen before in Toowoomba—something that has resonated around the world. Indeed, in the aftermath of the floods my office was contacted by people not only from all parts of Australia but from several overseas countries concerned about what they had seen and concerned about the welfare of the people of our beautiful city and its surrounding towns.

There was a universal sense of disbelief that this could happen to a city on top of a mountain. Not surprisingly, you will find that same sense of disbelief is also shared by those in my electorate who experienced this one-in-500-year event.

It is not accurate to say that Toowoomba has never prepared for the impact of flash flooding. In fact, with the help of the federal government, over the last decade the local council has put in place a comprehensive strategy for flood mitigation in the CBD. But this was flash flooding on a scale never seen in our region before, stemming from an extraordinary storm event. From speaking to people who have lived in Toowoomba all their lives and who came from families who have called the city home for generations, you get a clear idea of how extraordinary this event really was. No-one I have spoken to can recall anything like it, nor have they ever heard of anything like it in the local history files or even folklore.

It is particularly poignant that Toowoomba should come to the national consciousness in this way when, not so many years ago, our city was known for its tenacity in combating a drought and its impact on urban water supplies. For a city that just a few months ago had water storage levels of less than 10 per cent, heavy rain has been a particularly rare event in recent times. But on Monday, 10 January, that all changed.

For a city that sits on top of the Great Dividing Range in the crater of an extinct volcano—it sits 691 metres above sea level—flooding is not the norm, nor is it an expected occurrence within the CBD. Toowoomba is a bowl; it sits like that. Its centre is named after a swamp—in the local dialect, the ‘double-o, double-o’ means water. So, if you imagine a bowl like that, the only way the water gets out is on the side where the volcano crater has been eroded.

The two creeks that run down to the centre meet in the CBD. Every drop of water that lands in Toowoomba south of the CBD has to pass through the CBD to get out. That is the natural formation of the city.

Coming on the back of several weeks of consistent rainfall, the ground was already soaked and the conditions were in place for the incredible scenes that were to follow as rainfall of between 150 millimetres, or six inches as my father would say, and 230 millimetres, or greater than nine inches, fell in less than one hour—nine inches of water. Over there it is 18; further down it is 27 or 36—that is three foot, or a metre. It is no wonder that a wall of water came down and created what is now known as an inland tsunami.

It hit the city without warning. I heard a story of a man who was driving across James Street; he looked down the creek in the heavy rain and said, ‘Those retention basins and the flood mitigation are working really well.’ He glanced left and saw a wall of water 15 feet high approaching the bridge. That water crashed through the centre of town but, despite what the media might think, did not go to the Lockyer Valley. I understand from the member for Parkes that it is currently out near Lightning Ridge. The event that caused the devastation in the Lockyer Valley was the same storm but involved different water.

Despite the shock and the unreal nature of the scenes from Toowoomba, there are remarkable stories of bravery and the rapid response from local people who had the courage and alertness to help those around them. Sadly, the city of Toowoomba was directly impacted with loss of life when Toowoomba woman Donna Rice and her 13-year-old son, Jordan, were swept away from their vehicle, which had been travelling along James Street just near the CBD. This loss is one that is felt by the entire commu-

nity, and our hearts have gone out to Donna Rice's partner, John Tyson, and Jordan's 10-year-old brother, Blake, who was rescued from the flooding water as a result of an incredible act of bravery by Jordan, who insisted that rescuers save his younger brother first. These memories remain etched extremely deeply in our community's minds.

There are, of course, stories of extraordinary bravery throughout the affected regions which serve as the much-needed life-affirming aspects such a disaster can deliver to our community. Some of these stories have been rightly honoured in the media, while there are certainly many others that will be aired as time moves on—perhaps in months; perhaps in years. Prime Minister, I thank you for the opportunity that you have presented for those people to be recognised formally in the future.

I would also like to record my sincere gratitude to our region's police, fire brigade, ambulance and emergency service workers and volunteers for their rapid and professional response to this sudden crisis. Many risked their own lives to rescue people in danger from the flash flood. Special mention goes to the rapid water rescue team, who risked all to save people who were clinging to trees, power poles, railings and cars and were at risk of being swept away by the raging torrent.

What transpired in Toowoomba was terrible enough, but what happened in our neighbouring communities to the east, the communities of the Lockyer Valley, later that afternoon as a result of the same storm moving east is mind-numbing. I extend my sincere condolences to those communities, which I know the member for Wright will speak of shortly.

As well as Toowoomba, Oakey, 40 kilometres north-west of Toowoomba and the home of the Army's helicopter training cen-

tre, was hit by a savage storm the following day and a significant number of houses were inundated. In fact, 15 remain uninhabitable. Fortunately, though, there was no loss of life.

Through these floods farmers in my region lost an enormous amount of crops, and the economic impact of that on our region is yet to be felt. Just one month since the flood ripped its way through the CBD, many businesses are now getting back to business and those still closed are closer to operating as usual. Incredibly, the hard work has seen places like Rows Furniture, whose furniture was seen floating down Russell Street in those iconic images, reopen this week. It shows that that business, a business of long tradition in Toowoomba, has no intention of not being around for a long time.

Other businesses are still repairing extensive damage, but that work is well under way. The fast turnaround is testament to the community spirit and mateship of our region. In the days immediately after the flood there were reports of people who were no doubt still on their Christmas holidays turning up to volunteer in the clean-up. That is something that has been replicated in every flood community right around Australia. The Army also pitched in, of course. I echo the sentiments of the member for Wide Bay about the lift that it gives a city or a town when the Army turns up. The Army helped in the clean-up in Toowoomba while still doing search and rescue operations in the Lockyer Valley. There is also a strong determination from shoppers to support local businesses in Toowoomba. I am sure the campaign will be of great assistance to get the economy back on its feet.

I should also mention and, perhaps, thank the insurance companies—some of whom needed a little encouragement—who in the end agreed that all claims in Toowoomba would be paid out to their full value as the

result of a storm event, not flood. I just warn them that I am still watching, and I will be ever vigilant.

In the days and weeks that followed, our community was very appreciative also of the visits by both the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, as well as that by the Governor of Queensland, Penny Wensley, along with Premier Anna Bligh and several of her ministers. They, along with the local MPs, local government and community leaders and church groups helped in the rebuilding of our community's confidence.

Of course, the repercussions of the floods will be felt for much longer. Like many other regions, Toowoomba's transport infrastructure took a huge blow. Local roads are still being repaired and the rail network around the city and surrounding areas will be non-functioning for months. Toowoomba was cut off from the rest of the state for two days and from Brisbane for four days. It has only been in the last few days that both the up lanes on the Toowoomba range have reopened, and one down lane is still closed. In fact, the other lane is still moving north at about a millimetre a day, with a widening crack on the side of the hill. The resulting traffic jams would rival anything you have seen in Sydney, with delays of up to 2½ hours to traverse the range when the normal trip takes 10 minutes.

The railway line servicing all coal and grain industries in south-west Queensland remains shut and, as I said, may be for up to six months. The damage to the main highway again reinforces the need for an alternative route to and from Toowoomba, and it underlines the need for the Toowoomba bypass—an issue that I will ensure is further discussed and given full attention in the months ahead. I should say to the Prime Minister that I appreciated her offer to have a meeting on that matter in the near future when she visited

Toowoomba on Australia Day. On that note I thank the Prime Minister again for her visit on Australia Day. That provided an enormous morale boost to our community and is part of that rebuilding process. Thank you for coming twice in such a short period.

While the physical damage of the floods can be eliminated through hard work and time, the psychological impacts of the event will be more long term, even for those people who escaped the worst of the damage. It shows the resilience of our community, and that community is working together to soothe the deepest wounds.

I would also like to pay tribute to the church leaders in our community, as well as both the paid and unpaid volunteers and counsellors—who have travelled in some cases from as far south as Victoria—and also the charities and community spirit organisations who are still working to heal the wounds of the flood. Their guidance and support have been crucial in helping our fellow residents through the darkest days, and I am certain that unwavering support will be equally important in the coming weeks.

I relate one Queensland flood story—a story of enterprise, opportunity and mateship—which so demonstrates the Australian ethos. It actually happened in Brisbane, not in Toowoomba, but I think it is a great story to tell. A friend of mine who had a unit in Brisbane that was flooded was down there on the Saturday morning just after the flood to clean it out and to get it back into order. It was in a block of units. A complete stranger walked in off the street at about eight o'clock and said, 'Would you like a hand with a hose to clean things up?' Peter, of course, jumped at that—every hand was vital. The stranger disappeared and re-emerged with a brand new, petrol powered pressure cleaner. He said: 'I've been wanting one of these for years but my wife wouldn't let me buy it.

This morning she relented. I went straight down to the shop and bought the last one.' He worked all day, and left with his now near-new pressure cleaner and the thanks and gratitude of all the people who were there. That is the Australian way.

In conclusion, even more than the hardships, the most significant and far-reaching consequence of these events of 10 January will be the rekindled sense of common purpose and the reach of the new bonds of mateship and camaraderie in our community. As we move forward through the recovery phase, this community spirit will be the real legacy of the floods of January 2011.

Mr McCLELLAND (Barton—Attorney-General) (3.51 pm)—I commend previous speakers for their contributions and for their regaling of local stories which very much give an outline of the Australian character. These events have been a national tragedy. They are very much part and parcel of our natural environment, but we lost 22 lives in the recent floods in Queensland and there are still, as has been noted, nine people unaccounted for. In fact, since 30 November last year, we have lost 35 Australians in floods. Each of those is a personal tragedy for families, friends and communities. Many will never fully recover from that hurt and our thoughts are with each and every one of them.

The Leader of the Opposition indicated that these events crept up on us. In part that is the case, but as a result of advice that was provided by the Bureau of Meteorology on 25 November—indeed the last time I was on my feet in this House—I noted that we were coming into a festive season which was going to be an intense cyclone season and intense period for bushfires along eastern Australia extending over to south-western Australia. We have seen as a result the Queensland floods, which originally came from a

cyclone belt. We have seen Cyclone Yasi, we have seen the floods in central and northern New South Wales and also extensive flooding in Victoria and even in Tasmania, and we have seen fire in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

In a radio broadcast today the Western Australian fire brigade did a rollcall for people evacuated from their homes that indicated those properties that had been destroyed or damaged, according to address, and the emotion of that was intense—68 properties were destroyed in and around Perth and another 32 were seriously damaged. These disasters have had widespread repercussions all around Australia. They are very much, as has been noted, part of our natural environmental history but, nonetheless, devastating and distressing.

As I have indicated, when I was on my feet in this House in November I noted that we were approaching a very torrid time such as we have suffered in this last summer season. As a result of those warnings and of recommendations arising from the Victorian bushfires royal commission, Emergency Management Australia coordinated briefings by Commonwealth agencies including Emergency Management, Geoscience Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology, ADF and Human Services for state emergency responders. Arising from those briefings we arranged for liaison officers from Emergency Management Australia to be with state emergency responders to coordinate emergency responses. Those relationships have been extremely effective during the period that we have just gone through.

What we could not account for—at least fully—was the extent of the courage of Australian people, the local leadership and the spirit and resilience of local communities. There is no doubt that, as a result of those factors that are inherent in the Australian

people, we have suffered fewer losses of lives, we have suffered less destruction and communities, as we have heard, are bouncing back.

Members mentioned acts of heroism, most notably, of course, by Jordan Rice, who saved his young brother ahead of himself, and that has been noted. We have heard of a mum who unfortunately had her young child ripped from her arms by the floodwaters. We have heard of emergency responders who were able to save most people, fortunately, whom they attempted to save, but regrettably some witnessed a loss as a result of the elements. We have heard of communities banding together. I want to mention a few from my experience.

On the night before Cyclone Yasi hit I was listening to local ABC radio in Queensland. Regrettably, I cannot remember the name of the radio host but he did an outstanding job. Communities were literally huddled in evacuation centres or in their own homes. He kept communication going despite the fact that power had been cut off. People were listening on their transistor radios or phoning in on their mobile phones that were still working. There were people on their own in their homes, there were single mums in bathrooms with their kids and there were families in evacuation centres. He communicated expert advice including that from the military, he communicated well wishes, and he advised people how to keep their spirits up and what resources would be available to them when the cyclone had passed. That radio host was a true Australian and did an outstanding job.

I acknowledge the work of commercial radio. When I was in Townsville at a local radio station the young receptionist was active in communicating broadcasts to ensure that local pets, who had been lost during the previous evening, were able to be reunited

with their owners—a great story, a young lady on her own initiative using the resources of the radio.

I acknowledge the Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul and other voluntary organisations that operated evacuation centres to keep people safe and to keep their morale up. One person I recall being interviewed made the call to remove people from the senior citizens hall to take them to another evacuation centre. That was the right call—the following morning the senior citizens hall was not standing. I acknowledge local shopping centres that allowed people into those centres for safety, and churches. I acknowledge the work of local councillors and the leadership that they showed in bringing together local expertise and communities and being part of the rebuilding efforts.

The work of local police was truly outstanding. I have no doubt that lives were saved because of the professionalism, the local knowledge, the courage and the forthrightness of local police who were prepared to insist on evacuations when they were necessary. No other country in the world quite literally has so much of its emergency response capability based on volunteerism. Whether we are talking about bushfire fighters, state emergency services or marine rescue they are all based on volunteerism. That is very much something that we are entitled to be proud of, to nurture and to support.

The Minister for Defence will speak shortly, but 1,900 members of the Australian Defence Force are assisting in the Queensland floods and 4,000 are available to help in the aftermath of Cyclone Yasi and elsewhere around Australia. Their work has been truly outstanding. Mention has been made of utility workers; of health workers; of local government employees; of community service workers, including Centrelink staff and counsellors; indeed, of banks, who are per-

haps not traditionally complimented in this chamber but have arranged for funds to be available through features such as bank-in-the-box initiatives to ensure local people have available resources. I also mention the support of the rugby league, particularly in New South Wales and Queensland, which I suppose is the heartland of rugby league. When we were in Ipswich, there were Parramatta, Penrith and, I think, some other teams, who had been visiting the evacuation centres. We met them with the local member, Shayne Neumann.

Finally, I turn to a matter mentioned by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—that is, that it is now appropriate to reflect in a professional way on the events. This Friday, there will be a meeting of emergency management ministers to conduct a debriefing on these events, and next week the Council of Australian Governments will discuss planning for a national resilience strategy involving all arms of government and the private sector. I note that relief is important. We have, as members are aware, the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, which are essentially a partnership between Commonwealth and state governments providing personal hardship payments, business support and ultimately, of course, assisting in the rebuilding of infrastructure. At a federal level, we have the Australian government disaster recovery payments. Just in respect of those, we have paid out some \$450 million to 430,000 Australians as a result of these recent events.

While focusing on relief is important, we must continue to focus on prevention and mitigation. As part of that rebuilding effort, we must have constantly in mind the need for the betterment and improving of that infrastructure so it is less susceptible to these natural events in the future. There is no doubt that resilience works, that building in mitigation and prevention techniques works,

and I think the aftermath or consequences of Cyclone Yasi is testament to that. Lessons were learned from Cyclone Larry and it is a remarkable achievement that, although there were losses of life in the aftermath, there was no loss of life as a result of the impact of the cyclone. That is a remarkable achievement by all the local responders I have referred to, and I give note to a very mild mannered fellow, the leader of Emergency Management Queensland, Minister Neil Roberts. His leadership, in a low-key, unsung, but very effective way, I have no doubt was very much part of that successful response.

Measures such as the National Emergency Warning System, which came online last February and has now issued literally hundreds of thousands of messages on SMS and telephone, have been responsible for keeping people safe. Also, what is clearly evident when you look at the buildings that have survived in these areas is that local planning decisions are so tremendously important in ensuring that areas are developed where they should be developed, not where they should not, and of course the enforcement of building codes is tremendously important as to whether those buildings survive and ultimately the people are safe. Community awareness, the fact that people in the path of the cyclone actually cleaned up their own properties to prevent missiles affecting their neighbours' properties, was itself a source of minimising damages. Things such as levees, firebreaks, evacuation plans and, indeed, even public advice about local, private and family emergency kits are all part and parcel of developing resilience as part of our community.

We have an extremely professional and committed emergency response team that works well together at a local, state and federal level. We have strong and resilient communities, but it is important, as others have mentioned, that we do maintain that

focus on mitigation on prevention. It is through properly resourcing, thinking through, planning and working together at all levels of government and with the private sector that we further enhance the ability of local communities to cope with and bounce back from these natural environmental events that are very much part of our environmental history but are, as we have seen, so tremendously destructive and distressing.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (4.05 pm)—The great flood of 2011 will leave a permanent mark, not only on our geography and our homes but also on our character. It will be something that we will talk about for many years to come. Last month's flood and now a cyclone as well as fires have caused unprecedented destruction, and a public and private cost unprecedented to match. But after all of this we will rebuild, we will repair and we will mend our lives. It will be difficult and, for some, it will be almost insurmountable. Those most deeply affected will need all the support of their families, of their friends, of their community and, I want to also say, the support of their government.

The real story of these floods, the cyclones, the fires and all the devastation we have seen this so far this summer is really a human story. It is the story of courage, of generosity and of hope. I also want to acknowledge the people and families who have lost a loved one—and there have been many. Those in the floods in Queensland in particular, in Cyclone Yasi in the north and elsewhere in the country have been affected by the most severe weather that they have had to endure. My deepest sympathies and my condolences in this time of tragedy to all of those families.

This summer will always be etched in our minds as the one of the great flood that wreaked so much death and destruction and forever changed the lives of thousands of

people. Unfortunately, it will be remembered for other devastating weather events right across the country. As I said, from firestorms in the West to flash floods in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania, it seems as though nobody was spared. My electorate of Oxley was also not spared—in fact, it was hit very hard by flooding. The flood and rains came quickly, with a ferocity not seen for many years.

To put it into context, three-quarters of Queensland has been declared a disaster zone. The Queensland government estimates that 500,000 square kilometres are flood affected. To put that into perspective, it is an area bigger than the whole of Great Britain. From Rockhampton to Dalby, from Toowoomba to Condamine, from Brisbane to Goondiwindi it seems that virtually no part of Queensland was untouched by floodwaters—truly, no part has been left untouched when you count tropical Cyclone Yasi.

It is true to say that floodwaters recognise no electoral boundaries and are completely indiscriminate. The floods of 2011 are the worst natural disaster in Queensland's history. Economically, they are the biggest natural disaster in Australia's history and the cost to rebuild will be enormous—the estimates are in the many billions of dollars. But none of this can be made up to anybody who has lost a loved one, including one man who was lost at Durack, in my electorate.

Most significantly for me, I can remember the 1974 floods, when I was a young child, but nothing can compare with what we have seen in 2011. In the Lockyer Valley the towns of Grantham, Murphys Creek and Withcott were virtually destroyed by floodwaters, and there was significant loss of life in those areas. Some media outlets reported that the Bremer River peaked at somewhere between 80 and 90 metres. It was actually only 18 or 19 metres but, when you contem-

plate just how high that is, it is almost too hard to imagine that waters could rise that high. The level was slightly lower than the 1974 flood peak, but it did a lot more damage. There were a lot more people and a lot more infrastructure, and so there was a lot more to lose. In 1974, there were many fewer people, schools and buildings and much less destruction. So, although the river did not rise quite as much, it came pretty close, and the destruction and the devastation will be felt for many more years to come.

In my electorate hundreds, if not thousands, of homes were either directly affected or affected in other ways, and many thousands of people were affected. The flood caused unprecedented devastation. In my electorate at least 17 suburbs were affected, including Goodna, Gailes, Darra, Wacol, Sumner, Sumner Park, Middle Park, Westlake, Jamboree Heights and Jindalee, to name just a few. Almost all parts of my electorate were affected directly by floodwaters. Many people, as with people in other areas, have lost everything. That is a hard notion to contemplate unless you are the person who has lost everything. It is very hard to imagine when you are working to help people clean up and doing things directly. You see the destruction and you see the loss but you do not feel it immediately. It is something that comes a little later on.

Sporting clubs and community facilities such as the Jindalee Golf Club, the McLeod Golf Club, the Goodna and District Rugby League Football Club, the Western Spirit Football Club, the Goodna RSL, which lost two premises, and a whole range of other community infrastructure were completely destroyed and will need enormous amounts of funding to rebuild. Public infrastructure such as roads, rail, traffic lights and a whole range of other infrastructure so necessary to a great lifestyle have all been destroyed.

It will have a huge emotional cost, and it is a very heartbreaking time for many people. I believe that the true outcome of that emotional cost will not be felt for many months. I have seen people come to the recovery centres with a dazed and faraway look, clearly suffering from emotional and physical stress. They are tired and worn out, not knowing where to turn or where to go that night. Where would they sleep? Where would they eat? Who would they turn to? Some people we know slept in stairwells or under bridges when the waters receded. If they were lucky, they stayed with family or friends or at the recovery centres in schools and halls—wherever they could find somewhere to rest for the night and go back to cleaning what was left of their houses in the morning. The emotional scars run deep and they will be felt for a long time to come.

For me it is has also been very personal. My brother lives near the river. He lost his home and is right now trying to rebuild it. He lost all of his possessions. He tried very hard on the day to move everything to higher ground. The first thing he did was to move his animals. He has a bit of a hobby farm and has a few poddy calves and his first concern was to save all his animals and make sure they were safe. Unfortunately, he could not save his treasured motorcycles. The waters came so fast and so high that, by the time, he had finished packing everything to the top floor the waters were starting to lap the top of the bonnet of his car as he was driving out of his driveway.

I have also had some loss, although I have to say that it is to a much lesser extent. My office has completely gone to the floods. When I say 'completely gone', I mean a 100 per cent loss, everything that was in it. We did think that the water might come close to the office but we did not think it would be so high. We moved things off the floor and onto the desks. Later that day we thought that, if it

were to come anywhere close to the door, we should take a safety precaution and move them to the tops of the cupboards. Unfortunately, when the water goes over the top of the roof it is not going to make much difference. So there are more than 12 years of memories, everything that one keeps in an office when your office really is your second home has a lot of significance, and it is a difficult loss. Many things in there just cannot be replaced. I can assure people that we did keep working, though. On the side of the road, under two marquees, we set up a fantastic office with just pen and paper, a couple of camping chairs and a table. Maybe I should be cautious in how I say this but we were just as effective. For all the technology that we have, sometimes your best work can be done with just a table and chair and a pen and paper.

While the scope of these floods and the devastation has been unprecedented, so too has been the response. There has been a truly awe-inspiring response from so many people—from friends, family and people we rang, from neighbours and from total strangers who just walked in off the street. We have heard stories already. There are so many others like those, of people doing extraordinary things at personal cost and in their own time, of people giving up work for two or three weeks. Some people I know are now in their fourth week; they have taken holidays to be able to help people they do not know. Many houses have had to be stripped of all their possessions. All internal fixtures and fittings were ripped out. Walls had collapsed. Ceilings were demolished and insulation removed. There was mud and stench everywhere. Everything had to be hosed and shovelled. It is quite a demeaning thing for somebody to have to do that to their own home.

In all of that ruin, many personal treasures were lost. People lost their jewellery and

things that were very close to them. I have one great story to come out of all those piles of rubbish and rubble that you see on the sides of the roads. Somebody actually went through and was helping a little old lady search for her wedding ring that she had lost. The likelihood of finding it was almost impossible, but everyone felt that it was so important to this lady that we had to give it a go. You are not going to believe it but, yes, we did find it. It was just amazing to find this mud covered little thing that meant so much to this woman. It was all that was left of her life.

Many other people came; they came from everywhere. Some of them came alone with a pair of gloves if they had them; some brought brooms, mops and buckets; others just brought their labour. Many brought food. In fact, we had an oversupply of Sunday-bake cakes. At one stage we were saying, 'We love the cake but, please, no more. There's going to be a health issue here eventually.' The amount of food that people brought and the generosity they showed were truly unprecedented. It has been said already, and I want to repeat it, that it really does typify and characterise what Australians are and the way we come out and help each other in times of crisis. We might argue over small things because they seem important at the time, but when disasters happen and people need each other we are there. It really is a true reflection of the Australian spirit—that sense of mateship is something that I think only Australians truly understand.

The clean-up has been a massive job and is mostly complete, but it is still quite eerie to drive down certain streets in my electorate that are completely pitch-black at night with no electricity. Roads are still covered in a brown tinge and house after house is empty, with no windows or doors and nothing inside, just pitch-darkness. You see some people in tents, believe it or not, and others in

caravans trying to protect what is left of their homes or trying to rebuild. It is an incredible sight. Tradesmen have come from New South Wales and Victoria. People have come from Perth and from all over Australia to help. We had so many volunteers that at one point we could afford to send teams of 20 or up to 50 to clean houses and get the job done in a matter of hours when normally it would take days or weeks.

Great stories are coming out, some that are as yet are unrecorded, and I want to relate a few. A very large lorry of polar ice arrived in Ipswich and the driver asked, 'How much ice would you like?' It was really hot and we needed to keep drinks cold, so not only did we get the drinks for free but we kept them cold for free as well. There was one catch: if I could supply a large, commercial sized generator they would keep providing ice for as many weeks as we needed. With the help of the ADF we were able to organise that. It was a really fantastic thing for them to do. A man driving a Mr Whippy ice-cream truck turned up at the Goodna flood recovery centre. He was from Byron Bay, it was his day off and he filled his truck and drove around my electorate giving away ice-creams until he had none left. It was an incredible act of generosity. He said it was not that far to drive from Byron Bay to Ipswich, but what he did made so many people smile on that really hot day. There are so many other stories of people coming to help from many, many different places all over the country. Places like Westlake and Jindalee are a little better off, and once people from those areas finished cleaning their homes and streets they volunteered to help out other parts of the electorate. I want to pay tribute to that generosity.

At times like these it is always difficult because there are so many people to thank, but some people really do stand out. They give so much that you must mention them.

From day one, Cathy Beauchamp from Westlife Church just got on the ground and became a general on site. She helped organise the effort and did an incredible job. I must mention my wife, Margy. They are still on the job, but for many weeks those two women ran the recovery centre. It is an unofficial recovery centre, but it became the site of many thousands of volunteers. At one point last week we counted that we had fed over 15,000 people. Reverend Tania Eichler, from St Catherine's Anglican church in Middle Park, Tammy Rowe and Trevor Bryce from the Salvation Army in Middle Park, Rowan Truss from Good News Lutheran Church in Jamboree Heights, Allan Morris from Shiloh Church in Goodna, Phil Cutcliffe from Westside Community Care and so many others assisted. It was so great to see the church community come out in their hundreds and hundreds to help everywhere they could and do everything they could. They opened up their homes, their churches and their halls and gave everything they had.

Rotary clubs and Lions clubs assisted and many people came to help prepare meals. I also want to make special mention of Maxine Norsgaard, who ran another unofficial recovery centre at the Redbank State School. She became known as the 'Queen of Redbank' for her efforts. She is finding it difficult to extricate herself from there, knowing as she does every single family in the area. Cathy Easte, from the Darra Community Group, did an incredible job coordinating Centenary Village. Many sporting teams helped out. Professional teams, including the Gold Coast Titans, the New South Wales Waratahs and others, and amateur teams did a lot to lift morale if not to clean houses. I took my kids to clean houses for a day so they would understand just how important this task was. We saw busloads of really fit young people turning up to the electorate and asking what

they could do to help. So many people were assisted; it was an incredible effort.

I want to make special mention of the ADF and in particular the RAAF at Ipswich. For the first few days they were not there—they were getting themselves organised to help—but when they appeared it was almost like a ray of light, a miracle. When military folk arrive there is a sense of stability and calm. They provide structure. It was so reassuring to know they were there to help. People felt much more at ease. It was not that everyone else was not doing a good job; it just makes a difference when you see hundreds of people in uniform. I say an enormous thanks to them for risking their lives in many areas and for simply coming and shovelling mud—just helping ordinary people. They did a fantastic job. It is pretty special when you see ADF equipment and kit arrive, either in a big Unimog or tethered to a Blackhawk helicopter.

I want to make mention of some other very important people. A Goodna family of four were living at the Gales Caravan Park, which was washed away—there was nothing left. Those four adults lived in a tent for about three weeks before accommodation could be found for them, but they were very lucky. Some businesses have lost everything, but some really great bosses tried to not only keep their businesses running amidst the devastation but keep their workers on the payroll. Nellie Gatehouse and her husband run the Army disposal and industrial sewing business in Sumner Park. The business is more than 100 years old and has been through everything, but unfortunately it will not survive this flood and will be forced to close. Lots of people have lost everything.

I recognise, too, people like Tara Smith and her friend Robert, from Sydney, who pulled up in their little old Winnebago one day and said, 'We're here to help.' They have

been there for nearly four weeks now, helping every single day and doing everything they can. They were so moved and compelled by what they saw on television they felt this urge to drive up and do everything they could. They have been an absolute god-send.

Don Peden from Truck Cranes Australia in my electorate keeps these fantastic guard dogs that he absolutely loves on the huge compound for his trucks and cranes. He was so worried about their safety because of the rising water that he sent out one of his blokes who is a great kayaker to go in a kayak and make sure that the dogs were okay and that they were not going to drown. They saved the dogs; it is a great story.

I recognise other people from the Salvation Army, the Goodna RSL, the Redbank Plains RSL, Global Care, Chaplaincy Australia, the Goodna SES and the Australian Children's Trust. Kim Wilkie, the former member for Swan, is very familiar to people in this House. He has gone up to Queensland and will be spending the next six months there working for the Australian Children's Trust to help in the rebuilding effort following the efforts he made in Victoria after the fires down there. So, special thanks to him.

John Grant from Ipswich is an amazing person. His name has been mentioned in this House many times in the past. I want to mention his name today for a very special reason. He has a dealership right in the centre of Ipswich. It was completely flooded. He lost a brand new showroom but saved most of his cars. His main concern was for his staff. His second concern was to get the place cleaned out. In the middle of that he was giving trucks, utes—yes, utes as well!—and cars to absolutely anybody who wanted one to help in the clean-up effort. A more trusting, caring and generous man I have never met. He is an absolute saint. And John continues to help to

this day. He has driven up to Grantham four times to help up there and he has given trucks, utes and cars. His generosity is beyond belief and he expects nothing in return. He is a great person.

I also want to thank Mark Edwards from the Ipswich Regional Community Church for an incredible effort. He housed, in the middle of the night, 180 frail aged people from the Salvation Army retirement home when it got flooded. I recognise the goodness of him and his congregation to look after these very high-need, high-care people for four days. It was an incredible effort. And there were so many others.

My last word is to thank generation Y. I want to thank generation Y because this is the first opportunity that this young generation, so often maligned for their perceived arrogance or lack of empathy or ability, were able to demonstrate that, just like generations before them, when they were needed they turned up and worked hard. They are great people and I wanted to make sure that everybody in this place understood that. The young are really great people and they help just as much as everybody else.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (4.25 pm)—On behalf of the people of Wright I offer my condolence. I will tell you a quick story about Darren and Sue Steinhart, just to give you a bit of an idea how quickly the water came up. Sue went down into the laundry to check the washing. There was about an inch of water under her feet and she thought the washing machine had shit itself. So she opened the back door and found an inch of water through the backyard. There was a wheelie bin sitting out the back with three pumpkins on it. She picked each of the pumpkins up because the wheelie bin was starting to float away. By the time she picked up the third pumpkin the water was up to her knees. She rushed back into the house and

grabbed the kids out of the second bedroom and got them out the window and up onto the carport roof whilst her husband was in the fourth bedroom trying to break the window to get the last child out, which he did. By the time they had got the window open—Steiny had cut his arm—and had got the kids out, the water was up to their chests and they had got up on top of the carport. By the time they got on top of the carport the water was lapping the gutters of the carport so they got on top of the roof. They sat there for eight hours before they were all saved. To get an idea of the time frame of getting the kids on to the roof I asked Sue, ‘How long did it take?’ She said, ‘As long as it took me to tell you that story.’

Rob and Jim Wilkin, a couple of brothers from Grantham, whom I will be mentioning for honours awards, had the peace of mind in this torrent to hook their small tinnie to the back of a Toyota LandCruiser to try to get out in front of this massive wall of water that was coming. Their vehicle was engulfed. They got out on top of the roof and into the tinnie. The boat was starting to get engulfed but they took the tinnie back into the township and plucked 16 people; they saved them all.

But there were people in the community who were not able to be saved. I would just like to mention each of them, for those mothers, fathers, grandparents, sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, friends, partners and loved ones. We honour and will always remember 52-year-old Selwyn Schefe and six-year-old Kate Schefe from Murphys Creek, 31-year-old Llync-Chiann Clarke-Jibson from Grantham, 12-year-old Garry and five-year-old Jocelyn Jibson from Grantham, 88-year-old Jean Gurr from Grantham, 65-year-old Pauline Magner from Grantham, 88-year-old Merv Knight from Helidon, 25-year-old Joshua Ross from Grantham, 23-month-old Jessica Keep from Grantham, 82-

year-old Regina Vanderwerf from Grantham, 72-year-old Sylvia Baille from Grantham, 56-year-old Steven Matthews and 46-year-old Sandra Matthew from Murphys Creek, and 67-year-old Bruce Marshall from Grantham. We are still courageously looking for a number of people who are missing.

For every story of tragedy and horror that our electorates have been exposed to, there is a story of equal genuine kindness and humility. I would like to acknowledge the council up there. Mayor Steve Jones, who is known as 'Jonesy', and his councillors had their resources absolutely stretched. They did a magnificent job under the circumstances and whenever I get the opportunity I will always praise the work that they have done along with the state member, Ian Rickuss. Every one that I do not know, Ian knows, along with their parents and kids, and what schools they go to. These are tremendous members.

I want to particularly mention a couple of local businessmen who really banded together and helped pull together the first disaster recovery centre. There is Andrew O'Brien, the local Ray White agent, nicknamed 'Obi' because he is bald—he has funny-looking ears and looks like Obi-Wan Kenobi—and John Boyd, the LJ Hooker agent. They compete in the market in a small town but they have become strong allies and have done a wonderful job disseminating gifts that were donated to the area. There is Jason 'Jughead' Cook, who owns the local transport business. These people have lost tens of thousands of dollars which will never be recovered because they have assisted in the clean-up.

There is Derek Pingel, who took charge of the distribution centre. There were about six of them because every stage was at a different level of recovery. I also want to acknowledge all the ladies and blokes who helped out in the evacuation centre and the heart-lifting

visit from the Canterbury Bulldogs up there. The locals who were displaced from their homes spoke about Hazem El Masri for three or four days. It was nice soft relief and I appreciate their visit.

In the Murphys Creek area, which sits at the bottom of the Toowoomba Range where the first inundation really hit, a bloke by the name of Peter Souter—and Tony mentioned him earlier—was a deadset champion. He owns the caravan park there. He is an ex-major in the Army. He is not an elected official; I do not even think that he is a member of Rotary. But when the crisis was on this bloke just stood up and was counted. He led a community that was in desperate need of leadership. I am proud to sit down and have a beer with him.

Lynn and Jimmy Barnes—his is the easiest publican's name in the world to remember—own the pub at Murphys Creek. They had two foot of water through the pub and, once we got that cleaned out, that became the evacuation centre. It is probably not the smartest evacuation centre! I remember the first Sunday there. In the pub we had state government officials handing out cheques in one corner and emergency services in another. In another corner, a church service was held—I think it was the first time we had ever had one in a pub—with most of the patrons hanging onto a frosty ale.

Sue Haughey, the bar manager over there at Murphys Creek, came from nowhere and took a leadership role and made a magnificent effort. Muzza, Peter Schreck, Cam McDonald and other community members—and I know that I am going to forget people—stood out by taking a role in trying to make those couple of hours of discomfort a little bit more comfortable. I want to make particular mention of a generous bloke with the name of Jerry Keogh. He has got a couple of excavators over at the North Coast. He

was sitting there watching the ABC News and his wife started crying when she saw the devastation. The next morning he said, 'I'm going to Murphys Creek.' So he came over to Murphys Creek and has had four or five excavators in there working for nothing since 10 January. On top of his own generosity he has managed to jag \$200,000 worth of pipes—big concrete culverts—as donations from Hume's pipes to start rebuilding the area, and then probably another 10 semi-trailer loads full of pipes from Rocla Pipes out of Brisbane. All that happened just because of one man's genuine want to help that community.

It was a significant day at Grantham yesterday. Our roadblocks were taken down for the first time. Since we were first flooded we have had police roadblocks at either end of the community to stop people going in. The only way you could get access was with an armband, which was blue when they gave it to us—and mine is so worn—to identify yourself, in order to stop looters and other people going in. The only way I can describe Grantham to you is as nothing short of a war zone.

Previous speakers have spoken of the devastation. I would like to continue in acknowledging those people who assisted in the clean-up and the recovery. There is Warren Kimlin. Again, he is not an elected official, but just a farmer. His house is down the bottom in Harris Street. He ended up being the chairman of the town effort, hosting the community meetings and playing an exceptional role. Malcolm and Tracy Dionysius came from nowhere. These guys are just farmers. Because their place was not affected, they hooked in along with Julie Johnson and Marty and Narelle Warburton. Marty owns the service station. His business was lost. You have probably seen some of the footage. The front of his shop is besser block. It is still there and the back of it is still

there, but the inside is gutted. Marty was a councillor for the Gatton shire council and he has taken a lead role in setting up, through the council, a bank account where people can donate directly to Grantham. He set up a committee so that the money that comes directly to that community is going straight into those people's pockets as opposed to other processes that may be in place at the moment.

In the Laidley-Forest Hill area I would like to acknowledge Linton Brimblecombe, a large beetroot farmer who provides mostly to Golden Circle. He took significant crop damage. He is going to hurt a little bit for the next couple of months. He rallied the community. Again, he is not an official; he is just a bloke from the street. He rallied the locals and systematically went through each of the houses in the Forest Hill community and pulled out the carpets and cleaned up the houses—and when they finished one house they just went to the next one. These are silent achievers and acts of random kindness. And I would like to mention Paul Williamson, the manager of the community care centre in Laidley, who looked after the recovery centre.

There were some other acts of kindness that need to be mentioned. Before I entered politics I had a transport company, and one of my depots in Rockhampton was up the road from a pub called the Great Western, which Lee Kernaghan owned. I rang Lee and said, 'I don't know when or where, but I just want you to start getting your head around the fact that I want you to put on a bit of a concert for my people.' He said, 'Mate, whatever you need.' I said, 'I'll leave it with you for a couple of days.' He phoned me back and said: 'We might be able to pull something together. I've got Gina Jeffreys, Graeme Connors, John Williamson, the McClymont Sisters, Kasey Chambers, Troy Casser-Daly, Adam Brand'—and a number

of other people I have never heard of! He said, 'We'll put together a show for you on 20 March free of charge.' Hopefully, 20 March will be a good day for us.

I want to mention as well the groups and organisations that helped so effectively—in particular, the Queensland Police. In a situation like we just went through there are two phases—rescue and recovery. When the situation is in the rescue phase the police have charge over it and call the shots. When it goes to the recovery stage the authority is handed to council and they run it. Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson and Assistant Commissioner Brett Pointing were briefing me with updates every two hours, and then it dropped back to daily updates. In addition, I would like to mention a few other police officers. Excuse me for not knowing these blokes' ranks, but I think they all carry a few stripes. There was Andy Morrow, from Toowoomba. Mark Kelly, a young bloke—I am sure he is an inspector—handled himself in an exemplary way. Ben Marcus did a great job as an inspector liaising with the community. You have to remember that in Grantham, with the roadblocks in place, there were some people who could not get out of town and some people who could not get back to town. There was a period of about eight days when people did not know whether their houses still existed. The fear of the unknown was driving a lot of the problems we were seeing. Ben Marcus did a great job of communicating. Grantham does not have a police station, so they put a temporary police station there. The police station at the moment is an Iveco van with an awning off the side of it. It is manned by a bloke by the name of Mark Wheeler. His nickname is 'Rock', which I think is appropriate for a local copper. The local police officers Sergeant Tom Messingham and Rob Brown are going to be dealing with some demons. They know everyone and it is a tough gig.

I want to mention the media and how they dealt with the situation out there. I have nothing but praise for the way they reported. They showed compassion and empathy, and it was well received and informative. Like I said, there was a lot of fear of the unknown, and people were looking for information. In particular, one Sunday afternoon I was listening to Kelly Higgins-Devine on ABC Radio. Earlier that day I had met a Reverend Lance Mergard. He runs a chaplain service and he had about 20 chaplains in Sydney and Melbourne who had worked with all the trauma victims of the Victorian bushfires. He said to me: 'Your community is going to need counselling. But I have a problem. I've got 20 counsellors but I can't get them to you.' I said, Leave it with me.' I rang Kelly Higgins-Devine and said, 'Mate, can we put a call out to the airlines to get some seats for these councillors to come up.' I think we did that at three o'clock on Sunday afternoon. By 3.30 on Sunday afternoon an old gentlemen from Brisbane, a pensioner, had rung up and said, 'I can't do them all, but I can do one for you.' That was very humbling. By 9.30 the next morning Virgin Blue had rung my office at Beaudesert and said, 'We'll give you as many flights as possible.' So, I want to acknowledge their work. They had heard that through our request that went out over the radio.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue—they have the little yellow four-tonne trucks that you see running around, which we call 'bumblebees'—did a great job. I want to mention Emergency Services Queensland—in particular, the flight crew that plucked a lot of our families and friends from rooftops. You might have seen their leader, Mark Kempton, on Channel 7 the other night. His team includes Darren Parson, Mark Turner and Glen Ryan. We will be acknowledging those guys in a formal way later in the year. I want to acknowledge the SES workers who

came from all over the state and rotated on a weekly basis. That was overwhelming. Two days later we had 200 Army personnel on the ground. Their task whilst in rescue mode was to walk the creek lines looking for bodies. The watercourse that goes through the electorate is 260 kilometres long when you add up all the tributaries.

They had a team of Army blokes on either side going through every inch systematically, looking for bodies—it was 520 kilometres, which is why it took so long for us to get through the recovery phase. To each of those guys, we are indebted. We could not have done it without them. To the social services groups—Red Cross, Lifeline, Vinnies, local churches and the guys that have been mentioned before—we will never forget you. The bipartisan support that was shown by both sides of government at both a state and a federal level was outstanding. In this time of crisis, being a new member, I did not have any templates to work off. I often found myself calling my staff and trying to get them to Google who a particular minister was because I was not yet familiar with them.

I thank those thousands of Queenslanders and Australians who donated goods and money. I encourage the groups that would still like to give to do it in the way of cash. We have a situation at the moment where we are absolutely inundated with wonderful gestures of fridges and clothing and stuff but it is becoming logistically difficult for us to manage that, from a warehouse perspective. Cash gives us so many more options. If we receive a truckload of washing machines it just means that the local businessman who sells washing machines will not sell one for three years, and he will probably end up putting four blokes off. So if we can get cash we can then go and give out vouchers so the washing machine will be purchased from a businessman in the town. That goes for hot-water systems, beds et cetera. We should just

buy locally—because our economy is going to take a hit. I flew back down to Canberra two days ago. A mob of Canberra businessmen hosted a fundraiser for us. Over a couple of red wines and a quick auction they raised in excess of \$40,000, which was very humbling.

There are people within the electorate whom I have not had time to get to, who are not affected by the flood. I thank them for their patience and courtesy. We had bookings to be in their areas which, because of the floods, we unfortunately had to cancel. I want to thank those people working with us from Mudgeeraba, West Logan, Jimboomba, Mount Tamborine and Scenic Rim for their patience. I want to thank my staff, who have not slept much, as someone has been with me all the time: Greg Birkbeck, my chief of staff, and the two girls in the office, Alice and Ruth, who are starting to get inundated with insurance claims.

We will find a new energy. The people of Wright are afraid and they are mostly displaced. I will not abandon you, nor will I allow your insurance companies to abandon you. Know this: whilst most insurance companies have shown great compassion, I will continue to pursue those who think that they might be able to sneak out the back door because of some technical fine print on the contract. I might be a new member but I will hunt them vigorously. I will expose them. While God puts breath in me I will hang them from the wall if they try to escape from my people.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—I thank the honourable member for Wright for that particularly moving contribution.

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (Perth—Minister for Defence) (4.48 pm)—I associate myself with the remarks of earlier speakers and I

compliment, commend and congratulate the member for Wright for his contribution. At times like this, at the aftermath of national crises—some aspects of which are ongoing—the parliamentary contribution can be at one of two levels. It can be at a national leadership level, as we saw with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. In that context it can be at a portfolio level, as we have seen for example with the Attorney-General, who has formal portfolio responsibility for disaster relief matters. Or it can be at the local community level. Already, we have seen in the course of today's debate on the condolence motion for natural disasters that mix of contributions—a fine contribution from the member for Wright and equally fine contributions from the local members for Oxley and Capricornia.

This has been a particularly bad and onerous Australian summer. On one side of the continent we see drought broken with a vengeance and on the other side of the continent—the west, where I come from—we see ongoing drought and pernicious and ferocious bushfires in and around Perth. We see floods from Queensland to Victoria, to the mid-west of Western Australia and to the Carnarvon-Gascoyne region; a cyclone in North Queensland; a terrible bushfire south of Perth, in the Lake Clifton area, before the new year; and, in the last couple of days in the north-eastern and south-eastern suburbs of Perth, as you come off the Darling Scarp, ferocious, damaging and heartbreaking bushfires.

Other than my Perth or Western Australian contribution, my contribution today is as Minister for Defence. Other members have spoken of the magnificent contribution our defence personnel have rendered in the course of this very difficult summer and Christmas-New Year period. I had the great honour, as Minister for Defence, to travel to both Brisbane and Ipswich at the height of

the flood and to visit Enoggera Barracks in Brisbane and the Amberley Airbase. I talked with our defence personnel and heard first-hand about the great work that they are effecting, whether from Army at Enoggera Barracks or from Air Force at the Amberley Airbase.

I make particular mention of the two heads of the Operation Queensland Flood Assist task force: firstly, Colonel Luke Foster and, subsequently, Brigadier Paul McLachlan. They both made an exemplary contribution. There was a period over the summer where I would speak to them on a regular—indeed, daily—basis. The effort and the work that they put in was first-class and widely appreciated, not just by the people of Brisbane or Ipswich but by the broader community.

I said earlier today in a different context that the two great contributions that our defence personnel make are, firstly, in the core business area of military, defence and national security work and, secondly, in what has become much more prominent than in the past, the area of disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, whether it is in Australia during, for example, the Victorian bushfires some 24 months ago or floods or cyclones in Brisbane, or whether it is working in that capacity in our region—most recently, for example, due to the earthquake in Indonesia and the cyclone and tsunami in Samoa and Tonga.

As the Prime Minister and others have said, underappreciated is the contribution that personnel from Army, Navy and Air Force made through the use of helicopters in the aftermath of the flash flood and storm through the Lockyer Valley and Toowoomba—underappreciated because, in some respects, it was really the devastation at that moment which caused the entire country to stop and appreciate that this was a

natural disaster of an enormous scale. At Amberley I had the privilege to speak to helicopter pilots and crews who had worked effectively on that rescue mission. In one 24-hour period, they moved some 417 people to an evacuation centre in Forest Hill at a time when the storm was such that some of our most experienced pilots have said that they have never had helicopters in the air in the face of such bad weather or climatic conditions. It was an understated and underappreciated act of great heroism, to which one gets the usual and the typical response from our defence force personnel: 'I was doing my job. I wanted to help; it was the right thing to do.'

In addition to that effort on the floods, in recent days of course we have seen the work done by defence force personnel to assist in the aftermath of Cyclone Yasi, with Brigadier Stuart Smith heading up our cyclone task force from Lavarack Barracks in Townsville. Again, there was a period when I was speaking to him on a daily basis, if not a couple of times a day. The calm, assured, methodical manner of Brigadier Smith and his forces from Lavarack Barracks filled one with confidence. I have had the general remark made to me not only that the people of Queensland in the devastated areas were pleased to see our defence force personnel on the ground but also that Australians generally seeing the presence of our defence force personnel on the ground, not just engaging in emergency search and rescue but also cleaning and mopping up, fills the country and its people with a great sense of confidence that everything that the nation can do is being done, including with the assistance of our defence force personnel.

In the context of Brisbane, Ipswich, the Lockyer Valley, the cyclone in the north and the earlier floods in North and Central Queensland, in some respects the Victorian floods snuck up on us in terms of a national

appreciation. But, again we saw, in a very understated way, defence force personnel helping out—under the leadership of Brigadier Robert Marsh.

When Australian Defence Force personnel come to the assistance of fellow Australians during times of natural disasters they can get there in three separate ways. Firstly, it is not uncommon to find reservists out on the street just helping out in their local community. That occurs on a regular basis whether or not reservists are formally called up. Secondly, it is open to a local commander in the exercise of his or discretion to authorise the allocation of emergency assistance if circumstances are such that there is a threat in his or her local command area. That occurred in Victoria and also in Carnarvon. Thirdly, where the magnitude of the crisis and the devastation are such that an individual authority—in this case, the state of Queensland—is on the receiving end of such devastation that national help is required, there is a formal request for defence force personnel to assist. At each of those levels we saw over the summer in a range of states in the Commonwealth that assistance at a first-class level from our defence force personnel. Indeed, I think it is now well known that here we have seen far and away the largest deployment of Australian Defence Force personnel in the face of natural disasters since Cyclone Tracy.

I would like to pay a couple of particular compliments. I have referred to Colonel Foster, Brigadier McLachlan, Brigadier Marsh and Brigadier Smith in terms of their responsibility and leadership of the various task forces. One January morning in Brisbane I, together with the Prime Minister, had the privilege of attending a meeting of the Queensland Emergency Disaster Committee and I was struck by officers of a state doing what in very many respects is core business for a state in the Commonwealth. Seeing the dedication, foresight, methodical approach

and leadership of the police officers and emergency management authority officers it struck me that, at this point in time in Queensland's crisis, Queensland is very, very well served by the application, planning, foresight and plain hard work and perspiration of all of those emergency service leadership teams and workers.

Secondly, can I pay, as I did to the member for Wright, a compliment to the local member on this side of the chamber with whom I had most contact over this period—the member for Blair. The member for Blair's electorate effectively abuts RAAF Amberley and so the work being done out of RAAF Amberley to help the people of Ipswich and the assiduous on-the-ground work the member for Blair was doing over that period and continues to do, in my case, is well worth putting on the record. He was acting like a local member should: assiduously trying to help and assist disadvantaged and adversely affected members of his local community.

One of the things which occurred at Air Force Base Amberley over that break, when people were on leave, was that personnel came back early from leave to help out. The Chief of Air Force told me on one occasion that so many of the Amberley personnel were coming back from leave early with one purpose in mind: to help the people of Ipswich. The member for Blair is to be complimented on the good work that he has done and continues to do, as are the Defence Force personnel I have referred to.

I conclude my remarks by making some references to my own state of Western Australia and my own capital city of Perth. Whilst the current terrible bushfires that we see in the south-east of Perth and in the north-east of Perth are not part of my local community, they are very much heart and soul of Perth. We look out over a west coast.

As you fly into Perth, you go over the Darling Scarp and, as you go over the Darling Scarp into those suburbs of the north-east of the hills district of Perth, which are now subject to such a devastating bushfire, you see the intermingling of human civilisation and the bush. In that area, as members would recognise if I refer to the electorates of Hasluck and Pearce, you find that constant threat which local community members and emergency services personnel are only too conscious of. The Kelmscott, Armadale and Roleystone areas in the south-east have a similar disposition, coming over the scarp where the sprawling community of Perth meets the bush in the Darling Scarp hinterland. It is a devastating fire in the south-west. I know that the respective members for those local communities, the member for Canning, the member for Pearce and the member for Hasluck, will be doing all that they can to assist their local communities. Whilst very much of the focus has been on floods in recent times, people from Western Australia will be conscious of that other great threat that we find constant in times of spring and summer, namely, ferocious bushfires which Perth is now suffering the adverse consequences of. Our thoughts are very much with those south-east and north-east communities in Perth.

I conclude where I started by complimenting the fine contribution of the member for Wright and drawing attention to a number of great values, virtues and characteristics of the Australian community. In times of great difficulty and hardship, people will always find someone who is less well placed than they and lend a helping hand, whether it is someone adversely affected, whether it is a member of our Defence Force personnel or whether it is emergency service personnel. In the course of his heartfelt contribution, the member for Wright also exposed one of our great national characteristics and virtues as

well, which is that at all times in adversity we always retain the Australian sense of humour, and that has been there on display in abundance. We will always find someone less well off than ourselves to whom we can lend a helping hand, irrespective of our own circumstances, and Australians can always find a sense of humour as collectively we do our best to help those who are in a time of great need.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (5.04 pm)—I rise in this condolence motion to extend my deepest sympathies to the Barbagello family. I have worked with diesel pumps down wells and taken lighted candles down to see if it was safe to find it was not safe. It is very difficult to conceive that, even in a room, this could have happened. It is just one of those things that did happen as a direct result of the power being out. When I was minister for power in Queensland, I decided that we really had to put all future transmission lines underground on what we might call ‘Cyclone Alley’ along the coast. We do not want people to get too carried away that we are a disaster zone up there. We are not. In the last six years we have had two terrible cyclones outside of Cyclone Tracy, the worst cyclones in Australian history. But in the 135 years before that we only had two bad cyclones. So, yes, we do get a lot of cyclones but they are not difficult events for us to cope with.

I tried to get some publicity on the night before the cyclone to tell people that they should understand that we lost 2,000 houses in Cyclone Larry but that there were 9,000 houses that were not destroyed. These houses are built like fortresses. We had 320 kilometre an hour winds and the houses were just like the day they were made after the cyclone. Our building code and—for once I can say—the legislators have done a brilliant job. The scientists at James Cook University who have done the wind tunnel research have done an absolutely brilliant job. Most of the

homes I have seen that were seriously damaged in Cyclone Larry were built before this or had not met the building codes, for reasons I will not go into.

I would ask both the Attorney-General, who is in the House now, and the previous minister not to say that everything is going well. I would never advise a minister to say that in this sort of situation. I have given a lot of thought to whether I should say these things, and I just cannot see that I cannot say them. I am not going to mention names here, but you can see these little pieces of paper that I have been carting around when I lost my notebook.

One person has no roof on his house, and they told him he cannot have any tarps for his house. I was in his house when he said this to me. There were 16 people at another house. A man from Cairns was there, and he was not allowed in to help his friends and his second cousin because people were not allowed into that area. Another gentleman cannot get out of his house because there are big logs all the way along and he does not have a chainsaw, and he cannot ring up because the towers are out.

Nearly 100 mobile telephone towers are still out, and we are at the sixth day of this cyclone. On the second day of Cyclone Larry, all the towers were operating. I praise Optus. They have put in mobile towers in a number of centres and given out free telephones. I am not going to stand up and criticise everyone. I want to praise Optus. The rest of it stands for your own reading. There are three people who have been harmed. They are not dead, although I think one of them will ultimately die. If there had been telephones, maybe those three people would not have reached the situation that they have reached now. Those three people will be totally disabled for life.

Another gentleman has no water, no phone, no electricity, no tarps—no anything. Another person said, ‘Could you please speak to the business houses in Tully,’ because 20 of them cannot operate because they cannot get tarps and they cannot get access to the assistance they need. One of them said, ‘There’s asbestos in the building next door and maybe some of it, with the rainfall that is coming down, could come into our place.’ People imposed upon him that all his staff now have to work with masks on. That did not help him.

There are at least six people in these lists who went to get tarps and were told they could not put the tarps on the roof if they did not have proper authority—that is, they had not been properly trained to put tarps on the roof. I would say that that is ridiculous except that I got it from seven separate people. I have not got all my little bits of paper here but I have got some of them.

For one of those people, yes, it was not her house—legally you can do it if it is your house—but she owns a guesthouse and there were a lot of people in the guesthouse. After two, three or four days of trying, she got a tarp from friends and put it up. One of the officers—official people who are supposed to be helping us; they are not helping us but some of them are really creating great problems for us—told her to get down off the roof because she had no authorisation to put the tarp up. I cannot say in the Parliament of Australia what this lady said back to the official—and she continued putting the tarp on the roof.

I could go on and on and on. If you are down here in Canberra or if you are in Brisbane—if you are the head of the state of Queensland—and you are saying what a wonderful job everybody is doing and how well it is going and how heroic the people are, I am afraid that you are not going out to

Tully Heads or to Hull Heads and looking people in the eye. Just to give you a scene from Taylor Street, Tully Heads: every single house is smashed to pieces. You can drive down the street and see the ocean through the houses on your left. In some of the houses on the right are the remnants of the houses on the left that have come over to that side. They are not cleaned out because there is nothing to clean out. The ocean has already done that for us. People are huddled around. Some of them have glazed eyes. Some of them are saying, ‘Come over here,’ passing words that I cannot repeat here and giving me a wave—a funny sort of wave with two fingers in the air. They have a carton of grog and they are doing their best to drown their sorrows, and I think that may be the best way to attack things.

They cannot get any help because they have no cars. They cannot get any help because nobody has come down to see them except to tell them: ‘We’re down here to look at things. We can’t do that for you.’ They cannot walk to get any help because Tully Heads is a long way away from the nearest town. They cannot get any help because they have no telephones. They cannot have a shower or a bath because there is no water, and they have no electricity.

If I could single out people for praise, the Ergon workers impressed me so much in Cyclone Larry and they have impressed me so much this time. You get up early in the morning, at six o’clock or something, and they seem to be out there working everywhere like ants, just going at it so hard, doing dangerous work in dangerous working conditions. Late at night, they are still out there. I praise the company as well because hundreds and hundreds of Ergon workers have been flown into North Queensland. When people say that the thing is working, that is as good as it could be working, so I

single them out for praise, as I single Optus out for praise.

I would like to think that Peter Beattie and I go back a long way in our friendship. Peter and I got in a corner on the fifth day of Cyclone Larry—I think it was the fifth; it might have been the third day; all those things are confused in my mind—and the net result of that was that he made a decision, and three hours later General Cosgrove was appointed. I understand, although I do not know this—I have not had telephones, so I do not know what is going on in the world outside; if it were not for ABC radio I would have no idea what is going on except on a face-to-face basis with these people—that something like 30 small towns have been destroyed. I would say that in Tully, which is the biggest of the towns, with maybe 6,000 people, one in 20 houses is destroyed and one in five is very seriously damaged. In maybe one in 10 the damage is so critical that the insurance company may insist that the house be rebuilt. That is in Tully, and that was not the eye of the storm. Tully Heads and Hull Heads were in the eye of the storm. That is the picture from the coalface.

You have people over here sitting around doing nothing, you have tarpaulins in a shed and you have no-one being told to distribute them. People come in and they are told, 'No, you're not allowed to do it because you might hurt yourself when you climb up there on the house with that tarpaulin.' Whether that is real or not I do not know, but seven people have told me that and I have to accept it. All I know is that there most certainly are tarpaulins in the shed. There most certainly are close to 1,000 houses that need those tarpaulins. Very few houses have tarpaulins on them. There is no water and no food. As a result of discussions yesterday, we now have distribution points for water and food. But—heavens!—this is on day 6 from ground zero, and we say things are working well.

I will go back to Cyclone Larry and the decision that was taken—I think it was on the fourth day, if my memory serves me correctly—that Cosgrove should be brought in. There were a lot of people who criticised 'St Peter', as I call him, and criticised the decision and criticised the way that it worked. But I will say this: Cosgrove was appointed at three o'clock in the afternoon. I think it was Tuesday. By Wednesday at 11 o'clock he was in the streets of Innisfail. The mayor did not share our view on the decision, but I got the rest of the councillors together and we walked down the street behind Peter Cosgrove to say, 'We are behind this man. This is the bloke that's in charge now; everyone understand that.' He walked the streets, face to face with people.

For the next six weeks, as far as I can make out, every single waking hour that man was eyeballing the people who were in dreadful pain. A lot of people came through that psychologically for no other reason than that Cosgrove was there, standing in front of them, eyeballing them. He was a powerful man who could ring up the Premier or the Prime Minister in the next second and get them on the telephone. The attitude was: 'Here he is, coming to see poor little me. I haven't even got a house. I'm just a banana worker on no money at all, but this bloke cares about me.' If he was not doing that then he was directing traffic and he was delivering the services.

I have thought about this a lot. A lot of those services are not being delivered this time. They are simply not being delivered. I am informed that there has been a person appointed to be in charge of rebuilding after the cyclone. I am not going to go into any more details than that. The person is in Brisbane. Ground zero after Cyclone Larry was Innisfail. Ground zero this time is Tully. Peter Cosgrove was in ground zero as fast as was humanly possible and he was walking

the streets. This time I am told that there is a person in charge and he is in Brisbane. He is based in Brisbane.

After Cyclone Larry I do not think I made a negative comment. I do not think I am on record making a negative comment—not that I made any comments at all; I never went near the media throughout that period. Another official there spent a lot of time with the media and he got annihilated at the next election and I got a record majority. I just do not know whether it is a good idea to go racing around and performing in front of the media in these sorts of situations. I did not avoid the media for that reason. I had a choice of either doing media interviews or being on the telephone saying, ‘We need to cut so-and-so out because he is not in a good condition and he can’t get in or out of his home. He’s starting to get short of food and his situation’s starting to deteriorate.’ You had to have a preference for doing one of those two things. You really could not do both of them.

Both the Prime Minister and the Premier gave me their telephone numbers and they were accessible on an hourly basis throughout that period of time. It was hard for them to react and deliver services on the ground, but they put Cosgrove in and he could deliver services on the ground. People were scared of him because they knew that if they did not do what he told them to do then he would just ring up the Premier and it would be too bad for them. Similarly, he could ring up the Prime Minister and it would be too bad for them.

I will give you one other example from Cyclone Larry. On day 3, people did not have enough money to buy anything. We have the same situation now, but not quite so bad. People did not have any money. I went hungry on the second day. I never ate on the second day, until I drove back to Cairns that

night, because I ran out of money. You do not think about it, but we live in a plastic card economy, not a cash economy. Suddenly you have to revert to a cash economy and you run out of money. I had plenty of money in my pocket on day 1, but by day 3 I had no money at all so I just went hungry. But I had a big four-wheel-drive car and I had petrol in the tank. A lot of people in these areas are banana workers who do not have cars. A lot of these people, like pensioners and single mothers, do not have cars. Even if they did, they did not have the petrol to get to Cairns. Some of them did not have any money to buy the petrol, if it was available, to get to Cairns.

I heard people criticising and saying, ‘All these people are asking for handouts.’ In actual fact, 70 per cent of them were not asking for handouts at all. All they wanted was the cash. Only 12 officers had been allocated to do that job and on the third day there were 600 people in the street who still could not get any cash out. I pay Peter Beattie a very great tribute. He was a man who had tremendous courage. I think it comes from his family. Peter walked straight into the crowd, which was almost in riot mode. I was very scared; I was in the middle of the crowd. You could not blame them. I said to one bloke, ‘Didn’t I speak to you yesterday?’ He said, ‘Yes, in exactly the same spot, Bobby.’ I said, ‘Didn’t you get your money?’ He said, ‘No. They finished at six o’clock and I was 12 short of the head of the queue so I had to come back this morning. Today the queue was so long—I came almost at sun-up—that I am only just back to where I was yesterday. As you can see, there are still 100 people in front of me. I may not get to the front of the queue today.’ John Howard reacted very quickly. I think we had 60 people handing out money by the fourth day after the cyclone.

Having disorientation and things not working is part of these situations. Our emergency services can cope with small situations but when you move into these sorts of situations you really have to have a Premier or Prime Minister running the show. In Queensland we have the unfortunate situation of having two areas that have been very badly damaged. I will be having discussions with the Prime Minister today on behalf of the people I represent. I have no criticism of the Prime Minister—not even remotely. She came straight up and stood in the teeming rain for a good hour. She was soaked to her skin. She talked to people at Cardwell. It took her an hour to get in on the chopper and nearly an hour to get out because of the safety measures. There was some danger involved in her visit. We thank her very much. I have no criticism of the Prime Minister. I really am the representative of the federal government on the ground and I did not attempt to speak to her until yesterday afternoon. I sincerely hope I will speak to her today because the situation is very grave indeed.

Frank Barbagello's life was surrendered during the cyclone. It is terrible to reflect on the fact that his death helps all the other people realise the very serious problems that arise in these cyclones. If I had been living at Hull Heads or Tully Heads, I would have said: 'We've heard this story 100 times. I'm not getting out. I'm staying here,' and I would have been terrified out of my mind when I found myself in the sea—not on land; it was sea as far as the eye could see. With lightning flashing that night all I would have been able to see was sea, which was rising. It was up to eight feet in my house. If I was not on the second storey, I would have been drowned. Three people did stay down at Tully Heads and Hull Heads and they survived. Two climbed up to the second storey and were hanged on the rafters towards the

end of it. A death like that brings home that we should not take lightly the warnings that we receive. Only one out of 20 cyclones really hits the coast, so we older North Queenslanders tend to yawn a bit when we hear a cyclone is coming.

The media started scaring people, which was a very good thing to do. I praise them greatly for doing that. They started the day before the cyclone and they kept it going for a good 20 hours. At that stage it had become a problem in itself. The Mayor of Newcastle rang me and said: 'Bob, two years later you will get the problems.' I have very good friends. One of them was a very tough rugby league player of great note. I just lost him. I said: 'He'll never be my friend again. I will never be able to communicate with him.' All of his mates said the same thing to me. He said, 'You are not Robinson Crusoe, Bob.' Well he has come back to life. It is five or six years later and he has rejoined the human race. So many people will not be redeemable; they will not come back to life.

Yes, we had to face the cyclone, but I remember when I was a kid—and you may not have gone to the same school as me—that getting the cuts was nowhere near as bad as the terror while you were waiting to get the cuts. I think the terror has very bad psychological effects. I do not criticise the media. I think they did an absolutely brilliant job and I think that is one reason that we came out of it without any deaths. The town of Innisfail was founded by the Catholic Church, and they are still pretty influential people there. A lot of them believe profoundly in prayer. We came through two cyclones with 300 kilometre gale winds with no-one dying, except in an indirect way. The power of prayer may have been at work in this case.

The media made a very significant contribution to the fact that we did not have deaths, but there may have been a bit of

overkill. I do not want to say that that is the definite truth at this stage—it is too early to assess that. That night I wanted to say in the media that, whilst we lost 2,000 houses, 9,000 survived and, of the 2,000 that were wrecked, the people inside them survived. We build houses like fortresses in this country. We have done a magnificent job with our building codes and God bless every single one of the builders who have implemented those codes for the safety that they have provided for us. I have faith in that fact. I do not know whether it was a bad decision, but the media chose not to run what I was saying there.

I say in this parliament to the people of Australia that at least 1,000 people tonight will not have a house to live in. No alternative accommodation has been provided for them and they have no tarpaulins. We have got water. I am not at liberty to single this person out, but an official in North Queensland is responsible. He is a great man. He has had to defy his superiors and his inferiors to deliver supply points where people can find out what is going on. They are in the horrific situation of not having a house, not having water, not having money, not having phones or any of these things and then not knowing anyone they can talk to and say: ‘Don’t you know we haven’t got any of these things? We are suffering dreadfully.’ They cannot even talk to anyone. Part of that problem is being addressed as I speak.

I thought a lot before I said these things today. I could not see how I could stand up and say anything without saying that. I hope this is interpreted in the right way. I ask everyone to please let me get home as fast as humanly possible. Let me be first on the speakers list on the levies et cetera.

Mr GIBBONS (Bendigo) (5.28 pm)—It is something of a cruel irony that we are debating this condolence motion almost exactly

two years after parts of Victoria were devastated by bushfires. Last weekend’s unveiling of the Bendigo Bushfire Memorial was an occasion for those who had lost their homes and possessions to meet again with the emergency service workers who toiled so tirelessly on that hot summer’s day. It was a time to remember Mick Kane, the wheelchair-bound Long Gully resident who lost his life in the fire, and to remember that, for the survivors of tragic events such as this, recovery takes years, not weeks or months.

While not as dramatic or tragic as some of the scenes we have recently witnessed in Queensland, there has nevertheless been extensive flood damage in recent weeks across the electorate of Bendigo. The weather events causing the flooding have been truly extraordinary. For example, 228 millimetres of rain fell in the Central Goldfields Shire in four days during the week of 10 January. The floods in the township of Carisbrook exceeded the forecasted once-in-100-years level and were the highest in living memory. Macedon Ranges Shire received more than 230 millimetres of rain in some places. Some communities have been inundated more than once since last September. Our emergency services workers have once again shown their bravery and fortitude, sometimes in the face of very dangerous conditions. Fortunately, we have so far seen no human fatalities in my electorate, but the list of damage to properties and infrastructure makes appalling reading. There has been significant inundation of homes and commercial properties and the resulting disruption is likely to last for months, not weeks.

The township of Carisbrook was hit particularly hard, with more than 200 homes and businesses inundated and hundreds of residents evacuated to higher ground. Towns outside my electorate, such as Charlton, Rochester and Bridgewater, were also severely affected. I am sure their respective

members will inform the House during the course of this condolence motion. Rural local councils that already have the burden of maintaining thousands of kilometres of country roads and ageing bridges will clearly be unable to meet the additional cost of repair and reconstruction from their own budgets. Complete sections of sealed roads have disappeared and hundreds of driveway culverts were simply washed away. There are gravel roads with scouring up to a metre deep and a kilometre long. By way of example, here are some numbers from just the Central Goldfields Shire: five kilometres of sealed road has been washed away; 200 kilometres of unsealed road needs repair; shoulders need resheeting on 600 kilometres of sealed roads and on 150 kilometres of unsealed roads; and 140 bridges and major culverts need debris removed and 90 require major repairs. In the City of Greater Bendigo, while final figures are not yet available, the council estimates that repairs to road infrastructure alone will cost more than \$2 million. Many parks, reserves and botanic gardens that are picturesque located at rivers have been badly hit, with major damage to vegetation and the complete loss of pathways and boardwalks. In Castlemaine's historic botanic gardens there has been extensive damage to recently completed, and federally funded, refurbishment works. Some 10 or 12 houses in Gingle Street were inundated as a result of flash flooding. Almost every community in the Loddon Shire has been affected by riverine or flash flooding.

There has been widespread impact to rural properties, including loss of stock, loss of fencing and inundation of farm buildings and houses. In many cases, the assessment of fencing losses will be a significant task and will take some months to complete. Of course, the loss of boundary fences in particular severely inhibits the operation of a farm. This is an urgent issue facing the agri-

cultural sector in Central Victoria. As I said, although we have seen no loss of human life, stock losses have been significant. One farmer in Loddon Shire reported the loss of 800 sheep and another reported the loss of in excess of 1,000 sheep. These losses will not cease with the receding floodwaters. Stressed animals are more vulnerable and likely to succumb to illness and there is an increased risk of flystrike on wet sheep in warm weather. Indeed, Loddon Shire Council tells me that sheep losses from flystrike could exceed those lost in the floods.

While the grain harvest was almost completed in many parts of my electorate, there are estimates that about 30 per cent may be lost due to flooding, which will represent a significant loss to the agricultural community. A large number of public buildings, some with significant heritage value, have suffered inundation. Recreation facilities have been badly affected in some shires, including sporting pavilions in Newstead and Castlemaine, and swimming pools have been inundated. Kyneton's new sports and aquatic centre was under water, as were several bowling greens across the electorate. Public caravan parks are often located alongside waterways or in low-lying areas, and many cabins and caravans have been inundated, severely damaged or simply washed away. In some cases, park infrastructure has also suffered damage that will take a long time to repair.

On a more positive note, I must commend the extraordinary outburst of volunteer support to help communities clean up. Donations of goods and services have been pouring into the area. Recovery centres are now replacing relief centres that were established in towns across the electorate. However, the widespread nature of the flooding across Northern and Central Victoria has put a significant strain on the resources of government agencies, and in some locations it is

proving difficult to get the required information to residents. As we saw in the aftermath of the Victorian bushfires, recovery from major disasters can take years rather than months, and the emotional and psychological effects can often continue well after rebuilding is complete. It is important that support services are available as the recovery effort continues.

Although we have our own challenges in Victoria, at this time we naturally offer our condolences to those who have lost loved ones in Queensland. Indeed, I commend the member for Wright for his very powerful and deeply moving contribution earlier today. We must not forget those who escaped with their lives but lost their homes and livelihoods. Houses can be rebuilt and furniture, televisions, carpets and curtains can all be replaced. Even important documents such as passports and drivers licences can be reissued. Whether a house or a caravan is owned or rented, it is more than just a dwelling; it is a home. When we lose a home and precious mementoes, we lose a part of ourselves. Photographs, old school reports, letters, childhood toys and family heirlooms are all part of who we are. The scars of losing them can run very deep indeed. Our thoughts are with those who have survived this ordeal but lost their homes and precious possessions. We will continue to think of them as they go about the often slow process of recovery.

While the focus of today's debate is on the victims of the floods, I want to take this opportunity to make a more general point about the way we deal with extreme weather events in this country. We have known that Australia is prone to extremes of weather since long before Dorothea Mackellar penned her famous lines. Modern science now gives us much greater warnings about cyclones, storms and droughts so that we can no longer regard them as unexpected events. In recent years, governments of all persuasions and at

all levels have undertaken considerable effort to improve emergency response and recovery capabilities in Australia. This has involved investment in training and resources for our emergency services organisations, as well as improvements in emergency and recovery planning. These investments often resulted from lessons learnt from previous disasters, and great progress has been made. I think there can be no doubt that we are better placed to respond to natural disasters today than we have ever been.

But one area in which we, as a nation, have made very little progress is in how we deal with the financial risks involved in these events. There is virtually no part of the community that is not exposed to financial loss from extreme weather events. Home-owners and businesses, landlords and tenants, governments and the private sector are all exposed to the cost of damage and replacement of assets for which they are responsible. The public sector's risk exposure is significant not only through the billions of dollars of public infrastructure it owns on behalf of taxpayers but also through the relief programs it offers to disaster victims. Yet the pattern in the aftermath of natural disasters is depressingly repetitive with people not insured, or misunderstanding the terms of their insurance policies; with governments pressuring insurance companies to be generous in their payouts; and disaster victims left to argue about the fine print of policies through their lawyers.

And then there is the political point-scoring over how the recovery effort should be funded. Surely, as one of the most developed economies we can do better than this. It is in our own interests to do better than this because we are so exposed to the economic impact of bushfires, cyclones, storms, drought and flood. All these events are expected to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change, whatever the cause of

that change may be. We are vulnerable to rising sea levels and coastal inundation and erosion which are also expected to occur as a result of climate change. Between 1970 and 2006, 37 of the 40 largest losses from catastrophic events around the world have been weather related. In Australia, 19 out of the 20 largest losses since 1967 have been weather related. The largest was the 1989 Newcastle earthquake, although it appears that may now be exceeded by the Queensland floods. Our immediate focus must be on the recovery from the recent floods. But as soon as those processes are under control we, as a nation, need to have a good hard think about the risk exposure of our public and private sectors to the catastrophic weather related events that will continue to occur in the future.

An inquiry is needed, involving all levels of government and the private sector, to recommend an appropriate mix of private sector insurance and public sector funding to provide for the cost of future disasters. This is a serious issue and it requires the participation of serious people to find a solution that is in the country's national interest. We cannot afford the distraction of political point-scoring on this, and I think the community will expect its elected representatives to take a bipartisan approach in finding a better way forward.

I would just like to close by reiterating my condolences to those affected by the recent events in Queensland and Victoria and encourage all members of the community to continue offering their support throughout the difficult weeks and months that lie ahead. I would also particularly like to offer my condolences to those affected by the cyclone and by the fires in WA. I know I speak on behalf of all of the residents of Central Victoria in hoping that the people affected can get through those events and rebuild their lives knowing that we are all thinking of them.

WYATT ROY (Longman) (5.40 pm)—I extend my deepest sympathy and that of my constituents to those who have lost people they love in the terrible events in recent weeks in Queensland. We grieve with you and for you. I also extend our sympathies to those who have lost their livelihoods, their homes and their possessions which held so many memories of lives well lived. There are so many irreplaceable possessions that people will miss: that child's painting from pre-school; that gift from a birthday long ago; that irreplaceable photo. As someone who has experienced the loss of a home, I can empathise. So many homes have been irreparably damaged. The water has taken away people's sanctuaries and places of safety and so many people have been left displaced. Australia and the rest of the world have been viewing the heartbreaking images of communities throughout Queensland that had been devastated by the floods. No-one can help but be touched by the pictures of homes and businesses that had been torn apart by water. Treasured possessions collected over a lifetime in many, many cases lie in muddy, soggy piles on pavements. The Lockyer Valley is a community in mourning and the rest of the nation mourns with it. This is the human face of the tragedy.

No-one has remained unscathed by this event. My electorate of Longman was affected too, although to a lesser extent than the widespread damage that has affected communities the length and breadth of Queensland. Many homes have been flooded and many businesses have been both directly and indirectly affected. Reeling off numbers somehow diminishes the pain and renders it superficial. I have visited the homes of the families affected and those businesses that are now getting back on their feet. I have visited the evacuation centres in my electorate and heard the stories of those who had fled there. They are not numbers; they are

people who have been deeply affected. The floods of 2010-2011 will become a significant part of Queensland's history and something that has touched all our lives.

In my electorate of Longman we did not suffer the same devastation as we have seen in regional communities such as Emerald and Condamine, in larger centres such as Rockhampton, and in many suburbs of Ipswich and Brisbane affected by these floods. The scale of the destruction and loss in the Lockyer Valley is unprecedented. But, like much of Queensland, we did not remain untouched by the disaster. On the weekend of 8 and 9 January, the rain was unrelenting. Vast sheets of water were falling over my electorate and many other parts of South-East Queensland. On Monday the 10th, the day of the tragedy in Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley, the rain continued. By Tuesday, 12 January, so much rain had fallen that just before midday the whole of Caboolture and neighbouring Burpengary were issued with orders to evacuate to higher ground as all our creeks and rivers threatened to break their banks. And still the rain kept coming, flooding the Caboolture River, Burpengary Creek, Sideling Creek, King John Creek and Wararba Creek, cutting roads and damaging homes. By 2 pm, the Caboolture River had reached a height of 11 metres and had cut Morayfield Road, the major arterial route through Caboolture.

In Caboolture itself there were many houses flooded in low-lying areas. Affected homes I visited in William Street, Mary Street and Dux Street in Caboolture, and Dale Street in Burpengary, were particularly hard hit. Many of the semi-rural properties in the area were also flooded. For a time on Tuesday, Caboolture was completely isolated, Bribie Island was isolated, and the Bruce Highway was cut in both directions. The communities of Woodford and Kilcoy were isolated for days. Roads were damaged

and bridges were completely washed away. Some roads have suffered such significant damage that they are yet to reopen.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Seventh Day Adventist Church for collecting donations and assisting people in their time of need. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Bronwyn, Russ, Charles and Phil for giving so generously of their time, yet again, to assist the least fortunate members of our community during this crisis. The ladies at the Woodford evacuation centre, and Michael Wallis, worked tirelessly to provide a refuge, comfort and support to the many that sought shelter there. When I visited the centre, the atmosphere was almost festive and spirits were high. In this nation it is often our sense of humour that carries us through the most difficult of times. Thank you also to the Caboolture RSL for opening its doors to the community at very short notice. It is a measure of the strength, resilience and generosity of the people of Longman that they have considered themselves fortunate not to have suffered the same extensive damage as they have seen in other parts of the state.

My electorate is not a wealthy one and yet my office was overwhelmed with donations of clothes, linen and towels. No sooner did people hear of a request for donations of furniture for flood victims than scores of people were calling my office asking how to organise for their goods to be delivered to those in need. At one stage some charities in my area simply could not accept any more donations because their warehouses and storage facilities were full. I am eternally proud to be part of such a community. So many people that do not have a lot still found something to give.

There were some parts of the emergency response to the floods through my electorate that worked well and some parts of the re-

sponse that I believe could be improved. The flood event in my electorate was of a different nature to that experienced in Brisbane and Ipswich. Whereas Brisbane and Ipswich had a couple of days of warning of the flooding of the Brisbane and Bremer rivers, we had very little warning. At one stage the Caboolture Hospital was completely isolated by floodwaters.

There is much we can learn from this event. I look forward to being part of the discussion and facilitating input on behalf of my constituents. Many people have contacted my office since the floods. Like most Queenslanders I welcome the commission of inquiry announced by the Premier. Hopefully the outcome will be detailed recommendations regarding improvements that can be made to the emergency response and a thorough analysis of the disaster. I have undertaken to make a submission to the commission of inquiry on behalf of my electorate and have invited my constituents to make contributions and comments via my website and to my office.

We have been seeing and hearing about the devastating effects that the floods have had on those directly impacted by them, but my office has been contacted by a growing number of constituents whose homes are dry and who have not been directly affected by the waters; however, their businesses have been. Truck drivers have not been able to transport goods because the roads have been cut and there are no goods to transport. Other business owners, such as in the case of a pizza business, could not operate for a week because the business was isolated and supplies could not be delivered. There are scores of similar stories I have heard from business owners. They just need a little time to get their cash flow moving again, and I call on financial institutions to be sympathetic to their plight and give them a fair go at this time.

Such tests bring out the best in us Queenslanders. In the face of unspeakable tragedy we have seen remarkable courage and determination. We have seen the most extraordinary acts of generosity, kindness and compassion. We have witnessed a coming together of the community all over Queensland and, indeed, Australia. This will be etched into the memory of this nation long into the future. In Brisbane there were people who had travelled from all corners of the country—from Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales—to help their fellow Australians when they needed it most. The events of the 2010-11 summer will be remembered for a long time for the devastation wreaked upon our homes, but surely they will also be remembered for the resilience of our community and because, in the face of adversity, the strength of our community was equal to the strength of the wind and the rain.

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (5.48 pm)—Yesterday I telephoned a little boy called Bailey Lackas. Bailey is nine years old and this year is excited about going into grade 4 at his local school. He is also excited about the three new foals that he has to care for. Their names are Jear, Charlotte and Cupcake. And Bailey, as long as I have known him, has always been excited about his extensive collection of toys, led by the unparalleled and unmatched Ben 10. Bailey is a typical little Australian boy, except two years ago he lost his dad in the Black Saturday fires in Victoria. Life has been tough for little Bailey and many like him in the two years since then and it has been tough for his mum, Sandra, too. But there is some good news: in the next month both Sandra and Bailey are going to move into their brand-new home. Since their last house burnt down, they have been living in the converted back part of a farm shed where I visited them last year, this having

been built for them by their friends and their neighbours.

So why do I mention little Bailey and his mum, Sandra, in relation to the motion before the House today? Because it reminds us all that it is not just the first few weeks after a disaster that matter—it is the months and often the years that follow. It reminds us all that ultimately we rely upon the community around us when we face life in extremis. But there is also something particularly special about the story of Bailey and his mum. Sandra told me that this winter the two of them will head north to Queensland to help in any way possible with the reconstruction effort there. I asked her why. She said she believed in ‘paying it forward’. She said she and Bailey had received so much from the community and from so many people that she did not know and will never know that she would now like to do the same for the good people of Queensland. In this small story there is so much alive about the spirit of this great country, Australia.

My community in the middle of Brisbane suffered considerably in the Queensland floods. Of course, we were not alone and many communities have suffered much worse, both in the floods and later in the cyclone in Queensland’s north. And in our community we suffered no loss of life. All our hearts go out to those in Toowoomba and those in the Lockyer Valley who lost loved ones in that wall of water that descended upon them. In my community, homes and businesses were inundated across West End, South Brisbane, East Brisbane, Norman Park and Hawthorne. But then, without a single phone call, without a single marshalling call, without ever being asked, the whole community rose immediately to support those in trouble.

One street symbolic of much of what happened in my community was Ryan Street in

West End. On the night before the river broke its banks, the waters were already rising fast from the stormwater drains. Then suddenly volunteers, at 11 o’clock at night, began to appear—out of the dark, seemingly from nowhere, wading through already waist-deep water. This went on into the early morning until the job was done. The family living in the house told me that they had never met most of the folk there. One of them told me that they had migrated to Australia some 35 years ago and that he would never have seen such a mammoth community effort in the country from which he came. It brought tears to his eyes then; it brings tears to his eyes still today. And this was the story right across the city, right across the state and beyond in the various natural disasters that we have suffered these last few months. The next day, Ryan Street in West End looked like a war zone. And then an army of volunteers arrived—not just on that day, the day of the clean-up, but for days and days until the job was done.

So I thank this army of unnamed volunteers. I thank those who cleaned and those who delivered the cleaning equipment. I thank those who delivered the food and the clean water; those who bagged the sand; those who distributed the sandbags, such as in the extraordinary community effort I witnessed firsthand at the Morningside Australian Football Club; and, of course, those who then built the levees. To the Army, the SES, the police, the council workers and the electricity workers, I say: thank you for your absolute professionalism and always going above and beyond the call of duty. To the legion of local businesses who gave and gave, too numerous to name, I thank you too. Through my office alone, these local businesses gave—and we then distributed—10,000 pairs of gloves, 60 pairs of gumboots, 140 litres of industrial bleach, five high-pressure cleaners, 1,500 bottles of water,

countless rounds of sandwiches—and so the list goes on. To those who offered their homes and their hearts to those who had lost so much, I also say thank you.

With the headlines gone and the emotions of those days now a little dimmer, there are those who still provide practical, day-to-day support for those trying to put their lives back together. These are often the silent heroes in the aftermath of any disaster. The uncomfortable truth is that the emotional impact on relationships can be great during a time of crisis and the time that follows, and this has been a time of great, great crisis for far too many people: family photos lost; frustrations with insurance companies and with family finances; the pressures of temporary accommodation. These are the hidden impacts of these disasters on people's everyday lives, and they continue to need our support.

I have one final word of thanks and that is to the young people. As I said just after the floods, gen Y:

... came out in droves.

Everywhere I went, young people represented about a third of the cleanup force.

So no, they didn't stay at home, locked in their rooms, on Facebook, with their anonymous friends across the globe.

Instead, they sprung into action. And I thank these young people in particular.

So for anyone who doubts our country's future, for anyone who fears the rise of the so called "selfish" generation, think again. For what happened is these young people proved that you are wrong. Our country's future is in the safest of hands for those who will come after us.

As it has been in our generation, despite the anxieties of those who passed us this baton.

The young people of Australia deserve our praise—

for what they have done voluntarily during these disasters.

Our test, as with the bushfires before this, will be to stay the course until Queensland's reconstruction is complete and until the reconstruction task right across the country is complete where Mother Nature's fury has been unleashed. For Queenslanders this is a testing time, but we will not be found wanting—in part because Queenslanders are a determined lot and in part because Queenslanders are confident of the support of the great Australian family.

The Prime Minister spoke eloquently on behalf of the nation today. Many other members whose communities have been affected have spoken movingly of their local experiences. As foreign minister, I would also like to take this opportunity to inform the House that people and governments around the world have been amazed at what has happened here—amazed at the magnitude of this disaster, amazed at the magnitude of the community response and amazed at the spirit of Australia in the face of adversity. In this House I thank formally the governments and peoples of the world for their expressions of solidarity and support during this testing time. We are justifiably proud of this country and confident too for our country's future—a future which will rest comfortably on the shoulders of Bailey Lackas and those like him in the decades to come. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (5.57 pm)—I want to join here this afternoon and support this condolence motion that has been moved by the Prime Minister. I want to say that as I speak I am speaking on behalf not only of myself but of the people of Maranoa, the constituency that I represent, which covers some 45 per cent of the land area of Queensland. In many ways they know so well of the tragedy of drought and of flooding rains. What we have seen in my electorate in the last 12 to 18 months and, more particularly, in the last six to eight weeks

is—in my memory, certainly—unprecedented.

I want to first take the opportunity to extend my sympathies to the family members and near friends of the 23 people who lost their lives in that tragedy in Toowoomba, Grantham and the Lockyer Valley. I went down through that area only last weekend, down through Murphys Creek, to see the clean-up that is going on and to see and appreciate just how high the water was in that part of the Lockyer Valley. It is a frightening thought to imagine that there were people caught in there at a minute's notice—some without any notice. It was just a frightening thought.

The events of 10 January were unprecedented, and they have been described by many as an inland tsunami. I think that describes it pretty well. When you hear the stories that have been put this afternoon by many in this House—the member for Groom, members on the other side of the House, the member for Wright in his contribution—you start to appreciate that this was a tragedy that was of mammoth proportions. When it takes the lives of innocent people—young people and old people—you do feel for the communities that will live with the effects of the loss of members for many years to come.

I was speaking only last week to a person in my own constituency of Maranoa at an induction ceremony for the school leaders at Allora. She was a relative who was going to the funerals of two people in the Lockyer Valley last week. I shared my thoughts and extended my sympathies through her to the people that she would be honouring and remembering at the funeral service in the Lockyer Valley.

The television images of those cars being washed away in Toowoomba, and the events that we saw on television of people being

rescued from Grantham in the Lockyer Valley and down through there, will live with me forever. It certainly makes you feel proud to be an Australian to see the effort that was put in by the emergency services, the defence people, the police, the councils, the volunteers and just people across the street in many areas, helping their fellow Australians in such a time of need. I will never lose the vision of that image—those cars being swept down like toys in the bathtub, knocking over trees and signs. It was just frightening. I think it shows us all the mighty power of water and the mighty power of nature; when she speaks she leaves us messages as well about what we need to look at in the future. There were certainly messages that nature has delivered in this tragic event and, of course, the floods that have followed.

This is the second such event—although we did not have any loss of life in my electorate—that has occurred in 10 months in Maranoa. In March of last year we had 500 houses inundated in Roma, Charleville, St George, Thargomindah, Quilpie, Meandarra and Surat, where communities were cut off for six weeks. There was the same response from the people and, I must say, from the former Prime Minister—who has just left the House—where I was able to communicate to him about his personal attendance through a mobile phone given to me. It was quite extraordinary. I was able to do that this time as well, and I will talk a little bit about that during my contribution this afternoon.

In the last 10 months we have had two events of such magnitude, so that you might say we had a bit of a training run in March and April of last year. We have small businesses still trying to recover from that, and yet they were hit again this year. Some of those small business people are saying that their business revenue is back to 60 per cent in 10 months. They have said to me that they want to keep their employees employed be-

cause they are part of the community. In small towns that is so important; a job lost may mean that there is a teacher lost at the school because those numbers are so critical for keeping up the numbers at our schools in these very small communities—so many are quite fragile.

Many of them just have not had the business activity in Roma and the western part of my electorate dating back to March of last year—they are still recovering. And, of course, there are still some houses that have not been rebuilt. Part of the problem there is the insurance companies. We tried to name and shame some of them last year, but some of them are just immovable. I know that in my own home town of Roma we have a number of people who feel that they have been unfairly treated by insurance companies. They are taking out a class action against these insurance companies, and I support them. These companies are discussing whether it was stormwater that came or if it was floodwater. They have got hydrologists with conflicting answers; the council has got one answer and they have got another one. I am left speechless that these very large companies have not seen fit to even make ex gratia payments without necessarily accepting a liability.

In Roma and Charleville, and in Cunnamulla to a lesser extent, because it is really protected by a levee bank, the churches and charities have done a wonderful job, as have the local small businesses in some cases, where we know there are people who are pensioners on fixed incomes with no insurance on their houses because the insurance company has failed to honour insurance that they believed they had. I hope we are going to be successful with this class action, and I commend the work of those volunteers that went into a couple of houses and rebuilt them. Local businesses have provided new refrigerators, air conditioners, stoves, wash-

ing machines and tanks. They have repainted whole houses and supplied whitegoods and brown goods—a fantastic effort. But when you deal with a large insurance company and they cannot see fit to even match the charity of your own community it leaves me cold.

I spoke with my office in Roma this afternoon and we looked at the BOM website before we came in. Normally we welcome rain in the electorate, but since nine o'clock this morning we have had just on 50 millimetres. We have not started praying for sunshine, but we had a week of sunshine and thought that things were drying out. Yet we have not been as affected as further in the electorate. I just want to mention that it goes on, and we are not through the wet season yet.

The flood event of March of last year started to emerge again in November of last year in my electorate, out in Blackall and Tambo through to Longreach and down through the very far western shires of the Barcoo, Bulloo and Diamantina. They have been cut off since November of last year. I think that the Cooper Creek at Windorah has only been open for one day since 23 November last year; no goods in and no goods out. The only way in was by air or by a very long route around via Mount Isa to try to get in when a little window of opportunity opened up and the roads were open to bring avgas, other fuel and food supplies into those very far western communities.

It does not make television viewing because it is happening in very small communities and it was not making television news at that time in November of last year but it started to come east and on Christmas Day and Boxing Day the heavens really started to open up. Whether it was at Dalby or on the inner downs, the floodwaters were just unprecedented in their height and volume and

in their persistence. I will talk about that a bit more in a minute.

After the mid-December events in the electorate of the member for Flynn and in mine in the Galilee Basin east of Barcaldine, I had a call from the Governor-General who wanted to come to my electorate of Maranoa. I was absolutely delighted. She said that she would like to go to some small communities and talk to some farmers. I give great credit to Her Excellency for making the time to come to small communities of 200 and 300 people. We went to Alpha and Jericho first to see the recovery that was going on there where the flood had happened 10 days ago, but to see the devastation also.

We were able to talk to the P&C president. The school was being cleaned out and they were desperate to make sure that they could get their school to open on time. It is so important to be able to get the kids back to school on time. The P&C president said that they had lost something like \$15,000 of materials and goods that they had raised as a P&C in the community. They are little things, but mean so much. I am only hopeful that the grant money and the Premier's relief fund might at least provide some money to replace some of the things that P&Cs have provided over the many years and that have been lost in this flood. They are not insured through the state; they take their own risks. But they are just little things.

I wanted to touch also on the \$1,000 that was available to people who have been inundated with water, isolated for more than 24 hours or off utilities for 48 hours. I did speak to the Prime Minister's office when I first saw those guidelines. In Jericho I saw the real value of that. Some have said that it is pretty generous. I said that they are the same guidelines we had to establish—and the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged that during his contribution—as we had in west-

ern Queensland last year. We cannot have two classes of people receiving Centrelink benefits. So the same guidelines were established for this event.

We had the Barcaldine Regional Council there acting as an agent for Centrelink to start to help people to fill out these forms. This is a typical example of where it really helps: some people were coming back from holidays and they could not get through Emerald. They had to stay in motels to the east of Emerald—two nights accommodation that they had not planned for as part of their holiday, \$400, extra food—and they eventually got home. That expense was on their credit card and they wanted to make sure that they had paid it off before the following weekend because the husband had to go to Brisbane for a cancer operation. I paint that little picture which I also told to Minister Plibersek who rang me very kindly—I always thank the ministers who have done that—because I think it explains a lot about where that money goes and whom it helps. There may be some who are claiming it dishonestly, but the overwhelming majority of people need it and it will help them to get through a very difficult period emotionally as well from what they have seen lost in their own lives and from their homes. That is just a little picture.

We were there with the Governor-General who was able to give great comfort to this very small community. I think her gracious presence both there and when we went to Condamine was just so appreciated by the local people, in that the Governor-General of Australia would even think or make time to come in to a small community. When we were going to the Darling Downs area I said to the Governor-General that I wanted to take her to a food producer on a feedlot. We went to see Simon Drury and his wife, Kylie, and their four wonderful children. They have a family business as food producers. I often

talk about them as food producers because these are the people who feed us daily across this nation. Kylie and Simon's family are just one of many. They provide the food and fibre for us. They feed another 60 million people around the world with our exports, but that is another story.

I wanted to go there because I had seen the vision of what they went through at very short notice having to get cattle out of a feedlot because the water was rising so quickly. We have heard the stories of water rising quickly. These cattle were caught and they had to cut the fences and swim them out. It almost terrified me, but they were out in boats with a helicopter above them trying to steer the cattle out of the feedlot to high ground.

They had started the clean-up of their house. It was built 100 years ago and it had never had water into it in 100 years. It is on stumps, as so many Queenslanders are. The water went through that house and it rose within hours not days. Not only was it just above the floorboards, it was halfway up the walls of that house. Simon and Kylie told me that they were in the house and they had a boat outside. They had to pass material out through the windows to put it up on the roof to try and save some of the things that are precious to all families. When they were going through the clean-up they were in good spirits saying, 'There's something up in that tree that will probably remain there and that'll remind us of how high the water was.' Ten days later the floods came again. They had cleaned up the house. They had kicked off the feedlot again, and the floods did the same again and went through the house. Emotionally, quite apart from mentally trying to deal with these issues, that is what people are going through.

We went into Condamine then, and I thank the Australian Army from Oakey who

arranged for us to go in on Black Hawks. Condamine had to be evacuated with 45 minutes notice. The order was given from the emergency services of Queensland and the mayor, Ray Brown, had a very difficult job having to ensure that people would move. Many people said, 'Oh, it's never been here before.' It was a very difficult time, but thank goodness they got them out. They started to put people in at five or six o'clock in the afternoon and they got them all out during the night. They evacuated them to an evacuation centre at, I think, Miles. We were there as part of the clean-up. We had to go in on Black Hawks; there was no other way in. People had come from near and far to once again help clean up the town. The Governor-General was, as I was, able to talk to people. But, do you know, it happened again. They had to be evacuated again. They had cleaned up, they had moved back, they were starting to establish the water systems and the electrical connections, and the floods came again and they had to be evacuated a second time. It was unprecedented.

Emotionally, people at the time were dealing with it, but I know that down the track it is going to linger with them: those memories of having to leave, to come back and to see the vision of their little bit of Australia—their home, their business or their hotel. I remember talking to a cattle producer and feedlotter there. A lot of their property was under water. They were able to get most of the cattle out of the way but they lost two very good stud bulls. They are breeders of very high value and genetically superior shortland cattle. She said, 'Yes, well, we lost a couple of bulls but we can breed more bulls.' She said that the tough thing—and this was sometimes the picture you would paint to try and convey it to people on the other side of Australia who are not in the area and wanted to know what was happening—was when she saw a cow standing out

there with a calf beside it and the calf could not get a drink. I said, 'Why couldn't the calf get a drink?' She said, 'Because the udder was in the floodwaters.' She said that upset her as much as anything. On losing a couple of bulls, she said, 'We'll breed some good ones again,'—and they will—but the picture you can paint with that tells a story.

Kylie and Simon Drury, with their family, were evacuated from Condamine twice. You wonder where people get that strength, but they were so appreciative of the Governor-General coming there. I know that they will forever cherish the moment when the Governor-General came into their feedlot, just as the people of Chinchilla will cherish when we went in there. Parts of that town had been evacuated. The Warrego Highway was cut for days and days, but at the time we went in it was actually sunny. The Black Hawk did two circles over the town of Chinchilla and half the town came out to see us land on the football field. Once again, it was the Governor-General's visit, and they appreciated the fact that the person in the highest office in this land would come to their town to comfort them and talk to the emergency services people, the counsellors and the children. She gave great comfort to all of the people wherever she visited. Last week I also had the Governor of Queensland, Penelope Wensley, in my electorate. She came in without any publicity; she did not put out press releases. She wanted to talk to the chambers of commerce and the schools, as they were starting last week. I thank her for that. She also wanted to talk to Landcare groups so that she could also have an understanding of what was happening and how the recovery is occurring.

I want to mention something else, as the devastation of our roads has come up quite often in our discussions here. The member for Groom mentioned the Toowoomba range crossing. I want to mention the other road.

The Toowoomba range is terribly important to my electorate because the Warrego Highway feeds from it. Cunningham's Gap is where the first crossing of the Great Dividing Range was in Queensland. It was raining there yesterday and again, I think, this morning. It has one lane open. One thousand trucks a day go through Cunningham's Gap on the Brisbane-Sydney run. It is an extraordinary trade route. There are now people there trying to stabilise the road. It is actually slumping, sliding down the hill. I said, 'Are you sure it's slumping?' and they said, 'Yes.' I want to go and visit it personally, but they are pumping as much concrete in as they can to try and get it stabilised. Whether they will I do not know, but it presents a problem for the future. There is only one lane open and that is really putting a brake on the trade. There are delays in moving between Brisbane up into the southern downs and out through Goondiwindi right through to Sydney—it is a major trade route. It is something, along with the second range crossing, that we must look at. It cannot be just a second range crossing, because this is the vital link for that trade route for trucks to Sydney.

I want to mention Dalby too. Dalby had five floods, and we were getting to the stage where we were asking, 'When will this ever end?' You would just start to see it cleaned up again, everyone would just start to do their job again, and the flood would come through again and houses would be inundated again. It was extraordinary emotional pressure that people had been under, yet they would come up every day. I think the common thread of what they have all said to me is: 'We'll be all right; we'll fix this up.' It is that Australian spirit: we have still got our lives; we can rebuild what we have lost. It is that very stoic Australian attitude. It is almost a trademark of what it is to be Australian.

I want to thank my own staff, because a staffer who has only recently joined me had to wade through knee-deep water to get home and was the last person across the creek as they were not going to let anyone else across. I guess she otherwise would have been in the emergency evacuation centre that night, but it is always good to get home, even though the water came right to the edge of her home. Our staff, in all cases when in flood areas, have also carried the burden of that phone call saying, 'Where is the member?' and, 'We haven't got this; we haven't got that,' and 'Who do we contact?' They have done a marvellous job and I say that for all members of parliament who have been out there in these flood times.

I also had many calls from members on both sides of the House. I really do thank them because, at times, you get to a stage after five to six weeks when you start to wonder, 'When will this end?' You get emotionally drained and then you get a call from a member or, out of the blue, from Minister Ludwig or Minister Plibersek or Minister Shorten and they give you their mobile phone numbers. I tell you, it bucks you up to think that we are all in this together, and that is how it always should be and always has been, I know. I thank them for that. It is not about photos of politicians helping people, it is about making sure that we do our job and, as a collective parliament, that we all do our job to help those who so much need our help.

I want to also commend the work of Premier Anna Bligh. She has done an extraordinary job. She has communicated the message in a confident manner. She has been out there almost daily, day and night, night and day. She has been confident about what she has said. She has given people great comfort and, because of the way she delivered messages, we thought that she was well in command and that we were being led well, which she was elected to do. I give her great credit for

the way she has managed the disasters as they have unrolled across 70 per cent of Queensland. First of all it was 200,000 people and 40-odd per cent of the landmass of Queensland and now it is nearly all of the state, so I say 'well done' to the Premier.

I want to also thank the mayors in my electorate who had to be the leaders and make sure that their communities were safe. I thank emergency services, the electrical people, Ergon, Telstra, the SES, the volunteers, the churches—they were all there—and AgForce and their leadership at this time. We all had to work as a team and everyone has done a magnificent job. I thank Ray Brown, David Carter, Rob Loughnan, Ron Bellingham, Graham Scheu, Donna Stewart and Peter Taylor. They are mayors who have a job to do as mayors in their own communities normally, but this was a time when they had to make sure that everything was working well because, at the end of the day, there were lives that could have been lost. In my own community we did not lose a life and that is to the great credit of everyone who worked in a well-coordinated team and who knew what was going on all of the time.

People have come from all around Australia and they have also come from overseas to help our communities rebuild. There is a town called Texas, which is on the border of New South Wales and Queensland, east of Goondiwindi and west of Stanthorpe. Three years ago the World Cup Polocrosse was held in Warwick and a team from the United States of America came out. They were from Texas in the US so they wanted to see Texas in Australia. Those people have again come out from Texas in the United States of America because they heard that Texas in Australia in my electorate had suffered badly and they are now out here helping to rebuild and clean up. So I thank those Texans who have come out to help the people of Texas in my community.

I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationals who have both visited Maranoa. I was in constant communication with them, as I was with the minister's office. I guess one of the enduring memories for me was in Dalby when, after the first clean-up, I was standing in the house of Mrs Pat Hands, which is up on stumps. She is retired and is on a single income. The house had actually moved off its stumps. The insurance people had been to check it and I think they were still making a decision as to whether it could or would be rebuilt. Of course, since that time, it has been flooded again to the same height. Mrs Hands said—and I think this says a lot about so many of the people we represent and a lot about Australians and their family homes—‘Mr Abbott, I know it's not very much, but it's my little palace.’ It is her little bit of Australia—it is her palace—as everyone's home and their backyard is their own piece of Australia.

It is important that we as members of parliament never lose sight of the people we represent no matter how trivial sometimes it may seem. We have to make sure as a nation that we do as much as we can, erring always on the side of generosity, to help the Pat Hands and the so many hundreds of thousands of people across Queensland and other parts of Australia, including the fire victims now in Western Australia. We need to make sure that we can help them to rebuild their little palaces or re-establish after what has happened in the disasters across Australia this summer.

In conclusion, I think that the true spirit of Australia has shone right through, and Australian humour has also shone through, Mr Speaker. There are lessons to be learnt. We are open for business and I invite you to come to the electorate of Maranoa because we are open for business. You have heard about people going to the Whitsundays to

promote tourism. Well, I say come to the outback, perhaps to the Birdsville races, or the Longreach Hall of Fame for the drovers reunion, or the Melon Festival next weekend in Chinchilla. They are great events and this is how we can all help our communities and continue to show our support as they rebuild. We are with them for the long haul. I thank the House and I support the condolence motion.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (6.28 pm)—On behalf of the people of Blair, I thank the Prime Minister for the condolence motion and extend my deepest sympathy and heartfelt sorrow to the people of Queensland and to people across the country for the loss they have sustained in lives, in property and in personal possessions, particularly the cherished mementos that they have lost. Our hearts go out to the people of the Lockyer Valley adjacent to the electorate of Blair and to the people of Toowoomba.

The measure of any community is found not in times of comfort and ease but in times of challenge and controversy. War and natural disasters bring out the best in humanity—and, regrettably, the worst. The virtues and the vices are very obvious, open and apparent at times of crises. The floods in South-East Queensland overwhelmed communities and councils. Lives were lost. People were injured. Families damaged psychologically and farms were destroyed. Schools were ruined. Clubs were obliterated. Roads and bridges were trashed. The damage to the lives of the people of Blair is as raw as the landscape around the Lockyer Creek, the Brisbane River and the Bremer River.

If you were to go to my electorate, you would think it was a war zone. There are people there who are living in caravans on river banks and creek banks, and they look like they are traumatised—because they are. They have not started the clean-up—you

would think that the flood waters had receded 12 hours previously. It is the same for my friend the member for Oxley. The people of Goodna have sustained horrendous damage to their communities. Their CBD of Goodna in suburban Ipswich has been trashed, and the member for Oxley and his family have endured tremendous loss of possessions and of mementos and artefacts of many years of loyal service not just to his constituency but also to the party and to the people of Queensland. My heartfelt sorrow goes out to the member for Oxley, my good friend, and his wonderful wife, Margie, and their family.

I thank the ADF, particularly the RAAF base at Amberley, for the work they did during the flood. The RAAF base at Amberley is a cherished institution and icon for the people of Ipswich. I thank the Queensland Police Service. I thank the City of Ipswich Council—the mayor, Paul Pisasale, and the councillors. I also thank the mayor of the Somerset region in Blair, Graeme Lehmann, and the councillors. I thank the Salvos, who are an ever-present lifeline. I thank the churches, the clubs and the trade unions, who showed just how important the trade union movement is to the people of South-East Queensland. I thank the businesses, the Ipswich Business Enterprise Centre, the chamber of commerce in Ipswich and the Somerset Region Business Alliance for their wonderful support, particularly to the people of Blair.

I represent most of the city of Ipswich and all of the Somerset region—the Brisbane Valley and old Kilcoy shire. I have the Somerset Dam and the Wivenhoe Dam in my electorate. The floods in South-East Queensland were worse for the people of the Brisbane Valley—far higher in terms of the levels of floods and the damage that was done—than was the 1974 flood. The people of Ipswich suffered far worse. In 1974, there

were 74,000 people living in Ipswich, and 1,500 homes were inundated. In 2011, there are 170,000 people living in Ipswich, and 3,000 homes have been inundated and hundreds of businesses destroyed. In the Somerset region, 470 properties have been inundated. Over 700 streets in Ipswich were inundated with water. For the people of the upper Somerset the flood continues. Bridges are gone. Dozens and dozens of people are living in circumstances where they need choppers to bring in food and household possessions up at Mount Stanley and other places—there are dozens and dozens of people.

I particularly thank David Greenwood and River 94.9, the local radio station that around the clock served the people of Ipswich, the Brisbane Valley, Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley. It is by far the most listened to radio station, where you have David, Moffy, Goldie, Dave and Tania—these are names that people across the South-East Queensland area know—and they did a fantastic job, sleeping at the radio station because they were cut off, as all the parts of my electorate were. Country towns and suburbs in Ipswich were cut off by water. There were 1,500 people staying in evacuation centres in Ipswich, and there were hundreds and hundreds in places like Lowood, Fernvale, Kilcoy and Toogoolawah.

Across the electorate of Blair the mud is still there putrefied, and the silt is still there. You can see from the faces of people that they are still reliving the events of 11, 12 and 13 January. Countless farms have had the topsoil ripped off them. Farms have lost 40 per cent of their farmland due to the rapid release of the water from the Wivenhoe Dam and the rivers gouging through the farmlands. Three schools in the Somerset and four in Ipswich were inundated. At Brassall State School, every computer, every piece of paper and every teaching aid was lost. Every

building was inundated, and three have gone. At Ipswich East Primary School, a school of 520 students, 40 per cent of the children had their homes inundated. Their school was inundated. At Bundamba State School, every school building was inundated. Near Bundamba State School is Ipswich Basketball Stadium. It is trashed. It will cost about \$800,000 to repair that basketball stadium in Ipswich, and the Ipswich Force women's and men's teams play in the state league just below the WNBL and the NBL. You cannot now play basketball in a stadium in Ipswich, one of the major cities in Queensland.

The Salvation Army corps, the biggest church in Bundamba was trashed. The evacuation and recovery centre at Bundamba was trashed. But still the Salvos kept on going—1,700 people registered, 15 volunteers a day, and they still kept on providing assistance to the people of Ipswich. Clubs such as the Karalee Tornadoes Junior Rugby League Club, the Ipswich Dog Obedience Club and so many others across the whole region were inundated and destroyed. So many country towns were cut off—places such as Rosewood and Kilcoy. Every community was isolated. Water, food, power, electricity, gas and shelter were crucial to avoiding civilisation breaking down. We teetered on the brink of lawlessness in some of these communities. There were many failures, and I am thoroughly furious at the lack of communication, coordination and consultation. The people of my electorate were let down, I have to say, at every level of government.

But I thank the Prime Minister and the ministry for listening to my incessant and insistent phone calls all day and night. I thank the Queensland Premier for the wonderful leadership she showed. I thank the mayors for the leadership they showed. The impact was disproportionately inflicted upon the poor, the weak, the frail, the aged, the infirm and the young. This was our Hurri-

cane Katrina in my area. The hard-pressed suburbs like Basin Pocket, Brassall, Booval, East Ipswich, and Bundamba were hit hardest. Those people, in large part, were left to fend for themselves. They needed people to advocate for them. I saw the discriminatory application of resources to leafy suburbs in Brisbane. Do you think I am furious about it? Absolutely I am, but eventually we got the help we needed. But we did not get it quickly enough, and those people suffered.

I said, in my first speech after being re-elected, that I would argue, advocate and even annoy people for the people of Blair. I guarantee that I fulfilled that in the last few weeks, because we needed to. We failed repeatedly in terms of emergency services at the level of local disaster management groups and even at the federal level. We came good eventually through Centrelink and through the application of the ADF. We are so appreciative of the wonderful work that was done, but I need to say this, because people need to hear it: the people in my electorate are really angry. I went to a community meeting in Fernvale last Saturday. People were absolutely furious at the lack of drainage and consultation. The waters were allowed out. They were given very little notice indeed. Some people in my electorate had five minutes notice before their houses were inundated. They fled to schools. They broke into schools to get away from the water. It was not like Brisbane, where they had days of preparation; the water just came rushing down—the volume of water was more, in fact, than the whole of Sydney Harbour—destroying, gouging and affecting people day by day.

The cost to the electorate of Blair will be more than \$1 billion. Ipswich City Council says that it will cost more than \$300 million. Even the Brisbane City Council, neighbouring us, says it will cost them \$500 million. Blair contains the Somerset region, bigger

than Ipswich and Brisbane combined. The damage bill for that area will be enormous.

I have spoken of the many people who have been injured but there are many people of inspiration—people who put their lives on hold to staff evacuation centres and, of their own initiative, established evacuation centres when local disaster management groups simply failed. In places like Karalee, Esk, Fernvale, One Mile, Riverview, North Ipswich community leaders—school principals, a local councillor, a police officer, an emergency service worker, a rural fire brigade leader—got together and formed evacuation centres. Sometimes these people were left without food and water for days. This is the reality.

But for the kindness of Dick Karreman, a philanthropist who runs an excavation business in Redlands and up in the Brisbane valley, the people of the Wivenhoe Pocket would have been left without food and water for four days. It is simply not good enough in Australia in the 21st century. This happened despite the fact that I repeatedly raised this issue with the people in emergency management.

I want to thank the heroes of Blair. I want to thank so many people. So many are anonymous. So many are compassionate and humane. I want to name just a few and tell the House what they have said. I want to congratulate Arie van den Ende, the SES coordinator in Ipswich. Arie is a brilliant bloke. He worked around the clock with magnificent men and women to help us. I want to thank him very much, and sincerely, for the work he did.

I want to thank St Johns Ambulance Superintendent Robyn Rossi and her offsider Corporal Pat Roach. Robyn said: 'Our job was to treat the wounded. The first 72 hours were horrendous. I think we never slept. I had to set up Ripley, another evacuation cen-

tre.' Seven hundred people were treated by St Johns Ambulance, including the residents of four nursing homes. Robyn said, 'I guess we've never been privileged to see the people of Ipswich at their most vulnerable—to save the community in a different way.'

Former Deputy Mayor Denise Hanly was always there at the Ipswich evacuation centre at the showgrounds. She was there on her feet all the time, with a cheerful smile giving to people whatever she could and helping anyone in need. Majors Bruce and Margaret Dobbie and Brad Strong from the Salvation Army at Ipswich and Bundamba did wonderful work. I will never forget the Salvos. Councillor Cheryl Bromage from the Ipswich City Council had to deal with the death of her own uncle, Robert Bromage, who died driving his car into floodwater near Karrabin, seven kilometres from the CBD in Ipswich, but she still had time to set up and run an evacuation centre at St Joseph's Catholic primary school in North Ipswich, after working to the wee hours of the morning to warn people of the floodwaters coming down. When asked about it, Cheryl said, 'It's the Ipswich spirit; you've just got to get on with it.'

The wonderful women of Riverview set up the evacuation centre at Riverview. Mysteriously, magically and stupidly someone wanted to close it down. That centre fed hundreds of people. Dozens and dozens of people stayed there. People walked there when faced with floodwaters and people like Kerry Silver, Christine MacDonald and Pastor Paulo Paulo and his wife Lorinda, a registered nurse, looked after them. I also want to thank the Ipswich GP Super Clinic. The Ipswich GP Super Clinic tended the evacuation centre at Ipswich showground, beside it. When I rang the clinic up Dr Simon Barnett went down to Riverview to look after the people.

I want to thank also an honorary Ipswichian who is my very good friend, the member for Rankin, Minister for Trade. His performance and that of his staff were simply wonderful in the way they helped the people of Ipswich. I sincerely thank you, Craig, for the wonderful work you did. I will never forget it as long as I live.

Peter Doyle is the principal of Brassall State School. His school was left covered with silt, garbage and driftwood. An army of volunteers came around—parents, teachers, RAAF, workers. QBuild was magnificent, repairing this school and all the others, so they got started. Peter said this:

The whole community's devastated.

And then he said defiantly and deliberately:

We soldier on because we're Brassall boys and girls.

And Pastor Mark Edwards, of Ipswich Region Community Church, opened his church as an evacuation centre and delayed the marriage of his daughter Gabrielle for a week, and tended the frail of three nursing homes in Ipswich. Liz Bayley is the principal of Patrick Estate State School, which was entirely destroyed. And while her school was being destroyed, she was trapped in Esk in her home. She took strangers into her home. She had never met them before; she took them in and they stayed with her. And all the while she was organising the evacuation centre at Esk State School. These are just a few of the many heroes of Blair. The Ipswich Ministers Fellowship president, Fred Muys—he is the pastor of Harvest Rain church—said this about the people of Ipswich and the Brisbane Valley:

Neighbours who didn't know each other before have banded together to help each other.

Some years are etched in the memory of the people who live in Ipswich: 1893, 1974 and 2011—floods of horror and heartache; floods that damage and destroy. They did not defeat

them; they could not because the people are resolute, stoic and determined. We will recover. We will repair. We will rebuild. I have never been more proud to say I was born in Ipswich, I was bred in Ipswich and I live in Ipswich.

The SPEAKER—I thank the member for Blair, and I say to him that I know that Ipswich will shine through.

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (6.47 pm)—I would like to add my voice to those who have spoken already today by extending my sympathies to all those people who have been affected by flood, cyclone or fire during what has been an horrific eight weeks. Our thoughts are also with the people of Wright. Eighty per cent of my electorate of Flynn has been affected in some way by floodwaters that have left whole townships and communities devastated.

The whole township of Theodore in Central Queensland was inundated by floodwaters. Every home and business was completely covered. Sixty-five homes have been condemned. In Emerald, homes and businesses have been inundated for the second time since 2008. Tourism has been shattered in our electorate. It is hard to imagine the heartbreak and suffering that is occurring in our regional communities. I have had visits to Flynn from our Prime Minister and our Premier, Anna Bligh, and Tony Abbott and Warren Truss, as well as many other ministers and senators. Many members of the House have contacted me by telephone, fax and text and wished us well in getting through our experiences.

I have visited all the towns affected by the floods and I can tell you, Mr Speaker, people are hurting out there. Small business owners and primary producers have slipped through the cracks. Some farmers have not been able to get their cattle to market because the roads to their properties have been closed for more

than two or three months. In the case of farmers around Rolleston, it has been a year—12 months without being able to get their cattle to market because of the standard of the roads. Entire crops have been flattened and some farmers will not get a crop for another 12 months. Graziers in Central Queensland have lost thousands of head of cattle and we still do not know where some of those cattle are. Hundreds of kilometres of fencing have been flattened, machinery lost and buildings demolished.

The coal industry has virtually shut down. Mines are full of water and railway lines have been washed away. There are so many people involved and the damage to Flynn has been so widespread that I am reluctant to mention anyone's name for fear of missing some people out. Needless to say, the police, the Red Cross, the emergency services, the mayors of the shires, the councillors, the council workers, the road workers, the Australian Defence Force and individuals have done a wonderful job in helping us to recover, and that recovery process is still in hand.

We must get Central Queensland working again, because until it does the whole of Australia will suffer. The \$25,000 grants to primary producers and small business are proving almost impossible to access, and the offer of a loan at four per cent interest to affected businesses is, quite frankly, totally inadequate. The last thing our primary producers want or need is more debt. Local councils so far have not received any funding to commence the work of repairing our roads and our community infrastructure. In fact, a couple of the councils in Flynn have just received their NDRRA money for the floods that happened 12 months ago. I appeal to the government to adopt a Roads to Recovery model used to great effect by the Howard government. When aid or recovery money goes direct to the local councils approxi-

mately 99 per cent of it goes straight to the project. In the past, when this money has been passed through the Queensland state government, less than 60 per cent of the money has actually got to the bitumen. Local councils have the staff, equipment and expertise to get on with the job of rebuilding our communities. All they lack is the money. And if they have to wait for the state government to dole it out then the people of Central Queensland will be the big losers.

In closing, I appeal to the government to be mindful of the emotional stress and strain that these events have placed on our people in the affected areas. Please do not place extra strain on them by delaying the flow of money to our councils and affected areas. Distribute the money directly to our local councils and you will get value for money and provide necessary employment in our local communities. On the upside, all our dams and weirs are full.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (6.52 pm)—Natural disasters have always been a fact of life in human history. Flood, famine and untamed fire are a feature of almost all creation myths and foundation stories, including, of course, the Bible. Here in Australia, the land of drought and flooding rains, our national stories and history are full of suffering and loss and heroism and solidarity in the face of these natural disasters. We remind ourselves that we are a tough and generous people who, while struggling against what this country throws at us, will always lend a hand to a mate. We comfort each other in the face of enormous tragedy and loss of life. We celebrate the actions of the emergency services and ordinary people, which are testament to an enormous capacity for individual and collective heroism that is stupendous in its everydayness. And this is what we do again today.

Today we acknowledge the terrible toll of these natural disasters and express our condolences to the families and friends who have lost their loved ones. We cannot share their feelings of grief but we can give them our thoughts in the hope that, with time, healing can begin. And we parliamentarians can do them the courtesy and respect of taking the responsibility of doing whatever we can to prevent such tragedies from occurring again. I, like all Australians, have been horrified and amazed by the experiences of flooding in Queensland, in my own state of Victoria and in the rest of the country. I, like all Australians, have been terrified by the looming threat of Cyclone Yasi and simultaneously relieved that it was not worse.

Nonetheless, I have been shocked by the devastation to the communities of Far North Queensland. I, like all Australians, have been encouraged and moved by the way people pull together in times of crisis, and felt proud of the work of our emergency and social services. And I, like many Australians, feel we have been given a glimpse into the future we face if we do not act to cut pollution and prevent further climate change.

While scientists are not yet able to know for certain that any individual extreme weather event is triggered by climate change, we do know that the earth is warming and the climate is changing. In fact, it may be that, in the near future, the term 'natural disaster' can no longer describe what we are experiencing. It may be that we are experiencing, and most definitely will soon be facing, what are in fact 'unnatural disasters'. Some loud and partisan voices in recent weeks have tried to shout down any discussion about climate change and the floods. Some have tried to argue that to talk about climate change, unlike discussing the usefulness or otherwise of dams, is to politicise the issue or is somehow unseemly given the proximity to the disaster. Others have been

angered or driven to abuse by the suggestion that responsibility for global warming might need to be discussed. It is as if discussing the causes of climate change is somehow outside the boundaries of acceptable national conversation. Well, as John Ruskin said, no individual raindrop ever considers itself responsible for the flood.

It is my view and the Greens' view that it is our responsibility to listen to what scientists are telling us about extreme weather and climate change. Now is not the time to give in to some political correctness or orthodoxy that wants to avoid reality. Now is not the time to focus only on the symptoms and avoid the warnings we have been given. Now is the time to help communities recover and rebuild. But it is also the time to discuss what we can do to prevent far greater calamities in the future—because unfortunately, as the government's adviser and my colleague on the multi-party climate change committee, Professor Ross Garnaut, said recently, we ain't seen nothing yet.

The basic physics are fairly straightforward. A warmer atmosphere means more moisture in the air and warmer oceans. This in turn means more precipitation and more energy in storm systems, exacerbating natural cycles like La Nina. In other areas and in other seasons these hotter temperatures mean superdry conditions and heatwaves like we saw on Black Saturday two years ago. As a recent editorial in the *Sunday Age* stated, we respond well to an emergency but global warming is an emergency too. It is time we faced up to this emergency. To fail to do so would be to compound the tragedy and economic dislocation of this summer, for which we will be rightly condemned by future generations. Australia has always been a land of extremes but, unless we act now, we are on the verge of making these extremes a regular occurrence. We run the risk that we will hear the tragic stories of victims, their families

and their communities far more often than we would like.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (6.58 pm)—I rise to contribute to the Prime Minister's condolence motion on this summer's natural disasters and in particular the recent flooding in my home state of Queensland. It is fair to say that rarely has the Brisbane River risen so quickly and with so much force and fury. Sadly, in the weeks just gone, this was another occasion. In my electorate of Ryan people's homes, businesses, cars, personal belongings and treasured possessions have, in so many cases, been ruined with little trace that they ever existed. People are devastated and Queensland is a state that will never be the same. So many thousands in my electorate were affected by the flood in some way or another. I want to put on record my deepest regret that so many in my electorate lost everything. Years and years of building a life and, in many cases, a home were wiped out as the Brisbane River unleashed beyond imagination. River water, dirty brown mud, rose and subsequently ran into streets, homes, garages, parks and businesses and, in some cases, destroyed everything in its path.

It is fair to say it was one of my community's darkest hours and, indeed, darkest weeks in a very, very long time. People from all over the electorate were left wondering why. But what makes me so proud to be a Queenslander and Brisbane resident is that this disbelief was turned to determination very quickly. The courage and tenacity of Queenslanders was on display even before the water had reached its peak. The word 'inspiring' is often thrown around these days, but the response from the electorate of Ryan and from across Brisbane was truly inspiring. An international visitor from America commented to me how amazed he was to see the traffic jams going into Brisbane, after the floods, with volunteers rushing to help—not people rushing to escape the city.

My heart goes out to the Ryan residents who have had to go through this ordeal. If Ryan residents had not personally experienced these trying times, a family member had or they knew someone who had. Those who were lucky enough to escape the floodwaters went to the heart of the disaster and helped those who were less fortunate. People from near and far pitched in, every day. I am confident in saying that everyone in Ryan helped in some way.

I would like to take this opportunity to put on the record my appreciation and admiration for Brisbane Lord Mayor, Campbell Newman. The Lord Mayor's leadership throughout this challenging experience has been the reason Brisbane stayed so strong. Campbell chaired the local disaster management group and coordinated the flood relief and recovery process. As you would appreciate, this could not have been an easy task. The Lord Mayor's commitment to Brisbane and determination to see our city continue to prosper could never be doubted before the flood, and certainly not after. On behalf of the people of Ryan I would like to thank the Lord Mayor and Brisbane City Council for the way in which the aftermath of the flood was handled and for the amount of communication there was between the council and the community. The importance of this communication can never be overlooked, and it certainly was not under the Lord Mayor's watch.

As residents who lived through the 1974 flood commented, on the clean-up of Brisbane, what took three months to achieve in 1974 was achieved in three days in 2011. This, in no small way, was due to the wonderful contribution made by the men and women of our Australian defence forces. Listening to the condolence messages today I have been struck by how lucky we are, as a country. How many places in the world can say their people rejoice when they see col-

umns of their military forces rolling into their towns? How many countries have a history which makes it far more likely that the people would hide in fear at the sound of armed vehicles rumbling towards them, while in Australia we automatically say, 'Thank God, the army is here'? This was certainly the case in Ryan and around the state of Queensland.

Moving away from my electorate of Ryan for a moment, I want to also say a few words about my experience in Emerald, in the electorate of the member for Flynn, Mr Ken O'Dowd. Just after Christmas Day I was activated by the Queensland Red Cross as a disaster volunteer to go to Emerald. By the time we got to Emerald Airport we had to be helicoptered in to the rapidly reducing town centre, which became known as 'Emerald island'. This was a community virtually cut off from the rest of the state and a community torn apart by floodwaters and devastated by nature, but it was a community determined to survive. But my time in Emerald was as inspirational as it was heartbreaking. The strength of the community and determination of Emerald volunteers, like Sue and Ian Johnson, inspired me and made me even prouder to be a Queenslanders, whilst the looks of despair and disbelief on people's faces coming into the Red Cross centre broke my heart. The people of Emerald and all affected Queenslanders knew that the Red Cross was working for them and their families, day and night. Its volunteers—from all over Australia—cared for people's safety and wellbeing enormously. The Red Cross has a proud history of supporting communities and people in need and this was once again on show in Emerald, and I was very proud to be a part of the Red Cross team.

I also want to make mention of the mayor of Emerald, Mr Peter Maguire, who led by example throughout the ordeal in Emerald. The people of Emerald benefited not only

from Red Cross but also from so many other outreach services working together to maximise our effort: the Salvation Army, Anglicare, Lifeline, QFRS and SES, to name just a few. As my shift in Emerald came to an end, it was incredibly heartening to welcome the next wave of emergency leaders—who included Queensland police officers Richard Symes and Don Amos, from my local Indooroopilly police station in Ryan.

Returning to my electorate of Ryan, community groups across the electorate all pitched in and worked together to help those in need. So many volunteers and community groups assisted in the recovery and clean-up—certainly too many to name. But I would like to take the time to recognise the work and effort of some of our local community organisations who went above and beyond the call during these heartbreaking times: the Holy Family Church and parish at Indooroopilly; the Lions Club of Brisbane Inner West; the Mandalay Progress Association; the Chinese Christian Church at State Lucia; the University of Queensland's student union; the Moggill Uniting Church, the Rotary Club of Karana Downs and Mount Crosby; the Bellbowrie Community Association; the Moggill-Mount Crosby Lions; the Kenmore Rotary Club, which assisted greatly in the evacuation of the Riverview retirement village; the Mount Crosby school; the Moggill-Mount Crosby SES; the Kenmore Uniting Church; the St Vincent de Paul branch of Our Lady of the Rosary; the Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church at Kenmore; the Rotary Club of West Brisbane; and the Salvation Army at Toowong.

In addition to the many community groups in my electorate who helped in so many ways I would like to place on record my appreciation to our elected representatives in Ryan, who were constantly out and about and helping in every way they could, and to Brisbane city councillors Julian Simmonds,

Margaret deWit, Geraldine Knapp and Peter Matic. A special mention should also be made to the state members Dr Bruce Flegg, the member for Moggill, and Scott Emerson, the member for Indooroopilly, for their dedication to their local communities.

I would also like to make special mention of the University of Queensland's student union, who, after seeing firsthand the devastation that had been caused to the highly student-populated suburb of St Lucia, took it upon themselves to contribute to the clean-up of the area. I believe their efforts are best done justice through the words of Ben Riley, a long-time student leader of the University of Queensland Union:

We decided to open the stall on Saturday morning at 9am with 300 sausages and 50 bottles of water. As the person who co-ordinated where the volunteers were to go I was ambitiously expecting to get 20 volunteers for the day. However, I knew we were going to be in for a big day when after only four hours our online video had been shared by over 250 people and viewed by several thousand. I never expected that by the time I was setting up the stall at 8.30 am thirty people were already waiting on the side of the road ready to help. By 10am we were completely out of sausages and water and the place was a hive of activity. As time went by complete strangers were turning up to donate food and drinks.

By the end of the day we had over 200 volunteers register directly with us, hundreds more from Volunteering Queensland, three bus loads of volunteers from the Brisbane City Council, and army workers. It was also very impressive to see that many of the people who lent a hand were from a vast array of backgrounds including UQ clubs and societies, colleges, a variety of international groups, the Young LNP, churches, sporting clubs, and many others who banded together through their own networks and helped out. After only expecting to help out a few houses in the area, we ended up becoming the central organising body for the St Lucia area. Given the overwhelming response we received (and the vast amount of

work still required) we decided we had no choice but to open up again the next day.

My family and I and some of my staff, along with Senator Russell Trood, spent all of Saturday and Sunday as part of the University of Queensland Union effort, alongside volunteers from all parts of South-East Queensland. The individual stories of loss and devastation were heartbreaking, including that of my own staff member Emma Yabsley, who, rather than save her own possessions, instead helped other residents escape the rapidly rising water from a block of units where she lived. These efforts by the University of Queensland Union saw St Lucia back on its feet far sooner than would otherwise have occurred, and they were repeated by many different volunteer groups across the electorate. In addition to their efforts on the ground, the University of Queensland continues to provide support and relief for flood affected students, which is of particular relief to international students, who on top of having to overcome language and cultural barriers in the wake of the flood itself are, in most cases, not entitled to any government assistance. I commend the work of the University of Queensland Union and see it as a shining example of the mateship and hard work that the youth of today are so often accused of lacking.

Ryan responded to the call. We responded as a community and as a family. To those thousands of volunteers who put aside everything to help their neighbours, friends and total strangers, I say a big thank you. As I drove and walked around Ryan with state member Scott Emerson on what was a nice summer's day just hours before the Brisbane River was expected to peak, in some places the water was rising as fast as we were walking. People were in their neighbours' homes, streets and garages helping to sandbag, to move furniture and evacuate elderly resi-

dents. The sense of community was literally breathtaking and it will never be forgotten.

We, of course, had our fair share of daunting moments throughout the electorate, with elderly residents in nursing homes evacuated in police boats. Many of our local residents were stranded without power, cut off from family and friends and, in some cases, cut off from food and drink. It was a trying time but, like any family, we stood by each other not just in the good times but also in the bad. It makes me so proud to be a representative in this parliament for the electorate of Ryan—an electorate where your neighbours are your friends and your friends' friends are your neighbours. It really is a special place to live, work and raise a family, and I commit myself in this place to making sure it always remains that way.

On a sombre note, I want to send the thoughts and prayers of my family, my staff and the people of Ryan to those families who lost not only their homes, their possessions and their livelihoods but also in some cases their loved ones. Our hearts go out to my colleagues—in particular the member for Wright, Scott Buchholz; the member for Groom, Ian Macfarlane; and other members in this place who have had constituents lose their lives. These communities will never be the same and they will never forget those who lost their lives. They died in a devastating tragedy. It was unprecedented and unexpected. But these men, women and children will be remembered in the highest regard. Throughout the flood, I spoke with each of my colleagues that I just mentioned, and they too were devastated for their communities and for the people in their electorates who had died or who had lost everything. I know these members not just as colleagues but as friends, and I want to place on record how much I admire them for how they have led their communities through this horrific time.

I also want to make mention of my colleague and Ryan neighbour the member for Oxley. I spoke to the member for Oxley, Mr Ripoll, during the floods, as his community had been devastated, along with his electorate office. The Bellbowrie community in Ryan, although affected themselves by flood, wanted to help the residents of Goodna. The rebuilding stage will not be easy for any community no matter which electorate they are in, but as a community no task is ever too great, and the 2011 floods have proven this over and over.

Working around the electorate in the aftermath of this disaster I saw the pain and devastation in my constituents' eyes. I heard the heartbreaking stories of a mother who had lost her baby's first day of walking photos; of a young child who lost not only their favourite toy but all their toys; of a newlywed who lost their precious wedding day photos; and of a widow who lost the home she had shared with her loved one for 40 years or more. The stories could go on, and they are not necessarily less painful or easier to recall, but they are just some that reflect the magnitude of the loss in Ryan and, indeed, around the whole of Queensland. Whilst thousands of my constituents lost their homes, precious possessions and memories, we did not have any loss of life like some of my colleagues. To the families, friends and loved ones of the 23 Queenslanders who lost their lives, I say: the hearts and thoughts of every Queenslanders are with you.

In conclusion, I want to thank my colleagues who have come to Ryan in recent times to assist me and our community with the flood recovery and massive clean-up effort. The Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, joined me and the member for Brisbane, Teresa Gambaro. Thank you, Tony, for your support, assistance and presence in Ryan. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Julie

Bishop, joined me and the Queensland Leader of the Opposition, John-Paul Langbroek, and assisted with evacuations; the member for North Sydney, Joe Hockey, met with local residents and the members of the Indooroopilly Canoe Club, who had lost everything; the member for Wentworth, Malcolm Turnbull, met with local people in the electorate who are struggling to put their lives back together; and the member for Longman, Wyatt Roy, joined me for a day in reaching out to those still coming to terms with their losses. So many of my coalition colleagues have joined me in the electorate during these trying times, and even more have contacted me and my staff offering assistance and support. Their presence and their friendship have been a blessing. I especially note those Brisbane colleagues such as my friend Teresa Gambaro, who offered help to me and my staff in any way, particularly when my Chapel Hill office was evacuated.

The people of Ryan are strong and proud people. We stand up for each other and look out for each other. The floods tested the strength of our community, but of course the community overcame whatever was thrown our way. The floods across Queensland affected people's homes, possessions, businesses and lives in so many ways. Lives were lost and communities torn apart. The rebuilding process is well under way. Yes, there is more work to be done, but the people of Ryan and Queensland, as everywhere, have proven no challenge is too great. However, this experience will never be forgotten. The determination of locals to get their lives back on track has never been stronger.

In the weeks just gone, Australians have looked to our state of Queensland. Sadly, it is a state that will never be the same. The memories of this terrible and devastating ordeal will stay with many for a very long time, but we will come back stronger than before because nothing could ever diminish

that fighting Queensland spirit. My heart and my thoughts go to all those in my electorate and Queensland who were affected.

The SPEAKER—As a mark of respect, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

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

**LAW AND JUSTICE LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (IDENTITY CRIMES
AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2010
[2011]**

**SCREEN AUSTRALIA (TRANSFER OF
ASSETS) BILL 2010**

**AVIATION CRIMES AND POLICING
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL 2010**

**CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL 2010 [2011]**

Referred to Main Committee

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (7.16 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the bills be referred to the Main Committee for further consideration.

Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (7.17 pm)—As a mark of respect to the victims of the natural disasters, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Question agreed to.

House adjourned at 7.18 pm

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Brendan O'Connor to present a Bill for an Act to amend the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006, and for related purposes.

Mr McClelland to present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Electronic Transactions Act 1999*, and for related purposes.

Dr Leigh to move:

That this House:

- (1) reaffirms this Government's commitment to evidence-based policy making;
- (2) notes that:
 - (a) the Productivity Commission has highlighted the importance of rigorous evaluation in assessing the impact of social, educational, employment and economic programs; and
 - (b) randomised policy trials are increasingly being used as an evaluation tool in developed and developing nations; and
- (3) supports measures to increase the quality of evaluations, and calls on the Government to consider whether randomised policy trials may be implemented to evaluate future Government policies.

Mr Robert to move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) Defence Housing Australia (DHA) is the professional manager of Defence houses;
 - (b) the Department of Defence still retains over 1650 homes that have not been handed over to DHA; and
 - (c) the Government is using some of these 1650 homes, notably over 50 at Inverbrackie, as a detention facility to house Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMA), rather than Defence families; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
 - (a) cease using Defence housing as an immigration detention facility;
 - (b) hand over all houses managed by the Department of Defence to DHA; and
 - (c) categorically state that it will not acquire the homes of Defence families for the purpose of housing the ever increasing number of IMA arriving in Australia as a

result of the Government's soft border protection policies.

Ms Vamvakinou to move:

That this House:

- (1) condemns the New Year's Day attack on the Al-Qiddissin Church, the Church of the Two Saints, in Alexandria, Egypt;
- (2) acknowledges the historical role of the Coptic Orthodox community of Egypt;
- (3) expresses its condolences to all victims of violence and terrorism;
- (4) reaffirms the Australian Government's call for fundamental political reform in Egypt and the protection of the rights of all Egyptian citizens; and
- (5) recognises:
 - (a) the contributions made by the Coptic Orthodox community of Australia under the leadership of His Grace Bishop Suriel of the Coptic Orthodox Church Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions;
 - (b) the value and role of interfaith dialogue in building a diverse and harmonious society; and
 - (c) the value of democratic rights and the right to freedom of religion and culture.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop to present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992* to abolish the age limit on payment of the superannuation guarantee charge.

Mr Hayes to move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) Sunday 20 February to Sunday 27 February 2011 is Donate Life Week, Australia's national awareness week to promote organ and tissue donation; and
 - (b) organ donation is giving the gift of life, yet is a gift that most people do not know how to give;

- (2) acknowledges that:
- (a) one third of Australians do not know that family consent is needed for organs to be donated when someone dies;
 - (b) there are more than 1000 people on organ donation waiting lists and were only 279 donations in 2009-10, despite the year being our highest annual donation rate in a decade; and
 - (c) on average, every deceased organ donor in Australia may contribute to between three and ten transplants;
- (3) encourages all Australian men and women to:
- (a) set some time aside during the week to talk about organ and tissue donations with people closest to them; and
 - (b) consider organ donations and sign up for the Australian Organ Donor Register; and
- (4) pays tribute to organ donors who have kindly given the gift of life.

Mr Hayes to move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that:
- (a) for more than 2000 years religious groups such as Assyrians, Mandaeans, Chaldeans, Syrians and other Aramaic speakers have called Iraq home;
 - (b) in 2003, Australia was part of the 'coalition of the willing' that invaded Iraq in the belief that Iraq harboured weapons of mass destruction;
 - (c) since 2003 there have been horrendous acts of persecution against these religious minorities in Iraq, including murders, bombings and extortion; and
 - (d) the Catholic Church reports that one million Christians have fled Iraq since the 2003 invasion; and
- (2) recognises that:
- (a) thousands of people are sheltering in Syria, Egypt, Jordan and the northern regions of Iraq because they feel they

cannot return to their homes for fear of death and persecution;

- (b) due to our part in the 'coalition of the willing', Australia has a moral responsibility to deal compassionately with these displaced people; and
- (c) it will be a damning critique on humanity and the Coalition forces, who have vowed to protect the people of Iraq, if religious groups with such a significant historical link to the region are forced out at the hands of terrorists.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING**Australian Taxation Office: Technology Transformation Program****(Question No. 3)**

Mr Fletcher asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 29 September 2010:

In respect of the contracts in place between the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and Accenture as part of the ATO's technology transformation program, (a) have any of those contracts been terminated, (b) what action is being taken or contemplated for any breach of those contracts, and (c) can he detail the circumstances of termination or alleged breach or potential breach of contract, including the quantum of damages being sought or contemplated.

Mr Swan—The Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The ATO did not terminate the Change Program contract with Accenture and the ATO has been very satisfied with Accenture's standard of performance. There has been no breach of contract. Accenture successfully delivered the releases in the Change Program as contracted.

Following negotiations with Accenture it was agreed that the Income Tax release in February 2010 would be the last major release and the contract for the Change Program should be finalised.

Visa Cancellations**(Question No. 17)**

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 30 September 2010.

In respect of the Minister's announcement of the cancellation of about 20,000 visa applications made prior to 1 September 2007: (a) what is the estimated total sum of the value of application fees that will be refunded; (b) what total sum has been refunded as at 30 September; and (c) by what date are all application fees expected to be refunded.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) The estimated total value of applications to be refunded is \$14.4 million
- (b) \$156,625 has been refunded as at 30 September 2010
- (c) the completion of the refund process is dependant on the Department receiving from clients their correct current bank account and contact details. The Department has requested this information, but has not yet received responses from all the clients.

Sydney Airport Community Forum**(Question No. 19)**

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 30 September 2010:

In respect of the Sydney Airport Community Forum (SACF):

- (1) What is the current (2010-11) budget estimate for the secretariat.
- (2) What was the expenditure for the secretariat in 2009-10 and 2008-09.
- (3) Is funding for the secretariat ongoing; if not, when will it cease.
- (4) How does the current funding arrangement for the secretariat differ to that under the previous government.

- (5) What was the average annual cost of the SACF between 1996-97 and 2007-08.
- (6) What sum of money is allocated to full time equivalent positions in the secretariat for 2010-11.

Mr Albanese—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) to (6) The SACF secretariat is funded from within the Aviation and Airports Divisional Budget as occurred under the Howard Government.

Asylum Seekers

(Question No. 20)

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 30 September 2010:

In respect of the 89 failed asylum seekers transferred from Christmas Island to the Villawood Detention Centre on 27 March 2010:

- (1) How many of the asylum seekers have (a) had their hearing review completed, (b) had their status overturned as a consequence of the hearing review process, and (c) been (i) voluntarily, and (ii) involuntarily returned to their country of origin.
- (2) As at 1 June 2010, how many members of this asylum seeker group remained detained in Villawood Detention Centre.
- (3) What action has commenced in relation to the removal from Australia of the members of this group, including arrangements for air travel and preparation of travel documents.
- (4) What is the estimated cost to the Government for the removal of a failed asylum seeker from Christmas Island to their country of origin, including but not limited to the cost of detention, flights and meals.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

In respect of the 89 failed asylum seekers transferred from Christmas Island to the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre on 27 March 2010:

- (1) (a) All 89 asylum seekers have had their Independent Merits Review hearings completed. As at 30 September 2010, Independent Merits Review outcomes have been received for all 89 of these clients.
 - (b) As at 30 September 2010, 42 clients have been assessed to be refugees following Independent Merits Review.
 - (c) (i) As at 30 September 2010, three clients have been voluntarily removed to their country of origin (Sri Lanka).
 - (ii) As at 30 September 2010, none of the 89 clients had been involuntarily removed.
- (2) As at 30 September 2010, 44 of the 89 failed asylum seekers were detained at the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre (IDC). A further 12 clients found to be refugees, awaiting security clearances, were also detained at the Villawood IDC.
- (3) Removals are not effected until a client's protection processing is finalised or they request to be removed from Australia. As at 30 September 2010:
 - three clients have been voluntarily removed following a negative IMR outcome;
 - eighteen clients had lodged litigation in the High Court of Australia following negative IMR outcomes. Removal planning will be finalised should their applications be unsuccessful; and
 - twenty-five clients who received negative IMR outcomes are not cooperating with removal plans. The Department has lodged travel document applications for four clients and 21 have been referred for further identity investigation.

- (4) Of the 89 failed asylum seekers transferred from Christmas Island to the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre on 27 March 2010, three individuals have since been returned to their country of origin (Sri Lanka). Removal costs vary depending on individual client needs and destination. For these three removals from Australia, the average estimated cost to the Government was approximately \$15,000 per removal. This amount includes escort costs (airfares, accommodation and allowances) and airfares, travel documents, and return assistance packages for each client.

Visa Refusal Applications

(Question No. 21)

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 30 September 2010:

Further to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's answer to question in writing No. 60 (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Additional Estimates 2009-10, Immigration and Citizenship Portfolio, 8-9 February 2010):

- (1) Of the 138 refused applications, what are the sub-classes, what number of applications was refused in each sub-class, and does this figure include cancelled visas.
- (2) How many (a) of the 138 refused applications were subject to legal appeals, (b) legal appeals were successfully upheld, (c) upheld legal appeals were appealed by the Minister, and (d) appeals initiated by the Minister were successful.
- (3) What was the cost to the Government of defending legal appeals in part (2) (a) and (c).

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Section 501 visa refusal decisions, by visa subclass (1 July 2009 to 14 May 2010)

Visa class and subclass	Number of refusal decisions
TR 676 – Tourist	93
TZ 417 – Working Holiday	29
UC 456 – Business (Short Stay)	8
UF 309 – Partner (Provisional)	3
UK 820 – Partner	1
TU 571 – Schools Sector	1
TU 572 – Vocational Education and Training Sector	1
TU 573 – Higher Education Sector	1
UD 976 – Electronic Transit Authority	1
Total	138

The figure of 138 refusal decisions does not include cancelled visas. Visa cancellation decisions are calculated separately, and where a visa application is taken to be refused by operation of law under section 501F (2) of the *Migration Act 1958* (the Act), as a consequence of a visa cancellation decision under 501, 501A or 501B of the Act, this is not included in the above list of refusal decisions.

- (2) (a) Six of the visa refusal decisions have been subject to an application for review by the AAT.
- (b) Of the six reviews: one case is yet to be decided; one application for review was withdrawn by the client; three cases resulted in the AAT directing that the decision be remitted for reconsideration by the Department; and one case resulted in the Department's decision being affirmed.
- (c) None of the three review decisions directing to remit for reconsideration were appealed by the Minister.
- (d) The Minister has not appealed any of the review decisions.

- (3) The total legal cost for the five finalised matters is \$92653.29. At this point the legal cost for the matter yet to be finalised is not available.

Permanent Skilled Migration Program

(Question No. 24)

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 30 September 2010:

In respect of the Minister's announcement of 8 February 2010 regarding reforms to the Permanent Skilled Migration Program:

- (1) How many (a) applications for permanent skilled migration visas were awaiting processing as at 1 June 2010; and (b) of these applications are (i) sponsored, and (ii) independent.
- (2) Has there been a freeze imposed in respect of the processing of certain types of visa applications pending the commencement of the new Skilled Occupation List.
- (3) What is the current average processing time for (a) a sponsored permanent skilled, and (b) an independent permanent skilled, migration visa.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) As at 1 June 2010, 91,061 permanent skilled migration visa applications were awaiting processing, including 4051 in the Business Skills category. This figure represents principal applicants.
(b) Of these applications, 46,864 are sponsored and 44,197 independent.
- (2) No.
- (3) (a) and (b) Due to the current Priority Processing Direction which requires permanent Employer Sponsored and certain General Skilled Migration (GSM) visa applications to be processed in a particular order of priority it is not possible to provide a definitive average processing time. Furthermore, processing times vary across visa subclasses and also within subclasses due to factors such as onshore/offshore lodgement, whether a security referral is required and the completeness of the application provided to my Department at time of lodgement.

However, in general, a permanent GSM application lodged with the Department onshore will be processed within two to three months of allocation to a case officer. In cases where the application is for an offshore applicant, processing times are between three to four months. Should a security referral be required, processing may take 12 to 18 months from the time of allocation. The above applies to both sponsored and independent visa applications.

It should be noted that GSM applications are not automatically allocated upon receipt by the Department. It can take between 12 to 24 months (or more) for an application to be allocated to a case officer due to the existing pipeline and priority processing arrangements. Processing does not commence until allocation.

Employer sponsored visa applications (Employer Nomination Scheme and Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme) take on average, three to six months to be processed.

As with the GSM and employer sponsored visa categories, processing times for the remaining permanent skilled migration visas varies due to a number of factors including onshore or offshore lodgement and security referral.

Business Skills visas on average, take approximately six to twelve months and Distinguish Talent visas six to eight months.

Indonesia: People-Smuggling Laws**(Question No. 26)**

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 30 September 2010:

In respect of the announcement made by the President of Indonesia regarding the introduction of people smuggling laws that would make people smuggling a crime: can he indicate (a) the status of these proposed laws and their likely commencement date, (b) the penalties associated with convictions for people smuggling under these proposed laws, (c) how these proposed penalties compare with the penalties recently introduced into the Australian Criminal Code, and (d) how the interpretation of a people smuggling offence under these proposed laws compares to that within the Australian Criminal Code.

Mr Rudd—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) On 27 April 2010, the Indonesian Government introduced an Immigration Bill to Parliament, which contains provisions aimed at criminalising people smuggling. Introduction of the Immigration Bill follows President Yudhoyono's announcement, in March 2010, that Indonesia would move to criminalise people smuggling. In accordance with the Indonesian parliamentary process, following its introduction to Parliament the Immigration Bill was submitted to the Legal Affairs and Human Rights Commission of Parliament (known as 'Commission III'), where it will be the subject of debate and possibly amendment by members of the Commission.
- (b) to (d) It would not be appropriate for the Australian Government to comment on the content of Indonesia's Immigration Bill. The Bill is still subject to debate and possible amendment by the Indonesian Parliament.

Protection Visas**(Question No. 27)**

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 30 September 2010:

How many asylum seekers who have received permanent protection visas since 24 November 2007 have made an application to sponsor a family member under the family reunion migration program, and, of these, how many (a) applications have been successful, and (b) family members have been granted visas.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Family members of persons who have been granted permanent Protection visas or Resolution of Status visas in Australia can be proposed for entry under the split family provisions of the Humanitarian Program or sponsored for entry under the Family Stream of the Migration Program.

Under the split family provisions of the Humanitarian Program, a person granted a permanent humanitarian visa (including Permanent Protection or Resolution of Status) has five years from the date of grant to propose their immediate family members. For this purpose, 'immediate family member' refers to a spouse, dependent child or, where the family member in Australia is under 18 years of age, a parent.

Data is not kept in a way that can be interrogated to answer the question asked. I can, however, advise that under the Humanitarian Program, in the period 1 December 2007 to 30 June 2010, 1612 applications (4133 persons) were received from family members who held Protection visas or Resolution of Status visas. Of that same cohort, 589 applications (1598 persons) were granted, 145 applications (378 persons) were withdrawn or refused and 878 applications (2157 persons) are yet to be finalised as at 30 September 2010 (Source: MPMS 30 September 2010 extract).

Mr Jock Palfreeman**(Question No. 37)**

Mr Fletcher asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 18 October 2010:

In respect of the conviction in December 2009 of Australian citizen, Mr Jock Palfreeman, in a Bulgarian court, (a) what steps did the Government take to (i) monitor the legal proceedings against Mr Palfreeman, and (ii) provide support and assistance for Mr Palfreeman during the legal proceedings, and (b) what assistance is the Government currently providing Mr Palfreeman with.

Mr Rudd—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) (i) Consular officials have attended all of Mr Palfreeman's court appearances, most recently on 21 October 2010, and will continue to do so. Consular officials have spoken to Mr Palfreeman's lawyer on a regular basis.
- (ii) Consular officials provided Mr Palfreeman with a list of local lawyers upon his arrest in 2008 and have visited him regularly in detention. During a visit to Australia in October 2009, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Smith raised Mr Palfreeman's case with his Bulgarian counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Raykov. I also raised Mr Palfreeman's case myself with President Parvanov during his visit. On 9 November 2009, Australia's Ambassador to Bulgaria (resident in Athens, Greece) raised the case with Mr Raykov. On 9 March 2010, the Australian Embassy in Athens made formal enquiries of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seeking clarification of the conditions of Mr Palfreeman's detention.
- (b) Consular officials have visited Mr Palfreeman in gaol regularly, most recently on 22 October 2010, and will continue to do so while he remains in detention. Consular officials in Athens and Canberra have met with Mr Palfreeman's family on a regular basis.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference**(Question No. 38)**

Mr Fletcher asked the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, in writing, on 18 October 2010:

In respect of the following people:

- (a) Louise Helen Hand,
- (b) David Fredericks,
- (c) Philip Green OAM,
- (d) Andrew Charlton,
- (e) Lachlan Harris,
- (f) Scott Dewar,
- (g) Clare Penrose,
- (h) Fiona Sugden,
- (i) Lisa French,
- (j) Tarah Barzanji,
- (k) Kate Shaw,
- (l) Gaile Barnes,
- (m) Gordon de Brouwer,
- (n) Patrick Suckling,
- (o) Rebecca Christie,

- (p) Michael Jones,
- (q) Stephan Rudzki,
- (r) David Bell,
- (s) Kym Baillie,
- (t) David Champion,
- (u) Matt Jebb,
- (v) Craig Kendall,
- (w) Squadron Leader Ian Lane,
- (x) John Olenich,
- (y) Kristina Hickey
- (z) Martin Parkinson,
- (aa) Howard Bamsey,
- (ab) Robert Owen-Jones,
- (ac) Clare Walsh,
- (ad) Jenny Elizabeth Wilkinson,
- (ae) Elizabeth Peak,
- (af) Kristin Tilley,
- (ag) Andrew Ure,
- (ah) Annemarie Watt,
- (ai) Kushla Munro,
- (aj) Kathleen Annette Rowley,
- (ak) Anitra Cowan,
- (al) Sally Truong,
- (am) Jane Wilkinson,
- (an) Tracey Mackay,
- (ao) Laura Brown,
- (ap) Tracey-Anne Leahey,
- (aq) Nicola Loffler,
- (ar) Tamara Curll,
- (as) Jessica Allen,
- (at) Sanjiva de Silva,
- (au) Gaia Puleston,
- (av) Penelope Morton,
- (aw) Claire Elizabeth Watt,
- (ax) Amanda Walker,
- (ay) Alan David Lee,
- (az) Erika Kate Oord,
- (ba) Jahda Kirian Swanborough,
- (bb) H.E. Sharyn Minahan,

-
- (bc) Julia Feeney,
 - (bd) Chester Geoffrey Cunningham,
 - (be) Rachael Cooper,
 - (bf) Rachael Grivas,
 - (bg) Moya Collett,
 - (bh) Rob Law,
 - (bi) Robin Davies,
 - (bj) Deborah Fulton,
 - (bk) Katherine Vaughn,
 - (bl) Brian Dawson,
 - (bm) Andrew Leigh Clarke,
 - (bn) Bruce Wilson,
 - (bo) Jill McCarthy,
 - (bp) Simon French,
 - (bq) Ian Michael Ruscoe,
 - (br) David Walland,
 - (bs) Damien Dunn,
 - (bt) Helen Hawka Fuhrman,
 - (bu) Scott Vivian Davenport,
 - (bv) Graham Julian Levitt,
 - (bw) Kate Jennifer Jones,
 - (bx) Michael William Dart,
 - (by) Matthew Anthony Jamie Skoien,
 - (bz) Michael David Rann,
 - (ca) Suzanne Kay Harter,
 - (cb) Paul David Flanagan,
 - (cc) Timothy O'Loughlin,
 - (cd) Nyla Sarwar,
 - (ce) Gavin Jennings,
 - (cf) Sarah Broadbent,
 - (cg) Rebecca Falkingham,
 - (ch) Simon Camroux,
 - (ci) Geoff Lake,
 - (cj) Sridhar Ayyalaraju,
 - (ck) Tegan Brink,
 - (cl) Melissa Eu Suan Goh,
 - (cm) Lauren Henschke,
 - (cn) Maree Fay,
 - (co) Patricia McKinnon,
-

- (cp) Eugene Olim,
- (cq) Belinda Lee Adams,
- (cr) Jacqui Ashworth,
- (cs) Patricia Smith,
- (ct) Martin Bo Jensen,
- (cu) Mauro Kolobaric,
- (cv) Susan Flanagan,
- (cw) Stephen Kanaridis,
- (cx) George Reid,
- (cy) Ashley Wright,
- (cz) Jodie Littlewood,
- (da) Thomas Millhouse,
- (db) Timothy Whittley,
- (dc) Julia Thomson,
- (dd) Donald Frater,
- (de) Jacqui Smith,
- (df) Greg French, and
- (dg) Jeremy Hillman,

were any of them a member of Australia's delegation to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009, if so, for each person that was:

- (1) In what department or organisation were they employed in December 2009, in what position, and for what length of time had they been employed in this position.
- (2) Were they an Australian Government employee in December 2009, if so, when were they first employed by the Australian Government.
- (3) What was their specific area of expertise or professional responsibility in December 2009, what role were they assigned to perform at the Conference, and how were they selected.
- (4) What written objectives or deliverables were they to achieve at the Conference; if none were provided, why and what was the purpose of their involvement.
- (5) What scheduled appointments or meetings did they have each day they attended the Conference.
- (6) Did they meet with or brief the Minister or Prime Minister on any occasion(s) at the Conference; if so,
 - (a) on what date(s);
 - (b) for what length of time; and
 - (c) regarding what subject matter.
- (7) Did they prepare a written report on their activities at the Conference; if so, will the Minister provide it.

Mr Combet—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The people listed in the question were those listed in a provisional (draft) list compiled by and circulated by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat and it reflected information submitted in advance of the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) meeting. The draft list of COP15 participants circulated by the UNFCCC contained some errors and also included

people who did not attend the Copenhagen conference. This list, although released by the UNFCCC, does not represent the Official Australian Delegation to COP15.

The Official Australian Delegation to COP15 comprised 98 people, including 30 observers from State and Territory Governments and non-government organisations. The name, title and agency for each member of the Official Australian Delegation is provided at **Attachment A**. The names of Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers providing protection to the Prime Minister have not been provided. The AFP does not comment on security or issues that may disclose methodology associated with security matters.

A final list of participants to COP15 was published by the UNFCCC Secretariat following COP15, although it still contains some inaccuracies.

- (1) Please refer to **Attachment A** for the name, title and agency for each member of the Official Australian Delegation. Sourcing information on the length of time that those listed above had been employed in their position would be an unreasonable diversion of Government resources as it would require approaching each member of the Official Australian Delegation to seek their permission for the release of that personal information, in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*. The Minister would also only be able to provide information on officers from the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (the Department) – for all non-Departmental officers the Member will need to approach the relevant Minister or agency.
- (2) Please refer to the response to part (1).
- (3) It would be an unreasonable diversion of Government resources to prepare an overview of the specific area of expertise or professional responsibilities, the role that each individual played in the Official Australian Delegation, and how they were selected.
- (4) The objectives for the delegation at the Conference were discussed by the Australian Government at Cabinet-level in advance of the COP15 Conference and are confidential.
- (5) It would be an unreasonable diversion of Government resources to prepare an overview of the scheduled appointments or meetings for each member of the Australian delegation to the Conference.

Formal meetings commenced in Copenhagen on 7 December 2009 and concluded on the afternoon of 19 December 2009. Daily programs for the formal COP15 meetings are available on the UNFCCC website. No formal UNFCCC meetings were scheduled on 13 December 2009. However, informal negotiations commenced before 7 December 2009, were ongoing through 13 December 2009 and through to the conclusion of the conference.

- (6) It would be an unreasonable diversion of Government resources to prepare an overview of each meeting or briefing involving the then Minister or the then Prime Minister on any occasion at the Conference. Further, informal or confidential discussions by any member of the Australian Official Delegation are not recorded.
- (7) The UNFCCC has published the formal report of the Conference on its website. In line with established practice, individual delegates from the Department did not write up reports of their individual activities during the Conference. For all non-Departmental officers the member will need to approach the relevant Minister or agency.

Attachment A

Final List of Australian participants to COP15

as at Friday 15 January 2010

AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION

H.E. Mr. Kevin Rudd

Prime Minister

H.E. Ms. Penelope Wong

Minister, Climate Change and Water

Office of the Minister for Climate Change and Water

H.E. Ms. Louise Hand

Ambassador for Climate Change

Department of Climate Change

Mr. David Fredericks

Deputy Chief of Staff

Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. Andrew Charlton

Senior Adviser

Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. Sean Kelly

Press Secretary

Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. Scott Dewar

Senior Adviser

Office of the Prime Minister

Ms. Clare Penrose

Adviser

Office of the Prime Minister

Ms. Fiona Sugden

Media Adviser

Office of Prime Minister

Ms. Lisa Ffrench

Adviser (Advance)

Office of the Prime Minister

Ms. Gaile Barnes

Executive Assistant

Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. John Olenich
Deputy Chief of Staff
Office of the Minister for Climate Change and Water

Ms. Kristina Hickey
Adviser
Office of the Minister for Climate Change and Water

Federal Agent
Australian Federal Police

Federal Agent
Australian Federal Police

Federal Agent
Australian Federal Police

Dr. Martin Parkinson
Secretary
Department of Climate Change

Mr. Howard Bamsey
Special Envoy on Climate Change
Department of Climate Change

Mr. Robert Owen-Jones
Assistant Secretary, International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Clare Walsh
Assistant Secretary, International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Joanne Evans
Assistant Secretary, International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Jenny Wilkinson
Assistant Secretary, Emissions Trading Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Elizabeth Peak
Principal Legal Adviser
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Kristin Tilley
Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Mr. Andrew Ure
Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change
Ms. Annemarie Watt
Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change
Ms. Kushla Munro
Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change
Ms. Kathleen Annette Rowley
Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change
Ms. Anitra Cowan
Assistant Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change
Ms. Sally Truong
Assistant Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change
Ms. Jane Wilkinson
Assistant Director
International Division,
Department of Climate Change
Ms. Tracey Mackay
Assistant Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change
Ms. Laura Brown
Assistant Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Tracey-Anne Leahey
Delegation Manager
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Nicola Loffler
Legal Adviser
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Tamara Curll
Legal Adviser
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Jessica Allen
Legal Adviser
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Mr. Sanjiva de Silva
Legal Adviser
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Gaia Puleston
Assistant Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Penelope Morton
Executive Officer to the Secretary
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Claire Watt
Assistant Director
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Amanda Walker
Policy Officer
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Mr. Alan Lee
Policy Officer
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Ms. Erika Oord
Policy Officer
International Division
Department of Climate Change

Mr. Jahda Swanborough
Communications Manager
Department of Climate Change

Mr. Patrick Suckling
First Assistant Secretary
International Division
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Ms. Chelsey Martin
Senior Adviser
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Ms. Rebecca Christie
Visit Coordinator
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Mr. Michael Jones
Official Photographer
Department of Finance

Mr. Stephan Rudzki
Medical Officer

Ms. Julia Feeney
Director
Climate Change and Environment
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Mr. Chester Cunningham
Second Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Ms. Rachael Cooper
Executive Officer
Climate Change and Environment
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Ms. Rachael Grivas
Executive Officer
Environment Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Dr. Moya Collett
Desk officer
Climate Change and Environment Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Mr. Robin Davies
Assistant Director General
Sustainable Development Group
Australian Agency for International Development

Ms. Deborah Fulton
Director
Policy and Global Environment
Australian Agency for International Development

Ms. Katherine Vaughn
Policy Advisor
Policy and Global Environment
Australian Agency for International Development

Mr. Brian Dawson
Climate Change and Energy Adviser
Australian Agency for International Development

Mr. Andrew Clarke
Deputy Secretary
Department of Resources Energy and Tourism

Mr. Bruce Wilson
General Manager
Environment Energy and Environment Division
Department of Resources Energy and Tourism

Ms. Jill McCarthy
Policy Adviser
Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism

Mr. Simon French
Policy Adviser
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Mr. Ian Ruscoe
Policy Adviser
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Mr. David Walland
Supervising Meteorologist
Bureau of Meteorology

Mr. Damien Dunn
Minister – Counsellor (Economic)
The Treasury

Ms. Helen Hawke Fuhrman
Policy Officer
Renewable Energy Policy and Partnerships
Department of Environment, Water Heritage and the Arts

Russell Baker
Senior Industry Adviser,
Australian Trade Commission

HERE AS OBSERVERS

Mr. Scott Davenport
Chief Economist
NSW Government

Mr. Graham Levitt
Policy Manager, Climate Change
Department of Industry and Investment
NSW Government

Ms. Kate Jones
Minister Climate Change and Sustainability
Queensland Government

Mr. Michael Dart
Principal Policy Advisor
Office of the Hon. Kate Jones MP
Queensland Government

Mr. Matthew Skoien
Senior Director, Office of Climate Change
Queensland Government

Mr. Michael Rann
Premier of South Australia
South Australian Government

Ms. Suzanne Harter
Adviser
Department of Premier and Cabinet
South Australian Government

Mr. Paul Flanagan
Manager, Communications
South Australian Government

Mr. Timothy O'Loughlin
Commissioner for Renewable Energy
South Australian Government

Ms. Nyla Sarwar
Senior Researcher - Fuels
Department of Premier and Cabinet
South Australian Government

Ms. Rebecca Falkingham
Senior Adviser
Office of Climate Change
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Victorian Government

Mr. Simon Camroux
Policy Adviser
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Victorian Government

Mr. Geoff Lake
Adviser
Australian Local Government Association

Ms. Marion Niederkofter
Manager, Climate Change
Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council

Mr. Miles Prosser
Executive Director
Australian Aluminium Council

Mr. Peter Morris
Director, Economic Policy
Australian Coal Association

Mr. Brad Page
Chief Executive Officer
Energy Supply Association of Australia Limited

Mr. Brendan Pearson
Chief Executive Officer
Minerals Council of Australia

Ms. Maria Tarrant
Director Policy
Business Council of Australia

Ms. Georgina Woods
International Coordinator
Climate Action Network Australia

Mr. Erwin Jackson
Director Policy and Research
The Climate Institute

Mr. John Connor
Chief Executive Officer
The Climate Institute

Mr. Paul Winn
Climate and Forest Campaigners
Greenpeace Australia Pacific

Mr. Don Henry
Executive Director
Australian Conservation Foundation

Mr. Tony Maher
General President
Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union

Mr. Greg Bourne
Chief Executive Officer
World Wildlife Fund for Nature

Rev. Tim Costello
Chief Executive Officer
World Vision Australia

Ms. Peg Putt
International Green Carbon Consultant
The Wilderness Society Australia Inc.

Mr. Simon Sheikh
National Director
GetUp

Senator Stephen Fielding
Senator for Victoria
Leader and Whip of the Family First Party

Renewable Energy
(Question No. 43)

Mr Gibbons asked the Minister for Resources and Energy, in writing, on 21 October 2010:
Is the Government considering introducing a national feed-in tariff for renewable energy; if not, what are the Government's objections to a national feed-in tariff for renewable energy.

Mr Martin Ferguson—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Government's primary support for the deployment of renewable energy in Australia is the expanded 20 per cent by 2020 Renewable Energy Target (RET), and as such the Government is not considering introducing a national feed-in tariff for renewable energy.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has previously considered this issue. In November 2008, COAG agreed and announced four National Principles to be applied to jurisdictional feed-in tariff schemes. The National Principles were intended to be a guide for the state and territory governments considering introducing a feed-in tariff scheme, or reviewing existing schemes.

Premium feed-in tariffs create an additional burden on electricity consumers, particularly those that cannot afford to install renewable energy systems but pay higher electricity prices to cross-subsidise those that can afford such systems.

Maintaining the least cost approach to stimulating investment in renewable generation that is represented by the RET will minimise the impact on electricity prices and vulnerable Australian electricity consumers.

National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health (Question No. 44)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 21 October 2010:

In respect of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health, for each State and Territory and for Australia as a whole, as at June 2009:

- (1) What proportion of (a) children, and (b) adults, were of an unhealthy weight
- (2) What was the mean number of daily serves of fruit and vegetables consumed by (a) children, and (b) adults.
- (3) What proportion of (a) children participated in at least 60 minutes, and (b) adults participated in at least 30 minutes, of moderate physical activity on five or more days of the week.
- (4) What proportion of adults smoked daily.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Framework for Measuring Performance Benchmarks under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health (NPAPH) was agreed to at the 12 November 2010 Australian Health Ministers' Conference. This Framework outlines the approach for using available and planned survey data to report against the seven performance benchmarks contained within the NPAPH.

The Enabling Infrastructure (Surveillance) Initiative under the NPAPH will provide \$10 million to states and territories to implement or expand existing surveillance capacity to support the monitoring and reporting requirements specified in the Framework.

Data to establish benchmark baselines will be requested from jurisdictions and determined in early 2011.

Investing in Our Schools Program (Question No. 46)

Ms Marino asked the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, in writing, on 26 October 2010:

In respect of the Investing in Our Schools Program, for each government, non-government and independent school within the electorate of Forrest, (a) what sum, in the form of a grant, was allocated to each school, and (b) for what project was each grant allocated.

Mr Garrett—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Attached as requested are the list of approved *Investing in Our Schools Programme* (IOSP) projects and grants for government and non-government schools in the electorate of Forrest.

There were a total of 126 projects approved for 51 government schools with total IOSP grant funds of \$5,394,055 in the electorate of Forrest (see List at **Attachment A**).

There were a total of 29 projects approved for 21 non-government schools with total IOSP grant funds of \$1,368,181 in the electorate of Forrest (see List at **Attachment B**).

ATTACHMENT A

Investing in Our Schools Programme - Government Schools - Electorate of Forrest

Suburb	School Name	Project Name	Grant Amount
Allanson	Allanson Primary School	Sports Fields	\$100,000
Augusta	Augusta Primary School	Sporting Infrastructure (Multi-purpose Court)	\$130,664
Australind	Australind Primary School	Playground Equipment	\$12,201
		Shade Structures	\$69,708
		Music and Drama Facility Extension and Refurbishment	\$68,091
	Australind Senior High School	Air Conditioning: Cooling	\$150,000
	Parkfield Primary School	Shade Structures	\$60,965
Balingup	Balingup Primary School	ICT Upgrade	\$45,719
		Fencing of School Perimeter	\$33,263
		Fencing Upgrade	\$7,986
		ICT Facilities	\$9,308
		Music and Drama Facilities	\$82,160
Boyanup	Boyanup Primary School	Canopy Roof Extension	\$9,000
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$55,409
		Floor Coverings	\$19,674
		Air Conditioning: Reverse Cycle	\$10,156
Brunswick Junction	Brunswick Junction Primary School	Play Equipment	\$34,536
Bunbury	Bunbury Primary School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$54,760
		Playground Equipment	\$12,650
		Furniture	\$87,315
	Bunbury Senior High School	Shade Structure	\$150,000
	Carey Park Primary School	Walkways	\$100,000
	College Row School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$33,051
		Drama/Performing Arts Equipment	\$2,348
		Sporting Equipment	\$924
		Playground Upgrade	\$40,953
		Shade Structures	\$16,432
		Furniture	\$5,920
		Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School	ICT- Notebooks
	Newton Moore Education Support Centre	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$49,206
		Library Resources and related Musical Instruments	\$1,445
		\$6,421	

QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Suburb	School Name	Project Name	Grant Amount
		Sporting Equipment	\$1,283
	Newton Moore Senior High School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$97,990
	Withers Primary School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$43,470
		Playground Upgrade	\$70,266
Burekup	River Valley Primary School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$45,730
Busselton	Busselton Primary School	Small Scale Extension, ICT Upgrade and Library Resources	\$115,032
	Busselton Senior High School	Refurbishment of Music facilities	\$81,027
		ICT Improvements	\$47,430
	Geographe Education Support Centre	Air Conditioning: Reverse Cycle	\$27,085
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$25,695
		Outdoor Learning Area	\$42,200
		Administration Office Equipment	\$5,020
	Geographe Primary School	School Grounds Improvements	\$27,600
		Fitness Track	\$19,699
		Soft Fall Play Area	\$54,042
	West Busselton Primary School	Classroom Improvements	\$149,363
Capel	Capel Primary School	Play Equipment and Shade Structure	\$83,955
		Outdoor Learning Area	\$9,946
		Enclosures	\$6,094
Clifton Park	Clifton Park Primary School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$15,949
		Air Conditioning: Cooling	\$46,086
		Playground Equipment	\$21,432
		General Classrooms	\$16,489
Collie	Amaroo Primary School	Air Conditioning	\$47,302
		ICT Facilities	\$19,678
		Play Equipment	\$23,917
		Fencing	\$4,924
	Collie Senior High School	Drama/Performing Arts Equipment	\$44,670
	Fairview Primary School	School Ground Improvements and Security Measures	\$83,853
		Classroom Improvements - Furniture	\$35,794
	Wilson Park Primary School	ICT Facilities	\$88,617
Cowaramup	Cowaramup Primary School	Musical Instruments	\$5,560
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$51,538
		Sporting Equipment	\$7,871
		Floor Coverings	\$12,579
		Air Conditioning: Reverse Cycle	\$17,169
Dalyellup	Dalyellup College	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$50,019
		Shade Structures	\$49,981
Dardanup	Dardanup Primary School	ICT hardware upgrade	\$49,931

QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Suburb	School Name	Project Name	Grant Amount
Dardanup		Play Equipment	\$37,513
Donnybrook	Donnybrook District High School	Shade Structures	\$20,334
		Air-conditioning	\$118,283
Dunsborough	Dunsborough Primary School	Shade Structure and Upgrade of Play Equipment	\$85,448
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$61,780
East Bunbury	Cooinda Primary School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$16,852
		Shade Structures	\$82,972
Eaton	Eaton Community College	Classroom Improvements	\$14,940
		Air Conditioning: Reverse Cycle	\$122,698
	Eaton Primary School	Playground Equipment	\$39,993
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$58,980
	Glen Huon Primary School	Furniture	\$7,239
		Shade Structures	\$29,860
		School Grounds Improvements	\$5,150
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$50,758
Glen Iris	Picton Primary School	Air Conditioning: Reverse Cycle	\$99,074
Harvey	Harvey Primary School	Classroom Improvements	\$84,940
		Assembly area upgrade	\$50,000
	Harvey Senior High School	Classroom Improvements (Manual Arts Room)	\$58,338
		Science Laboratory	\$46,247
	WA College of Agriculture - Harvey	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$55,036
		Air Conditioning: Cooling	\$44,964
Karridale	Karridale Primary School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$9,666
		Upgrade Resource/Library Centre	\$18,392
		Sports Fields	\$70,779
Kirup	Kirup Primary School	Play Equipment	\$71,007
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$15,900
Margaret River	Margaret River Primary School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$2,270
		Enclosures	\$97,730
	Margaret River Senior High School	Small Scale Extensions	\$54,547
		Music Resources	\$45,453
Nannup	Nannup District High School	ICT and Computer Equipment	\$35,753
		Playground Improvement	\$30,017
		Landscaping Services and related	\$3,492
		Display Boards for Exhibition of Student's Work	\$4,680
		School Grounds Improvements	\$8,470
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$4,708
		Enclosures	\$6,356
		Shade Structures	\$5,550
		Home economic classroom improvement	\$973

QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Suburb	School Name	Project Name	Grant Amount
South Bunbury	Adam Road Primary School	School Security	\$42,163
		Shade Structures	\$59,750
	South Bunbury Education Support Centre	Small Scale Extensions	\$7,278
		School Grounds Improvements	\$8,648
		Shade Structures	\$8,276
		ICT and Computer Equipment	\$6,001
		Shade Structures	\$15,801
		Sheds and Storage Facilities	\$6,541
		Play Equipment	\$45,714
	South Bunbury Primary School	Security and Safety Equipment	\$32,250
		School Grounds Improvements	\$11,990
Vasse	Vasse Primary School	Air-conditioning	\$69,734
		Small Scale Extensions and School Ground Improvements	\$96,329
Yarloop	Yarloop Primary School	Library Resources and related	\$3,940
		Shade Structures	\$150,000
		Total - Government Schools - Forrest Electorate	\$5,394,055

ATTACHMENT B

Investing in Our Schools Programme -Non-Government Schools - Electorate of Forrest

Suburb	School Name	Project Name	Grant Amount
Australind	Australind Christian School	Provision of playground equipment, computers, bore pump, filter and school bus.	\$65,900
		Provision of a transportable building for use as a library.	\$56,250
Boyanup	Leschenault Catholic Primary School	Information Communication Technology equipment.	\$10,260
	Child Side School	Construction of outdoor learning environment.	\$40,000
		Site preparation for playing field.	\$52,500
Brunswick Junction	St Michael's School	Information Communication Technology equipment.	\$60,000
		Technology equipment.	\$60,000
	Bunbury Catholic College	Technology upgrade.	\$15,000
		Reading recovery room.	\$19,592
Bunbury	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Play equipment.	\$35,000
	St Mary's Catholic Primary School	Provision of information communication technology equipment.	\$56,000
		Construction of an ablutions block.	\$60,000
Busselton	Cornerstone Christian College	Construction of an ablutions block.	\$60,000
	St Joseph's School	Playground equipment and basketball hoop.	\$15,000

QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Suburb	School Name	Project Name	Grant Amount
		Provision of information communication technology equipment.	\$31,000
Dalyellup	Ocean Forest Lutheran College	Upgrade of power supply.	\$60,000
Dardanup	Our Lady of Lourdes School	Information Communication Technology equipment.	\$50,000
Donnybrook	St Mary's School	Undercover area	\$10,000
Dunsborough	Our Lady of the Cape Primary School	Playground equipment.	\$8,040
Forest Grove	Margaret River Independent School	Upgrade of multi-purpose sports area and provision of playground equipment, computers and IT equipment.	\$57,600
Glen Iris	Grace Christian School	Construction of multi-sport hard courts.	\$60,000
		Construction of primary play area including earthworks, equipment, shade, pathways and landscaping.	\$38,000
Harvey	St Anne's Catholic School	The replacement of carpet in Art room.	\$3,000
Margaret River	Margaret River Montessori School	Refurbishment of playground and provision of shade area, sporting equipment and storage shed.	\$31,200
		Provision of a multi-media projector, a portable PA system, computer hardware, furniture, shelving, a laser colour copier, an interactive whiteboard, music equipment and library books.	\$13,125
	St Thomas More Catholic Primary School	Cricket nets, fencing and shade.	\$10,000
Roelands	Hope Christian College	Construction of car park and shade area.	\$60,000
		Construction of Two General Learning Areas, Kitchen, Staff Preparation Area, Staff and Pupils Amenities, Playground, Site Development, Furniture and Equipment, Fire Services and Fees.	\$169,200
Yallingup	Yallingup Steiner School	Installation of two aboveground water tanks.	\$45,339
	Georgiana Molloy Anglican School	Construction of Four General Learning Areas, Activity Room, Site Development, Furniture and Fees.	\$180,000
		Purchase and installation of twelve interactive whiteboards, computers and data projectors.	\$56,175
		Total - Non-government - Electorate of Forrest	\$1,368,181

QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Immigration: Ministerial Intervention**(Question No. 47)**

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 26 October 2010:

- (1) In respect of decisions in the 2008, 2009 and 2010 (to 26 October) calendar years pursuant to section 351 of the *Migration Act 1958*, how many requests were made for ministerial intervention to overturn a decision of the Migration Review Tribunal, and of these, how many (a) ministerial interventions were made to overturn a decision, (b) requests for ministerial intervention were denied or withdrawn, and (c) interventions resulted in the granting of a visa, and what type of visas were granted.
- (2) How many requests were resolved using other methods, what were those methods and in which visa categories were those requests eventually resolved.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) In the 2008 and 2009 calendar years, the Minister received 1347 and 1207 requests for intervention respectively. Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, the Minister received 1131 requests for intervention.
- (b) In the 2008 calendar year, the Minister finalised some 902 requests for intervention. Of these requests, the Minister chose not to intervene under section 351 in 629 requests. In addition, the Department finalised some 438 requests for intervention and 9 requests for intervention were withdrawn.

In the 2009 calendar year, the Minister finalised some 586 requests. Of these requests for intervention, the Minister chose not to intervene under section 351 in 352 requests. In addition, the Department finalised some 262 requests for intervention and 27 requests for intervention were withdrawn.

Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, the Minister finalised some 766 requests for intervention. Of these requests, the Minister chose not to intervene under section 351 in 534 requests. In addition, the Department finalised some 315 requests for intervention and 26 requests for intervention were withdrawn.

- (c) In the 2008 and 2009 calendar years, the Minister intervened under section 351 and granted visas to a total of 273 and 234 people respectively. Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, the Minister intervened under section 351 and granted visas to a total of 232 people.

The types of visas that were granted to these people consisted of:

- 101 (Child)
- 115 (Remaining Relative)
- 116 (Carer)
- 117 (Orphan Relative)
- 120 (Labour agreement)
- 121 (Employer nomination)
- 143 (Contributory Parent)
- 151 (Former resident)
- 155 (Five year resident return)
- 176 (Skilled - Sponsored)
- 202 (Global special humanitarian)

410 (Retirement)
444 (Special Category)
457 (Business (long stay))
475 (Skilled – Regional Sponsored)
476 (Skilled – Recognised Graduate)
485 (Skilled – Graduate)
562 (Iranian postgraduate student)
571 (Schools sector)
572 (Vocational education and training sector)
573 (Higher education sector)
580 (Student Guardian)
676 (Tourist)
685 (Medical treatment (Long stay))
801 (Spouse)
802 (Child (Residence))
814 (Interdependency)
826 (Interdependency)
835 (Remaining Relative)
836 (Carer)
837 (Orphan Relative)
838 (Aged Dependent Relative)
845 (Established business in Australia)
851 (Resolution of status (permanent))
856 (Employer Nomination Scheme)
857 (Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme)
880 (Skilled – Independent Overseas Student)
885 (Skilled – Independent)
890 (Business Owner (Residence))
892 (State/Territory Sponsored Business Owner (Residence))

- (2) In the 2008 and 2009 calendar years, 104 and 31 people respectively had their requests for intervention finalised by the Department due to their requests being inappropriate to consider under section 351. Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, 81 requests for intervention were finalised by the Department as inappropriate to consider. A number of factors may have contributed to the Department resolving their request in this way including that the person may have had other ongoing matters before the Department, or the person had their immigration status resolved through the grant of a substantive visa before their request for intervention was finalised.

A number of people who withdrew their requests for intervention under section 351 departed Australia in order to lodge an application for a visa offshore.

Immigration: Ministerial Intervention**(Question No. 48)**

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 26 October 2010:

- (1) In respect of decisions in the 2008, 2009 and 2010 (to 26 October) calendar years pursuant to section 417 of the Migration Act 1958, how many requests were made for ministerial intervention to overturn a decision of the Refugee Review Tribunal, and of these, how many (a) ministerial interventions were made to overturn a decision, (b) requests for ministerial intervention were denied or withdrawn, and (c) interventions resulted in the granting of a visa, and what type of visas were granted.
- (2) How many requests were resolved using other methods, what were those methods and in which visa categories were those requests eventually resolved.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) In the 2008 and 2009 calendar years, the Minister received 3468 and 2549 requests for intervention respectively. Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, the Minister received 1897 requests for intervention.
- (b) In the 2008 calendar year, the Minister finalised some 2240 requests for intervention. Of these requests, the Minister chose not to intervene under section 417 in 1560 requests. In addition, the Department finalised some 1129 requests for intervention and 47 requests for intervention were withdrawn.

In the 2009 calendar year, the Minister finalised some 1903 requests. Of these requests for intervention, the Minister chose not to intervene under section 417 in 1410 requests. In addition, the Department finalised some 918 requests for intervention and 43 requests for intervention were withdrawn.

Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, the Minister finalised some 1690 requests for intervention. Of these requests, the Minister chose not to intervene under section 417 in 1252 requests. In addition, the Department finalised some 645 requests for intervention and 43 requests for intervention were withdrawn.

- (c) In the 2008 and 2009 calendar years, the Minister intervened under section 417 and granted visas to a total of 680 and 493 people respectively. Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, the Minister intervened under section 417 and granted visas to a total of 438 people.

The types of visas that were granted to these people consisted of:

- 151 (Former resident)
- 155 (Five year resident return)
- 202 (Global special humanitarian)
- 457 (Business (long stay))
- 485 (Skilled – Graduate)
- 495 (Skilled-Independent Regional (Provisional))
- 573 (Higher education sector)
- 676 (Tourist)
- 685 (Medical Treatment (Long stay))
- 801 (Spouse)
- 820 (Spouse (Extended Eligibility))

835 (Remaining Relative)

836 (Carer)

838 (Aged Dependent Relative)

856 (Employer Nomination Scheme)

857 (Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme)

- (2) In 2008 and 2009 calendar years, the Minister chose to intervene and grant visas under another public interest power other than under section 417 for a total of 72 and 33 people respectively.

Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, the Minister chose to intervene and grant visas under another public interest power other than under section 417 for a total of 17 people.

In the 2008 and 2009 calendar years, 82 and 153 people respectively had their requests for intervention finalised by the Department due to their requests being inappropriate to consider under section 351. Between 1 January 2010 and 22 October 2010, 71 requests for intervention were finalised by the Department as inappropriate to consider. A number of factors may have contributed to the Department resolving their request in this way including that the person may have had other ongoing matters before the Department, or following the introduction of the Partner pathway in September 2009, the person became eligible to lodge a valid application for a Partner visa onshore.

Business Events Australia
(Question No. 66 amended)

Mr Baldwin asked the Minister for Tourism, in writing, on 28 October 2010:

For (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12, (d) 2012-13, and (e) 2013-14, what was/is the total budget for Business Events Australia, and total sum of the contribution from (i) the Commonwealth, (ii) industry sources, and (iii) other sources.

Mr Martin Ferguson—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) For 2009/10 the actual budget for Business Events Australia was (i) \$4.1 million (ii) \$1.16 million and (iii) \$0. In 2009/10 Business expenditure included \$1 million from the \$9 million stimulus.
- (b) For 2010/11 the budget for Business Events Australia was (i) \$3 million (ii) \$1.06 million and (iii) \$0.
- (c) For 2011/12 the estimated budget for Business Events Australia is (i) \$3 million (ii) \$1.06 million and (iii) \$0.
- (d) For 2012/13 the estimated budget for Business Events Australia is (i) \$3 million (ii) \$1.06 million and (iii) \$0.
- (e) For 2013/14 the estimated budget for Business Events Australia is (i) \$3 million (ii) \$1.06 million and (iii) \$0.

Defence: Gap Year Places
(Question No. 71)

Mr Robert asked the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, in writing, on 15 November 2010:

In the: (a) Royal Australian Navy, (b) Australian Army; and (c) Royal Australian Air Force, how many Australian Defence Force Gap Year places will be made available in 2011, and of these, how many (in each service) will be reserved for female applicants.

Mr Snowden—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) to (c) The annual Gap Year intake has been re-shaped to reflect Defence's ability to provide a quality Gap Year experience, and the training capacity available within the Australian Defence Force

(ADF). The changes reflect recent strong recruitment and retention in the permanent elements of the three Services.

The large Navy intake to date has begun to affect the training and on-the-job experience available for both its Gap Year and permanent members. Consequently from 2011, Navy's intake will be 100 per year (down from 267). Army's intake will remain at 317. Air Force has found that conducting the Gap Year risks bringing in more people than can be accommodated and impacts on core training for permanent Air Force members. Consequently, Air Force's intake of 116 will be suspended in 2011.

No places will be specifically reserved for female applicants. However, the Gap Year has proved very popular with young women, who have consistently been strongly represented in the program. As at 1 October 2010, 30 per cent of Gap Year participants were female – more than double the female representation in the ADF overall. By Service as at 1 October 2010, the Gap year consisted of 44 per cent female for Navy, 18 per cent for Army and 35 per cent for Air Force.

Tax Practitioners Board

(Question No. 73)

Mr Fletcher asked the Assistant Treasurer, in writing, on 16 November 2010:

In respect of the Tax Practitioners Board (TPA), is it a fact that applicants for registration with the TPA are (a) being registered, and (b) having their details published online, and (c) being 'spammed' for commercial products, prior to being notified that their registration has been successful; if so, what changes does the TPA intend making to its procedures to ensure that applicants are notified of the outcome of their applications before their details are made publicly available.

Mr Shorten—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

I am advised that issues in relation to registration and 'spamming' have been raised with the Tax Practitioners Board (TPB) on a small number of occasions and the Board will determine if any further action is required.

The TPB is required to establish and maintain a register of tax and BAS agents on the internet which includes the name of the registered tax or BAS agent and their contact details. An agent's details may appear on the online register before they receive a letter of acknowledgement because the issuing of letters is a manual process whereas the updating of the information on the online register is automated. The TPB is addressing this issue and these changes are due to occur in the first quarter of 2011. Such changes will include automated emails being sent to agents at the same time as their details are placed on the Register and limiting contact detail information to business addresses, rather than emails.

Broadband

(Question No. 75)

Mr Fletcher asked the Minister representing the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, in writing, on 16 November 2010:

In respect of the statement by the Secretary of the Minister's department, that there are 14 officers around the country hired to do broadband promotions (Senate Environment and Communications Legislative Committee, *Supplementary Budget Estimates*, 19 October 2010, pages 109-10): were any of these individuals (a) personally known to the Minister prior to being employed; (b) hired on the personal recommendation of the Minister; and/or (c) previously employed by a union or in the personal office of a Australian Labor Party politician; if so, what is their background and employment history.

Mr Albanese—The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

On 2 November 2010, the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE) wrote the Senate Standing Committee Secretary to correct Hansard.

The correct answer is that there are eight Regional Broadband Coordinators in total providing public information on the National Broadband Network. The fourteen officers relate to other local activities supporting digital switchover. The Digital Switchover Taskforce provides funding to local organisations to employ Digital Switchover Liaison Officers and by the end of 2010, it is expected that fourteen will have been employed.

To support the implementation of the Regional Backbone Blackspots Program, the Department has appointed eight Regional Broadband Coordinators to promote of broadband and raise awareness of the Regional Backbone Blackspots Program and broadband initiatives in blackspot route locations of South West Gippsland, Geraldton, Victor Harbor, Darwin, Emerald to Longreach/Mt Isa, Toowoomba to Arcadia, Gawler to Renmark and Shepparton to Mildura/Broken Hill.

The recruitment process was undertaken in accordance with the principles and processes used for the appointment of non ongoing APS employees. A specific selection process strategy was prepared based on the department's Non-SES Recruitment Policy and Guide.

The eight positions were publicly advertised in 28 relevant state, regional and local newspapers, in seek.com and in www.apsjobs.gov.au

Applications were assessed through a competitive, merit-based and transparent selection process. Assessment was against the selection criteria and only those that met the criteria to the highest degree were shortlisted for telephone interviews. This was followed by face-to-face interviews for those who ranked highly at the telephone interviews.

Two selection panels were established to facilitate the selection of candidates. Each panel comprised senior departmental employees and a local external representative for each region (senior officials from relevant Regional Development Australia offices).

All shortlisted candidates were asked to declare any potential or perceived conflict of interest at both telephone and face-to-face interviews. Following the interviews, referee reports were sought to verify the candidates' claims.

Following completion of the process, offers of employment were made to six successful candidates. Two positions were unable to be filled through this process and were subsequently filled through the secondment of existing Australian Public Service employees.

Additional Information

- All appointments were subject to police checks, obtaining a protected level security clearance, satisfying a health assessment and confirming they possessed a current driver's licence.
- Coordinators are engaged as non-ongoing staff employed by the department in accordance with the public service regulations for a specified term for non-ongoing employment.

Based on information submitted by the coordinators to the department, no Regional Broadband Coordinator was previously employed by a union or in the personal office of a Australian Labor Party politician.

Atomic Weapons Testing

(Question No. 79)

Mr Simpkins asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 16 November 2010: In respect of the collection of human adult and children remains in Perth, Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne from December 1957 for use in atomic weapons testing in Australia:

- (1) Between what specific dates did this practice occur.

- (2) Was family or parental consent obtained before the remains were taken and used for testing.
- (3) From what hospitals/locations were the remains taken, and has the Government written to each family to inform them of what occurred; if not, when will it do this.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Between 1957 to 1978.
- (2) No.
- (3) Bone samples were obtained from a number of hospitals and coronial institutions in mainland capital cities around Australia. Bone samples were removed from approximately 22,000 bodies. In all cases where there was remaining ash residue that could be identified, the residue was returned to the appropriate institution in each state (relevant hospital or state health department). It was anticipated that state authorities would make those residues available to the families upon request. All unidentifiable ashed remains were interred in the grounds of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency's Yallambie laboratories in a ceremony in May 2007.

Epping to Parramatta Rail Link

(Question No. 82)

Mr Alexander asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 17 November 2010:

Was he aware prior to the announcement on 11 August 2010 to provide Federal funding towards construction of the Epping to Parramatta Rail Link, that (a) the NSW Government Metropolitan Transport Plan 2010; and (b) Infrastructure Australia's National Infrastructure Priorities Report released on 30 June 2010; did not prioritise the Epping Parramatta Rail Link; if so, on what grounds was the decision made to provide Federal funding for this project.

Mr Albanese—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Parramatta to Chatswood rail link was first promised by then NSW Transport Minister Bruce Baird in 1994.

It was identified in the NSW Metropolitan Transport Plan as a project that could be brought forward if federal funds were to become available.

Infrastructure Australia noted in its June 2010 report Getting the fundamentals right for Australia's infrastructure priorities that it would continue to work with the NSW Government "to further develop Sydney's public transport network to ensure that Sydney continues to develop on a sustainable basis". The Parramatta to Epping Rail Link project is part of the Sydney public transport network.

The only risk to this project going ahead is the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, and the Leader of the NSW Opposition, Barry O'Farrell.

Epping to Parramatta Rail Link

(Question No. 84)

Mr Alexander asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 17 November 2010:

In respect of Federal Government funding towards construction of the Epping to Parramatta Rail Link:

- (1) What infrastructure planning has been completed, by whom, and what are the conclusions.
- (2) What further detailed infrastructure planning will be undertaken prior to construction, and what are the proposed completion dates for planning.
- (3) When will the first passenger services begin, and will all current and planned CityRail carriages be able to be used on the proposed Epping to Parramatta Rail Link.

Mr Albanese—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) The NSW Government granted planning approval in 2002 for the construction of the entire 28 km Parramatta Rail Link project, which includes the now completed Epping to Chatswood section and the 14 km section between Parramatta and Epping.
- (2) Transport NSW will be responsible for the project development, including design and planning approvals.
- (3) This is a matter for the NSW Government as they are the service provider.

Epping to Parramatta Rail Link

(Question No. 85)

Mr Alexander asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 17 November 2010:

In respect of Federal Government funding towards construction of the Epping to Parramatta Rail Link:

- (1) What are the (a) anticipated costs, (b) construction commencements, and (c) completion dates, for each stage of this project.
- (2) What is the overall cost estimate for part (1), and what proportion of this cost will be met by the (a) Australian, and (b) NSW Government.
- (3) Have formal agreements/contracts been signed with external parties for the detailed planning of this project; if so, who are the parties and what are their roles.
- (4) What is the procedure and timetable for the tender process for the construction of this project, and what criteria will be used to select the most suitable construction company or companies.

Mr Albanese—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) and (2) The estimated project cost is \$2.6 billion. Planning work is underway. The Australian Government contribution to the project is \$2.1 billion.
- (3) and (4) The NSW Government is responsible for the detailed planning and tender processes of the project.

Male Health

(Question No. 87)

Mr Hawke asked the Minister for Indigenous Health, in writing, on 17 November 2010:

- (1) For the periods 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13, (a) what programs will comprise the National Male Health Policy, and (b) what sum of money has the Government allocated to (i) the National Male Health Policy, (ii) Men's Sheds, (iii) local governments for their Men's Sheds programs, and (iv) the Australian Men's Shed Association.
- (2) Can he confirm that the Australian Men's Shed Association has been allocated funding of \$3 million over four years; if so, what consultation was undertaken with the Association prior to the funding being allocated and what other organisations, if any, were consulted or considered for the funding.

Mr Snowden—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) For the periods 2010-2011, 2011-12 and 2012-13 the following new programs will support the National Male Health Policy (the Policy):
 - Strong Fathers Strong Families to promote the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers and partners, grandfathers and uncles, and encourage them to actively participate in their children's and families' lives, particularly in the antenatal period and early childhood development years;

- The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health which will consider the social determinants of male health;
 - Male Health Bulletins to focus on specific areas of male health;
 - Health Promotion Materials targeting men at key transition points in their lives; and
 - Australian Men's Sheds Association (AMSA) to provide meeting places where men can find social support and camaraderie to improve their health and wellbeing.
- (b) The Australian Government has allocated the following funding amounts in the 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 financial years.
- (i) Overall the Australian Government committed \$16.7 million (GST Exc), including \$4.75 million (GST Exc) in 2010-11, \$5.25 million (GST Exc) in 2011-12 and \$5.65 million (GST Exc) in 2012-13 to the Policy.
 - (ii) The Men's Sheds Development Program will contribute \$250,000 (GST Exc) per annum over the 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 financial years to men's sheds, totalling \$750,000 (GST Exc) in direct funding to men's sheds. Under the Shed Development Program, a men's shed is any community-based, non-commercial organisation which is open to all men where: the primary activity is the provision of a safe, friendly meaningful projects at their own pace, in their own time and in the company of other men and a primary objective is to advance the health and well-being of their members.
 - (iii) No funding has been specifically allocated to local governments for their men's shed programs. However, local governments are eligible to apply for funding through the Shed Development Program.
 - (iv) The Australian Men's Shed Association will receive \$3 million (GST Exc) in funding over four years. This includes funding for the Shed Development Program. The funding allocation is \$1 million (GST Exc) in 2010-11, \$1 million (GST Exc) in 2011-12 and \$0.4 million (GST Exc) in 2012-13.
- (2) The Australian Men's Shed Association has been allocated \$3 million (GST Exc) over four years. This includes the \$750,000 (GST Exc) allocated to the Shed Development Program.

Funding is intended to provide support to all men's sheds through a single funding stream. Men's sheds can benefit from this investment regardless of their affiliation with any particular shed organisation.

The Department considered that AMSA, as the widely recognised peak body for men's sheds, was ideally placed to undertake this project given its linkages and long standing support for the recognised principles of sustainable community engagement, and work to empower local communities to own, lead and organise grassroots health and wellbeing interventions. AMSA's broad membership base also supported this funding decision.

Mensheds Australia operates on a fee for service model. Funding to AMSA will expand and build on AMSA's current functions and operation as a community based model. The Department is encouraging collaboration between AMSA and Mensheds Australia to further the development of all men's sheds.

Funding of AMSA is consistent with program objectives. It will enable the organisation to develop a national infrastructure that will benefit men's sheds on the ground and ensure continuity of services. Funding will also allow for the organisation to recruit and retain suitably qualified professionals to expand and improve the quality of health promotion activities delivered through the sheds, and to work effectively with the business and community sector to ensure ongoing AMSA viability.

All men's shed members will have free access to the range of support materials to be developed by AMSA, which will include an up-dated manual on how to set up a men's shed; an interactive website and virtual on-line shed to be developed in partnership with *beyondblue*; and an interactive program to address occupational health and safety issues in sheds.

Defence Properties

(Question No. 88)

Mr Robert asked the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, in writing, on 17 November 2010:

- (1) How many:
 - (a) Defence houses and units are retained by Defence, and in what locations;
 - (b) of the houses and units in part (a), by location, currently have service personnel residing in them;
 - (c) Defence owned houses and units are being used to house refugees or those seeking asylum; and
 - (d) houses and units, by location, are owned and managed by Defence Housing Australia (DHA).
- (2) What is the cost per annum of Defence managing its own housing stock?
- (3) Why has Defence not handed over its housing stock to DHA?

Mr Snowdon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) and (b)

The following table provides the number of Defence houses, by location, that are retained by Defence and of those houses, the number currently occupied by Defence personnel:

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) manages these Defence owned properties.

Defence Owned Housing Numbers as at 31/10/2010		
	Defence Owned Housing Stock	Number Occu- pied by Defence Personnel
New South Wales		
Sydney	29	24
Liverpool	17	17
Richmond/Glenbrook	32	30
Newcastle/Hunter	64	61
Wagga Wagga	203	187
Nowra	57	51
Total New South Wales	402	370
Queensland		
Townsville	40	30
Cairns	5	5
Brisbane (Includes Canungra)	74	38
Ipswich	33	19
Toowoomba	31	24
Total Queensland	183	116
Northern Territory		
Darwin (includes Alice Springs)	678	441
Tindal/Katherine	293	283
Total Northern Territory	971	724

Defence Owned Housing Numbers as at 31/10/2010		
	Defence Owned Housing Stock	Number Occu- pied by Defence Personnel
Australian Capital Territory		
Canberra (including Queanbeyan)	194	177
Total Australian Capital Territory	194	177
Victoria		
Melbourne (incl Cerberus)	139	122
Puckapunyal/Seymour	315	272
Wodonga	28	26
Sale	64	56
Total Victoria	546	476
Western Australia		
Perth	1	1
Karratha	5	4
Regional WA	20	18
Total Western Australia	26	23
South Australia		
Adelaide	20	15
Total South Australia	20	15
Tasmania		
Hobart	41	36
Total Tasmania	41	36
Total Australia	2,383	1,937

- (c) A total of 81 houses at Inverbrackie, South Australia, which are surplus to Defence requirements, have been made available for use by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.
- (d) The following table provides the number of houses and units that are owned/leased and managed by DHA. Accommodation leased by DHA is included.

DHA Owned/leased Housing numbers as at 31/10/2010	
	DHA Owned/ Leased Stock
New South Wales	
Sydney	1642
Liverpool	790
Richmond	711
Newcastle	985
Wagga Wagga	240
Nowra	308
Total New South Wales	4676
Queensland	
Townsville	1908
Cairns	235
Brisbane	1581
Ipswich	803
Toowoomba	191
Total Queensland	4718
Northern Territory	
Darwin	1393

DHA Owned/leased Housing numbers as at 31/10/2010	
	DHA Owned/ Leased Stock
Katherine	105
Total Northern Territory	1498
Australian Capital Territory	
Canberra (including Queanbeyan)	1784
Total Australian Capital Territory	1784
Victoria	
Melbourne (incl Cerberus)	814
Seymour (Puckapunyal)	3
Wodonga	264
Sale	65
Total Victoria	1146
Western Australia	
Rockingham	371
Perth (incl Pearce)	437
Karratha	108
Regional WA	43
Total Western Australia	958
South Australia	
Adelaide	954
Total South Australia	954
Tasmania	
Hobart	36
Total Tasmania	36
Total Australia	15,770

- (2) Total expenditure incurred by Defence in Financial Year 2009-10 for the management and maintenance services provided by DHA for Defence owned houses was \$15.572 million.
- (3) Defence owned houses are located on Defence bases or off-base in limited or remote locations. Under commercial arrangements between Defence and DHA, Defence is responsible for the provisioning of these houses.

Bruce Highway

(Question No. 89)

Mr Truss asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 18 November 2010:

When is construction work expected to commence on Section A of the Cooroy to Curra section of the Bruce Highway duplication in Queensland.

Mr Albanese—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

After 12 years of inaction by the Howard Government, the Gillard Labor Government is investing \$488 million in Cooroy to Curra Section B on which construction is now well underway.

A further \$200 million has been allocated towards planning work on section A, C and D of the Cooroy to Curra section.

Visas

(Question No. 91)

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 22 November 2010:

In respect of his department's Special Humanitarian Program, how many visas were issued in 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 and, in each year, how many of these visas were issued to (a) family members of permanent protection visa holders (subclass 866) under the split family provisions and (b) persons offshore sponsored by Australian citizens not being the holder of a subclass 866 visa.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The table below outlines the number of Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) visas granted in each of the years: 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 (to 19 November 2010). The table outlines how many of these visas were granted under the split family provisions, that is to the immediate family members (spouses, de facto partners, dependent children and parents of minors) of persons previously granted permanent visas under the Humanitarian Program, including persons who held subclass 866 visas, and how many SHP visas were granted on other grounds.

	Financial year			
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11 YTD ¹
Subclass 202 (Global Special Humanitarian) visas granted under split family provisions				
Split family of subclass 866 (Protection) visa holders	1,256	854	970	250
Split family of subclass 851 (Resolution of Status) visa holders ²	0	18	46	0
Split family of subclass 202 (Global Special Humanitarian) visa holders	191	297	251	111
Other subclass 202 visas granted ³	3,579	3,417	1,977	239
Total subclass 202 visas granted	5,026	4,586	3,244	600

1. Year to date is as at 19 November 2010.

2. Temporary Protection and Temporary Humanitarian visa holders were granted Resolution of Status visas.

3. Includes persons granted subclass 202 visas offshore on grounds other than split family, as well as subclass 202 visas granted onshore through Ministerial Intervention.

In respect of part (b) of this question, it should be noted that, without going in to individual records, we cannot distinguish whether or not the proposer is an Australian citizen. Under the Special Humanitarian Program, proposers may be:

- an Australian citizen,
- an Australian permanent resident,
- an Australian organisation, or
- an eligible New Zealand citizen.

Asylum Seekers**(Question No. 92)**

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 22 November 2010:

Further to his answer to question in writing no. 16 (*House Hansard*, 15 November 2010, Pages 204-5), what are the reasons for his department not collecting or aggregating statistics on persons who arrive in Australia without any form of travel or identity documents.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

DIAC does collect and aggregate statistics on people who are detected arriving without some form of travel or identity documents. They are collected and aggregated primarily for border security purposes, including to analyse trends in irregular movement to Australia. Question 16 asked about tracking such data through to those who are ultimately found to be refugees and are granted permanent residence. It is that tracking which is not readily accessible.

Asylum Seekers**(Question No. 93)**

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 22 November 2010:

In respect of his discussions with the Government of East Timor and neighbouring countries concerning the establishment of a regional processing centre in East Timor, what sum of funding has been allocated to this election commitment during 2010-11 and in the forward estimates.

Mr Bowen—The answer to the honourable member's question is:

In respect to this election commitment, no funding has been allocated during 2010-11 or the forward estimates.

Human Rights: Vietnam**(Question No. 100)**

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 22 November 2010:

Has he or his department raised with the Vietnamese authorities, the issue of the recent imprisonment of three Vietnamese labour unionists Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung, Do Thi Minh Hanh and Doan Huy Chuong, which was condemned by Amnesty International; if not, when will it be raised; if so, will he advise the parliament of any response received.

Mr Rudd—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government shares the honourable member's concerns about the recent conviction of the 3 Vietnamese labor unionists Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung, Do Thi Minh Hanh and Doan Huy Chuong.

Australia raises human rights concerns with the Vietnamese Government at appropriate opportunities, including through the regular Human Rights Dialogue.

The Australian Embassy in Hanoi made representations on these cases to the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10 December 2010.

It is not appropriate to comment publicly on the Vietnamese Government's response to specific human rights representations as doing so could undermine our efforts with respect to the individuals concerned.

Afghanistan
(Question No. 103)

Mr Fletcher asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 22 November 2010:

In light of the military and humanitarian commitment of Australia to Afghanistan, and Australia's belief in freedom of religion, what advocacy has the Australian Government undertaken with the Afghani Government in respect of laws and practices in Afghanistan that seek to prevent and punish conversion to religions other than Islam and ban organisations that preach other religions.

Mr Rudd—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government believes that freedom of belief and worship is a basic human right and that followers of any religion, including Islam, should be free to convert to other faiths, without discrimination or punishment.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is seeking clarification from the Afghan Government of the treatment under Afghan law of conversion and proselytisation, and the legal position of organisations that preach religions other than Islam. This information will give the Government a clearer picture of the situation facing religious converts in Afghanistan.

Superclinics
(Question No. 114)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

- (1) For each of the 28 GP Super Clinics promised during the 2010 election campaign, (a) what consultation has she undertaken, on what dates, in which locations, and why were these location chosen, and (b) did she or her department undertake an analysis of existing primary healthcare providers in the area of the promised clinic; if so, who are they and what are the results.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) The Minister for Health and Ageing, following liaison with local members, identified 13 of the 28 new GP Super Clinic locations for community consultation. Consultations will commence over the coming months and continue into early 2011. The identification of the locations for a GP Super Clinic was part of the Government's 2010-11 election commitment.
- (b) The Department of Health and Ageing did not undertake an analysis of existing primary healthcare providers.

Superclinics
(Question No. 115)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

- (1) For the GP Super Clinics at (a) Jindabyne, NSW, (b) Cobram, Victoria, (c) Northam, WA, and (d) Rockingham, WA, what are the names of the proposed operators, how were they found, and what other operators were considered.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) The names of the proposed operators for the GP Super Clinics identified are:
- (a) Jindabyne GP Super Clinic - the Snowy River Shire Council and the Southern General Practice Network.
- (b) Cobram GP Super Clinic - the Cobram District Hospital.
- (c) Northam GP Super Clinic - the Wheatbelt GP Network.
- (d) Rockingham GP Super Clinic - the Rockingham Kwinana Division of General Practice.

The identification of these operators was part of the Government's 2010 election commitment and therefore decisions of Government.

Coordinated Care for Diabetes

(Question No. 116)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

In respect of the 2010 Budget measure Coordinated Care for Diabetes, (a) what consultation was undertaken prior to this Budget announcement, (b) what sum of money has been allocated, and (c) what sum of money will be spent on the pilot over the forward estimates.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) The Coordinated Care for Diabetes program responded to the directions set out in the National Primary Health Care Strategy, and the work of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, both of which included extensive public consultation processes and expert input from a wide range of health professionals. As the Coordinated Care for Diabetes program was a Budget measure, there was no public consultation in relation to the specific measure prior to its announcement.
- (b) Funding of \$449.2 million over 4 years was allocated through the 2010-11 Budget. On 12 November 2010, I announced the early commencement of a pilot of the Coordinated Care for Diabetes health reform measure. A full rollout of the measure will be deferred until after the results of the pilot are known.
- (c) Funding of \$30.2 million over 4 years has been allocated to the Coordinated Care for Diabetes pilot, which will commence from 1 July 2011.

Practice Incentives Program: Diabetes Incentive

(Question No. 117)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

In respect of the Practice Incentives Program (Diabetes Incentive) in 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10: (a) what sum of money was paid in the (i) sign-on payment, (ii) outcomes payment, and (iii) incentive payment; (b) has a review been undertaken; if so, what was the outcome; if not, why not; and (c) how many (i) multi-disciplinary care plans for patients with diabetes were in place, and (ii) diabetic patients were registered with their general practitioner.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) The table below reflects total expenditure for sign-on payments, service incentive payments (SIPs) and outcomes payments. The Department of Health and Ageing's financial reporting system does not specify expenditure on individual components of the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) Diabetes Incentive.

Annual Expenditure (\$m) for the PIP Diabetes Incentive (sign-on, SIPs & outcomes)	
2006-07	14.888
2007-08	16.390
2008-09	15.764
2009-10	17.236

- (b) The PIP Diabetes Incentive was evaluated as part of an independent review of the National Integrated Diabetes Program in 2005. As the review was part of a Budget process, its findings have not been made public.
- (c) (i) Multi-disciplinary care plans are not a requirement of the PIP Diabetes Incentive.

- (ii) Diabetic patients are not required to register with their general practitioners for the purposes of the PIP Diabetes Incentive.

Practice Incentives Program: After Hours Incentive

(Question No. 119)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

In respect of the Practice Incentives Program After Hours Incentive, what sum of money:

- (a) is currently spent on (i) tier 1, (ii) tier 2, and (iii) tier 3; and
- (b) will be spent in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12, (iii) 2012-13, and (iv) 2013-14.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) In 2009-10, annual expenditure was around \$29 million for Tier 1, \$20 million for Tier 2, and \$8 million for Tier 3.
- (b) There is no specific funding allocation for the Practice Incentive Program After Hours Incentive as expenditure is demand driven. In 2009-10, annual expenditure was approximately \$58 million.

National Binge Drinking Strategy

(Question No. 121)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

- (1) In respect of the study undertaken by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction and co funded by DrinkWise Australia and the Australian Government From Ideal to Reality, what
(a) is the Government doing to change the drinking culture of 14 to 24 year old Australians, (b) sum of funding has the Government provided for national education campaigns in relation to alcohol abuse, and (c) sum of funding is the Government providing to the National Preventative Health Agency for national education campaigns in relation to alcohol abuse.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) (b) The Australian Government is committed to changing Australia's drinking culture and to addressing the problems associated with binge drinking, especially among young people. As part of a comprehensive approach, the Government is implementing the National Binge Drinking Strategy. With the addition of \$50 million through the 2010-11 Federal Budget, the Government has now committed \$103.5 million to the Strategy, including:
 - \$34.4 million for community level initiatives to confront the culture of binge drinking;
 - \$25 million for a community sponsorship fund to provide an alternative to alcohol industry sponsorship for local community sporting and cultural organisations;
 - \$20 million for advertising that confronts young people with the costs and consequences of binge drinking, 'Don't turn a night out into a nightmare' campaign;
 - \$19.1 million for the Early Intervention Pilot Program, working with the states and territories to divert young people who get themselves into trouble with drinking from the police system into counselling and health care; and
 - \$5 million for the enhancement of alcohol counselling and referral helplines.
- (c) Once established, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (the Agency) under the *Australian National Preventive Health Agency Act 2010*, provides that the functions of the Chief Executive Officer include conducting educational, promotional and community awareness programs relating to preventive health, including:
 - the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and good nutrition;
 - reducing tobacco use;

- minimising the harmful drinking of alcohol;
- discouraging substance abuse; and
- reducing the incidence of obesity amongst Australians.

All health ministers will play a role in determining the work program of the Agency by approving its strategic and operational plans.

Practice Incentives Program: Service Incentive Payments

(Question No. 122)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

- (1) By quarter since January 2002, how many service incentive payments have been made under the Practice Incentive Program for (a) diabetes, (b) cervical screening, (c) asthma, and (d) mental health.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) Number of Practice Incentives Program (PIP) diabetes service incentive payments (SIPs) by quarter since January 2002:

PIP diabetes SIPs					
	August	November	February	May	Total
2002/03	23,629	18,487	20,674	28,495	91,285
2003/04	28,129	27,629	25,577	31,964	113,299
2004/05	32,216	33,295	31,573	33,429	130,513
2005/06	36,046	38,299	35,127	34,908	144,380
2006/07	36,932	39,877	38,702	38,447	153,958
2007/08	39,631	40,785	39,390	41,803	161,609
2008/09	41,309	42,170	39,789	43,286	166,554
2009/10	41,919	43,059	40,138	44,183	169,299
2010/11	45,283	N/A	N/A	N/A	45,283

- (b) Number of PIP cervical screening SIPs by quarter since January 2002:

PIP cervical screening SIPs					
	August	November	February	May	Total
2002/03	12,836	11,972	10,577	12,917	48,302
2003/04	13,004	12,903	11,433	14,205	51,545
2004/05	14,593	14,732	12,824	16,228	58,377
2005/06	19,159	15,337	13,522	15,050	63,068
2006/07	15,240	16,055	20,321	24,296	75,912
2007/08	20,649	20,426	16,336	19,438	76,849
2008/09	19,155	17,302	14,403	18,832	69,692
2009/10	17,896	15,621	12,900	16,056	62,473
2010/11	16,289	N/A	N/A	N/A	16,289

- (c) Number of PIP asthma SIPs by quarter since January 2002:

PIP asthma SIPs					
	August	November	February	May	Total
2002/03	12,278	9,292	6,581	5,805	33,956
2003/04	7,783	7,953	5,399	4,559	25,694
2004/05	6,290	6,472	4,945	4,386	22,093
2005/06	5,615	5,913	4,527	3,570	19,625

PIP asthma SIPs					
	August	November	February	May	Total
2006/07	4,751	4,701	5,167	4,839	19,458
2007/08	7,439	6,909	5,183	5,582	25,113
2008/09	7,027	6,872	5,386	5,577	24,862
2009/10	7,254	6,919	5,447	5,883	25,503
2010/11	8,052	N/A	N/A	N/A	8,052

(d) Number of PIP mental health service incentive payments by quarter since January 2002:

The PIP Mental Health Incentive ceased in 2008. The requested data is not available.

Medicare

(Question No. 123)

Dr Southcott asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

By quarter since January 2002, how many practice nurse Medicare items have been claimed for (a) immunisation, (b) wound management, (c) monitoring and support for a person with chronic disease, and (d) cervical smears.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The first Medicare items for practice nurses commenced in February 2004. Service counts are shown from the first quarter in which the relevant item(s) commenced in the Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS) and have been tabulated by the date of processing of claims by Medicare Australia. The latest available quarter is July-September 2010.

All items listed are claimed by the medical practitioner but are provided on their behalf by a practice nurse, except for the item for monitoring and support for a person with chronic disease, which can be provided by either a practice nurse or a registered Aboriginal Health Worker on behalf of a medical practitioner. The item is claimed by the medical practitioner but the claim record does not show whether such a service was provided by a practice nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker.

This data is publicly available and was obtained from the Medicare Australia website, https://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/statistics/mbs_item.shtml.

(a) Immunisation. MBS item 10993.

Time Period	Services Claimed
January-March 2004	251,310
April-June 2004	578,479
July-September 2004	200,102
October-December 2004	176,395
January-March 2005	422,635
April-June 2005	831,077
July-September 2005	269,413
October-December 2005	231,381
January-March 2006	575,175
April-June 2006	832,808
July-September 2006	305,720
October-December 2006	260,021
January-March 2007	660,605
April-June 2007	916,637
July-September 2007	558,014
October-December 2007	512,552
January-March 2008	828,867

Time Period	Services Claimed
April-June 2008	1,491,504
July-September 2008	495,978
October-December 2008	439,993
January-March 2009	1,063,554
April-June 2009	1,461,130
July-September 2009	511,460
October-December 2009	1,768,739
January-March 2010	1,425,398
April-June 2010	1,810,431
July-September 2010	558,950

(b) Wound Management. MBS item 10996.

Time Period	Services Claimed
January-March 2004	97,750
April-June 2004	208,661
July-September 2004	235,216
October-December 2004	252,852
January-March 2005	276,173
April-June 2005	292,391
July-September 2005	297,621
October-December 2005	311,587
January-March 2006	347,156
April-June 2006	329,183
July-September 2006	344,658
October-December 2006	362,268
January-March 2007	393,867
April-June 2007	374,553
July-September 2007	379,306
October-December 2007	407,522
January-March 2008	433,913
April-June 2008	418,978
July-September 2008	418,931
October-December 2008	449,674
January-March 2009	451,952
April-June 2009	409,561
July-September 2009	415,435
October-December 2009	429,217
January-March 2010	455,044
April-June 2010	429,219
July-September 2010	444,993

(c) Monitoring and support for a person with chronic disease. This item may be provided by practice nurses or registered Aboriginal Health Workers. MBS item 10997.

Time Period	Services Claimed
July-September 2007	14,700
October-December 2007	28,062
January-March 2008	34,624
April-June 2008	36,686
July-September 2008	31,789

Time Period	Services Claimed
October-December 2008	34,795
January-March 2009	46,127
April-June 2009	44,501
July-September 2009	51,069
October-December 2009	53,848
January-March 2010	68,305
April-June 2010	70,829
July-September 2010	77,452

- (d) Cervical smears. MBS items 10994, 10995, 10998, 10999.

Time Period	Services Claimed
January-March 2005	1,926
April-June 2005	2,891
July-September 2005	3,673
October-December 2005	3,737
January-March 2006	4,610
April-June 2006	5,277
July-September 2006	5,910
October-December 2006	8,867
January-March 2007	11,826
April-June 2007	14,735
July-September 2007	16,451
October-December 2007	16,826
January-March 2008	18,158
April-June 2008	22,092
July-September 2008	22,188
October-December 2008	21,310
January-March 2009	22,893
April-June 2009	25,759
July-September 2009	26,174
October-December 2009	24,237
January-March 2010	26,109
April-June 2010	28,103
July-September 2010	30,603

Mental Health
(Question No. 126)

Mr Christensen asked the Minister for Health and Ageing, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

- (1) What criteria did the Government use to determine the locations for the establishment of headspace youth mental health centres throughout the nation.
- (2) Given the national publicity surrounding mental health in the Mackay region, particularly with the Four Corners episode which aired on 9 August 2010, what action is she taking to address the urgent need for a youth mental health centre in Mackay.
- (3) Will the Government consider providing funding for the establishment of a headspace centre in Mackay.

Ms Roxon—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

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- (1) The Australian Government, announced the locations of ten new headspace sites on 24 July 2010. The selection of the location of these sites was based on criteria agreed by the headspace Board, in consultation with the Australian Government. These criteria are as follows:

Priority will be given to areas that:

- have a significant, and possibly growing youth population, the needs of whom are not currently being met through existing headspace services;
 - experience known socio-economic disadvantage and/or have a high Indigenous youth population;
 - have experienced indicators of social distress in relation to youth mental health eg. incidence of youth suicide, imprisonment, or homelessness;
 - have sufficient local capacity and infrastructure to support integration and possibly co-location of headspace's four streams of support – physical health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and social/vocational support; and
 - will be supported by existing local service providers and community organisations.
- (2) The location of future headspace sites will be determined by headspace and the Commonwealth, having regard to the criteria set out in response (1) above.
- (3) Of the existing 30 headspace sites, four are located in Queensland - Fraser Coast (Maryborough), Gold Coast (Southport), Southern Downs (Warwick), Townsville (Thuringowa) - with an additional three Queensland sites announced in July 2010 at Brisbane South (Inala), Brisbane North (Nundah), and Cairns. Locations of future sites will be determined through the process outlined in response (2) above.

Centrelink: Family Spending and Savings Form

(Question No. 129)

Mrs Griggs asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

In respect of the Family Spending and Savings form released in June 2010: (a) did Centrelink consult with the Department of Defence concerning the decision to include Question 34; if so, with whom did it consult and on what date(s) did those discussions occur; and (b) what impact will this decision have on Defence Force Reservists.

Ms Plibersek—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (a) No, Question 34 is not a new question and therefore there has been no need to consult with the Department of Defence. A question relating to Defence Reserve payments has always been asked in the Spendings and Savings form so that a beneficial deduction can be applied to a Family Actual Means Test assessment.
- (b) Not applicable.

Ministers and Ministerial Staff: Mobile Phones and iPads

(Question No. 146)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

- (1) How many (a) mobile phones, (b) blackberries and (c) I-Pads are currently allocated to the (i) Minister, and (ii) the Minister's ministerial staff.
- (2) In respect of mobile phone usage between (a) 3 December 2007 and 24 November 2010, and (b) 24 June 2010 and 24 November 2010, what was the total cost for (a) the Minister, and (b) the Minister's ministerial staff.

- (3) For each month since December 2007, what was the cost of mobile phone usage for each mobile phone account allocated to the (a) Minister, and (b) Minister's ministerial staff.

Mr Burke—The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the member's question:

- (1) As at 25 November 2010, a total of 0 mobile phones, 11 blackberries and 2 iPads were allocated to the minister and ministerial staff.
- (2) Between 3 December 2007 and 24 November 2010, the total mobile phone usage cost for the minister and ministerial staff was \$130 113.21*.
- (3) For each month since December 2007, the total cost of mobile phone usage for the minister and ministerial staff was as follows*:

December 2007	Nil	December 2008	\$2 159.48	December 2009	\$4 258.24
January 2008	Nil	January 2009	\$6 395.14	January 2010	\$87.60
February 2008	\$616.22	February 2009	\$2 043.73	February 2010	\$12 324.35
March 2008	\$547.41	March 2009	\$3 459.16	March 2010	\$633.23
April 2008	\$196.36	April 2009	\$4 492.67	April 2010	\$5 964.17
May 2008	\$2 527.05	May 2009	\$4 093.63	May 2010	\$7 865.78
June 2008	\$4 953.14	June 2009	\$3 616.60	June 2010	\$5 713.34
July 2008	\$2 151.66	July 2009	\$4 841.32	July 2010	\$2 562.65
August 2008	\$402.78	August 2009	\$4 575.65	August 2010	\$1 474.69
September 2008	\$2 054.43	September 2009	\$5 642.90	September 2010	\$12 565.72
October 2008	\$3 316.05	October 2009	\$4 749.79	October 2010	\$1 121.18
November 2008	\$3 368.09	November 2009	\$3 836.30	November 2010	\$5 502.70

*Note: Owing to the reporting limitations of the department's Corporate Finance system, the information in this response is unable to be further disaggregated and may contain costs attributed to: the previous government; all Blackberry, mobile and satellite phones call costs; and the purchase of some Blackberry, mobile and satellite phone handsets. The fluctuations in the total cost of mobile phone use from month to month is attributed to the purchase of handsets and billing cycles which impact upon the department's ability to accrue costs.

Ministers and Ministerial Staff: Mobile Phones and iPads

(Question No. 152)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 25 November 2010:

- (1) How many (a) mobile phones, (b) blackberries and (c) I-Pads are currently allocated to the (i) Minister, and (ii) the Minister's ministerial staff.
- (2) In respect of mobile phone usage between (a) 3 December 2007 and 24 November 2010, and (b) 24 June 2010 and 24 November 2010, what was the total cost for (a) the Minister, and (b) the Minister's ministerial staff.
- (3) For each month since December 2007, what was the cost of mobile phone usage for each mobile phone account allocated to the (a) Minister, and (b) Minister's ministerial staff.

Ms Plibersek—The answer to the Honourable Member's question is as follows:

- (1) (a) There are no mobile phones currently held by the Minister or the Minister's ministerial staff.
- (b) (i) There is one Blackberry currently held by the Minister.
- (b) (ii) There are nine Blackberries currently held by the Minister's ministerial staff.
- (c) (i) There is one iPad currently held by the Minister.

- (ii) There is one iPad currently held by the Minister's ministerial staff.
- (2) The total mobile phone costs between (a) 3 December 2007 and 24 November 2010 and (b) 24 June 2010 and 24 November 2010 for (a) the Minister and (b) the Minister's ministerial staff is shown in the below table.

	(a) 3/12/07-24/11/10	(b) 24/06/2010-24/11/10
(a) Minister for Human Services	\$4,810.03	\$635.68
(b) Minister's Ministerial Staff	\$23,392.33	\$3,520.28

- (3) (a) For each month since December 2007, the total cost of mobile phone usage for the Minister was as follows: \$130.55 for December 2007, \$132.11 for January 2008, \$128.47 for February 2008, \$135.66 for March 2008, \$129.77 for April 2008, \$136.88 for May 2008, \$138.50 for June 2008, \$131.88 for July 2008, \$135.74 for August 2008, \$140.55 for September 2008, \$129.88 for October 2008, \$138.33 for November 2008, \$130.44 for December 2008, \$140.11 for January 2009, \$138.22 for February 2009, \$129.44 for March 2009, \$138.77 for April 2009, \$130.66 for May 2009, \$135.50 for June 2009, \$138.50 for July 2009, \$132.66 for August 2009, \$129.55 for September 2009, \$139.88 for October 2009, \$134.44 for November 2009, \$129.88 for December 2009, \$138.00 for January 2010, \$131.88 for February 2010, \$140.50 for March 2010, \$137.33 for April 2010, \$135.50 for May 2010, \$134.77 for June 2010, \$135.85 for July 2010, \$139.88 for August 2010, \$88.17 for September 2010, \$130.86 for October 2010, \$140.92 for November 2010.
- (b) For each month since December 2007, the total cost of mobile phone usage for the Minister's ministerial staff was as follows: \$549.37 for December 2007, \$556.77 for January 2008, \$579.10 for February 2008, \$574.35 for March 2008, \$560.40 for April 2008, \$590.84 for May 2008, \$597.92 for June 2008, \$612.95 for July 2008, \$612.65 for August 2008, \$622.97 for September 2008, \$621.18 for October 2008, \$623.75 for November 2008, \$630.15 for December 2008, \$626.34 for January 2009, \$624.13 for February 2009, \$621.55 for March 2009, \$630.77 for April 2009, \$621.43 for May 2009, \$698.54 for June 2009, \$697.43 for July 2009, \$682.80 for August 2009, \$690.40 for September 2009, \$696.88 for October 2009, \$692.20 for November 2009, \$690.59 for December 2009, \$696.19 for January 2010, \$691.17 for February 2010, \$689.60 for March 2010, \$703.14 for April 2010, \$692.95 for May 2010, \$693.54 for June 2010, \$697.43 for July 2010, \$682.80 for August 2010, \$466.19 for September 2010, \$722.35 for October 2010, \$951.51 for November 2010.