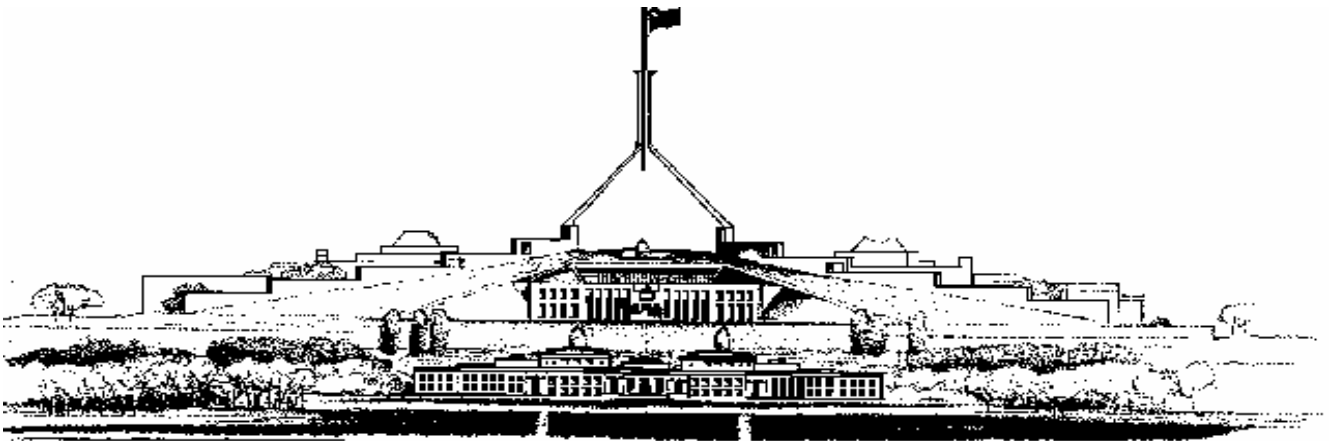




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 9, 2008

Thursday, 26 June 2008

FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SITTING DAYS—2008

Month	Date
February	12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
March	11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20
May	13, 14, 15, 26, 27, 28, 29
June	2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26
August	26, 27, 28
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25
October	13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23
November	10, 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27
December	1, 2, 3, 4

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

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

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Deputy Speaker—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP

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

Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Joseph Benedict Hockey MP

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

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Australian Labor Party

Leader—Hon. Kevin Michael Rudd MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Julia Eileen Gillard MP

Chief Government Whip—Hon. Leo Roger Spurway Price MP

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

Liberal Party of Australia

Leader—Hon. Brendan John Nelson MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP

Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Alex Somlyay MP

Opposition Whip—Mr Michael Andrew Johnson MP

Deputy Opposition Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals

Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP

Chief Whip—Mrs Kay Elizabeth Hull MP

Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

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Adams, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry	Lyons, Tas	ALP
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Andrews, Hon. Kevin James	Menzies, Vic	LP
Bailey, Hon. Frances Esther	McEwen, Vic	LP
Baldwin, Hon. Robert Charles	Paterson, NSW	LP
Bevis, Hon. Archibald Ronald	Brisbane, Qld	ALP
Bidgood, James Mark	Dawson, Qld	ALP
Billson, Hon. Bruce Fredrick	Dunkley, Vic	LP
Bird, Sharon Leah	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Bishop, Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen	Mackellar, NSW	LP
Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel	Curtin, WA	LP
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Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael	Holt, Vic	ALP
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Combet, Hon. Gregory Ivan, AM	Charlton, NSW	ALP
Costello, Hon. Peter Howard	Higgins, Vic	LP
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Crean, Hon. Simon Findlay	Hotham, Vic	ALP
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D'Ath, Yvette Maree	Petrie, Qld	ALP
Debus, Hon. Robert John	Macquarie, NSW	ALP
Downer, Hon. Alexander John Gosse	Mayo, SA	LP
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Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, Qld	LP
Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
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Ellis, Hon. Katherine Margaret	Adelaide, SA	ALP
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Ferguson, Hon. Martin John, AM	Batman, Vic	ALP
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Garrett, Hon. Peter Robert, AM	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
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Georganas, Steven	Hindmarsh, SA	ALP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
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Gillard, Hon. Julia Eileen	Lalor, Vic	ALP
Gray, Hon. Gary, AO	Brand, WA	ALP
Grierson, Sharon Joy	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
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Hall, Jill Griffiths	Shortland, NSW	ALP
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Hawker, Hon. David Peter Maxwell	Wannon, Vic	LP
Hayes, Christopher Patrick	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Hockey, Hon. Joseph Benedict	North Sydney, NSW	LP
Hull, Kay Elizabeth	Riverina, NSW	Nats
Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew	Flinders, Vic	LP
Irons, Stephen James	Swan, WA	LP
Irwin, Julia Claire	Fowler, NSW	ALP
Jackson, Sharryn Maree	Hasluck, WA	ALP
Jenkins, Henry Alfred	Scullin, Vic	ALP
Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey	Tangney, WA	LP
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Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, Qld	Ind
Keenan, Michael Fayat	Stirling, WA	LP
Kelly, Hon. Michael Joseph, AM	Eden-Monaro, NSW	ALP
Kerr, Hon. Duncan James Colquhoun, SC	Denison, Tas	ALP
King, Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, Vic	ALP
Laming, Andrew Charles	Bowman, Qld	LP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Lindsay, Hon. Peter John	Herbert, Qld	LP
Livermore, Kirsten Fiona	Capricornia, Qld	ALP
McClelland, Hon. Robert Bruce	Barton, NSW	ALP
Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin	Groom, Qld	LP
McKew, Hon. Maxine Margaret	Bennelong, NSW	ALP
Macklin, Hon. Jennifer Louise	Jagajaga, Vic	ALP
McMullan, Hon. Robert Francis	Fraser, ACT	ALP
Marino, Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Markus, Louise Elizabeth	Greenway, NSW	LP
Marles, Richard Donald	Corio, Vic	ALP
May, Margaret Ann	McPherson, Qld	LP
Melham, Daryl	Banks, NSW	ALP
Mirabella, Sophie	Indi, Vic	LP
Morrison, Scott John	Cook, NSW	LP
Moylan, Hon. Judith Eleanor	Pearce, WA	LP
Murphy, Hon. John Paul	Lowe, NSW	ALP
Neal, Belinda Jane	Robertson, NSW	ALP
Nelson, Hon. Brendan John	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Neumann, Shayne Kenneth	Blair, Qld	ALP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Neville, Paul Christopher	Hinkler, Qld	Nats
O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John	Gorton, Vic	ALP
Owens, Julie Ann	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Parke, Melissa	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Pearce, Hon. Christopher John	Aston, Vic	LP
Perrett, Graham Douglas	Moreton, Qld	ALP
Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Price, Hon. Leo Roger Spurway	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice	Sturt, SA	LP
Raguse, Brett Blair	Forde, Qld	ALP
Ramsey, Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Randall, Don James	Canning, WA	LP
Rea, Kerry Marie	Bonner, Qld	ALP
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
Roxon, Hon. Nicola Louise	Gellibrand, Vic	ALP
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	NP
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
Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Somlyay, Hon. Alexander Michael	Fairfax, Qld	LP
Southcott, Andrew John	Boothby, SA	LP
Stone, Hon. Sharman Nancy	Murray, Vic	LP
Sullivan, Jonathan Harold	Longman, Qld	ALP
Swan, Hon. Wayne Maxwell	Lilley, Qld	ALP
Symon, Michael Stuart	Deakin, Vic	ALP
Tanner, Hon. Lindsay James	Melbourne, Vic	ALP
Thomson, Craig Robert	Dobell, NSW	ALP
Thomson, Kelvin John	Wills, Vic	ALP
Trevor, Chris Allan	Flynn, Qld	ALP
Truss, Hon. Warren Errol	Wide Bay, Qld	Nats
Tuckey, Hon. Charles Wilson	O'Connor, WA	LP
Turnbull, Hon. Malcolm Bligh	Wentworth, NSW	LP
Turnour, James Pearce	Leichhardt, Qld	ALP
Vaile, Hon. Mark Anthony James	Lyne, NSW	Nats
Vale, Hon. Danna Sue	Hughes, NSW	LP
Vamvakinou, Maria	Calwell, Vic	ALP
Washer, Malcolm James	Moore, WA	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Windsor, Anthony Harold Curties	New England, NSW	Ind
Wood, Jason Peter	La Trobe, Vic	LP
Zappia, Tony	Makin, SA	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia;
Nats—The Nationals; Ind—Independent

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—H Evans
Clerk of the House of Representatives—IC Harris AO
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—A Thompson

RUDD MINISTRY

Prime Minister	Hon. Kevin Rudd, MP
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion	Hon. Julia Gillard, MP
Treasurer	Hon. Wayne Swan MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and Leader of the Government in the Senate	Senator Hon. Chris Evans
Special Minister of State, Cabinet Secretary and Vice President of the Executive Council	Senator Hon. John Faulkner
Minister for Trade	Hon. Simon Crean MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Hon. Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Defence	Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon 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 Finance and Deregulation	Hon. Lindsay Tanner MP
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and Leader of the House	Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate	Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research	Senator Hon. Kim Carr
Minister for Climate Change and Water	Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts	Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP
Attorney-General	Hon. Robert McClelland MP
Minister for Human Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate	Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism	Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP

[The above ministers constitute the cabinet]

RUDD MINISTRY—*continued*

Minister for Home Affairs	Hon. Bob Debus MP
Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs	Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Hon. Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for Employment Participation	Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Minister for Defence Science and Personnel	Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy and Minister Assisting the Finance Minister on Deregulation	Hon. Dr Craig Emerson MP
Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law	Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Minister for Ageing	Hon. Justine Elliot MP
Minister for Youth and Minister for Sport	Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Childcare	Hon. Maxine McKew MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Procurement	Hon. Greg Combet AM, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support	Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia	Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services	Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance	Hon. Bob McMullan MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs	Hon. Duncan Kerr MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister	Hon. Anthony Byrne MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion	Senator Hon. Ursula Stephens
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade	Hon. John Murphy MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing	Senator Hon. Jan McLucas
Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services	Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP

SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition	Hon. Brendan Nelson MP
Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Employment, Business and Workplace Relations	Hon. Julie Bishop MP
Leader of the Nationals and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Local Government	Hon. Warren Truss MP
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Defence	Senator Hon. Nick Minchin
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research	Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Shadow Treasurer	Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
Manager of Opposition Business in the House and Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing	Hon. Joe Hockey MP
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs	Hon. Andrew Robb MP
Shadow Minister for Trade	Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP
Shadow Minister for Families, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs and the Voluntary Sector	Hon. Tony Abbott MP
Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion
Shadow Minister for Human Services	Senator Hon. Helen Coonan
Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training	Hon. Tony Smith MP
Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Urban Water	Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Shadow Minister for Finance, Competition Policy and Deregulation	Hon. Peter Dutton MP
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	Senator Hon. Chris Ellison
Shadow Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy	Hon. Bruce Billson MP
Shadow Attorney-General	Senator Hon. George Brandis
Shadow Minister for Resources and Energy and Shadow Minister for Tourism	Senator Hon. David Johnston
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Water Security	Hon. John Cobb MP

[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]

SHADOW MINISTRY—*continued*

Shadow Minister for Justice and Border Protection; Assisting Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	Hon. Chris Pyne MP
Shadow Special Minister of State	Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson
Shadow Minister for Small Business, the Service Economy and Tourism	Steven Ciobo MP
Shadow Minister for Environment, Heritage, the Arts and Indigenous Affairs	Hon. Sharman Stone MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Governance	Michael Keenan MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing	Margaret May MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Personnel; Assisting Shadow Minister for Defence	Hon. Bob Baldwin MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House and Shadow Minister for Business Development, Independent Contractors and Consumer Affairs	Luke Hartsuyker MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP
Shadow Minister for Employment Participation and Apprenticeships and Training	Andrew Southcott MP
Shadow Minister for Housing and Shadow Minister for Status of Women	Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport	Hon. Pat Farmer MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Secretary	Don Randall MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia	Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health	Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education	Senator Hon. Brett Mason
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence	Hon. Peter Lindsay MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure, Roads and Transport	Barry Haase MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade	John Forrest MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship	Louise Markus MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government	Sophie Mirabella MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism	Jo Gash MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Ageing and the Voluntary Sector	Mark Coulton MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs	Senator Marise Payne
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Community Services	Senator Cory Bernardi

CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 26 JUNE

Chamber

National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Amendment Bill 2008—	
First Reading	6021
Second Reading	6021
Appropriations Legislation: Additional Information	6022
Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Bill 2008—	
First Reading	6023
Second Reading	6023
Personal Explanations	6025
Aviation Legislation Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008—	
First Reading	6026
Second Reading	6026
Aviation Legislation Amendment (International Airline Licences and Carriers’ Liability Insurance) Bill 2008—	
First Reading	6027
Second Reading	6027
Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 4) Bill 2008—	
First Reading	6029
Second Reading	6029
Trade Practices Legislation Amendment Bill 2008—	
First Reading	6030
Second Reading	6030
Delegation Reports—	
Parliamentary Delegation to European Parliaments and Institutions in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria	6034
Committees—	
Treaties Committee—Report	6036
Public Accounts and Audit Committee—Report	6037
Privileges and Members’ Interests Committee—Report	6039
Publications Committee—Report	6039
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008—	
Second Reading	6039
Business—	
Days and Hours of Meeting	6090
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008—	
Second Reading	6090
Ministerial Arrangements	6092
Valedictories	6092
Questions Without Notice—	
Emissions Trading Scheme	6094
Climate Change	6094
Distinguished Visitors	6098
Questions Without Notice—	
Fuel Prices	6098
Emissions Trading Scheme	6099
Grocery Prices	6100
Climate Change	6101
Economy	6102
Climate Change	6103

CONTENTS—*continued*

Housing Affordability.....	6104
Child Protection.....	6105
Workplace Relations.....	6106
Same-Sex Relationships.....	6106
Pensions and Benefits.....	6107
Economy.....	6108
Economy.....	6109
Rudd Government—	
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders.....	6110
Questions Without Notice—	
Budget.....	6116
Budget.....	6118
Battle for Australia.....	6118
Veterans.....	6119
Council of Australian Governments.....	6120
Questions to the Speaker—	
Question Time.....	6123
Committees—	
Reports: Government Responses.....	6123
Auditor-General's Reports—	
Report No. 45 of 2007-08.....	6131
Documents.....	6131
Leave of Absence.....	6131
Ministerial Statements—	
Equine Influenza Inquiry.....	6132
Adjournment—	
Equine Influenza.....	6134
Gilad Shalit.....	6135
Rudd Government.....	6136
International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.....	6138
Canning Electorate: Shire of Waroona.....	6139
Death Penalty.....	6140
Gilmore Electorate: 805 Squadron.....	6142
Main Committee	
Constituency Statements—	
Mr John William Archer.....	6143
Hindmarsh Electorate.....	6143
Cowan Electorate: Warwick Senior High School.....	6144
Dawson Electorate.....	6145
Distinguished Visitors.....	6146
Constituency Statements—	
Forrest Electorate: Gas Supply.....	6146
Bass Electorate: St Giles Society.....	6146
Dunkley Electorate: Carer Payments.....	6147
Fremantle Electorate: Homelessness.....	6148
Mitchell Electorate: Kokoda Track Trek.....	6149
Casey Electorate: Vietnam Veterans.....	6150
Committees—	
Electoral Matters Committee—Report.....	6151

CONTENTS—*continued*

Adjournment—

Groom Electorate: Exceptional Circumstances	6157
Bass Electorate: CHOOSE Cafe.....	6158
Commercial Ready Program	6160
National Families Week.....	6161
Fisher Electorate: Sunshine Coast Infrastructure	6162
Oxley Electorate: Spirituality	6163
Oxley Electorate: Multiculturalism	6163
Flinders Electorate: Mornington Peninsula Planning	6165
Petition: Federal Funding	6166
Makin Electorate: KD Dance Centre	6166
Mr Jonathan Cox	6167
Petrie Electorate: Transport	6169
Fuel Prices	6170
Lindsay Electorate.....	6171
Red Nose Day.....	6172
Australian Masters Games.....	6173
Age Pension.....	6175
Petition: Climate Change.....	6176
Grey Electorate: GP Plus Emergency Hospitals	6178
Human Rights.....	6179
Sri Lanka	6180

Thursday, 26 June 2008

The SPEAKER (Mr Harry Jenkins) took the chair at 9 am and read prayers.

**NATIONAL GREENHOUSE AND
ENERGY REPORTING AMENDMENT
BILL 2008**

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Treasurer) (9.01 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Amendment Bill 2008 is to make a number of minor amendments to the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007, to improve the administration of the act and to make modifications to what information can be published by government under the act.

The National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007 was introduced by the previous government and enacted on 28 September 2007.

It establishes a framework for mandatory reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and energy production and consumption by industry.

Corporations which exceed certain thresholds are required to apply to register under the system by 31 August 2009, and to provide data concerning their emissions and energy use, commencing with the 2008-09 financial year. The first corporation reports by industry are due by 31 October 2009.

Data collected by the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System (or NGERs) will facilitate policy making on greenhouse and energy issues.

A goal of the system is to eliminate duplicative industry reporting requirements under the existing patchwork of state, territory and Commonwealth greenhouse gas and energy programs. It provides a repository for data which may potentially serve the needs of all Australian governments. The government is working with the states and territories through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to identify opportunities for streamlining national reporting requirements via this system.

In addition, the system aims to underpin the introduction of an emissions-trading scheme, and will assist the government to meet Australia's international reporting requirements.

The amendments set forth in this bill are, for the most part, administrative amendments to improve the functions of the act. They do not impose new regulatory burdens on industry. The measures will not have a budgetary impact.

In some cases, the amendments are required to better reflect the original policy intent behind the act when it was introduced. In other cases, these administrative amendments will increase flexibility for business to comply with the act.

An example of the greater flexibility provided by these amendments is the area of registration of corporations under the act. The proposed amendments will ensure that a corporation may apply for registration well in advance of meeting one of the emissions or energy thresholds specified in the act, as opposed to waiting until the day a threshold is met. In addition, it will no longer be necessary for a corporation to provide evidence that it has met a threshold at the point of registration. This will significantly reduce the red-tape burden imposed on industry at the start of their involvement with the scheme.

Another administrative amendment set out in this bill is to clarify the distinction between reporting of projects leading to reductions and removals of greenhouse gases, and reporting of offsets. Currently, the act allows a corporation to report on offsets arising from a project undertaken by itself or a member of its group. This would prevent a corporation from reporting offsets which could be generated by activities carried out beyond the corporate boundaries of the group. A new provision inserted by this bill will allow separate reporting of offsets and other types of projects.

The bill clarifies that a member of a corporation's group must provide assistance to an external auditor during audits of the corporation's group. This will assist in ensuring that the external audit regime imposed by the act is robust.

The one area where the amendments proposed by this bill go beyond existing policy is in the area of public disclosure. Even here, the amendments do not impose a new reporting burden on corporations. Instead, the effect of the amendments will be to increase the amount of information collected by the system which may be publicly disclosed.

The bill will ensure the public and investors have access to information on both a corporation's scope 1 (direct) and scope 2 (indirect) greenhouse gas emissions. This distinction has been added following public consultation. Corporations will benefit from a greater public understanding of how their emissions profile is composed, rather than from the publication of a single total. In some sectors, scope 2 (indirect emissions) can compose a significant share of a corporation's total greenhouse gas emissions footprint.

The bill also allows corporations to disclose to the public the methods used to measure their emissions, and for the accu-

racy rating of methods to be disclosed publicly. This will lead to far greater transparency concerning the accuracy and reliability of data published.

This bill will make the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System simpler to administer, and provide clarity for industry on administrative procedures.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Bronwyn Bishop**) adjourned.

APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATION: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mr TANNER (Melbourne—Minister for Finance and Deregulation) (9.06 am)—On indulgence, I seek to make a correction to the record. On 18 June 2008 in the Main Committee during consideration in detail of the appropriations of the Department of Finance and Deregulation the member for Dickson asked a question in relation to advertising campaigns. In my response I made reference to the National Skin Cancer Awareness Campaign. By way of clarification, the Minister for Health and Ageing received approval for continuing the campaign from the Prime Minister in December 2007. I was consulted by the minister before formal approval from the Prime Minister was sought as I had requested ministers with advertising campaigns in development to advise me of their proposals before taking any further steps. This reflected the incoming government's strong commitment to reducing spending on government advertising and ensuring that such advertising is not used for party political benefit. I did not receive specific advice from the Department of Finance and Deregulation on this particular matter.

**FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL 2008**

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TANNER (Melbourne—Minister for Finance and Deregulation) (9.07 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 primarily amends the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 (the FMA Act) to further simplify the financial management framework. This bill will reduce red tape in the government's internal administration of the 100 agencies that are governed by the FMA Act, including 19 departments of state and a range of statutory and executive agencies. The bill also sets out consequential amendments and corrects minor errors in other laws.

This is the fifth financial framework bill since 2004, being part of an ongoing approach to maintaining the financial framework of the Australian government. This ongoing process of monitoring and review, and clarifying issues as they arise, is consistent with responsible government.

The bill's proposed amendments primarily clarify the operation of the law, rather than change it substantively, and allow for more efficient processes.

For example, a key reform included in this bill relates to contracts that involve non-Commonwealth entities handling public money. The current law allows these entities, called 'outsiders', to receive or hold public money, and thus effectively only remit that money to the Commonwealth. There are cases, however, where outsiders legitimately

need to make payments of public money, but this can only occur currently through an unnecessarily complex process.

Accordingly, an amendment is proposed to section 12 of the FMA Act that will allow outsiders to make payments of public money, where the relevant arrangement is authorised by me, as the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, or by my delegate, or by the parliament. This is an important deregulation initiative that, by definition, benefits not only the Commonwealth but also contractors, trustees and other outsiders, who are in a position of handling public money that could also involve the making of payments.

Second, and also affecting contracting processes, the bill adds a short note in section 44 explaining that the obligation on chief executives to promote the 'proper use' of Commonwealth resources includes an implied capacity for chief executives to enter contracts. By definition, such contracts are made on behalf of the Commonwealth, using the executive power of the Commonwealth, but this process has not necessarily been sufficiently clear to date.

The ability for other officials in agencies to enter contracts can then also more clearly be seen as requiring a delegation, or an authorisation, made to them by their chief executive, in relation to that agency. Similarly, a relevant chief executive or an appropriately authorised official can enter arrangements on behalf of agencies as well as their own, such as relating to whole-of-government procurement initiatives and the 'proper use' of Commonwealth resources across the government generally.

A third important reform in the bill relates to the definition of 'proper use' of Commonwealth resources in section 44. The current reference to 'efficient, effective and ethical use' of Commonwealth resources will be expanded to refer to efficient, effective

and ethical use 'that is not inconsistent with the policies of the Commonwealth'.

A proper use of resources would, in many ways, already take account of relevant Commonwealth policies. There are several benefits in this being stated expressly.

For a start, it reinforces the clear role that policy plays in agencies ascertaining the efficient, effective and ethical use of Commonwealth resources. Also, it helps ensure that contracts entered into by FMA Act agency chief executives, or their officials, are not inconsistent with Commonwealth policy. Next, it reinforces the longstanding requirement in regulations made under the FMA Act that require approvers of proposals for procurement and grants et cetera to ensure that the spending proposal is efficient, effective and in accordance with Commonwealth policy. And, last but not least, it places an appropriate emphasis on how policies are developed, implemented and maintained in and across agencies.

Another important proposal in the bill involves an explicit recognition that ministers responsible for FMA Act agencies may request information relating to that agency's operations. This requirement is implied in the exercise of responsible government, but has not been explicitly articulated on the face of the FMA Act. The new proposed section 44A will, however, mirror equivalent provisions that already apply to bodies governed by the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 (colloquially known as the CAC Act), thereby improving consistency between the FMA Act and the CAC Act.

Some other clarifications proposed by the bill to the FMA Act include: the way that payments supported by appropriations can occur between and within FMA Act agencies, simplifying requirements for drawing rights that support payments of public money, updating penalty provisions, clarify-

ing the application of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003, moving certain requirements to the FMA regulations to allow more efficient placement and updating, and simplifying how investments are made on behalf of the Commonwealth, by removing two archaic bodies corporate from section 39 of the FMA Act.

The bill also updates or affects five other laws, of which two are a consequence of updates being made to the FMA Act in this bill.

First, the bill amends the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme Act 2008, as a consequence of the reforms relating to 'outsiders' that I mentioned are being made in this bill. And, second, the bill makes an appropriations related amendment to an explanatory note in the Public Service Act 1999, which mirrors a similar update being made by the bill to the act of grace provisions in the FMA Act.

Turning to other acts being amended, the bill corrects references in the Reserve Bank Act 1959 to the CAC Act that have been outdated since changes to the CAC Act occurred in 1999. Fourth, the bill amends the act supporting the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation to place that organisation under the CAC Act, as one of the two accepted frameworks supporting Commonwealth-created entities. And, fifth, the bill implements a transfer of funding for the Water Smart Australia program, which is moving from the National Water Commission to the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

In summary, this bill reflects the fact that the FMA Act and the CAC Act comprise a robust financial framework. Since their commencement in 1998, both have accommodated a number of different policy imperatives, including devolution and the introduction of accrual budgeting. The present reforms will ensure the financial framework

remains responsive to the needs of the government and of the parliament.

In that regard, this bill is consistent with updates made to the CAC Act that I introduced into this House on 13 February 2008, and which will commence on 1 July 2008, including an important clarification to the mechanism by which general policies of the government apply, and are made transparent, to over 80 relevant bodies under the CAC Act.

Overall, this work demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment to deregulation, where appropriate, of the financial framework, while optimising the accountability and transparency of the operations of government generally.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Bronwyn Bishop**) adjourned.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government) (9.15 am)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr ALBANESE—I do.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr ALBANESE—Yesterday the Leader of the National Party, during the MPI debate, made a number of assertions about my personal positions. He stated:

A few days ago he was quoted as saying that fuel had to be a part of the emissions-trading scheme.

That is incorrect. What I have said is that transport has to be a part of a climate change strategy. The second misrepresentation was that the Leader of the National Party said:

But the minister stuck his boot into the little town of Lock, accused them of roting ...

That is also incorrect. I accused the ministers who presided over the Regional Partnerships program of roting. The third misrepresentation was that the Leader of the National Party said:

This is not better regions; this is better rorts. He is the king of the rorts; the man who invented the Fort Street rort; the man who rerouted the railway line through his own electorate at a cost of \$300 million.

As I have stated during question time, the Fort Street insulation program was supported in the Sydney Airport Community Forum by members of both sides of the chamber, including the now Leader of the Opposition and the member for North Sydney when he was chair of that forum. This is an important program in the budget. As for the railway—

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop—Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

The SPEAKER—The minister is now coming to any other misrepresentations, I would hope.

Mr ALBANESE—Yes. As for the railway line—

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop—We're getting into debate now.

The SPEAKER—The minister knows the requirements and has been very careful so far.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop—He is attempting debate.

Mr ALBANESE—No, I am not.

The SPEAKER—I appreciate that the member for Mackellar might assume that she needs to have some concerns. I am listening carefully to the minister.

Mr ALBANESE—Yes, Mr Speaker. I understand the provisions of this standing order. The Leader of the National Party said:

... the man who rerouted the railway line through his own electorate at a cost of \$300 million.

I have no idea what that is about, but I assure the House that not even the federal minister for transport has the power to reroute railway lines.

**AVIATION LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (2008 MEASURES No. 1)
BILL 2008**

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government) (9.18 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Australia's aviation security system has a number of layers to ensure the travelling public and the aviation industry are safe and able to respond quickly against threats of unlawful interference with a plane.

The Aviation Legislation Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008 makes amendments which will enable regulations to be made which will enhance one of these layers, namely the operation of the air security officer program.

The air security officer program involves the placement of covert, armed security officers on selected domestic and international flights to protect the flight deck.

Currently, the air security officer program has underpinnings in the Aviation Transport Security Act 2004, the Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005 and the Civil Aviation Regulations 1988.

These regulations, and the acts under which they are made, effectively permit an air security officer to engage in conduct necessary for the performance of duties that would otherwise be contrary to Common-

wealth legislation—for example, the possession of a firearm on an aircraft.

However, existing regulations do not allow an air security officer to lawfully discharge a firearm in an aircraft without the risk of prosecution.

This problem is currently being addressed through periodic notices issued under regulation 144 of the Civil Aviation Regulations 1988, which effectively allow on-duty air security officers to lawfully discharge a firearm in an aircraft without the risk of prosecution.

There have been some concerns that the issuing of these exemptions under the Civil Aviation Regulations 1988 is inconsistent with the purpose of safety legislation as it inherently implies that it is safe to discharge a firearm on board an aircraft.

This bill makes the necessary amendments to the Aviation Transport Security Act 2004 and the Civil Aviation Act 1988 which will allow the current exemptions to be replaced with new regulations under the aviation security legislation.

Under the regime established by this bill, a lawful discharge of a firearm could only occur in the course of the air security officer's duties—which might be, for example, preventing unlawful interference with an aircraft.

Of course, an unlawful discharge would risk prosecution—making the system broadly equivalent to that applying to police officers.

As such, the amendments made by this bill will provide a more appropriate and permanent platform to deal with the lawful discharge of firearms by air security officers.

One of the key amendments made by this bill is to enable regulations to be made under the Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005 which will operate extraterritorially.

Such regulations would only have extra-territorial operation if specified, and would only apply to Australian aircraft or aircraft engaged in Australian international carriage, and the crew and passengers on board these aircraft.

In effect, the proposed amendments will allow regulations to be made permitting air security officers to lawfully discharge their firearms on board an aircraft in Australian territory or an Australian aircraft in foreign territory.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Bronwyn Bishop**) adjourned.

**AVIATION LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (INTERNATIONAL
AIRLINE LICENCES AND CARRIERS'
LIABILITY INSURANCE) BILL 2008**

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government) (9.23 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Aviation Legislation Amendment (International Airline Licences and Carriers' Liability Insurance) Bill 2008 will improve and modernise two regulatory programs related to the aviation industry.

Those two programs are:

- the system of international airline licences; and
- the system of mandatory airline insurance.

The bill will overhaul the system of international airline licences so that existing licences can be reissued with standardised and consistent conditions. It will also enhance the

government's ability to check that airlines are complying with licence conditions, and rectify a range of administrative deficiencies.

The system of international airline licences is established under the Air Navigation Act 1920 and its accompanying regulations. It ensures scheduled international air services are operated in accordance with bilateral agreements and arrangements between Australia and our international aviation partners. They also act as a final checking mechanism to ensure safety and security approvals are in place prior to the commencement of operations.

There are several problems associated with the current administrative framework for international airline licences. For example, once a licence is issued it remains in force indefinitely unless an airline contravenes a provision in the Air Navigation Act, the Air Navigation Regulations or conditions in the licence itself.

As a result, many licences remain in force even though the airlines they were issued to have since ceased to exist or operate services to Australia.

The framework is also unnecessarily complicated by the regulatory structure of the licence scheme. Currently, some aspects of the regulatory structure are contained in the Air Navigation Act, and other aspects are contained in the regulations. This complicates the ongoing management and auditing of the licence process.

This bill will move the entire regulatory framework for international airline licences into the Air Navigation Regulations 1947. The bill allows for the granting, variation, suspension and cancellation of international airline licences by the Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government under regulations.

Regulations will be drafted to update and rectify the current administrative deficiencies in the international airline licence system.

The bill also removes a range of redundant definitions in the Air Navigation Act.

The definitions relate to issues such as aviation security, which are now dealt with under the Aviation Transport Security Act 2004.

The second regulatory program overhauled by the bill is Australia's system of compulsory non-voidable insurance for passenger-carrying air operators.

Under the carriers' liability act, carriers are required to maintain minimum levels of insurance to protect passengers in the event of an accident. The scheme is supplemented by provisions in the Civil Aviation Act, which allow the Civil Aviation Safety Authority—or CASA—to enforce the requirements as part of their management of safety issues via the air operators certificate.

The bill will improve the ability of CASA to proactively enforce insurance requirements for air carriers. It will also streamline administrative processes.

Under the new system, carriers will no longer need to obtain a certificate of compliance from CASA before flights are operated. Instead, operators will be obliged to provide CASA with a declaration indicating they have obtained insurance. Failure to notify CASA would incur a small administrative penalty. However, operators will continue to be authorised to operate services as long as they have an appropriate contract of insurance.

Amendments to the Civil Aviation Act will ensure that the authority to carry passengers under an air operators certificate will only be valid while operators hold an appropriate contract of insurance.

If an operator allows its insurance to lapse, authorisation to carry passengers will automatically lapse, but can automatically be reactivated as soon as an operator secures appropriate insurance. If at any time an operator carries passengers without appropriate insurance, it will be subject to administrative and criminal sanctions.

Additional amendments will be made to provisions in the Civil Aviation Act relating to the short-term approvals for non-scheduled international flights that are granted by CASA. In the case of these special approvals, the bill proposes that carriers which do not have a commercial presence in Australia will be required to prove that they have an appropriate contract of insurance before they are granted approval to operate the service. In such cases, the carrier will not be able to make a declaration after conducting the service. This is due to the increased difficulty of auditing a carrier that does not have a commercial presence in Australia.

The bill will improve carrier compliance with the insurance requirements. This is achieved by providing CASA with the necessary powers to regularly audit carriers, to ensure carriers have maintained appropriate insurance at all appropriate times. If CASA identifies an operator that has carried passengers without appropriate insurance, the carrier will be subject to a range of administrative actions and criminal penalties under the Civil Aviation Act, in addition to criminal penalties that are currently imposed under the carriers' liability act.

These two regulatory proposals have been the subject of significant industry consultation. When a discussion paper was released some three years ago in 2005, no objections to the proposal were raised.

A regulation impact statement relating to the proposal to reform the system of IALs

was prepared in 2006 and is included in the explanatory memorandum.

The expected financial costs to the government to implement this bill are anticipated to be minimal.

Although the regulation impact statement anticipated a small administrative impost to the government, this estimate has since been revised, and it is now expected that any additional financial impact will be able to be absorbed by current resources.

The bill provides long-overdue and significant improvements to two important regulatory systems that promote a safe and efficient Australian aviation industry.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Bronwyn Bishop**) adjourned.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2008 MEASURES No. 4) BILL 2008

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BOWEN (Prospect—Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, and Assistant Treasurer) (9.30 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends various taxation laws to implement a range of improvements to Australia's tax laws.

Schedule 1 provides relief from capital gains tax for private health insurance policyholders when their insurer demutualises to a for-profit insurer. These amendments facilitate the demutualisation of private health insurers.

These amendments ensure that policyholders who receive shares in the demutualised insurer will not be subject to capital

gains tax when they receive the shares. In addition, these shares will broadly receive a market value cost base.

Policyholders who receive a cash payment under their insurer's demutualisation, rather than shares, will not be subject to capital gains tax at the time they receive this payment.

Although schedule 2H of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 provides members of mutual entities that demutualise with certain capital gains tax relief, many policyholders of health insurers are not covered by the existing demutualisation provisions because they are not members in the sense required under schedule 2H and consequently would be subject to the general income and capital gains tax provisions of the law on demutualisation.

The changes will provide certainty to policyholders of health insurers that have demutualised this year to receive the new tax treatment.

To illustrate the effect of this measure, NIB demutualised in October last year; MBF is preparing to demutualise. In the interests of full disclosure, I declare that I am an MBF policyholder.

Schedule 2 reverses the family trust changes announced by the previous government in the Tax Laws Amendment (2007 Measures No. 4) Act 2007.

These amendments were foreshadowed by Labor prior to the federal election, and were announced in the 2008-09 budget.

The amendments change the definition of 'family' in the family trust election rules to limit lineal descendants to children or grandchildren of the test individual or of the test individual's spouse—that is, the previous definition of family will be restored.

The amendments also prevent family trusts from making a variation to the test in-

dividual specified in a family trust election, other than specifically in relation to the 2007-08 income year or in the case of a marriage breakdown.

Both of these changes reduce the scope for family trusts to be used to lower income tax by utilising losses, delivering on the government's commitment to disciplined budget management providing savings of almost \$20 million over the forward estimates.

Finally, schedule 3 implements various minor amendments to the law and also some general improvements of a minor nature to deal with such issues as incorrect terminology, grammatical or punctuation errors, missing asterisks from defined terms, inoperative material, ambiguities in the law and adding non-operative notes to help readers navigate their way through law. These amendments reflect the government's commitment to the care and maintenance of the tax system.

Full details of the measures in this bill are contained in the explanatory memorandum. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Bronwyn Bishop**) adjourned.

TRADE PRACTICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2008

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BOWEN (Prospect—Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, and Assistant Treasurer) (9.34 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Introduction and overview

This is a bill to amend the Trade Practices Act 1974, to improve its ability to promote

competition and fair trading in Australian markets.

This bill is a reflection of the importance that the government places on competition policy.

The Australian Labor Party has a strong legacy of competition reforms, having been responsible for the introduction of the TPA in 1974 to enhance the welfare of Australians, through the promotion of competition, fair trading and consumer protection.

Labor again made substantial improvements to the act in 1986 as well as instigating National Competition Policy in the 1990s.

The NCP put in place many of the policy settings that have resulted in Australia's strong economic performance over the past decade.

These competition reforms have had a cascading effect throughout the economy. And a strong, competitive economy benefits all Australians.

It is this government's fundamental belief that competition policy is at the core of the government's economic agenda.

This government believes that being pro-business and pro-competition delivers the best results for consumers. Those opposite simply do not have the same concern for consumers.

Part IV of the Trade Practices Act promotes competition by prohibiting anticompetitive conduct. Section 46 in part IV prohibits unilateral anticompetitive conduct, most notably by prohibiting corporations from misusing substantial market power to harm or eliminate competitors or competition generally.

Part IVA of the Trade Practices Act promotes fair trading by prohibiting unconscionable conduct. In particular, section 51AC of part IVA prohibits unconscionable conduct in connection with the supply of

goods or services to, or the acquisition of goods or services from, a corporation.

However, it is the government's belief that a series of court decisions have undermined the operation of the act, section 46 in particular.

It is not just me who believes this; the ACCC has been making this point for several years. The ACCC has been fighting with one hand tied behind its back when it comes to anticompetitive conduct.

In opposition we indicated that we would strengthen the Trade Practices Act to restore its original 1986 intention.

Late last year the then government rushed through amendments to improve the operation of section 46 but it was a clear case of 'too little, too late'. At the time, Labor supported those changes but indicated that more needed to be done.

This bill strengthens section 46 and section 51AC as part of the government's ongoing commitment to improving Australia's trade practices laws. The amendments constitute the biggest TPA reform in over 20 years.

Outline of measures in the bill

The bill covers four key areas of reform.

Firstly, the bill makes a number of amendments to section 46 to improve and clarify the operation of that section in relation to anticompetitive unilateral conduct.

Secondly, the bill amends the Trade Practices Act to require that at least one of the deputy chairpersons of the ACCC have knowledge of, or experience in, small business matters.

Thirdly, it amends section 51AC to extend the protection it provides against unconscionable conduct in business transactions.

Finally, the bill clarifies the ACCC's information gathering powers, to facilitate effective enforcement by the ACCC.

Schedule 1: Misuse of market power by corporations

Schedule 1 of the bill makes amendments to sections 46 and 86 of the Trade Practices Act.

Section 46 contains two prohibitions against unilateral anticompetitive conduct. Firstly, subsection 46(1) prohibits a corporation with a substantial degree of market power from taking advantage of that power for a prescribed purpose. Secondly, subsection 46(1AA) prohibits a corporation with a substantial share of a market from engaging in sustained below-cost pricing for one of the same prescribed purposes.

Amendments relating to predatory pricing

The government will be making amendments to section 46 to enhance its ability to address predatory pricing.

Predatory pricing refers to a particular type of unilateral anticompetitive conduct, whereby a firm deliberately sells at unsustainably low prices in an attempt to drive its competitors out of the market.

Predatory pricing harms competition and consumers. However, it should be distinguished from legitimate, pro-competitive conduct, such as vigorous discounting, which benefits consumers.

The bill amends the prohibition on predatory pricing in subsection 46(1AA) to align it with the prohibition on the misuse of market power in subsection 46(1).

Consistent with the findings of the Senate inquiry, a specific prohibition against predatory pricing makes predatory pricing a clear target of section 46. However, the specific prohibition should complement the long-standing prohibition in subsection 46(1), rather than being inconsistent with it. The

present reference to market share has given rise to uncertainty and may reduce pro-competitive price competition in markets. The ACCC has publicly stated that subsection 46(1AA), as currently drafted, adds considerable confusion to the law, and should be amended to clarify the protection it provides.

In particular, the bill amends subsection 46(1AA) to focus it on a corporation's market power as opposed to its market share. The size of a firm including its market share will, however, remain a relevant factor in establishing a corporation's market power for the purposes of the revised prohibition.

The bill also clarifies the role of recoupment in predatory pricing cases under subsection 46(1AA).

Presently section 46 does not expressly provide whether it is necessary to prove recoupment to establish a case based on predatory pricing. Some submissions to the Senate inquiry raised concerns about this lack of clarity and its impact on the effectiveness of section 46. As a consequence, the Senate inquiry recommended that section 46 be amended to clarify that it is not necessary to prove recoupment in order to establish that a corporation has engaged in predatory pricing.

The High Court's decision in the Boral case meant the ability to recoup losses incurred from below-cost pricing is a necessary precondition in establishing a breach of section 46. As said by prominent commentators, the Boral case set up a 'cogent case for reform'.

The bill gives effect to this recommendation for reform. It is appropriate for section 46 to clearly provide that recoupment is not legally necessary in order to establish a breach relying on predatory pricing conduct. Recoupment may be an indicator of predatory pricing, but it should not be an essential precondition.

Clarification of the meaning of 'take advantage'

To contravene section 46 a corporation must 'take advantage' of its substantial market power for a prescribed purpose. This requires a causal connection between the relevant conduct of the corporation and its substantial market power.

Presently section 46 does not provide any guidance as to the meaning of 'take advantage'.

The Senate inquiry considered that the present judicial interpretation of 'take advantage' was too narrow, focusing on the physical capacity of a corporation to engage in the relevant conduct rather than its intent or rationale for doing so. Consequently, the inquiry recommended that section 46 be amended to clarify the term's meaning.

The bill implements the Senate inquiry's recommendation. It incorporates four non-exclusive factors into section 46 which may be considered by the court in determining whether a corporation has taken advantage of its substantial market power. Importantly, the amendment ensures that, in addition to considering whether a corporation could have engaged in the relevant conduct in a competitive market, the court may also consider whether that corporation would have been likely to do so.

Jurisdiction of the Federal Magistrates Court

The ability of parties to effectively pursue rightful claims is as important as having well-drafted laws.

Concerns have been expressed about the costs and delays associated with bringing section 46 matters. If the costs associated with privately pursuing section 46 claims are prohibitively high, it will not be as effective in addressing anticompetitive conduct.

The bill addresses these concerns by conferring jurisdiction on the Federal Magistrates Court to hear private matters arising under section 46. By doing so, the bill improves access to justice for businesses in cases arising under this important provision, in appropriate circumstances.

The Federal Court will, appropriately, continue to hear cases brought by the ACCC.

Schedule 2: Misuse of market power by persons

Schedule 2 of the bill makes equivalent amendments to the version of section 46 in the competition code. That provision applies to all persons in the states and territories, by virtue of application legislation enacted in those jurisdictions. The amendments are made in accordance with the 1995 intergovernmental Conduct Code Agreement to maintain consistent and complementary competition laws throughout Australia.

Schedule 3: Other amendments

Schedule 3 of the bill makes three other amendments to the Trade Practices Act to promote competition, fair trading and consumer protection.

Firstly, schedule 3 ensures that small business has a prominent and permanent voice at the ACCC by requiring that a deputy chairperson of the ACCC has experience in, or knowledge of, small business matters.

Secondly, schedule 3 repeals the price thresholds that currently limit the protection afforded by section 51AC of the Trade Practices Act against unconscionable conduct in business transactions. By doing so, the bill implements a recommendation of the Senate inquiry. It enhances the protection afforded by section 51AC by focusing the prohibition on the wrongdoing involved, rather than arbitrary monetary thresholds.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 applies the same rules

as those dealing with unconscionable conduct in section 51AC of the Trade Practices Act to the supply and acquisition of financial services. To ensure continued consistency between the unconscionable conduct provisions of the ASIC Act and the Trade Practices Act, the bill duplicates the changes made to section 51AC in section 12CC of the ASIC Act. As required under the Corporations Agreement, the Ministerial Council for Corporations was consulted in relation to the amendments to the laws in the national corporate regulation scheme.

Thirdly, schedule 3 of the bill clarifies the ACCC's information-gathering powers. The ACCC has expressed concerns that its ability to enforce the law has been adversely affected by its inability to use its section 155 powers after seeking an interim injunction. Uncertainty also exists as to when those powers cease. By addressing these concerns, the bill enables the ACCC to fully investigate suspected breaches of the law to the benefit of consumers, without interfering with the court's role in supervising litigation.

Conclusion

This bill improves the overall effectiveness of the Trade Practices Act in improving the competitive processes in Australian markets. Importantly, it makes particular enhancements to the act in relation to the legitimate interests of business, particularly small business.

It provides the ACCC with the tools it needs to vigorously protect competition, fair trading and consumers.

In particular, by identifying and addressing the real impediments that have prevented the law from functioning properly the amendments will clear major blockages that have prevented more cases under section 46. In this regard, it is telling that the ACCC's Chairman, Mr Graeme Samuel, stated on 11 June 2008 that as a result of the amendments

contained in the bill small businesses will soon enjoy the greatest protection in 30 years against predatory pricing and the misuse of market power.

As noted by Mr Samuel, the result of more cases now being able to proceed will be a win for all those who look to the Trade Practices Act to protect the competitive process.

This bill represents the most significant reform of the TPA in 22 years.

This bill is important to our economic reforms: in the tradition of Labor governments, making markets work, driving efficiency and putting consumers at the forefront of government policy. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Bronwyn Bishop**) adjourned.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Parliamentary Delegation to European Parliaments and Institutions in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (9.46 am)—by leave—I present the report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to European parliaments and institutions in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria from 4 to 20 April 2008 and I seek leave to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON—This was by a long way the longest and most significant delegation in which I have participated. The delegation visited the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria. In the Netherlands we met the President of the Presidium of Amsterdam, visited and met with board members of the Aboriginal Art Museum of Utrecht, visited the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague

and spoke with judges from those tribunals. We also met with members and senators from the Dutch parliament. We met the Dutch Minister for European Affairs, Frans Timmermans, a very impressive man, and we met senior officials from Europol.

In Belgium we had an interparliamentary meeting with members of the European Parliament who are members of the European Union Australian Group. This two-day meeting canvassed issues such as climate change, European Union institutional reform and the Lisbon treaty and trade liberalisation. The delegation also met with various political groups within the European Parliament. I and other Labor MPs met with members of the British Labour Party such as David Martin, and other members of the European Parliament who are members of the European Parliament Socialist Group. We had a meeting and briefing with Mr Neil Parish MEP, chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. We were given an overview and tour of the European Parliament, which was in session. This was something of an eye-opener. Their voting system is extremely quick. They would carry out about 20 divisions in the time that it took the former member for Corangamite, Stewart McArthur, to count one and they are about 10 times the pace of this parliament.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop—I rise on a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I really do think it is quite unnecessary for the member giving a report to comment unfavourably upon a person who has served in this parliament and his electorate well. I would ask him to withdraw those remarks.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)—I was listening and I am sure the member for Wills will take that on board. But it is not unparliamentary and I will call the member for Wills.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON—Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. No offence was intended. We also met Belgian MPs and toured the Belgian parliament. In Brussels we had extensive briefings at NATO headquarters. I was a bit taken aback by the sanguine view which our NATO advisers had of Australia's willingness to commit troops overseas. Certainly we sent troops to Vietnam and to Iraq but the decisions were highly controversial and I believe the former decision played a role in the 1972 Australian election outcome and the latter decision played a role in the 2007 Australian election result.

On our final day in Belgium we visited the Polygon Wood and Tyne Cot cemeteries at which many First World War Australian soldiers lie buried. It is remarkable that some have been recently identified through the use of modern DNA technology. But most lie in unmarked graves, a silent yet loud endless commentary not only on heroism and courage but also on the brutality, futility, violence and waste of war. We attended a Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate where the delegation leader Senator Ferguson laid a wreath. The people of Ypres conduct this ceremony every night, and have done since the end of the First World War except for an interregnum during the Second World War following Nazi invasion. It is an incredible achievement.

In France we met with the OECD, with French parliamentarians from the French National Assembly and their Senate, members of the France-Australian Parliamentary Friendship Group, and with UNESCO. In Austria we met with Austrian parliamentarians and toured the Austrian parliament. They complained about being regularly confused with Australians. They have bumper stickers which say, 'Austria—no kangaroos', to try to get their message across. It is quite a tribute to the kangaroo's international standing, I think. We met with representatives of the

International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Austrian State Secretary for European and International Affairs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation, and with OPEC. OPEC were a very cheerful lot, which they could afford to be, given the price of a barrel of oil.

The delegation learned an immense amount from these briefings and meetings. There is simply no substitute for being there to learn about country and its people—to smell the air, see its transport, walk into its shops, talk to its people. The delegation behaved as ambassadors for Australia. I think we sometimes showcased its laconic and quirky sense of humour and worked together in a highly bipartisan way. Nevertheless, I am sure we all picked up different messages from the experience.

It was very clear to me that Australia's stocks in Europe have risen greatly as a consequence of the change of government on three counts. The first is the apology to the stolen generations. It was remarkable just how often this was mentioned to us around Europe in a most positive way. Clearly the apology is one story about Australia which has received widespread international coverage and has cut through. The second is the ratification of the Kyoto protocol on climate change. The nations of Europe have been trying to tackle global warming for years and are extremely pleased that Australia has now resolved to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. The third is that Prime Minister Rudd had been to Brussels recently and had left a very favourable impression, presenting Australia as very positively disposed towards Europe. This presented a real contrast with the member for Mayo, who, when he was Minister for Foreign Affairs, used to say from time to time in a most pa-

tronising way, ‘Oh, you’re taking the European position.’ Needless to say, many of those we met in Europe were pleased that Australia had moved on from this kind of condescension.

The challenges Europe faces are numerous, and many of them resonate here: climate change, population pressures, illegal migration, drugs, crime, terrorism, the pros and cons of biofuels, public transport infrastructure—big challenges, not easily fixed. But our understanding of these countries, the challenges they face and how they are facing up to them was enhanced immeasurably by our visit. Hopefully, we will be able to apply some of what we learnt in facing up to the challenges which we confront in our own country.

I want to thank the leader of the delegation, Senator Alan Ferguson, for his hard work, which was a key to the delegation’s success. I also want to thank his adviser, Gerard Martin; the delegation secretary, Maureen Weeks, who did an outstanding job; and the ambassadors and other diplomatic personnel of the various missions we visited who were invariably helpful and professional. I also want to thank my parliamentary colleagues from both houses and both parties: the member for Kooyong and Senators Glenn Sterle, Anne McEwen, Grant Chapman and Ruth Webber. They were a pleasure to travel with. Each of them grew in stature in my eyes during the course of the delegation and their energy, idealism and good humour helped make the delegation quite unforgettable.

COMMITTEES

Treaties Committee

Report

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (9.54 am)—On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties I present the committee’s

report entitled *Report 91: Treaties tabled on 12 March 2008*.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON—by leave—Report 91 contains the committee’s findings on six treaty actions tabled on 12 March 2008. The committee found all six treaties reviewed to be in Australia’s national interest.

The Treaty on Extradition between Australia and the State of the United Arab Emirates is based on Australia’s model extradition treaty and will provide for more effective extradition arrangements between Australia and the UAE. The committee has raised a number of concerns in its report about the general operation of Australia’s current treaty model for extradition. Australia’s responsibility for persons extradited should not end at the conclusion of the extradition process but should extend to monitoring the detention of extradited persons, the judicial proceedings they are subject to, their sentencing and their imprisonment.

The committee considers that a formal system should be established by the government to monitor the status of extradited persons. Further, the committee has recommended annual reporting to parliament on both the number and nature of extradition requests and also particulars relating to each extradited person. In its 91st report the treaties committee has recommended to the Australian government a number of measures to better protect human rights concerning extradition arrangements, police-to-police cooperation and film production in China.

The Treaty between Australia and the State of the United Arab Emirates on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters provides a framework for Australia and the United Arab Emirates to provide and receive timely advice in obtaining information and

evidence for the investigation or prosecution of a crime. While the committee recognises the importance of international cooperation in combating crime and supports ratification of this treaty, its inquiry did raise issues in relation to police-to-police cooperation, which the committee recognises differs from mutual assistance arrangements. The committee has recommended that there be a review by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security of Australian policy and procedures concerning police-to-police cooperation and intelligence sharing arrangements. The committee recommended that information should not be exchanged with another country if doing so would expose an Australian citizen to the death penalty.

The Convention between Australia and Japan for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income will bring taxation arrangements between Australia and Japan into line with Australia's recent tax treaties by providing reduced rates of withholding taxes on dividends, interest and royalties, and improved integrity measures. The treaty is expected to reduce barriers to bilateral trade and investment and enhance investment in Australia from the Japanese sector. It will also provide benefits to Australian businesses looking to expand into Japan.

The film co-production agreements with China and Singapore will open new markets for Australian films in the increasingly important Asian region for the global film and television industry and foster cultural and technical exchanges. An important aspect of these agreements is that each country must treat co-productions as local content. Producers will receive benefits that would normally be reserved for local productions, such as tax incentives, financing arrangements and more liberal broadcasting rights. The committee further recommended that, where

the subject matter of a treaty has a bearing on freedom of expression issues, the government broadens its consultation to include relevant human rights organisations and that it takes up any opportunities to make representations to the Chinese government to lift its 20 foreign films quota significantly higher, with a view to eventually abolishing the quota.

The Fourth Extension to the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology will continue Australia's longstanding participation in this agreement. The regional cooperative agreement provides an important mechanism for Australia to fulfil its technical cooperation obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It allows Australia to participate in mutually beneficial collaborative projects with 16 regional countries and to maintain and extend a national capacity in cutting-edge nuclear technologies.

The committee supports all six agreements and has recommended that binding treaty action be taken. The committee's recommendations, if acted on, will go a considerable distance towards the protection and advancement of human rights in Australia's treaty-making processes.

I want to thank the other committee members for their excellent work in considering this group of treaties, and the treaties committee secretariat, including both the outgoing secretary, James Rees, and our new secretary, Siobhan Leyne, for their hard work in bringing this report first to the committee and now to the parliament.

Public Accounts and Audit Committee Report

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (10.00 am)—On behalf of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, I present the committee's report, incorporating dissenting

reports, *Report 410: Tax administration*, together with evidence received by the committee.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Ms GRIERSON—by leave—Since the introduction of self-assessment in 1986, this is the committee's second report on tax administration. The committee reported in 1993 with 148 recommendations, the majority of which were implemented. In this report, the committee is satisfied with the tax office's performance overall. Good tax administration requires tax authorities to strike a delicate balance between efficiency and fairness. Generally, the Australian Taxation Office achieves this.

The inquiry commenced in December 2005. The committee received 58 submissions. Submitters included peak bodies, Treasury, individuals and the Taxation Office, external scrutineers such as the Australian National Audit Office and the Inspector-General of Taxation as well as individual taxpayers. The committee held five hearings in the second half of 2006. Following this, the committee held three biannual meetings with the Commissioner of Taxation and his staff. These meetings helped the committee to stay up to date in the fast-moving world of tax.

The topic in the report that has the most recommendations is the complexity of our tax laws. In 2004, Australia had the third most complex tax system out of the 20 largest economies in the world. Admittedly, the recent repeal of inoperative tax law has made Australia's tax laws less complex. However, on this league table of complexity Australia has probably only dropped from third to fourth place. Much more needs to be done.

Complexity is important because of the self-assessment system. Taxpayers take the risk of penalties and interest if the tax office

amends their return and finds a tax shortfall. Complex tax law increases the chance of taxpayer error and taxpayer risk.

Simplifying the tax law depends on coherent, simple tax policy, which in turn depends on thorough consultation. This is exactly what the committee recommended in 1993, but neither side of politics to now has been able to deliver on that.

Redrafting the tax law into plain English was well intentioned. However, it has not simplified the law. Anthony Mason, previously a Chief Justice on the High Court, has publicly stated this position.

This government has commenced a tax review, Australia's Future Tax System. The committee feels that this has the potential to conduct the thorough consultation on tax law that the committee recommended 15 years ago. I wish the review panel well in this challenging but important task.

Another important issue to emerge in the report was illustrated through the court case of *Essenbourne*, decided in late 2002. Broadly, the Federal Court found that a particular transaction between related entities did not attract fringe benefits tax but was not an allowable tax deduction. The decision meant that the arrangements were no longer financially attractive.

The tax office took the unusual step of neither accepting the decision nor appealing it. Instead, they stated that they would attempt to bring another test case on the fringe benefits tax question. In early 2007, the full Federal Court gave its decision in *Indooroopilly*, which confirmed the same decision brought down in *Essenbourne*.

The tax office's conduct increased taxpayer uncertainty. If taxpayers followed *Essenbourne*, they faced the risk of tax office litigation. However, if they took the tax office view, then they might be paying unnecessary tax. More importantly, the case raised

the question of whether the tax office was following the law. The tax office received a great deal of criticism for its position.

The tax office has received legal advice that it may take this course of action if it acts quickly. However, the committee believes that a court decision represents the law and should be followed. This was also the view of the full Federal Court in Indooroopilly. Michael McHugh, when he was a High Court justice, also made a statement to this effect.

The committee recommended that the tax office should either appeal or accept court decisions. If the tax office has concerns about how a court decision will affect the tax system or the revenue, it can always refer the matter to Treasury.

The committee's report confirms the view of senior judges. Given this consensus among the parliament and the judiciary, it may be appropriate for the tax office to publicly announce, in the near future, that it is prepared to implement the committee's recommendation.

In tabling this report, I would like to acknowledge the many people who contributed to it. In particular, I note the contribution of the peak bodies, agencies and individuals who gave their time and knowledge to the committee. By listening to them, we become much more expert ourselves in an area which is very complex.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow members on the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit for their constructive, collegiate, and professional attitude to the inquiry and their work on this committee overall. In particular, I thank retiring senators John Watson and Andrew Murray for their expertise and diligence in working through the evidence. The committee wishes them well for the future and they will certainly be missed on our committee.

I also acknowledge the outstanding work of our secretariat: the work of our secretary, Russell Chafer, and in particular David Monk, who had some expert knowledge, much needed by us, in the area of taxation, who guided this inquiry and report, and of course the other staff in the secretariat. I commend the report to the House.

Privileges and Members' Interests Committee Report

Mr RAGUSE (Forde) (10.06 am)—As required by resolutions of the House I table copies of notifications of alterations of interests and a statement of registrable interests received during the period 17 March to 25 June 2008.

Publications Committee Report

Mr HAYES (Werriwa) (10.06 am)—I present the report from the Publications Committee sitting in conference with the Publications Committee of the Senate. Copies of the report are being placed on the table.

Report—by leave—agreed to.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2008

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 25 June, on motion by **Mr Garrett**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs) (10.07 am)—Australia has recognised a duty to ensure the conservation, protection and transmission to future generations of its cultural and natural heritage. Australia has recognised this duty by becoming party to the United Nations Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. If we are complacent in the management of our places of natural beauty and ignore the ef-

fects of climate change, we will be unable to pass the Great Barrier Reef on to our children, and that would be a great tragedy. The Great Barrier Reef is a place of remarkable ecological variety and astounding natural beauty. With 2,900 individual reefs, 400 types of coral, 1,500 species of fish and 4,000 types of mollusc, it is one of the most significant natural habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity on the planet. The reef is also home to threatened species of outstanding value from the point of view of science and conservation. It provides a breeding and spawning ground for unique coral reef associated species, including 43,000 square kilometres of seagrass meadows, which are vital to the future survival of the dugong.

Tourism involving the reef is central to the local economy. In 2005 there were 820 tourist operators and 1,500 vessels and aircraft permitted to operate in the park. In its February 2003 report on the reef, the Productivity Commission estimated that the economic worth of tourism in the Great Barrier Reef is over \$4 billion per annum. The fragility of the reef means that it is particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change. Increases in water temperature, storm frequency and sea acidity have led UNESCO to warn of increases in coral bleaching and the possibility that the Great Barrier Reef could follow the trend in the Indian Ocean, where 50 per cent of coral reefs have died. It is distressing to think that an Australian icon such as the Great Barrier Reef might have a limited future as a consequence of human activity. If ocean temperature anomalies on the reef reach three degrees over a period of several months, which they may do given the recent intensity of the El Nino southern oscillation, UNESCO predicts widespread coral death. The oceans are also an important sink of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Increasing dissolution of carbon dioxide levels has acidified

the water, slowing the growth of corals and weakening their skeletal structure.

For these reasons, the government has introduced the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. This bill gives new powers to the marine park authority to enable a better response to environmental issues such as climate change threatening the park. The purpose of this amendment bill is to modernise the administration of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and to facilitate the integration of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The bill also introduces new emergency management powers so the park authority may better respond to emergency situations. This amendment bill seeks to resolve any ambiguity as to whom the legislation applies. Section 5 of the bill clearly states that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act covers the Australia's exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf is applicable to everyone within Australia, including foreign nationals.

The bill also updates the focus of the legislation. When the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act was drafted in the 1970s, concepts such as sustainable use and development did not have the currency that they enjoy today. This bill defines ecologically sustainable use and requires the marine park authority to act consistently with that objective. The amendment bill will encourage a greater respect for the park by introducing penalties for irresponsible use. This includes placing a responsibility on users to avoid or minimise any environmental damage associated with their activities. This is important because it raises awareness in the community of the effect of visitors to the park and encourages them to tread lightly. The old advice for visitors to land based national parks was to 'take nothing but photographs and leave nothing but footprints'. The advice for visitors to the

reef could be to 'leave nothing but the wake of your boat and the bubbles from your scuba gear'.

The discharge of sewage from vessels has been a particular problem for the marine park authority. Nutrient and pathogen loadings caused by sewage can affect coral reefs and tropical seagrasses, particularly in bays and lagoons, which are less subject to tidal flushing. The bill's provision that users minimise their environmental impact will help enforce requirements such as the directive that boats with 16 or more passengers travel one nautical mile from a reef, island or aquaculture facility before discharging sewage. This is part of a general aim to encourage users to self-regulate, sharing in the responsibility for the care of the park. This will also complement the Maritime Safety Authority's 'Stow it, Don't Throw it' campaign, which encourages people operating vessels to take their garbage and waste back home. Dumping is of particular concern on the reef as the large population of turtles and whales often mistake plastic bags for jellyfish.

Under the new arrangements the chair or a delegate will have greater power to carry out environmental impact assessments in relation to actions in the marine park. They will also take responsibility for certain statutory decisions associated with enforcement. This is intended to give the marine park authority a greater capacity to respond to breaches and play a greater role in environmental regulation.

This amendment bill is consistent with the Rudd government's approach to federalism. It is an approach based on cooperation with the states and avoidance of unnecessary regulation. In line with this approach, item 25 of the amendment bill links this act with the Queensland legislation applicable in the park. Previously, if Queensland legislation governing fisheries was amended, the regula-

tions under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act would also have to be amended. This has been changed so that marine park regulations simply require compliance with Queensland legislation in force from time to time. This renders the act easier to administer and reflects a commonsense approach to jurisdictional responsibilities.

You can well imagine the increased convenience that is going to flow from adopting this particular regulatory mechanism. It is obviously inconvenient to ensure conformity between state legislation and federal legislation if every time a state law is changed it is necessary to make new regulations under the federal act. The mechanism that has been adopted, which is a simple device to adopt Queensland law applying law in the marine park, is a far more practical approach.

Maritime safety is a particular focus in this amendment bill. The new powers granted to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to respond to emergency situations are intended to exist in conjunction with the powers of other emergency organisations such as the State Emergency Service and the Maritime Safety Authority. Australia is the world's fifth largest shipping nation in terms of tonnes of cargo shipped and kilometres travelled and the Great Barrier Reef is one of the most sensitive marine areas in the world. Those two facts carry with them the possibility for conflict between protection of sensitive marine areas and very high levels of shipping. The marine park authority is partly responsible for balancing the reality of those two facts. This amendment bill reinforces the authority's commitment to the continuous improvement of safety provisions and its disaster response capability.

Both Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people have strong connections with the sea country in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Clan groups have inhabited the

region for over 40,000 years. Food from the sea has been an integral part of economy, culture and diet of Torres Strait Islanders, whose seafood consumption per person is among the highest in the world.

It is perhaps not well understood by most Australians that for Aboriginal people the sharp distinction that European culture makes between the land and the sea is a foreign concept. I have not spent a great deal of time with Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islander people associated with the Great Barrier Reef but I have spent a considerable amount of time with Aboriginal people on the coast of Arnhem Land. In the time that I spent with people—particularly at Milingimbi and Elcho Island, which are on the Central Arnhem Land coast—one of the things that I found to be particularly powerful was the way in which people treated the sea as simply another part of their country. The naming of places and the stories that are associated with the land equally extended to places going far out to sea, for which there were not only names but in all cases a story to go with the named place as well.

In the Great Barrier Reef, traditional owners have played a significant role in improving populations of culturally significant animals, such as the green sea turtle or 'Nam' in the Meriam Mir language of the eastern Torres Strait islands. The turtle has an enduring place in the stories and ceremonies of Indigenous Australians passed down from generation to generation. Thanks to the efforts of the marine park authority and the Indigenous population, there has been a much greater recognition of the importance of the Great Barrier Reef as a breeding ground for the turtle population.

The traditional owners of the park also play a significant role in education. The Reef Guardians Program, offered to schools by the marine park authority, teaches students about

the importance of the Barrier Reef as an ecosystem and the role of Indigenous people on the reef. This program is available to schools anywhere in Australia and is an important part of ensuring that the reef is preserved for future generations.

This amendment bill recognises the reef's traditional owners by reinstating the statutory requirement that there be an Indigenous person with specific knowledge of and experience of Indigenous issues on the reef as a member of the authority. The previous government removed the Indigenous member requirement in July 2007, showing a particular and indeed striking insensitivity to the partnerships that had been built up between the traditional owners and the marine park authority. These amendments restore that requirement, ensuring that the management of the park will not only be responsive to Indigenous issues but benefit from the immense knowledge and experience the Indigenous community bring to the park.

This amendment bill modernises the marine park authority. It updates the framework and objectives within which they operate and gives them better tools to continue their excellent work. It provides for climate change, recognises Indigenous Australians and allows for the increasing number of Australians and visitors from overseas who are choosing to visit this spectacular natural phenomenon. Above all, this bill honours Australia's commitment under the United Nations Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and will help preserve this place of pristine natural beauty. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (10.21 am)—The explanatory memorandum circulated with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 states that the purpose of the bill is to estab-

lish a modern robust regulatory framework that provides the capacity for the efficient and effective protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef into the future. As the member for Flinders said, the coalition supports this bill for one very simple reason: it is our bill. This is the legislation and the process that was actually introduced by the previous government.

As a new member of this House, I must say that I am a little disappointed. Prior to the last election there was much fanfare from the then opposition, and now government, about their grand agenda. But in the last sitting week before we go into the recess, the government are literally running down the clock. They have basically run out of puff—they have run out of a program. It was only a few weeks ago they were ramming bills through this place with the cooperation of the opposition in speaking arrangements and so on—there was a reduction in the level of scrutiny of bills as they passed through this chamber. But now we find ourselves with the government running off the legislative fumes of the Howard government to literally limp across the line in this last sitting week. They will be watching the clock all day today. We saw a long list of speakers with a passionate interest in the bills debated in the last couple of days. There is a long list of speakers to this bill too, as they run down the clock by padding out the program.

That said, this bill is of significance for the reason that the former government believed that it was of significance and put the process in place. Not only have we seen it with this bill, with which the government are taking on—in this case, wisely—a process put forward by the Howard government, but we have also seen it in relation to tax cuts, which was another item of unfinished business put forward by the Howard government. We put forward tax cuts in the election campaign and the government adopted them. I

am looking forward to next year's budget because I will be interested to see where the policy initiatives come from. They will not have the member for Higgins, Mr Costello, to rely on. They will not have the member for Wentworth, Mr Turnbull, to rely on. And, looking back to Senator Ian Campbell, they will not have him to rely on as they have in relation to this measure. It will all be up to them to put forward policy and legislation. It will be interesting when we get to the June sitting of next year to see whether there will frankly be much to do because the grand revolutionary change on education and the other things has literally run out of steam before it has got out of the station. So as we look at this bill today, I think we look at it in that context—a government running on the legislative fumes of John Howard and his great government.

The previous coalition government completed a review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and the authority in 2006. The previous coalition cabinet accepted all of the recommendations of the review and this legislation before the House is largely the result of the work undertaken by the previous government. At the time the report was released, the former Minister for Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, said:

... the Australian Government has recognised the evolving needs and challenges of safeguarding the Marine Park for the future. Meeting these requires up-to-date, relevant legislation and an approach that provides for continued protection for marine life and biodiversity, as well as for ongoing sustainable economic and recreational activity and engagement with business and local communities.

Members on this side of the House give their support to these changes. The Great Barrier Reef is a place of unique environmental qualities and keen human interest. The Great Barrier Reef is literally the world's largest

coral reef system. There is an interesting connection between the reef and my electorate of Cook because of its namesake, Captain James Cook. He chose to visit Kurnell and the landing place in Botany Bay on 29 April 1770. Then, on 11 June of the same year he found himself in the middle of quite a storm in the Great Barrier Reef, which he happened upon by chance. Seven days after the *Endeavour* ran aground they made it to the beach at the Endeavour River and stayed there until 3 August. A range of things took place there at the time. The whole discovery of the east coast of Australia was held in the balance right there at that time in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef as Cook and his crew set about repairing the ship to enable them to get underway again. There are reports of other explorers who may have come and gone along the east coast but, unless they took those discoveries back to their home countries and moved forward to make the great modern nation of Australia a product of that voyage, they account for little. In thinking about the Great Barrier Reef, it is, I think, important to understand the connection with James Cook's discovery, which was not by plan but a matter of almost being shipwrecked. It forever sits in our history.

There are other reasons that the reef is a unique place for all Australians. It is unique because of its environmental qualities; it is unique because of its Indigenous heritage, as those opposite have said; and it is unique in terms of its heritage value to modern Australia. It is unique all around the world for all of these reasons and that is why people have such a keen interest in it.

In terms of its environmental qualities, it can be seen from space and it is the world's biggest single structure made by living organisms. It comprises more than 2,900 individual reefs, 900 islands, and it covers a distance of more than 2,600 kilometres. The reef is home to over 1,500 species of fish,

400 species of coral, between 5,000 and 8,000 species of molluscs, 22 species of sea birds, 32 species of shore birds, 17 species of sea snakes, six species of marine turtles, a large number of dugong plus a great diversity of sponges, anemones, marine worms, crustaceans and many other varieties of marine life. I take the time to actually document this because this diversity is what we are trying to protect.

In 1981 the Great Barrier Reef was nominated for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List by the Australian government. As part of the nomination statement, the ecological significance of the reef was put in the following terms:

Its enormous diversity is thought to reflect the maturity of an ecosystem which has evolved over millions of years on the north east Continental Shelf of Australia.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act is now more than 30 years old. The act provided for the creation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and for the establishment of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to manage the park. At the time, the government stated that the protection of our unique Barrier Reef was of paramount importance to Australia and to the world. The act had bipartisan support in the parliament and was groundbreaking legislation. It also established the concept of a multiple-use park and has been an exemplar for marine management and conservation.

What is implicit in that is that this is an area that is supposed to be interacted with by human beings. This is not something we completely lock away and shut out from any sort of human interaction. That act originally provided for the engagement and association with the Great Barrier Reef and for human enjoyment and interaction with that incredible place of creation.

The marine park covers 98 per cent of the World Heritage area and a further one per cent is covered by Queensland national parks. Over the 30 years since the legislation has been enacted more sections of the reef have been progressively proclaimed to be part of the marine park and an achievement of the previous, coalition government was the consolidation of all sections into a single unit and the introduction of an integrated zoning plan.

While the act has generally withstood the test of time, as with most environmental legislation it needs an overhaul to reflect current attitudes to the environment and the challenges of the present day. The bill is a direct result of a review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act that commenced in August 2005. The report arising from the review was publicly released in October 2006. The recommendations of the review were endorsed by the former government. In March 2007 the parliament considered the first stage of several amendments to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act. The first bill provided stronger governance arrangements and improved transparency and accountability, specifically in relation to the zoning plan process. The current changes before the parliament were also foreshadowed. The then minister for the environment, the member for Wentworth, told the parliament there would be changes to better integrate the act's environmental assessment, compliance and enforcement measures with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is the single largest of any Commonwealth or state marine protected area. The marine park extends over 344,400 square kilometres. There is significant economic activity undertaken within the Great Barrier Reef and the surrounding coastal areas. The reef coexists with tourism, recreational and commercial

fishing, shipping, military activity and urban development. The Great Barrier Marine Park Act has successfully provided for a balanced approach between conservation and activity.

I would like to turn now to the tourism elements of, and interests in, the Great Barrier Reef. As members would know, prior to coming to this place I had the experience of being the managing director of Tourism Australia and have previously worked in the tourism industry in other roles. There are three things that people know about Australia in terms of the great tourism icons of this country. They are the reef, the rock and the bridge. When they show themselves in any news bulletin or any form of publicity relating to Australia these are the images that the world most commonly turns to.

Now, that is not what all of Australian tourism is about—it is certainly not the case—but those icons are focal points. What we see in the reef, the rock and the bridge are three very unique things about Australia. We have talked about the reef's incredible environmental quality and biodiversity. We talk of similar things in the rock but we also draw in the unique Indigenous heritage of this country. The rock symbolises that heritage most significantly. The bridge—that is, the Sydney Harbour Bridge; not the Captain Cook Bridge or Tom Uglys Bridge in my electorate—talks of modern Australia: a modern place with modern cities, a modern way of life and a modern democracy.

These three icons go together to paint a very admirable picture of this country. In undertaking research into the views of international visitors to Australia, and reflecting on the comments I have made, I am taken by what I used to refer to as the trifecta of Australia's attraction. That trifecta was: the people of Australia, the personality of Australians and the place. And when we are talking about the reef, we are very much talking

about the place of Australia, because it is the place of Australia—its environment—which has contributed to who we are as a people. The lifestyle we live is the envy of the world. This is a function of the environment that we live in and our appreciation of it.

Those who come to Australia—particularly those who come from European countries, who tend to stay longer and spend more—are keenly fascinated and interested in the environmental quality of Australia. The Australian tourism industry is not the same as that in Cancun. The Australian tourism industry is not about high rise and lots of rooms; it is about environmental quality. It is about engagement with the people of Australia. It is about getting an appreciation of the heritage of Australia. This is what modern travellers are looking for when they come to this country. And this was the thinking that underpinned the campaign I was responsible for when at Tourism Australia.

There has been much comment about that campaign in the last few years. There was comment in this place recently by the Prime Minister who, when the campaign was first launched, was very quick to say on *Sunrise* on Friday, 24 February 2006:

But look, I saw them—

referring to the ‘So where the bloody hell are you?’ ads—

on TV last night. I think they’re great. This is a bipartisan thing. Tourism is a huge export industry for Australia. The international tourism numbers are coming down a bit at the moment and that’s why we have to get behind a major new push to freshen up Australia’s global image. I think it’s important we all get behind the campaign.

This campaign was designed to do something very different to previous campaigns. One of the biggest problems in the tourism industry is that it focuses on volume, not yield. Anyone in business will tell you that

you can have the turnstiles clicking over but if you do not have the cash register ringing then you do not have a viable business. The purpose of the ‘So where the bloody hell are you?’ campaign was to appeal to a type of visitor who would come, stay longer, spend more and travel further around the country. That does not refer just to people who sit up the front end of the plane but also to backpackers. A backpacker will often leave as much money behind as a high-spending tourist in five or six days; it will just take them six months to do it. So, both of those types of tourists produce major economic dividends for Australia.

I put on the record that in the year previous to the year in which the campaign was launched—at the end of February 2006—there was a nought per cent increase in the inbound economic value: that is, the international tourism earnings of Australia. There was a nought per cent increase. At that time it was \$19.7 billion. In the year following that campaign being rolled out that increased by 12 per cent to over \$22 billion, and in the next year it increased by a further eight per cent to almost \$24 billion a year. There have been criticisms of that ad, which by the way was voted one of the top 30 ads in Australia’s marketing history. When that campaign was launched we said that it was not about visitor numbers—visitor numbers could have, by all means, remained flat—but rather getting the spending to go up; and the spending increased by over \$4.2 billion. The new government have brought that campaign to an end, and that is their prerogative. I look forward to seeing their efforts and I look forward to seeing what benchmarks they will put out there.

When you run a campaign you set out very clear benchmarks about what you hope it is going to achieve. What that campaign was designed to achieve was an increase in spending, and it achieved a more than 20 per

cent increase in the international value of tourism. This was at a time when the Australian dollar was appreciating, making it even harder—the dollars that people were spending from overseas were worth less and less as they were spending them in this country so they had to spend even more. This was a major challenge that we had to face as we became more uncompetitive in that way yet we were able to lift earnings by more than \$4.2 billion. That came with the force of the campaign and it also came with the force of the spend that we were able to put behind that campaign into a range of markets—there was a range of markets we really put the heavy dollar into. That was made possible by the significant investment through the white paper that was introduced by the member for North Sydney—the single largest investment in the tourism industry that has ever been made in this country.

The Prime Minister can waltz in here and make criticisms about a campaign which he supported and which, for populist reasons, he now opposes. I note that the Prime Minister recently went to Japan—and I know that the member for Moncrieff would know this as well—a market that has been absolutely struggling, and no advertising campaign is going to fix what is going on in Japan. The Minister for Tourism would understand that—he is the last honest man in the Rudd government. He understands the challenges of what is going on in Japan. When the Prime Minister went to Japan, a market which the member for Leichhardt would know is very important to his part of the world and the Great Barrier Reef, did he go and meet with tour operators at the embassy? Did he go and hold meetings with Qantas staff? Did he go and hold meetings with their counterparts at Japan Airlines and places like that in order to get more cooperative funding into tourism promotion for this country? No, he did not. He did none of those things. He

scooted off. He scooted away from the tourism industry when he was in Japan. He scooted away, and here is another scooter—

Mr Turnour—Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am just not sure of the relevance of this to the bill before the parliament.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams)—I ask the honourable member to come back to the bill before the parliament, which is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008.

Mr MORRISON—This is very relevant and I am glad the member for Leichhardt has raised the relevance of this.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I will determine what is relevant. I ask the honourable member to address the bill.

Mr MORRISON—The Great Barrier Reef is the subject of this bill and my comments—which I began I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, before you entered the room—relate to the importance of tourism to the Great Barrier Reef. One of the single biggest markets over the last 10 to 20 years for Great Barrier Reef tourism has been the Japanese market. The Prime Minister went to Japan and completely scooted off in terms of supporting the tourism industry whilst he was in Japan. I found that every time I went to Japan as Managing Director of Tourism Australia the embassy up there and Ambassador Murray McLean were fantastic in helping bring together and support the tourism industry and in hosting various events and functions at our fantastic embassy there in Tokyo to support the tourism industry. So, frankly, this government have no credit to make criticisms of previous campaigns. They need to stump up their own cash on this. They need to stump up now with their own campaign. The campaign that was run under the incredible funding of the Howard government

delivered a \$4.2 billion increase in tourism revenue for Australia.

Mr TURNOUR (Leichhardt) (10.41 am)—I rise today to support the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. The Great Barrier Reef is an iconic and important natural asset, and one of the most spectacular in the world. It is the world's largest coral reef, covering over 344,000 square kilometres. There is no place on earth like it. It contains numerous unique and precious ecosystems and incredible biodiversity. It is a mecca for not only scientists and researchers but also tourists, who flock to the North Queensland region to view this beautiful and wonderful part of the world. It is therefore pleasing to be able to speak today in favour of new legislation that will secure the long-term management and preservation of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 will establish a solid regulatory framework that is modern and equipped to deal with the future of the marine park into the longer term. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act is the primary act with respect to the way the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is managed and preserved. Among the provisions included within this act are: the establishment of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Commonwealth authority responsible for the management of the marine park; the provision of a framework for the planning and management of the marine park, including zoning plans, permits et cetera; a framework that supports the prohibition of operations for the recovery of minerals in the marine park; requirements surrounding the pilotage of ships in prescribed areas of the Great Barrier Reef region; the collection of the environmental management charge and the implementation of enforcement measures as they relate to the Great Barrier Reef.

It has been 30 years since this act was first introduced and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority was established. In 1975 this legislation was pioneering and innovative for its time and it set the foundation for a good framework that has seen this incredible natural asset managed in a responsible manner. There is strong consensus that this legislation has served us well over the past 30 years. However there is also strong consensus that it is now time to move this very important legislation into the 21st century and lay the foundation for the next 30 years.

Much has changed in the 30 years since 1975. The reef has received international recognition as a World Heritage listed area. We have enacted the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, which greatly enhanced the role of the federal government in environmental regulations. The regulatory landscape in the fields of governance and financial management has also evolved. The introduction of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 and the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 has impacted on the operating environment of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. We have also witnessed demand for access to and use of the marine park for commercial and recreational purposes increase vastly. Very importantly, we have seen the level of awareness of our environment heightened. Whether it be through science based research or anecdotal evidence, there is a strong shift towards environmental preservation, sustainability and education as we take part in the global effort to explore issues such as climate change and global warming. It is because of these factors that there is a strong need to amend the 1975 act to reflect the ever-changing landscape that is the 21st century. Given the integral role that the act plays in the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef, it is sensible for the govern-

ment to formally review the legislation and amend it so that it is a strong, relevant and timely piece of Australian law.

This legislation is part of a package of measures that the Australian government is enacting to support and protect the Great Barrier Reef. Critical to that is tackling climate change, one of the greatest social, economic and environmental challenges of our time. It is the challenge of our generation. In the Rudd government's first budget, we committed \$2.3 billion to help tackle the threats that climate change posed and to better manage and protect our natural environment. Tackling climate change is particularly critical to protecting the Great Barrier Reef, which as we know and as science has demonstrated is potentially under real risk and threat from global warming. This commitment is in stark contrast to the opposition of the Liberal and National parties, who for 12 years have neglected, and paid no attention to, issues in relation to climate change. They refused to accept that climate change was real, refused to sign Kyoto—which clearly demonstrates that—and would not commit to setting targets for cutting emissions. They effectively squibbed the issue of climate change. One of the reasons that the Rudd government was elected last year, and for the strong support that I received in my electorate, was that people were looking for clear change in this area. Protecting the Great Barrier Reef is very much about taking action on climate change.

Since being elected, the Rudd government has demonstrated commitment to this global issue. We are working towards the implementation of an emissions-trading scheme in 2010 and have set a national renewable energy target as a key measure for reducing the country's greenhouse gas emissions. Of particular relevance to this bill, and to my electorate of Leichhardt in tropical North Queensland, is a \$200-million commitment in the

federal budget for the reef rescue package. This package, which falls under the new \$2.25 billion Caring for our Country initiative, aims to address the impacts of climate change on the reef by improving the quality of water entering the reef from its catchment. The Great Barrier Reef rescue plan is a significant boost for the tropical north's environment. We are lucky to have this amazing natural asset in reach, so it is important that a strong commitment has been made to combat the threats to the reef from land based sediments and nutrients and to preserve it for future generations. I am particularly pleased that the majority of that money, approximately \$146 million, is earmarked for farmers and graziers to enable them to improve the way they manage their land and to reduce their impacts on the reef. Having worked with agriculture for most of my life and with many of those farmers, I know they welcome this commitment from the Rudd government.

The reef rescue plan is complementary to the bill we are presently debating. Together they provide a strong, comprehensive framework for the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef. It is also pleasing to be able to note that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 has generated bipartisan support. It is reassuring to know that we are working in unison to ensure that this bill is passed as promptly as possible. The previous government, under the former Minister for Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, commissioned a review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 in 2005. Following that, a series of recommendations were proposed to strengthen legal, governance and policy frameworks relating to management and long-term protection of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. I am pleased to advise that during this time, whilst in opposition, Labor supported these recommendations. Throughout the review, the gov-

ernment undertook an extensive consultation process. A number of organisations and individuals contributed to the review process, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, numerous tourism operators, fishing representatives, natural resource management groups like my local Terrain NRM group and a range of environmental groups. I believe a solid legislative framework has been developed, in line with industry and community sentiments, as a result of these consultations.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 has important ramifications for my electorate of Leichhardt. Over 1,400 kilometres of Leichhardt borders the coast, and the Great Barrier Reef covers a significant watery expanse in this vicinity. There are numerous coastal communities located along this stretch, and many thousands of people rely on this asset as a means of income and a way of life. One obvious example is the tourism industry. Picking up some comments from the member for Cook a little while ago, we can bleat all we like about the ‘Where the bloody hell are you?’ campaign, but you have only to go to tropical North Queensland and talk to tourism operators or hear what the Prime Minister had to say about feedback from Japan and other parts of the world to know that that campaign was seen as a failure, and the member for Cook was responsible for that failure.

The tourism industry is fundamentally important to tropical North Queensland. It is also an important contributor to the national economy. Many foreigners associate Australia with the natural icon that is the Great Barrier Reef, and it is a major reason why they come to Cairns, Cooktown, Port Douglas and other places within my electorate. Tourism Tropical North Queensland estimates that the value of tourism to the tropical North Queen-

sland region is over \$2 billion. We have more than two million visitors a year, and the overall value to the Queensland economy, I understand, is approximately \$6 billion. So it is a very important icon, not only from an environmental perspective but also from an economic perspective and a way-of-life perspective, for those of us who live in tropical North Queensland. As has recently been mentioned in this House, we have taken a hit recently with the cancellation of a number of flights between Japan and Cairns—180,000 or so seats. We are seeing a significant impact, with \$100 million and, potentially, 1,200 jobs lost from tropical North Queensland.

I am pleased that while the Prime Minister was over in Japan we had the opportunity to talk about this issue, and he responded appropriately, committing an additional \$4 million to go with the \$4 million that the Queensland government provided—that is, an \$8 million package. We are developing plans for the longer term, and I appreciate the interest the Prime Minister takes in tropical North Queensland and the tourism industry and the support that he has given us. I also particularly appreciate the work that the Minister for Tourism, the Hon. Martin Ferguson, has done. I appreciate their support.

I know that we have taken a hit up in Cairns, and that is well known within the community, but we are kicking on, we are striking back, and there has been a supportive response from the *Cairns Post*. I was talking to the editor of the *Cairns Post* today, Mr Mark Alexander, who was recently down here for an editor conference, and he was pleased to let me know that the local community and the *Cairns Post* are showing some leadership here and really want to continue to support the recovery of the local tourism industry. On the weekend they will be launching the ‘why we love it here’ campaign, where locals can get onto their web-

site and put up 100 to 150 words about why they love it in tropical North Queensland.

And we do love it. I love getting out to the Great Barrier Reef, doing some snorkelling and the odd bit of sailing—I have had the great pleasure of sailing up the east coast. It is a fantastic initiative by the *Cairns Post*, and I am pleased that I will be able to get involved in that and put up what I love about the Great Barrier Reef, what I love about the Wet Tropics Rainforest, what I love about Cairns and the whole region, because it is a fantastic part of the world.

So that is a fantastic initiative by the *Cairns Post*. It will allow people from all around the world to click on and read directly about the real benefits of coming to tropical North Queensland from the people who live and experience and love the place, talking about how their families enjoy it, maybe some of the fishing they might do on the reef or some of the snorkelling or sailing activities that they might undertake. We have got some other fantastic icons up there, like the World Heritage listed rainforests. People might talk about the times they have spent there, walking through the bush, experiencing and enjoying the rainforest, or even just having a cup of coffee, lunch or dinner on the beach and walking on the sand with their families and friends.

Tropical North Queensland is a wonderful part of the world. Along with the Queensland government, the Rudd government is supporting the recovery of the tourism industry, and I am proud to be a part of that government. I also welcome the *Cairns Post* initiative to get locals involved by putting down why they love it in tropical North Queensland as part of its campaign to support the tourism industry.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has a very important role to play, because, putting aside the environmental im-

portance of the reef, it is a very important economic driver of the region. So this bill is particularly important in terms of making sure that we protect not only the environment in tropical North Queensland but also that economic resource.

Comparatively, Australia has done a fair job of preserving the Great Barrier Reef when assessed against other reef systems throughout the world. We have learnt an enormous amount over the last 30 years and globally we excel in the field of science, being more aware than ever of the impact the human population has had on the environment. And we know that more can be done. We need to ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner, before any further degradation of the reef occurs. Failure to do so will see the abolition of an entire economy, an entire industry and the livelihoods of many in tropical North Queensland. So this legislation is very important, because it sets a framework for the management of the reef through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

I mentioned the *Cairns Post* and the fantastic job they are doing in supporting the tourism industry, but I have also been looking forward to talking a bit about some of the work that local tourism operators are doing to protect this local environment. Even prior to the loss of the flights between Cairns and Japan, they had been working to improve the green footprint of the tourism industry and ensure that the tourism industry is doing all it can to limit its impact on the reef and combat the threats of climate change. In an era when going green has taken precedence, there is real potential for operators and the community in general to capitalise on the reef as a symbol of the climate change movement and do so at an international level. Some tourism operators in the region are already looking to operate in a more environmentally friendly manner and market their greenness to their

competitive advantage. Tropical North Queensland contains many coastal communities which are more susceptible to climate change, and they know our locals are quite protective of their reef. So I believe there will be strong support by the local industry and community in embracing such a concept.

The strong links between my electorate, our reliance on tourism and the integral part the reef plays in this clearly demonstrate the importance of this amendment bill to tropical North Queensland. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 will set a clear direction for the future management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. One of the most crucial aspects of this bill is the removal of the duplication and inconsistency that exist in the current legislation. More specifically, the impact that the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 has had is a key matter that needs to be addressed and will be thanks to the introduction of this amendment bill by the Rudd government into this House.

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act is Australia's centrepiece of environmental heritage legislation. It provides a legal framework for the way in which our nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecologically significant habitats and heritage locations are protected and managed.

As this act was introduced over 20 years after the Great Barrier Park Marine Park Act 1975, there is a real need to bring these two pieces of legislation into alignment. Both acts represent important objectives, and there are a range of issues in common; however, there are also a number of inconsistencies, gaps and overlaps. This can be restrictive in the practical administering of the legislation, making it quite bureaucratic, with a lot of red tape that can get in the way of effective im-

plementation of the act's provisions. We want to ensure that that does not get in the way of not only the management of the marine park but also the economic activity that needs to happen around the reef. For example, the amendment bill will address issues such as the way in which environmental impact assessments are undertaken, as well as enforcement action and penalty options. At present, such issues under these acts are inconsistent and poorly integrated with each other, which ultimately burdens business, community and general users of the reef.

Another specific aspect that demonstrates the age of the current marine park act and its inconsistency with provisions in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 is that the 1975 act does not recognise the Great Barrier Reef as a World Heritage area, despite it being one of the first World Heritage areas to be listed on the international register managed by UNESCO and one of the best known in the world. There is no recognition of this status in the current legislation.

The Great Barrier Reef was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981. Australia was the first country in the world to enact specific legislation to protect such areas, which are now covered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Recognising the reef as a World Heritage listed area translates to improved conservation power for our authorities. The reef is a marvel; it is a precious natural environment. With the knowledge we now possess about environmental impact and sustainability, any measure that will enhance the ability of our authorities to protect such areas should be encouraged. Technically speaking, the declaration of the Great Barrier Reef as a World Heritage area means that the current objects section of the 1975 act is now inaccurate given it is so out of date. The amendment bill outlines a new objects sec-

tion that will bring this act into the 21st century.

A particularly important matter I would like to conclude on is the fact that this amendment bill will ensure that we again have an Indigenous member on the board of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. This was an election commitment of the Rudd Labor government and the government is honouring its promise to the Australian people, including the Indigenous people, not only in my region but all the way along the coastline of the Great Barrier Reef. With over 70 traditional Indigenous groups that have ownership and/or links to the land and sea along the coast from Bundaberg to the Torres Strait, it is logical and important that a member of the authority that oversees the management of the Great Barrier Reef is Indigenous. Traditional owners have an intimate knowledge of the local area which will prove invaluable to the ecological and cultural management of the reef. I am sure the Indigenous member on the board will contribute significantly to the effectiveness of the authority's team.

Federal Labor has demonstrated their commitment to preserving the Great Barrier Reef. The passing of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 is a key element in this effort. The Tropical North's tourism industry is just one of the significant benefactors of the work that is being done by the government to bring this legislation to fruition. I look forward to working with my region and continuing close contact with the local marine park authority to ensure they are well equipped and supported in continuing their very important work. I commend this legislation to the House.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (11.01 am)—I am certainly pleased to speak in support of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and

Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. I understand if the member for Leichhardt needs to scoot off, as we know he is fond of doing. In speaking to this bill, I would like to take this opportunity to address some of the issues that were raised by the member for Leichhardt. This bill at its core goes to the preservation of Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. We know that this marine park is one of the key tourism icons for this country. There is no doubt that the Great Barrier Reef is up there together with Uluru, the Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge as being among Australia's greatest tourism icons. Having said that, it is important to recognise that the legislation before the House is essentially, in full, coalition legislation. So, from a coalition perspective, we are pleased that the Labor Party has now sought to bring about this legislation and to introduce it.

With respect to the timing of the introduction of this legislation, I am a little surprised, as indeed are many on the coalition side, that this bill is currently before the House at this point in time. The reason it is slightly surprising is that the coalition was informed that this legislation would not be brought on until after the winter recess. But what we know is that due to the long lists of government speakers on a number of bills before the House the Rudd Labor government has got no legislative agenda. The Rudd Labor government is so light on in their pursuit of legislation, so bereft of any legislative agenda, they have brought this bill forward from after the winter recess to this, the final sitting week, because there is nothing else for the Rudd Labor government to talk about. We have bills in front of the House with two or three opposition members speaking and about 20 government members speaking as they desperately try to pad out, each and every day, their legislative agenda. So that is why this bill is before the House now. This

bill is an important bill and its significance should not be lost even though the government has brought it on early. It goes to the core of ensuring that Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is maintained in pristine condition as much as possible going forward.

We know this reef is the world's largest and, I would argue, the most complex ecosystem on the planet. It comprises not one continuous reef; there are in fact around 2,900 individual reefs, with about 760 fringing reefs around islands or along the mainland. There are about 900 islands and quays within the boundaries of the current marine park. It is little wonder then that tourists from around the world—millions of them each and every year—come to Australia to have the opportunity not only to look at the Great Barrier Reef but also to interact with it. There is no doubt that interaction with such an incredibly unique ecosystem is in fact one of the key reasons why people spend thousands of dollars to travel to Australia to explore the reef.

The tourism industry, for which I have the privilege of being the shadow minister, is an industry that contributes about \$24 billion a year in export income to Australia. I listened with great interest to the comments that the member for Leichhardt made with respect to Australia's tourism industry, because we know, especially in tropical Far North Queensland, that the tourism industry is doing it particularly tough. We know, despite the comments that the member for Leichhardt made that the tourism industry is well served by the Rudd government, that the exact opposite is the case.

What we saw only a couple of months ago was this new Labor government impose a billion dollars of new tourism taxes on the tourism industry, on an industry that the member for Leichhardt said was crucial to

ensuring that the reef would be visited and that the reef would be interacted with. So, if the focus of this legislation and a side benefit of this legislation are to ensure that the reef is maintained and protected and importantly that tourist operators have the chance to showcase Australia's Great Barrier Reef to international tourists, you would have to wonder why the government would impose a billion dollars of new tourism taxes. That is hardly support for Australia's tourism industry at a time when the industry is suffering the headwind of a high Aussie dollar.

In addition to that I would like to address another particular comment the member for Leichhardt made, because the member for Leichhardt himself acknowledged that the tourism industry in tropical Far North Queensland is facing tough conditions. The member for Leichhardt made a comment which I found extraordinary. He said that the way that the Rudd Labor government's support for the tourism industry could be assessed and evaluated was on the basis of the government's \$4 million contribution to tropical Far North Queensland's tourism industry. Let us get this in context. The Rudd government has implemented \$1 billion in new tourism taxes and has made a paltry and miserly \$4 million contribution towards the tourism industry. That contribution is in some way meant to balance the imposition of the new taxes. I am not surprised that the member for Leichhardt has left the chamber; we know that he does not like to stick around in this place very much.

Ms Roxon—You were not here when he spoke.

Mr CIOBO—I correct the minister at the table. I was here for the entirety of the member for Leichhardt's speech. Like so many aspects of what the minister at the table says, she is completely wrong. What is extraordi-

nary is that the minister at the table, who wandered in—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams)—Order!

Mr CIOBO—I have addressed the interjection directly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! I ask the member to resume his seat. The honourable member for Moncrieff is ranging far and wide on a bill which has a reasonably narrow focus. I ask the honourable member to come back to the bill and address his remarks to it.

Mr CIOBO—Mr Deputy Speaker, I am addressing very directly every comment that was raised by the member for Leichhardt and drawing that back to the bill in the same way the member for Leichhardt did. I have not made a comment that has been contrary to what the member for Leichhardt has sought to do. In addition, in addressing the remarks of the minister at the table, I have been very directly responding to the minister's allegation. The minister called me a hypocrite, which I found extraordinary—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member should not respond to interjections, and ministers at the table should not interject.

Mr CIOBO—I am simply seeking the protection of the chair when I am falsely accused of something by a minister who came in for the final five minutes and did not realise that I had been here for the entire contribution by the member for Leichhardt.

Returning to the core focus of the legislation before the House, I want to focus on the fact that this bill very much goes to ensuring that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is protected going forwards. This builds on the review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in 2006, which played a large part in the direction of the former coalition government on these issues. This review re-

ceived submissions from many interested parties across the country. There were 227 submissions and 36 consultations. The key focus of the review was to ensure that we developed a framework for protection of the Great Barrier Reef going forward.

This legislation, in large part, ensures the completion of that 2006 review—and the responses that the former government put forward basically accepted all the recommendations that flowed as a result of that review. Those proposed changes included the updating of the act to ensure that it reflected the development of the Great Barrier Reef and its accreditation as a World Heritage listed site. The coalition government in fact introduced the EPBC Act and ensured that any gaps in emergency management powers exposed as a result of the review process were closed. This new act also picked up on the decision of the former Howard government to move beyond a criminal penalty only system and provided for greater flexibility of enforcement options—for example, civil penalties for breaches such as fishing on an unintended basis in no-take zones—as well as ensuring that we have opportunity for reef recovery.

But the key aspect of the bill that I would also like to focus on is the recommendation that there be an expansion of board members from three to five. This is a fundamental and important point. In accordance with the previous government's policies and this government's policies, the coalition are proposing that one of those two additional places be filled by an Indigenous Australian and that the second position should be filled by an industry representative. It is important that industry does have a say at the table when it comes to the board of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. We know that historically there has been a wealth of experience on the GBRMPA board, but now we have added opportunity to ensure that we bring in two

additional members. The first additional member will be an Indigenous Australian. The coalition are supportive of that and we support this legislation which enables that. But we will be seeking to move an amendment in the Senate, as has been foreshadowed by the shadow minister for the environment, to ensure that we also allow for an industry representative on the board.

The Great Barrier Reef attracts some two million visitors a year—and others contributing to this debate have highlighted this—and generates in tropical Far North Queensland about \$2 billion of revenue. Across the country, and most importantly in the state of Queensland, some \$6 billion of income is produced from people visiting the Great Barrier Reef. So we know the significance, from an economic point of view, of tourism for the Great Barrier Reef.

I have spoken with many tour operators who run day tours and the like out to the Great Barrier Reef, such as Quicksilver and Passions of Paradise, so I know that these tour operators have a very strong understanding of the need to conserve and protect the Great Barrier Reef. Tour operators who run reef visits, scuba diving and snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef recognise that the protection of the reef is critical to their livelihoods. They recognise that the protection of the Great Barrier Reef is crucial if they are going to have a sustainable business case. In addition to that, those tour operators who attract tourists to the reef recognise the importance of making sure that those people who visit the reef do so in a sustainable way and do not damage it.

Tour operators, among others, have the most profound connection to the reef and the strongest desire to ensure that it is protected and able to recover when it is damaged through man-made activities or, for example, a crown of thorns starfish infestation. It is

therefore important that industry has a place on the board. It is important that industry's thoughts, views, desires, aspirations and wishes are incorporated with the board and that the industry has a voice on the board. That is why the opposition will move in the Senate to introduce an amendment to ensure that the additional board position is given to an industry stakeholder.

In terms of the coalition's past performance in respect of protecting the reef and in order to get a sense of the significance of what took place over the 2003-04 period, it is important to understand the extent to which the various marine park zones prior to 2004 and afterwards have changed. The marine national park zone, which is coloured green on the various maps, prior to 2004 accounted for about 4.6 per cent of the marine park. After 2004 that was increased to about 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. The buffer zone, which was about 0.1 per cent prior to 2004, was increased to 2.9 per cent as a result of those 2003-04 changes. The habitat protection zone, which was about 15.2 per cent prior to 2004, became 28.2 per cent as a consequence of the changes. The area that decreased most significantly was the zone referred to as the 'general use zone'. This light blue zone on the various maps was decreased from just under 78 per cent to around 33.8 per cent. The key facet with all of this is that a greater balance was achieved between the areas available for general use and the areas that needed to be protected. So in that respect the former coalition government took very significant and meaningful steps to ensure the protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

This bill before the House reflects that work in some respects and the coalition is certainly pleased to be supportive of this legislation subject to the amendment. I say to all the new Labor government members that they should consider very seriously the amendment that the coalition will put for-

ward with a view to building on that and incorporating that amendment into this legislation. That will improve the legislation. Industry does have something to contribute to this particular debate. Industry does have something to contribute to the preservation and management of the reef, and in that respect their voices should be heard by having a voice on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park board.

In essence, the coalition supports this legislation. I certainly support this legislation. I think that it is important that we do protect the reef to ensure its viability long term, and that it is protected to ensure that we continue to generate tourism interest in the Great Barrier Reef as well as attract tourists. We know that the tourism industry is doing it particularly tough, thanks to the billion dollars of new tourism taxes that the Rudd government has imposed. But hopefully, if we can continue to protect the reef to make sure that it is particularly attractive, it will continue to attract tourists despite all the new taxes that have been imposed by the Rudd government.

Mr MURPHY (Lowe—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade) (11.17 am)—As the world's largest coral reef, the Great Barrier Reef is not only an icon for all Australians, it is an icon for the world. The protection of 344,000 square kilometres of incomparable biodiversity and unique ecosystems cannot be left to chance and for obvious reasons the protection of our unique Great Barrier Reef is of paramount importance to Australia and, indeed, the world. This was a sentiment, as you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that was expressed in this place over 30 years ago by the government of the day when it introduced the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975, and it is a sentiment that remains true to this very day.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975, which the Great Barrier Reef Marine

Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 amends, has served its purpose extremely well, in my view. Like any other good piece of legislation, the act has given effect to the public policy considerations underpinning it. We need not look much further for evidence of this than the outstanding achievements of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority over many years and the international recognition in 1981 of the conservation value of the Great Barrier Reef following its inscription on the World Heritage List.

While the inscription of the Great Barrier Reef on the World Heritage List can be cited as an example of how well the act has stood the test of time, it also reveals one of the act's weaknesses—its age. The act's object, for example, does not contain a recognition of the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef. The provision of an object section within an act is not an exercise in symbolism; these provisions provide guidance to the untrained eye when constructing a section that may leave some room for interpretation. Members would be aware of section 15AA of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 which underpins the importance of the objects or purposes within acts. This section states *inter alia*:

- (1) In the interpretation of a provision of an Act, a construction that would promote the purpose or object underlying the Act ... shall be preferred to a construction that would not promote that purpose or object.

With an asset as precious as the Great Barrier Reef, having sound environmental objects within the act would seem obvious, yet the act's objects have not been suitably updated for decades. The act's object section is a product of the time when the act was first drafted when the predominant focus was on establishing the marine park and developing administrative and institutional arrangements for management, and at a time when the

Great Barrier Reef was not yet declared a World Heritage area.

Indeed, guiding environmental principles such as ecological sustainability and the precautionary principle had not yet emerged when the act was first enacted. The act has certainly been an exemplar defender of marine management and conservation. Nonetheless, it has been in place for over 30 years and many lessons have been learnt from the challenges of the past. The passage of time has meant the act has lost some of its gloss. Its fundamental integrity as well as its acceptance by stakeholders is essential if it is to continue safeguarding the interests of the Great Barrier Reef well into the future. The bill will insert a new objects clause that not only recognises the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef but also recognises the importance of applying environmental principles such as ecological sustainability and the precautionary principle to the management of the marine park, as I have mentioned. A new objects section that provides a modern, future-oriented focus to guide the administration of the act and management of the park is now an urgent necessity. In light of the fact that the marine park is now intensively used for a wide variety of purposes, including tourism, fishing, research, public enjoyment and defence training, the application of ecologically sustainable development and the precautionary principle to the marine park is long overdue.

Where there is a threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage to the Great Barrier Reef, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. This principle should long have been central to the administration of the act and management of the marine park. Following the amendments contained within this bill, this principle will now provide a shining

light on any proposed use of the marine park in the future.

This bill also implements recommendations 18 to 28 of the 2006 review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975—recommendations which we expressed bipartisan support for while we were in opposition. Without going into the detail of each of those recommendations, the measures will broadly improve the integrity of the act and the integrity of the processes that allow conservation to coexist with reasonable marine park use.

Schedule 3 of the bill clarifies processes that must be followed and requirements that must be met when developing zoning plans, proclaiming an area part of the marine park or removing an area from the marine park by way of proclamation. The introduction of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003, with its considerable scale and scope, affected many communities and stakeholders. Perhaps better than any other chapter in the act's history, this example demonstrated the tension often felt by many stakeholders in the decision-making process. Managing the alternative uses of the marine park and responding to its long-term protection needs will become more challenging in the future. This bill introduces a requirement for the authority to publicly consult on the making of proclamations creating or amending the marine park, zoning plans or plans of management. This will enhance stakeholder and community engagement in the management of the Great Barrier Reef.

Schedule 4 of the bill establishes the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as a 'matter of national significance' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999. As Australia's central piece of environmental legislation, it is appropriate that it governs any proposals that will have or are likely to have a significant impact on the Great Bar-

rier Reef. This will ensure that a robust and best practice environmental impact assessment process is applied to any proposal that may affect the Great Barrier Reef in the future. The measures I have mentioned implement practices and procedures that are thoroughly transparent, clearly understood, engage with the stakeholders and assess the social and economic impacts of any changes affecting the Great Barrier Reef.

Schedule 5 of the bill provides amendments that will facilitate effective compliance with the act and allow a more tailored and targeted approach to enforcement. While criminal enforcement should and will always remain an option, amendments in this bill will enable the minister to impose graduated penalties that vary in severity according to the gravity of the contravention involved. Clearly, criminal penalties can often be an inappropriate and disproportionate reaction to regulatory breaches. The minister ought to have the tools to apply fitting and proportionate penalties that fit the particular circumstances—to ensure penalties are neither too lenient nor too harsh. The tools provided by this bill include the expanded availability of infringement notices, the introduction of civil penalty provisions and the introduction of alternative sanctions such as remediation, publicity orders, enforceable directions and enforceable undertakings.

Enforceable undertakings, for example, have been used with great success by a range of other regulators, including the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. Enforceable undertakings provide a new approach to compliance that avoids, where possible, the spectre of a drawn out and costly legal battle. By endeavouring to promote a working relationship between the regulator and the regulated, it becomes possible to foster a genuine commitment to the act and to avoid similar

breaches in future. That can only be a good thing for the barrier reef and for our country.

The bill also delivers on a Rudd government election commitment to reinstate the requirement for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to include an Indigenous member on the board. I note, on the question of board representation, that the previous government abolished automatic Indigenous representation on the authority under the guise of implementing recommendations from the 2003 Uhrig report titled *Review of the corporate governance of statutory authorities and office holders*. In its defence, the Howard government may have cited the following conclusion from that report:

The Review does not support representational appointments to governing boards as representational appointments can fail to produce independent and objective views.

However, assuming Mr Uhrig's conclusion is correct—and that is a legitimate question—it is interesting to note that his findings on the matter only made up one page of a 133-page report. It is important to note that Mr Uhrig also made the comment:

... there are no universally accepted structures and practices that constitute good governance.

The choice of governance model for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority should not be formulaic but should be driven by the objectives and stakeholders of the authority. There would not be many more worthy appointments to the authority than an Indigenous member with knowledge of or experience concerning Indigenous issues relating to the marine park. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the traditional owners of the Great Barrier Reef. There are more than 70 traditional owner clan groups along the Queensland coast from the eastern Torres Strait Islands to just north of Bundaberg. Furthermore, for more than 60,000 years the traditional connection of Indige-

nous communities with the marine environment of the reef has been evident. It is right that the Indigenous community be represented on the authority.

It is important to note that the amendments contained within the bill complement measures such as the Rudd government's reef rescue plan and our swift action to help protect the Great Barrier Reef from the impacts of climate change. It would be naive to view this bill and its measures to protect the Great Barrier Reef in the future in isolation from the destruction caused by climate change. The issue of climate change is the largest single challenge confronting the Great Barrier Reef. Reports from the United Nations have predicted the beginning of the end of the Great Barrier Reef within 13 years because of the effects of climate change. I have read reports that a three-degree rise in temperature could bleach 97 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef and that coral reef communities could be replaced by algal communities by 2030.

The effect of carbon dioxide upon the ocean waters is also starting to take its toll. Carbon dioxide when dissolved in water forms a weak acid. The Great Barrier Reef is under siege not only from rising water temperatures that cause coral bleaching but also, it appears, from rising ocean acidity. I saw that myself only a couple of years ago when I went out on the reef. I was terribly disappointed at the lack of colour from the coral on the reef. When you see it, it is certainly not what is promoted in all the tourist brochures that go all throughout our country and around the world as a great kaleidoscope of colour of marine life and coral. Just go there and have a look at it yourself. We know that it is in danger. It is quite disappointing. Despite the endless stream of evidence presented to this effect, the Howard government was unrepentant in its determination to sabotage efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Aus-

tralians are entitled to ask why the Howard government ignored assessments from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Why did it ignore Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg of the Australian Research Council of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies? Why did it ignore warnings from Sir Nicholas Stern?

There is very little point worrying about the environmental impact assessments, zoning plans or enforcement mechanisms contained within this bill if the Great Barrier Reef faces extinction because of the effects of climate change. Unlike the Howard government, the Rudd government has not ignored the scourge of climate change. Rather than taking a wrecking ball to the international community's efforts to reduce the volume of greenhouse gas emissions, the Rudd government seized the moment and immediately signed the Kyoto protocol. The Rudd government is heavily committed to renewable energy and an emissions-trading scheme. Rather than trying to turn the climate change debate into a mutually exclusive choice between environmental protection and job creation, the Rudd government knows that the economic costs of not doing anything about climate change will be far greater than the economic costs of addressing it. Nowhere is this more obvious than with the Great Barrier Reef.

In conclusion, as I have already mentioned, the Great Barrier Reef currently supports many sectors, including the tourism, fishing, research, cultural and recreational sectors. The destruction of the Great Barrier Reef from the effects of climate change directly puts at risk tens of thousands of jobs and over \$6 billion in gross domestic product each year. A government that is committed not only to reforming the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority but also to dealing with the onset of climate change is something the Great Barrier Reef deserves. It is

something the Great Barrier Reef received with the election of a Rudd government and I commend this bill to the House.

Mr BIDGOOD (Dawson) (11.32 am)—I rise to speak in favour of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. The bill will establish a modern and robust regulatory framework, providing capability for the efficient and effective protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef into the future. The bill implements recommendations 18 to 28 of the 2006 review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975. That review found that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act has served its purpose well over the past 30 years but needs to be updated and better integrated with other legislation to meet future needs and challenges. This bill will establish a modern framework for administration of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park that is aligned, integrated and not duplicated with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and other legislation. This includes a new objects section, recognition of the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef and the application of principles such as ‘ecologically sustainable use’ and the ‘precautionary principle’. This bill will also establish the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act as the basis for environmental impact assessment and approval of actions in the marine park involving significant environmental impacts. This includes establishing the marine park as a matter of national environmental significance under the EPBC Act. This bill will also enhance capability for investigation and evidence collection, in particular by allowing inspectors appointed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to use the investigation related powers of the EPBC Act for the purposes of the

GBRMP Act. The relevant GBRMP Act powers are repealed.

This bill will also provide a wider range of enforcement options, allowing for a more tailored and targeted approach to enforcement. This includes new administrative mechanisms, expanded availability of infringement notices and the introduction of civil penalty provisions. This proposed act will also enhance deterrence and encourage responsible use of the marine park. This includes adjusting penalties to ensure they are neither too lenient nor too harsh, depending on the circumstances; the introduction of alternative sanctions, such as remediation and publicity orders; and the establishment of an environmental duty applying to marine park users, similar to that applying under state legislation. This bill will also establish new emergency management powers, allowing the authority to respond to incidents presenting a serious risk to the environment of the marine park. These powers will complement and be subservient to those of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

As it happens, this bill also honours a Rudd Labor government election promise to reinstate a requirement for the authority to include an Indigenous member. I am particularly pleased to see this amendment because in my seat of Dawson we have the highest population of South Sea islanders gathered anywhere in Australia. It is only fair, right and just that someone from that large community in my electorate is on this authority to represent the interests of the traditional owners.

I asked the Parliamentary Library to do some fact finding for me on the coastline of the electorate, and I was quite interested with some of the answers I got back. As you travel through the seat of Dawson, you will see that there is one thing that we love to talk about, and that is tourism. We are passionate

about international tourism and we have a slogan: 'Queensland: beautiful one day, perfect the next.' It is just like the Rudd Labor government! You just cannot beat this government, especially when there are two Queenslanders at the top of it—Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Treasurer Wayne Swan. It is absolutely great leadership and great command. I am looking forward to this Sunday, when the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the vast majority of the federal cabinet are coming to Mackay to engage the local people and hear their concerns. The boundaries of the electorate of Dawson have been redrawn, so I asked the Parliamentary Library to find out how much coastline I actually have in my electorate. Mr Speaker, I was quite interested in the answer.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr AJ Schultz)—I thank the member for Dawson for my elevation to the position of Mr Speaker, but I am Deputy Speaker.

Mr BIDGOOD—I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. Perhaps that is a prophecy for you! You never know your luck—just keep wishing! I asked the Parliamentary Library to find out how much coastline I have in the seat of Dawson. The coastal boundary of my electorate runs from Mackay to the Ross River in Townsville. To drive it by road is 400 kilometres. I was most intrigued to find out from the Library that the coastline of Dawson is approximately 977 kilometres long. I am also informed that within the boundaries of my electorate are 144 islands. It is a great seat to represent and obviously there is rich diversity in the electorate, not only in the culture of the people who live there but also in the geographical terrain and, of course, the wonderful Great Barrier Reef itself. If you travel around Dawson you will see publicity that says we have 74 beautiful islands for you to come and visit. I suppose a lot of the other islands are just small islands. We have 74

islands which are key destinations for our international tourists.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you may know that I originally came to Australia in 1991 as a backpacker—and now I am a backbencher, which shows what you can do in this country.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—We are a very tolerant community!

Mr BIDGOOD—Very tolerant, indeed! I can tell you that it has been a long road, but it has been a good road. One of the main drawcards in coming to Australia was the Great Barrier Reef. I enjoyed my time in 1991. I was living in Sarina, which is just 30 minutes south of Mackay. In those days it was a small town of about 5,000 people and we had to travel into Mackay for our social life. In those days there was just one cinema. But how the times have changed! In 2008 there are now 20,000 people living in Sarina, and in Mackay there is not one cinema but 11. That gives you some idea of how things have changed. I have only ever lived in Mackay. One of the reasons that I love Mackay so much is because it is beside the Great Barrier Reef and we also have access to the beautiful rainforest in Yongala.

When we first came to Sarina, my wife at the time was a GP and she had applied to do a locum. She was told: 'You've got two places you can choose to go. One is Alice Springs and the other is Sarina.' We knew where Alice Springs was but we did not know where Sarina was. They said, 'It's on the Great Barrier Reef.' That is what hooked us. They got us like fish and we just had to go. I never regret for one minute going all the way to Sarina. I have only ever lived in Mackay, and one thing I love to do is enjoy the hospitality around the islands on the Great Barrier Reef. I have enjoyed some of the best snorkelling I have ever had in the world, and I have snorkelled in many differ-

ent places in the world. There is a beautiful island called Hook Island, which is the best-kept secret. There are cabins and camping facilities on the island. It does not have a flash hotel or anything like that, but the diversity of coral is amazing. There are three main types of coral around the island—stag, table and brain coral—and there is a rich diversity of fish there as well. Of course, there was nothing more inspirational to the people who made the film *Finding Nemo* than the Great Barrier Reef. What great publicity for the Great Barrier Reef that was. That drew many people from across the world to Australia, to Mackay and the Whitsundays to see the Great Barrier Reef—and that has been a fantastic success.

We have to look after our Great Barrier Reef. When I first went there in 1991, I went to Brampton Island. I snorkelled around and looked at the coral there and thought that it was beautiful. I came back a few years later—in 1993 or 1994—and had another look at the coral. I was amazed at the amount of bleaching that had taken place in a couple of years. We have to realise that there is a real issue with climate change in our world. We have a World Heritage site in the Great Barrier Reef. It is one of the world's greatest natural wonders. We have to look after it.

This bill addresses the care of that reef. It addresses things like where you can or cannot fish and how people progress through it in vessels. It is very important. These provisions are up to date with global standards. As I said in my introduction, over the last 30 years we have been well served. But we have to review all laws from time to time and we need to make appropriate changes. The changes in this bill are such appropriate changes.

I spoke to Mr David Phillips of Mackay Tourism not so long ago. I asked him: 'How can we attract more people to the beautiful

region of Mackay, Whitsunday and Bowen?' He said to me, 'One of the greatest opportunities we have to get people to come and view our reef is the new film that is being made by Baz Luhrmann called *Australia*, starring Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman.' I am pleased that the Minister for Tourism, Martin Ferguson, is very much on the front foot with Tourism Australia. We are working together to maximise all opportunities. One of the major locations, apart from Western Australia, was the town of Bowen in Central Queensland, which is right in the heart of my seat of Dawson. We are preparing for an influx of international tourism as a result of that film. The local mayor of the Whitsunday Regional Council, Mr Mike Brunner, is more than keen to take full advantage of that opportunity and to showcase our beautiful Great Barrier Reef. So we are very much looking forward to that.

There are educational opportunities as well. One thing that schoolchildren in the seat of Dawson love to do is to go on a school trip to the islands and explore the coral that is there. That is why we need to keep it in such good condition. One of the schools from the seat of Dawson is visiting me today. I met them at 11 o'clock this morning. That school is St Joseph's Catholic School from Mackay. There are about 30 students down here. I would like to acknowledge their presence at the top of the gallery today. It is nice to see you, kids. I hope that you are enjoying our modern democracy.

I was most pleased to say to them that democracy is wonderful because we have new forms of democracy in action here, which a lot of people do not realise. The fact that we are streaming live over the internet means that you can view this speech right now live across the other side of the world. That is a wonderful new form of democracy, which opens up parliament to the world. That is a fantastic development.

The internet has also provided us with a great opportunity to monitor the Great Barrier Reef. Just recently—last month—Senator Kim Carr came to southern Townsville to the Australian Institute of Marine Science to launch and open a digital skin across the reef. What is this? This is a series of buoys that have been set up across the barrier reef. They have cameras looking at the reef monitoring it and broadcasting live to the internet, so anyone in the world can see the development. They monitor the change in the coral, temperatures and things like that. Isn't that a wonderful thing? New technology enables new observation and research. We figuratively have a digital skin across the Great Barrier Reef. I welcome the help that new technology, innovation and science can provide in protecting the great natural wonder that is our Great Barrier Reef.

As I said earlier, it is wonderful for children to explore. One thing that children love to do is to go out fishing. They love to fish—and I can see that you do, too, Deputy Speaker Schultz. But I need to inform you that it is not a free-for-all. We not believe in just anything happening in the jungle. We have to have order and we have to help nature along. Sometimes, some people want to fish in areas where they should not. This bill addresses where people can and cannot fish responsibly. What we have found since measures have come in saying where people can and cannot fish is that fishing stocks are now increasing in number.

The people of Bowen love their fishing. They love to get out on the reef. I have been along to the Bowen Fishing Festival, and the number of fish that are caught is quite staggering. If we do not look after our fishing stocks on the Great Barrier Reef, we will lose another major tourist attraction, because fishing is a big money earner for the people

of Dawson and particularly the people in Bowen.

Another major thing to do on the Great Barrier Reef is sailing round the islands. With the help of the state government in 2000, we have down in Mackay a fantastic luxury marina. It has hosted some fantastic boats from around the world. What is the reason they come? They want to get out on the Great Barrier Reef.

We have to look after the quality of water; we have to look after the quality of the reef; we have to look after the stocks of fish. It is in our national interest to do so. And it is not only in the national interest but in the international interest. When people think of Australia, they think of a few icons. They think of the kangaroo, they think of Ayers Rock, they think of the Sydney Opera House. On the natural list, they say, 'We want to visit the Great Barrier Reef.' I conclude by saying that we have a great natural treasure and we must treasure it and look after it, and this bill does so. Thank you.

Ms GEORGE (Throsby) (11.52 am)—I am pleased to be able to add my comments on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008, which is a very important piece of legislation. I do so because we all recognise what a wonderful asset we are blessed to have in this country. I did not know until I heard it from my colleague the member for Dawson that, had it not been for the reef, he may not have ended up here in parliament. That is another aspect of this debate that is very interesting.

On a more serious note, the bill before us is necessary in order to put in place a new regulatory framework to ensure that we have the best management for the long-term protection and ecologically sustainable development of this wonderful icon. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 provided

first for the creation of the marine park and it also established the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. There is no doubt it was groundbreaking legislation at the time and I think we all agree that it has served its purpose well for over 30 years. But in that 30 years there has been a lot of change and the 1975 act really needs to be amended to keep pace with some of the modern issues and challenges facing the reef. For example, the earlier legislation did not recognise the World Heritage status of our reef and nor did it incorporate principles such as ecological sustainability and the precautionary principle. Both are principles that have been developed as we have moved forward to look at good environmental management systems. The bill is important also in that it establishes our primary legislation, the EPBC act, as the primary basis for environmental impact assessments and approval arrangements applying to the marine park. In doing so, as I read the bill, it importantly recognises that the Great Barrier Reef will now be considered a matter of national environmental significance, which, I believe, will provide a strong legal base for its protection for decades and generations to come.

I am also delighted that the bill addresses a specific election commitment made by the Rudd Labor government—that is, to appropriately and properly restore Indigenous representation on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, which was deleted by the Howard government back in July 2007. As we know, there are more than 70 traditional owner groups along the coast from Bundaberg to the Torres Strait who have a long historical and continuing relationship with the reef. Obviously, their knowledge and perspective as people with such lengthy experience will be invaluable in achieving ecologically sustainable management of the reef into the future. Several years ago I happened to be in Townsville at the GBRMPA

headquarters when the first agreement was reached between GBRMPA and one of the local Indigenous groups for the use of the resources on the reef. I know that GBRMPA plans to do more in this regard in the future.

I think all Australians understand how blessed we are to have use of the reef. That also carries with it an obligation to act as guardians of one of the world's most important natural assets. The reef as we know it today has evolved over the 10,000 years since the last ice age. It is the biggest single structure made by living organisms and it is one of the most complex natural systems on earth. It is home to around 1,500 of the world's marine fish species, a third of the world's soft coral species, six of the seven species of marine turtles and, very importantly, it is home to one of the world's remaining dugong populations, a species that has been listed internationally as being vulnerable to extinction.

So, as I said earlier, it is no wonder that its natural values are internationally recognised through its inclusion on the World Heritage List. Inclusion on the World Heritage List, I think, imposes an additional moral obligation on its guardians to protect it for generations to come.

The international recognition of this icon has supported substantial economic activity. My colleague the member for Dawson discussed some of the very important economic outcomes of the reef. The most obvious is the tourism it generates, which now underpins approximately \$6 billion of income on an annual basis. We are aware too of the importance of other recreational activities and commercial fishing in areas so designated. The Great Barrier Reef is undoubtedly a great drawcard, not just for our own tourism industry but also for international tourists, because of its iconic status.

But as good as that is, the Great Barrier Reef also has the potential to be made an international symbol for the understanding of the impacts of climate change. In my contribution today, I want to address some of these impacts so that we have a good understanding of the fact that our policies and programs are aimed at preserving this iconic reef for future generations and at ensuring that, in the meantime, we have a coherent set of adaptation strategies to ensure that the huge pleasure and interest that is derived from the value of the reef is there in perpetuity. We know that the world's scientific body of knowledge points to the fact that corals are vulnerable to thermal stress and that they have a low adaptive capacity. Increases in sea surface temperatures of about one to three degrees centigrade are projected to result in more frequent coral bleaching events. Climate change has a number of potential detrimental effects on coastal regions and on our reef. We are aware of this because we have lived through two large bleaching episodes on the reef—in 1998 and 2002. Eminent scientists warn us that by mid-century, on the current trajectory, we will be well above the line that we know causes temperatures to impact on coral bleaching. So that is a very significant factor that needs to be taken into account in our adaptation strategies.

Rising sea levels, which we also know from worldwide scientific expertise is projected to be a consequence of climate change, will also have an impact—not so much on the potential threats to a healthy coral reef but related impacts, such as temperature increase and increased turbidity which can negatively affect reef development. In addition, decreased decalcification rates due to increased atmospheric CO₂ can reduce a reef's ability to grow and keep up with the projected rates of sea level rise. I want to quote from a statement by Professor Iain Gordon from the CSIRO. We are lucky

that we have eminent scientists focusing their minds and their research capacity on what is needed to protect the reef in its iconic status. Professor Gordon said:

... water quality has a negative impact on coral biodiversity and coral cover through a range of different effects ... like smothering the coral and also by blocking light that is happening through silt and mud.

In addition, climate change and global warming will bring more extreme weather events. We have already witnessed the impact of cyclonic and storm activity in the northern part of our nation. It is predicted that there will be increased cyclone and related rainfall intensities. Much of this can cause damage to not just human and physical infrastructure but also the natural habitats that are very much part of the beauty of the northern part of our country. More intense rainfall events can also alter the nutrient loads of rivers and increase the risk of toxic algal blooms.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Great Barrier Reef in my capacity as Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts. I want to place on record my thanks to the chair of GBRMPA and the wonderful staff with whom he works for making our visit such a productive one and enabling us to better understand the consequences of climate change on the reef. However, I would also say that understanding the potential consequences means that with the passage of this bill we will be better placed to put in place effective adaptation strategies.

I also want to place on record and acknowledge the constructive work undertaken by the Australian Greenhouse Office in a very important report entitled *Climate change in the Cairns and Great Barrier Reef region*. When we look at the preservation of the reef into the future and for the benefit of future generations, we need to understand that development in Cairns and in the sur-

rounding land areas has a significant impact on the reef, particularly on water quality. In that report, the Australian Greenhouse Office outlined a series of recommendations to ensure effective monitoring and climate change adaptation policies. I want to refer to a number of these because I think they are an important component of our plans for the future. The report pointed to the need for development of a high-resolution climate change projection for the Cairns and Great Barrier Reef region and development of regional model models of land use. This is very important because sugar cane farming, grazing and other agricultural uses of land along the coastline have a downstream impact on the quality of water and that affects the potential of the reef to remain one of the natural wonders. The report also points to the importance of development of spatial hazard and other vulnerability maps, a series of integrated assessment models, a cost-benefit analysis of proposed adaptation measures and improvements to long-term monitoring in the region—particularly in regard to determining regional rates of sea level rise—and provision of more appropriate data to improve our current understanding of biological processes and simulation of these systems. We are going to be very well informed by a great body of scientific knowledge that will help guide the Rudd Labor government's efforts to protect and enhance the reef in its iconic status.

In the lead-up to the last election, as well as campaigning on climate change and the need for better adaptation and mitigation strategies, I was very heartened that the minister and the Prime Minister announced a specific package of \$200 million known as the Great Barrier Reef Rescue Plan. This plan will help secure the reef from climate change and declining water quality. I am pleased that a substantial amount of funding was allocated to a new water quality grants

scheme. The government has also made a commitment to extend the Reef Partnerships Program so that people engaged in agricultural activity can better appreciate the consequences of land use and its impact on the water quality of the reef, particularly from increased urban development and agricultural use. The government will be investing more funding to ensure that the reef water quality monitoring and reporting program can be enhanced. We have a \$10,000,000 commitment to the Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships program and we are committed to publishing an annual Great Barrier Reef water quality report card.

Professor Terry Hughes from James Cook University, who I had the opportunity to hear from as part of our visit to the reef, has importantly referred to some possible strategies for the future that we need to build into our thinking. He talks about the importance of the food webs on the reef. Zoning plans are an important component in ensuring that the food webs are not altered in a way that is deleterious to the coral formation.

Importantly, we need to give greater consideration to land use practices. I was concerned to see some of the plans for future coastal development near the hub of Cairns. This is not an issue just peculiar to the Cairns region; along the coastline people are starting to be quite anxious about the impact that unsustainable economic development and housing developments can have on our natural environment. I think the Great Barrier Reef and the Cairns region have been identified in a number of reports as particularly vulnerable hotspots. We need to ensure that land use practices are more sustainable in the future.

I think we are very fortunate that, with the scientific body of knowledge that is now accumulating with an emphasis on some of the vulnerable places in Australia—like

Kakadu, Cairns, the Great Barrier Reef and others—we can now have more effective regional analysis and regional programs and responses to the hotspots that have been identified.

Having said all that and maybe dwelling too much on potential problems that may exist, I will say that we are well placed to ensure that with appropriate action we can continue to have a magnificent reef which is, by all accounts, very well preserved and protected compared to many reef systems elsewhere in the world. Obviously that is the way we want to keep it for future generations. The Labor government's commitment of \$200 million to the Great Barrier Reef Rescue Plan demonstrates the level of importance the Rudd Labor government is giving to the protection of the reef in order to build its resilience and to begin setting in place plans to deal with the impact of dangerous climate change.

In conclusion, the bill before us is a timely update of the powers that we extend to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The initial legislation was probably quite groundbreaking 30 years ago, but it does need to be updated. Very importantly, the consequence of this legislation will be to recognise the Great Barrier Reef as a matter of national environmental significance, which I believe will provide it with a strong legal base for protection. And that, together with a coherent range of adaptation and mitigation strategies, means that our generation will bequeath to future generations a world iconic reef.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (12.10 pm)—Before I speak on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008, I ask for indulgence to wish Red Nose Day a very happy 21st birthday for tomorrow, which is officially Red Nose Day. I want to acknowledge what SIDS and Kids

have been doing to help stamp out Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Over the last 20 years, the death of infants through SIDS has reduced by something like 90 per cent, which I think we in parliament would all applaud. If I could be so bold, as I look towards the government minister, on behalf of all of parliament I wish to say, 'Happy 21st, SIDS and Kids, for tomorrow.'

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr AJ Schultz)—I thank the member for Fadden. I am sure all parliamentarians would support him in his sentiments.

Mr ROBERT—I support the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 and note that it is in fact our legislation. The previous coalition government completed a review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and authority in 2006. The former Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, oversaw that review which delivered on a coalition election commitment to review the act and improve the performance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The review consulted with a wide range of stakeholders with a diverse range of views. It held 36 consultations and considered 227 submissions. The coalition cabinet then released a response accepting all the recommendations. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 is largely a result of this work by former Senator Ian Campbell and the Howard government.

The purpose of this now Labor government bill is to establish a modern and robust regulatory framework that provides the capability for the efficient and effective protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef into the future. Proposed changes include updating the act to reflect the fact that the Great Barrier Reef has been World Heritage listed, updating the act to reflect that the

coalition government introduced the EPBC Act and closing the perceived gaps in emergency management powers. The new bill also picks up the coalition cabinet's decision to move beyond a criminal penalty only system to allow for greater flexibility of enforcement options, such as reef recovery or civil penalties for breaches such as fishing in no-take zones. In addition, the bill expands the number of board members from three to five, in line with recommendations. Under the bill, one of those places will now be filled by an Indigenous representative. In the Senate, we will also move to ensure that there is appropriate industry representation.

By way of background, the Great Barrier Reef is one of the world's largest and most complex ecosystems. It comprises not one continuous reef but over 2,900 individual reefs, including about 760 fringe reefs around islands and along the mainland. There are over 900 islands and cays within the boundaries of the current marine park. The reef is one of the most visually spectacular and richly diverse ecosystems on the planet and, indeed, is visible from space. The reef represents one of the most amazing aspects of life: that where there is wind, wave and true buffeting the reef is most alive. Coral is brighter on the ocean side than on the mainland side. Where the coral has to struggle, it is the brightest. Perhaps there is a lesson there for the government.

Of course, the reef is also one of Australia's most internationally recognised tourist icons. Its value to Australian tourism is immense. Reef related tourism generates close to \$6 billion a year. Recreation and commercial fishing generate hundreds of millions more. It would be difficult to overestimate the reef's importance to Australia economically, culturally and environmentally.

By way of history, we have come a long way as a nation in our attitude towards the

Great Barrier Reef. In 1967 the Queensland department of mines received an application to mine limestone on Ellison Reef and legislation was drawn up to govern the granting of offshore oil exploration permits. In 1969, an oil company was actually granted a permit covering the entire reef. Soon afterwards concern began, quite rightly, to grow about the potential for environmental catastrophe brought about by a major oil spill. A Royal Commission into Exploratory and Production Drilling for Petroleum in the Area of the Great Barrier Reef was held between 1970 and 1974. This resulted in the banning of petroleum drilling and a recommendation that a statutory authority be set up to protect the reef and regulate research and development within its vicinity.

At the same time, a committee of inquiry into the national estate deemed the reef to be of World Heritage standard and found that the Queensland and Commonwealth governments had a responsibility to preserve and manage the reef. These recommendations of course received bipartisan support and resulted in the enactment of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975. Over the following 25 years or so, more sections of the reef were progressively proclaimed to be part of the marine park.

I proudly say that no government in this nation's history has done more to protect the Great Barrier Reef than the Howard government. This was done principally through a number of far-reaching and ambitious actions. Firstly, the Howard government passed the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act in 1999—opposed by members opposite, can you believe it? This act gave the country its first national environment specific legislation in our history. One of the most significant impacts of the act has been to give the Australian government unprecedented powers to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

The second massive contribution to the protection of the Great Barrier Reef by the Howard government was the development of a new zoning plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park that ensured that one-third of the reef—a sixfold increase—will be protected in so-called ‘no take zones’, zones where no extractive activity can occur. Another great advance by the Howard government was in terms of protecting the biodiversity, and thus the resilience, of this national icon in the development in concert with the Queensland government of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

The fact that the Howard government did more to protect the Great Barrier Reef than any other government is supported by the current government Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, the member for Kingsford Smith, who I believe is actually absent from the country during the debate on his own bill. The member for Kingsford Smith, the current responsible minister, said on 10 May 2007—and I will quote so the government does not miss any of it:

... we certainly acknowledge that the significant protection of the Great Barrier Reef is one of the Howard government's real environmental achievements.

Building on this great legacy, the Howard government then put together what Labor has now copied in the form of the bill we debate today. To get a sense of the impact and importance of this legislation that the Howard government put through, it is worth while looking at the extent of the various marine park zones before 2004 and afterwards. General use reduced from 77.94 per cent to being only 33 per cent. Habitat protection increased from 15.2 to 28.2 per cent, and marine national parks increased from 4.6 per cent to a staggering 33.3 per cent. The marine park now covers around 98 per cent of the World Heritage Area and an additional one per cent is covered by Queensland na-

tional parks and by the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is now by far the largest marine protected area in Australia. It extends over 2,300 kilometres along the Queensland coast and covers close to 344,000 square kilometres. The Howard government can be incredibly proud of the legacy it left the Australian people.

I will conclude on three simple three points. Firstly, I am staggered by the timing of this bill's introduction. I believe it only serves to highlight the fact that the Rudd government's legislative program is in disarray. On 18 June this year we were told by Minister Garrett's office that the bill would be held over until late August. By the following morning, 19 June—clearly there had been a chaotic evening with the Prime Minister—it was announced that the bill was to be debated a few days later, whilst the responsible minister was overseas. Thus, this bill is being debated whilst the minister damages Australia's reputation on the international stage over whaling. Instead of allowing the industry time to comment and review the legislation over the parliamentary winter break, the bill is being brought forward to fill a legislative gap because the chaotic Rudd Labor government cannot pull its legislative agenda together.

Secondly, the Rudd Labor government needs to ensure that there is at least one person with tourism industry skills and experience on the board of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Yet there has been a marked lack of consultation with the industry on this matter—yet another example of the government's hypocrisy on broader environmental matters such as the destruction of the solar industry. Before the election, you could not see the member for Kingsford Smith without a set of solar panels strapped to his back, walking behind the capped crusader, Captain Chaos, the Prime Minister

himself. And now, with the virtual destruction of the solar industry, a bill coming forward and the minister absent, there is only one conclusion that can be drawn: the legislative agenda of this government is in disarray.

Thirdly—and, may I say, most poignantly—this Prime Minister, the caped crusader himself, has only ever uttered the phrase ‘Great Barrier Reef’ once in his 10 years in parliament. On 8 September 2005, when the member for Griffith was speaking about the Protection of the Sea (Shipping Levy) Amendment Bill 2005, he actually snuck in the phrase ‘Great Barrier Reef’. But apart from that, in 10 years in this hallowed chamber—and he purports to be one of the great environmental champions; perhaps we can put a big ‘E’ on the cape of the caped crusader, Captain Chaos, for his purported environmental concern—he has not mentioned the Great Barrier Reef. It was only that one time and never in the context of its protection. I can only assume that the Great Barrier Reef is just not one of the Prime Minister’s ever-growing number of chaotic priorities. Notwithstanding that this government’s legislative agenda is in complete disarray, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 is almost wholly the work of the coalition, which is why we seek to support the bill.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (12.22 pm)—I rise today to express my support for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. I am a little disappointed by the member for Fadden. It is interesting that he said that this was the Howard government’s legislation. However, the Howard government did not enact this legislation; it is up to the Rudd Labor government to do so. I hope it is not the intention of the member for Fadden to criticise the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts for attending the Inter-

national Whaling Commission meeting, because certainly many people in my electorate are very concerned and like the decisive action that the Rudd Labor government is taking on whaling around the world.

This is an extremely important bill that will encourage responsible and ecologically sustainable use of the iconic Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef is one of the most significant and identifiable parts of Australia. The importance of the Great Barrier Reef was recognised in 1981, when the area was internationally recognised with inscription on the World Heritage List. The great coral reef is by far the largest of any Commonwealth or state marine protected area, extending over 2,300 kilometres—approximately 300,000 square kilometres—and including 2,900 individual reefs. The biodiversity of reef inhabitants is amazing. The reef is home to 30 per cent of the world’s soft corals and 30 per cent of Australia’s sponges, and includes areas used for breeding by the humpback whale, the dugong and six of the world’s seven species of marine turtle.

If the Great Barrier Reef is not protected adequately then many of these diverse species may be lost forever. Among the key species under threat are the marine turtles. The Great Barrier Reef is one of the few nesting areas for the green, hawksbill and loggerhead turtles. This is a very important area for their breeding. Australia has some of the largest marine turtle nesting areas in the Indo-Pacific. The loggerhead and Olive Ridley turtles are listed as endangered and could become extinct if the threats to their survival continue. The other turtles are listed as vulnerable and may become endangered if these threats continue. The marine turtles are just one of the many species which contribute to the huge biodiversity of the Great Barrier Reef.

I personally had no concept of the amazing ecosystems that existed at the Great Barrier Reef until I visited there on holiday. After putting on my lycra stinger swimsuit, I jumped into the water and quickly became absorbed by the ecological and biological surroundings on display. In fact, I was so amazed by the surroundings that I forgot to reapply my sunscreen and became severely sunburnt. However, this great national icon is under threat. The threat of coral bleaching caused by climate change and declining water quality needs to be addressed to preserve the reef long into the future.

The proposed changes before the House today complement measures already announced by the Rudd government to help protect the Great Barrier Reef. Threats to the Great Barrier Reef such as climate change and declining water quality will be tackled by the \$200 million reef rescue plan announced in the 2008-09 budget. The funding will support land management grants to farmers and community groups and assist vital research. The rescue plan will help protect this natural wonder, while benefiting local conservation and Indigenous groups, agricultural production, tourism, and fishing and aquaculture industries. The combination of this bill and the \$200 million in funding will establish a strong foundation for the future prosperity of the Great Barrier Reef. I congratulate the minister for introducing this important bill, which will create long-term security for the Great Barrier Reef by strengthening and amending the act.

Although the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 has served its purpose well over the past 30 years, a comprehensive update through this bill is required to ensure that one of our most significant environmental assets is preserved and enjoyed for future generations. The marine park is one of the largest and best-protected marine areas in the world, and now, more than ever, we need

to ensure the appropriate action is taken to preserve this important environment asset.

The bill will establish a modern and robust regulatory framework that will provide capability for efficient and effective protection and ecologically sustainable management. The government is taking the vital steps to ensure the Great Barrier Reef can meet future needs and challenges. The bill will implement a number of recommendations of the 2006 review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act. These changes will update and establish a robust framework allowing for the successful management of the Great Barrier Reef into the future. The bill will not change the marine park's zoning, but the legislative changes will ensure it delivers a high level of protection for the Great Barrier Reef. The amendments will ensure that there is consistency between the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, thus eliminating unnecessarily duplication and ensuring that the two pieces of legislation are operating in a cohesive and integrated manner.

The amendments also recognise the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef and apply new streamlined environmental impact assessment processes. Furthermore, the bill seeks to improve the enforcement and compliance regime, providing a wider range of enforcement options tailored to circumstances. In addition, the amendments will enhance deterrence and provide encouragement for responsible use of the marine park. Finally, the bill establishes new emergency management powers to enable the authority to respond in conjunction with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to incidents that present a serious risk to the environment of the park.

The bill before us today is yet another example of the government delivering on its

election commitments. The bill provides an essential framework that is required to ensure the Great Barrier Reef's vast benefits and environmental prosperities are realised. In addition to the Great Barrier Reef, there are many smaller reefs around Australia also with very fragile ecosystems which are under threat. One of these is in my electorate of Kingston. The reef at Port Noarlunga, although much smaller than the Great Barrier Reef, is a popular recreation area for many holiday makers in South Australia. The reef lies about 400 metres offshore. It is estimated that 6,000 scuba divers visit the reef each year. In fact it has been said that the reef at Port Noarlunga is one of the best land based scuba dives in Australia.

As a result of geographic isolation and cooler waters in the Gulf of St Vincent, the Port Noarlunga reef has developed a unique ecosystem. However, the Port Noarlunga reef faces some of the same threats that the Great Barrier Reef does, despite being protected as an aquatic reserve in 1971. The reef is subject to a number of coastal outflows including the Christies Beach sewage outfall and the Onkaparinga River and local stormwater outlets. The water that flows into the sea is high in nutrients, therefore having a big impact on the local reef ecosystem.

Therefore, I welcome all levels of government which have showed commitment to recycle and reuse the waste water at the Christies Beach sewerage plant. Many of the projects that will come on line in the following years will lessen the amount of water that flows into the gulf and hence decrease the damage to the local reef and seagrasses. Protecting our reef systems all around Australia is extremely important. This bill provides an effective framework to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef is protected. I therefore commend the bill to the House.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (12.31 pm)—I want to begin by endorsing the comments from the member for Kingston in respect to the Port Noarlunga reef. She is absolutely right about it being a special place for those people who live in the Adelaide area. I too rise to support the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. I commend the minister for introducing this bill into the House and I too point out that it is the Rudd Labor government that has introduced this bill into the House. I begin my remarks on this bill by quoting the opening statement of the 1991 House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment, Recreation and the Arts report titled, *The injured coastline*. A statement, which was part of a submission to the committee, was made by Paddy Roe, OAM, a Goolarooloo elder of the Yawuru people. He said:

The Country now comes from Bugarri-Garri—

That is, the dreamtime—

It was made by all the dreamtime ancestors who left their tracks and statues behind and gave us our law, we still follow that law, which tells us how to look after this country and how to keep it alive.

The true people followed this law from generation to generation until today that is why this country is still good and gives us plenty, we never take more than we need and we respect each others areas.

Today everybody, all kind of people walk through this country, now all of us together have to respect and look after this land, and when we look after it the proper way, this land stays happy and it will make all of us happy.

That was signed Paddy Roe, Law-Keeper, Custodian, Broome Region on 7 February 1991. The Indigenous people of Australia certainly understood, valued and lived in harmony with the environment and we could learn a lot from them.

In my own lifetime, too much of the natural environment and landscape that I grew up

with has been lost forever. I do not refer to areas of national or international significance. I make the observation, however, that the environment is changing around us and before our very eyes, in some cases for reasons beyond our control but in many cases because of human intervention. In isolation, the single loss of an environmental feature appears of no great consequence, but collectively the changes occurring are indeed significant. What is happening to our environment on a global scale should be of concern to us all and it is my strong belief that many of the causes of climate change can be attributed to mankind's activities. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Synthesis 2005 report stated:

Over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history ... This has resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on Earth.

Concerningly, environmental mismanagement leads to an escalation in the rate of further destruction of our environment. That is what is occurring with the Great Barrier Reef and it is why action must be taken if we are to halt the growing threats to the reef's survival.

The Great Barrier Reef is indeed the world's largest and most complex coral reef ecosystem. It is much too valuable, with respect to its environmental value and its economic value, to allow it to deteriorate or even die. The minister and other speakers have all spoken of the value of the fishing and tourism industries which the reef sustains and I do not want to cover that ground again.

The gradual decline of the Australian coastline has been the subject of several national reports dating back to the 1970s. There are a number of common themes which emerge from those reports, but regrettably responses have continued to be fragmented

and inadequate. Human impacts on our coastal waters associated with nutrient run-off, ship ballast discharge, clearing of coastal land, overfishing, discharge of sewage effluent, coastal mining activities, oil and gas drilling, recreation and tourist uses of our coastline and the man-made groynes, marinas, seawalls and breakwaters can all have and often do have serious environmental and ecological consequences over time. Whilst this bill focuses on the Great Barrier Reef, it does however begin to establish a model for a coordinated approach to coastal management. Firstly, it brings together all three levels of government. Secondly, it highlights the number of different government departments and acts of parliament which have to be coordinated in the effective management of our coastline. Thirdly, it begins to identify the land uses which ultimately impact on and cause damage to the coastline and to the coastal waters. In that respect it is quite often the case that what we do on the land is not apparent until many years later in the impact it has on our coastal waters. Part of the reason I guess for that is that, unlike what you see on the land, you cannot see what is happening to the waters themselves unless, of course, you are a scientist or a research person carrying out research activities. To most people, however, it is very difficult to understand the damage that may be caused by what we are doing elsewhere.

Whilst the Great Barrier Reef is in better shape than most other reefs, nutrient run-off and the loss of fish and marine mammals which graze on the seagrasses have been identified as two key threats to the health of the reef. According to the annual report of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, one-third of the world's reefs have degraded in the past 30 years, making them of little use for tourism and fisheries. Commercial harvests of sharks and rays have increased fourfold since 1993. In 40 years the

number of nesting turtles have plummeted 50 to 80 per cent. The coastal Queensland dugong population has dwindled to three per cent of the 1960s figure. Nutrient and sediment discharge has quadrupled over the last century. Those figures are concerning. Again, each of those changes in isolation would not be so disastrous but, collectively, they create an unhealthy environment for the reef, and I have not even included the risks associated with climate change. Much of the threat faced by the Great Barrier Reef is symptomatic of the lack of a national coordinated management plan for all of our coastal waters. It should be noted that our coastal waters cover a larger area than the Australian mainland, and are a source of significant environmental and economic wealth.

As I said earlier, this bill begins a process of coordinating the efforts of all three levels of government, the administrative agencies and the broader community in better managing our coastal waters. As Mayor of Salisbury, I had some personal experience in that process because the City of Salisbury shared responsibility for part of the Adelaide coastline in the vicinity of the area known as the Barker Inlet. Some eight years ago, I convened a summit which we entitled 'Living on the Edge'. We invited to that summit the councils surrounding the city of Salisbury, a number of state government agencies including the EPA, SA Water and Primary Industries and Fisheries, some expert environmentalists, recreational fishers and other people with expertise in coastal management. The purpose of the summit was to coordinate a strategy to restore the health of the Gulf of St Vincent along the Adelaide coastline. The outcome of the summit was that a group came together which we referred to as the Barker Inlet and Port Estuary Committee. It was a group made up of representatives of all of those people that I mentioned earlier. Effectively, it was a group of all of the gov-

ernment agencies that had an interest in the management of the South Australian coastline and, as a result of that group's work, action was taken to begin to reverse the process of degradation that had been occurring in and along the Barker Inlet where, for some 14 kilometres along the coastline and up to four kilometres into the waters, all of the seagrasses had pretty much disappeared and much of the mangroves had also begun to die.

As a result of the Barker Inlet and Port Estuary Committee, that work was commenced. Subsequently, it was followed up with the state government's legislation of the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary Act. Again, I had some experience in that, because I was on the advisory committee which advised the state government in the establishment of the act, and once the act was established I was also on the board. The purpose of that act was very similar to the objectives in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, and that is to preserve a natural asset. In the case of the Dolphin Sanctuary Act it was the Port River dolphin colony that was unique to the Adelaide coastline and to the city of Adelaide. Like the Great Barrier Reef, it was also at risk and for the same reasons as the risks that are threatening the reef. Again, it was a case of having to coordinate the activities of all the various government agencies that need to work together if we are going to ensure that our coastal waters are no longer placed at risk. For too long we have allowed polluted waters to drain into the coastline. We have incrementally destroyed our coastal vegetation, we have allowed too much land clearing and we have ignored the warning signs. It is indeed disappointing to see the responses from the opposition in recent days. The opposition did very little for 12 years and are now running a fear campaign against the government's efforts to manage the long-term effects of climate change.

I have spoken on other occasions about the economic and environmental costs of global warming. Global warming also poses a real threat to the Great Barrier Reef. An increase in water temperature will have serious consequences for the reef, and predictions of temperature increases of between two and five degrees by the year 2100 will inevitably cause mass bleaching of the corals. To quote Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:

We can't prevent future bleaching except through international action on greenhouse gas emissions. In the meantime, it's important to do whatever we can to minimise the damage and assist reefs through these difficult times.

Australian research fellow, Morgan Pratchett, effectively endorsed that comment when he said:

For reefs to withstand the rigours of climate change, they need to be resilient—able to bounce back after a severe shock such as a bleaching episode, an outbreak of disease or a hurricane. That means maintaining the richness and diversity of their assemblages of coral, fish and other animals.

These consequences, however, will be minimised if the human induced threats are reduced. Of concern is a report, only yesterday, from the *Canberra Times* science and environmental reporter, Rosslyn Beeby. Reporting on the International Whaling Commission's latest scientific report, she notes:

The world's coastal oceans are in crisis, with oxygen-starved "dead zones" increasing by a third in just two years as global temperatures increase ...

Dead Zones, caused by over-enrichment of waters by nutrients from run-off, sewerage and warming waters, represent "the worst-case scenario for coastal biodiversity" and are the "severest form" of ocean habitat degradation, ...

The number of ocean dead zones has grown from the 44 areas reported in 1995 to more

than 400, with some of the worst oxygen starved areas extending over 22,000 square kilometres.

Recent figures from the United Nations Environment Program estimate that fertilizers, sewage and other pollutants, combined with the impact of climate change, have led to a doubling in the number of oxygen deficient dead zones every decade since the 1960s. The worst affected areas are in tropical regions of the Atlantic Ocean west of Africa and the equatorial areas of the Pacific. Where does the Great Barrier Reef lie? It lies in the equatorial areas of the Pacific.

Report after report provides worrying pictures of the impacts of climate change, and it is important that governments act appropriately. It is disappointing to hear the responses from the opposition in recent days. The environment and the disastrous consequences which will result from government's inaction on global warming is much too serious a matter to be used for political point-scoring. Or perhaps it simply indicates a very real ignorance by opposition members on the subject of global warming and climate change. But I assure members opposite that the overwhelming number of people I speak to understand the impacts of climate change and want the government to implement policies that provide long-term security for future generations.

As a member of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts, I recently had the opportunity to visit the Great Barrier Reef—along with the member for Throsby and others—and to see first hand the unique beauty of this World Heritage listed Australian iconic site, and to hear from a range of experts about the repercussions of continuing to allow the mismanagement of the coastal waters along the Queensland coastline.

This bill, thankfully, constructively responds to many of the matters raised with the committee during our visit there. I was particularly interested to hear from a local sugar cane grower about the better farming practices which he had implemented to minimise the nutrient run-off into the coast. It is indeed most encouraging to hear of local initiatives being taken by local people. They understand their local area, they care about their local area, they have extensive knowledge of their local area and they have a genuine interest in the future of their local environment. What they do not have, however, is the ability to coordinate the functions of the many government departments which oversee the wellbeing of their local area. They do not have the authority to police those who wilfully ignore the laws which have been put in place to prevent unnecessary damage to the coastal waters and the reef.

From my observation the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has done, and continues to do, an excellent job in managing the marine park. However, it is clear that the act under which the authority operates needs to be strengthened. That is what this bill does, and other speakers have made specific reference to how the bill does that. It is also important that we continue to monitor and carry out research on our coastline, certainly with respect to the areas surrounding the Great Barrier Reef. As I said earlier, one of the problems that all governments face is that when you cannot see a problem it is harder politically to sell to the community the expenditure required for the measures needed to rectify the problem. But that work can be carried out—money is needed, obviously, to do that—if we engage the right people and if we continue to monitor the waters through the research scientists are out there because they are capable of doing that.

Ultimately, managing the Great Barrier Reef is an ongoing matter. It is not some-

thing where you can put a particular practice into place and ensure that forever and a day that is all you need to do. When the Great Barrier Reef Marine Act was brought in in 1975 it seemed appropriate; today it needs to be amended and upgraded, and that is exactly what this bill is doing. The research dollars need to be spent if we are to continue to ensure that the reef remains healthy.

I want to finish off with a comment on the section of the amendment to the act which talks about having an Indigenous person on the Marine Park Authority because I started with a quote from an Indigenous person. It is important to have one of their members on the authority, not just out of respect to the Indigenous community but because they, for thousands and thousands of years, lived in harmony with this land and with our environment. They have a great depth of wisdom and knowledge about how we should be managing our environment. I welcome the input of the Indigenous person on the authority. We have an obligation to the people of Australia, to future generations and to all people on earth to preserve this unique wonder of the world, the Great Barrier Reef. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (12.50 pm)—I would like to start by saying how wonderful it is to see so many speakers participating in this debate. As someone who lives in a community adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef—in fact, I have lived on the Queensland coast for most of my life—I can say that it is very encouraging to see not only the priority that the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef is getting from the new Labor government but also that so many of my colleagues on this side of the House and also on the other side of the House have indicated the importance of the Great Barrier Reef in their minds.

I also want to commend the government for acting so quickly to introduce this set of amendments, the second set of amendments arising out of the review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975. That review took place in, I think, 2005. It is great to see, in the first six months of this government, that the government is acting to do everything it can to strengthen the management regime which underpins the protection of this incredible natural asset. As I said, these amendments implement the recommendations of that review.

It is true to say that, while the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has done its job in managing the marine park and advising governments over the last 30 years, the act that created the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the authority needs to be updated. The original act provided for the creation of the marine park and the authority, and the authority's job is to manage the marine park and advise government on matters relating to the reef and the marine park.

Being a member from Queensland, I know that the people in my electorate are well aware of the important and good work undertaken by the marine park authority, and in fact Capricornia has a special place in its history. The Capricornia section of the reef, some 12,000 square kilometres, was first established as part of the marine park back in 1979. Of course today the marine park covers some 344,000 square kilometres.

As I said, the act has been in place for 30 years. In its day, in 1975, it was groundbreaking legislation; and it has served us well in the intervening 30 years. However the 2006 review into the act demonstrated that it was starting to show its age. Two of the most glaring examples of that are the facts that the original act predates not only the EPBC Act—the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act—but also

the listing of the Great Barrier Reef as a World Heritage area. Going back to the EPBC Act, at present that act, which was established in 1999, largely overlaps with the Great Barrier Reef Park Act—and these two pieces of legislation do not work as well together as we would hope. There are definitely improvements that can be brought about by bringing those acts into better alignment. There is also in the current arrangements too little flexibility for the enforcement of penalties for the range of varying infringement circumstances and inefficiencies in the way that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act allows for responses to emergencies that pose a serious risk of environmental harm. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 will address those issues amongst others.

The bill will put in place a 21st-century future focused framework for the efficient and effective protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef. It complements the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan, which was introduced in 2003 to provide a strong framework for protecting and managing the reef. This bill enhances the capability to effectively administer and enforce that framework so as to ensure its benefits are realised. This bill makes a number of changes to achieve those aims and I will just go through those one by one.

First of all, and significantly, the bill recognises the World Heritage status of the reef. The World Heritage values of the reef will be recognised in the objects of the act, and importantly the long-term protection of the reef will now be the primary object in the legislation. These changes will also ensure that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act will provide a modern framework to offer better management and protection of the reef in the 21st century. The act will now make specific reference to modern concepts such as eco-

system based management and the precautionary principle. The definition of these concepts in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act will now be consistent with that in the EPBC Act. This will also promote a fairer approach to compliance and offer fairer deterrence through a more tailored and flexible system of enforcement and penalties. The aim in these amendments is to reduce regulatory red tape. This involves better co-ordination between the state and federal management regimes. Another way that this will be achieved is to better align the act with the EPBC Act. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act is now established as the primary basis for environmental impact assessment and the approval of activities within and affecting the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

I am particularly pleased to note that the marine park is recognised as a matter of national environmental significance. This means that actions having a significant impact on the environment of the marine park must be approved under the EPBC Act and that regime. This will be of great comfort to those of us living adjacent to the reef as we watch the pressures of development slowly but surely encroach on the natural beauty of the reef and threaten the future of its unique environmental values.

This bill also recognises the importance of having an Indigenous voice on the membership of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. This step of including this measure in this bill honours an election commitment made by Labor to reinstate a requirement for the authority to have Indigenous representation. As someone who represents a region of Queensland where we have seen what is I think the first, or maybe the second, management agreement between the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the state government and traditional owners, that is very significant to me. This bill will also

complement the government's reef rescue plan and other significant government measures to tackle head-on the effects of climate change. These are responsible and necessary improvements to the management regime for the reef and I am pleased to offer my support to this bill on behalf of a constituency which has a very close interest in this great natural wonder.

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest and most complex coral reef ecosystem and is indeed one of our great national treasures, extending approximately 2,300 kilometres along the Queensland coast. A large chunk of that is in my electorate of Capricornia. It is because my electorate is blessed with being able to lay claim to a significant section of the unparalleled biodiversity that is the Great Barrier Reef that we in Capricornia are keenly aware of the challenges we face in safeguarding the reef for future generations. It can be said that Capricornia is a very diverse electorate. We are considered the beef capital of Australia, and the region's coalmines provide an economic windfall for state and federal government coffers the likes of which this country has never seen before.

Of course my electorate also profits from the significant financial benefits of the reef. In Central Queensland we understand well the economic imperatives of protecting the reef, along with of course the important environmental imperatives. More than 63,000 people are employed in Great Barrier Reef tourism, fishing, and cultural and recreation related industries. This represents more than \$6 billion in national gross domestic product every year, but of course most of that flows to the communities along the Queensland coast. I would also add that the large Aboriginal and South Sea Islander communities of Capricornia have their own strong cultural connection to the reef, and the coastal towns of Capricornia have that strong connection and love for our part of paradise.

As I said, we understand the benefits the reef brings to our communities, and we are also acutely aware of the threats to the health of the reef. We recognise the need to act if those threats are to be mitigated, and there is a distinct possibility that the worst-case scenarios depicted by scientists will become a reality in our lifetime. As we have heard from so many speakers, the reef has been identified as an area where the consequences of climate change will hit hard, and they are already in evidence.

We are fortunate in Australia that the Great Barrier Reef is well preserved. We are fortunate that those steps were taken in 1975 to recognise the value of the asset that we have in the Great Barrier Reef and that the management regime was put in place so that the reef is well preserved compared to other systems elsewhere in the world. This makes the Great Barrier Reef a drawcard for domestic and international tourists, but its iconic status also has the potential to make it an international symbol for the impacts of climate change. The eyes of the world are definitely upon Australia and how we manage the pressures that the reef is under.

Unlike the previous government, the Rudd Labor government is acting proactively to address climate change. The release of *Climate change and the Great Barrier Reef: a vulnerability assessment* and the *Great Barrier Reef climate change action plan 2007-2012* and the \$200 million reef rescue plan demonstrate the level of importance the government is giving to this threat. The reef rescue plan that Labor announced in the election was a very big part of my pledge to the people of Central Queensland. I campaigned very strongly on that initiative, and it was obviously very well received by communities throughout my electorate.

In Central Queensland we do not need the many reports and scientific papers to tell us

about the impacts of climate change and the effect that it is having on our precious reef. Right in my backyard, in the Keppel region of the reef, just off Yeppoon and the Capricorn Coast, we have already experienced some of the worst bleaching events seen on the reef. I think it was back in 1998, or maybe 2000. We saw a precursor to what might lie ahead for the reef if we do not, firstly, do whatever we can to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and the effects of climate change and, secondly, do everything we can to enhance the resilience of the reef to cope with the amount of climate change that is now inevitable as a result of our activities over the last few centuries. It is well known that we have already lost 10 years in these efforts with the previous government's refusal to take climate change seriously and to prioritise the protection of the Great Barrier Reef. I understand that back in 2002, despite the then Prime Minister signing off on the 10-year Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, no funds were actually forthcoming to make that plan mean anything on the ground. So we are really 10 years behind on what needs to be done to protect the reef and to prepare it for climate change.

I am pleased to say that that is no longer the case. The Rudd Labor government made it very clear in the election that we made the protection of the reef a priority. We made the announcement then of the \$200 million reef rescue plan, which is very much about enabling all stakeholders in the reef to adopt better practices that enhance the quality of water going onto the reef and also to improve the resilience of the reef. The \$200 million, five-year reef rescue plan includes grants to farmers, cane growers, Indigenous communities and landholders for improved land management. That totals \$146 million. I am certainly working closely with the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts to make sure that that money is available as soon as possible, because there is a great deal of interest in that program in my electorate. People want to accelerate the good work that they are doing to change land-use practices and to better protect the reef. There is also money in there for monitoring water quality and land condition and for investing in research and development. So, as I say, it was very well received in my electorate and is greatly needed if we are serious about protecting the health of the reef to prepare for climate change. In that context, the measures in this bill will provide a much more comprehensive framework through which the people of Capricornia can do their part to help protect the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef is indisputably one of the world's most important natural assets and we in Central Queensland are well aware of the significant steps that are required to safeguard this asset for future generations.

I have already spoken of Capricornia's close ties to the act's inception back in the 1970s, but I would like to talk now about some of the things that the people of my electorate are engaged in right now to help safeguard the reef into the future. There are currently 14 schools in my electorate that very actively take part in the Reef Guardian Schools program. This is an action based environmental education initiative that engages schools to promote their ideas, initiatives and activities to communities and to encourage people in the school and the broader community to protect the reef and its supporting environments. I must say that I dread the times when I forget to take my green cloth bags to the supermarket in Rockhampton for fear of running into some of the students. They would be on to me about using plastic bags because that has obviously been a very big focus for some of the schools

engaged in the Reef Guardian Schools project. Other initiatives include energy efficiency audits in the schools. One school came up with a range of measures to prevent cigarette butts entering our waterways and flowing out to the reef. I recognise that these students of today are the decision makers of tomorrow and the foundation stones of a sustainable future for the reef. I would like to commend the schools for the work they are doing to educate the rest of us and to work towards a sustainable future.

One of the reasons that the Reef Guardian Schools program is so popular in my electorate is the decision by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to open an office in Central Queensland to service Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast. The presence of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority right in our region has brought the reef closer to us and increased the awareness in the broader community of the impact so many land based activities have on the reef and our collective responsibility and ability to take every step we can in our everyday lives to avoid indirect harm to the reef. The office has also provided a source of information about the zoning system and reef management practices. Importantly, it is a way for the community to interact with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and to provide feedback on the condition of the reef and the management processes that the authority undertakes.

I would encourage the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to maintain these growing ties with communities along the coast of Queensland and to continue to build relationships with the broad range of stakeholders whose activities impact on the reef and who want to be involved in its protection and management.

My electorate also has a significant primary industries sector, which has gone to

significant lengths to put in place best-practice farm management for the benefit of the reef system. I have only recently returned from discussions with farming groups, and I am thankful for all the work they are doing to mitigate their impacts on the reef, whether it is through fertiliser run-off or other farming methods that have been in place for many years. I understand that changing these traditional practices has taken a very deliberate and active effort on the part of their industry sectors, particularly those involved in sugar and beef production, and I commend them for their actions. In this context I also want to acknowledge the great work of both the Mackay Whitsunday Natural Resource Management Group and the Fitzroy Basin Association for the leadership they demonstrate and the support they give to local landholders who want to know more about current best practice and sustainable land management.

Another important stakeholder group in my electorate is the recreational fishing sector. I think one of the good things that have happened in recent years is the closer interaction that we had seen between that sector and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, particularly through the zoning process and the opening of the office. One of the groups that work closely with the fishing sector is CapReef. They are currently preparing a submission to government seeking funding under the Coastcare community initiative—I think submissions close very shortly—and I will certainly be giving that group every bit of support that I can to ensure that they get the funding that they need to continue their important monitoring and education activities.

This bill demonstrates the Australian government's commitment to securing the future of the Great Barrier Reef and strengthens our capacity to preserve this important feature of our nation's and the world's heritage for fu-

ture generations. I welcome the government's proactive stance on this issue and I will welcome the quick passage of this bill through both houses of parliament. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (1.10 pm)—I rise to speak on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. We in Queensland love the Great Barrier Reef. It is sacred to our Indigenous people but it is beloved by all Queenslanders. Its wonder, its beauty, its colour and its majesty are so evident. The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest living reef system. Placed on the World Heritage List in 1981, the Great Barrier Reef is one of the seven natural wonders of the world. It is an extraordinary example of ecology, natural phenomena and biological diversity. It is a vast, interlinked web of life. All the plants and animals in the reef play a part in keeping this system healthy and strong. The relationships have been fostered and grown over many thousands of years, and we humans really are relative newcomers to the reef. The Great Barrier Reef is a fragile ecosystem, and we need to carefully manage it—not just for our generation but for the generations to come. We need to preserve the long-term health of the ecosystem that the Great Barrier Reef represents.

We know that fishing on the Great Barrier Reef is carefully managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, and they have been doing an excellent job in sustaining the Great Barrier Reef for generations to come. We know also that shipping poses a threat to the Great Barrier Reef because even before the time of Captain Cook, when there was Asian migration into the waters of the Great Barrier Reef, off the coast of the continent of Australia, they saw the benefit of the passage through the Great Barrier Reef in terms of naviga-

tion: it is easier to get through that area. Unfortunately, we have seen a number of tragic shipping accidents on or about the Great Barrier Reef.

Despite the best efforts of the Queensland department of primary industries and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, there have been problems in terms of fishing and, if we get it wrong, there will be an imbalance in the entire ecosystem chain. We do not want overfishing of certain species, because imagine what that would do to the Great Barrier Reef and the various ecosystems involved.

The pollution of water causes difficulties in the Great Barrier Reef, and it is caused by human activities—not necessarily by going through the Great Barrier Reef; tourism itself does not exert much pressure on the reef because it is so thinly spread over such a vast area. Tourism operators, in my experience, have a vested interest in maintaining the health of the reef and they act as a kind of watchdog at times in alerting the managing authorities to problems with the reef. But it is industrialisation and human activities which cause pollution of the water, and this is one of the greatest threats to the barrier reef. This has propelled around 300 of the reefs into the danger zone, because of poor water quality. Industrial waste adds to the worsening scenario. Of course, like human beings, coral can also get infections. Industrial pollutants such as copper have proved to interfere with the growth and development of coral, which is so critical to the Great Barrier Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef contributes enormously to the Queensland economy. Reef industries alone employ about 63,000 people and add nearly \$6 billion to the Australian economy, so it is essential in terms of not just the environment but our economy that the Great Barrier Reef remains vital and vibrant.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan was first implemented in 2004. It has created a network of marine sanctuaries that stretch from the north to the south. It is the world's largest network of marine sanctuaries and it covers about a third of the marine park. Scientists have identified about 70 distinct biological regions in the park and they represent a vast array of plants and animals. It is not just sediments and nutrients, fertilisers, pesticides, toxic chemicals, sewage, rubbish, detergents, heavy metals and oil that run into our rivers, into the ocean and into the Great Barrier Reef which threaten plants and animals; another great challenge is climate change.

We on this side of the House unequivocally believe that climate change is one of the great moral challenges for our generation. It is unequivocally the case that the earth is getting warmer. It is now warmer than it has been for 2,000 years. There is a vast body of research to that effect—that human activities which release into the atmosphere greenhouse gases cause such problems to our environment. Even small changes in our temperature can have a devastating effect on our natural environment. Just imagine the impact on coral bleaching that a one- or two-degree increase in temperature could have. The impact on plant and animal life would be horrendous.

The previous Howard government, as part of their election commitment in 2004, pledged that they would undertake a review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975. I commend the Hon. Senator Ian Campbell for undertaking that review and fulfilling that election commitment. It seems that that was a core promise which was honoured. There were 227 substantive submissions received by the review from a wide range of interested parties, and there were 36 consultation meetings with industry, communities, government organisations and con-

servations groups. That report was handed down on 28 April 2006 with a number of recommendations. Those recommendations are being carried out today. It has been left to the Rudd Labor government to carry out the recommendations.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act was promulgated in 1975. That established the fundamental regulatory and governance landscape and operations for the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In recent years we have seen lots of changes in the way we do things in terms of companies and associations and the way we do things not just in the private sector but in the public sector. We have witnessed a number of important pieces of government legislation. There was the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997, which deals with commercial purposes and Commonwealth companies and authorities. It is appropriate that that particular piece of legislation alone deal with those sorts of entities. We also saw the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997. These acts have an important impact on entities and companies in our public and private sectors. The Great Barrier Reef is affected by these sorts of changes in terms of its management and in terms of its operational aspects.

The Great Barrier Reef is an extraordinary place. It covers about 22 per cent of Queensland's land area. Queensland has an enormous number of people living within 100 kilometres of the coast. My electorate of Blair is one such place. The people in my electorate holiday at the Gold Coast. We sometimes call the Gold Coast 'our beach' because we holiday there so often. The Sunshine Coast, Hervey Bay, the Fraser coast, Cairns, Townsville, the beaches at Bargara and others are places we visit regularly. We think of the Barrier Reef as integral to our holiday, as integral to our lifestyle in Queensland and as integral to the values that we

hold dear in Queensland. It is iconic. It really is a place that Queenslanders hold as being sacred to their hearts.

Both the Queensland government and the Australian government, no matter who has been in power since 1975, have demonstrated a long-term commitment to work together to protect the reef. That has been evident in a collaborative approach. It is necessary because of course the Commonwealth has jurisdiction up to the low-water mark and Queensland has management for the fisheries within its coastal waters, including the marine park.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act established the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority; it is a statutory authority and a body corporate. There is a chairperson, a person nominated by Queensland and two other members, a statutory consultative committee, other interested bodies, a number of reef advisory committees, and a number of local marine advisory committees. There are hundreds of staff employed by the authority. Both sides of politics have contributed and both levels of government have contributed to the management of the park.

The report of the review of the act found that, whilst globally about 27 per cent of coral reefs have been lost due to human activity, the Great Barrier Reef was in pretty good shape, and that is a credit to governments of all persuasions since 1975. But there need to be effective operational and institutional frameworks for the management of the place in the future.

The review recommended that a dedicated statutory authority responsible for advising and acting on behalf of the Australian government was necessary and stated that it was well founded that we had established one. It recommended that the body corporate should remain to provide a collective decision-making entity. It recommended that informa-

tion in relation to monitoring, assessing and analysing should be brought together in a report on a five-year basis. I would urge whoever is in government in the future, no matter who that is, to adopt that practice. It recommended that there was a need for greater alignment of legislation between acts that governed the Great Barrier Reef and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. There are a number of overlaps and gaps. I have had a look at the legislation and I can see why the recommendation is needed.

We need to say what we believe about the Great Barrier Reef. We need to specify in our objects what we actually believe is necessary. We need to identify the concepts of ecologically sustainable development. We need to think about recognising and improving the role of the authority. We need to ensure that we do not duplicate legislation. We need to cohesively integrate our legislative frameworks. What we have done in the past 30 years is establish the marine park and the framework for the management, but we need to get the legal aspects right.

There were a number of recommendations in the review. This bill is carrying out recommendations 18 to 28. One of the things that I find interesting and am very pleased about is the recommendation that came forward about considering applying, when necessary, the national heritage management principles and the idea that we need to put plans in place. That is what this bill is all about.

This bill is a credit to the government, just as the 1975 bill was a credit to the Whitlam Labor government over the objections of the former National Party Premier of Queensland Joh Bjelke-Petersen. As a young teenager, I well remember Joh wanting to drill for oil in the Great Barrier Reef. It just seemed like he wanted to drill for oil every-

where, mine everything he possibly could and knock down every building he could. So I am pleased that, over his objections, the Whitlam government brought forward this ground-breaking legislation. The people of Queensland and the people of Australia were right to oppose the plan to drill. I think at that stage they grasped the importance of the reef to all Australians and to the world. It would be unconscionable today for the government to propose to destroy such an environmentally important natural asset by simply exploring for oil. When the legislation came through on 22 May 1975, it was proclaimed that it was all about the 'protection of our unique Barrier Reef' and it being 'of paramount importance to Australia and the world'. Nothing much has changed in over 30 years. It remains unique and is still of paramount importance to Australia.

This bill establishes a modern framework for administration under the legislation to enable better management of the park in the future—streamlining environmental impact assessment and permit processes and enhancing our capability for investigation and evidence collection for the future. It also includes a wide range of enforcement options to better target and tailor our enforcement approach. It enhances deterrence and encourages responsible use of the marine park. It establishes a new emergency management power as well.

I just want to say how wonderful the Great Barrier Reef is for its marine life. I mention just a few examples. There are 5,000 to 8,000 molluscs, thousands of different sponges, worms and crustaceans, 800 species of starfish and sea urchins and 215 bird species, of which 29 are seabirds. It is home to diverse habitats ranging from fringed coastal reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, sandy and coral cays, sandy- and muddy-bottomed communities, continental islands and deep ocean areas.

I think this bill is very timely. The old act is out of date. When I had a look at the act I saw just how very out of date it is. It does not recognise the World Heritage status of the reef and it does not incorporate concepts of ecological sustainability or the precautionary principle. The precautionary principle puts forward the common-sense idea that decision makers should be cautious when assessing potential environmental plans in the absence of full scientific facts. It is a well-established principle of environmental law and it has been on our statute books, in our courts and recognised for decades. Yet the 1975 act mentions nothing about it. This bill seeks to remedy this.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure it is contemporaneous. As the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts stated in his second reading speech, the bill is about placing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park on a modern footing. A lot has changed since 1975. Our society, our belief in the environment and our green beliefs have changed. John Grey Gorton, a former Liberal Prime Minister, once famously said, 'We are all socialists now,' and I think if he came back today he would say, 'We are all green now.' This bill is about protecting a green aspect, and we are doing that. This bill is about having the strongest legal basis for the protection of our environment. It promotes the responsible use of the marine park and encourages compliance with all relevant laws. I am pleased that it recognises the three-score-and-10 traditional owner groups which have had a profound and continuing relationship with the reef. I am pleased that they are going to be better involved by having at least one Indigenous person as a member of the authority.

The change to governance will enhance the management and improve the protection of the environment and particularly the Great Barrier Reef. It will maintain the health and

resilience of the Great Barrier Reef and its ecosystems. It will do wonders in terms of the protection of so much flora and fauna and it will enhance this wonderful natural asset of Australia and the world. This bill is a great investment in helping provide security for our coastal communities and significantly benefiting both the Australian economy and the Australian environment. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHEESEMAN (Corangamite) (1.30 pm)—The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 is important for two reasons. It is important in itself because it is about the regulation of one of the wonders of the natural world, the Great Barrier Reef. It is also important as an indication of how Australia is now becoming a world leader in marine conservation. The bill shows the sophistication we are developing in our approach to marine conservation. I am very proud of the direction we are heading in marine conservation and of the leadership we are now showing the world.

But I have to say that we need to place this in context, and the context is this: for over a hundred years the oceans of Australia and around the world have been subjected to increasing industrial harvesting techniques. It started off with more than one hook on a line, moved to nets, and has ended up with giant mother ships hoovering up vast populations of fish. Around the world today there is virtually no marine environment that has not been affected, including most Australia marine environments. The Great Barrier Reef itself is not exempt from that of course. To put it bluntly, the world has hammered its marine environment, with often only a veneer of respectable management. The marine environment, up until recently, was treated as an inexhaustible resource. It clearly is not. Many marine species, as we know, are now on the brink of extinction as a result. Many marine ecosystems are now very degraded.

So the context is that we are coming off a low base. It might sound a little churlish, a little negative, to say these things when we are passing a very positive and groundbreaking piece of legislation in marine conservation, but it has to be said. We have done a lot of damage and we are just beginning to understand what we have done.

I want to talk today about what this bill does, to put it within the context of the history of impacts on the marine environment and the other important marine conservation initiatives Australia is undertaking. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park bill puts the act, which first became law in 1975, on a modern footing. It focuses on long-term protection and ecologically sustainable management. It introduces the precautionary principle. It will help protect the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef. The bill establishes the EPBC Act as the central environmental impact assessment system tool. The bill provides a clear and strong environmental investigation regime for the marine park through the EPBC Act. This bill strengthens enforcement mechanisms and introduces a more appropriate range of penalties including civil penalties.

I want to go back a bit to the underpinnings of the marine protected areas. Concern about what has been happening within our marine environment escalated more than a decade ago. Over-exploitation of marine biodiversity resulted in the marine environment being one of the first significant issues to be addressed by the parties to the International Convention on Biological Diversity. In Jakarta in 1995, at a Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Australia signed the Mandate on Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity. Ultimately an international agreement was established urging the nations of the world to establish a 'comprehensive, representative and adequate system of ecologically viable marine pro-

tected areas'. Thirteen years later, those deliberations resulted in this bill.

This bill progressing through the parliament is another important step for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and it is the fulfilment of our international obligations of protecting marine diversity. The Great Barrier Reef is clearly one of the wonders of the natural world. This coral reef system extends for around 2,300 kilometres along the Queensland coast and covers over 344,400 square kilometres. It contains unsurpassed biological diversity and globally unique ecosystems. It is also of great significance, of course, to our economy. The international and domestic interest in the reef generates approximately \$6 billion per annum.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, which includes a range of different areas with different levels of protection, is now a flagship in terms of Australia's leadership in marine conservation internationally. An increasingly sophisticated management system is being built around the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. There are carefully thought out and well-researched areas within the marine park that have specified protections. Some have limited fishing; others are no-take whatsoever areas; and some areas are complete no-go except for science use only.

Importantly, the management system relies on a lot of education, and the whole management system relies on an ongoing research base. And, most importantly, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is underpinned by very significant resources. It is not one of those park systems that has been declared with no resources, then been left to rot. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park system has a flagship environmental reserve management system. However, I would point out, with the indulgence of the Deputy Speaker, that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park legislation is only one aspect of Austra-

lia's growing reputation for leadership in marine conservation around the world.

I would like to point out that in my own state of Victoria we have led the way in this area—and I know that would please you, Madam Deputy Speaker Burke, being a Victorian. If we can boast a bit, we have done something that is quite remarkable; in fact, it is a world first. We were the first state in any country to establish a comprehensive, adequate, representative system of marine protected areas. No other state anywhere in the world has undertaken this. There have been particular parks declared here and there, such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the marine park in the Great Australian Bight, but never before has a comprehensive network of marine parks been implemented across a whole state. What we did in Victoria, in a process that took a decade, was to comprehensively survey and analyse the habitats and ecology of our marine environment and then put in place a network of marine parks and reserves of high integrity.

Just over six per cent of Victoria's marine environment is now contained within the marine national parks, and they are all no-take areas. I would like to put on the record my thanks to the former Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks, for his vision, courage and foresight in implementing this system of marine national parks and reserves. And it did take courage, as all big and significant decisions do. I would also like to put on record my thanks to another former Premier of Victoria, Joan Kirner, who kicked off this process and was still there at the end of the process lobbying hard for its completion. Thank you, Steve and Joan.

Before returning to the details of the Great Barrier Reef bill, can I say that the Victorian MPA initiative has led me to closely follow developments in marine conservation policy areas in other states, and what I see does

concern me a bit. I see a hesitancy, maybe a fear of sectional interest groups, in other states in implementing the policy of establishing a system of comprehensive, adequate and representative marine parks.

In South Australia I have not heard much about no-take areas, which must be at the heart of any system. There seems to be a fear of talking about that. I know there are some very important waters in South Australia—on the Great Australian Bight, where the Commonwealth has established another MPA, and along both sides of the Eyre Peninsula and in some of the island areas. The government in South Australia are committed to marine parks, but the sectional interests are lobbying hard, just as they did when the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was declared. The Commonwealth showed fortitude, and the South Australian government need to show it now. I think I am right in saying that South Australia was the first Australian state to establish a coastal management act, a very significant piece of work, way back in 1975. They were our nation's leaders in this area, but they have slipped back and need to take some bold steps to re-establish their leadership.

In New South Wales, in Western Australia and in other states, although there are increasing areas under marine reserves or marine parks, there are very small percentages of no-take areas. There seems to be a preference for marine parks which are largely 'multiple use', which everyone knows to be 'multiple abuse' marine parks—Clayton's marine parks. No-take areas are like the control sample in a science experiment. They are the heart of the integrity of the system. I say to all Australian states who are nervous about the political consequences of marine conservation: think about our kids. Think about future generations. Show courage. Show leadership.

We are an island continent. We have a massive coastline, and a massive responsibility that goes with it. Let us make Australia the world leader in marine conservation. The Rudd government is showing leadership through this bill.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature is on record as being 'deeply concerned' by the slow progress made by countries to meet their commitments. Despite the repeated calls for urgent action and the increasing and overwhelming scientific evidence for protection of marine environments, overfishing and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing persists and the plundering of sharks continues. Environmental quality continues to deteriorate from pollution and invasive marine species. These threats are aggravated by the ongoing and predicted impacts of climate change on the oceans.

The IUCN estimates that, unless progress is accelerated, the agreed international goals establishing representative networks of marine protected areas by 2012 will not be met until 2060. The IUCN analysis of data from five ocean basins reveals a dramatic decline in numbers of large predatory fish—tuna, blue marlin, swordfish and others—since the advent of industrialised fishing. The world's oceans have lost over 90 per cent of large predatory fish, with potentially severe consequences for the ecosystem.

There is widespread public concern over the worldwide decline of our coral reefs, changes to temperate kelp bed communities, decline in seagrass beds and loss of salt marshes and mangroves. Although there are obvious examples of marine mammals and birds that have either become extinct or are considered endangered, little is known of this problem for the vast majority of marine animals, including fish and invertebrates.

Of course, it is not just the impacts of fishers and others involved in marine har-

vesting. The impacts of global warming have added a new layer of threats across a wide range of marine environments. Thousands of Antarctic marine species, adapted to constant temperatures over millions of years, now appear to be uniquely vulnerable in the face of predicted temperature change, new research has revealed.

Coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, have been specifically identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as areas where climate change impacts will occur. We have already seen this through bleaching events. We are fortunate in Australia that the Great Barrier Reef is well preserved compared to reef systems elsewhere in the world.

The government is, of course, addressing the impacts of climate change through initiatives aimed at increasing the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef and through measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The government has also undertaken a Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Action Plan and a Great Barrier Reef Rescue Plan, underlining the levels of threat the reef and our marine environment face.

The Great Barrier Reef is an absolutely awesome natural wonder. But it is not untouched. The Great Barrier Reef is a reef system that has felt the impacts of industry, of human activity and of climate change. Like every other marine environment in the world, it has been impacted by human activity. Too often we hear the nonsense come up about the untouched environment of the Great Barrier Reef. In some parts of Australia the word 'pristine' must be the most abused word in the dictionary.

The Great Barrier Reef Management Authority, whilst acknowledging that there is still an enormous amount of information they do not know, have clearly stated that there are many species under threat along the

Great Barrier Reef. These include: helmet shells, triton shells, clams, seahorses, pipefish, sea dragons, potato cod, Queensland grouper, barramundi, cod, whale shark, grey nurse shark, great white shark, freshwater sawfish, sea snakes, crocodiles, marine turtles, birds, seals, whales, dolphins and dugongs. That is the 'pristine' marine environment that we now know.

There are some enormous challenges to protecting species and protecting habitats. This bill is crucial to addressing those matters. It adds to Australia's improving record in marine conservation; a record that has put us in a leadership group in the world on marine conservation. But there is still a lot more we can do. If I look at my own environment in Victoria—the Great Ocean Road, the Surf Coast, the Bellarine Peninsula—there are some magnificent reef systems and some magnificent places where all of us can participate in our environment. However, there are significant threats to those environments. I look forward to working with the Rudd government in continuing to protect our environment over the years to come. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate interrupted.

BUSINESS

Days and Hours of Meeting

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.48 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker, on indulgence: it is anticipated that the House of Representatives will be able to rise at the scheduled time tonight. That is dependent on some events in the Senate over the coming hours but for the benefit of members on both sides of the House, at this stage that is the plan until otherwise advised.

Mr Dutton—What happened to your busy agenda?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—I thank the Leader of the House.

Member for Dickson, that was an unwarranted interjection.

Mr ALBANESE—It is quite extraordinary. I was asked to do this by the opposition—to indicate it to their members—but they cannot miss an opportunity to engage in juvenile behaviour. Parliament has been extremely well run. That is why we can leave at the time as determined. I am told that in the third last week of parliament sitting more bills were passed during that week than in any week in recent history. That was done with some cooperation on both sides of the House. As it is, we are rising at the scheduled time. If the opposition want to convey through the Manager of Opposition Business that they have the same view as the member opposite and wish to sit tonight, then certainly they can be accommodated, for whatever debate they want to take place. The government has ensured that in the conduct of this parliament it has put forward its legislation in a timely fashion and will continue to do so.

Mr Dutton—No, you haven't.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member for Dickson will abide by the order.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2008

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (1.51 pm)—It is not very often that one gets the opportunity to speak on a matter that is of profound importance to the marine life of Queensland, of national importance and of international significance. Madam Deputy Speaker, could we please not have that chitchat across the table. This is an issue of national importance but equally one of international significance, given the Great Barrier Reef's World Heritage status. Also at a very local level the

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 is important because the Rudd Labor government is honouring yet another election commitment that this government is characterised by. We have honoured our commitments unlike those opposite, who, when they first got elected around 12 years ago, fell almost immediately into what became known as core and non-core promises. Who had ever heard of such a thing until they were elected? These were raised by the then Prime Minister, endorsed by the then Treasurer and endorsed by many others still here in this place today—ex-ministers, aspiring ministers, aspiring authors, aspiring diplomats, aspiring trade barons and the like—all of them on the opposite side of this chamber.

The election commitment that the Rudd Labor government is honouring is specifically to reinstate a requirement for the authority to include an Indigenous Australian on the board. That gives expression to honouring an election commitment—in other words, doing what you say. The longer I sit in this chamber and familiarise myself with this place and those on the opposite side, the one thing that I have noticed is that the opposition say one thing and do another. They say anything and do anything and they are not consistent in the positions that they put forward, unlike us on the government side. I have never seen so many positions on the same issue—and sometimes on the same day. First of all we heard from the opposition about inflation—it was not a problem, then it became a problem, then it was a fairytale, then it was a challenge, then it was a charade and then it was a problem again.

Those opposite had three positions on the means test for the baby bonus, which changed in as many days, and they have had about five positions on Fuelwatch. Now they are starting with emissions trading and a fear campaign. We on the government side on the

other hand are characterised by consistency—we say it and we do it. This legislation and the parts contained therein reflect our consistency. I labour this point as it is a mark of clear differentiation between the record of this government and the shambolic approach to law-making and policymaking by those on the opposite side of the chamber.

I will now turn to some of the specific provisions that are to be included in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act by this amendment bill. I can remember quite some years ago, when I was a law student, having the benefit of studying the act. It is an act from 1975, so it is 30 years old. It has served us well but it was in urgent need of reform. I acknowledge that reform was begun by way of review under the previous government, but then it was sat on and not acted on by them. They were too busy worrying about things like peddling their Work Choices paraphernalia rather than focusing on seminal reform issues like this one. It has been left to the Rudd Labor government to pick up this issue and run with it, as we have done with other issues.

The act will be enhanced by the inclusion of Indigenous representation. Indigenous representation is one of those seminal issues when we look at the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It is one of those issues that go to the heart of social and Indigenous inclusion. The Rudd Labor government have been left with a lot to pick up—and not just this amendment bill. We have been left to pick up problems such as inflation, skills shortages, health crises, housing crises and the spiralling cost of living, which were all left behind unchecked and untouched by the previous government. The opposition initially did not believe in climate change. Then they said that maybe they believed in it. Now, with the scare campaign that they have started, they are saying that they are not too sure.

This bill is aimed at establishing a modern and resilient regulatory framework that will give strength and capacity to ensure that management can effectively function to give the protection required to the Great Barrier Reef now and into the future. The 30-year-old act was a good act, and it has done its job, but it is just not capable of meeting the future challenges that are now presenting themselves at the Great Barrier Reef. This bill in essence represents an approach that is meeting the long-term challenges of protection along with human use. The Great Barrier Reef signifies values that are held dear by the community, such as environmental protection, but it is also an area that people want to use. This is always a challenge, but it is a challenge the government is rising to. This bill demonstrates that the Rudd Labor government is rising to the challenges we have now as well as the challenges we will have in the future.

Combining environmental protection and human use is a challenge for anyone, but an area like the Great Barrier Reef cannot be untouched by human activity. That is not practical and it is not the reality. We have to manage that combination of activities and protection. This bill recognises the primacy of the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, known as the EPBC Act, and it integrates with but does not duplicate other appropriate legislation. This is reflected in part in the new objects sections, which recognises the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef. The objects sections in the act are clearly out of date. They are a product of the time when the act was first drafted, when the focus was on establishing a marine park. The objects sections served that purpose well, but at that time the Great Barrier Reef had not been declared a World Heritage area. Concepts such as ecological sustainability had not emerged and been adopted into the nomen-

clature. The new objects sections provide a modern, future oriented focus to guide administration of the act and management of the marine park.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 2 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 97. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member for Page will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (2.00 pm)—I inform the House that the Minister for Foreign Affairs will be absent from question time today. The Minister for Trade will answer questions on his behalf.

VALEDICTORIES

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (2.00 pm)—Mr Speaker, I rise on indulgence. Today we note the retirement of 14 senators from the parliament: from the government, Senator George Campbell, Senator Linda Kirk and Senator Ruth Webber; from the coalition, Senator Grant Chapman, Senator Rod Kemp, Senator Ross Lightfoot, Senator Sandy Macdonald, Senator Kay Patterson and Senator John Watson; and from the Greens, Senator Kerry Nettle. We thank them for their services to the parliament, and we wish them well for the future.

Members will also be aware that this is an historic day, with the departure of the last four senators from the Australian Democrats: Senator Lyn Allison, Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, Senator Andrew Murray and Senator Andrew Bartlett. As the Leader of the Australian Democrats has acknowledged this week, this marks the passing of the Democrats from the Australian political scene. Only time will tell if they are able to return in some other form in the future, but for now at least we mark the end of an era in Australian politics.

The Australian Democrats have been part of the national political landscape for 31 years since Don Chipp resigned from the Liberal Party and established the Democrats as the third force in Australian politics. In marking their departure after three decades of representation in the parliament, we acknowledge that Australia's political history over those years would have been quite different were it not for the Democrats. They made a significant contribution in successive parliaments. They had considerable success, with senators elected in successive elections through to 2001. They added colour and passion to the life of the parliament with such leaders as Don Chipp, and they worked successfully with governments of different political persuasions and were effective in influencing policy outcomes in many different areas.

The Democrats made a stand on important questions of values, including social justice, the protection of the environment, compassion, humanity, the rights of Indigenous Australians and the integrity and accountability of government. Their time as a party of the balance of power through the 1980s and 1990s and until 2004 was marked by a willingness to compromise in achieving their goals and to not simply be a party of obstruction. That involved difficult and often controversial decisions which affected all sides of politics. Sometimes they probably paid a political price for not being willing to simply adopt a 'just say no' attitude to government legislation. Nonetheless, they were also effective at times in joining with the opposition and blocking legislation, much to the chagrin of the government of the time.

Throughout these 30 years, successive Australian Democrat senators have earned respect from both sides of politics for their personal decency and sincerity. The legislative role that they played also put the Democrats under great pressure to master the

detail of legislation without the resources afforded to major political parties, and we acknowledge the hard work of many Democrat senators over those years, even when those of us on this side had very different views on the economy, foreign policy and other matters of policy. The Democrats also contributed significantly to the work of the parliament through the committee system.

The Australian Democrats also made a landmark contribution to progress on the role of Australian women in the parliament. With Janine Haines, they were the first party to elect a woman as their leader. Following Janine Haines, they were also led by five other women: Janet Powell, Cheryl Kernot, Meg Lees, Natasha Stott Despoja and Lyn Allison.

Politics is all about making a difference and, as we farewell the last four Australian Democrat senators today, we thank them for their service to the Australian parliament, and through them say thank you to their predecessors as well, as they did make a difference in Australian political life. Just as in life, nothing is ever certain in politics. We must all use every waking moment we have as members of parliament to make a difference. On this occasion, the meeting of the Senate on this day, we acknowledge the contribution of Democrat senators past and present to Australia's national democratic and political life.

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (2.04 pm)—I rise on indulgence to join with the Prime Minister in recognising the service of the 14 senators who are leaving the parliament at the end of this week. I also recognise and pay my respects to the Democrats for the contribution that they have made over a long period of time. I will not name or speak about all of the 14 senators who are leaving the parliament, but

I would like to briefly speak about two, one Labor and one Liberal.

The first is Senator Robert Ray. While an adversary of ours and someone who brought trepidation to us when he was in opposition in Senate estimates, he was also for six years the nation's Defence minister and did an exemplary job in that role. The Senate and indeed the Labor Party will be diminished for his leaving. He has made a significant contribution to this place and to this country.

One of the Liberal senators retiring is Senator Rod Kemp. I pay special tribute to Senator Kemp, who, for five years as the Assistant Treasurer of this country, in the Senate day after day took questions of a quite complex and a politically loaded nature in relation to the goods and services tax and the major reforms to Australia's taxation system. For that in particular I pay tribute to Senator Kemp, along with the many other things that he has done in this place.

I also recognise that, had she not died in April last year, Senator Jeannie Ferris would also be leaving the Senate today. Her memory, I know, is one that is respected across both sides of this parliament for the contribution that she made in this place.

In relation to the Democrats, we too have a very high regard for the Democrats for the role that they have played in the Australian parliament and the Australian Senate. We always regarded them as men and women who were driven by idealism, deeply rooted in the conviction that they ought to make Australia a better place by creating a balance of power between the two major political powers. Of the many things that the Democrats were able to achieve—while it could be argued that they paid a political price for it—their role in making sure that we had major taxation reform in Australia's long-term interest in the late 1990s is arguably from our perspective their greatest contribution to this

place. I wish all of the four retiring Democrats the very best for the future and thank them for the professional way in which they have conducted themselves in relation to our senators and for making Australia a better place.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Emissions Trading Scheme

Mr TRUSS (2.07 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. On Tuesday the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government said that an emissions-trading scheme must include the transport sector because it contributes 14 per cent of emissions, and that was 'Economics 1A'. This morning in the House he denied ever saying that fuel had to be part of an emissions-trading scheme but rather that transport has to be part of a climate change strategy. Does the Prime Minister agree with the transport minister's latest position on the ETS that liquid fuels should not be included?

Mr RUDD—The government has said consistently that determination of the scope of the emissions-trading scheme and those sectors of the economy that will be included in it will be determined as a consequence of the green paper and white paper process that will ensue during the second half of this year. We have said that repeatedly and we restate it again. On the question of the inclusion of the transport sector and liquid fuels, the most definitive statement we have had is that by the former Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Mr Turnbull, who stated on behalf of the Howard government in July last year that the transport sector should be in.

Climate Change

Mr PERRETT (2.09 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline the need for an approach to climate change that recognises the need to tackle our future challenges rather than an

approach to climate change that is stuck in the past?

Mr RUDD—I thank the honourable member for his question. Climate change is among the most pressing economic challenges facing the world today and is among the most pressing long-term economic challenges facing Australia. All are familiar with the fact that the economic cost of inaction on climate change is far greater than the economic cost of action on climate change.

Dr Jensen interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Tangney!

Mr RUDD—I would draw attention to a new report from the CSIRO that was released today. On the question of the economic and employment impacts of climate change, the report underlines that by acting on climate change we can create new opportunities for economic growth and for employment. I draw honourable members' attention to this report because it is a contribution to the debate. The report is entitled *Growing the green collar economy: skills and labour challenges in reducing our greenhouse emissions and national environmental footprint*.

The CSIRO analysis, which is a report to the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, is based on the most recent economic modelling. Using two different economic models, the CSIRO has found that, if Australia takes significant action to cut greenhouse gas emissions, national employment will still increase by between 2.5 million and 3.3 million over the next two decades; secondly, jobs in sectors that are currently high carbon emitters, like transport, construction, agriculture, manufacturing and mining, are forecast to grow strongly as well in the next decade; and, furthermore, in high environmental impact industries, 3.25 million workers will need to be equipped with new more sustainable skills.

In dealing with these challenges, there are two options facing those of us charged with national political responsibility. Either you prepare Australia for this future or you stick your head in the sand, which would be to run away from the problem.

Dr Jensen interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Tangney is warned!

Mr RUDD—To quote the Executive Director of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum in the report today:

Climate change is both our greatest economic risk and, ironically, a great economic opportunity. But only if the Australian workforce is properly skilled and resourced to underpin truly sustainable industries and workplaces.

In the debate this week on climate change and an emissions-trading scheme there has been a great deal of proper emphasis on the economic cost of inaction—the cost that will be borne by the Australian economy on the part of our farmers, the tourism sector, through the consequences that flow for public health outcomes and also, to mention something that we have not touched on in this debate before, the long-term consequences for insurance premiums. All of these represent impacts that will have to be dealt with. Whether it concerns Kakadu, whether it is to do with the impact of drought on our rural commodity exports or whether it is the impact on public health, we believe that the economic case for action is clear-cut. This is an economic policy challenge. If we stick our heads in the sand, these things will come to affect us and those who follow us—our children and our grandchildren—and it will affect, long term, the health of the Australian economy.

That is why we have embarked on a course of policy action to deal with these challenges. We have committed ourselves to increasing the renewable energy target. We

have committed ourselves to a half-billion dollar Renewable Energy Fund, a half-billion dollar National Clean Coal Fund and a quarter of a billion dollar Clean Business Fund. As well, we have committed ourselves to the introduction of a market based way of dealing with bringing down greenhouse gas emissions over time—an emissions-trading scheme. Our objective is clear: it is to bring down emissions over time. We are deploying these multiple areas of policy to do that. And in managing the transition to a lower carbon economy we will act in a responsible and equitable fashion to support working families, pensioners, carers and low-income Australians throughout the transition process. We will also provide support to business through the transition process.

Our position is clear and our timetable for this is clear. We are seeking to do this in a consultative fashion, not just with industry but across the wider community. It is a most complex task and, had it been begun during the 12 years when those opposite occupied the treasury bench—and begun in earnest—Australia would be better placed than it currently finds itself.

I was also asked to contrast this with policies that are very much located in the past. I draw honourable members' attention to the clarity of the approach we are bringing to bear in this national debate on the one hand and the absolute absence of clarity on the part of those opposite. Were this not such a significant national debate, we could simply push that to one side, but this will be a major economic debate for the second half of this year and beyond because it will affect us long term.

What we have on the part of those opposite is absolute policy incoherence. I cannot make hide nor hair of it, because we have the member for Wentworth saying that he supports the inclusion of petrol in an emissions-

trading scheme. He said that in July 2007 but when asked about whether it was Liberal Party policy today he said, 'That was Howard government policy.' I do not know what it is today, but it was Howard government policy. He then went on in an interview—I emphasise to all those opposite—that it was the whole government policy on the part of the Howard government, including presumably the current Leader of the Opposition, who was a member of the cabinet which determined their approach to climate change and emissions trading in the middle of last year. It was a reminder from the member for Wentworth that they were all on board for that one.

Then we tried to seek further clarity as to where policy stands now, so we turned to the member for Flinders. The member for Flinders is even more illuminating on this question, because when asked whether emissions trading is now a part of Liberal policy for the future—when challenged on this in an interview the other day—he said that ETS is their policy. It is their policy. So we are now getting to the stage where it was Howard government policy; we do not know whether it is going to continue to be Howard government policy.

The member for Flinders, their spokesman on the environment, says it is their policy but we are not quite sure what part of it is their policy, because he was asked the critical question whether, in fact, fuel should be left out. This is the debate, and those opposite, by virtue of their questions in parliament today, are implying that fuel should be left out. That is the fear campaign they have launched. So here, in the ultimate clarification of policy, the member for Flinders, their spokesman on the environment, was asked this clear-cut question:

So you are clearly arguing that fuel should be left out?

Answer from Mr Hunt:

No, we are going to make a final decision in due course ...

So we are not sure whether they are going to have an emissions-trading scheme. Some say that it was Howard government policy; some say it still is Liberal Party policy in opposition. But on the question of the inclusion of petrol, based on all the questions I heard this week, I thought we could assume that it was out. Now we think that—at least on the current formulation of the leadership—but, no, the member for Flinders says, ‘We’re going to make a final decision in due course.’ It would be good if we had some clarity on this, so in further search of clarity on this question—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr RUDD—There is always a great barometer of how things are going on the part of those opposite: it is called ‘the Hockey volume barometer’. The louder Joe yells you know the worse it is getting.

On the question of clarity on this we had to go, again, to what the current Leader of the Opposition had to say about this. I understand that it was in an interview today. There you go; it is from the Liberal Party of Australia. If you want some clarity about what their position on emissions trading is, and their position on what the impact of energy prices would be—because that has been the other thrust of their questioning this week—the Leader of the Opposition said this in response to a question:

The fact of it is that if we go, as we will, as we must, as we will and we will pay a price as a nation as we should—

This interview was this morning. I actually had them double-check the transcript to make sure this was accurate—

for a genuinely global response. One of the consequences of that will be an increase in the price

of energy—electricity bills for households and petrol and fuels that we use ...

In other words, their position is—

Mr Albanese—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the House will get the call when the House comes to order.

Dr Jensen interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Tangney was warned earlier in the day. He will leave the chamber for one hour under 94(a).

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—It is for one hour and I do not think he can catch his plane.

The member for Tangney then left the chamber.

Mr Albanese—I am concerned that perhaps the Prime Minister might be misleading the House. The Leader of the Opposition cannot possibly have said that gibberish. I ask—

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the House will resume his seat. He knows that that does not come under the standing orders and it is not helpful at all.

Mr RUDD—So, in a vain search for clarity on the part of their actual position on (a) climate change, (b) emissions trading, (c) the inclusion of petrol, and (d) the implication for petrol and energy prices, members opposite and in fact the entire House could be, shall we say, well understood if we had some confusion on this question, because frankly it is difficult to discern where those opposite stand on one of the critical policy challenges for the year ahead. The interview concludes on a question where again the Leader of the Opposition was asked about their position on emissions trading and his definitive response was:

In government we believed in an emissions-trading scheme—

‘We believed in an emissions-trading scheme’! He went on:

... now ... we too believe that an emissions-trading scheme, assuming the rest of the world is able to work with us in an emissions-trading scheme, is the way to go.

Mr Hockey—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Prime Minister has been answering the question for 9½ minutes now. We would prefer to hear from the member for Grayndler than the gas from the Prime Minister.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! I am happy for the House to end on this tone, but I am not going to cop the blame for it. I think it is probably appropriate to apportion the blame to those who are responsible. The House should really have a good look at itself. I suppose I will just have to leave it to others from outside to view the behaviour of this place and make their own decisions. I call the Prime Minister.

Mr RUDD—On this other critical question of an emissions-trading scheme the Leader of the Opposition said today that they believe in one but only when the rest of the world acts. Let us go back to their environment spokesperson who said in May that Australia should not wait until a genuinely global agreement has been negotiated. In other words, whether it is on support for an ETS at all, the inclusion of petrol, the impact of price or whether an ETS should be brought in prior to or subsequent to the establishment of global arrangements on this score, we have at least three conflicting positions on the part of those opposite.

This is a serious debate for the nation’s future. It has huge economic implications for the nation. It has huge implications in terms of the environment itself. We are proceeding

in a calm, measured, responsible way through our deliberative processes with industry. Across the other side of the parliamentary chamber today, and in recent days and weeks, we have an absolute policy shambles—there is not a skerrick of consistency on any element of these policies. I would invite those opposite to participate in a sober national debate on this rather than simply degenerate into the fear campaign and the scare campaign which those opposite have embarked upon. It is not worthy of them, it is not worthy of this parliament and it is not worthy of the future of the national economy.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (2.24 pm)—I inform the House that we have present in the gallery today Mr Alan Thompson, the new Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services. Whilst this is not his first visit here, it is probably a little more exciting than his first visit. On behalf of the House, I wish him well in the challenges that confront him in providing services for members, senators, and other occupants and visitors to this building.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Fuel Prices

Dr NELSON (2.24 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. When will the Prime Minister stop watching the price of petrol go up and start doing something about it?

Mr RUDD—One of the things which presented itself as I ran through some of the transcripts of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Flinders today, speaking on what to do about the price of fuel and about climate change, was the issue of greater reliance on fuel-efficient cars. That is part of their policy. On that we have acted. You asked what specific action we have

taken. We, through industry policy in cooperation with Toyota, will now have for the first time a hybrid car manufactured in this country. We believe in manufacturing policy; those opposite do not. That is one step forward.

Secondly, we have the Building Australia Fund to invest in public transport. That is a policy on our part not on the part of those opposite. Thirdly, in supporting working families and pensioners and carers, we have a \$55 billion income support package in the budget. For a typical young family this will mean \$52 a week, against the \$2.50 per week offered by the policy of those opposite on the question of excise—that is, depending on whether it is the Leader of the Opposition's policy; the member for Wentworth's policy, which is to oppose it; the member for Aston's policy, which is to double it; or the Leader of the National Party's policy, which is to quadruple it. And we do not know which policy currently stands.

So whether it is in terms of direct income support, investment in fuel-efficient cars, acting responsibly on the future of public transport or doing the right thing in the long term on climate change and emissions trading this is the right group of policy settings for Australia—as opposed to those opposite, who have embarked on one thing and one thing alone: a fear campaign, a scare campaign. They will say anything and do anything to grab a headline in tomorrow's newspapers.

Emissions Trading Scheme

Mr HALE (2.26 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline to the House the importance of getting the economics of the emissions-trading scheme right and what the government is doing to ensure it benefits from broad consultation?

Mr SWAN—I thank the member for his question, because this government does un-

derstand that the cost of inaction on climate change is far greater than the cost of action. We also understand that there are great economic opportunities for Australia in the move from the high-emissions economy of the past to a low-emissions economy of the future. The CSIRO report that the Prime Minister was talking about before is very important. I want to quote from that for a moment. It says:

There is a triple-dividend of greater wellbeing, cost-saving and greater competitiveness and reduced environmental impact to be earned if measures would be taken to support the skill revolution required for a low-carbon, environmentally sound society.

This again highlights how important and how economically responsible it is to tackle climate change. It also highlights the need for an emissions-trading system—that is the responsible thing to do. Of course an emissions-trading system will limit the amount of carbon we produce by creating a cost to those producing the carbon emissions—that is true. But it will allow households, business and industry to choose the best ways to cut these omissions. To do that we do need an emissions-trading scheme that has a broad coverage. The wider the coverage the more the burden of emissions reduction is shared across the economy and so the lower the total cost to the economy.

In designing an emissions-trading scheme we will be mindful of advice—we will be mindful of Treasury modelling, international research and of course the academic work of Professor Garnaut. The government's green paper on the emissions-trading scheme will be released in mid-July and it will form the basis for an initial round of formal consultation with business, the social sector and the wider community.

Those opposite have no coherent approach to this at all. They have failed to provide any leadership in this area. As I said the other

day, they are the Neanderthals of climate change. They are simply stuck in the past. There has been backflip after backflip. The backflips on the other side are truly of Olympic proportions. First of all is the timing backflip. They said 2011 this morning, and yesterday they again pushed the timeline out. Backflip No. 2 is the petrol backflip, because now petrol is out, but of course the member for Wentworth said it was in. Of course, there is now the China backflip. Before, they were going to move ahead without China and India; now they want to wait for China and India. Of course, these are truly spectacular backflips. The backflips of the Liberal Party, as I said before, are of Olympic proportions. The timing backflip, the petrol backflip and the China and India backflips condemn them for being unable to meet the very big challenges of the future.

Grocery Prices

Ms JULIE BISHOP (2.30 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Now that the Assistant Treasurer has admitted to the *West Australian* that the government's 'grocery watch' will do nothing to reduce grocery prices, when will the Prime Minister stop watching grocery prices go up and start doing something?

Mr RUDD—From the honourable member for Curtin, who disparages shoppers who go in search of specials, I find that absolutely remarkable. I think the most out-of-touch question I have heard from the Liberal Party all year was the one earlier this week or last week—whenever it was—when she actively disparaged people who go out there in search of specials. The average annual growth in food prices for the 10 years to the March quarter of 2008 was 3.9 per cent, compared to three per cent for headline CPI.

Ms Julie Bishop interjecting—

Mr Simpkins—You're stuck in the past.

The SPEAKER—The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has asked her question. The member for Cowan is warned.

Mr RUDD—Average annual growth in the period from March 2006 to March 2008 was 5.1 per cent for food, compared with 3.3 per cent for the CPI. One might ask: between March 2006 and March 2008—three months into our government but almost two years of their government—if 5.1 per cent was the average food increase in that period, what by way of any assistance to the competition policy powers available to consumers did those opposite do? Nothing. They simply adopted a position where they disparage those who go in search of specials and disparage the efforts of the member for Lilley, the Treasurer, who has been active in this field ever since I have known him, as a member of parliament with his constituents on the north side of Brisbane, to assist them with their own hunt for the best grocery prices in his community.

In the 12 months to March 2008, food prices increased by 5.7 per cent due to strong increases in the prices of dairy and related products and, of course, increases in bread and cereal products. Working families, working Australians, pensioners and carers are feeling all of these costs. As a result, on 22 January, a month or two after we took office, the government directed the ACCC to commence a formal inquiry into grocery prices and to report its findings by 31 July 2008. I notice that, despite all the powers available within the ACCC, in the period of 12 years when those opposite were in office—including the last two years when grocery prices went up by 5.1 per cent, a couple of percentage points in excess of the regular CPI—those opposite did absolutely nothing. What we have asked is for the ACCC to conduct a formal inquiry into grocery prices. Furthermore, the government has instructed the ACCC to take a broad approach to its

inquiry so that all aspects of the supply chain are included, from the farm gate to the checkout counter, to ensure that families are getting the best deal possible at the supermarket. The ACCC is considering the industry's current structure and the nature of competition within it at the supply, wholesale and retail levels in order to determine the transparency of what is going on. It is also considering mergers and acquisitions by national retailers. The ACCC has received some 190 submissions from a variety of stakeholders in response to the issues paper which it has released. The ACCC has conducted a number of public hearings across rural and metropolitan areas. The government has also asked the ACCC to undertake a monthly survey of grocery prices for a typical shopping basket of goods across Australia and to establish a dedicated website on grocery prices.

We have always said about grocery prices, and Fuelwatch in relation to the price of petrol, that we are committed to a set of modest measures to give consumers more information and, as a consequence, more power. As a consequence, we believe these are modest steps forward, as we have always indicated, in stark contrast to those opposite, who for 12 long years in office washed their hands of all responsibility. The honourable member who asked the question has done so, I think, with absolute temerity given her derisory remarks about working Australians who every week look for their specials and go out to balance their family budgets.

Climate Change

Ms LIVERMORE (2.35 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Will the minister update the House on the latest information on the effects of climate change on agriculture? What are the different options before the government in response to this information?

Mr BURKE—I thank the member for Capricornia for the question. This morning, as I was reading *Stock and Land*—which I do now in the morning; I am a recent convert to *Stock and Land*—on page 8 there was an article on some of the latest research coming out today from the CSIRO. The research, by the CSIRO's Dr Mark Howden, outlines in pretty stark terms the potential of climate change for Australian agriculture. It goes through the risks and the opportunities to particular industries and through how farmers can adapt to the challenges of climate change.

I noticed from comments made this morning by the Leader of the Opposition that he does not think it is all that appropriate for the government to be talking about the risks, as though the risks and danger of climate change are purely some sort of sneaky government plot. If the Leader of the Opposition is looking for a sneaky plot, I suggest he just turn around, and he will find one directly behind him right now. The Leader of the Opposition apparently thinks it is some sort of sneaky plot to acknowledge research by leading scientific bodies, like the CRC for National Plant Biosecurity, that shows that sleeper pests and weeds that are not currently a problem could become one with warmer temperatures or that weeds, which metabolise CO₂ faster, will have the upper hand in a CO₂-rich environment. I presume the Leader of the Opposition thinks it is some sort of sneaky plot to listen to joint research by the CSIRO, the Bushfire CRC and the Bureau of Meteorology showing that the number of days of extreme fire danger experienced each year in Australia could increase by 65 per cent by 2020 and up to 300 per cent by 2050. Whenever a bushfire goes through, that is when fireweed and other weeds are the first to come back. But there is also good news in a report by the CSIRO released today. I will

quote it, as I am sure honourable members have already read *Stock and Land* today:

The good news, Dr Howden said, is that Australian agriculture is already used to coping with adversity and climate risk; and that the nation has a strong underlying research base.

The bad news is that Australia has been politically slow to accept the threat of climate change, “putting us a decade behind where we could be.”

I quote: ‘a decade behind where we could be’. The CSIRO report found that, to protect against pests, diseases and weeds in a changing climate, we have to maintain and improve our quarantine capabilities. We have to improve the effectiveness of pest, disease and weed management practices. The report also found a range of specific actions which could be put forward to farmers so that they can be better informed when they make choices about what to do on their own land.

If all of this is a sneaky plot then we are colluding with some of the world’s best scientific minds. If the Leader of the Opposition is right, then this is a conspiracy which involves the CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology, the National Farmers Federation, all the state farming bodies and pretty much every government in the world. Everybody is in on it except him. And you know what? When you see a conspiracy everywhere you look, maybe you have got to wonder if you are the problem.

The government knows that Australian farmers can adapt to climate change if they are given access to the best information we can give them. Under no circumstances will we be telling farmers what to do. They make the choices as to what to do on their own land. But it is the Australian government’s responsibility to be clear about the risks, to be clear about the opportunities and to make clear to our farmers the best options to ensure a successful future in the face of climate change.

Economy

Mr TURNBULL (2.39 pm)—My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. When will the Prime Minister stop watching consumer and small business confidence collapse and when he is going to do something about it?

Mr RUDD—I would have thought that as shadow Treasurer the member for Wentworth would have reached a conclusion about the intersection of 10 interest rate rises in a row with the cumulative confidence of the business community, because what those interest rate rises add up to is a huge additional cost to the operation of a business. They also affect, of course, consumers—those who buy the goods and services produced by businesses—and, as a result, that washes through in terms of the impact on the economy.

The second factor I would draw to the honourable member’s attention—and I would draw his attention to the impacts outlined in parallel business confidence surveys in many OECD countries at present—is the wash-through effect of the global financial crisis and the global oil crisis: the third great global oil shock in 30 years, the biggest global oil shock in 30 years. We had interest rate rises, 10 in a row under the previous government—having promised us that interest rates would be kept at?

Government members—Record lows!

Mr RUDD—Were they kept at record lows?

Government members—No!

Opposition members—Yes!

Mr RUDD—Did I hear someone opposite say yes? Name them! Was that Joe?

Mr Hockey interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr RUDD—I have a question for the member for North Sydney, which is: if they

were going to be kept at record lows, and that undertaking was given at the end of 2004, what was it that happened in 2005, 2006 and 2007?

Government members—They went up!

Mr RUDD—Maybe it was a mirage, all of those interest rate rises in a row. I would say to the member for Wentworth, as he plots and schemes over the break in his preparation to take over the Liberal leadership, that, on the basic question of what impacts on confidence: there is the impact of a succession of interest rate rises, the impact of the global economy on the basis of what is happening with global financial markets still and, on top of that, the impact we have seen of global oil prices.

Our alternative is responsible economic management, which is why we have brought about a \$22 billion surplus on which a Liberal Party raid is being conducted at the moment in the Senate, on this last day that the Senate sits—a \$22 billion raid on the surplus. If there is one sure-fire way to put upward pressure on inflation, upward pressure on interest rates and, as a consequence, affect confidence in the real economy, it is to pursue such a policy of continued economic irresponsibility. I would have thought the member for Wentworth would be aware of those basic facts. Perhaps his energies have been directed in another direction in recent weeks and days.

Climate Change

Mr NEUMANN (2.42 pm)—My question is to the Attorney-General. Will the Attorney-General inform the House of the implications of climate change for national security?

Mr McCLELLAND—I thank the honourable member for Blair for his question. Last night Dr Thomas Fingar, Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analysis and Chairman of the National Intelligence Council in the US, gave a statement entitled *Na-*

tional intelligence assessment on the national security implications of global climate change to 2030 to a United States congressional committee. In his statement, he said:

From a national security perspective, climate change has the potential to affect lives (for example, through food and water shortages, increased health problems including the spread of disease, and increased potential for conflict), property (for example through ground subsidence, flooding, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events), and other security interests.

Dr Fingar specifically referred to the circumstances of Australia and New Zealand in his statement. In view of the significance of that statement, I table it.

Those views have also been outlined and formed by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, who said in a report earlier this year called *Taking a punch: building a more resilient Australia*:

Climate change will compound the risks of disruption and have a direct influence on the type, scale and frequency of disasters and emergencies Australia will face, including increased flooding, more frequent and intense storms, lightning events and bushfires.

Indeed, last September, members interested—and that should be all of us—would recall the significant statements made by the Australian Federal Police Commissioner, Mick Keelty, and also the Chief of the Defence Force, Angus Houston. Mick Keelty said in his speech:

... if only some and not all of this occurs—

that is, the consequences of climate change—

climate change is going to be the security issue of the 21st century.

In responding to those speeches at the time, the then Minister for Defence, the current Leader of the Opposition, said—and appropriately so:

If you think about the security challenges that we face in the future, obviously, population shifts associated with any one of a number of causes including climate change is one of them.

That was a specific and an appropriate acknowledgement. It is now completely irresponsible for the opposition to effectively be running interference on measures to address climate change and to be avoiding the security challenges of climate change. The Rudd government is determined to confront these significant security challenges head on.

Housing Affordability

Ms LEY (2.45 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. When will the Prime Minister stop watching household costs such as rent and child care go up and when is he going to do something about it?

Mr RUDD—Following the earlier question from the honourable member for Wentworth concerning the impact on rents and housing costs generally, I would have thought there was an axiomatic relationship between interest rate rises and those costs. Therefore the proper question in economic policy is: what do you do to make it less likely in the future that there are further interest rate rises? The answer to that is called responsible fiscal policy. The answer to that does not lie in continuing the fiscal policy settings of the type that we inherited from our predecessors.

As the finance minister has repeatedly advised the House, with expenditure running in excess of five per cent of annual growth at the time at which this government assumed office, had that been perpetrated in the current financial year by this government then the impact of that on total final demand in the economy would have been unhelpful in terms of the overall inflationary pressures in the economy. In fact, it would have been more than unhelpful; it would have been decisively negative. It would have made the

task of maintaining current interest rate policy settings on the part of the Reserve Bank even more difficult. Therefore, we believe that the responsible course of action when it comes to dealing with pressures in the housing sector is first and foremost to make sure that you have a responsible economic policy which does not put further upward pressure on interest rates and further upward pressure on inflation and, through that, further upward pressure on interest rates.

The second point in answer to the honourable member's question goes to how you deal effectively with those who are suffering from housing policy stress, those who are finding it difficult to cope with housing policy challenges into the future. What do you actually do through housing policy itself? The question related to interest rates and rents; therefore, the question deals with what you are going to do about housing more generally.

For the first time in 12 years the government of Australia has a housing minister. Those opposite did not have one. That was the priority they attached to the housing portfolio. They did not have a housing minister, they did not have a housing portfolio and we know for a fact that they never had a housing policy. What we have done by contrast is put forward some \$1½ billion-plus of housing programs which deal with, firstly, assisting first home buyers to accumulate enough savings to put a deposit on a home, because that is very difficult; and, secondly, investing in bringing down some of the infrastructure charges, particularly those impacting on new housing developments around the country. That is another half a billion dollars-plus program that we have put forward.

There is a third policy, specifically in relation to the point raised by the honourable member for Farrer, which goes to rents, and affordable rents. In our work around the

community it is quite plain that this is a situation faced not just by those paying mortgages or seeking to save for mortgages but by those currently paying rents and facing huge challenges in balancing the family budget on that score, which is why we have introduced a half-a-billion-dollar National Rental Affordability Scheme with the intention of making it possible for private sector investors in the sector to create a large number of additional units—over time, 50,000 units—of affordable rental accommodation across the country. These are practical measures in the housing policy space.

But I go back to my first premise. None of this is possible unless you have responsible economic management, and you do not have responsible economic management if in the current environment you are launching a \$22 billion raid on the surplus, because the impact of that is to put further upward pressure on interest rates, which is disastrous for all people out there in the economy.

Child Protection

Ms CAMPBELL (2.49 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. What is the government doing to improve child protection?

Ms MACKLIN—I thank the member for Bass for her question. I am sure every single member of this House joins with me in horror at the reports that are coming out from various parts of Australia demonstrating terrible stories of child neglect and abuse. To be confronted with the horror of malnutrition and starvation of children I think is shaking every one of us to our foundations. I think we would all agree that, understandably, Australians want to know just how this can continue to be happening and also want to know what each and every one of us at this level of government and in the states and territories are going to do about it.

As I am sure everybody here understands, these cases are now subject to police investigations, so of course I cannot comment on any of the individual cases. What I can say—and I am sure once again it is something that we all feel very strongly about—is that child abuse is a crime. It is a crime that must see the people who are perpetrating it punished. As a nation, we not only need to see the people perpetrating it punished; we also need to do a much better job of protecting our children from abuse and neglect. As we all know, including those of us who are parents or aunties or uncles, we want each and every one of our children to grow up in a safe, happy and healthy environment.

It is the case that the levels of child abuse are at an alarming high. Just last year there were around 60,000 cases across Australia where authorities found that a child was likely to be harmed, abused or neglected. What I think shocks us all is that these rates have doubled over the last decade. Of course, governments cannot replace the job that responsible parents have to do. But one of the things that is our responsibility is stepping in where there is evidence of neglect or abuse.

One of the things that has come out from the reports over the last few days is the very clear need to have much better sharing of child protection information both within and across jurisdictions. We certainly intend for this to be a very important aspect of the new national child protection framework as a way in which the Australian government can provide leadership on the critical issue of child protection.

In addition to the vital role of information sharing, the framework will include better prevention, better integration of services, improving responses for children in care and children coming out of care, improving responses for Indigenous children and, most critically, attracting and retaining the right

workforce so that we can have effective child protection systems across the country.

Under the new national child protection framework, the Australian government is also giving state and territory child welfare authorities the power to advise Centrelink to quarantine various welfare payments to make sure that that money is being spent in the interests of children. We have committed some additional funding in the recent budget to this welfare reform agenda to make sure that our children are protected and that they are going to school.

These are very challenging issues that confront every single one of us here today, and I think everybody here also knows that there are no simple solutions to these very complex issues. As I said before, parents will always have the primary responsibility for caring for and protecting their children, but state, territory and national governments have a responsibility to step in where children are at risk of neglect or abuse. We all have to do more to make sure that the cases we have seen in recent days stop falling through the cracks that exist in the system. I am sure that together we can make some improvements for the children who have been so badly treated in our community.

Workplace Relations

Ms JULIE BISHOP (2.55 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the level of strikes and industrial disputes across Australia has increased sixfold since this government came to office, when will the Prime Minister stop watching the strikes and do something about them?

Mr RUDD—As I indicated in responses to questions on industrial relations from the honourable member early in the week, the first thing that the country needs is the implementation of a fair and flexible industrial relations system. Secondly, the current level of industrial disputation occurs under the

existing set of laws—otherwise called the continuation of those which we inherited from the previous government—which provide for recognised industrial action. The third point is that individual industrial negotiations—the content of those negotiations, the way in which they are conducted and the negotiating leverage—are affected by the overall supply and demand for labour and skilled labour in the economy. If you fail to invest over such a long period of time in an effective skills policy for the economy, it has a direct impact on the labour market.

I would suggest to those opposite that, if they were genuinely seriously concerned about advancing the debate on the supply of skilled labour to the Australian workforce and its direct consequence on the conduct of industrial negotiations, it would have been wiser for them to have paid close attention to the 20 warnings they received from the Reserve Bank on the question of investment in skills and infrastructure to deal with long-term inflationary challenges.

When those opposite respond with such feigned outrage on this question, I draw their attention to a long perusal of the Reserve Bank documents over a long period of time where one after another those warnings were made. Had they acted on that and acted on infrastructure, not only would it have had an effect on long-term inflationary pressures in the economy, which is the burden of the Reserve Bank's advice, but, in terms of the specific matter raised by the honourable member for Curtin, it would have been of material relevance as well.

Same-Sex Relationships

Mr BEVIS (2.57 pm)—My question is to the Attorney-General. Will the Attorney-General update the House on steps to remove discrimination in Commonwealth laws against Australians in same-sex relationships

and their children? What support exists for these moves?

Mr McCLELLAND—I thank the honourable member for his concern on these matters. There are in fact a number of members of the opposition who are supporters of removing discrimination from Commonwealth laws. At one point, some were very strong supporters indeed. For instance, there was an article published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 13 August last year entitled, ‘Turnbull takes on mission for gay and lesbian rights’. In terms of advancing that mission, it said:

Malcolm Turnbull has embarked on a personal crusade to convince his cabinet colleagues to allow same-sex couples the same legal and financial rights as heterosexual married and de facto couples.

Indeed, consistent with those views, during the election campaign, in an interview with the *Wentworth Courier* he is reported to have said in response to a question about removing discrimination:

This is a policy initiative that I have championed for a long time.

We have got a champion for the cause here! Again, consistent with those views, on the front page of a newsletter to the electorate of the member for Wentworth—I assume this was during the election campaign—which again highlighted the article from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the honourable member for Wentworth was quoted as saying:

While some important reforms to superannuation have been made there remain a number of legal and financial rights available to heterosexual couples not available to same-sex couples. That is not fair, and since my election I have sought to address and overcome this discrimination. I have pledged to continue this fight until justice is done.

That article has a reference to an annual dinner and the honourable member is quoted in his newsletter as saying, ‘We both enjoyed the Aurora annual dinner a few weeks ago

and I was pleased that the auction item which I donated—dinner with me and Lucy—raised around \$6,000 for Aurora’—a very worthy organisation. It is a wonderful thing that some people can afford \$6,000 for a dinner. That is a terrific thing, and I am sure it was a wonderful dinner. But the reality is that as a result of the opposition delaying the passage of this legislation—the Commonwealth reforms to remove same-sex discrimination from superannuation laws—there will be many people who will be unable to afford dinner, and that potentially includes children. In the assessment of focus groups on this self-proclaimed champion on these issues, I think they would find a very lacklustre crusade and a very disappointing mission. I remind the honourable member of the commitment he gave to his electorate and I look forward to the opposition supporting this legislation.

Pensions and Benefits

Mrs MAY (3.01 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. When will the Prime Minister stop watching pensioners and Australians on fixed incomes struggle to meet day-to-day bills and start doing something for these struggling Australians?

Mr RUDD—I thank the honourable member for her question. The government’s budget measures relating to pensioners and carers have been detailed on a number of occasions by the Treasurer and me. They cover what we have done on the utilities allowance and additional assistance with telephone connections—internet connections for older people—and a range of other measures as well for pensioners, carers and those on the DSP. There are some 2.2 million age pensioners in the country, some 700,000-plus on the DSP and a significant number of carers. These are a very important group of Australians and we are therefore working through not just the budget measures which have

been delivered—and many of those payments have already commenced—but also long-term retirement incomes policy. We have put that before the Henry commission to ensure that that can be appropriately deliberated on in the context of overall tax reform which we need to do in the long term.

I find it puzzling that the member for McPherson would stand up and ask this question on the matter of pensions. When asked in a debate, ‘Was it Liberal Party policy to increase the base rate of the pension?’ the honourable member for McPherson said yes. It lasted as a Liberal Party commitment for about 30 minutes, because, when challenged about the new policy on pensions advocated by the member for McPherson, the member for Wentworth—the alternative leader of the Liberal Party—said about half an hour later, ‘Well, we have not got a policy to raise the base rate of the pension.’ So from Steve Price, ‘So you don’t have a policy that supports a rise in the base rate of the pension?’ the answer from Malcolm Turnbull was, ‘No, we have not formed a new policy.’ ‘The opposition is now endorsing an increase in the base rate of the pension’—that is what Margaret May said. ‘Yes, absolutely’.

What you had within one day was the classic flip, flop, flap we have seen from those opposite, not just on the question of pensions policy but also on the question of excise: 5c, 10c, 20c, no sense! On the question of the means testing of social security payments: do they believe in means testing or do they not believe in means testing? Are we going to have an emissions-trading scheme? Are we going to have one before the rest of the world? Are we going to have one with the rest of the world? Are we going to include petrol? Some say yes; others say no. The opposition—the Liberal Party—is an absolute shambles on every element of public policy. Those opposite should use the July and August period to bring about some

policy coherence, rather than embark upon the politics of smear and fear, which are their first courses of action.

Economy

Mr SULLIVAN (3.05 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the progress of important inflation-fighting measures in the Senate?

Mr SWAN—I thank the member for his question. Through the budget, we have built a \$22 billion surplus to fight inflation and put downward pressure on interest rates. The opposition, through their irresponsible actions up in the Senate, are trying to punch a huge hole in that surplus. Let us have a look at what they are blocking. They are blocking increasing the Medicare levy surcharge threshold, which will remove a tax slug on middle-income earners. That is what they are doing—effectively a tax increase. They are also politicking with the condensate measure, which could cost the budget \$177 million in terms of delay; if blocked altogether, it could cost the budget to \$2.5 billion. How irresponsible is that? Their delay on the luxury car tax threatens a \$22 million hole from delay, but if it is blocked it will cost \$555 million.

Something rare happened in the House last night. There was 10 minutes of economic responsibility from the Liberal Party. After seven months of irresponsibility, we had 10 minutes of responsibility last night. Last night they let through an important compliance measure to stop rorting in the welfare system. They were going to block it but, when we highlighted it, they were shamed into supporting it. Good on them—10 minutes in seven months is not bad!

Perhaps the member for Wentworth ought to convene another focus group. He can ask them what they want the Liberal Party to do. What would families want? They would want lower inflation. They would want lower

interest rates. All of that is threatened by the actions of the Liberal Party in the Senate. We on this side of the House understand the importance of fighting inflation. We understand the importance of getting interest rates down. What the Liberal Party is doing in the Senate is pushing up inflation and interest rates. It has a chance this afternoon to stand up in the Senate and be responsible. Let this vital legislation through and send it down to the House so that the Australian people can get full responsibility from their government—a full attack on inflation, doing something about interest rates in the long term. The Liberal Party is completely irresponsible.

Economy

Dr NELSON (3.08 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to his commitments to watching petrol prices, grocery prices, childcare prices, strikes and falling business and consumer confidence. I also refer the Prime Minister to the 135 committees and inquiries he has established in the first seven months of his government. Given that the Prime Minister and his government have blamed the coalition in 422 responses to the first 550 questions in the House this year, when will the Prime Minister accept responsibility and deliver action that is going to address the day-to-day concerns of everyday Australians?

Mr RUDD—Brendan, if I were you, mate, when it comes to watching, I would be watching my back! I would be watching my back very closely over the next few months. Up there, over there and even over here—you have been a bad boy, Joe!

The government makes no excuse for commissioning expert advice on future policy settings when we need it. My recollection is that it said in the set of annual reports tabled by the previous government at the end of last year that there were something in the order of 400 to 500-plus reports, inquiries

and commissions undertaken by those opposite in the last financial year alone. That is an extraordinary number. So I would suggest to those opposite it is not abnormal for the executive in government to seek professional advice. We are in exactly the same category and we are doing that through commissions of inquiry and the like. For example, we make no excuse for the fact that in the 2020 Summit there was a national call for us, after 12 years of inaction, to work towards—

Mr Robert interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Fadden is warned!

Mr RUDD—a seamless national economy, a seamless national market, and also to undertake the first root and branch review of Australia's national taxation system in a quarter of a century. We make no apology at all for the fact that we have commissioned Ken Henry of the Treasury to undertake the Henry commission of inquiry. Our tax system—

Mr Simpkins interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Cowan was warned earlier. He will remove himself from the chamber for one hour under standing order 94(a).

The member for Cowan then left the chamber.

Mr RUDD—our income support system and our retirement income system need a root and branch review for their long-term future. We make no apology for the fact that we have also commissioned external advice to assist us with the large, long-term policy reform process which emissions trading represents. A question was asked about why we are seeking this advice now. Those opposite did not use their 12 years in office to act productively on climate change. Rather, they swept the issue away, only to panic at five minutes to midnight and do a little bit on

emissions trading and then walk away from it after the election. That is another reason why we have been required to commission external advice on various aspects of the emissions trading and climate change debate. We make no apology for the way in which we intend to govern. We make no apology for the fact that we are governing for Australia's long-term future. We make no apology for the fact that our horizon for this country is very much what we can do for Australia in the decade ahead and not just in the week or month ahead or the next focus group ahead, as seems to be the preoccupation of the member for Wentworth. Instead, we will plan for Australia's long-term future. We intend to govern for Australia's long-term future. I would suggest that those opposite are very much anchored in the past.

RUDD GOVERNMENT

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (3.12 pm)—I seek leave to move a motion condemning the Prime Minister and his government for seven months of watching, committees, inaction and indecision.

Leave not granted.

Dr NELSON—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition moving immediately—That this House condemns the Prime Minister and his Government for seven months of watching, symbolism, inquiries, summits, committees, stunts, spin and buck-passing—anything but making a decision. In particular, for:

- (1) standing by and watching petrol, grocery, childcare and household costs rise significantly, while doing nothing about it;
- (2) watching consumer confidence plummet to 16 year lows, not seen since the days of Paul Keating's recession 'we had to have';

- (3) watching the largest decline in small business confidence since the start of the survey, while doing nothing about it;
- (4) walking away from pensioners, carers, seniors, farmers and small businesses by failing to assist them in the recent Budget, while only delivering the Howard Government's tax cuts to workers and families;
- (5) slugging Australians with \$19 billion of new inflationary taxes that Labor hid from the community prior to the election;
- (6) promising the Australian people last November that he would deliver 'new leadership and fresh ideas' when instead, the Prime Minister has outsourced leadership and decision-making to 135 committees, reviews, inquiries and summits; and
- (7) misleading the Australian community into believing that he wanted to end the 'Blame Game' when on over 420 occasions in this chamber alone, the Prime Minister and his Government has variously blamed the Coalition, OPEC, the Iraq War, his own staff, the international credit crisis, the mining boom, China's energy demands, international banks, alcohol companies, heatwaves, pubs and clubs, an 'overheating' solar panel industry, oil companies, overseas travel entitlements when in Opposition, State governments and State oppositions, the RACV, RACQ and RAA of South Australia, his own public service, alcopops, the drought, urban traffic congestion, global warming, four wheel drives and Taragos, the US subprime crisis, drinkers, smokers, teenagers, parents, and even the Japanese Government for the challenges he faces, but won't do anything about it,

It is now seven months that this Prime Minister has governed Australia—and I use the word 'governed' loosely. George Megalogenis, who is one of the most respected journalists in the Canberra press gallery, who writes for the *Australian* newspaper, wrote recently of our Prime Minister:

Will he become our first federal premier, a master of the media cycle who ultimately runs a do-nothing Government?

We have a Prime Minister who, when in opposition, went around Australia and said a lot of things to Australians—that, if he were chosen to be the Prime Minister of Australia, were he to govern the country, interest rates on home loans would be more affordable. He led Australians to believe that he would do something about rising petrol prices, that he would do something about grocery prices, that he would do something to assist pensioners and those that struggle in day-to-day and week-to-week life.

But what we have had for seven months, it is now clear, is a government led by a Prime Minister who is more concerned about his popularity, who is more concerned about his image in the media, who is more concerned about micromanaging every decision that has not been made in the government, who clearly has disdain for his own public servants and who has ignored the advice of four major departments in one of his many stunts, called Fuelwatch. He had disdain for the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, keeping him outside his office for hours for no good reason. He has commissioned 135 reviews, committees, commissions, boards, working groups, inquiries, discussion papers, summits, consultations and a whole variety of things to avoid actually making a decision.

Australians have experienced in the last seven months two official interest rate rises from the Reserve Bank and another 40 basis points from the banks in unofficial rises. The average Australian family are paying more than \$152 a month more on their mortgage today than they were in November last year. Confidence in the business community is the lowest on record. The Sensis survey of the small business community in May, for example, showed that only 10 per cent of Australia's small businesses actually have confidence in the policies of the current federal

government, down from 47 per cent in November last year.

We also have consumer confidence in the Westpac-Melbourne Institute survey at the lowest level since 1992, when, under the last Labor government, more than one million Australians were out of work and when, only a year earlier, Australians had been paying more than 17 per cent interest on their home mortgage and when small business had struggled with 22 per cent interest on business overdrafts. That is the lack of confidence the business community has had in this government since it came to office.

We had the Fuelwatch stunt. The Prime Minister decided that, in order to make it look as though he were doing something about petrol, he would have a thing called Fuelwatch—in other words, he would watch the price of petrol. No-one is opposed to consumers getting information, but what he is most cruelly actually doing—as opposed by the RACV, as opposed by the RAA amongst many others, as opposed by four of his major government departments and as opposed by his blowtorch, the member for Batman, in a letter—is making it difficult for those families who line up on a Tuesday night for the maximum discount on their petrol, making decisions about which cut of meat to buy or whether they will put another 10 litres of petrol in their car. They, Prime Minister, are the cruellest examples of the people who are suffering most under this government, which is more concerned about a media image than it is about making real decisions.

Then we had \$35 million in taxes—and damned hard work on the part of everyday Australians who had earned that money—given to the Toyota motor company, which made a profit last year in the order of \$17 billion—that is, \$35 million that it did not ask for and does not yet know how it is go-

ing to use. This \$35 million was announced so he could have his photo taken in Japan sitting in the front seat of a hybrid car which the Toyota motor company was going to make in Australia anyway, as we subsequently discovered.

Then, because the government had inherited \$60 billion invested in Australia's future and no Commonwealth debt because Labor's \$100 billion deficit had been paid off, because it inherited an economy that was the envy of the rest of the world, what did he decide to do? He decided to talk up the problems, as he saw them, with inflation in Australia. We were told by a very nervous Treasurer that we had an inflationary genie out of the bottle on the day before the Reserve Bank had a meeting to talk about interest rates that affect those of us in this country that have a mortgage. So in the cruellest possible way, for political advantage and opportunism, the government talked up an inflationary crisis to give cover for the fact that it was delivering a budget that would increase taxes by \$20 billion and cut only \$1 in spending for every \$2 added to it.

This country needs a government that has a strategic direction. It must have a sense of priority. In desperately trying to appear to be Hawke on the outside, this government, as we know from John Lyons in the *Australian* and many other sources, is much more like Whitlam on the inside. We unashamedly stand up for Australians, who deserve good government and deserve a government that will make decisions with a sense of priority for Australia's short, medium and long term. (*Time expired*)

The SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (3.23 pm)—I second the motion. There are many words that could be used to describe the way in which Australians feel

when they think about what Labor promised before the election and has since failed to deliver. One I am hearing increasingly is 'conned'. I am also hearing 'duped', 'scammed', 'ripped off', 'gulled', 'deceived', 'swindled', 'hoaxed' and 'defrauded'. The people of Australia feel betrayed by this government, which promised so much but has delivered so little. This big-promising Labor government is big on blame, big on excuses and light on action—spin, no substance; talk, no action; blow, no torch. This is a government that has simply failed to deliver. In seven months and two days it is already out of ideas.

Don't tell me the Prime Minister is actually walking out—he is not even prepared to answer for his actions! The Prime Minister is leaving the chamber, not prepared to account for his government after just seven months in office—seven months of failure; already out of ideas. This parliament has spent fewer days sitting than any other in modern history. We are about to go away for almost nine weeks on one of the longest winter breaks ever recorded and we are doing that because the government have run out of business. There are no bills. The bills that we have dealt with, apart from the budget group, were mainly leftover, B-grade legislation from the previous government. They are peppering their speakers list with 25 speakers discussing a bill that is about whether we should have three people or five people on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. This is the kind of legislation that is left for the government to bring forward to the place.

What are we going to do with the government after so many promises and so little delivery? They have commissioned 135 reviews. You would think that 11½ years in opposition would be enough time to actually think up a few ideas about what you might do when you got the government. You would think they would have been ready for action.

We got all this rhetoric about how hardworking the government were going to be. No-one could take more than Christmas Day off; we were going to have parliament back before Christmas; the ministers could not have any holidays. Well, it was weeks and weeks after Christmas before parliament got back, and when we did get back there was no legislation for us to deal with. We only sat for a few weeks and we were gone again. The government were out of ideas and had nothing to do. So what we have instead are summits, reviews, inquiries and focus groups—nothing to deliver any real benefits for the Australian people.

While we are away for eight weeks the Prime Minister is going overseas again another three or four times. In fact, he is the most travelled Prime Minister in history in his early days in office. That, again, is a bit of a surprise because before the election we were told the country was in a derelict state. The economy was a mess. There was no proper investment, no proper planning and we would be so busy—so busy that he spent one month out of his first four out of the country visiting the world, telling other countries how to do things. Maybe the problems in Australia were not so bad. And he was away for three weeks during the critical budget preparations.

But let us look at what the government have actually delivered. They said they would put downward pressure on petrol prices, but they have gone up. They said groceries would be cheaper, but they have gone up. Interest rates would go down, but they have gone up. They would improve housing affordability, but housing affordability is worse and rents are higher. They were going to deliver fast broadband, but they axed the OPEL contract, and who knows whether their own scheme will ever get off the ground? They were going to spend more on roads and infrastructure, but they have spent

less. They were going to save the whales, but they have rolled over and wimped out on their promised legal action. They said their expenditure would be open and transparent, but billions of dollars are covered up in Labor Party promises. They said they would get rid of regional programs that were criticised by the Auditor-General, but they have slashed the Auditor-General's budget and developed a giant new rorts program for which only Labor candidates could apply and the applications are already closed. They said they would protect workers, but strikes have gone up sixfold. They said they would secure the future of the aged, but they have ignored pensioners in the budget and \$50 billion has been slashed off their superannuation in their first six months. The stock market has plummeted. Unemployment is to rise by 134,000. And they said they would end the blame game, but they have become the blame kings—75 per cent of questions without notice have been answered by blaming someone else. (*Time expired*)

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (3.28 pm)—This is the 18th motion of censure or for the suspension of standing orders moved by the opposition this year—double the number moved in 2007 in the lead-up to a federal election. The opposition are motivated not by good public policy but by dealing with their own divisions. They want to give lectures to their own backbench but make the whole of the parliament sit through them. This is the weakest censure motion moved in this parliament since Federation. Not only that, they have now wound it back so we now have suspensions of standing orders for condemnation motions because they could not bring themselves to say that this was worthy of a censure motion. Can you believe that those pathetic questions today went through their tactics committee? Unbelievable.

The opposition would have Australians believe that every problem which the nation faces began at 9 am on Sunday, 25 November. They forget about the 16-year high inflation legacy that we were left. They forget about the eight interest rate rises that occurred after the 2004 election when they promised to keep interest rates at record lows. They say they are opposed to watching and the consideration of policy initiatives but they were blind to the inflation threat. They were blind to climate change. They were blind to the fact that workers were having their wages and conditions ripped away from them through Work Choices. They remain blind to the fact that we are living through an international credit crisis. Those opposite want to pretend that it does not exist, that the global community is not going through an international credit crisis. In the US, the most prominent measure of consumer confidence, the Conference Board's index, has fallen nearly 50 per cent since the global turbulence began. In the UK, consumer confidence has fallen to its lowest level in 13 years. In New Zealand, confidence has fallen to its lowest level since 1998 when it was buffeted by the Asian financial crisis.

Mr Truss—All Labor governments.

Mr ALBANESE—All Labor governments, including the Bush administration in the United States! That is the level that we are left with. This guy is the Leader of the National Party—a once great party, now a party that does not even know if they will continue to exist beyond the next year—a party that have reforms and ballots on whether they should continue to exist or not. What an absolute disgrace.

The opposition argue there is no international credit crisis. They argue that there is no international impact of oil. They argue that it has nothing to do with the global situation because they cannot put forward an al-

ternative. They simply are incapable of having one option just as they are incapable of uniting behind a weak and pathetic leader. They have one position on Work Choices, I will give them that—that is, they will bring it back because every one of them voted to confirm that they would bring back Work Choices and AWAs if they were re-elected. They have two positions on the alcopops issue. On 27 April, the Leader of the Opposition said:

The proposed increase in the excise on alcopops is something that will be supported by us ...

Come 1 May, not even a week after:

What we've learned—

said the Leader of the Opposition—

is that they spin a few things out into the newspaper like the outrageous half a billion dollar tax binge ...

This guy, a former doctor, a former president of the AMA, thinks that binge drinking amongst our young is just a fantasy. It is out there with the other fantasies of inflation and all the other challenges facing the community.

On the baby bonus, they have three positions. The Leader of the Opposition said on 2 May:

Every mother loves her baby. Every baby is valued and Mr Rudd should value all babies equally.

The shadow Treasurer said on 3 May, the next day:

I don't believe there should be any means testing ...

Then on 7 May the shadow Treasurer said:

Look, there is no question that a millionaire does not need the baby bonus ...

He would know. The opposition has four positions on inflation, five positions on excise, six positions on pensions and on climate change, who would know? We simply do not know. It is impossible to define what their positions are because they are all over

the shop, whether it is putting up shadecloth in outer space or over the Great Barrier Reef, whether it is that it does not exist or it does exist, whether we should have ETS—yes or no—whether Kyoto is good or bad, whether we should have the Asia Pacific climate pact—remember that? They do not talk about that. Remember the new Kyoto; what happened to that? The global system is called Kyoto, now they support it, having ridiculed us for our consistent position year after year on tackling climate change.

In this House today it was pretty interesting because yesterday I got the first question about the issue of transport and climate change but today they tried to put together two answers over two days and a quote that was about Malcolm Turnbull to suggest that I was saying something that I was not. My position is very clear and has always been clear. For those opposite, who just do not get it, it is pretty clear: climate change requires a whole-of-government strategy. Transport must be a part of climate change strategy. It is very simple. Too hard for them to understand, but a consistent position that I have held since I entered this chamber in 1996 is that climate change requires a whole-of-government strategy. That is why they did not put a question to me today about those issues—they did not want to hear a response.

They talk about government inquiries. According to the 2005-06 annual reports of government departments, the Howard government had 501 reviews and task forces set up in one financial year. There was the review of the administrative arrangements for tourist shopping, the review of the random sample survey program, the review of the draft national standard for manual handling, the forms and letters task force—we await that with anticipation—the senior executive service 360 degree review and coaching feedback; there were reviews right across the board.

Meanwhile, if you look at the portfolios held along this frontbench, a frontbench of which I am proud to be a part, what you see in each and every area is an enormous achievement over just six months in turning around the ship of state, which essentially was stuck, crashed on the rocks and going nowhere. The opposition spent all of last year worrying about whether the member for Higgins should take over from the member for Bennelong. That was what obsessed them all of last year. All of this year there has been just one issue—whether the member for Bradfield will retain his tenuous hold on the leadership. That is why we see backflips, even on positions that they have said they support, such as on same-sex superannuation entitlements. Even issues such as these—which they say they support—they cannot support because they have always got to appeal to the right wing extremists who gave Brendan Nelson the leadership of the Liberal Party.

The SPEAKER—Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired.

Question put:

That the motion (**Dr Nelson's**) be agreed to.

The House divided. [3.42 pm]

(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes.....	50
Noes.....	<u>69</u>
Majority.....	<u>19</u>

AYES

Andrews, K.J.	Bailey, F.E.
Baldwin, R.C.	Billson, B.F.
Bishop, B.K.	Bishop, J.I.
Broadbent, R.	Ciobo, S.M.
Cobb, J.K.	Coulton, M.
Dutton, P.C.	Farmer, P.F.
Forrest, J.A.	Gash, J.
Georgiou, P.	Hartsuyker, L.
Hawke, A.	Hawker, D.P.M.
Hockey, J.B.	Hull, K.E. *
Hunt, G.A.	Irons, S.J.

Jensen, D.
Laming, A.
Lindsay, P.J.
Marino, N.B. *
May, M.A.
Moylan, J.E.
Pearce, C.J.
Randall, D.J.
Schultz, A.
Secker, P.D.
Somlyay, A.M.
Truss, W.E.
Turnbull, M.
Washer, M.J.

NOES

Adams, D.G.H.
Bevis, A.R.
Bird, S.
Bradbury, D.J.
Burke, A.S.
Byrne, A.M.
Champion, N.
Clare, J.D.
Combat, G.
Debus, B.
Elliot, J.
Ellis, K.
Ferguson, L.D.T.
Georganas, S.
Grierson, S.J.
Hale, D.F.
Hayes, C.P. *
Jackson, S.M.
Kerr, D.J.C.
Macklin, J.L.
McClelland, R.B.
Melham, D.
Neumann, S.K.
Parke, M.
Plibersek, T.
Raguse, B.B.
Ripoll, B.F.
Roxon, N.L.
Saffin, J.A.
Sidebottom, S.
Sullivan, J.
Symon, M.
Thomson, C.
Trevor, C.
Zappia, A.

Keenan, M.
Ley, S.P.
Macfarlane, I.E.
Markus, L.E.
Morrison, S.J.
Nelson, B.J.
Ramsey, R.
Robert, S.R.
Scott, B.C.
Slipper, P.N.
Southcott, A.J.
Tuckey, C.W.
Vale, D.S.
Wood, J.

Albanese, A.N.
Bidgood, J.
Bowen, C.
Burke, A.E.
Butler, M.C.
Campbell, J.
Cheeseman, D.L.
Collins, J.M.
D'Ath, Y.M.
Dreyfus, M.A.
Ellis, A.L.
Emerson, C.A.
Fitzgibbon, J.A.
George, J.
Griffin, A.P.
Hall, J.G. *
Irwin, J.
Kelly, M.J.
Livermore, K.F.
Marles, R.D.
McKew, M.
Murphy, J.
O'Connor, B.P.
Perrett, G.D.
Price, L.R.S.
Rea, K.M.
Rishworth, A.L.
Rudd, K.M.
Shorten, W.R.
Snowdon, W.E.
Swan, W.M.
Tanner, L.
Thomson, K.J.
Turnour, J.P.

PAIRS

Danby, M.	Vaile, M.A.J.
Ferguson, M.J.	Pyne, C.
Garrett, P.	Costello, P.H.
Gillard, J.E.	Downer, A.J.G.
Gray, G.	Stone, S.N.
King, C.F.	Neville, P.C.
McMullan, R.F.	Robb, A.
Owens, J.	Ruddock, P.M.
Smith, S.F.	Smith, A.D.H.
Vamvakinou, M.	Haase, B.W.

* denotes teller

Question negatived.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr BIDGOOD (3.48 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation. Why is consistent economic management important in the fight against high inflation and interest rates? Also, why is it crucial that the Senate not delay the passage of the government's budget measures?

Mr TANNER—I thank the member for Dawson for his question. Today is the last day of the budget session, and it is therefore appropriate to take stock of the budget and, indeed, the opposition's response to the budget. The budget had three central features: a \$22-billion surplus designed to put downward pressure on inflation and interest rates; over \$40 billion invested in three large funds for the investment in infrastructure that this country has lacked for so long and so desperately needs from its national government to increase our economic capacity; and a \$55-billion package of initiatives for working people, including at the heart of those initiatives very substantial tax cuts.

The opposition response to the budget has consisted of a number of things. First, a complete and utter refusal to engage in debate about the macroeconomic settings in Australia—a complete refusal to indicate what level of surplus they believe is appropriate to fight inflation and to put downward

pressure on interest rates and a complete refusal to engage in debate about investment in the nation's long-term future through investment in infrastructure and skills. The second element of their response has been to take as many positions as possible on issues in order to avoid the responsibility and the scrutiny of having a single position and in order to cover up the fact that they are engaged in a life and death internal struggle over the leadership of the Liberal Party—not just between the member for Wentworth and the Leader of the Opposition but also with the member for Higgins lurking in the background, hoping against hope that the world economy will collapse, that circumstances will change and that the entire Australian nation will come begging at his door asking him to fulfil the mantle that has always been his by birthright. So the Leader of the Opposition not only has to deal with the member for Wentworth snapping at him day in, day out; he also has the member for Higgins waiting, hoping, that the world economy will collapse. The third element of their response has been to block and delay budget initiatives to undermine the government's inflation-fighting settings and to undermine the government's long-term investment in infrastructure and skills.

In fact, the opposition has just blocked another budget savings measure in the Senate—the measure to end tax deductibility for donations to political parties. We might ask why they have done this. We might ask: who benefits from this? Are these donations being made predominantly by low-income people? Are they being made by working people, by battling working families? I do not think so. They are being made by high-income earners—by the kind of people that we all know the Liberal Party truly represents. That is who they are being made by.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order so that the minister can be heard in silence.

Mr TANNER—We need to see this action to block a significant savings measure in the budget in the context of another decision taken by the Liberal Party, the opposition, a couple of weeks ago to send off to a committee for over a year a measure to reduce the threshold for disclosure of political donations from the current \$10,000 figure. They are committed to achieving a situation where wealthy Australians can make big political donations in secret and get a free kick from the tax commissioner at the same time.

In conclusion, the random sniping at the budget measures that we have seen from the opposition is unworthy of a party that seeks to form government. If you parade yourself around, as the Leader of the Opposition does, as the alternative government—and that is a phrase that he likes to use—you have a responsibility to act like an alternative government. It is not a badge you put on yourself; it is a badge that you earn. You earn that by engaging with the debate on the big issues that are facing this country. That is when you are entitled to call yourself an alternative government. The Rudd government is addressing the big issues facing Australia: investing in infrastructure, building a high-speed broadband network, tackling the skills crisis, putting downward pressure on inflation and interest rates, tackling climate change, reintroducing fairness into the workplace and getting better living standards for working people in this country. I will leave it to the Australian people to decide who the serious players are in Australian politics. It is certainly not the opposition. I call on them to stop their blocking and obstructive tactics and to engage in the debate about the future of this nation.

Budget

Ms JULIE BISHOP (3.54 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to page 6 of his budget newsletter, where he talks about opening a new structure for Sandgate State School. The Treasurer says:

The area was built with the help of a \$150,000 Rudd Labor Government grant through the *Investing in Our Schools* program.

Can the Treasurer identify the funding allocated in the Rudd government budget for the Investing in Our Schools program?

Mr SWAN—The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has yet again indicated just how out of touch she is. She refuses to acknowledge there was a change of government on 24 November! She does not know the government changed. Is it any wonder that they are such a rabble in this House? We are proud of what we have done since we were elected to office, and one of the things we are particularly proud of is that we are out there putting forward our achievements on behalf of the Australian people. It does not matter how much she turns up her nose and sneers at ordinary people, the government are absolutely in touch with working families, and we are delivering for them.

Ms Julie Bishop—Mr Speaker, as the government axed the Investing in Our Schools program, I seek leave to table the newsletter.

Leave not granted.

Battle for Australia

Mr TREVOR (3.56 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. Will the minister please inform the House of what the government has done to meet its commitment to recognise the Battle for Australia?

Mr GRIFFIN—I thank the member for Flynn for his question. Today I am very pleased to announce that the government has

met yet another of its election commitments: an official national observance day of the Battle for Australia. Members on all sides would be aware of the push over a number of years for a better understanding of what occurred around Australia, and particularly to our north, during the Pacific war. I note that we are talking about a national mobilisation that involved the entire population of some seven million people. With respect to this initiative, the battles normally referred to are those that occurred on the Kokoda Track and around Papua New Guinea and Northern Australia—and members know of the terrible bombings; there were over 60 in Darwin and hundreds were killed—as well as the Battle of the Coral Sea and various others around Northern Australia. To recognise this officially was a commitment made some years ago by the Labor Party when it was in opposition, and it remained part of our policy at the last election. The official promulgation of this day, as authorised by the Governor-General, therefore meets a commitment that was an important part of our program.

I want to particularly acknowledge the work of the RSL and the Battle for Australia national committee, whom I had the pleasure of having a cup of tea with this morning as part of this announcement. They, and many World War II veterans, are very pleased to see this initiative coming to fruition. There will be a series of activities and commemorations occurring around the date—which will be the first Wednesday in September each year—to acknowledge the sacrifice, courage and national effort that we can all be proud of. I urge all members, and I am sure all members will know that we have taken this decision, to ensure that this day is properly commemorated and properly acknowledged and that there is a better understanding of what occurred to our forebears when they defended our country at a time of very great need.

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (4.00 pm)—On indulgence, on behalf of this side of the House I support the decision made by the government to recognise the Battle for Australia. The year 1942 was arguably the most important one in this country's history since European arrival. Whilst I know that not all members of the Australian community will support this, I want to make it clear that this is supported by this side of the House. I congratulate the government for making the decision.

Veterans

Mr SECKER (4.00 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. Minister, why is it that you signed a letter, dated 6 June 2008 and addressed to me as the member for Sturt, in which you advised me of a grant in my electorate to a veteran organisation based in Brisbane Water? Is the minister not aware that Brisbane Water is not in South Australia? It is, in fact, almost 2,000 kilometres away on the Central Coast of New South Wales, in the electorate of Robertson. Could it be that the minister was too afraid of the member for Robertson to advise her of a grant in her electorate?

The SPEAKER—The last part of the question is out of order.

Mr GRIFFIN—You would think the honourable member would know—although this seems to indicate that he does not—that, when we are dealing with large-scale programs in government, letters are electronically generated and the details are provided through the department in order to ensure that the details are provided to the groups. They are electronic signatures.

Mr Billson interjecting—

Mr GRIFFIN—In those circumstances, as the member for Dunkley would know, this is a standard process employed by the department. It has been employed on more than one occasion in the past—and is certainly

what occurred in his ministry—for grant programs of this nature.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The question has been asked and it is getting a response.

Mr GRIFFIN—This gives me an opportunity to say that this government is very proud of what it is doing to assist veterans in our community. This government fully supports providing assistance to communities and ex-service organisations through the grant programs provided by my department. Those departmental funds are provided on behalf of the government to very many important groups.

Mr Robert interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Fadden will, first of all, withdraw the comment that he made.

Mr Robert—I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER—Now he will leave the chamber under standing order 94(a) for one hour. He was warned earlier in the day.

The member for Fadden then left the chamber.

Mr Albanese—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder about action against advisers in the box handing new members, who perhaps do not know better, their notes—which is what occurred—and whether that is assistance for disorderly conduct.

The SPEAKER—I hope that there will be a review of the practices between the advisers in the box and those they are assisting. I think there should be some care in the way in which things occur.

Mr Albanese—The process that exists is that advisers—

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the House will resume his seat. The usual and

preferred process is that advisers should pass messages via the attendants.

Mr GRIFFIN—The question I have to ask the member is: is he serious about informing groups in his own area or is he just trying to score a cheap political point?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The question has been asked and it is getting a response.

Mr GRIFFIN—If he were serious about ensuring that these matters were handled correctly and sensitively then he might have raised this with me privately. He chose not to and he sought to make a grubby political point. This is not the first time for that side of the House, as we can tell from the interjection before provided by someone in the advisers' box. But, once again, these things sometimes happen.

The programs we are talking about here provide excellent support to the ex-service community. They are certainly welcomed on this side of the House. If they are not by that side of the House, they ought to make that clear. I am very proud to be the minister delivering a budget on behalf of this government at a record level, building on the commitments we made in opposition that were belatedly endorsed by the now opposition when they were the government.

Council of Australian Governments

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (4.05 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House the future reform agenda the government is pursuing through the Council of Australian Governments?

Mr RUDD—I thank the honourable member for his question. The government is committed to a program of long-term reform for the nation. Part of that reform program is what we do in partnership with the states and territories. Of course, the government in its

first six months in office has been focused on honouring its pre-election commitments. The government has been focusing on the delivery of a sound and responsible budget.

Prior to the election we said to the Australian people that we would bring forward a \$44 billion tax package for Australians. As a result of the election we have honoured that commitment. Prior to the election we said that we would increase the childcare tax rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent. Since the election we have honoured that commitment. Prior to the election we said we would introduce an education tax refund. Subsequent to the election, through the budget we have honoured that commitment. We said prior to the election that, when it comes to the future of the hospital system, we would assist by investing funds to deal with elective surgery waiting lists for the public hospital system of Australia. Subsequent to the election we have honoured that commitment by investing \$300 million to try to reduce those elective surgery waiting lists.

Prior to the election we said that we would embark upon an education revolution by investing in computers and schools and, since the election, we have provided the first tranche of grants to more than 800 schools across the nation. Prior to the election we said that we would begin work on a rollout of trades training centres for Australian secondary schools across the nation and, subsequent to the election, we are honouring that commitment. Prior to the election we said that we would invest in the capital needs of Australia's universities and, in our first budget, we have honoured that commitment by delivering a half billion dollar additional allocation to Australia's 30-plus universities.

Prior to the election we said that we would invest in the nation's infrastructure. Since the election we have established Infrastructure Australia. We have established the Building

Australia Fund and we have allocated \$20 billion to that fund. Prior to the election we said that we would invest in the nation's long-term education future and, since the budget and since the election, we have established an \$11 billion Education Investment Fund. We said prior to the election that we would not pass the buck on the future of the public hospitals system, that we would invest in their capital needs in the future. Since the election we have, through the budget, established a \$10 billion hospital investment fund for the future. Prior to the election we said that we would make it impossible for people like the member for Menzies to prosecute—

Mr Andrews—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question was about the COAG reform agenda. The Prime Minister has come nowhere near the question, which was a question from his own side.

The SPEAKER—I will listen carefully to the Prime Minister.

Mr RUDD—Each of these measures, at least in large part, deals with cooperation with the states and territories invariably through the COAG process, and I can understand why members opposite could not understand what cooperation meant, because their preferred default position in politics is always the blame game. Prior to the election—and I am glad the member for Menzies has taken an intervention—we committed to making it impossible to make AWAs in the future and, since the election, we have honoured that commitment. Prior to the election we said that we would introduce national employment standards and, since the election, we have honoured that commitment. Prior to the election we said that we would ratify—

Mr Andrews—Mr Speaker, I renew my point of order. The Prime Minister has not come to the question that he was asked.

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister will respond to the question.

Mr RUDD—Prior to the election we also, as a responsible party in government, said that we would not engage in conduct of the type that we saw from the member for Menzies during the election campaign in relation to certain groups within this country. Any civilised country would not do that.

Mr Andrews—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I take offence at the Prime Minister's remarks, and I ask for a withdrawal.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Prime Minister has withdrawn.

Dr Nelson—Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order. To clarify, if the mike was not on: the Prime Minister has the call and he has withdrawn.

Mr RUDD—The other thing we said prior to the election was that we would withdraw our combat forces from Iraq. We have honoured that commitment. Prior to the election we said in relation to the states and territories that a framework for responsible economic management—

Mr Andrews—Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Menzies will resume his seat. If he was listening to the response, he would have heard that it actually came to mentioning cooperation with the states and territories.

Mr RUDD—It seems to be difficult for those opposite to contemplate a list of positive achievements that deal with the future of the nation. A permanent psychology of negativity permeates those opposite. We said prior to the election that we were engaged—

Mr Broadbent—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The only point the member for Menzies is making I would also make, and that is—

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister will respond to the question.

Mr RUDD—In dealing with the future of the Federation, the cornerstone of that, of course, is the soundness of public finances.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! I preface before giving—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Wakefield is not assisting. I preface before giving the call to the member for Aston that there have been three words since the last intervention.

Mr Pearce—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. You have indicated that you wish to have points of order raised at the time.

The SPEAKER—What is the point of order?

Mr Pearce—When the Prime Minister withdrew the remarks against the member for Menzies, his microphone was off. You subsequently clarified it but that, of course, will not be in *Hansard*. Could I ask you to ask the Prime Minister to say it.

The SPEAKER—Order! Sometimes that very valued standing order of common sense does not really get much application. Whatever the record shows, as far as the chair is concerned, the Prime Minister withdrew.

Mr RUDD—The fundamentals for the future of the Federation consist in the sound management of the national finances of Australia. Prior to the election we committed to govern on the question of public finance as economic and fiscal conservatives. Since the election, to the chagrin of those opposite, we have honoured that commitment with a \$22

billion surplus in contrast to a proposed \$22 billion raid on that surplus by those opposite. We are implementing our pre-election commitments. We have brought down a responsible budget, and we are engaged in a big policy agenda for the future.

Mr Schultz interjecting—

Dr Jensen interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Hume and the member for Tangney will leave the chamber for one hour under standing order 94(a). I indicate to the member for Tangney that that is a very generous, low-level punishment.

The member for Hume and the member for Tangney then left the chamber.

Mr RUDD—In building on these foundations of a sound budget, a responsible budget, and looking to the future reform agenda for the period ahead: firstly, there is the tax reform agenda, through the Henry commission; secondly, there are the emissions trading reforms, which we have been debating in part in this chamber during the course of this day and which are of great consequence to the country's future economic direction; and, thirdly, there is the bold program of microeconomic reform that will be advanced through the Council of Australian Governments. COAG is designed to be a workforce for the nation and should be used as such. That is why, when this government came in, we planned ahead and commissioned five meetings of the Council of Australian Governments, starting from the end of last year. Working groups on health and ageing, the productivity agenda, climate change and water, infrastructure, business regulation and competition, housing and Indigenous reform—

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I draw your attention to the practice where previous Speakers have ruled that, where an answer is overly long

and strays continually, the Speaker will wind up the speaker. I ask you to follow the ruling.

The SPEAKER—I take note of the member for Mackellar's point of order. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr RUDD—That is why when we met as COAG we agreed to establish those seven working groups—positive programs of long-term economic and social reform of a type which those opposite could not spell, let alone execute. And building on that, as of the March 2008 COAG, the Commonwealth provided a meaty allocation of \$1 billion to relieve pressure on public hospitals, reversing the national trend of Commonwealth cut-backs to public hospitals—something which those opposite would prefer not to hear about. Secondly, despite the fact that they made great fanfare last year about the establishment of a Murray-Darling reform commission and a single entity for the governance of the basin, it took this government at the March 2008 COAG to establish that single entity. On top of that, COAG agreed on a national registration and accreditation system for health professionals as a major step in health workforce reform. Furthermore, on the business deregulation front, 27 areas of work were commissioned. And furthermore again, COAG agreed to the distribution of \$150 million to build homes for homeless people.

This is a solid policy program of reform. It is about the nation's future. It is about governments working with each other rather than just blaming each other. It is about where Australia wants to be in three years time, in five years time and in 10 years time. It responds to a deep mood in the country where people are fed up to the back teeth of governments simply blaming each other for everything that goes wrong. Instead, they have an expectation that people will behave maturely and responsibly in cooperation to

provide answers, not excuses, to the long-term, intractable problems which our nation faces.

As we approach the 3 July meeting of COAG, again this program of reform faces the nation and we will be embracing it once again across the policy agenda. We will be dealing with early childhood education but also with the future of the skills agenda and the deregulation agenda. Those opposite prefer instead the politics of smear and fear. I recall those opposite saying that they were united by one thing—hatred, hatred of the Labor Party. What unites this side of politics is a positive vision for the nation's future. We are committed to it and we will implement it. Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Question Time

Mr PEARCE (4.18 pm)—Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that today in question time, and indeed for most of this week, almost without exception when the Prime Minister has been at the dispatch box he has leant on the dispatch box and turned his back on you. Mr Speaker, my question is: do you consider that to be parliamentary and are you happy with the Prime Minister having his back to you most of the time?

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister refers his remarks through the chair, and that is the main thing that I look for.

COMMITTEES

Reports: Government Responses

The SPEAKER—For the information of honourable members, I present a schedule of outstanding government responses to reports of House of Representatives and joint committees, incorporating reports tabled and details of government responses made in the period between 21 June 2007, the date of the last schedule, and 26 June 2008. Copies of

the schedule are being made available to honourable members and it will be incorporated in *Hansard*.

The schedule read as follows—

THE SPEAKER'S SCHEDULE OF OUTSTANDING GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

(also incorporating reports tabled and details of Government responses made in the period between 21 June 2007, the date of the last schedule, and 26 June 2008)

26 June 2008

THE SPEAKER'S SCHEDULE OF OUTSTANDING GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO COMMITTEE REPORTS

The attached schedule lists committee reports tabled and government responses to House and joint committee reports made since the last schedule was presented on 21 June 2007. It also lists reports for which the House has received no government response. A schedule of outstanding responses will continue to be presented at approximately six monthly intervals, generally in the last sitting weeks of the winter and spring sittings.

The schedule does not include advisory reports on bills introduced into the House of Representatives unless the reports make recommendations which

are wider than the provisions of the bills and which could be the subject of a government response. The Government's response to these reports is apparent in the resumption of consideration of the relevant legislation by the House. Also not included are reports from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, the House of Representatives Committee of Members' Interests, the Committee of Privileges, the Publications Committee (other than reports on inquiries) and the Selection Committee. Government responses to reports of the Public Works Committee are normally reflected in motions for the approval of works after the relevant report has been presented and considered. Reports from other committees which do not include recommendations are only included when first tabled.

Reports of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit primarily make administrative recommendations but may make policy recommendations. A government response is required in respect of such policy recommendations made by the committee. However, responses to administrative recommendations are made in the form of an Executive Minute provided to, and subsequently tabled by, the committee. Agencies responding to administrative recommendations are required to provide an Executive Minute within 6 months of tabling a report. The committee monitors the provision of such responses. Reports which do not contain policy recommendations are only included when first tabled.

26 June 2008

Description of Report	Date Tabled or Published ¹	Date of Government Response ²	Responded in Period Specified ³
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (House, Standing)			
Unlocking the future: The report of the Inquiry into the Reeves Review of the <i>Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976</i>	30-08-99	No response to date ⁴	No
Indigenous Australia at work: Successful initiative in Indigenous employment	13-08-07	No response to date	No
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (House, Standing)			
Inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities – Interim Report	05-05-04	No response to date	No

Description of Report	Date Tabled or Published ¹	Date of Government Response ²	Responded in Period Specified ³
Getting water right(s) – The future of rural Australia	21-06-04	No response to date	No
Taking control: a national approach to pest animals	28-11-05	No response to date	No
Skills: Rural Australia's need	26-02-07	No response to date	No
ASIO, ASIS & DSD (Joint, Statutory)			
Review of the listing of four terrorist organisations	05-09-05	16-08-07	
Review of the listing of six terrorist organisations	07-03-05	16-08-07	
Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (Joint, Statutory)			
Examination of the annual report of the Integrity Commissioner 2006-07	23-06-08	Time has not expired	
Australian Crime Commission (Joint, Statutory)			
Supplementary report to the Inquiry into the trafficking of women for sexual servitude	11-08-05	13-09-07	No
Review of the Australian Crime Commission Act 2002	10-11-05	No response to date	No
Examination of the Australian Crime Commission Annual Report 2004-2005	19-10-06	No response to date	No
Inquiry into the manufacture, importation and use of amphetamines and other synthetic drugs (AOSD)	28-02-07	No response to date	No
Examination of the Australian Crime Commission Annual Report 2005-06	18-06-07	No response required	
Inquiry into the future impact of serious and organised crime on Australian Society	19-09-07	No response to date	No
Examination of the Australian Crime Commission Annual Report 2006-07	23-06-08	Time has not expired	No
Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (House, Standing)			
From reel to unreal: future opportunities for Australia's film, animation, special effects and electronic games industries	21-06-04	No response to date	No
Digital Television: Who's Buying It?	13-02-06	No response to date	No
Community Television: Options for digital broadcasting	12-02-07	No response to date	No
Report: Tuning in to community broadcasting	20-06-07	No response to date	No
Corporations and Securities (Joint, Statutory)			
Report on aspects of the regulation of proprietary companies	08-03-01	No response to date	No
Corporations and Financial Services (Joint, Statutory)			
Report on the regulations and ASIC policy statements made under the <i>Financial Services Reform Act 2001</i>	23-10-02	No response to date	No
Inquiry into the review of the <i>Managed Investments Act 1998</i>	12-12-02	No response to date	No

Description of Report	Date Tabled or Published ¹	Date of Government Response ²	Responded in Period Specified ³
Inquiry into Regulation 7.1.29 in Corporations Amendment Regulations 2003 (No.3), Statutory Rules 2003 No.85	26-06-03	No response to date	No
Money matters in the bush-Inquiry into the level of banking & financial services in rural, regional & remote areas of Australia	15-01-04	No response to date	No
Report on the ATM fee structure	15-01-04	No response to date	No
Corporations amendment regulations 2003	24-03-04	No response to date	No
Corporations Amendment Regulations 7.1.29A, 7.1.35A and 7.1.40(h)	02-06-04	No response to date	No
Property investment advice – Safe as houses?	23-06-05	No response to date	No
Timeshare: The price of leisure	05-09-05	13-09-07	No
Statutory oversight of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, December 2005	13-02-06	No response to date	No
Corporate responsibility: Managing risk and creating value	21-06-06	No response to date	No
Statutory oversight of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, August 2006	16-08-06	No response to date	No
Corporations Amendment (Takeovers) Bill 2006 [Exposure Draft]	23-02-07	No response to date	No
Statutory oversight of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, March 2007	01-03-07	No response to date	No
Corporations Amendment (Insolvency) Bill 2007 [Exposure Draft]; Corporations and Australian Securities and Investments Commission Amendment Regulations 2007 [Exposure Draft]	29-03-07	No response to date	No
Structure and operation of the superannuation industry	07-08-07	No response to date	No
Statutory oversight of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, August 2007	09-08-07	No response to date	No
Better shareholders – Better company: Shareholder engagement and participation in Australia	23-06-08	Time has not expired	
Economics, Finance and Public Administration (House, Standing)			
Review of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission annual report 2003	21-06-04	No response to date	No
Improving the superannuation savings of people under 40	19-06-06	No response to date	No
Review of the Reserve Bank of Australia & Payments System Board Annual Report 2005 (First report)	14-08-06	No response to date	No
Servicing our future – Inquiry into the current and future directions of Australia's services export sector	18-06-07 13-08-07 17-09-07	No response to date No response to date No response required	No No
Australia manufacturing: Today and tomorrow			
Review of the Reserve Bank Annual Report 2006 (second report)			

Description of Report	Date Tabled or Published¹	Date of Government Response²	Responded in Period Specified³
Inquiry into home loan lending practices and processes used to deal with people in financial difficulty	17-09-07 19-09-07	No response to date No response required	No
Report of the 2007 New Zealand Parliamentary Committee Exchange			
Economics (House, Standing)			
Review of the Reserve Bank Annual Report 2007 (First report)	02-06-08	No response required	
Education and Vocational Training (House, Standing)			
Top of the class: Report of the inquiry into teacher education	26-02-07	No response to date	No
Electoral Matters (Joint, Standing)			
Funding and Disclosure: Inquiry into disclosure of donations to political parties and candidates	30-03-06	09-08-07	No
Civics and electoral education	30-03-06	No response to date	No
Review of certain aspects of the administration of the Australian Electoral Commission	17-09-07	No response to date	No
Employment and Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation (House, Standing)			
Making it work: Inquiry into independent contracting and labour hire arrangements	17-08-05	No response to date	No
Current vacancies: Workforce challenges facing the Australian tourism sector	18-06-07	No response to date	No
Environment and Heritage (House, Standing)			
Sustainable cities	12-09-05	No response to date	No
Inquiry into a Sustainability Charter, Review of Green Office Procurement Audit (Interim Report)	04-09-06 17-09-07 19-09-07	No response to date No response to date No response to date	No No No
Sustainability for survival – Creating a climate for change: Report on the inquiry into a sustainability charter			
Managing the flow – Regulating plumbing product quality			
Family and Human Services (House, Standing)			
Balancing work and family	07-12-06	No response to date	No
The winnable war on drugs: The impact of illicit drug use on families	13-09-07	No response to date	No
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (Joint, Standing)			
Review of the Defence Annual Report 2004-2005	16-10-06	21-06-07	No
Review of Australia's relationship with Malaysia	26-03-07	13-09-07	No
Inquiry into Australia's Defence Force regional air superiority	12-09-07	No response to date	No
Australia's trade with Mexico and the region	12-09-07	No response to date	No
Australia's aid program in the Pacific	20-09-07	No response to date	No
Review of the Defence Annual Report 2005-2006	02-06-08	Time has not expired	

Description of Report	Date Tabled or Published ¹	Date of Government Response ²	Responded in Period Specified ³
Health and Ageing (House, Standing)			
The Blame Game: Report on the inquiry into health funding	04-12-06	No response to date	No
The best start: Report on the inquiry into the health benefits of breastfeeding	09-08-07	No response to date	No
Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 19 (2006 – 2007): Administration of State and Territory compliance with the Australian Health Care Agreements	15-08-07	No response to date	No
Industry and Resources (House, Standing)			
Renewable power: A case study into selected renewable energy sectors in Australia for the inquiry into developing Australia's non-fossil fuel energy industry – Background information – Interim report	21-09-07	No response to date	No
Intelligence and Security (Joint, Statutory)			
Review of administration and expenditure: Australian Intelligence Organisations Number 4 - Recruitment and Training	14-08-06	10-09-07	No
Review of the relisting of Al-Qa'ida and Jemaah Islamiyah as terrorist organisations	16-10-06	16-08-07	No
Review of security and counter terrorism legislation	04-12-06	No response to date	No
Review of the re-listing of the ASG, JuA, GIA and GSPC	26-02-07	16-08-07	
Review of the re-listing of Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (TQJBR) as a terrorist organisation under the <i>Criminal Code Act 1995</i>	09-05-07	No response required	
Review of the re-listing of Ansar al-Sunna, JeM, LeJ, EIJ, IAA, AAA and IMU as terrorist organisations	12-06-07	13-09-07	Yes
Review of administration and expenditure No. 5, Australian Intelligence Organisations	13-08-07	No response required	
Annual report of committee activities, 2006-2007	13-08-07	No response required	
Review of the re-listing of Hizballah's External Security Organisation	15-08-07	No response required	
Inquiry into the proscription of terrorist organisations under the Australian Criminal Code	20-09-07	No response to date	No
Review of the re-listing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Lashkar-e-Tavibba (LeT) and the Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Oassam Brigades as terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code Act 1995	27-09-07	No response required	
Review of the re-listing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	25-06-08	Time has not expired	

Description of Report	Date Tabled or Published ¹	Date of Government Response ²	Responded in Period Specified ³
Legal and Constitutional Affairs (House, Standing)			
The third paragraph of section 53 of the Constitution	30-11-95	No response to date	No
Harmonisation of Legal Systems within Australia and between Australia and New Zealand	04-12-06	No response to date	No
The long road to statehood: Report of the inquiry into the federal implications of statehood for the Northern Territory	28-05-07	No response to date	No
Inquiry into older people and the law	20-09-07	No response to date	No
Reforming the Constitution: A roundtable discussion	23-06-08	Time has not expired	
Migration (Joint, Standing)			
Negotiating the maze: Review of arrangements for overseas skills recognition, upgrading and license	11-09-06	No response to date	No
Temporary business visas...permanent benefits: Ensuring the effectiveness and integrity of the temporary business visa program	12-09-08	No response to date	No
National Capital and External Territories (Joint, Standing)			
Norfolk Island electoral matters	26-08-02	13-09-07(draft)	No
Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?: Inquiry into governance on Norfolk Island	03-12-03	13-09-07 ⁵ (revised)	No
Norfolk Island financial sustainability: The Challenge – Sink or Swim	01-12-05	13-09-07	No
Review of the Griffin Legacy Amendments	26-03-07	16-08-07	No
Primary Industries and Resources (House, Standing)			
More than honey: The future of the Australian honey bee and pollination industries	16-06-08	Time has not expired	
Procedure (House, Standing)			
House Estimates: consideration of the annual estimates by the House of Representatives	13-10-03	16-08-07	No
Media coverage of House proceedings including the Chamber, Main committee and committees (Final report)	10-10-05	No response to date ⁶	No
Encouraging an interactive Chamber	07-12-06	No response to date	No
Motion to suspend standing orders and condemn a Member: Report on events of 10 October 2006	07-12-06	No response to date	No
Options for nursing mothers	21-06-07	12-02-08 ⁷	
Making a difference: Petitioning the House of Representatives	17-09-07	12-02-08 ⁸	
Public Accounts and Audit (Joint, Statutory)			
Developments in aviation security since the committee's June 2004 <i>Report 400: Review of aviation security in Australia – An interim report</i> (Report 406)	07-12-05	No response to date	No

Description of Report	Date Tabled or Published ¹	Date of Government Response ²	Responded in Period Specified ³
Developments in Aviation Security since the Committee's June 2004 Report 400: Review of Aviation Security in Australia (Report 409)	04-12-06	No response to date	No
Report on the draft budget estimates for the Australian National Audit Office for 2008-09	13-05-08	No response required	
Publications (Joint, Standing)			
Printing standards for documents presented to Parliament	20-09-07	No response to date	No
Science and Innovation (House, Standing)			
Pathways to technological innovation	19-06-06	18-09-07	No
Between a rock and a hard place: The science of geosequestration	13-08-07	No response to date	No
Transport and Regional Services (Joint, Standing)			
The great freight task: Is Australia's transport network up to the challenge?	13-08-07	No response to date	No
Treaties (Joint, Standing)			
The Australia – United States Free Trade Agreement (61st Report)	23-06-04	No response to date ⁹	No
Treaties tabled on 7 December (4), 15 March and 11 May 2005 (66 th Report)	17-08-05	30-11-05 (preliminary) 2-08-07(full)	Yes No
Treaties tabled on 8 August 2006 (2) (81 st Report)	06-12-06	13-09-07	No
Treaty tabled on 6 December 2006 (84 th Report)	20-06-07	13-09-07	Yes
Treaties tabled on 6, 7 and 27 February 2007 (85 th Report)	21-06-07	No response required	
Treaties tabled on 27 March and 9 May 2007 (86 th Report)	16-08-07	No response required	
Treaties tabled on 13 June 2007 (87 th Report)	16-08-07	No response required	
Treaty tabled on 7 August 2007 (88 th Report)	16-08-07	No response required	
Treaties tabled on 7 August 2007 (89 th Report)	20-09-07	No response required	
Treaties tabled on 12 March 2008 (90 th Report)	15-05-08	No response required	
Treaty tabled on 4 June 2008 (92nd Report)	19-06-08	Time has not expired	

Notes

1. The date of tabling is the date the report was presented to the House of Representatives. In the case of joint committees, the date shown is the date of first presentation to either the House or the Senate. Reports published when the House (or Houses) are not sitting are tabled at a later date.
2. If the source for the date is not the *Votes and Proceedings* of the House of Representatives or the *Journals of the Senate*, the source is shown in an endnote.
3. The time specified is three months from the date of tabling.
4. Amendments to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* reflecting the government's reforms were introduced to Parliament on 31 May 2006 and passed 17 August 2006. The

Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment Act 2006 received Royal Assent on 5 September 2006. The government in 2006 indicated that no further response was required. No formal response has been provided to the committee.

5. Original response presented 01-11-05.
6. A response from the Speaker was received on 14-02-07.
7. On this date the House passed a resolution making special arrangements for nursing mothers to have a proxy vote.
8. The House agreed to amendments to standing orders on 12 February 2008 to establish a Petitions Committee and made most of the changes recommended by the committee to the petitioning process.
9. Legislation to give effect to the Free Trade Agreement has now been passed. The government in 2006 stated that no further response was required. The committee awaits a response to recommendations of the Free Trade Agreement report.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (4.19 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence, I wish to speak in response on the schedule of outstanding government responses to House of Representatives and joint committee reports.

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the House may proceed.

Mr ALBANESE—I thank you for the tabling of that schedule. I note that when this schedule was last published, on 21 June 2007, 29 reports had been awaiting response for between one and five years and four had been awaiting response for five years or more, including one from 1995. I know there has been a meeting of the chairs and deputy chairs of the committees of the House of Representatives and the joint committees, and the Deputy Speaker has conveyed to me views from across the chamber with regard to these reports. I can confirm to the House that at the end of this year I will circulate a response from the government to the document being tabled today, and then there is to be consideration given to a much better performance when it comes to responding to these reports.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

Report No. 45 of 2007-08

The SPEAKER (4.21 pm)—I present the Auditor-General's Audit report No. 45 of 2007-08 entitled *Specific purpose payments: general recurrent grants for government schools: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

DOCUMENTS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (4.21 pm)—Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (4.21 pm)—I move:

That leave of absence be given to every member of the House of Representatives from the determination of this sitting of the House to the date of its next sitting.

Question agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**Equine Influenza Inquiry**

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (4.22 pm)—by leave—On Thursday, 12 June 2008, I tabled the report of the equine influenza inquiry, conducted by the Hon. Ian Callinan AC, and released a detailed government response. Today I am providing the House with further details about the report, the government's response and its implementation. The commissioner was appointed by the previous government in September last year to investigate the outbreak of equine influenza. He was asked to report on the circumstances contributing to the outbreak of the disease and the need for any strengthened biosecurity procedures for the quarantine management of imported horses. I thank Commissioner Callinan for his report and for the extensive work in undertaking this inquiry and reporting to me earlier than the due date. The inquiry was completed over seven months with 44 days of hearings, 260 witnesses, 80,000 documents and 41 formal submissions. In response, Commissioner Callinan submitted a comprehensive report of over 345 pages and made 38 recommendations. The government has agreed to every single one of these recommendations. The report contains substantial criticisms of the quarantine and biosecurity systems operating in relation to horse imports prior to the outbreak of equine influenza in August 2007. In his report, Commissioner Callinan said:

What I describe bespeaks an organisation that lacked clear lines of communication between those responsible for formulating procedures and work instructions and those responsible for implementing them.

The report also refers to 'systemic failures', 'inadequacies and breakdowns' and being 'understaffed'. In examining these failures, the commissioner says that 'inertia, inefficiency, lack of diligence, incompetence and

distraction by unproductive bureaucratic processes all played a part'.

This report is a scathing assessment of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements for horse imports prior to August 2007. These matters must be addressed as a matter of urgency—and they will be addressed. We must drive cultural change in our quarantine and biosecurity systems so that Australians can have confidence in them. My priority is to address each of the failures identified in the report and to restore public confidence in our quarantine and biosecurity systems.

While Commissioner Callinan was unable to make a precise finding as to how equine influenza escaped into the general horse population, he concluded that the virus 'probably' came into Australia on 8 August 2007 via horses from Japan. He has further found that the most likely explanation for the virus's escape from infected horses at Eastern Creek is that it did so by means of a contaminated person or equipment leaving the quarantine station. He has also indicated that the contaminated person or equipment is most likely to have been associated with the care of the horses while in quarantine. The commissioner accepted that private vets, grooms, farriers and their employers must take some responsibility for the failure in quarantine. The commissioner says:

Their failure to decontaminate themselves and their equipment contributed to the probable means of the virus's escape from Eastern Creek.

In opposition, Labor expressed grave concerns about Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements; these concerns were well founded. In response to these findings, the commissioner has made detailed recommendations in relation to biosecurity measures at Eastern Creek and a number of other inadequacies in import conditions, pre-export quarantine and post-arrival quarantine.

As a priority, those recommendations that can be implemented immediately are being implemented immediately. For example, a senior officer of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has been designated as responsible for the importation of horses into Australia. An inspector-general of horse importation will be appointed following legislation establishing the position. In the meantime, an interim inspector will be appointed.

The government will also initiate improvements to a number of operational procedures for the clearance and quarantine of horses. It has been estimated that implementing the recommendations that require immediate attention will cost \$1.3 million. To ensure early action, this funding will be provided by the government.

We are also committed to implementing those recommendations which call for further investigative work, including a review of current interim biosecurity policies for horses, followed by a formal import risk analysis. There will also be a reassessment of current import conditions for horses as applied by AQIS and a review of pre-export, airport and quarantine station facilities. In implementing all of these recommendations, the government is consulting with a range of industry sectors, including the racing, breeding and recreational sectors.

To ensure that the government's response is implemented in full and without delay, the government has appointed Professor Peter Shergold AC, former Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, to independently audit the implementation of the government's response. He will provide regular external assessments to me over the next two years.

Another important part of our response to the inquiry is already well underway. On 19 February this year, I announced a compre-

hensive, independent review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity systems, which is being led by Mr Roger Beale AO. I have asked Mr Beale to have regard to the issues raised by the Callinan inquiry as part of his broader review, but action on Commissioner Callinan's recommendations specific to horse imports will not be delayed.

The commissioner made no findings on legal liability; I expect that any such matters will be tested in the courts. There have been a number of reports regarding Mr Stephen Hunter and his decision to stand aside from his current role. I want to make clear to the parliament that this was his decision alone. It is worth noting, as Commissioner Callinan does, that he was appointed as Deputy Secretary and Executive Director of AQIS on 10 April 2007, only a few months prior to the outbreak of EI in August 2007. The secretary of my department, Dr Conall O'Connell, accepted his offer to stand aside. I thank Mr Hunter for this difficult decision to help drive cultural change.

Following my request, the Australian Public Service Commissioner has provided a report to the Special Minister of State, Senator John Faulkner, who forwarded it to me in a letter dated 22 June 2008. Ms Lynelle Briggs has provided me with recommendations with respect to the conduct of certain people named in the report, as well as some people who were not named but who held certain positions at relevant times. On 24 June 2008, I forwarded this report to the secretary of my department for his immediate attention. A new animal quarantine branch has been established, led by a senior executive now primarily responsible and accountable for the importation of horses into Australia.

This is also an opportunity to thank the thousands of hard-working, dedicated and valued public servants involved in quarantine

and biosecurity right around this nation and the world. From our airports and our seaports to our many islands and remote locations—and the many public servants who work here in Canberra at my department's headquarters—they perform an important function for all of us. Indeed, wherever there is an interface between Australia and the world, our quarantine and biosecurity officers are there.

These changes outlined today send a clear signal that the reform process has begun, and it will continue. I recognise that the outbreak of equine influenza has had serious economic and social effects. Commissioner Callinan's report has exposed a critical need to restore public confidence in Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements. The Rudd government is committed to the task of restoring that public confidence and driving cultural change in Australia's quarantine and biosecurity systems. There is much more to do, but I am pleased to report that this work has indeed begun.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—Order! It being 4.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Equine Influenza

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (4.30 pm)—Unfortunately there was not enough time for me to respond to the minister's statement, so I apologise to those members who had hoped to contribute to the adjournment debate whose time is being denied. But it is important that the opposition have an opportunity to respond to ministerial statements, and I thank the minister for the update that he has provided to the House on the response to the Callinan inquiry. I have read most of the Callinan inquiry report and found it a very interesting document to read. Justice Callinan certainly went about his task very thoroughly. It is a forensic examination.

He has gone through the endless possibilities and assessed them one by one. In the end, he could only come to a conclusion about what probably happened. I think that conclusion is not unreasonable.

Australia prizes its disease-free status. Protection of our industries and environment from pests and diseases is a very important priority, but it is a difficult and challenging area. We want to facilitate the free trade of products into and out of Australia—and indeed the movement of people through our airports and seaports—but we also want to ensure that we do that in a way that guarantees that no pests and diseases unwanted in this country come through the net. There are conflicts all along. Airport managers complain about the delays at airports; people complain about delays at seaports, because containers and the like are subject to inspection; and those in this country wanting products urgently can be disadvantaged if those delays are too long. The government comes under almost as much pressure from people wanting the process to be truncated as it does from those who want it to be extended to ensure protection from pests and diseases.

I think the government's response to the report has been a reasonable one. It is clear that there were breakdowns in the quarantine arrangements, particularly surrounding Eastern Creek. The minister commented in his speech that Labor had expressed grave concern about Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements. So too did the previous opposition in its time. I have no doubt that the new opposition will have occasion to be critical in the future, because the issues are difficult. But I cannot find any record of anybody ever having complained about Eastern Creek. There was a general perception that it was a reasonably good facility. It had been handed over to the Commonwealth by New South Wales and, while there would occasionally be issues, the only references I

can recall to Eastern Creek were of people complaining that it was taking too long to get animals through the process. I can recall on a number of occasions being lobbied by industry organisations, including the horse industry, to find ways to reduce the amount of time that animals should be kept in quarantine.

So whilst Eastern Creek has been out of the news, I suspect that it has not had the scrutiny that it should have had. If there is a message it is this: even if the public have a perception that a facility is going well, and there have been no incidents and no reports of problems, that does not mean that we should not review it from time to time and go and have a look at it. When I was the minister, I never visited Eastern Creek. It was not that high on the priority list. No problems there had ever really been brought to my attention. There were some issues raised with me in correspondence about quarantine arrangements in Melbourne, but this problem did not occur in Melbourne. The Melbourne issue was about whether private vets, rather than AQIS vets, should be used to take initial blood samples. That was clearly not a factor that led to this particular incident. So it is clear that, because there had been little adverse publicity about Eastern Creek, there had not been the attention that there should have been at a departmental level towards the management of this facility.

I compliment Justice Callinan on the work that he did in this report. I think he was a good choice to do the job because he knows a bit about horses and he certainly knows a bit about the law. It is clear from his report that he is also very forensic in the things that he does. It is appropriate that the government should respond, and the message to us all is that we should always be alert to the risks that are associated with entry of animals and products into this country. We should seek always to improve the system and, even

when things seem to be going well, be aware that we need to thoroughly examine the processes and the procedures from time to time. We should ensure that we not only have written procedures that meet the criteria but also that they are being followed on the ground. It seems that that was where the breakdown was at Eastern Creek. (*Time expired*)

Gilad Shalit

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs) (4.35 pm)—A year ago, I spoke from the steps of the Melbourne GPO to a rally of 300 people. The rally was called to mark the first anniversary of the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier, and to give public voice to calls for his release as well as the release of two other Israeli soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, who are still being held by Hezbollah after being kidnapped on 12 July 2006 from near the Lebanese border. I am deeply saddened that today, one year later, I am speaking again on this anniversary. Yesterday marked two years since Gilad Shalit was kidnapped near Gaza as part of an attack on Israel for which Hamas's military wing, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, claimed responsibility. The raid also resulted in the deaths of two of Gilad Shalit's fellow defence force members. Since that time, Gilad Shalit has been held by Izz al-Din al-Qassam, the military wing of Hamas, with no contact with the outside world.

These kidnappings are an impediment to lasting peace in the region. They are a crime against the laws of war and they are a personal tragedy for these young men and their families. The kidnapping of Gilad Shalit has done nothing to further the prospects of peace in the Middle East. It has provided another roadblock on the path to peace. It has increased the level of violence and deepened the suffering of Israelis and Palestinians. It has not advanced the cause of the Palestinian

people, once again, who were let down by the actions of those claiming their leadership. We should make no mistake about what these actions say about the enemies that seek to destroy Israel.

The kidnapping of Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev were war crimes. They were against the laws of war and outside the Geneva conventions. They were against any accepted standard of human rights. Their continued detention is similarly illegal. The kidnapping of Gilad Shalit was conducted, as I said, by the military wing of Hamas. Hamas has played a central role in refusing to release a hostage who is being held for political purposes. Hamas has brazenly used Gilad Shalit's captivity to try to secure a swap with hundreds of terrorists currently imprisoned in Israel.

The taking of these three Israeli soldiers is just as much a crime as was the taking of BBC journalist Alan Johnson, whose safe release we should be thankful for. It is the same crime. There is no valid distinction in the three Israelis being serving soldiers and Alan Johnson a journalist. If any comparison is to be made, the kidnapping of the three soldiers is worse because the terrorists crossed borders to commit their crimes. There were worldwide protests from several countries in response to the BBC journalist's kidnapping. I would hope to hear those same countries protesting just as loudly about the continued detention of the three Israelis. The international community must, in no uncertain terms, continue to condemn Hamas for its role in the abduction and holding of Corporal Shalit. The whole international community should call on Hamas to renounce violence, to recognise Israel and to respect commitments made by the Palestinian leadership to progress the peace process.

At a human level, the ordeal that Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev

have faced is unimaginable. The pain that their families have experienced, the agony on a daily basis, is something that no parent and no family should ever have to experience. Since the kidnapping, the family of Gilad Shalit has received only a recorded message in June 2007, a letter in February 2008 and a letter that was faxed to former President Jimmy Carter, which was subsequently passed on to Gilad Shalit's family.

We should welcome Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's meeting with Egyptian President Mubarak on 24 June where they discussed efforts to negotiate the release of Corporal Shalit. The international community must do all it can to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. We should utterly condemn the taking of hostages for political purposes.

Rudd Government

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (4.40 pm)—I rise this evening to talk about the way in which the Rudd Labor government's policies are having a profound and negative impact on small businesses and the tourism sector on the Gold Coast. We have heard time and time again, and as recently as today, the Prime Minister engage in some kind of Orwellian doublespeak. We have heard the Minister for Finance and Deregulation and the Treasurer from this new Rudd Labor government engage in this Orwellian double-speak. And during question time Labor MPs have stood up speaker after speaker to lecture this side of the chamber about the importance of fiscal responsibility and careful economic management.

We have heard the Labor Party discuss—and highlight for this side of the chamber, apparently—that we need to ensure that the economy has a strong fiscal surplus and is in a strong economic position. Yet, the extraordinary thing about this is that it was only two

days ago that the Labor finance minister, when questioned about \$110 billion of state Labor debt, remarked that he was comfortable with it. He said he was comfortable with \$110 billion of state Labor debt and that it was not inflationary. Yet, the same Labor finance minister will stand up in question time and claim that, because the coalition is questioning the \$19 billion of new taxes imposed by the Rudd Labor government, that is in some way economic irresponsibility.

It is extraordinary that this level of crass hypocrisy extends so far as to also include comments that the Prime Minister makes. We heard today the Prime Minister castigate the opposition time and time again for not having a policy when it comes to the emissions-trading scheme, ETS. It is extraordinary because the Prime Minister stood at that very dispatch box and said that his government is going to wait six months before they reach a final conclusion.

This new Rudd Labor government, which went to the last election preaching to the Australian people that it was going to be strong on environmental change, provide new leadership and provide a pathway forward on climate change, stands up and says to the opposition—and we heard it on three separate occasions today—that the opposition should be condemned for not having a position on ETS. But they make no comment about the fact that the government does not have a position on ETS. The government said it is going to wait six months. The impact of these comments, and the fact that this government is engaged in this kind of Orwellian doublespeak, is negative. The reason it is negative is that the Australian people are awake to this lack of leadership by the Rudd Labor government.

The Australian people know that the government they have ended up with is a very different proposal to what they thought they

were going get. Prior to the last federal election, we heard Kevin Rudd travelling across the length and breadth of this country talking about how if he was elected he would ensure that petrol prices and grocery prices came down. It is the same benchmark that the Prime Minister raised against the former Prime Minister John Howard when he said that he would do his best to keep interest rate levels low.

We know that the coalition's track record on interest rates cannot be questioned because, although interest rates have risen slightly in the past under the coalition, they are nothing in comparison to the 19 per cent we saw under the Australian Labor Party. More fundamentally, the former coalition government were able to deliver a 33-year low on unemployment. Already in just seven months we have seen the new Rudd Labor government slowly undoing the good work of the coalition. It is spelt out in two key ways. Firstly, it is highlighted by virtue of the fact that this new Rudd Labor government is already budgeting for 134,000 Australians to lose their jobs this year. We saw only last month 20,000 Australians lose their jobs. Secondly, we have seen the complete collapse of consumer and small business confidence.

It is those two together which impact in such a negative and detrimental way on my constituents that have small businesses and that run tourism businesses, especially given the imposition of nearly \$1 billion of new tourism taxes by the Rudd Labor government. So, as we go into this winter break, I will absolutely make sure that all residents in my electorate understand that this new government is very big on talk but very weak on action. I will make sure they know this government stands for big spending, big taxes and, no doubt in due course, higher inflation and higher interest rates. That will be the legacy of this government, and I feel like I

am in safe territory to predict that already.
(*Time expired*)

International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (4.45 pm)—I note that today is the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. As former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan said in 1998:

This is a day on which we pay our respects to those who have endured the unimaginable. This is an occasion for the world to speak up against the unspeakable. It is long overdue that a day be dedicated to remembering and supporting the many victims and survivors of torture around the world.

As a democratic country, we do not tend to think of Australia as a place where torture is sanctioned or practised, but of course it is home to many people who have suffered torture. To that end I would like to recognise the work done by the Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors, or ASeTTs. This Perth based non-profit, non-government organisation provides free counselling to 2,000 refugees in Western Australia each year. It takes as its task 'the provision and promotion of comprehensive and holistic services to people who have endured torture and trauma resulting from unjust persecution and violent conflict'. It also undertakes important research into the needs of torture and trauma victims. Today is an opportunity to honour the work of organisations like ASeTTs, and I want to personally commend the 38 employees and 90 volunteers who work for ASeTTs, as well its patron, Janet Holmes a Court.

Today we might also reflect on those victims of torture yet to come to our shores—and people who may never get that chance: men, women and children who are forced to flee their own countries, people oppressed by their own governments. As members on both sides of the House have noted in recent

times, torture and murder have been frightening features of the state sponsored violence and intimidation that has taken place in Zimbabwe following the 29 March parliamentary and presidential elections. We have heard horrific accounts of how the bodies of MDC supporters have been found with their eyes gouged out, genitals mutilated, lips and tongues and in some cases breasts, arms and legs cut off. In this environment, it is not surprising that opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai has withdrawn from the presidential run-off election.

Torture has been a feature of the darker side of humanity from the earliest time to the present and throughout every part of the world. Thankfully society's revulsion against torture has also been an increasingly strong countervailing force. In international law terms, the prohibition on torture joins prohibitions against slavery and genocide as a jus cogens norm which applies to all nations, regardless of whether or not they have entered into a treaty prohibiting torture. Under article 53 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, a jus cogens norm is 'a norm accepted and recognised by the international community of states as a whole as a norm from which no derogation is permitted'. In other words, under international law there are no circumstances and there is no place in which torture is acceptable.

The prohibition on torture is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which will celebrate its 60th anniversary in December this year. It is also part of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the international Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Australia has of course ratified the ICCPR and the convention against torture.

Just last month, in May 2008, the UN Committee against Torture delivered its ob-

servations on Australia's implementation of the convention. The UN committee's report was extremely positive about several new initiatives of the Rudd Labor government, which include the apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the ending of the so-called Pacific solution and the new government's commitment to becoming a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, known as OPCAT. I note that it has long been the policy of the Australian Labor Party to become a party to OPCAT.

There were also aspects of the committee's observations that merit follow-up by the government. Among other things, the committee noted as its first main concern that the convention against torture has only been partially adopted into Australian law. Indeed, there is no specific offence of torture at the federal level and there are gaps in the criminalisation of torture in the states and territories. The UN committee recommended that Australia fully incorporate the convention into domestic law by enacting a specific offence of torture at the Commonwealth level. The committee also indicated that Australia should continue consultations with regard to a bill or charter of rights to ensure comprehensive constitutional protection of basic human rights at the federal level.

I note that the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture has been recognised by Amnesty International, which organised today for Professor Maxime Tardu, former Director of the Research and Treaties Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, to address the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, in addition to providing a seminar in this place. These presentations were extremely useful and I am grateful to Professor Tardu and to Amnesty Inter-

national for their efforts to advance human rights in Australia and throughout the world. This international day is a day when we remember the victims of torture and when we say no to torture—not here, not anywhere. *(Time expired)*

Canning Electorate: Shire of Waroona

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (4.50 pm)—I again raise in this place the issue of the redevelopment of the Preston Beach Caravan Park in my electorate. I do so because recent events are such that the Shire of Waroona has written to Mrs Hilary Wheeler, the chairman of the Friends of Ramsar Action Group for the Yalgorup Lakes Environment—which has the acronym FRAGYLE—to allege that the information that they were seeking clarification of was erroneous. Because the council said the information was erroneous, I feel responsible in that I must help correct this information because I passed some of this information on to that group.

I have been concerned about this development and its probity for some time, and I have raised this before. This is the redevelopment of a community caravan park which was sold for just over \$2 million. It intends to make well over \$40 million, which I do not have a problem with, but the fact is that they get a walk-up start. In fact, they get a head start on everyone else because the Preston Beach Townsite Strategy for the redevelopment of this small beachside hamlet has not even been completed. Yet this group is allowed to go ahead and be involved in a development which does not have the same probity as the future developments in this town will have. This development has been initiated and proposed by Rapley Wilkinson. As I said, 131 shacks will be built on this caravan park.

The problem is that this is an overdevelopment of the caravan park. The issues that the council raised with Mrs Wheeler relate to

the fact that the shire has assigned a certain proportion of council land to this project for public open space. This is where the question needs to be asked. It is purely semantics because they may not have given this land to the developers to enhance and enrich the development, but it is still council land on which the developers will build a playground, which will satisfy the public open space requirements of this particular development and add value to it. I think this use of taxpayers' money needs to be questioned. In fact, I am assured that the public open space within the caravan park before its development was far larger than the amount assigned on the edge of the road, which I viewed recently. I make it clear that I own a property in this area, so I declare an interest.

The amount of council land being made available is not that large, but, believe it or not, the council now has built a water sump on this so-called playground area. While I was there the other day, this water sump was full of water, and this is where the children's playground is meant to be. I find this totally bizarre because, at the end of the day, who is going to maintain this playground? Who is going to meet the cost of the playground? They say that there will be a management group in this precinct for 25 years. Further, in this document, which is the council minutes—'Special council meeting of the Waroona Shire, Monday, 31st October 2005'—it says that this will be in perpetuity. I am writing to ask more than 20 questions of the Shire of Waroona, which I would like answers to, not only on my behalf but on behalf of the constituents and residents in the Preston Beach area and other people who want to do business in the area. For example, the people from the Satterley-Preston Beach joint venture wrote to me saying that they felt somewhat aggrieved by the lack of coordination in the development in this area. They mentioned the need for a coordinated

approach to sewerage, water, gas and communications. These developers have the means to put in temporary measures like BioMAX sewerage systems near the Ramsar lakes, which are some of the oldest stromatolite areas in Western Australia. Yet the lack of sewerage could see leakage and seepage into the area.

So I will be asking questions. If the council does not answer them I will get them through freedom of information or via the public. I consider that this is an improper use of the council's ability to advance the developers in this project ahead of anyone else, including the residents of this area. I intend to continually watch this and, if I do not get the answers I want for and on behalf of my constituents and the rest of the community, I will continue to not only pursue this but to raise these issues with, for example, the town planning people in Western Australia. (*Time expired*)

Death Penalty

Mr HAYES (Werriwa) (4.55 pm)—A few weeks ago I informed the House that, along with my wife, Bernadette, I met with Lee and Christine Rush, the parents of Scott Rush. Scott, as many will know, is currently on death row in Kerobokan prison in Bali after being arrested in Denpasar on 17 April 2005. Along with other members of the Bali nine, he was charged and convicted under breaches of the Indonesian narcotics law.

Scott appealed his life sentence by the Indonesian court to the Supreme Court only to find his sentence increased to death. This occurred without any request by the prosecution or any comparison with the severity of penalties handed down for those convicted of the same crime by the same court. I should point out that Scott was 18 years old. As a result, Scott now spends his days and nights in Bali not knowing from one day to the next when his final hours will be.

In my previous remarks to the House I highlighted the fact that Lee and Christine are typical parents with all the struggles of ordinary life and certainly a love for their kids. But you could see unmistakably the emotional strain of having a son condemned to death in a foreign land. As parents we could not help but be moved by that. I just cannot think how I would react in the same circumstances.

When speaking to Christine and Lee, I mentioned that a friend of mine, Colin McDonald, the Australian lawyer who is appearing for Scott and has represented him ever since he was arrested, was due to meet Scott the next day. I indicated that I would speak in parliament, which I did on 2 June. Colin requested that I email him a copy of the speech, which I did. Colin contacted me and told me that when Scott read the speech he broke down and cried—and I have to say that my comments very much had bipartisan support. I would like to read the letter that I got back from Scott the very next day:

Dear Mr Hayes,

I have just read the speech that you delivered in the House of Representatives last night.

I was very moved by what I read, and I, my family, and friends and supporters thank you for caring.

I would like to thank you and your colleagues for your concerns and the actions that you recommend that Australia takes.

I hope that your recommendations are carried for the benefit of all young Australians, and their parents.

I am a living example of how drugs destroy the life and ambitions of a young Australian and his family.

I have lost so much but I still want to give. Can you please say to all young Australians: don't even try experimenting with drugs.

I want you to know I'm sorry for what I have done and am reforming myself.

I am extremely grateful for what you and your Bernadette have done.

Sincerely

Scott Rush

Last week I again met with Scott's mum and dad and I showed them the letter. Whilst they diligently read every word of that piece of correspondence, they broke down and cried. It is not sympathy that these people want. It is about more than that. What they need is a very clear sign that both sides of the parliament support the abolition of capital punishment in all places.

In order to avoid as much as possible the exposure of Australian citizens to the death penalty, Australia should act consistently and in a determined way in our opposition to capital punishment, including legislating to give effect to the second operational protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This would have the effect of preventing any Australian jurisdiction from making laws to introduce capital punishment, but, more importantly, it would communicate very clearly and unequivocally to the world at large the position Australia takes in opposing the death penalty.

In concluding, I leave you with the words of the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Ismail Mahomed. He said that the death penalty:

... is the ultimate and the most incomparably extreme form of punishment ... It is the last, the most devastating and the most irreversible recourse of the criminal law, involving ... the planned and calculated termination of life itself; the destruction of the greatest and most precious gift which is bestowed on all humankind.

He went on to say:

It is not necessarily only the dignity of the person to be executed which is invaded. Very arguably the dignity of all of us, in a caring civilisation, must be compromised ...

Gilmore Electorate: 805 Squadron

Mrs GASH (Gilmore) (5.00 pm)—Today in my electorate of Gilmore was the decommissioning of 805 Squadron and its Sea-sprites. It was an emotive time especially for the men and women who worked so hard on this project and their families. It has not been an easy time for them. I felt very privileged to have been there for the ceremony, especially as my whole time in government has been associated with this project. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Procurement, Greg Combet, for without his inviting me to accompany him it would not have been possible for me to attend. I appreciated his courtesy and that of his staff.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 5 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 5.00 pm

Thursday, 26 June 2008

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) took the chair at 9.30 am.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Mr John William Archer

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa) (9.30 am)—I rise today to honour one of Australia's many unspoken heroes, a veteran of the Second World War, a respected community member and, perhaps most importantly, a loving husband and father. John William Archer was born in Sydney on 15 May 1921. He spent his youth playing alongside his two sisters on their parents' sheep-grazing property, Wanora Downs, in Winton before heading off to boarding schools in Charters Towers, Warwick, and finally the Southport School on the Gold Coast. It was here that the country boy fell in love with the sea and surfing, and they soon joined football as great passions of his. After high school, he traded his surfboard for a saddle and gained work as a jackaroo on a merino sheep stud in New South Wales.

In 1939 war broke out in Europe and at the age of just 18 a young, enthusiastic and fresh-faced John, like so many boys of his age, fulfilled his national duty. He headed to Brisbane to enlist in the Army. His number was QX1. Of the 2,092 days he served in the armed forces, John served more than 1,500 days overseas in the 2/1 Australian Anti-Tank Regiment with the Anzac Corps, which was the first time they came together after Gallipoli—this was in the Second World War in Greece in those dark days when Greece fell to the Germans—and helped to defend Australia's sovereignty in pushing the Japanese out of New Guinea during those very dark days of World War II. When he was discharged in October 1945, at the end of the war, he was only 24—still so very young but now very much a man and a hero. Sadly, while John was serving overseas his father died and, upon his return from the war, John fulfilled another duty—that of a son—and took over the running of Wanora Downs at Winton. In 1950 he married his beloved wife, Rosie, with whom he had six beautiful children.

Not only was John a defender of our country, a keen and successful grazier and pastoralist and a loving family man but he was also a highly respected member of the Winton community. John served on the local council for many years and was an active member of the local RSL sub-branch. Each year he proudly marched alongside his fellow veterans in Winton's Anzac Day parade. Indeed, his frailty in his old age could not prevent his enthusiasm on Anzac Day and he took his last salute in a wheelchair. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to know John, QX1. Often we forget that Australia's heroes are not famous and they are not rich; they are just ordinary men making extraordinary decisions and sacrifices for Australia on our nation's behalf. Sadly, John left us in November last year, but like all of our veterans he will not be forgotten.

Hindmarsh Electorate

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (9.33 am)—I rise to pay tribute to organisations within the federal electorate of Hindmarsh, cornerstones of our community that continue their exemplary work for their members, for their constituency and for the community at large. These organisations, the Henley and Grange RSL and the Aged Care and Housing Group, which works in close conjunction with the Plympton Glenelg RSL, were recently acknowledged by the Rudd Labor government and were granted assistance through the government's veteran

MAIN COMMITTEE

and community grants program. The program provides an important source of funding to local organisations, such as these, for projects and initiatives that support the health and wellbeing of the veteran community. These grants provide funding to local organisations to meet the needs of veterans, war widows, widowers and their dependants. It is important to note that in many instances these projects also benefit the wider community. Projects funded by veteran and community grants include projects promoting healthy lifestyles, community activities, projects helping veterans to live independently at home and carers support.

One of the recipients of the grants was the Henley and Grange RSL, which is organised by their tireless secretary, Mrs Kaye Moseley. They recently received \$10,068 to assist with the cost of purchasing chairs, tables and an air conditioner. Kaye is an exemplary secretary who does many hours of volunteer work at the Henley and Grange RSL, and she should be recognised for the tremendous work that she does in that area with the RSL and with veterans. The other one was the Aged Care and Housing Group, or ACH Group. That is an organisation that provides a great many services for senior South Australians within and beyond Hindmarsh.

Mr Grant Schmerl is also a tireless worker and has been instrumental, in conjunction with the Plympton Glenelg RSL, in the development and operation of what they call a swap-links program. This swap-links program brings veterans together who perhaps would not otherwise have any outings for lunches and for other activities. It increases the opportunity for seniors in the vicinity of the RSL to also re-engage with the community, take care of themselves and make more out of life. So I was particularly pleased when Ms Julie Bonnici, the regional manager of the ACH Group, was granted \$44,000 for the ongoing delivery of the swap-links program. Ms Julie Bonnici is also a tireless worker who gives her all in that area.

I would like to congratulate those at the Henley and Grange RSL, the ACH Group and Plympton Glenelg RSL, as well as Ms Kaye Moseley, Julie Bonnici and Grant Schmerl, for the tremendous work that they do and for their successful grant applications. These organisations do terrific work and are the cornerstones of our community. (*Time expired*)

Cowan Electorate: Warwick Senior High School

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (9.36 am)—On Tuesday I had a great moment—it was a highlight of my parliamentary time so far—with the visit by a group of teachers and students from the Warwick Senior High School. It was a great event. They spent a couple of hours here at Parliament House, commencing with a parliamentary role play. I think everyone had a good time with that activity. Of the teachers, Donald Green was a photographer for the role play, Ian McAlpine was an assistant clerk, Emma Brennan sat on the government back bench and Britany Neale, the chaplain for the school, sat on the opposition back bench, which is a great location for all good people. The students did have a very good time with the role play, and I would like to thank Anne Nelson of the Parliamentary Education Office for her efforts.

Then we moved on for tours of the House and the other place with the tour guide. Our tour guide, Maggie, did a great job. Whilst I was on part of the tour, I had some very good conversations with three of the students, Michael Thompson, Kristian Fenn and Shane Smith. These three young men displayed a keen interest in the parliamentary system and, as they are all locals, a very keen interest in the important local issues in the electorate of Cowan. We had discussions about hooning and also about road safety. I think it was Shane Smith who raised concerns with me about Pinjar Road in Ashby in the electorate of Cowan. That was a good moment, and it is very pleasing to see those three young men and the rest of the students from

the very good school of Warwick Senior High here with a committed interest in how the parliament operates and clearly a committed interest in their communities.

The Principal of Warwick Senior High School is Lesley Wintle, who I have had some contact with in the past. The school is located within my home suburb of Warwick. It has a good reputation and a great academic extension program. I look forward to future visits by Warwick Senior High School in the future and, based on my observations of how good those young men and women are and the interest they showed whilst they were here, I think this country is well placed.

Dawson Electorate

Mr BIDGOOD (Dawson) (9.39 am)—I wish to put on record my thanks to the Prime Minister and the federal cabinet for making the decision to visit Mackay this Sunday, 29 June. They will be holding a cabinet meeting and public forum at the Mackay North State High School. Registration takes place between 11 am and 12.45 pm, and there will be light refreshments. The public forum commences at 1 pm, when the Prime Minister will address the gathering until 2 pm. There will also be pre-arranged meetings with cabinet ministers from 2.15 pm to 3.15 pm.

This is a fantastic way for democracy to come to the people. So often in my electorate of Dawson people from Mackay to Townsville, a distance of 400 kilometres, have said: 'Government is so remote from the people. How do they know what we are thinking and feeling and our views?' Well, Kevin Rudd and this government are showing that they have got up, moved out of Canberra and are coming to the people. This truly is grassroots democracy. This has never been done before in the seat of Dawson. Never before has the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and virtually the full cabinet come to the seat of Dawson. This has sent a very clear message to the people of Dawson that this is a new government, with new ideas and new ways of conducting the democratic process.

I am pleased to say also today that it is now official that Chalco, the Chinese aluminium company, have, as of yesterday, signed a memorandum of understanding with the state government to position their new refinery at Abbot Point, 20 kilometres north of Bowen. Only seven days ago in this Main Committee I once again mentioned in a speech that I believed this was the best place for Chalco to go. I am pleased, and I thank the Chinese for making that decision. This is going to be something like the beginning of Gladstone. I want to pay tribute to Mayor Mike Brunner and to the state member, Jan Jarratt, who have held the torch for this vision for so long. I am glad to completely endorse and work with these levels of government.

This morning it gives me great pleasure to welcome to the parliament and to show around the students from a local school of mine, St Joseph's Catholic School in Mackay. It has given me great pleasure to receive schools here and to show children how democracy works and how they can see democracy in action. We should be proud that we are a leading-edge democracy in Australia and that someone can watch these proceedings on the other side of the world via the internet. (*Time expired*)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—At this point in time I would like to say ‘jambo’. I welcome our guests from the National Assembly of the Republic of Kenya who are visiting us in the Main Committee today. Thank you for being with us.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**Forrest Electorate: Gas Supply**

Ms MARINO (Forrest) (9.42 am)—The current gas crisis in Western Australia is taking a significant toll on small to medium enterprises, especially those located in my electorate of Forrest, in the south-west of Western Australia. South-west industries utilise over 40 per cent of the gas supplies from Apache in the north-west. With 30 per cent of gas supplies being wiped out three weeks ago as a result of the explosion at Varanus Island, the south-west is bearing a significantly disproportionate burden of gas rationing, and it is crippling industry and productivity. South-west businesses are being starved of or drip-fed gas as a result of the shortages, and there is growing frustration, even anger, at the lack of transparency and fairness and at how the planning capacity in Alinta is allocating gas.

The Western Australian Premier has recently said that the gas shortage would have an impact on the state but that households and emergency services would not be directly affected. There have been various calls from the Premier as to what has been going on. However, he has been particularly quiet on any announcement of relief to small and medium businesses, which have been forced to drastically scale down their operations and lay off workers while the major companies are able to carry on. In this instance, in my electorate potentially between 700 and 800 businesses overall are affected by this. They are in manufacturing, mining, agriculture, general manufacturing, the timber industry, beef processing, the pork side of town, chemical plants, the transport industry, bakeries, job agencies, mechanical businesses and courier services. Anybody who is associated with any form of small to medium business within my electorate and more broadly is affected by this.

We have also heard very little from the federal level, and I would like to see the federal Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy come to Forrest and talk directly to those businesses that have been so badly affected.

What I am really struggling with is that it is the small to medium businesses that can least afford to carry the cost of this that have been and are being most badly affected. They are bearing the majority of the cost of this crisis. As major economic contributors, south-west businesses deserve to know whether they will receive gas and how much they will get. They also deserve to know who else is receiving a gas allocation and how much. The problem is that the allocation method is not transparent and is perceived by those dangling at the end of the hierarchical chain as being very unfair. I confirm that those small to medium enterprises in my electorate of Forrest are continuing and will continue to wear the cost and carry a very disproportionate load compared with the rest of the state. (*Time expired*)

Bass Electorate: St Giles Society

Ms CAMPBELL (Bass) (9.45 am)—Can there be a more worthwhile use of federal funding than looking after our children? I would argue not, and it is for this reason that I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House of a recent funding commitment made by

this government to the St Giles Society in my electorate of Bass. I value enormously, and the Rudd government values enormously, the role which the St Giles Society plays in northern Tasmania. When I first became aware that funding for its speech pathology services and family support services was due to expire at the end of this month, I took it upon myself to secure ongoing funding for the wonderful work to continue. These services are quite simply vital. That is why I was very pleased that, earlier this week, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs informed me and the St Giles Society that \$341,932 had been secured for the 2008-09 financial year. That money will be provided under the Vital Early Years and Family Support program and will be used to provide speech pathology services to children, from birth to five years of age, who are demonstrating, or are at risk of developing, specific difficulties in receptive and expressive language and auditory processing.

The program also provides for a family support coordinator to assist parents in their day-to-day role and provides support and counselling around broader issues. As a parent myself, I understand that the importance of this support cannot be overstated. There is a critical link in services liaising with various organisations to achieve the best outcomes for children and their families. The program also provides a psychologist to help parents in their day-to-day role and provides behavioural management strategies and support.

I was fortunate enough earlier this month to be taken on a tour of the St Giles facility in Launceston by the society's chief executive, Michael Sertori. The work which the society does is absolutely amazing. The commitment of the staff there is selfless and complete, and I would like to take this opportunity to make it quite clear how deeply the Rudd government values the role that the St Giles Society plays in Bass. I personally will continue to work hard on behalf of the people of Bass to ensure that organisations like the St Giles Society can continue to make their incredible contribution to children and their families throughout northern Tasmania. Community groups play an incredibly important role in our local communities, and I will continue to passionately represent the interests of the people of Bass in protecting and furthering the good work of organisations like the St Giles Society.

Dunkley Electorate: Carer Payments

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (9.48 am)—On behalf of and through the vivid experience of the Frankston family of Ray and Lyn Jones and their three children, I call for the Rudd government to amend the current law that limits the availability of carer payments. I specifically refer to the Social Security Act 1991 and the Social Security Administration Act 1999 and argue that they need to be amended so that people who receive compensation payments for reasons other than the conditions that give rise to carer responsibilities can receive the carer payment. At the moment the carer payment is denied to anybody who is receiving compensation payments and is not treated as ordinary income.

Ms Hall interjecting—

Mr BILLSON—Thank you for the ridiculous carry-on of the member opposite! Listen to this and you might actually notice something.

Ms Hall interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—Order! The member for Shortland will not interject.

Mr BILLSON—The example that has given rise to this came to my attention late last year after this family, struggling to care for their autism afflicted child and their other two children, was asked to repay carer payments that they had received. They were asked to repay those payments because the father, Ray, is receiving workers compensation for a back injury that denies him the opportunity to work. The law, as it is currently written, overreaches. If these compensation payments related to the condition that gave rise to the carer payment, I am sure that all in this parliament would recognise that that could give rise to double dipping, and that would be a perfectly reasonable application of the law. But the law goes way beyond that.

What is unjust and unfair about the Joneses' case is that the compensation that Mr Jones receives, which makes him ineligible for a carer payment, is entirely unrelated to his carer responsibilities for his son Brad. Along with this, in the way the law is administered, this family, who goes to great lengths to provide a full level of support and care for their 14-year-old son, Brad, is denied access to carer payments. On any other criteria—whether it be the family's incomes, the demands of the care responsibilities towards Brad, his condition, the fact that the family needs ongoing support and counselling because of the challenging behaviour of Brad—the family would meet the eligibility requirements. All of those factors, every one of them, would ensure that carer payment eligibility was met by the family.

The one reason that stops them is this over-reach in the law that says, because there are workers compensation payments being made and being received by the family, completely unrelated to Brad's condition, that of itself denies this family eligibility. If those workers compensation payments were treated as ordinary income and, therefore, treated in the same way as income earned from any other purpose, again, the family would be eligible for carer payments. This is a legislative over-reach; it has been recognised as such by the Social Security Appeals Tribunal. The case has been brought to my attention and is a vivid example where an amendment is required. Despite the ridiculous carry-on from one member opposite, I urge the House and the ministers to consider this. (*Time expired*)

Fremantle Electorate: Homelessness

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (9.51 am)—In Cockburn in my electorate only a few weeks ago, a ranger asked a homeless man to move on from the place on the beach where he had been sleeping. I am very sorry to say that early the next morning the man was found hanging from a tree. Earlier this year a young single mother with three children came to my office. Her lease had ended and she could not find another private rental. There is a two-year waiting list for public housing, so she was sleeping with her children in their car.

During the past year, I have been a frequent visitor to Saint Patrick's Community Support Centre in Fremantle, which does incredible work for homeless and disadvantaged people in the wider Fremantle community. After the success of the Choir of Hard Knocks, Saint Pat's started their own singing group, called the Starlight Hotel Choir, so named because of the circumstances in which too many people find themselves at night, with the stars as their only roof. I enjoy singing with this group when I am in the electorate. In February this year, the Fremantle community banded together to hold a benefit concert called *Gimme Shelter* at the Fremantle Arts Centre, which raised \$20,000 for Saint Pat's. I commend the organisers, Dave Johnson and Phoebe Clark; the sponsors; and the bands who donated their performances. The *Gimme Shelter* concert will now be an annual event and other members might like to consider promoting this idea in their electorates.

What has struck me in my talks with homeless people is how many of them were previously leading what could be described as relatively normal lives before something happened to change their circumstances—for example, a retrenchment or a sudden illness, domestic violence at home, family breakdown, substance abuse or an inability to cope with the spiralling costs of living. Of course, the issues of homelessness and mental illness are often interrelated; it seems that homelessness is both a cause and a consequence of poor mental health. The other thing that struck me was that, far from choosing a life of perpetual dislocation, the homeless people I listened to all wanted a place of their own, but there was nowhere for them to go.

The chronic lack of public housing has been exacerbated by a booming economy in WA that has seen private rentals soar beyond the reach of the unemployed and low-income earners. Rents in Fremantle have risen by 43 per cent over the last three years; the vacancy rate is around one per cent. In the year 2005-06, there were 637 people in the Fremantle electorate who required supported accommodation assistance. Seventy-two per cent of the adults who required this assistance were women. In that context I would like to mention the Sisters Place in Beaconsfield, which gives women on the streets a safe place to sleep. Many of us are fortunate enough to take a safe bed each night for granted.

Housing is a fundamental human right, as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which will celebrate its 60th anniversary in December this year. The Rudd Labor government is serious about the problem of homelessness and about the underlying conditions that give rise to it. I welcome the release of the homelessness green paper and the hard work that the Minister for Housing is doing to address this serious and complex problem as a matter of national concern. (*Time expired*)

Mitchell Electorate: Kokoda Track Trek

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (9.54 am)—I rise to speak on a matter of ongoing interest to my electorate in relation to Papua New Guinea and the Kokoda Track. This year I have met with many concerned residents from my electorate who have visited Papua New Guinea, walked the track and seen the sites of Kokoda where Australians fought in World War II. I note that this week the Senate passed a motion for official recognition of the fuzzy wuzzy angels, a group of people to whom we owe an immense debt of gratitude—people who we, indeed, ought to be recognising. I met with Sergeant Danielle Cameron from the New South Wales Police, who walked the Kokoda track recently; their experience tells me that people who go to Papua New Guinea do recognise that we have a debt. Brent Caisley, another from my electorate who undertook the trek across the Kokoda Track to recognise and remember those Australians who fought so valiantly in World War II, also shares a great concern about the need for us to perform this act of recognition. Even though these events occurred 65 years ago, we still have not officially recognised these people.

Australia does have a role as a regional leader. We have a role in aiding our friends and neighbours in Papua New Guinea and ensuring that their ongoing development is successful. Indeed, I know that the constituents of my electorate who undertake this trek—and there are an increasing number of them each year who do; indeed, I head a forum which encourages young people to trek the Kokoda Track—want to see a greater contribution from Australia in relation to Papua New Guinea.

When Papua New Guinea achieved independence, we assisted them with their new parliament. It is a very successful parliament and that building is a wonderful place to visit. However, it is stunning to understand that we have not officially recognised these wonderful Papua New Guinean nationals who saved the lives of Australian servicemen in World War II. I want to commend the motion passed this week because it calls for the immediate determination of a new award and medal to be presented to the fuzzy wuzzy angels, who carried stretchers, stores and wounded diggers directly on their shoulders over some of the toughest terrain in the world. Without them, I do not think the Kokoda campaign could have been the success that, indeed, it was.

I had the privilege of trekking the Kokoda Track with some of my constituents some years ago, and it was an immense exercise in understanding our obligations and gratitude to the people of Papua New Guinea. On behalf of all of the members of my electorate who trek the Kokoda Track, I call upon the government to immediately determine this award. (*Time expired*)

Casey Electorate: Vietnam Veterans

Mr BYRNE (Holt—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (9.57 am)—It is fantastic to be here in this chamber today contributing to the members' constituency statements. I would like to commend the Chief Government Whip and also the Leader of the House for this initiative. It enables me to talk about really special people in my electorate. There is one in particular—a pretty big, scary guy, actually, when you meet him—called Denny Van Maanenbergh. What makes Denny special is the contribution that he makes to my community and to the community of veterans throughout my electorate.

Denny is a Vietnam veteran himself, and he has provided outstanding service to the veterans community over a number of years. He helped establish the Aussie Veterans Opportunity Shop in Boronia. He eventually became the veterans association's treasurer and administration manager—the association also provided welfare and pension facilities. He has also served as pension officer at the Berwick RSL. Two years ago he became the chairman of the Casey regional veterans welfare centre. In addition to assisting veterans, Denny does numerous presentations to local schools on World War II, the Kokoda Trail and the Vietnam War. He has joined in local schools' Anzac Day and Remembrance Day presentations. One highlight was a presentation to 1,000 students, teachers and guests at the Eumemmerring College Anzac Day commemoration service this year, where he rode in on a Harley-Davidson, much to the amusement and enjoyment of the students there.

He is the public officer of the Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club Gippsland Chapter. They run a veterans drop-in centre at Longwarry North, in an old hall they saved from demolition after they convinced the Baw Baw Shire Council to grant a planning permit to renovate it. Nearly two years on, the old hall has taken on a new life and is a centre for veterans to drop in each Friday for a chat, a cuppa, to do some photocopying or use the computers. This is all free of charge. He has conducted birthday parties for Vietnam veterans and he has helped 18- to 80-year-olds celebrate their birthdays. Every year has had a special Christmas party for local kids in need. He has also helped out where he can with members' veterans welfare issues. Denny volunteers at Casey on Wednesdays, does Fridays at Longwarry North and, on the odd occasion, helps out at the Drouin Welfare Centre. Recently he was appointed a justice of the peace, which makes life a little easier for those wishing to get documents certified, particu-

larly veterans. About a year or so ago he helped start off the RAASC Vietnam Supply Platoons Association, and this provides an annual get-together for supply platoon blokes from across Australia.

There is a heck of a lot more I could read out about Denny and his contributions, particularly where he tries to help people find out about their relative's past, but Denny's great contribution is that he is a very passionate and a very proud Australian who wants to communicate his experiences to young people. What we need to remember is that we must learn from history. Having a bit of living history and presenting it to students in the area is great. Denny is a proud and passionate Australian and a tremendous asset to the electorate of Holt. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

COMMITTEES

Electoral Matters Committee

Report

Debate resumed from 16 June, on motion by **Mr Melham**:

That the House take note of the report.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (10.01 am)—I rise to address the report of the Standing Committee on Electoral Matters entitled *Advisory report on schedule 1 of the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008*. Sadly it is a deeply disappointing piece of work—at least the majority report from the committee is. Political party fundraising in Australia is worthy of greater consideration than this report gives it. In recent times we have seen practices such as those at the Wollongong City Council, for instance, involving the intersection of money and influence with ALP donors and ALP councillors on Wollongong council. We have seen practices in Western Australia where fundraising intersects with the political process in a way that is deeply unhelpful; as a result, several ministers have resigned from the cabinet in Western Australia.

This report deals with political party fundraising, but I think it deals with it in a very inadequate way. Majority members who compiled this report have totally neglected the national interest in favour of the sectional interests of the ALP. Political party fundraising is an issue that is worthy of serious consideration by this parliament. The Australian people are rightly suspicious of the way that the political parties in Australia raise funds. I think that most members in this place would certainly not enjoy discussing the practices of political party fundraising in their entirety in a transparent way. If journalists were to ask questions of political parties about their fundraising processes, most of us would be reluctant to discuss it. I am not claiming the moral high ground personally on that issue; what I am saying is that it indicates that it is an issue that lacks certain transparency. The fundraising of Australian political parties in general is an issue that I think this parliament should take seriously.

The coalition parties do have a commitment to addressing this crisis of confidence in the fundraising of political parties within our political system. Many of the concerns of the public have been confirmed by the practices at the Wollongong City Council, which I referred to earlier, but such practices have also occurred in other jurisdictions, particularly in the Western Australian Labor Party. This makes people rightly suspicious of the way that political parties

raise funds. It means that we need to have an urgent and sensible review of the way we finance campaigns at both the federal and the state level. A comprehensive inquiry should look at the way we do this. We should make sure that there are sufficient authorities, investigative powers and enforcement measures to prevent any illegal activity in the future. We also need to make sure that we have a framework that removes weaknesses within our regulatory system on these matters—a framework that gives us an environment where illegality will not take place in the future.

In pursuit of this the coalition has put forward a comprehensive reference to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. It was moved in the other place by Senator Ronaldson. It asks that committee to undertake an extensive inquiry into campaign financing. Sadly, this motion was opposed by the government, but it was supported by every other political party in the Senate.

The coalition believes in confronting these issues head-on and dealing with them in a systematic and comprehensive fashion. We believe that we should address the challenges that have been thrown up by the illegal activity in Wollongong and by other practices in other parts of the country. By contrast, I think the government have shown their true colours by insisting on the progress of this bill in isolation from the other, broader issues and in refusing to support a comprehensive review in the other place. I think this shows that the government have no real interest in these issues. Now that they are in government they are really only concerned about maximising the power of their incumbency.

Coalition members of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters did put in a dissenting report. In that report they maintained their opposition to the progress of this bill until such time as it can be dealt with along with other issues that will arise when it comes to campaign finance. I think that is a reasonable position, and I think it shows a desire on their part to sensibly address these issues in a comprehensive fashion. Coalition members of the committee also believe that the inquiry failed to demonstrate the urgency of these matters and failed to demonstrate why this should be treated in isolation from other parts of the system.

I note that the majority report from the committee ignores the views that were put to the inquiry. Two-thirds of the submissions received by the inquiry either opposed the removal of tax deductability or required such changes to be counterbalanced by other measures. There was a significant question mark over the costings of the measure. Sadly, the government does not have a very good record on the costings of measures. Treasury came before the inquiry and said that the costings that they did on this measure were actually a bold guess. There is no reliable data on the claimed savings. This lack of data underlines the revenue estimates; therefore, the argument for urgency, based on fiscal necessity, is pretty empty and hollow.

In relation to donations, Treasury officials also confirmed in evidence the great difficulties in estimating revenue savings relating to claims for gifts and donations. You could say that Treasury really had no knowledge of the amount or the value of donations of less than \$1,500, which, of course, is the subject of this bill. All they could really do was just give an estimate based on assumptions that they had made, and that makes for very unreliable costings. Coalition members did not dispute the internal logic of Treasury's reasoning, but they did conclude that the results, based on a total lack of information, were by necessity totally arbitrary.

From the very start of this bill the Labor Party have been determined just to play politics as opposed to addressing the issues. They have been trying to push through measures within the

bill that, without doubt, required further review. There is absolutely no reason why this measure for the tax deductability of political donations should have been included with other measures in this original TLAB legislation. I think it is cause for concern that they would include what was obviously going to be a controversial measure with other measures that were not controversial. When we have heard a lot of talk about open and accountable government, I hardly think that that is a very constructive way for the government to have proceeded with this measure.

I will go to the history of this measure, because there has been a substantial change of heart from the Labor Party in relation to the tax deductability of political donations. In fact, in the past the ALP has repeatedly supported tax deductability. Indeed, the initial bill that granted tax deductability for political donations was introduced by the Hawke government. As is proper, following every election the election process is reviewed by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and obviously this matter has come up on a regular basis. In the reviews that were conducted after the 1987 and 1990 elections, the Australian Labor Party claimed that tax deductability for the additional funds that were raised by political parties would alleviate any pressure for increased levels of public funding, would encourage political parties to continue to seek support from the public and, very importantly—and these are the words of the ALP at the time—would help political parties more adequately fulfil their social functions. In December 1991, under the Hawke government, the House of Representatives had a vote along party lines that introduced tax deductability for political donations. In 1991 that level was \$700. The bill was introduced by the then Minister for Transport and Communications, Kim Beazley.

When the ALP were in government during the Hawke and Keating years, they made up the majority on the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and they never had anything to say against the tax deductability of political donations. Reports were handed down after the 1990 and 1993 elections, and they made absolutely no mention of the tax deductability of contributions to political parties. But the 1996 report from the joint standing committee included a recommendation to make tax deductible donations of up to \$1,500 annually. That is the exact measure in the report that we are discussing today. The committee's report on the conduct of that election, the election that saw the Howard government come into office, nominated \$1,500 as the maximum level of tax deductability. That is where the \$1,500 figure comes from. That report was unanimously supported by all members of the committee. Of course, these committees are run on a bipartisan basis.

I would like to remind the House of the members of that committee, because they are now very senior people in the new government who apparently think this is a terrible measure. Members of that committee who supported the \$1,500 level were: the now Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Conroy; the now Attorney-General, the member for Barton; and the now Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, the member for Reid. These are heavy hitters in the new government, and they supported this measure. There are two cabinet ministers and one parliamentary secretary. It is not clear why they have had this change of heart. Really what we are discussing here is gross hypocrisy from the government. The coalition are very happy to have a sensible discussion about campaign finance. There is no doubt in my mind that the Australian people have very

little faith in the way that political parties in Australia raise their money, and they have very little faith in it because it lacks transparency.

As I said in the opening part of my speech, I am not pretending to be an innocent party in this; I am not claiming the moral high ground. Like many members in this place, I engage regularly in fundraising. But that does not mean that we in this parliament should not have a good think about the way we go about it. The Australian people have concerns about it. What we do not need is a piecemeal approach, as evidenced by the introduction of one measure in a tax laws bill when it would be far more appropriately dealt with in a review of the entire campaign fundraising system.

I am particularly attracted to other examples that we see around the world. In Canada, as a result of very significant fundraising scandals, they comprehensively overhauled the way that political parties are financed. They have essentially taken money out of that process. Canadian political parties are publicly funded. There are limits on what individual members can spend in their seats; I think it is around Can\$80,000. There are limits on what individuals and entities—whether they be unions or businesses—can donate to political parties, and those are set at a very low level. I would be very happy to have a conversation about that, but that should be a comprehensive conversation about the way we do it in Australia. There should not be a piecemeal approach, as advocated by the government and as condemned by the coalition members of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

I am deeply disappointed in this report; I am deeply disappointed that the government does not want to have a sensible discussion about what is a very important matter. I commend the dissenting report put in by members of the coalition on the joint standing committee, and I genuinely urge the government to rethink their approach to this because I do think that the Australian people deserve better. I think we need to look at the way things are done. I think that examples of illegal behaviour in Wollongong and in my home state of Western Australia give great urgency to these particular issues, and I urge the government to reconsider its approach.

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (10.16 am)—I rise to add my comments to the discussion about the report by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters entitled *Advisory report on schedule 1 of the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008*, which has been presented. Indeed, I spoke on the Tax Laws Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008 earlier in the life of the parliament and made a number of comments on that occasion in relation to schedule 1. Schedule 1 is the schedule that was the subject of this particular review.

I begin by making a couple of obvious points that need to be borne in mind in any discussion of schedule 1 of that bill—that is, first and foremost this was an election commitment. It was an election commitment that had been put on the public record and was before the Australian people well and truly in advance of the election. I note that this particular measure had been a part of the Australian Labor Party's official platform since 2004, so it is not a measure that should have come as a surprise to anyone. For those who were not aware of that particular provision within the platform, I note that the then shadow finance minister, Lindsay Tanner, released a media statement on 2 March 2007 entitled 'Labor's \$3 billion savings plan'. In that media release it was also made clear that it was a clear component of the Labor Party's election manifesto that we would be going to the campaign with a view to removing the tax deductability of political contributions, so it should not have been a surprise to those on the

other side when this was included in one of the first revenue bills to come before the new parliament. It was brought as a revenue measure, because quite frankly it is a significant revenue measure. We are talking about over \$30 million, over \$10 million in each year. That is why it was brought as a revenue measure, and that is why the position that has been taken by those on the other side really does reinforce the view that they are committed to playing the role of the economic vandal when it comes to this government's budget.

We are all aware of the pressures on inflation and the pressures that those pressures place on interest rates. That is why this government has handed down a budget that has delivered a \$21 billion surplus. Opposing this measure is just another example of how those on the other side are determined to punch a hole in that surplus. It is important that this measure go through on revenue grounds, but there are also other important reasons as to why these measures are important and should be supported. They go to the very heart of the operation of our democracy. They go towards issues of political participation and the right of all citizens to equally access the rights and obligations that come with political citizenship in this country. I note that in the report a number of significant points were set out in relation to a summary of a review that was undertaken in the United Kingdom in 1998. It went through and looked at the pros and cons in relation to this issue of the tax deductibility of political contributions.

It has been suggested by the member for Stirling that there has been inconsistency on the part of the Labor Party over the years, and it is true that in the past the Labor Party in government and in opposition has supported measures to allow tax deductibility—albeit in very limited circumstances—for political contributions, but I do not think the Labor Party, or any political party for that matter, should be bound by some previous position that it has held. Clearly, we would not advance any new positions if that were the logic that we were to follow. I should make the point that, on those occasions that the Labor Party has supported tax deductibility for political contributions, it has been applied to a fairly low cap. In the original legislation the cap was imposed at \$100. In effect the tax-deductibility provisions amounted to no more than a tax deduction for political party membership. In effect, most of the beneficiaries of those particular provisions were people that joined political parties and were able to claim a tax deduction on a decent part, if not all, of their membership fees.

We have seen the evolution of the provisions on tax deductibility and the debate has moved on, particularly with the increase of that threshold from \$100 to \$1,500. I think most people would understand that that is well and truly greater than any amount that individuals would be required to pay to be active and paid-up members of political parties. That has taken this whole debate into a new realm, and that new realm is fairly and squarely in the domain of contributions by private donors to political parties. In our democracy, that is encouraged or at least not discouraged.

But, when we look at the contributions of private individuals to political parties, a very significant question has to be asked. The committee in considering these matters homed in on this question. In a context where public funding is provided for political parties, how appropriate is it that a private tax concession be provided to individuals who make campaign finance contributions? In an environment where there is significant public funding for political candidates and parties, why is additional tax relief—or additional public subsidy—required for those individuals? Firstly, they have the money to make contributions. On that point—and it is a significant point—in my electorate there many families and many individuals doing it

tough at the moment. A lot of them, if they were listening to this debate, would be scratching their heads to think that someone has got \$1,500 to spare to make a contribution to a political party. Many low-income workers in my electorate really would not be able to fathom the fact that someone might have that amount of money to just write a cheque and go down to a political fundraiser and hand it over to someone to assist them in their future campaign. That goes to the issue of whether or not you even have the capacity to make a contribution; there are many people that do not.

But, when we look at the way in which tax-deductibility provisions operate, by their nature they do provide a greater benefit to a higher income earner. As the opposition members of the committee indicated, that is the case with all tax-deductibility provisions, not just those applying to political contributions. It is important in the context of this debate to make the point that we are not just talking about a run-of-the-mill tax deduction; this is not an ordinary, plain, vanilla tax deduction. Most tax deductions are received as a result of expenses incurred by individuals in the course of deriving their assessable income. Most deductions relate to an expense that you incur in the course of producing your assessable income. The basic philosophy is that if you incur costs in order to make money then you should have some tax relief on those costs. That is a fundamental principle of taxation policy. Outside of those general principles, there are specific tax deduction provisions that relate to charities. Those provisions are grounded in the public policy attached to providing some benefit to those with a sense of philanthropy who want to make a contribution. Our system provides people, in limited circumstances, with tax deductions for those types of expenditure.

In relation to charities, I would just make this point: under the current system, if these changes are not made, you have a situation where on the one hand you have charities that are able to receive contributions from individuals that are tax deductible, provided they are a deductible gift recipient, while on the other hand you have political parties able to receive funds that are tax deductible up to the limit of \$1,500. But there is a whole range of non-profit organisations out there that are currently denied the opportunity of being a deductible gift recipient. That means that only organisations that are deductible gift recipients or contributors are entitled to the benefit of a tax deduction if they make a contribution to those entities. Those particular organisations are denied the opportunity to be a deductible gift recipient organisation for the simple reason that they may have a political or quasi political purpose.

At one end of the spectrum you have the charities, at the other end of the spectrum you have the political parties that receive these contributions and in the middle you can have a series of non-profit organisations pursuing legitimate activities on a non-profit basis. In respect of those particular organisations, anyone making contributions to them is not given a tax deduction. I have to say, having dealt with many organisations in the non-profit sector in the past, there are many organisations out there engaged in legitimate beneficial activities to the community but because they have a political or quasi political purpose they are denied the benefit of any tax deductability. It stands to reason to me that, looking at the spectrum of organisations there, there is absolutely no justification for providing any tax deductability to contributions to political parties.

On the issue of equity, I make the very obvious point that low-income earners, in particular those not paying tax, will get no benefit out of provisions that provide tax deductability for contributions. To starkly illustrate this, we should have a look at some of the figures provided

in the report. For someone who currently has a marginal tax rate of zero—they do not pay tax; there are plenty of tax exempt organisations, but also individuals who do not pay tax because they do not earn sufficient income in order to be required to pay tax—on a \$1,500 donation or contribution to a political party in the course of the financial year, those individuals will not receive one cent in a tax subsidy from the government. So if they make a contribution of \$1,500, their out-of-pocket expenses are \$1,500. Let us look at the other end of the spectrum. If you earn over \$150,000, on that \$1,500 contribution the government, us as taxpayers, will put \$825 back in the pocket of that person who made the contribution.

Those on the other side talk about the need to avoid influence peddling, and I totally agree. We need an up-front, transparent democracy where there is no incentive for people to try to buy influence. But why should those who have the capacity and who are high-income earners derive a significant benefit from contributing to a political party when those who do not pay tax—and they are not an insignificant number of people—do not? The report points out that 2.1 million individual taxpayers in the year 2005-06 had a taxable income of less than the tax-free threshold. So 2.1 million taxpayers in this country, and we can assume that the majority of them are citizens, are denied any benefits of political participation so far as these particular measures are concerned. I think it is a point worth making. It is not just simply one that can be disregarded, as those on the other side say, by simply saying that any tax deduction will suit higher income earners more than lower income earners. Clearly that is the case. But when it goes to the heart of someone's ability to participate in the democracy then I think that, as a matter of public policy, it requires us to intervene.

I simply conclude by making this point: it is entirely appropriate for taxpayers to make a contribution to the health of their democracy, and that is why I am a great supporter of a system of public funding, but it is an entirely different proposition to expect the taxpayer to provide tax relief to those individuals that exercise choice in terms of where they are going to make their contributions. They exercise that choice and often derive a benefit from it. I am not suggesting that it is by way of anything illegitimate, but often in attending functions there is at least a minimal benefit associated with what they derive. Why should their political choices be subsidised when there is already a system of public funding in place? Surely taxpayers as a whole should be subsidising the political process rather than picking and choosing and allowing individuals to make their own choices and then derive a benefit out of our common stock of funds. (*Time expired*)

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

ADJOURNMENT

Ms HALL (Shortland) (10.31 am)—I move:

That the Main Committee do now adjourn.

Groom Electorate: Exceptional Circumstances

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom) (10.31 am)—I rise today to speak about an all too familiar topic, and one which I think unites both sides of the House: the issue of drought and the assistance that is provided to farmers as a result of their being in an exceptional circumstances declared area. We all know that drought has been the scourge of farmers not only in Queensland but in much of Australia in the last decade and certainly, as a previous representative of rural industry, I have had too much experience in drought not only as a farmer but also

through assisting farmers as they try to cope with the extraordinarily difficult financial and psychological impacts of drought.

I have dealt with a series of ministers for agriculture and ministers for primary industry in my time, including the now Minister for Trade, Simon Crean, and in more recent times the current Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. In doing that, I have tried to emphasise to them that once the rains come the drought is not necessarily over—that is, the drought in terms of income is not over—so there has to be some very careful management of the removal of exceptional circumstances. I was heartened when the minister for agriculture said earlier this year:

... that's why it's been important for me to give the guarantee that in any review of future drought policy people who are currently on EC assistance need to have a guarantee that the rules won't be changed from under them. They're protected. We are not going to, you know, pull the rug from under them at the most desperate time ...

The minister said that on 18 May this year. The salient point is this:

We are not going to, you know, pull the rug from under them at the most desperate time ...

In my electorate of Groom, I have farmers who are still covered by exceptional circumstances, thanks to the extension granted by the minister for agriculture. They and I are grateful for the way in which the minister has handled that issue. This is not a political issue; this is an issue about people. It is an issue about ensuring that everyone is treated fairly. I want to make it very clear that I am not attempting to make a political point. I see this as an oversight in administration.

I rise today to seek the minister's support. I have written to him asking him to reconsider the boundary issues in relation to the southern part of my electorate, in particular the area that covers Cambooya and Hodgsonvale, but also in areas that used to be in my electorate, such as Clifton, where the seasonal conditions are perhaps marginally better but not long term discernibly better than those areas where he has maintained the exceptional circumstance listing.

Farmers such as Edwin Metzroth, who has contacted my office this week, have been removed from exceptional circumstances as a result of lines being drawn on a map. Edwin faces an extraordinarily difficult situation. He informs me his calving rate is 70 per cent of the normal—that is, he will have only 30 per cent of the calves and therefore ultimately 30 per cent of the income he would normally expect.

The areas south of Toowoomba need reassessing. The state Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Mr Mulherin, reassessed the boundaries in the Gatton area the week before last and successfully had them changed so that the farmers there were re-included in exceptional circumstances. It is my very strong view that, until there is a long-term break in the season, until there are widespread rains which return these fertile valleys to the rich productivity they so enjoyed a decade or so ago, there should be a reassessment of these boundaries and that the areas, particularly around Hodgsonvale and Cambooya in the southern Darling Downs zones, should be readmitted into exceptional circumstances.

Bass Electorate: CHOOSE Cafe

Ms CAMPBELL (Bass) (10.36 am)—I had the absolute pleasure of opening a new cafe in Launceston on 11 June called CHOOSE Cafe. Let me first say how delighted I am that the partnership that exists between Choice Employment and the Queen Victorian Museum and

Art Gallery has been allowed to blossom in Launceston. I would like to acknowledge the O Group, the Launceston City Council and of course Choice Employment. And blossom it has, from humble beginnings with seed funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund and a relatively small operation at Royal Park to what is now CHOOSE Cafe.

The CHOOSE Cafe that we celebrate today is a seven-day-a-week operation. It employs people with support needs and disabilities; but more than that it actively promotes that fact. The enthusiasm and passion of those at Choice Employment is evident. I would like to acknowledge the support of their general manager, Grant Coker-Williams, and also Scott Robson and Joy. Not only have their efforts, supported by the community and the museum and art gallery, seen two people employed under award wages, but they allow for the training and facilitation of work experience for others.

There is much to be said for any organisation in our community which seeks to break down barriers and which is open and honest and celebrates the contribution which people can make. All too often when we talk about disability services we can forget that we are talking about people who have an enormous number of abilities. CHOOSE Cafe celebrates these abilities. It highlights them, utilises them and offers them to the world to see, and that is magnificent. The Rudd government is keen to support disability service providers and organisations which celebrate those abilities to which I referred earlier.

Choice Employment is contracted by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to deliver vocational rehabilitation services to job seekers in the north-east. The range of services provided is many and varied, from assisting people who, through injury, disability or illness are finding it difficult to find employment to assessing the kind of work which would be most suitable. Choice offers assistance to employers and employees alike. I am proud to be associated with this wonderful organisation and will give my support to them at any time.

The recent federal budget allocated almost \$8 million for the development of a National Disability Strategy. It will provide the framework for the development of policy, legislation and service provision for people with disabilities. In order to improve access to the internet for people on low incomes, the telephone allowance will be increased for those people who receive the disability support pension. The utilities allowance will also be extended to disability support pensioners. The Rudd government has also spoken at length about social inclusion, and I am pleased to report that this is being borne out in the restructuring of employment services. We have committed almost \$4 billion to improve employment services and assist people to enter employment. This will mean increased assistance for people with disabilities and the long-term unemployed.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and commitment of the manager of CHOOSE Cafe, Lisa Nichols, and her fantastic staff. I first met Lisa a few years ago when visiting the museum at Royal Park with my daughter. It did not take me too long to realise the passion that Lisa has for the young people in our community. Lisa has been able to pass on to these young people her incredible skills and knowledge so that they can gain the skills necessary for their life's journey. A true success story for Lisa would have to be Matthew Viney. I first met Matt while he was working at the cafe. He was so extremely shy that he would not even look at you whilst taking your order. Now I have had the opportunity of opening two of Matt's art exhibitions. He is a truly amazing artist. He has gained full-time employment and

he is certainly not shy anymore. Matt is a remarkable young man. Having mentors like Lisa Nichols in a community is just so vitally important and I thank her for her constant commitment to these wonderful young men and women. The tapestry of our lives here in Launceston and also in Northern Tasmania is richer for the work of Choice Employment and the addition of the CHOOSE Cafe.

Commercial Ready Program

Mr IRONS (Swan) (10.40 am)—I rise today to criticise the Rudd government's decision to axe the Commercial Ready program. Commercial Ready was a valuable program established under the previous coalition government. It provided much needed assistance to up and coming companies, many of which were small and innovative businesses. Commercial Ready provided assistance during the commercialisation stage of business innovation ventures and was the only government program that assisted biotechnology and medical device companies where they needed it—at the commercialisation stage. Commercial Ready helped many small and innovative companies bring products to the market that benefited the community and/or met market demand. One example is the head lice treatment product commercialised by Hatchtech with the help of Commercial Ready. In my electorate of Swan the innovative company Pine Ridge Holdings Pty Ltd received a grant for the research and development of cardiothoracic and thyroid retractors.

Despite the program's great success, on 2 June the Senate estimates heard that the Commercial Ready program had been secretly closed to applications on 28 April—16 days before the government officially announced the decision on budget night, 13 May. Seventy-one pending applications were affected by this secret closure, as were companies who continued to spend thousands of dollars on consultancies for the Commercial Ready applications without knowing that the program would cease to exist. Others had been told that their projects had been successful bar the final dot on the 'i' and had started celebrating, only to despair the next day.

Recently I met with a constituent, Dr Alistair Murdoch, who was the Chief Executive Officer of Spirogene Pty Ltd. Spirogene had been a successful recipient of the Commercial Ready scheme and had benefited greatly from it. An emerging global problem in animal health and scientific interest by a world authority in this field led to the establishment of Spirogene. It grew from an idea to six employees in the space of eight months. Four of its employees are research assistants and postdoctoral fellows. Without this grants program we would have certainly lost their knowledge to overseas organisations. Dr Murdoch was adamant that the Commercial Ready and Commercial Ready Plus programs should not have been cancelled. He asked me how a government that has continuously promulgated a commitment to innovation as a key driver of productivity and commercial growth can cancel a major program that has led to significant innovation, commercial and ethical benefits, the creation of new businesses and sectors, and the revitalisation of existing industries.

Spirogene used their grant to commence their initial proof of clinic trials in the development of an innovative recombinant vaccine. This will be a global first in this area and has the potential to become a global industry with a significant impact on food production. The Commercial Ready grant enabled Spirogene to increase the speed of development of this technology and importantly assisted in keeping this exciting intellectual property within Australia. Our preference is to value-add to this technology locally by building local expertise and

skills in this growing area of recombinant vaccine technology. The company has been through a seed-raising round and has had independent validation of the technologies, so is not reliant on government grants alone. However, the government's decision to axe Commercial Ready will impact on Spirogene's ability to keep the development within Australian shores.

The axing of the Commercial Ready program has already had profound consequences for innovative companies, and more are likely to emerge. The cancellation of Commercial Ready will force some companies to relocate overseas where government assistance programs exist. Others, like Spirogene, will be forced to source overseas investment, which will reduce the end benefits to Australians because of increased foreign ownership. This lack of motivation for innovation in Australia will also mean that Australia will miss out on cures and treatments for conditions or illnesses. In axing Commercial Ready, the Rudd government cited a 2007 Productivity Commission report that found the program had supported too many projects that could proceed without public funding. However, the PC report recommended not the cancellation of the program but that a stronger filter should apply to the grant.

In summation, the government needs to give urgent consideration and assistance to those companies who had already submitted a grant application under the Commercial Ready program at their own great expense. Also as a priority the government must reinstate the Commercial Ready program or develop a replacement program to be in place and ready for operation at the beginning of the 2010 financial year. If it fails to do so, the Rudd government will inflict serious damage upon Australia's innovative industries and the future of this nation. I recently spoke on the collapse of consumer and commercial confidence. The scrapping of this program is another example of economic vandalism by this government. This scrapping will do nothing to regain lost ground in that confidence.

National Families Week

Ms HALL (Shortland) (10.45 am)—On Sunday, I will be holding my second family fun day at Belmont, on the foreshores of Lake Macquarie. Last year's family fun day was an outstanding success. It was a beautiful day. There was a lot of information available for families and there was a jumping castle, face painting and a free sausage sizzle. I am holding this family fun day in conjunction with the state member for Swansea, Robert Coombs. The family fun day last year was such an outstanding success that we decided that we would hold another one this year. Unfortunately, we could not hold it within National Families Week, but we are holding it this Sunday. Family fun days are an opportunity to highlight the importance of families in our community and provide a lot of useful information to families. They provide a chance for families to get together and relax on the foreshore of beautiful Lake Macquarie. I am informed that it is going to be an outstanding day. It will be a sunny day, and for once it will not be raining.

While we are there we can reflect on the importance of balancing work and family life, because these days families are under considerable pressure. It is interesting to note that Australia now has the longest working hours of all OECD countries. Around a quarter of parents with children under the age of 15 are in full-time work. They are working an average of 50 hours a week. That means that families have a lot of pressure on them. I would encourage members on both sides of the House to hold family fun days, because they have been very successful in my electorate. There will be stalls from a number of the schools and preschools and an information stall from the family centre at the university. This morning I was told by

my staff back in the electorate office that a local speech therapist came into the office and asked if she could bring along information on resources that are available for families within our local area. This is a time when families can do what families should do.

The slogan for National Families Week this year was 'Work and family: getting the balance right' so it is appropriate to reflect on the number of hours that families are working. It is important to make an investment in family time and remember that an effective balance of work and family responsibilities makes for stronger families, stronger workplaces and stronger communities because it helps us to care effectively for our families. The family does not stop with mum and dad; it is also the grandparents. Last year a number of people brought along the grandparents, and it was a fantastic day. The family fun day encourages people to invest some time in celebrating the vital role of families. Robert Coombs and I believe that our joining together and showing leadership and commitment to families will improve the all-round physical and emotional wellbeing of the family unit.

At this family fun day I will also be releasing my new support services document for families and children. That has been completed by the social work student, Mia, who has been on placement in the office. It will be an outstanding resource for people in the community, something that families can refer to on a daily basis if they are faced with a problem or if they are searching for information on one thing or another. I know that it will be a great success on Sunday. I know that families in the community will enjoy the day and I hope that they benefit from being able to obtain information whilst at the same time having fun.

Fisher Electorate: Sunshine Coast Infrastructure

Mr SLIPPER (Fisher) (10.50 am)—The Sunshine Coast is one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia, and it is little wonder because we have a lifestyle and climate that are the envy of people right around our country and around the world. The Property Council of Australia in a recent report noted that the high population growth in the region since 1976 is expected to continue well into the future. The Sunshine Coast is constantly ranked among the five fastest-growing regions in Australia, and this growth brings with it considerable population challenges and also extra problems associated with infrastructure needs such as roads, housing and the like. The population of the Sunshine Coast is about 260,000 and it is anticipated to double over the next 10 to 15 years.

We have an additional problem now because the state Labor government has announced that it is going to fast-track greenfield development sites on the Sunshine Coast. It really is important that we make sure that these developments do not proceed until additional infrastructure is provided to meet both existing and new demand on our roads, public transport networks, hospitals and health services, community facilities and schools. It is also important that all proper planning processes have been undertaken, including environmental impact assessments, traffic studies and full community consultation.

I want to commend the state member for Kawana, Steve Dickson, and also the Sippy Downs and District Community Association for organising a petition protesting against the fast-tracking of development of greenfield sites until such time as the necessary infrastructure is in place to meet the needs of the additional population. The Sunshine Coast has additional problems as a sea change community. Although our current population is about 260,000, on any night of the year we probably have 150,000 additional residents who are staying in our accommodation facilities such as hotels, resorts and backpacker hostels. Unfortunately, we do

not get funded for our real population; we only get funded for our actual permanent population. But the reality is that on the Sunshine Coast we have, on any night of the year, about 400,000 heads on beds.

The issues and challenges relating to high population growth require careful planning over the longer term. Roads need to be planned and upgraded over time so that their capacities will keep up with the increasing demands. Land for housing needs to be released in an obviously sensible manner to ensure there is enough land for houses but not a rapid release that would result in a glut of supply. The bizarre and sudden announcement by the Bligh government to open a massive area of land, for instance at Sippy Downs, to prompt immediate housing developments creates major problems. It is all very well to have additional housing, and we need additional housing to house a growing population, but it is inappropriate that planning processes should be bypassed. It is inappropriate that these developments should be allowed to proceed before the necessary infrastructure is in place to meet the requirements of the increased population. We have, for instance, a desperate need for a new hospital at Kawana. We are told that the state government is not going to complete that until 2014. By the time the hospital is opened, if it is ever opened by the state Labor government, the high growth in the region will mean that its size will be inadequate. I urge the Queensland Premier and her colleague the Prime Minister to allocate funds as soon as possible for the infrastructure needs of the Sunshine Coast—namely, road improvements, more hospital beds, major public transport initiatives and the like.

The road between the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane is an absolute disgrace. The former Howard government sought to upgrade the road to six lanes as far as Caboolture, and I have been pushing for the rest of the road from Caboolture to the Sunshine Coast proper to be upgraded to six lanes, because 80 per cent of the people who travel to and from the Sunshine Coast do so by road. The announcement by the state Labor government that they are going to fast-track development of land releases—and, in doing so, ride roughshod over the usual processes and fail to provide extra infrastructure as required—is, I believe, a situation that is completely unacceptable. I strongly support the petition that will be lodged in the Queensland parliament. I urge residents right across the Sunshine Coast and indeed elsewhere in south-east Queensland to sign similar petitions.

It is all very well to have additional housing, but you cannot have additional people in an area unless you have the infrastructure to meet the needs of that growing population. Indeed, that is bipartisan, because I can see the member for Oxley agreeing with me. The member for Oxley is agreeing that the Bligh government ought not to fast-track development on the Sunshine Coast without providing the infrastructure needs. Everyone should sign the petition and then hopefully a message will get through to the state Labor government. *(Time expired)*

Oxley Electorate: Spirituality

Oxley Electorate: Multiculturalism

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (10.55 am)—I want to take a few moments of the House's time today to talk about something that people may not know about, or perhaps would not intuitively understand, with regard to my seat of Oxley. One is the issue of spirituality in my electorate; the other is of multiculturalism.

My electorate in Oxley includes the western suburbs of Brisbane and the eastern suburbs of Ipswich, which is part of the great western corridor of Queensland. To represent that area and the people who live there is something I am immensely proud of. One of the things I have learned over almost a decade of representing that region and its people is the great spirituality that exists in the western corridor. I am very proud to represent a people who represent every faith. I have many, many churches of different denominations and descriptions within my electorate, and they are a very accommodating, tolerant, understanding, spiritual community. I am very proud of that. I can say that I have attended nearly every church—I do not know if I have actually got to every single one of them; there are many—in my electorate, and I have found a genuine warmth and understanding in all the denominations of faith. They really do feel that they belong and that they play a role within my electorate. I wanted to put that on the record, because I do not know whether it is something that people would truly understand about the seat of Oxley.

The other issue is multiculturalism, and I want to talk about the role it plays and the way it interlinks with faith and spirituality in my electorate. Multiculturalism in my electorate is, to say the least, immensely diverse and immensely vibrant. In my locality and through the western corridor we have some 140 different cultures represented, and my electorate is very proud to be right in the middle of that. It is a true snapshot, I think, of what Australia is about. It is about the coming together of many different cultures, about all of us together with a common bond. That common bond is the Australian ethos and having Australia as our place of being, a place we all love and share.

In my electorate, I have a very strong Vietnamese community, centred mostly around the suburbs of Darra and Inala but in other places as well, and a very strong and growing Pacific islander community. It is a very diverse community which in recent years has really grown not only in number but, in my view, in stature. The people in that community have really taken on board their new home here in Australia and have made wonderful efforts and great leaps in being part of the community, contributing to the community and playing their role. We are seeing that being done in significant ways by citizenship, by participating in our democracy and by the way they interact with other communities in the area and with me. I am very proud of them. I particularly want to mention the Samoan community today amongst my Pacific islander community because I was honoured by being a guest at their 46th anniversary of independence just recently, which was held over the June long weekend. I had the pleasure of celebrating this milestone not only with my local Samoan community but with the wider Queensland Samoan community. I do not want to spend too much time on this—I will brag for a very short moment—but I have been honoured by the Samoan community with a title, so this is to honour them for the privilege and honour they have given me.

I am now officially a Samoan chief; my title is Taamelalagi. Receiving this honour has truly been one of the highlights of my parliamentary career. It was a very long ceremony. Let me assure you that the Samoans do not cut it halfway when you become a Samoan chief. A number of church services were held and I did have to partake of the kava—

Mr Broadbent—Do we have to bow to you?

Mr RIPOLL—No-one has to bow to me, please—and I have my ceremonial dress and other things. I also want to mention the event that was hosted by President Reverend Setu Faaninira. It was a great day; it was an amazing celebration, in the western corridor, of all

things Pacific island and Samoan. They are very proud of their country, but they are very proud of Australia as their new country as well and they are working very hard.

I also want to mention the Samoan community advisory council based in Ipswich and the good work that they do. They have recently received a \$20,000 mental health grant from the federal government. I am proud of that and of the work they have done to establish that and assist people within their own community.

In wrapping up, I am very proud not only of the spirituality but also of the multiculturalism of my electorate and I will continue to represent them well. (*Time expired*)

Flinders Electorate: Mornington Peninsula Planning

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (11.01 am)—It gives me great pleasure to rise in response to events on the Mornington Peninsula within my electorate of Flinders and to set out a three-point plan to protect the peninsula. This is in relation to certain planning congestion and public transport challenges we have. The three-point plan, firstly, is about there being no high-rise for Hastings and no high-rise for the peninsula. Secondly, it is about better public transport. And, thirdly, it is about better public safety.

In turning to the first of these issues about the idea of planning for the peninsula, we need to understand the character of what the Mornington Peninsula is, should be and can be for Melbourne, Victoria and Australia—not just over the next 30 years but over the next 50 years and 100 years. We need this sense of higher purpose and vision. To me, and to those people who live on the Mornington Peninsula, who recreate on the Mornington Peninsula and who believe in the Mornington Peninsula, its role is not as a dormitory for Melbourne but as a place of sanctuary. It has a wonderful balance between coast and rural hinterland for the residents who take their place on the peninsula, who believe that the peninsula should not be overcrowded and should not lose its fundamental character as a place of essential environmental protection and who believe that it is one of the great urban environment sanctuaries of the world. Places such as the Monterey Peninsula come to mind. The Mornington Peninsula has a place in that pantheon, along with areas such as Willunga in South Australia. These are examples of how we can combine rural living with population on the edge, as a sanctuary for our urban places.

There is a proposal, outlined this week, for high-rise in Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula, and I want to make a clear stand that I am against that. On my watch, in my time, it is my duty and my responsibility to stand against this. I support the idea of the three activity centres for the Mornington Peninsula area in Hastings, Somerville and the Rosebud area, but that does not mean high-rise. There is a place for responsible medium-density building up to three storeys, as has been the case in Mornington. Mornington residents in McCrae and Rosebud have stood against high-rise, and exactly the same principle should apply to and be available to the residents of Hastings and Somerville. No high-rise for Hastings; no high-rise for Somerville. Let us give these people a break and preserve the essential characteristics of the Mornington Peninsula while being responsible and giving a sense of hope and aspiration for the future about what the peninsula can be.

This brings me to the second point, and it is about public transport. To designate these three towns and centres on the Mornington Peninsula as activity centres without additional state public transport has been a mistake. What we need to see is a comprehensive network of sup-

port from the state government, support which will assist with connections between these towns, and between these towns and Frankston and Melbourne, for residents of the Mornington Peninsula. If we are to reduce our reliance on automotive transport, if we are to reduce congestion, if we are to give people the sense that public transport is there to help them, then above all else the state needs to ensure that there is adequate support for the Mornington Peninsula, with additional services between the towns on the Mornington Peninsula and between the Mornington Peninsula and Frankston and Melbourne—so for Rosebud, for Mornington, for Hastings and for Somerville. Better, more frequent public transport is the responsibility of the state.

This brings me to the third area of our plan for protecting the peninsula—that is, the very simple idea that there has to be adequate public safety. At this moment in time the No. 1 public safety road challenge is what is known as the Baxter Tavern intersection in Baxter. This has been rated by many surveys as one of the state's most dangerous black spots. It sees the confluence of a number of roads; it has enormous congestion. Money was promised at the last state election and money has indeed been allocated, I am told, but there has been no delivery. The Baxter Tavern intersection needs to be fixed. Work needs to commence; there is no excuse for the delay. Correct and protect this intersection now. (*Time expired*)

Petition: Federal Funding

Makin Electorate: KD Dance Centre

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (11.06 am)—Can I begin by congratulating the member for Oxley on his appointment as a chief of the Samoan people. I think it is a very distinguished honour and I wish him well in that regard. On Monday night, when I was speaking in the adjournment debate, I referred to a petition which my office had passed on to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions. I said at the time that, once the petition had been considered by the standing committee on petitions and had been cleared for presenting and returned to me, I would formally present it to the House. The petition was in fact considered yesterday by the Standing Committee on Petitions. It was cleared and I today take this opportunity to formally present it.

The petition takes the form of two petitions, but in total there are 4,576 signatories to it. It relates to a promise made by the Howard government to fund, to the tune of about \$2 million, the facilities at Tilley Reserve, in the electorate of Makin, and a place referred to as Harpers Field, which is the home of the Golden Grove Football Club, also in the electorate of Makin. The promise was made in the lead-up to the last federal election but the money was never delivered. The community, quite rightly, had their hopes built up, their expectations built up, that they would be receiving those funds. They are now petitioning the federal government, asking whether the new federal government will fund those much needed community facilities.

The petitions read as follows—

This petition of: Members of the Golden Grove football club & Supporters.

Draws to the attention of the House: Are you aware of the withdrawal of promised funding for club-rooms at the Harpers field sporting ground, home of the Golden Grove Football club. For the past 12 years this club has been using an unfit temporary transportable club house. Being one of the biggest football clubs in South Australia. This is devastating news for over 1000 players & parents. WHO IS TO BLAME?

And what is going to be done to get our children a safe and much needed facility?

We therefore ask the House to: Please join our fight to honour promises made to our community from 2,389 citizens.

To the honourable members of the House of Representatives

The 2008 Federal Budget revealed the \$1.2m Regional Partnerships funding to help upgrade The Golden Grove Football Club's homeground at Harpers Reserve has been scrapped. Budget papers also reveal the Rudd Government will not honour the previous governments promise of \$687,500 to revamp the Tea Tree Gully Soccer Club, Golden Grove Tennis Club, Fairview Park Netball Club and Golden Grove Little Athletics facilities at Tilley Reserve. This petition makes the following request:

The Federal Government reinstates the Regional Partnerships funding of \$1.2 million for the Golden Grove Football Club and the \$687,500 to upgrade the Tea Tree Gully Soccer Club, Golden Grove Tennis Club, Fairview Park Netball Club and Golden Grove Little Athletics facilities at Tilley Reserve.

from 2,187 citizens.

Mr ZAPPIA—While I am on my feet and talking about community organisations and organisations associated with recreation, I take the opportunity to speak briefly about the KD Dance Centre in Adelaide. The KD Dance Centre is run by Mr Keith Willshire and his son Daryl, as well as Katherine Geister. On Sunday last, I attended the winter mid-year studio ball of the KD Dance Centre, where they also present awards and results of exams to their students. I have been to a number of presentations of the KD dance studio and I am most impressed, not only by the quality of the dancers that I see on the night—and I am referring to children from around five years old right through to senior adults. That is one of the wonderful aspects of what I see. Here is a recreational, a social and a healthy activity that people of all ages and from all walks of life are participating in. For those of us who go to the presentations it is also a joy to watch them as they present their different performances. It is most entertaining. They present performances in all of the different dance styles, whether it is classical, modern, social, theatrical, Latin, new vogue and so on.

One of the other interesting aspects of the KD Dance Centre is that one of the young ladies who has been with the centre for some years, a very charming young lady who is also a wonderful dancer, Victoria Letheby, has on occasions competed in national dancing competitions and, more recently, was a finalist in the Miss Australia quest. Again, this is an example of the outcomes when people commit themselves to a particular activity, persevere with it over the years and, in so doing, develop their confidence and their ability to enter championships—whether it is state, national or, in some cases, international. I also found it interesting that the examiner for the dancing was Miss Meredith Solly, who runs Dancecorp Australia, which has a branch here in the ACT.

Congratulations to all of those people who were involved in that activity. I would love to see more of it and more people involved, and I certainly look forward to attending more activities and more presentation nights of the KD Dance Centre.

Mr Jonathan Cox

Ms LEY (Farrer) (11.10 am)—On 13 February this year, parliament apologised to the stolen generations of Indigenous Australians. On this morning speeches were made, yet for all of the words said, none resonated more closely with me than those from a constituent who came to visit me shortly after the official proceedings ended. Jonathan Cox from Deniliquin made the journey to Canberra to witness the apology. It has been 43 years since Jonathan was taken away from his birth mother and family. In the letter and documents Jonathan sent me follow-

ing our meeting here in Parliament House, he writes of how he feels about his removal from his natural mother:

I was taken away from my birth mother/family. I never knew my birth father. I only have a name. It was awful to be taken and then just signed away to be a ward of the state while still a baby.

Jonathan goes on to say that his records state, 'Find parents for this child':

I already had a parent, but they did not care about that. They just did it. I had no say in the matter.

Records handed to me from Jonathan and his adoptive mother raise the question of his natural mother's consent to adoption. Much of the documentation surrounding his adoption appear, and I use the words of his adoptive parents, 'confused and clouded'. Jonathan and his adoptive parents believe that his natural mother was misinformed by health professionals as to the status of his health as a baby. They believe she was told that he would be crippled throughout his life and signed adoption papers without knowledge that this is what the papers were. It is most likely that Jonathan was removed simply because his mother was poor and of Aboriginal descent. His mother's attempt to seek information about the health of her child after he was hospitalised as a small baby demonstrates that Jonathan was not unwanted or unloved.

I also find it alarming that on 12 April 1965 Jonathan's medical record stated that 'on admission, he was a bright-eyed, happy little boy with no obvious traces of aboriginal blood'. This clear reference to his race, and other references that suggest his mother was unreliable, indicate the problematic and very serious nature of the reason why he became a ward of the state. It is through descriptions such as these that we see, for the stolen generations, the issue was less to do with possible abuse and neglect and more to do with the colour of skin.

Since Jonathan was removed from his mother, he has only seen her on two occasions. He poignantly says:

She never put her arms around me the first time and not the second time ... the love between us was destroyed when they took me away (from her).

After Jonathan's visit to Parliament House, his adoptive mother wrote to me. In her letter, dated 22 March 2008, Mrs Marie Cox notes:

It is remarkable that Jon has come to some understanding. His removal from his family devastated him for a long time, I don't think he will ever recover.

In reference to the apology, Jonathan says:

I felt like a huge weight was taken off my shoulders. As to compensation, if it happens, it happens. No amount of money will make up for all the pain and loss that I, and so many others have suffered.

I also cannot imagine the pain and betrayal that Jonathan's adoptive parents felt when learning that his natural mother did in fact want her baby to return home to her from hospital. On behalf of Jonathan, I would like the House to join me in honouring the work that Marie and Ron Cox did not just for Jonathan but for all the Aboriginal families they helped to look after.

It is unfortunate that while Jonathan's experience is unique his story is not. Closing the gap of Aboriginal disadvantage is a crucial issue for this parliament right now. I believe that the apology is an important part of working towards this and so is the sharing of Jonathan's story here today. I hope that in 10 years time the expression 'closing the gap' will not be spoken of so much in this place, nor will it be used as a by-line for attractive or sensational media stories. Jonathan and his adoptive parent have both thanked me on different occasions for listening to their story. Today I want to thank them. I want to thank Jonathan for sharing his story

with me and put on record that I have the utmost admiration for him and the courage he has shown in coping with such difficult circumstances. Jonathan's story is a powerful and timely reminder that debate surrounding Indigenous issues must transcend politics. So let us, as Jonathan wrote to me:

... move forward into a better future and never, ever, let such a thing happen again.

Petrie Electorate: Transport

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (11.15 am)—I rise today to speak about the importance of an integrated approach to the transport issues in my electorate of Petrie. With the electorate of Petrie stretching from Stafford Heights all the way up to the Redcliffe Peninsula, with the western boundary running along the Bruce Highway to the north and the eastern boundary linking Brisbane and the Gateway to Redcliffe via the Houghton Highway bridge, there are many transport issues that need to be addressed. It is paramount that the three levels of government work together to plan long term for our roads and public transport infrastructure in the area.

I recently had the pleasure of opening the new Hamilton Road upgrade with the Brisbane City Council. This project was partially funded by the federal government through Roads to Recovery, with the Commonwealth contributing over \$22 million and the council contributing approximately \$26 million. This was an important extension and upgrade for the inner western area of Brisbane.

In the outer northern area of Brisbane, as part of the commitment to improve access to and from the Redcliffe Peninsula, the Queensland government has already committed \$315 million to the construction phase of the Houghton Highway duplication project. This project has already commenced and is due to be completed in 2011. The project involves construction of a new 2.7-kilometre bridge between Brighton and Redcliffe and will link the people of the peninsula with Brisbane. I know that the people in my electorate are pleased that construction of the bridge duplication has commenced. However, the bridge will deal only in part with the ongoing transport issues in the electorate. In the southern end of the electorate, the most significant issue in relation to transport is road congestion and access to public transport. Much more needs to be done in this area. As we know, there is ongoing investment in infrastructure in roads occurring throughout south-east Queensland with more work being proposed for northern Brisbane through bypasses and tunnels. The state government is also in the process of consultation on the western corridor that could see an improvement in roads in the area, including Everton Park, Aspley, Carseldine and Bracken Ridge. I look forward to working with the local community and the state members to ensure that any proposed infrastructure will benefit the whole community.

The Rudd Labor government has also committed in the budget, fulfilling an election promise, to \$125 million to get moving on the \$2.5 billion northern missing link from the Gateway Motorway at Nudgee to the Bruce Highway at the South Pine River. This builds on the Queensland government's commitment to the Gateway Motorway duplication project—Queensland's biggest ever infrastructure project. It is extremely important to the people in the north of my electorate to have this missing link addressed. This will ensure a free-flowing motorway so that people and freight can move around the city and the region.

Having highlighted these projects, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. With the cost of failing to act on climate change much greater than the cost of acting, we must invest more in

the area of public transport. Whether you live in the north or the south of my electorate, people are frustrated by either the lack of bus services or the supply not meeting demand for commuters. More and more people are willing to catch public transport, whether for environmental reasons or for financial reasons with the increase in petrol prices and parking costs. We need to do more to support their willingness to use more environmentally friendly transport.

In the north of my electorate, there is ongoing frustration with the lack of reasonable access to an integrated public transport system. I acknowledge the many years of hard work by the Mango Hill Progress Association in their lobbying for a rail link to the Redcliffe Peninsula. I know that the state member for Murrumba, the Hon. Dean Wells, and the state member for Redcliffe, Lillian van Litsenburg, have both worked tirelessly to bring improved public transport to the area, as has the new Mayor of Moreton Bay Regional Council, Allan Sutherland.

I support the calls for a rail link to the Redcliffe Peninsula and for a more integrated approach to the public transport plan for the outer northern Brisbane areas. Areas such as Mango Hill, North Lakes, Griffin, Rothwell, Kippa-Ring and the whole of the Redcliffe Peninsula would benefit from such improved infrastructure. If we wish to bring more commercial enterprises to the area, provide job opportunities and training opportunities, we need to have a long-term transport plan. A rail line in itself will not address all of the issues, but with the support of local and state governments, in conjunction with the federal government, I believe much can be achieved. It is important to deliver this not just from a social perspective but also from an economic perspective. These people deserve to be part of the wider investment in infrastructure in south-east Queensland and nationally. I encourage the Moreton Bay Regional Council, the Queensland government and the federal government to recognise the needs of this area and to help us address an area that has missed out for far too long.

Fuel Prices

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (11.20 am)—I raised an issue in question time yesterday with the Prime Minister in relation to fuel taxation, particularly in relation to the emissions trading system that is going to be implemented in 2010. I will follow up on a couple of the points. Firstly, I was pleased with the Prime Minister's answer. In terms of referring to the old taxation arrangements of fuel excise and the new proposed taxation arrangements via the emissions trading scheme and the impact that that will have on the price of fuel, I was pleased that the Prime Minister indicated that it would be a subject of the Henry review into taxation. I will explain the reasons for that question, because I think there are some underlying issues here, not the least of which is the climate change debate, but also the transparency of our taxation system.

Currently we have a taxation system in Australia on petrol and diesel that is based on a fuel excise scheme. That is locked in at 38c a litre at the moment. The history of that goes back to when it was a road maintenance tax in a sense. Partly it was implemented because of a prior oil shock. Prime Minister Fraser at the time suggested that we should prepare ourselves for the future by moving to a global pricing arrangement and also having an excise placed on the use of fuel, partly to discourage people from using V8 engines et cetera so that fuel efficiencies would come into place. Those things are all very good, but they are very much last century. A major proportion of that tax take was in fact into consolidated revenue. If you look at the 38c a litre that we have today, about 8c goes into roads for maintenance and construction.

Some would say that we do not have direct hypothecation, but that is almost irrelevant in this argument.

Road users are paying about 8c of their 38c for road maintenance and construction; it comes to about \$3 billion in the budget papers. The other portion is essentially into consolidated revenue, not to mention that there is also another 15c a litre or \$5½ billion received that goes through to the tax via GST, part of which is the tax on a tax component that the Prime Minister is also looking at. If we look at the bulk that is received into the coffers, there is about \$14.4 billion currently received. If we reduce the 8c a litre for road maintenance and construction, and I think that that would be a transparent tax arrangement that most people would look at, that brings us back to 30c a litre or \$11.4 billion. That is still a lot of money, but from that bulk amount of money you have to deduct the fuel tax credit scheme to eligible businesses, which is about \$4¾ billion. Essentially, you are back to a shortfall of \$6.6 billion if you revisit the way in which this tax is structured in light of the emissions trading scheme.

We are told by many that the cost onto petrol of an emissions trading arrangement will be roughly 17c a litre. In effect, if the Henry report revisits the taxation arrangements for fuel, you can have a system where you send a transparent message to motorists that they pay for the maintenance and construction of roads through a fuel tax and that they pay for the pollution that they cause through an emissions trading charge, which some people would call a fuel tax. In doing so, you do not necessarily have a situation where you add another 17c onto the current taxation arrangements.

I think the Prime Minister is setting a precedent—it is slightly different but nonetheless it is a precedent—by saying that the Henry report will look at the GST on excise arrangement, the 3.8c a litre. We have had this massive debate about the 5c a litre and the 3.8c a litre. I think we do have to do something about climate change, and I would encourage the government to do something about it—it is a very important issue—but I think they have got to make sure that the fuel taxation messages that they are sending are transparent and not based on pre climate change tax agendas. (*Time expired*)

Lindsay Electorate

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (11.25 am)—I rise today to take note of some significant milestones reached by a number of local community groups in my electorate. I am very proud to offer my congratulations to Castlereagh Public School for reaching its 150th anniversary. I was honoured to be invited to celebrate the occasion with the Castlereagh Public School community on 2 May at a special commemorative assembly. This was followed the next day with a luncheon and the Back to Castlereagh Fair. Among the attendees were five former students who attended the school in the 1930s and had returned for the anniversary.

Castlereagh Public School was originally opened in 1858, founded by Edgar Fuller. Over the next 150 years it moved to various premises in the area, and it was spread across Castlereagh upper and Castlereagh lower schools until 1975. In a country as young as ours, it is not often we have the opportunity to mark such a significant milestone as this. I think it speaks to the vibrancy of the Castlereagh community that the Castlereagh Public School has been a cornerstone of education for local children over the past 150 years and will continue to be, I am certain, well into the future. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge in this place the people who organised the anniversary celebrations—in particular, former principals Di-anne Knight and Leon Lentfer; Melinda Clark and Kathy Willet, parents of former students;

Mary Vella and the hardworking members of the P & C; former student Helen Dixon; and current staff Lesley Hillyard, Gillian Spray and relieving principal Dale McFadden.

Recently celebrating its 80th birthday was the Penrith branch of the Country Women's Association. Meeting for the first time at the Penrith council chambers on 28 March 1928, the Penrith CWA has been a mainstay of our community over the past eight decades. With more than 30 members, including one life member, the Penrith CWA gives a helping hand where it is most needed. Members fundraise constantly, donating money and goods to the Nepean Hospital, local schools and local emergency services. I was very pleased to join the members for their 80th birthday at the Penrith Paceway earlier this year. I would like to place on the record my appreciation, and the appreciation of everyone in my electorate, for their continued support of our local community. The members, as the CWA anthem states, proudly stand in love to serve, and their service to the thousands of people in the Penrith area throughout their 80 years deserves the gratitude of the community, and I wish to thank them here in the nation's parliament today. I would also like to thank in particular the current president, Mrs Bev Byrnes, the secretary, Mrs Margaret Pope, and the treasurer, Mrs Joyce Gardner, for their work in organising the 80th birthday celebrations and leading the CWA in Penrith into its 81st year.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Penrith Community Kitchen, which celebrated its 10th birthday earlier this year. Penrith Community Kitchen was established to provide hot meals to the disadvantaged in our community and is a service that has continued to grow to meet the unfortunately increasing demand for assistance. If ever you needed a sobering reminder that families are doing it tough, you need look no further than the fact that the Penrith Community Kitchen served 20,600 clients last year. The volunteers at the Penrith Community Kitchen have worked tirelessly, often without public recognition, over the past 10 years to lend a helping hand to those who most need it. I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the entire team of the kitchen for all their hard work and their dedication over the past 10 years. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Mrs Margaret Goodridge, who founded the kitchen in 1998, and the coordinator, Mrs Cathy Craig. They are ably assisted by a growing army of volunteers and donations from local Rotary and Lions clubs, as well as many local businesses and residents. I congratulate these three organisations for the milestones they have reached. They have made lasting contributions to my local community, for which I thank them, and I look forward to their continued involvement in our community into the future.

Red Nose Day

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (11.30 am)—Red Nose Day is held annually on the last Friday in June and is the major fundraiser for SIDS. Tomorrow is Red Nose Day's 21st birthday. I hope I can speak for all parliamentarians to wish Red Nose Day in the campaign against SIDS a very happy 21st for tomorrow. SIDS and Kids is an international leader in the field of health promotion, dedicated to the elimination of sudden and unexpected infant death. In 2002, SIDS and Kids changed their name to reflect the expansion of services and now provide much needed counselling and support to all Australian families who have suffered the sudden death of an infant or young child. This service is provided free of charge and is available 24 hours a day every day of the year.

Since 1990 SIDS and Kids Safe Sleeping program has been instrumental in reducing the SIDS infant mortality rates by a staggering 90 per cent, equalling more than 4,500 Australian babies' lives saved every single day. I think we all in parliament support that staggering reduction. The question is: why a red nose? In 1988 the Red Nose Day concept was adopted by SIDS and Kids organisations around Australia. Since then people, cars, buildings and indeed parliamentarians around the nation have joined in the fun, but for a very good and very worthwhile cause. The Red Nose Day always brings a smile to the faces of people, including, of course, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament. Wearing a red nose, whilst we can be seen as somewhat silly and frivolous, is for an outstanding cause. Proceeds from the Red Nose Day assist in providing a range of vital services and programs: a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year crisis outreach and ongoing bereavement support for families and the community following the sudden and unexpected death of an infant or child from 20 weeks to six years; our SIDS and Kids Safe Sleeping program, an evidence based health promotion campaign; and research into the causes and prevention of sudden and unexpected deaths in the perinatal period and infancy.

In 1988, when Red Nose Day first started, 479 Australian babies died from SIDS. With Red Nose Day income, SIDS and Kids organisations funded research and produced the SIDS and Kids Safe Health program campaign leading to a drop to just 73 SIDS deaths in 2003. A million face noses were sold on that very first Australian Red Nose Day raising over \$1.3 million. In 1989 two million red face noses were sold nationwide at \$1.50 each, and a new button badge costing \$2 was included with a picture of a chicken saying, 'I'm too chicken to wear a red nose'. The price of \$2, of course, included a fine of 50c for, frankly, not wearing your red nose.

Within Fadden, the fastest-growing electorate in the nation, and the electorate I represent, a great organisation called Paradise Kids seeks to work to support those children and those parents who have suffered. Paradise Kids is not for profit. It is a support group for parents, kids and families who have lost a sibling, child or parent. They offer grief and loss counselling. The Paradise Kids program is tailored to all age groups. There is a program run for teens and also one offering one-on-one counselling for all paradise kids and the children that are part of the program. We all here in parliament support many worthy causes. I join my many parliamentary colleagues in wishing SIDS and Kids a very happy 21st birthday for tomorrow. I thank them for their work across the nation in highlighting the need for more research and more investment in the SIDS programs and salute them for their great work in reducing the SIDS rate of death by over 90 per cent.

Australian Masters Games

Mr MARLES (Corio) (11.35 am)—I rise to inform the House that we are now just 238 days from the commencement of one of the most important sporting events in the nation's calendar—the 12th Australian Masters Games. The Masters Games is an event that exemplifies the commitment with which our nation engages on the sporting field. At a time in life when Western social convention suggests people begin to wind down their sporting commitments, withdraw from contact sports and engage in less physically demanding and arduous activity, Australians seem to be gearing up. So much so it is anticipated that in excess of 10,000 athletes will register to participate in the 70 different sports on offer during next year's

games, making it the biggest Masters Games in the 22-year history of the event. It will host more events and athletes than the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

From the host city I am happy to report that Geelong is busily preparing itself for the arrival of the athletes and their families, friends and supporters. Come 20 February next year it is our intention to provide the nation with not only the biggest but also the best Masters Games yet held. It is envisaged that the Masters Games will now rotate on a biennial basis between Geelong, Canberra and Adelaide. It is for this reason I wish to inform the House of the formation of the Parliamentary Masters Games Committee. The member for Adelaide, who is, of course, the Minister for Sport; the member for Canberra; ACT Senator Kate Lundy, who is a Masters Games bronze medallist in rowing; the member for Corangamite; and I have all agreed to form this committee. I will also be inviting other Adelaide and ACT MPs to participate in the committee if they wish. It is our collective hope that this committee will provide a forum which can liaise with the Masters Games organisers and through which we as parliamentarians may discuss and promote ways in which the Commonwealth can assist with the ongoing success of the Masters Games. It is a body that we hope will serve the best interests of the Masters Games organisers, much in the same way that their hard work and diligence aid the greater Australian community.

For 10 days between 20 February and 1 March next year the Greater Geelong region will be on show. To that end we shoulder a heavy burden of expectation following the immense success of the previous Masters Games, particularly the 2007 games held in Adelaide that also incorporated the first Australasian Masters Games. However, the people of Geelong love a challenge. I know that at a local level planning for the event has been underway for quite some time.

To ensure the success of such a large sporting festival, a wide array of volunteers are needed both before and during the games. I take this opportunity to invite all members of the Geelong community to consider ways in which they can assist by visiting the event website: www.australianmastersgames.com. This is a fantastic opportunity for the Greater Geelong region to showcase itself on the national stage. Whether they participate as an athlete, operate a local business or assist as a volunteer, I hope that all Geelong people get involved.

I also use this opportunity to encourage the wider Australian community to participate in the games. Those individuals who compete in the 12th Australian Masters Games shall take with them the memories of having visited a region that has some of the best beaches, restaurants and wineries in the country, is the gateway to one of the world's most spectacular scenic touring routes and, given the sporting theme, is the home of some of Australia's best sporting facilities and of course the nation's premier football team.

The 70 sporting events of the 12th Australian Masters Games shall be spread across 80 different sites around the Geelong region, one of which is Geelong's Skilled Stadium. In the most recent budget the Rudd government committed over \$14 million to upgrade the existing facilities at Skilled Stadium. Skilled Stadium is an important sporting and cultural icon in the life of the Greater Geelong community. Host to various sporting and social events, the centrepiece of the Kardinia Park sports precinct and the home of the Cats, it shall again be a focus during the Masters Games. I look forward to hosting the Minister for Sport, the member for Adelaide, next Tuesday in my electorate, when we will visit Skilled Stadium along with a number of other sporting facilities in Geelong. The minister will be taking the time to inspect

the progress of the Skilled Stadium redevelopment. I am sure she will use the opportunity to impart her experience of the 11th Masters Games in Adelaide as well as to encourage Australians to participate in the 12th Masters Games, with the official athlete registration period opening next Monday, 30 June.

The 12th Masters Games will be a fantastic event. It will be fantastic for the community of Geelong and fantastic for all of those athletes who will participate. Again I encourage the people of Geelong to get involved and assist in the staging of the games in any way they can. To the nation: we look forward to seeing you come 20 February next year.

Age Pension

Mr IRONS (Swan) (11.39 am)—I rise today to discuss the Rudd government's lack of focus towards the plight of age pensioners in Australia. All across Australia, senior citizens are making a valuable contribution to our society. Whether they are volunteers or helping look after their grandchildren, senior citizens are an integral part of our community. However, despite this, Australia's seniors are now in a state of despair over the Rudd government's lack of care for them. The first sign to emerge which showed this government was not focused on age pensioners was back in March, when Mr Rudd would not commit to the pensioners and carers bonus. This caused widespread concern within the community, especially among age pensioners, who were already struggling to survive on measured pensions and had factored in their annual bonus in their household budgets. Thankfully, senior citizens, Australians and the opposition were loud and clear in saying that we would not tolerate the more vulnerable members of our community being neglected for cost-cutting measures, and the Rudd government performed a backflip—the first of many to come.

The Rudd government's disregard for Australia's elderly was made clear again when aged care was not an agenda item at the 2020 Summit and only one per cent of summit delegates were over the age of 75. This is despite the fact that older Australians make up 13 per cent of the Australian population, a figure that is projected to rise to 25 per cent over the next 40 years.

The Rudd government's lack of focus towards pensioners peaked on budget night in May, when the government did not increase the basic fortnightly pension rate despite the struggles that age pensioners are facing with rising grocery and petrol costs. However, Australia's pensioners are not timid and are fighting back with highly publicised rallies. Australia's pensioners have already taken a stand against the government, refusing to sit back and accept this unfair treatment from a government intent on only providing funding to where the votes are.

On Thursday, 5 June, more than 500 people packed into the Perth Town Hall for a forum to highlight the plight of cash-strapped pensioners. Seniors in attendance berated the government, saying the age pension is a pittance, particularly at this time of high inflation, high grocery costs and high petrol costs. Unfortunately, this rally was held during a sitting week and I was unable to attend to show my strong support for Australia's pensioners.

The following week, on Monday, 9 June, I was invited by the Carlisle senior retirees group in my electorate of Swan to speak and answer questions on the federal government. I found this session extremely informative and was concerned to hear from the group that senior citizens in my electorate were worried by a lack of certainty in their lives. Their expectations had been raised by Kevin Rudd during the election campaign and they now feel let down and un-

sure of their future. The Carlisle retiree group included members Mrs Edith O'Doherty, Mrs Maureen Castle, Mr David Mellett and Mrs Doris Kendle. They told me about the concerns of seniors, which include food and petrol prices, superannuation problems, a need for the rise in the pension, payment for volunteers, private health insurance, waiting times at hospitals and the increasing strain that the Silver Chain is under. They also spoke about the closure of the Royal Perth Hospital, which the state Labor government has flagged.

Age pensioners across Australia are speaking loud and clear, and they are telling us they are in financial difficulty and fear for their future. The costs of medications are too high; they used to be able to get their pharmaceuticals and prescription drugs for free, but now they have to pay. Single pensioners are struggling, as they only receive 59 per cent of the couple pension. When one partner dies, the fixed living cost remains. They had hoped for some relief from the federal government. Pensioners hoped the Rudd government had listened to them, but they now feel that no-one in the government is listening to them. Many widowed pensioners have never had paid employment. Instead, they worked hard in their homes, raised their children, looked after their houses and took care of their husbands. This, however, means they have not accumulated any superannuation and do not have adequate financial support. Many pensioners also do not have discretionary income at all and the pension is falling short of meeting their basic needs. Some pensioners are even cutting back on the necessities of life, risking their health and wellbeing.

Even the Western Australian state Labor MP for Victoria Park in my electorate has come out and criticised the Rudd government's neglect for age pensioners. In the local community newspaper, the *Southern Gazette*, the Labor member announced he will be presenting a petition to the Rudd government in a bid to rally for higher pension rates. The Labor MLA said that although pensions were indexed against inflation, they did not reflect Australia's cost of living. The Labor MLA even admitted the recent Rudd government budget failed to provide pensioners with suitable remuneration.

In summation, this government has made its priorities crystal clear: if you are not a working family or if you are in a demographic that does not predominantly vote Labor, then you do not matter. The Rudd government's abandonment of older Australians is jeopardising their health and wellbeing, along with their sense of being a part of the Australian community. The coalition recognises that the greying of Australia's population is an issue that needs to be addressed in order to protect more vulnerable members of our community.

Petition: Climate Change

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (11.44 am)—Today I wish to table a petition that has been certified by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions. It was sent to this place through me by Janet Cavanagh, Secretary of the Clarence Branch of Climate Change Australia. The petition contains approximately 2,500 signatures from people from the Page and Cowper electorates—in fact, from places all over Australia. The nature of the petition is as follows:

Recognition that human individual global warming is a serious problem confronting Australia's future and that the current policies and actions of the Australian government are inadequate to address this global challenge.

I note here that the petition began in 2005 and was finalised on 30 April 2006, so it refers to the previous government. I further note that the principal petitioner made it clear in her letter

to me that the previous local federal representatives in the seats of both Page and Cowper were not interested in climate change. That goes to the heart of the position of the then coalition government. I also note that the opposition are at it again—from not believing in climate change to maybe embracing it, to now cranking up a fear campaign by talking about trying to delay the introduction of the emissions trading scheme. That is a scheme that the Rudd Labor government is committed to introducing by 2010, a date known and accepted by local communities right across Australia. I have to ask: are the opposition committed to an emissions trading scheme or not? I note that the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Penny Wong, has said that the opposition do not know whether they are Arthur or Martha when it comes to climate change. Indeed this seems to be the hallmark of their tenure: flip and flop; one day inflation is fantasy and the next day it is a problem, and so on.

The petition includes a call for large support for renewable energy research and development and to increase the mandatory renewable energy target for electricity retailers to 50,000 gigawatts a year by 2010, or 10 per cent, and 100,000 gigawatts a year by 2020, or 20 per cent. It further says that the then current mandatory renewable energy target—and this is from a few years back—of 9,500 per year, or two per cent, would be likely to be met by December 2006, and it asked: then what? It was clear to us that a target of 20 per cent was the way to approach the issue of climate change. That was the Rudd Labor government's commitment in opposition in the lead-up to the election. As a government we are now making that a reality and rolling it out—another election commitment being delivered—and we are working with the states and territories to make sure that the whole country is on board.

One of the key initiatives around the whole debate of climate change is the Kyoto protocol. The Rudd Labor government went to the election the commitment to ratify that, and we did that on 12 December 2007. That, along with a domestic reduction target of 60 per cent by 2050 and the establishment of the emissions trading scheme by 2010, is a clear election commitment that is being met. I note that the protocol has been sent to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties to be further discussed. Some key climate change initiatives were rolled out in the budget, including investing in new technology—a package of \$1.9 billion—Climate Ready, helping households adapt and international leadership.

One other thing I would like to say about climate change is that, last Friday, when I was in Kyogle, marching with all the school kids and the Kyogle local reconciliation group in the lead-up to NAIDOC week, some of the young people from the climate change group at Kyogle High School said that this was critical for our nation, for government and for young people. They proudly presented me with a DVD and gave me other DVDs to present to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Climate Change and Water and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts.

The petition read as follows—

We, the undersigned, recognise that human-induced global warming is a serious problem confronting Australia's future and that the current policies and actions of the Australian Government are inadequate to address this global challenge.

The current Mandatory Renewable Energy Target of 9500GWh per year (2%) is likely to be met by December 2006. Once this target is met, investment in the Australian renewable energy industry will cease, as new generators will not be guaranteed access to Australia's expanding energy market.

At the same time, the Government is investing large sums into unproven 'clean coal' technologies.

Your petitioners request the House to call on the Government to:

- Provide a large increase in support for renewable energy research and development; and
- Increase the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target for electricity retailers to 50,000GWh/yr (10%) by 2010 and 100,000GWh/yr (20%) by 2020.

from 2,462 citizens.

Grey Electorate: GP Plus Emergency Hospitals

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (11.49 am)—I would like again to draw the attention of the parliament to the all-out attack on rural and regional communities in South Australia by the state government's plan to downgrade 43 country hospitals to GP Plus centres—a polite euphemism for bandaid centres. I briefly spoke on this alarming situation earlier this week but as the days go by there is more and more to be concerned about. I met with the Rural Doctors Association yesterday and discussed their vehement opposition to the plan. There are confirmed reports that doctors in a number of country communities to be affected by the proposed downgrading are reconsidering their futures. The electorate is outraged: 400 people turned out at a protest meeting in Cummins on the Eyre Peninsula and 800 at Yorketown. Further meetings are being planned as I speak—one for Peterborough tonight and one for Port Broughton next week. At the Yorketown meeting an official from Country Health SA told those present if their needs could not be met at their local GP Plus hospital they could attend their nearest country general hospital in Whyalla. Whyalla is 4½ hours away by car. Are they serious?

To recap: of the 43 hospitals to be downgraded, 23 are in my electorate of Grey. Their downgrading will have catastrophic knock-on effects for the local communities. The ramifications of these moves appear not to be understood by the government. The plan allows for four general hospitals to serve all of regional South Australia. Two of them will be in my electorate, which is an area more than four times the size of Victoria. They will be supplemented by five community hospitals, which will offer a lesser range of services. Those services are yet to be determined and none are guaranteed. The remaining 23 communities currently enjoying 24-hour local hospital services will become GP Plus centres. Inpatient services at these hospitals will be closed and beds will only be available for things like aged care and 24-hour observations. Maternity, acute care and general surgical services will be discontinued. That means people will have to travel—in many cases hundreds of kilometres—to reach reasonable levels of service. This is not acceptable in any way. For example, it will be 175 kilometres from my house to the nearest real hospital.

The inescapable fact is that this trashing of country services will lead to avoidable loss of life. Patient transport costs will escalate. There is potential for cost blowouts in an already overworked and understaffed voluntary based ambulance service. Disturbingly, it has come to light that the figures quoted as justification for the plan are flawed. The number of beds currently available has been overcounted by a factor of 30 per cent and shows inaccurately low daily bed averages. The community consultation claimed by Country Health SA has been totally discounted by those present at these consultations, who claim that the sessions focused on primary health care and that there was no reference made to a reduction in current services.

Significantly, the South Australian government has neutered the health voice of rural and regional South Australians with the axing of hospital boards—the people's representatives. It can only be assumed that this was part of the overall plan to muzzle dissent. What are the

longer term ramifications of this decision? It is a fact of life that, if you do not have hospitals, you do not have doctors. Doctors will not come and work in country regions if they have no support and cannot manage their patients locally. As I said earlier, already a number have indicated they will be giving up practice in rural South Australia. I have already heard stories of contacts in Queensland enticing doctors to a more friendly environment. The ramifications for communities without doctors reverberate through the whole economic structure of these communities. The loss of nurses and allied health professionals will follow as they find the environment has changed and they are not able to practise their skills.

What happens next? Most of these communities offer a reasonable range of aged-care services. It is the right and proper thing that we make sure that ageing residents are able to retire in their local communities. Our hospitals and our doctors are the foundations of these services. When residents make retirement decisions they will move to the centres that offer a full range of services. This plan will lead to the destruction of the fabric of these communities. The rural doctors have called on the Prime Minister to intervene to stop the implementation of this plan, to commission a community impact statement and to establish a charter of rural health obligations. I back those calls. The Prime Minister committed to governing for all Australians; he promised to fix hospitals. I call on him and on the Minister for Health and Ageing to govern for the people of rural and regional South Australia and to save our hospitals.

Human Rights

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs) (11.54 am)—I wish to speak on the importance of human rights and the Rudd Labor government's commitment to the protection of human rights since it was elected in November 2007. We should recall that this year is the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the pre-eminent international human rights instrument which fostered the development of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Today is International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, which is a reminder of the harsh realities of torture. Today is also the very day in which the convention against torture came into effect 21 years ago, in 1987. The use of torture is an abuse by the state of its powers, but it is worse than that: it is a denial of the humanity of the victim. It is the antithesis of those values on which we base our social and political systems. It is degrading and dehumanising, and its elimination demands international attention and action.

The Rudd Labor government is committed to human rights and ensuring the elimination of torture around the world. The Attorney-General has announced that he is beginning consultations on Australia becoming a party to the optional protocol on the convention against torture. This optional protocol was rejected by the Howard government, which meant that Australia joined China, Egypt, Libya, Cuba, Nigeria and Sudan in voting against the protocol at the United Nations. The main content of this protocol relates to the ability of officials from the Committee against Torture to inspect Australian detention facilities and to support the domestic national institutions put in place to prevent torture.

Senator John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee for President of the United States, is a war veteran who was a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War and was tortured in the infamous 'Hanoi Hilton'. In 2005 Senator McCain spoke very eloquently against torture in the United States Congress when he attached an anti-torture amendment to a defence ap-

propriations bill. That anti-torture amendment passed the Senate of the United States with 90 votes. In the lead-up to that vote, Senator McCain, when asked to reflect after his wartime experiences on whether torture should be used on terrorists said:

... every one of us—every single one of us—knew and took great strength from the belief that we were different from our enemies, that we were better than them, that we, if the roles were reversed, would not disgrace ourselves by committing or approving such mistreatment of them. That faith was indispensable not only to our survival, but to our attempts to return home with honor. For without our honor, our homecoming would have had little value to us.

The Labor Party has a long and proud history of support for human rights in Australia and the international law of human rights. It was a Labor foreign minister and later Labor leader, Doc Evatt, who helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Hawke Labor government signed and ratified the convention against torture, which I referred to earlier, in 1985 and 1989.

It is perhaps worth concluding by bearing in mind the words of the Chief Justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, Aharon Barak, who wrote in an historic judgement outlawing all coercive methods by the security forces of Israel:

We are aware that this decision does not make it easier to deal with that reality. This is the destiny of a democracy—she does not see all means as acceptable, and the ways of her enemies are not always open before her. A democracy must sometimes fight with one arm tied behind her back. Even so, a democracy has the upper hand. The rule of law and individual liberties constitute an important aspect of her security stance. At the end of the day, they strengthen her spirit and this strength allows her to overcome her difficulties.

We are very fortunate to live in this country free from torture. We should support the victims of torture and strive to continue to work with the international community to eliminate torture for all in the future.

Sri Lanka

Mr MURPHY (Lowe—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade) (11.59 pm)—On many occasions over the past 10 years I have raised on behalf of the people that I represent in this place the issue of the conflict in Sri Lanka. Today I again voice my concerns in the parliament about the ongoing war in Sri Lanka, particularly the killing of innocent victims, including the most innocent of all—the children. It is incumbent on all sides of politics to seek a peaceful resolution to the dispute that has engulfed the island of Sri Lanka and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. This intractable conflict has been going on for some three decades, and the time has arrived for all governments of the world to unite and to call on all parties to cease the bloodshed and work towards a peaceful solution and the resettlement and rehabilitation of Tamils in the war-torn region of north-east Sri Lanka.

I again call for the proper implementation of the 2002 ceasefire agreement, which was negotiated in good faith by all parties to the conflict. This ceasefire brought optimism for all Sri Lankans—and, indeed, citizens around the world—that there would be an end to the needless death and displacement of innocent people. All reasonable people, be they Tamil, Singhalese or Muslim, are demanding a peaceful solution from their government and the support of all governments around the world. Following the deaths of over 60,000 people, this is not much to expect.

All people of Sri Lanka deserve peace. They all recognise that no political, cultural or religious cause, conflict or dispute can be worth so many wasted lives. I have a document which I seek leave to table. It is in the form of a petition but it is not within the form outlined in *House of Representatives Practice*. Needless to say, it represents the voices of some 4,169 Australians, who on behalf of the people of Sri Lanka request that our government appeal to the government of Sri Lanka to do everything in its power to get a peaceful resolution to this dreadful conflict. I seek leave to table that document.

Leave granted.

Mr MURPHY—Thank you.

Question agreed to.

Main Committee adjourned at 12.03 pm, until Wednesday, 27 August 2008 at 9.30 am, unless in accordance with standing order 186 an alternative date or time is fixed.