

1998

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

No. 12

MONDAY, 7 DECEMBER 1998



1 The House met, at 12.30 p.m., pursuant to adjournment. The Speaker (the Honourable Neil Andrew) took the Chair, and read Prayers.

2 AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION—REPORT—STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr Jenkins presented the following paper:

Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the Republic of Korea and Malaysia, 4 to 19 July 1998—Report, December 1998.

Mr Jenkins and Mr Nugent made statements in connection with the report.

Mr Jenkins, by leave, again addressed the House.

3 SUPERANNUATION (ENTITLEMENTS OF SAME SEX COUPLES) BILL 1998

Mr Albanese, pursuant to notice, presented a Bill for an Act to remove discrimination against same sex couples in respect of superannuation benefits.

Mr Albanese made a statement in relation to the Bill.

Paper

Mr Albanese, by leave, presented an explanatory memorandum to the Bill.

Bill read a first time.

Ordered—That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting, in accordance with standing order 104A.

4 REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENTS

Mr Nehl, pursuant to notice, moved—That this House:

- (1) regrets that the action of the NSW Government in progressing the regional forest agreements for north-east and lower north-east New South Wales has forced the Commonwealth Government to withdraw funding of \$40 million; and
- (2) calls on the NSW Government to act with responsibility to protect the future of the forest industry.

Debate ensued.

At 1.45 p.m., the time allotted for the debate having expired, the debate was interrupted in accordance with standing order 106A, and the resumption of the debate was made an order of the day for the next sitting.

5 MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Members' statements were made.

6 QUESTIONS

Questions without notice being asked—

Paper

Mr Anderson (Minister for Transport and Regional Services) presented the following paper:

Airspace management system—Copy of letter from Mick Toller, Director, Civil Aviation Safety Authority to Mr Anderson, 3 December 1998.

Questions without notice continued.

7 PETITIONS

The Clerk announced that the following Members had each lodged petitions for presentation, viz.:

Mr G. J. Evans, from 1182 petitioners, praying that candidates and political parties at the next federal election be urged to place any party promoting racial and cultural division last on how-to-vote cards.

Mr Fahey, from 154 petitioners, praying that certain action be taken to prevent political violence in Cambodia and install a truly democratically elected Government.

Mr Fitzgibbon, from 461 petitioners, praying that the use of the adversarial method in cases before the Family Court not be used.

Mr Fitzgibbon, from 314 petitioners, praying that the child support system be completely overhauled.

Mr Fitzgibbon, from 21 electors of the Division of Hunter, praying that existing postal services be retained in rural and regional Australia.

Mrs Gallus, from 13 petitioners, praying that the proposed Sexuality Discrimination Bill be rejected.

Ms Hall, from 179 electors of the Division of Shortland and adjoining areas, praying that a goods and services tax be rejected and certain action be taken to ensure a just, fair and enforceable tax system.

Ms Hall, from 128 electors of the Division of Shortland and adjoining areas, praying that any further sale of Telstra be rejected and that Telstra's profits be used for the benefit of all Australians.

Ms Hall, from 80 electors of the Division of Shortland and adjoining areas, praying that the National Competition Council's proposals to deregulate Australia's postal services be rejected and that Australia Post's community service obligations be extended.

Dr Lawrence, from 127 petitioners, praying that uranium mining at Jabiluka be stopped.

Dr Lawrence, from 15 petitioners, praying that certain actions be taken to protect all native old growth, wilderness and other high conservation value forests in Australia.

Dr Nelson, from 2954 petitioners, praying that the Minister for Health and Family Services be instructed to negotiate a fair deal for general practitioners and their patients in the setting of Medicare rebates.

Dr Nelson, from 30 petitioners, praying that banking and communication legislation be enacted to limit the potential harm of legalised gambling from the home.

Mr Truss, from 1852 residents of Queensland, praying that increased funding be provided for research into osteoporosis, to raise public awareness and to enable its early detection.

Mr Williams, from 25 pensioners, superannuants and retirees, praying that funding be provided to the Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation.

Petitions received.

8 AUSTRALIA-TURKEY RELATIONS

Mr Sercombe, pursuant to notice, moved—That this House notes:

- (1) the special relationship between Australia and Turkey, which developed out of mutual respect engendered by the horrific experiences of the First World War;
- (2) that Turkey is a modern, secular state with which Australia should further enhance relations;
- (3) the importance of Turkey as a trade and investment partner in its own right and as a base for Australian trade efforts in the Middle East and Central Asia;
- (4) the significant contribution of Turkish migration to Australia's economic, social and cultural development; and
- (5) that Turkish speaking residents of Australia have contributed significantly to the Australian community by their approach to potentially divisive issues that could undermine harmony in our multicultural society.

Debate ensued.

Debate adjourned, and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.

9 BANK CLOSURES

Mr Mossfield, pursuant to notice, moved—That this House:

- (1) notes the increasing number of closures of bank branches within the Australian community;

- (2) agrees to refer the issue of bank closures to the Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs to take evidence as appropriate and consider appropriate recommendations to place before the House; and
- (3) determines that, as well as the general reference, the standing committee also inquire into and report on the increasing number of service reductions within communities and the increasing difficulties with which remaining services are able to be contacted by local residents where services are reduced or removed.

Debate ensued.

Debate adjourned, and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.

10 GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Pursuant to the provisions of standing order 106, the order of the day having been read—

Question proposed—That grievances be noted.

Debate ensued.

Paper

Mr Tanner, by leave, presented the following paper:

Ocalan, Mr Abdullan—Presence in Italy—Message to His Excellency, Mr Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, President of the Republic of Italy, 23 November 1998.

Question—That grievances be noted—put and passed.

11 ALTERATION OF HOUR OF NEXT MEETING

Mr Hockey (Minister for Financial Services and Regulation) moved—That the House, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 8 December 1998, at 2.30 p.m.

Question—put and passed.

12 A NEW TAX SYSTEM (GOODS AND SERVICES TAX) BILL 1998

The order of the day having been read for the resumption of the debate on the question—That the Bill be now read a second time—

Debate resumed.

Ordered—That Mr Crean (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) be granted an extension of time.

Mr Crean moved, as an amendment—That all words after “That” be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: “the House:

- (1) condemns the Government for seeking to introduce a GST which is an unnecessary, unfair, job destroying tax which discriminates against low and middle income earners, the aged and families;
- (2) condemns the Government for putting at risk the low inflation environment delivered by Labor by proposing to introduce an inflationary GST which will put at risk the low interest rates made possible by low inflation;

- (3) condemns the Government for placing a higher priority on imposing a GST on Australian families that will make the tax system less equitable, rather than addressing tax avoidance loopholes, which would improve the equity of the tax system;
- (4) condemns the Government for the hypocrisy of claiming that hidden indirect taxes are unfair merely because they are not separately disclosed to consumers and then proposing a massive new GST which will also be hidden from consumers even though a retail tax can simply be made transparent to consumers; and
- (5) condemns the Government for granting the GST a higher legislative priority than all of the following related matters which have not as yet been introduced into the Parliament including:
 - (a) those matters listed below which are contingent on the GST package which the Government is hiding from the Australian people and from the Senate inquiry process such as:
 - (i) the mechanism by which the rate of GST is supposed to be locked in;
 - (ii) the amendments to the Trade Practices Act which will grant the ACCC greater power to police the changeover to the GST regime which the Government claims will result in all of the reductions in Commonwealth and state taxes being passed on to consumers;
 - (iii) excise arrangements for petrol and diesel, involving supposedly retail price neutral shifts in petrol prices and a 25 cent reduction in diesel;
 - (iv) the repeal of the so-called safety net excise arrangements which were implemented after the High Court ruled State business franchise fees to be unconstitutional;
 - (v) the luxury car tax;
 - (vi) the wine equalisation tax;
 - (vii) repeal/amendment to the Diesel Fuel Rebate Scheme;
 - (viii) the First Home Buyers Scheme;
 - (ix) the guaranteed distribution of GST revenue to the states; and
 - (x) the \$500 million GST start-up package for small business; and
 - (b) those related taxation/equity matters which are not contingent on the GST but which should be made available to the Australian people for their consideration including:
 - (i) providing a Fringe Benefits Tax Exemption for remote area housing provided to employees in the mining industry;
 - (ii) the repeal of Commonwealth Local Government Funding Legislation;
 - (iii) changes to childcare assistance;

- (iv) excise arrangements for tobacco;
- (v) the entity taxation regime involving taxing companies, trusts, life insurance etc. under one common set of arrangements;
- (vi) the business taxation measures involving the deferred company tax (ie full franking of all dividends) and the possible changes to the corporate rate and business concessions arrangements;
- (vii) the new employer withholding arrangements which will replace the PAYE, PPS and RPS systems;
- (viii) share buy-backs and liquidations;
- (ix) extending capital gains tax relief and the retirement exemption for small business;
- (x) limiting the existing Fringe Benefits Tax Exemption for non-profit organisations to \$17 000 gross-up value for each employee;
- (xi) the anti-avoidance legislation addressing complex chains of trusts;
- (xii) the repeal of provisional tax and the introduction of the new Pay As You Go tax payment arrangements;
- (xiii) the changes to the timing of company tax arrangements; and
- (xiv) refundable imputation credits”.

Debate continued.

Paper

Mr Fitzgibbon, by leave, presented the following paper:

New Zealand Inland Revenue—GST guide, December 1997.

Debate continued.

13 ADJOURNMENT

It being 10.30 p.m.—The question was proposed—That the House do now adjourn.

Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

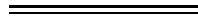
And then the House, at 10.59 p.m., adjourned until tomorrow, at 2.30 p.m., in accordance with the resolution agreed to this sitting.

PAPERS

The following papers were deemed to have been presented on 7 December 1998:

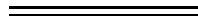
Aged Care Act—Principles under section 96-1—1998—

Accountability.
Accreditation Grant.
Classification Amendment (No. 1).
Committee Amendment (No. 1).
Flexible Care Subsidy Amendment (No. 1).
Quality of Care Amendment (No. 1).
Residential Care Subsidy Amendment (No. 2).
User Rights Amendment (No. 1).
Child Care Act—Determination—Child Care (High Need Regions) Amendment (No. 1) 1998.
Christmas Island Act—Casino Control Ordinance—Revocation of designation of casino premises 19 November 1998.
Customs Act—Instruments of approval 1998 Nos. 40, 41, 42, 43.
Export Control Act—Export Control (Orders) Regulations—Export Control Orders 1998 No. 3.
Higher Education Funding Act—Determination 1998 No. T24.
Remuneration Tribunal Act—Remuneration Tribunal—Determination 1998 No. 23.
Taxation Administration Act—
Determination 1998 No. TD 98/27.
Rulings 1998 Nos. TR 98/18, TR 98/19, TR 98/20, TR 98/21.
Veterans' Entitlements Act—Instruments under section 196B 1998 Nos. 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81.



ATTENDANCE

All Members attended (at some time during the sitting) except Mr G. J. Evans and Mr Snowdon.



I. C. HARRIS

Clerk of the House of Representatives