

English test stymies doctors

Practising doctors hit registration wall.



DOCTOR NO: Registration requirements under fire

Foreign-trained doctors living in Australia have voiced their anger and frustration at being unable to work because they are failing mandatory English tests which they claim are unfair, expensive and unnecessary.

The doctors' criticisms were aired to a parliamentary inquiry investigating the registration processes overseas medical graduates are required to complete before they can practise in Australia.

The registration processes are under scrutiny amid complaints they are onerous, expensive and a bureaucratic minefield.

Dr Michael Galak, from the former USSR, has been practising in Australia since 1981.

But he told a public hearing in Melbourne that his registration has now lapsed because under new rules he was required to sit several exams, including an English test, which he subsequently failed by half a point.

Dr Galak said the system was "chaotic" and "ad hoc". "It shifts the goal posts all the time," he said.

"My contention here is that when medical boards, the AMA included, tell us about the quality of service, about safety of patients and the consistency of assessment, the question which I have to [ask] is ... how come I was allowed to work for more than a quarter of a century as a doctor and be continuously registered?"

Dr Susan Douglas of the Overseas Trained Doctors Association told a public hearing in Canberra many doctors have complained to her that the English tests are unfair.

She said she knows of a GP who has been working in rural Australia for 10 years but is now no longer registered because she cannot meet new standards imposed.

"So this community is being denied a doctor because probably her grammar is not very good," she said.

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LATEST

WARNING FOR BILLBOARD ADVERTISERS

Billboard advertisers have been told by a parliamentary inquiry to toughen up their self-regulatory rules and better enforce them or face the prospect of government intervention.

The House of Representatives Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee has handed down its report into the regulation of billboard and outdoor advertising.

The inquiry was prompted by several controversial billboard campaigns in recent years such as those marketing sex performance products.

The report has made 19 recommendations aimed at strengthening the rules which govern what content can be shown in outdoor advertising campaigns.

"It cannot be turned off or put away if a consumer wishes to ignore it," committee chair Graham Perrett (Moreton, Qld) said.

While stopping short of calling for complete government regulation, the inquiry has recommended various changes to the industry's self-regulating system, including a separate code of practice for outdoor ads.

And it says if sufficient change has not been made by 2013 that a "co-regulatory" system be implemented.

Advertising and industry bodies have until the end of this year to tell the Attorney-General's Department how they will implement the inquiry's recommendations.

By the end of 2012 they must again report to show what changes they have made.

The Advertising Standards Bureau is considering its response. ●

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CAMPAIGN FUNDING INVESTIGATED

Australia's system of election campaign funding is being reviewed by federal parliament's Electoral Matters Committee. The public inquiry is canvassing ways to improve the system for funding political parties and campaigns, focusing on transparency and accountability, the role of third parties and how to limit the escalating cost of elections.

"Our goal is for a political funding system that is fair and transparent; one that we can all have confidence in," committee chair Daryl Melham (Banks, NSW) said.

Since 1984, when the current federal election funding and financial disclosure regime was introduced, public funding for political parties has jumped 162 per cent, costing \$49 million for the 2007 election.

And that \$49 million only represents around 20 per cent of the amount major parties spend on campaigns per election.

Twenty per cent of funds come from donations (which only need to be disclosed if they exceed \$11,900) and 60 per cent come from other sources such as membership fees and party investments which do not require transparent disclosure.

The inquiry comes after three years of stalled attempts to legislate changes to the campaign finance system. Measures to increase the transparency of political donations and funding of elections, which include lowering the donation disclosure threshold and prohibiting foreign donations, failed to pass the Senate in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Campaign finance reform was one of the proposals included in the agreement between the independent MPs and Labor to form government following last year's election. •

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"I think from a government point of view that is unacceptable. That has to be fixed."

Nasir Baig, from Pakistan, said he originally passed English tests in 2004 but it took him until 2007 to complete the rest of the exams required for registration.

He was then told he had to sit the English exams again because his first test was more than two years old and during that time he was not practising.

During the past four years he has re-sat the test over 19 times but cannot meet the requirement of obtaining a 'B' score in all four sections at the same time.

"I have financed thousands of dollars to complete all these steps. It is a very sad story," he said.

Since 2005 all international medical graduates have been required by the Medical Board of Australia to meet a certain standard of English proficiency.

Two tests are used to do this – an occupational English test and the International English Language Testing System.

Dr Douglas told the inquiry she believes there is a lack of transparency surrounding the occupational English test and doctors have trouble getting feedback on where they failed.

"There seems to be no ability to judge how people are being marked," she said.

"I have heard from people who have failed multiple times but their scores are all over the place. From an educational perspective that really raises red flags."

Dr Joanna Flynn of the Medical Board of Australia said although the

board requires that the exams be sat, it is not responsible for administering them.

She told the inquiry out of 1,000 consecutive applications for limited registration there were only 12 for whom the English standard was a problem.

"For most people [the English test] is not a barrier in terms of getting registration in Australia," she said.

Dr Flynn said the rule that requires doctors to re-sit a test if two years have lapsed and they have not been working would be reviewed under normal procedures.

Dr Christopher Butt, a retired GP who has done some English teaching, said there was a "lot of disquiet" about the English assessments.

"In the last nine years since I have been teaching, the level of English required to satisfy the Australian Medical Council has significantly increased. In fact many doctors now think that passing the English test is harder than passing the medical tests," he said.

But Ivan Thompson of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons said his college believed that the test needed to be tough and should in fact be tougher.

"We would maintain that in fact at a specialist level it is not too hard, it is too easy. We are dealing with high stakes here," he said.

Around 40 per cent of doctors working in Australia are foreign-trained and many practise in regional areas which struggle to attract local doctors. •

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NEW DAWN: Opportunities on the rise in Africa

Africa needs more missions

Growing links with Africa require attention.

Australia's diplomatic representation in Africa is shrinking at the same time as the continent is growing in significance.

Federal parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, which has completed a detailed investigation of Australia's relations with Africa, found our diplomatic representation in Africa has not kept pace with that of our major trading partners.

"The importance of Africa and African issues has increased over the past 25 years, but in the same period Australia's diplomatic presence has decreased from 12 posts to eight," committee chair Senator Michael Forshaw said when presenting the report prior to his retirement from federal parliament.

The committee has recommended a review of Australia's representation in Africa, with a view to opening an additional embassy in French-speaking Africa to fill the current gap in that region.

The committee also recommended the foundation of a Centre for African Studies at an Australian university in an attempt to encourage greater research into Africa.

"A centre will facilitate a coordinated approach to education and training both

at undergraduate and graduate level," Senator Forshaw said. "Further, it will establish a focal point for coordinating expertise on African issues."

With a mining boom across Africa attracting Australian resource companies into African mining projects, the committee has also called for Australia to implement the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), a process which requires governments to publish what they receive from mining companies which in turn publish what they pay.

"The EITI initiative promotes transparency and is aimed to reduce the risk of corruption," Senator Forshaw said.

Other recommendations include the development of a model regulatory framework for the resources industry that could be adopted by African governments; and greater coordination between government, non-government organisations and Australian resources companies to improve development aid delivery cooperation and social responsibility programs (see 'Deep impact' on page 50). •

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DEEPER TAX PROBE

Greater scrutiny of the Australian Taxation Office has been foreshadowed by federal parliament's financial watchdog.

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit already holds biannual hearings with the Commissioner of Taxation (pictured above) but has decided to undertake broader questioning of the ATO.

Committee chair Rob Oakeshott (Lyne, NSW) said at the next public hearing with the Tax Commissioner in September the committee intends to ask the ATO to detail how it takes on board and responds to reviews by other agencies, plus issues raised by industry and consumer groups.

"Integrity in tax administration is a critical foundation block of the Australian taxation system. Whilst evidence suggests in the majority of cases this is done well, the committee is concerned about the increasing number of complaints about the ATO," Mr Oakeshott said.

The committee's report has made a number of other recommendations aimed at increasing parliamentary scrutiny of the tax office, including the ATO reporting on what action it has taken to improve complaint handling and to address the underlying causes of these complaints.

The committee has also called for updates on the status of the 900 current cases of compromised tax file numbers, including what the ATO is doing to resolve the issue and their reasons for any delay. •

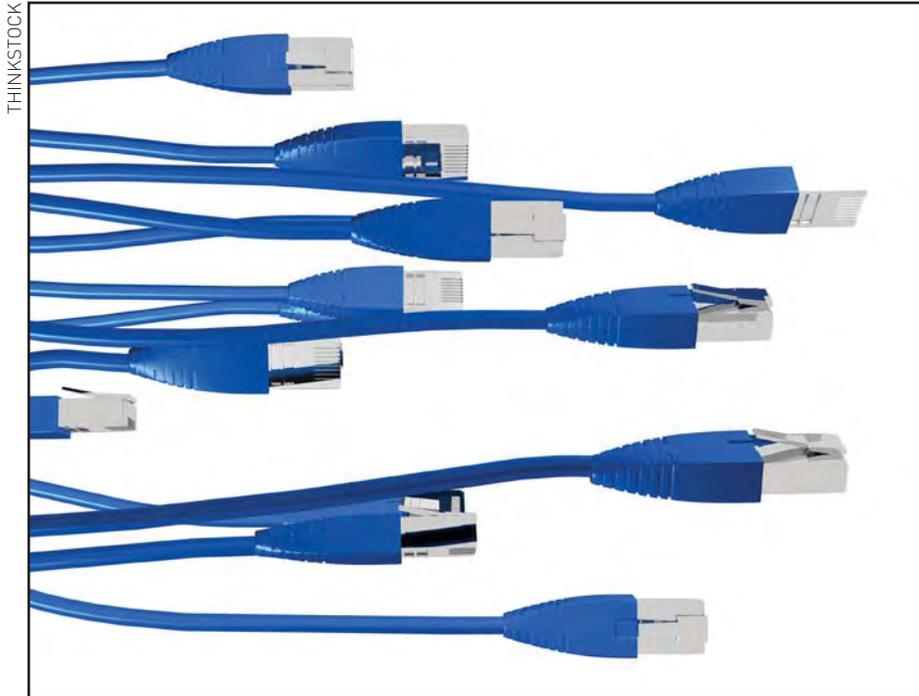
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Call for broadband equity

Connection costs queried for new homes.



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CHARGE AHEAD: *New homeowners could pay more*

Land developers claim new home buyers in greenfield housing developments will be unfairly charged to have the same access to the National Broadband Network that existing homeowners will be given for free.

At a public hearing of the new Joint Committee on the NBN, Housing Industry Association chief executive Graham Wolfe questioned who should pay for the delivery of the infrastructure that will enable fibre optic cable roll-outs into new developments.

“Existing home buyers will be delivered infrastructure to their house. If you are a new home buyer, the situation is different,” Mr Wolfe said.

“The Housing Industry Association has a very fundamental premise that housing affordability is critical to the delivery of homes to the Australian population, and that the addition of extra costs, whether they be hundreds of dollars or thousands of dollars, inevitably impacts on affordability and

inevitably impacts on people’s capacity to buy.”

Mr Wolfe said the HIA position is based on fairness, with the government already funding broadband delivery to most existing homes.

“That same NBN facility is going to be provided to 9.1 million homes around Australia, or 93 per cent of them, but there will be a funding obligation on new home buyers to pay for that same infrastructure,” he said.

“So it is not a question of whether or not it is good value; it is a question of whether or not there is equity between a person who owns an existing home and a person who is looking to buy a new home. From HIA’s perspective it does still go to the point of inequity for the new home buyer and to the question of housing affordability. It is another cost on a new home.”

The joint committee has also been debating the merits and costs involved with NBN Co becoming the dominant player in delivering broadband.

A smaller network provider, TransACT, has rolled out fibre networks past 200,000 homes across the ACT, Queanbeyan, Geelong, Ballarat and Mildura. It wants to continue providing broadband services into new housing developments.

But TransACT chief executive Ivan Slavich told the committee while TransACT supports the government’s emphasis on the rollout of fibre optic cable in new developments, they fear the ramifications of NBN Co becoming such a dominant player.

“The impact of this bill, together with the government’s overarching NBN policy and supporting legislation and initiatives, significantly affects the competitive landscape for future fixed line infrastructure competition in Australia,” Mr Slavich said.

“TransACT believes that the committee needs to consider the potential impacts on how the government’s NBN legislation and policies on technical standards looks to enshrine the NBN Co. as a monopoly provider of fixed line services in Australia, potentially displacing the private sector from the market altogether.”

TransACT wants a number of amendments to the legislation to encourage greater competition, including a share of the government subsidy provided to NBN Co.

Mr Slavich said TransACT can compete on the roll-out of broadband services to new housing developments. He told the committee a ballpark cost per home would be between \$500 to \$1,000 for rolling out optic fibre along the street frontage, or about \$3,500 per home for fibre to the premise.

“What we ask for is a level playing field so that we can compete on like terms. As it is, it will be difficult for us, as a smaller operator and from an economies of scale perspective, to compete with NBN Co,” he said.

“Competition will drive prices down because if you know that someone else is also bidding for the work you are obviously going to be as keen as possible to provide the lowest cost that will win you the business.”

Paul Cross, chief executive of OptiComm, another fibre deployment business, shared TransACT’s concerns about being sidelined by NBN Co from future greenfield housing developments.

“OptiComm probably has the widest and most extensive experience within Australia of fibre-to-the-premise GPON deployments,” Mr Cross said.

“Many of our employees have been involved in fibre to the premise for more than 10 years, and we have had to compete with a virtual monopoly through all of that period – that is, Telstra.”

He said Telstra through its market power and control of key infrastructure had long dominated fibre-to-the-premise rollouts and services for the vast majority of current greenfield developers and their residents.

“We therefore hope that it is not the intent or the outcome of this legislation that we see the minister’s much heralded structural reform of the telecommunications industry result in even less competition in greenfields,” Mr Cross said.

“This, we fear, could be the outcome for greenfields should we see government policy resulting in NBN Co simply replacing Telstra as the incumbent monopoly and perhaps being even further out of reach of competition due to additional legislation.”

In response the chief executive of NBN Co Mike Quigley said they had looked at using a number of possible suppliers to rollout broadband for new housing developments but had opted for Fujitsu as their one major partner because of the complexity of dealing with numerous technologies and numerous systems.

“Trying to integrate all of that would have been quite a difficult job,” he told MPs, at the same time questioning whether the smaller suppliers would have had the capability. •

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JUMPING ON BOARD: *Commercial links with Asian giants examined*

Focus on North Asia trade

Australia’s productivity would benefit by further developing the trading relationship with Japan and South Korea, according to the chair of a new parliamentary trade inquiry.

“It is important for Australia’s productivity to ensure that we strengthen our trading partnerships with these two countries, investigate how companies can take advantage of this and look at what the Australian government can do to strengthen trade ties,” Janelle Saffin (Page, NSW) said when announcing the latest review by federal parliament’s Trade Committee.

The inquiry will focus on the nature of Australia’s existing trade relations and will track emerging and future trends. It will also identify barriers to trade and investment, and examine the role of government to assist Australian companies take advantage of opportunities in the region.

Two way trade between Australia and the north Asian giants is already worth more than \$89 billion annually, making Japan and South Korea Australia’s second and fourth largest trading partners respectively.

Last year trade with Japan reached \$61 billion, including \$43 billion in exports, largely consisting of minerals, metals and beef. Japan also invested more than \$117 billion in Australia in 2010.

South Korea imported \$20 billion worth of Australian goods and two way investment totalled more than \$16 billion.

The committee wants to hear from industry, peak associations, academics, government agencies and individuals. •

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CHECK-IN: Photo ID may be needed to board domestic flights

Push for ID to board domestic flights

Security boost proposed for air and sea ports.

Passengers flying domestic Australian routes will need photo identification to board aircraft if recommendations to boost security at air and sea ports are adopted by the federal government.

Federal parliament's Law Enforcement Committee found that current security arrangements are not adequate to meet the challenge posed by criminal networks involved in the drug trade, money laundering, tobacco smuggling, counterfeiting and the illegal trade of plants and animals.

"The committee is deeply concerned by the level of organised criminal activity occurring in the aviation and maritime sectors," committee chair Senator Steve Hutchins (NSW) said.

"The prevailing security regime in the aviation and maritime sectors was introduced in the post-September 11

climate and focuses narrowly on the threat of terrorist attack.

"[The committee] makes recommendations in this report that would see the security regime extended to defend against the threat of organised crime."

The committee is seeking to reduce the vulnerability of the aviation sector by requiring photo identification to be shown before boarding an aircraft and creating a new criminal offence of travelling under a false identity.

"Organised crime figures are currently able to travel under false identities with impunity, facilitating criminal activity," Senator Hutchins said.

Former head of security at the Federal Airports Corporation Michael Carmody told the inquiry passenger identity was a weakness in aviation security.

"You can put yourself on an aircraft this afternoon, a 767, capable of flying anywhere, and no-one verifies either your identification or verifies you to the ticket to the bag," he said. "And when you enter the sterile area, because there are non-flying persons in that sterile area, you can swap your ticket with anyone and that person could then board the aircraft. This is just crazy stuff."

The Australian Services Union indicated that the increasing use of electronic check-in processes has reduced the ability of airline staff to assess the behaviour of passengers or check their identity.

Qantas was wary of increased security measures due to the lack of standard identity documentation and the cost of introducing the system.

Recommendations in relation to seaports include the creation of joint maritime taskforces in each state and the Northern Territory, a Commonwealth maritime crime taskforce, and increased port security including ID checks and CCTV cameras. •

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Time to act on youth custody shame

National disgrace says report.



IN JUSTICE: Incarceration rates too high for Indigenous youth

The rising number of Indigenous youth languishing in custody has been labelled a national disgrace by a parliamentary inquiry which has called on all governments to act urgently to reverse the trend.

The assessment is made in the report *Doing Time – Time for Doing* by the House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee.

The inquiry into Indigenous youth and the criminal justice system received 110 submissions and held 18 public hearings before releasing its 40 recommendations, which include:

- making sure those granted bail have a place to go so they do not remain locked up;
- the adoption of justice targets as part of the Closing the Gap strategy;
- cultural awareness training for police;
- a national program to provide local mentors to youth at risk;
- increased funding for substance abuse programs;
- comprehensive health screening for those in custody;
- consideration of options to increase the number of Indigenous people in federal parliament;

- finding ways to encourage Indigenous people to obtain their birth certificate and register births; and
- hearing tests for all Indigenous preschool children.

Indigenous youths are 28 times more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to be held in custody. In 2007, 59 per cent of juveniles in detention were Indigenous.

Between 2000 and 2009 the total number of Indigenous people in prison increased by 66 per cent.

Indigenous people make up a quarter of prisoners, but only 2.5 per cent of the Australian population.

Committee chair Shayne Neumann (Blair, Qld) said the statistics are damning.

“Sadly the incarceration rates for Indigenous young people have gotten worse – this is a national shame, a national tragedy and a national disgrace,” he said.

“It’s happened on the watch of governments of both political persuasions.”

Committee deputy chair Sharman Stone (Murray, Vic) said an enormous amount of work needed to be done to turn the situation around.

“I don’t know if there’s any other country with such escalation in incarceration amongst their indigenous population,” she said.

“We just have to make a difference because we can’t keep having this escalation that is basically a human tragedy.”

The committee noted many of the underlying factors identified as contributing to the problem, such as violence, family dysfunction, and access to education, were already identified by the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody 20 years ago.

The report said a large proportion of juveniles on remand will not be sentenced to custodial penalties but are in detention because they cannot meet increasingly strict bail conditions.

The committee received a large amount of evidence showing bail laws are having a serious impact on the incarceration of young Indigenous people and is concerned some are not granted bail because there is nowhere suitable for them to stay.

It recommended that there should be increased funding to provide better accommodation options for those granted bail.

The committee also heard evidence that a significant number of Indigenous people do not have a birth certificate and this stops them from becoming employed, getting a driver’s licence, opening a bank account or applying for a loan.

It has called on the federal government to find ways to encourage more Indigenous people to get their birth certificate and register newborn babies.

The committee also wants an independent commission established to investigate ways to get more Indigenous people into parliament.

It noted that while it is not an issue directly impacting on the reasons behind the over-representation of Indigenous youths in detention, more Indigenous people needed to be part of key decision making. •

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NEWS

Water buybacks targeted

Committee responds to wave of anger.



CHANGING COURSE: Report calls for new approach to Basin plan

Farming communities along the Murray and Darling rivers have welcomed a bipartisan report that has called for an end to non-strategic water buybacks and criticised the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's proposed cuts to farm water allocations.

The House of Representatives Regional Australia Committee inquiry was set up in the wake of widespread anger across Basin communities which feared the consequences for their farms, businesses and towns if the authority pressed ahead with plans to reduce water allocations.

Chaired by independent MP Tony Windsor (New England, NSW), the committee set out to balance the economic needs of farming communities along the Murray-Darling with the environmental needs of a river system long ravaged by over-allocation and a decade of drought.

During public hearings across the Basin, many irrigators, town mayors and business people rallied to tell MPs that these river communities faced annihilation if farmers' water entitlements were cut by thousands of gigalitres so as to return more water to the river's environmental flow.

Releasing the committee's report, *Of drought and flooding rains*, Mr Windsor said the health of the river system can be maintained by making significant water savings without the significant cut in allocations to irrigators.

"We believe our committee report does find a way in what we call a win-win solution," Mr Windsor said.

"Similar outcomes can be achieved through working with the community, working with government investment in terms of on-farm efficiencies and environmental water efficiencies, evaporative savings – a whole range of proposals."

The report recommended all non-strategic water buybacks be put on hold. It called for no mining projects to be approved in the Basin if they have an adverse impact on water resources. The committee also recommended the establishment of a national water fund to finance various water-saving projects as a joint venture between federal, state and territory governments.

The committee was scathing of the Basin Authority's consultation process before and after it released its guide to the proposed Basin Plan in late 2010, in which it proposed water cutbacks of between 3,000 and 4,000 gigalitres to ensure a more sustainable river system. The committee's report called on the authority to develop a proper community engagement strategy.

"It was very obvious the authority hadn't done a good job in terms of discussing the issues with the community," Mr Windsor said.

"To have the fairly brutal cuts to entitlement as a way to solve the obvious issues within the river system – the way in which that was marketed wasn't the correct way to go."

The committee's call for all non-strategic water buybacks to be put on hold was welcomed by all farming communities along the river system.

Victorian Farmers Federation president Andrew Broad said Victorian irrigators were also calling on the federal government to halt water buybacks until their full impact upon rural communities is assessed.

"It is disappointing that it has taken the release of this report to finally highlight the concerns of irrigators which have been so long ignored," he said. "We now expect the government to adopt the report's recommendations regarding a more strategic approach to buybacks."

Upstream the Queensland Farmers' Federation also supported the report's findings, especially the call to establish a water fund for water recovery programs. The QFF welcomed this fund's manager being responsible for strategic and localised approaches to buybacks as well as infrastructure programs.

According to the QFF, this approach should deliver "more accountable water recovery programs but we will wait to see if it will take a more responsive and cost efficient approach to water

recovery or simply result in another level of costly bureaucracy”.

“Irrigators will welcome quick action on the recommendation to cease all non-strategic water purchases by prioritising buybacks to achieve the lowest possible impact on communities.”

While the Australian Conservation Foundation welcomed the report, the environmentalist group was against the committee’s calls for voluntary water buybacks to be re-assessed.

ACF’s healthy rivers campaigner Arlene Harriss-Buchan said the inquiry has importantly reaffirmed bipartisan commitment to water reform and the implementation of a good Basin Plan.

“But we are very concerned by the suggestion that the successful and effective program of voluntary water buybacks should be suspended,” Dr Harriss-Buchan said.

“Voluntary buybacks return real water to the environment and provide real benefits for taxpayers’ investment. The efficiency and effectiveness of the voluntary buyback program has been acknowledged by the National Audit Office.”

Dr Harriss-Buchan said healthy communities depend on healthy rivers and for rivers to return to health the environment needs more water.

“But, as Environment Minister Tony Burke has said, delay is the enemy of water reform,” she said. “We must not put the brakes on the important voluntary buyback scheme.”

“ACF urges the government to reject any moves to slow down or stop the successful and effective program of voluntary buybacks of water entitlements.”

Water and Environment Minister Tony Burke, Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig and Regional Australia Minister Simon Crean all welcomed the committee’s recommendations in a joint response.

“We welcome this report as part of a process of building community and parliamentary support for reforms to deliver a healthy river system, economic capacity and sustainable communities in the Murray Darling Basin,” it states.

“The Murray Darling Basin Authority has committed to considering the findings and recommendations of the Standing Committee’s inquiry before releasing its Draft Basin Plan.

“The Gillard government wants Murray Darling Basin reform to deliver three outcomes: healthy working rivers, strong communities and sustainable food production.

“This report is important for the more than two million people who live in the Basin including farm communities that are committed to be efficient and sustainable contributors to Australia’s economy.”

According to the ministers, the government remains committed to delivering a final plan for the Murray Darling Basin to the federal parliament in early 2012. •

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Treaties scrutiny sidelined

Treaties Committee Chair Kelvin Thomson (Wills, Vic) has voiced his frustration over the lack of public scrutiny of some international agreements.

Mr Thomson told the House of Representatives the committee’s role in giving advice on international agreements is sometimes bypassed because amendments come into force before they are presented to parliament, even though the amendments are provided to signatory countries up to 12 months before they take effect.

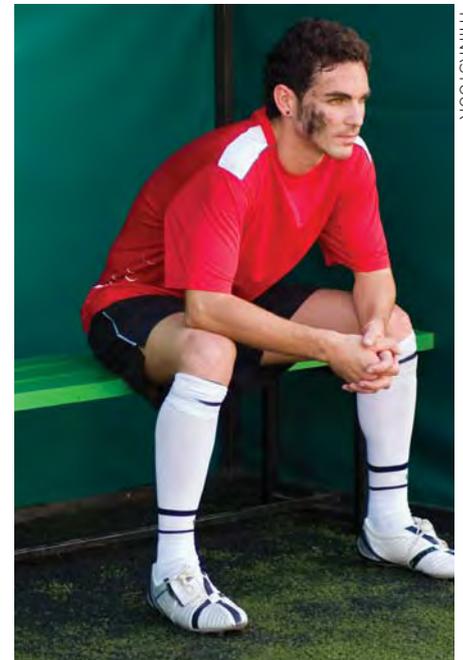
“The Treaties Committee plays an important role in the treaty making process by allowing parliamentarians and the public to have their say about treaties Australia is proposing to ratify,” Mr Thomson said.

“Regrettably some treaties come into force for Australia without the benefit of parliamentary or public scrutiny.”

Arecentexamplewastheamendments to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, which were provided to the Australian government in mid-2009 but were not tabled in parliament until November 2010, five months after the period for objections ended.

According to the Treaties Committee, parliament should have the opportunity before amendments take effect to examine the changes and advise the government to ‘opt out’ or attempt to have the amendments removed.

“There is enough time in this 12 month period for parliament and the public to make a material contribution to the outcome,” Mr Thomson said.



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BENCHED: Committee left out of the game on treaty amendments

In a subsequent hearing on other shipping-related treaty amendments, the Department of Infrastructure and Transport acknowledged the committee’s concerns.

“That recommendation is being acted on,” Ms Poh Aye Tan from the department’s maritime policy branch told the committee. “And I would like to assure the committee that all efforts will be made to ensure that future amendments...will be tabled in time to allow the committee to express a meaningful view.” •

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