



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

13 November 2002

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MR SPEAKER (Mr Berry) took the chair at 10.30 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Civil Law (Wrongs) Amendment Bill 2002 (No 2)

Ms Dundas, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory memorandum.

Title read by Clerk.

MS DUNDAS (10.31): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise today to present the Civil Law (Wrongs) Amendment Bill 2002 (No 2). This bill seeks to amend the recently passed act that codified tort law in the ACT. The bill recognises people within domestic relationships as family for the purpose of legal action following the death of a loved one and legal action in regard to nervous shock arising out of the injury or death of a loved one. The Assembly would be aware that I circulated amendments to this effect when we were debating the wrongs bill in October of this year. At that time I was prescribing cohabitation as another prerequisite for accessing the law in this area.

Concerns were raised at the time that the amendments may include some share houses and yet not recognise same-sex couples who have been together for years. So between the sittings I consulted with the Parliamentary Counsel, members of the queer community and others and I have brought back the amendments in a private members bill without the prerequisite of cohabitation.

The ACT Democrats are proud of our support for the queer community of Canberra and we are pleased that the government has agreed to investigate all legislation and policies that actively discriminate against gay and lesbian Canberrans. We look forward to the review.

I note in recent media comments that the Attorney-General is bringing in all the non-controversial amendments first and then opening up for debate the other areas which are controversial. By “controversial”, I think he means areas where members of the queer community are discriminated against and the discrimination is widely accepted—such as equal access to medical records or adoption. Just as an aside, Mr Speaker, the United Kingdom has just passed legislation allowing all couples to adopt, regardless of sexuality.

I understand that it may seem difficult to grant equal rights to members of the community who have been denied them for years, but I don't see the difference. These are not special rights: they are equal rights.

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Mr Speaker, action speaks louder than words. In the last sitting a new piece of legislation was brought in by the Stanhope government that defined family members, but it did not allow for the inclusion of same-sex couples in that definition. This bill will rectify that problem and allow all family members access to the courts, be they straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex members of our community here in Canberra. The ACT Democrats believe that there should be no second-class citizens in Canberra and nobody should suffer the indignity of having fewer rights. By passing this bill we will provide equal access to justice for all family members.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Stanhope**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Crimes Amendment Bill 2002

Mr Pratt, pursuant to notice, presented the bill.

Title read by Clerk.

MR PRATT (10:35): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Mr Speaker, the first and most important point that I can make—and I intend to labour this point a little—is that this bill is not intended to, nor in practical terms can it, undermine the recent legislation passed by the Assembly in relation to lawful abortions. While it is true to say that this anomaly was identified in the lead-up to the abortion debate, as a result of the level of scrutiny and analysis applied to the Crimes Act at that time, it is not true to say that this bill is designed to be a “backdoor” way of revisiting the abortion debate.

There are a number of key features in this bill that made very clear that lawful abortions in the ACT are recognised and sanctioned from the provisions of the bill. The very first amendment to the Crimes Act provided by the bill is the insertion of a new section 42A, subsection (1) of which states very clearly:

This section does not apply to—
(a) a lawful abortion; or

This new section does a couple of things in relation to the abortion debate. Not only does it clearly exclude lawful abortions from the provisions of the bill, it also enshrines in the Crimes Act an acknowledgment of “lawful abortions”. In addition, subsection 1 (b) of new section 42A also provides that the section does not apply to:

anything done by a pregnant woman in relation to her own unborn child; or

These are two vital paragraphs deliberately designed to separate the issues surrounding this bill from the issues surrounding the recent abortion debate in the Assembly. I understand fully the sensitivity of some members in relation to this issue, which is why

I have made a substantial effort to explain to members, both in the chamber and outside, that this bill will do nothing to affect the law changes passed by the Assembly recently.

Mr Speaker, I believe that this bill is of such importance that I will not be attempting to rush it through. I will be consulting fully and I will be taking each point of view expressed to me into consideration when assessing what amendments or changes may need to be made to the bill in order to make it more acceptable to a majority of members of the Assembly. Let me be very clear about that point: I will be consulting widely, both within the Assembly and in the wider community, so that every viewpoint is taken into account to ensure that the Assembly eventually passes the best possible piece of legislation.

A number of recent tragedies in Australia have highlighted what I believe is an anomaly in the Crimes Act. In New South Wales recently, Byron Shields, the son of Renee Shields and Ben Allen, lost his life following a hit and run by a drunken driver. Byron died in his mother's womb less than two months prior to his scheduled birth. The driver of the vehicle escaped a conviction for manslaughter because the court ruled that a seven-month-old foetus wasn't human. The New South Wales government announced plans to "review" the Crimes Act following this tragedy. However, with an election around the corner, there is little evidence that the New South Wales government is going to have the courage to do anything about this at all.

Mr Speaker, I don't think the ACT needs to have a similar tragedy before we take action to amend an outdated act. The ACT Legislative Assembly is better than that. I think it is better to look at preventative legislation—legislation that makes the laws clear, that makes people more accountable for their actions and the damage that their actions cause.

This bill is not just about reckless road incidents and other reckless actions: it is also about protecting women in cases of domestic violence. Surveys conducted in Australia indicate that almost one-third of pregnant women had experienced abuse. Broken down, this research also showed that 44 per cent of pregnant teenagers surveyed had been abused. The level of abuse ranged from being pushed, shoved, or slapped, right through to being choked, hit with a fist or even stabbed. Women who experience abuse are more likely to suffer from miscarriages and ongoing gynaecological problems.

Mr Speaker, it is important that we as legislators and as members of the community send a clear message that violence against women is wrong; that violence against pregnant women is an abomination; and what is more, if you do it there may be more serious consequences for you than just a charge of assault—there may be consequences for which you may be held responsible.

Under the current laws, a child is not considered a life until the first breath is taken. It should be noted that this bill does not change that definition, that it does not conflict with that definition. In the drafting of this bill, I have deliberately referred to the unborn child as a "fetus" in order to avoid a conflict with those other provisions of the act.

An unborn child, for the purposes of this bill, is defined as "a fetus at any stage of its development". It is considered that an embryo becomes a foetus sometime between six and eight weeks. I have been careful not to provide a more defined definition, as this is

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clearly a highly contentious area, and by leaving it deliberately open I am deferring to the judiciary to make a judgment on a case-by-case basis. However, if there is a strong view within the Assembly that there should be a clearer definition, I am willing to consider such a suggestion.

Mr Speaker, the role of the judiciary is an important component of this bill. They are the ones that ultimately must administer the laws that are passed by the Assembly. They are the ones to make certain determinations based on the guidelines provided by the Assembly.

Presently, in cases of violence or recklessness that involve pregnant women, the judiciary does take into account injuries to an unborn child. However, their ability to do this is limited to sentencing; and is limited by the maximum sentence accorded to the charge associated with the act against the mother. To make it clearer, if a man beats his wife and kills the unborn child he can only be sentenced to the maximum appropriated for the assault on his wife. While that may be sufficient in some cases, if the assault is so severe as to attract the maximum penalty then the discretion to appropriate a more severe sentence for the death of the unborn child is gone—there is no space for the judge to manoeuvre in order to make a further determination.

It is important that we look beyond the first breath of a child when deciding at what point we should be providing legal protection. Section 313 of the Queensland Criminal Code provides:

Any person who, when a female is about to be delivered of a child, prevents the child from being born alive by any act or omission of such a nature that, if the child had been born alive and then dies, the person would be deemed to have unlawfully killed the child, is guilty of a crime, and is liable to imprisonment for life.

The Queensland code also provides:

Any person who unlawfully assaults a female pregnant with a child and destroys the life of, or does grievous bodily harm to, or transmits a serious disease to, the child before its birth, commits a crime—maximum penalty, imprisonment for life.

This legislation provides different degrees of assault and separates the offences based on whether the perpetrator had prior knowledge that the woman was pregnant or whether the perpetrator has an intent to kill the unborn child. There are degrees of separation, where the judiciary may make determinations based on the severity of the cases, depending on the individual circumstances, on a case-by-case basis. In that sense, it is a better law than the Queensland example because it is not so encompassing as to be unworkable.

This is controversial legislation—sure it is—but it is necessary legislation. It is necessary that we send a message that we will provide protection for pregnant women and their unborn child. In that sense, Mr Speaker, it is an educative instrument.

The abortion debate dealt with women having a right to terminate their pregnancy. That has been agreed. This legislation says that women have an equal right to take their pregnancy to term and anyone who interferes with that in a violent or reckless way should be held accountable. I believe in that principle. I will work with members of the

Assembly as much as is needed to ensure that we can pass a bill, the principles of which we all believe in.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Stanhope**) adjourned to next sitting.

Building (Water Efficiency) Amendment Bill 2002

Mrs Dunne, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory memorandum.

Title read by Clerk.

MRS DUNNE (10.46): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The European peoples who settled this dry and arid continent, for all their resourcefulness, have not been particularly mindful of water conservation. As great tracts of the country are succumbing to yet another savage drought, we are once more reminded of how fragile our environment is and how scarce our most precious resource is.

Let us never lose sight of just how much we depend on water. The Murray-Darling Basin, of which we are part, covers one-seventh of the continent of Australia, including New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. The basin supports one-quarter of the cattle herd, half the sheep flock, half the crop land, and almost three-quarters of the irrigated land in Australia. Sixteen cities, including Adelaide and Canberra, as well as numerous other urban centres, rely on the rivers of the basin for their water supply. It, along with the Great Artesian Basin, represents life itself for this continent and all who live here.

Environmental flows have only recently come to our notice as a measure of the health of our rivers, and discussions of desirable levels make for hot political debate. Any suggestion of taking back some of the waters to restore environmental flows is met with cries of the economic consequences.

In the ACT it has been the policy of successive governments to leave 90 per cent of environmental flows for the rivers. By contrast, it is estimated that less than 20 per cent of the water of the Murray-Darling Basin system actually reaches the sea. At the same time, it is estimated that we need to restore 40 per cent of environmental flows before we can begin to have an impact on the health of the river system.

In terms of what we need for our cities and towns, the answer to decreasing supplies of fresh water is not to try to supply more. Human beings already use one-quarter of the earth's total water in natural circulation, and over half of the accessible run-off. New dams might make modest increases in available run-off, but they are costly and environmentally damaging. The reality is that no supply strategy can keep pace with the present rate of population growth and demand. This is the case certainly on a global basis, and it is even more acutely the case in a land as dry and arid as Australia.

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It is a matter of great concern that we are still making the same mistakes with water that we were making with energy—that is, depleting non-renewable supplies and seeking more water instead of efficiently managing demand. Why do we need to use high-quality drinking water, especially in inland Canberra, for every task? We use high-quality drinking water to flush our toilets. We use it to wash our cars and to water our gardens and lawn. We use the highest quality drinking water in Australia, and probably in the world. But we are waking up to that, even if we are doing so slowly. We simply have to change the mindset, and it is not so horrendously difficult to do that.

Enter technology: a whole range of available and emerging technologies is making it possible to radically boost the productivity of water directly where it is used. Efficient technologies that are already commercially available and on the shelf can, in combination, double or even triple water efficiency with no loss of service or convenience.

Canberrans, as residents of the largest inland city and the largest city in the Murray-Darling Basin, have a great responsibility placed on their shoulders. We must be careful custodians of our water; but more than that, we must be prepared to lead the way in innovative water policy. In Canberra we are now facing the prospect of water restrictions this summer—the first such restrictions in 35 years. Quite clearly, our water resources are scarce and finite. Unfortunately, they are often poorly managed by us as end users. But if there is an upside to a drought amid the daily litany of ruin, heartbreak and destruction, it is this: it has raised consciousness and heightened awareness. The fact is that we can all do our bit not only to conserve water but to better manage its use.

In the federal election campaign last year John Howard signalled that water policy was a priority. John Anderson has embraced this idea, which has been given momentum with the likes of Dick Pratt and Jeff Kennett, and now the Wentworth group of experts are weighing into the subject. It is clearly to the greater good that more people are talking about water. But the next step is to act.

Over the past quarter of a century, Australians generally have become aware of energy as an issue and it took the so-called energy shock of the early 1970s, when oil prices quadrupled, for us to look critically at our patterns of use and consumption. As a consequence of that shock, we stopped using fuel oil for home heating and became more conscious of fuel efficient cars. Here in Canberra we also became conscious of energy efficiency in our homes and offices and the energy efficiency rating scheme has become part of our lives.

Of course, we must go much further down that path, but as a starting point it has been a most effective one. And in short, that is what I am proposing in this bill in regard to water. It is, in itself, no panacea—and I am not for one moment suggesting that it is. The modest measures included in this bill will have little or no effect unless they are accompanied by ongoing public education and awareness programs. A great deal of the water in our home is wasted through ignorance and carelessness, and if we draw attention to this and effect a change in behaviour, as has occurred with energy use, we will be on the right track.

Many things that can be done in households are simply commonsense and require no legislative change. Let us look at a few examples:

- Only run your dishwasher and washing machine when they are full;
- Don't pre-rinse your dishes before loading the dishwasher—that saves up to 75 litres a load or almost 25,000 litres a year per household;
- Look at using waste water from the washing machine, the shower and the sink to water outdoor plants;
- Steam vegetables instead of boiling them;
- Chill water in the fridge instead of running the tap until water gets cold;
- Take shorter showers;
- Fix the washers, repair the leaks.

Leaking taps, worn-out washers and faulty plumbing are major water wasters. A study by the American Water Association showed that plumbing leaks alone accounted for as much as 14 per cent of household usage, with toilets the major offenders which often go undetected. Something as simple as a worn washer causes a tap to drip. A tap dripping at the rate of one drop every second will waste 10,000 litres of water a year. These are simple things, yet the savings that they can effect are enormous when multiplied on a household-by-household basis.

The average household uses 260 litres of water per person per day indoors. This would fall to a 195 litres, a significant drop, even with minimal improvements; and even to 150 litres by introducing more efficient toilets, washing machines, dishwashers, shower heads and bathroom taps. Even further efficiencies can be made by reusing some of this water as grey water in the garden.

While on the subject of toilets—I think this is something that we don't think about often enough—the basic technology of Thomas Crapper leaves much to be desired. In an effort to make solid human waste invisible, pathogen-bearing faeces are mixed with relatively clean urine, and then the slurry is diluted, in Canberra's case, with pure drinking water 100 times its volume. But wait, there's more. That mixture is then combined with industrial toxins in the sewerage system, thus converting what is in essence an excellent fertiliser and soil conditioner into a far-reaching and dispersed disposal problem. Supplying the clean water, treating the sewerage and providing all the delivery and collection in between it is a very expensive business.

The point that I am making is that the bill that I am introducing cannot be seen as a stand-alone measure but as a component of a much wider exercise to raise awareness of how we can better use water. I think that, given the Stanhope government's professed commitment to the principles of sustainability, it would be churlish to oppose this measure on some technical pretext merely to score a dubious political point. The conservation and efficient use of water is far more important than that. The fact that we

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have as yet no water policy is an abject reflection on politics. I urge the government to support this measure.

Valuable work on water policy has been done by many institutes around the world, particularly by the Rocky Mountains Institute in the United States, which has identified the emerging paradigm of what it calls a “soft path” for urban water infrastructure, a terminology borrowed from the energy soft path. The energy soft path is characterised by highly efficient end-use technologies and widespread use of small-scale renewable energy resources—such as photovoltaics, wind power, biogas and hydrogen fuel cells—in contrast to a continued proliferation of large centralised fossil fuel and nuclear power plants and continued reliance on fossil fuel for motive power. The water soft path is similarly characterised by a wide use of diverse and often decentralised systems and, like the energy soft path, it places a strong emphasis on greatly increased efficiency in end use.

Australia has already made big strides in reducing home water use. The dual-flush six litre/three litre toilet cistern and pan is an Australian design. It has been exported and copied, and already some 40 per cent of Australian households have a dual flush loo.

The mandatory use of efficient showerheads will not fall on a surprised public, as already some 20 per cent of Australian households have one installed, and I suspect that that percentage is even higher in water-conscious Canberra. Efficient taps are already common and most taps on the market now have an aerator fitted.

What we are asking here is that showerheads have the highest efficiency rating, that all new taps over a shower or bath must be mixer taps and that all mixer taps must be spring loaded with a default setting to cold. What we are asking is that all new toilets be the six/three, dual-flush type and that garbage disposal units must not be fitted to sinks.

These are, in essence, simple but effective measures. They demonstrate that, as a community, we are serious about water. As a jurisdiction, we can give a lead. Going the extra step will make the territory, to my knowledge, the first jurisdiction anywhere in the world to put these measures on the statute book as a holistic rating system of water efficiency.

It is not a radical change: it is merely an attempt to codify what has occurred voluntarily and to extend the benefits to all households. Canberrans are already water conscious and we are building here on fertile ground. Over the past 20 years we have reduced our household water consumption by 25 per cent. What I am proposing with the bill is to build on that, to continue the momentum, to make the territory truly a showcase of what can be achieved sensibly and practically.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Corbell**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Farmhand appeal

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (10.59): Mr Speaker, I move:

That given the terrible drought which now affects most of Australia, and in particular 98 per cent of New South Wales, and most of the neighbouring shires to the Australian Capital Territory, and that other Australian states have committed to support the Farmhand Appeal, this Assembly calls on the ACT government to make a financial contribution to the Farmhand Appeal.

This motion is a timely one in circumstances that are rapidly deteriorating. Indeed, the motion might have to be amended, because it refers to 98 per cent of New South Wales being drought affected. I think it is now 99 per cent.

The proposition behind this motion is quite simple. It is to call on the ACT community, through its government, to support what I believe is the only widespread effective social measure designed to support rural communities in Australia affected by what some are calling the worst drought in a century.

The motion calls for financial support from the ACT government for the Farmhand appeal. Members will be aware of the Farmhand Foundation. It has been very much in the news in recent weeks. It has had a major phone-in appeal. Many community-based organisations are presently raising funds for it. Australian governments at all three levels are supporting the appeal.

The Farmhand Foundation is the largest non-government group ever formed to tackle drought in Australia. It was formed to provide immediate relief to people suffering the effects of drought and to promote long-term strategies to help drought-proof Australian agriculture.

It was launched on 3 October this year, and as at 21 October had already raised \$13.5 million. Sadly, that \$13.5 million will be, excuse the pun, a mere drop in the ocean in dealing with the massive effects of the social problem Australia faces as a result of this drought.

The foundation is chaired by Bob Mansfield, the CEO of Telstra Corporation, and has a number of very senior Australian business people in its ranks. It is certainly attracting the attention of a great many ordinary Australians who appreciate that action of some kind is necessary.

The ACT, at this stage, appears to be in a relatively fortuitous position. As yet the government has not made a drought declaration in respect of the ACT, although with the water levels in our major dams falling daily and the effect of the drought being evident as we drive around the community that decision may well be not far away.

This motion is not so much about what we do within the boundaries of the ACT, with its perhaps better position than other jurisdictions in Australia as about what we do collectively for a community suffering very severely at the hands of this devastating natural phenomenon. We have a history of assisting citizens in other states and indeed in

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other nations in times of natural disaster. This drought, which is now probably the worst in 100 years, is certainly in that category.

As I said, 99 per cent of New South Wales is now drought declared. The only area in New South Wales not under drought is Bombala on the far south coast. Members would be aware that Melbourne has recently announced that it is imposing water restrictions on citizens, and the ACT is presently considering such restrictions.

The stop the drop campaign which the Urban Services Minister mentioned he had launched recently is obviously designed to address ACT citizens' water use, and the extent to which we can personally take steps to rein in our consumption of water has been outlined already today by Vicki Dunne in referring to measures that we might take to affect our own consumption. But we cannot affect the amount of water that falls from the sky. The appropriate reaction in those circumstances is to address the concern, the distress and the hardship being faced by Australians across wide reaches of this nation.

The Yarrowlumla Shire Council announced water restrictions for Bungendore and Captains Flat just last night. They decided to provide free drinking water to rural residents who are running out of rainwater supplies.

The effect of the drought on ordinary individuals is very severe. Members may recall an article that appeared in Saturday's *Canberra Times* about farmers on a property just outside Bigga, a community near Goulburn. Farmers Kate and Robert Hammond have six children and almost no water. Their property, at least nominally, is on Bushrangers Gully and Long Swamp Creek. Their water tanks have long since run dry, and there is no water to pump from the adjacent Wyangala Dam.

According to the article, the family has had to resort to carting water from a barely running creek a few kilometres from their home. The water is boiled and then kept in three-litre milk bottles. Mrs Hammond is quoted as saying:

Today I can quite honestly tell you I have seven litres of water.

I don't know what we will have tomorrow.

The Hammonds are having to scrutinise every drop of water they use. Their car has not been washed in a year. They use stagnant water from a disused swimming pool to flush the toilet in their home. Clothes are washed in muddy water. There is a laundromat in Goulburn but it is an hour's drive away. It is something of a luxury.

The six children, aged two to 15, share the bath water. As Mrs Hammond puts it, the cleanest one goes in first. Mrs Hammond also reports that she has forgotten "the joy of hopping under the shower". She says:

When we clean our teeth we're allowed a little bit of water in a cup, there's no running of the tap.

And you'd be surprised how clean you could get a baby with one litre of water.

Bigga is only one of a number of communities in rural New South Wales that are in danger of completely running out of water over the next three months if there is no rain. The article goes on to report how the local Federal Hotel has become a drop-in centre for people wanting a shower.

We are lucky that we are not in that position in this territory. We are lucky that our reserves are very good, relatively speaking. But we know that there are people who are not so lucky, and it seems to me that we ought to take some positive steps towards assisting those people.

The effects are much closer to home in other senses. We have seen instances of water theft going on. There was a report just this week or late last week of the theft of about 32,000 litres of water from a property near Cooma. We saw in today's newspaper a report about the wine region of our district facing hardship as the quantity of the vintage will be severely cut as a result of the drought. Quality may well be improved, I understand, but the reduction in volume will have a disastrous effect on the region's wine industry, an industry which we have collectively done so much to set up and promote in recent years. A setback like this will be very difficult to cope with. There will also be long-term impacts on the associated tourist industry of our region.

The social dislocation that goes with drought is perhaps a little difficult for people in a community like ours to understand but can be absolutely enormous. Families in rural communities very often have no recurrent income whatsoever. They are completely dependent on welfare payments or other forms of assistance. Those of us with secure incomes in a place like this, at least between elections, find that hard to understand. But the drought can affect the livelihoods and the lives of people, and it therefore has a very severe impact on the social cohesiveness, the social fabric, of communities so affected.

Unemployment soars. Disposable income for small things like buying raffle tickets or buying a drink when you are out becomes a serious question. Entire communities become mendicant communities, and that is extremely sad. I would argue, Mr Speaker, that we have an obligation to do something about that.

What can we do about that? Apart from measures we might provide within our boundaries, within the ACT itself, we can assist in nationwide appeals designed to provide relief. The Farmhand Foundation is the largest group ever formed to tackle drought in Australia, which is appropriate, given the magnitude of the crisis we are facing. Its objective is to distribute support to communities badly affected, in particular to families and individuals, and to work on developing strategies for drought-proofing or preventing the effects of drought in the future.

The federal government has announced its own measures to help drought relief. It is looking at trebling, quadrupling or even increasing fivefold the range of support within the next few months. The Deputy Prime Minister announced just a couple of days ago—

Mr Wood: Very decent of them!

MR HUMPHRIES: Indeed. I agree with that.

Mr Wood: The rural community does not think so.

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MR HUMPHRIES: Maybe not. Perhaps you are right, Mr Wood. The federal government has announced in the last couple of days that they are making a \$5 million donation to the Farmhand appeal. Perhaps that is not enough but to date it is more than the ACT government has provided to that appeal or in the form of relief to rural operators in our region, even within our own boundaries. We can point the finger at others and say they are not generous enough. That is quite true, but I think it behoves us to point the finger only after we have demonstrated our own generosity in these circumstances.

The Labor government in Queensland has announced that it is committing \$500,000 to the Farmhand appeal. The Labor government in South Australia is committing \$200,000. Other state and territory governments are looking at what support they might provide. I do not think any has yet ruled out supporting the appeal, although some have extensive alternative programs to assist.

It is quite appropriate to consider the effect on our own backyard first. When the suggestion was made that there should be an ACT government donation to the appeal, Mr Wood made the point, quite rightly, "We have plenty of priorities here in Canberra." That is perfectly true. It is also quite true that our level of need is nothing like as great as that in some other places in Australia. It would not be too much for us, given the fairly healthy state of our budget and the fact that the crisis is so severe in other parts of Australia, to make a donation of some kind to this appeal.

There may be other means of providing support outside our borders. I have not heard what they might be. I look forward to hearing what they might be. But in the absence of any advice about alternative mechanisms I believe we need to take steps to deal with this problem in a way which indicates our compassion for those people who are affected badly by this crisis.

Mr Speaker, I do not wish to make this a political issue. I hope that we can treat it on the basis that there is simply a decision to be made here about support for other communities in need. It is true that we are looking primarily at people outside our borders, but it is not unprecedented for the ACT to donate, and to donate generously, to both national and international appeals arising out of national disasters. That has happened on a number of occasions, and I hope it will happen again.

Taking up the point I raised when I began my remarks: I seek leave to amend my motion to replace 98 per cent with 99 per cent, for the sake of accuracy.

Leave granted.

MR HUMPHRIES: I commend the motion to members.

MR WOOD (Minister for Urban Services, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services) (11.14): Mr Speaker, the government understands, and is sympathetic to, the problems faced by rural communities in Australia severely affected by the drought, but we do not support this motion.

The Farmhand Foundation was formed to provide immediate relief to people suffering the effects of drought and to promote long-term strategies to help drought-proof Australian agriculture. There are two aspects of the Farmhand Foundation. The first aspect of providing relief to people is good in all circumstances. I have no difficulty with that. The second aspect of looking to drought-proof Australian agriculture is one about which I think people must be more cynical. Claims that you can drought-proof Australia have been the subject of severe doubt.

The Farmhand Foundation is certainly the largest private sector group ever formed to tackle such a national issue. It was launched on 3 October, and the appeal, concert and telethon have already raised \$13.5 million.

The Farmhand Foundation principals are Foxtel chairman, Mr Chisholm; News Ltd CEO, Mr Hartigan; Alan Jones, who is the spokesman; Telstra chairman, Mr Bob Mansfield; CPH chairman, Mr Kerry Packer; Visy Industries chairman, Mr Richard Pratt, and STW Group director, Mr John Singleton. There is no doubt it is a group of powerful movers and shakers. I will not comment on what other agendas they might have.

The Australian Red Cross is responsible for processing all applications to the appeal for relief. I commend them for that. They say they will not profit from the appeal in any way, but there is an administration fee to cover costs of the processing, administration and distribution of funds.

The assistance is for primary producers, including share farmers and farm contractors—I note that it does not extend beyond primary producers to people in rural communities or in the cities and towns—who are located in drought-declared or drought-affected areas, whose property or on-farm business is their primary source of income and whose property income or on-farm business has suffered as a result of the drought. I think they deserve help. I do not argue about that at all.

Farmhand is a response to a pretty grim national situation. It is only one response, mind you. As I have indicated, part of it is to meet a short-term immediate need in a financial crisis in the rural community. It is not a response to the great rural crisis of degradation of water and soil resources.

Mr Humphries said that only 1 per cent of New South Wales is not drought declared. The regions to the north, east and south of the ACT experience a modified Mediterranean climate, and it is not unusual for the ACT and the surrounds to have extended dry periods.

In the past, drought declarations have not occurred unless the region has experienced poor pasture growth for an extended period of time, defined as two growing seasons—spring/summer or autumn/spring, for example. However, weather forecasters are continuing to predict the likelihood of lower than average rainfall. This region has had little autumn/spring pasture growth, and any rainfall now will have little value in promoting grass growth. A drought declaration for the ACT is currently being considered, and the situation is being closely monitored.

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Any declaration of drought in the ACT will allow rural lessees to more easily claim certain taxation benefits, such as income averaging in the event of forced sale of stock, and recovery of farm management deposits. It does not imply that territory government assistance will be provided.

Actions taken by ACT government land managers to assist rural lessees through this difficult period are probably modest. They include making land currently in reserves available for stock agistment as a drought relief measure. Short-term agistment will be allowed in reserves where conservation values will not suffer long-term degradation.

While the ACT government is supportive of the principle of providing financial help to people in crisis, rural leaseholders in the ACT are not perceived to be in the same position as farmers in other parts of the country, as they generally—not always—have income additional to revenues generated from their farm activities. If people in the ACT want to contribute directly to the Farmhand appeal, as many have done, they may do so.

Nationally, we play our role in the Primary Industries Ministerial Council, which is concerned about drought and has been resolving issues associated with funding under the exceptional circumstances program. We have been attempting to resolve issues through ministerial councils. The Opposition Leader might contact his federal colleagues, because the rural community is distinctly unhappy, to put it very mildly, about the time the Commonwealth government is taking in moving on the exceptional circumstances program. It seems that circumstances have to be so exceptional that they may never happen. There is great discontent, as Mr Humphries would know, in rural communities about the slowness of the federal government. It is remarkable that the federal government should announce a large contribution to Farmhand and yet not look at the exceptional circumstances program.

Mr Humphries: They have.

MR WOOD: What have they done, Mr Humphries?

Mr Humphries: They have announced that they are going to treble it or quintuple it.

MR WOOD: They said they will, but what have they done?

Mrs Dunne: It is being announced today. Why don't you catch up on the news?

MR WOOD: It is being announced today? It will not be before time then. I wait with interest to hear it announced.

Mrs Dunne: And you are not making any announcement about any.

MR WOOD: No, that is dead right. We play our role at the national level, but locally we will do what New South Wales does and attend to local needs. We do not believe it is necessary for the ACT government to make a donation across the border in these circumstances. As I have heard it said and as Mr Humphries has explained, we have no small number of urgent priorities in the ACT. That is where we would be looking to make any special payments.

Mr Humphries said he did not want to make this a political issue. I am not sure about that. There are a number of ways of doing things around this Assembly. You can grandstand on something and make a big claim, or you can take a run before anybody else does. If you are really serious about something, you can negotiate with others in the place, with the government in particular, and see what chance you have. That is the way you would do it if you did not want to run it as a political issue. Then if you are not getting support, by all means take your run. I am not absolutely convinced that Mr Humphries did it the way he should have done it if it was not to be a political issue.

MS DUNDAS (11.24): I believe every member of this chamber is concerned at the impact of the current period of low rainfall on Australia. We recently saw some of the effects as tonnes of topsoil were dumped by storms across Canberra, covering our city in a thick layer of red dust.

Australia has always had a highly variable rainfall pattern, and its climate volatility means that our capacity for agricultural production is also highly volatile. I doubt that anyone disputes that periods like this cause increased hardship and anxiety in rural Australia, as the rural economy is highly dependent on changing climate conditions. The impact is also felt by our ecological communities, which are already under stress from unsustainable development and a loss of water for irrigation.

However, the hardship is exacerbated by the way European settlers have treated the Australian landscape. The wholesale use of European agricultural methods for over 200 years has not been suited to the Australian climate or the characteristics of our soils. Australian governments, both state and federal, need to work harder to adapt our means of agricultural production to our unique ecology.

What we are calling drought is a fairly regular occurrence here in Australia. Our native plants and animals have evolved numerous adaptations to cope with both variable rainfall and fire in the Australian landscape. Increasing climate research has produced a more in-depth understanding of Australian climate patterns, of phenomena such as the El Nino effect and how it is linked to the amount of rainfall Australia receives in any given year. Growing sophistication in climate forecasting and development of indices such as the southern oscillation index are making climate prediction more accurate so that primary producers may be able to better plan for dry periods.

One way perhaps to prevent devastating losses that occur during low rainfall periods is to better structure the agricultural economy to take into account the volatility of our climate. Droughts are part of the Australian climate and are becoming increasingly more predictable. Agricultural industries that make long-term plans assuming a constant level of rainfall from year to year are hopelessly unrealistic. Our governments need to be investing in education and industry restructuring to take into account the realities of the Australian environment.

Recently, we heard the idea of turning the rivers inland. But we need to realise that Australia cannot be drought-proofed; that ideas like this will not work. Instead, we need more efficient and sustainable management of our current water resources and our current agricultural industries.

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Australia is a dry continent. Our water resources are particularly precious and need to be used sparingly for urban and agricultural uses, for our environmental health as well. Mrs Dunne has previously gone so far as to say that we should reconsider having a rice-growing industry in Australia.

On a more positive note: the ACT government is part of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, which is doing some excellent work in water management, although this initiative needs more support and more funding. Governments need to look at stopping land clearing, at better clarification of water rights and at reforming taxation systems to reflect the full costs of food production.

I am happy to endorse increased government funding of drought prevention activities and improving our water management capabilities. Indeed, if Australia is going to meet its sustainability objectives, this is crucial to the future development of our nation. But I am far from convinced that the best use of ACT government funds is donating them to a corporate-sponsored charity.

I constantly hear that farmers are not interested in hand-outs. Nor do they wish to rely on charity for their livelihoods. Our agricultural producers need government assistance to restructure their industries to be able to cope with periods of low rainfall, not a donation or a hand-out every time rain does not fall.

I am glad that the opposition agrees that there is room for additional spending initiatives in the ACT budget. However, I believe that any additional spending initiatives around this area could be better directed at improving our water usage pattern within the ACT. If the opposition was thinking a little bit more environmentally, they would realise that our water usage here has effects downstream in the Murrumbidgee and Murray river systems and that reduced water consumption in Canberra will mean more water for both farmers and the environment.

The ACT spends very little on water policy compared to other jurisdictions. I understand that we have only one member of staff working on this area within Environment ACT. The fact that Canberrans used millions of litres of water washing their cars after the recent dust storms shows that there is still a long way to go in educating the community in Canberra about the efficient use of water. We can decrease water use in numerous ways, such as by developing grey water recycling and water efficient construction, even the ways Mrs Dunne suggested in the bill she introduced this morning.

In summary, there is huge scope for governments to improve agricultural industries that are now suffering from decades of environmental abuse and water mismanagement. There is scope for the ACT government to spend more on developing a more sophisticated water policy and reducing our current water usage. But I believe that making a donation to the Farmhand Foundation will not be an effective use of ACT resources, when there are so many more pressing priorities in both water management and social environmental services. As a result, the ACT Democrats will not be supporting this motion.

MS TUCKER (11.30): There is no doubt that the current drought affecting most of Australia is causing considerable hardship to many people, particularly in rural areas. The cost of the drought in lost production will be enormous, and the drought is already starting to affect city people through the imposition of water restrictions in various places and increased food prices.

Against this backdrop the recent establishment of the Farmhand Foundation by a group of business people to raise funds for the immediate relief of the people suffering the effects of drought has great emotional appeal. The foundation was launched on 3 October, and the public appeal, concert and telethon have already raised \$13.5 million for farming families.

While I do not wish to put a dampener on the sincere desire of many in the community to help those people most affected by the drought, I think it is important to question whether the means of assistance promoted by Farmhand is the most effective way to deal with this terrible situation, particularly given the Liberals' desire to get the ACT government to contribute taxpayers' money to this fund.

The Assembly needs to be aware of the speculation that there are hidden agendas behind the establishment of Farmhand, particularly its link to the potential sale of Telstra. The speculation was clearly raised in the ABC *Media Watch* program on 7 October. This program highlighted that the people who established the Farmhand Foundation have direct and indirect links to the Telstra Corporation.

The chairman of Farmhand is the chairman of Telstra, Bob Mansfield. Farmhand's principals are John Hartigan, the CEO of News Ltd, Telstra's partner in Foxtel; Kerry Packer, the owner of Channel 9, Telstra's other partner in Foxtel; and Sam Chisholm, chairman of Foxtel and a Telstra director. Then there is ad man John Singleton, whose agency represents Telstra and who owns a share of 2GB alongside Alan Jones, who is chief spokesman for Farmhand and whose breakfast show is sponsored by Telstra.

The odd person out seems to be Mr Richard Pratt, chairman of Visy Industries, but he has been running his own campaign to get the government to support his plan to replace irrigation channels with pipes as a way of stopping water loss, presumably using recycled plastic manufactured by his company after its acquisition last year of Southcorp Packaging.

The *Media Watch* program suggested that it is not coincidence that Farmhand has been established at the time the government is trying to push through the full sale of Telstra against the resistance of the rural sector. The sale of Telstra would give a wonderful boost to funding the proposals being put up by Farmhand to drought-proof Australia. It all sounds like a repeat of the Liberals' original sales pitch to sell Telstra back in 1996, when it promised to use the money to set up the Natural Heritage Trust.

This raises the other concern I have about Farmhand, which is its other objective to promote long-term strategies to help drought-proof Australian agriculture. Alan Jones, who is the spokesperson for Farmhand, has used his radio show to promote grand schemes of turning our eastern rivers inland over the Great Dividing Range to provide irrigation water, as with the Snowy Mountains scheme, and building huge pipelines from places like the Ord River to the farmlands in southern Australia. Such ideas have been

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around for decades and rejected for decades, but the desperation we are feeling about the drought is giving these plans a superficial appeal.

Fortunately, there are more knowledgeable people than Alan Jones who are now publicly saying that these plans are dumb. Of note is the formation of a group of scientists called the Wentworth Group. They recently issued a statement which in part says:

The problem of Australia's degrading landscapes is 200 years in the making. Australia cannot be drought-proofed. We need to learn to live with the landscape, not fight against it. We are using more natural resources than the current resource base can sustain. Reversing rivers is a simplistic reaction to a complex set of problems. We have sufficient knowledge now to set a new direction—this will involve a radical change in land use towards practices that can buffer the highly variable climate that is intrinsic to Australia.

The group has proposed a five-point plan for fundamental reform of water use in Australia which would cost some \$20 billion over 10 years. The first area is water rights. We need to clarify the property rights of farmers for water and the environmental obligations associated with those rights. Secondly, there must be an immediate end to broad-scale land clearing of remnant native vegetation and assistance to rural communities with the adjustment that this will require.

Thirdly, taxation and price signals need to be changed to pay the full cost of production of food, fibre and water, including the hidden subsidies currently borne by the environment. This could mean pollution charges so that the cost of sediment and other contaminants is built into the price of food we buy at the supermarket. Fourthly, we need to restore environmental flows to stressed rivers so that aquatic ecosystems have enough water to survive. Fifthly, we need to find ways to pay farmers for environmental services such as clean water, fresh air and healthy soils that we as a society are expecting them to provide for all of us.

The Greens would want to debate further some of the proposals of the Wentworth Group, particularly what property rights and compensation farmers should be entitled to. Farmer organisations have called for full financial compensation where any new environmental laws and policies limit current farming practices.

While we would support targeted structural adjustment funding, we oppose any general requirement to compensate farmers for changes to environmental policies and regulations. The public should not be expected to compensate land-holders who because of environmental regulation are prevented from using resources in an unsustainable way and causing long-term damage. An analogy would be a claim for compensation by factory owners who as a result of regulation are no longer able to discharge effluent into rivers.

For the purposes of this motion, however, the main point I want to make is that the Wentworth Group's proposals are much more thoughtful and comprehensive than anything the Farmhand Foundation has come up with. While there may be a need for short-term assistance to those farmers who are most in need, much more thought needs to be given to how we manage rural land in Australia.

There is still a prevailing romantic view that Australia generates its wealth off the sheep's back. However, the metaphorical sheep are now looking decidedly sick and wobbly. Governments need to start making some hard decisions about whether we want to continue to prop up unsustainable farms on marginal land. There may be a higher public and environmental benefit for the government just to buy this land back rather than pay out ongoing drought or other assistance.

We also need to question the sustainability of growing water intensive crops such as rice and cotton in a dry country like Australia. The recent CSIRO study on Australia's future population noted that rice uses a whopping 7,458 litres of water per dollar of output. By contrast, vegetables and fruit require only 379 litres. Another surprising statistic from this study is that Australia exports each year an estimated 4,000 gegalitres of embodied water in its agricultural products more than it imports, which is about the same amount used by the entire urban sector. As the report notes, if we receive relatively poor trade prices for these products, then the nation is suffering a double loss if funds are needed to repair the integrity of the inland river systems that have been degraded by agricultural production.

The current drought will hopefully end some time soon. However, there is an even bigger problem for Australia if we start to consider the impact of the greenhouse effect and global warming on Australia's climate. The CSIRO's latest predictions are that south-western Australia can expect decreases in rainfall, as can parts of south-eastern Australia and Queensland. Wetter conditions are possible in northern and eastern Australia in summer and in inland Australia in autumn. In areas that experience little change or an increase in average rainfall, more frequent or heavier downpours are likely. Conversely, there will be more dry spells in regions where average rainfall decreases.

Evaporation will increase over most of the country and, combined with changes in rainfall, will decrease available moisture across the country. It is very unfortunate that the federal Liberal government is choosing to stick its head in the sand over the greenhouse issue despite the growing scientific evidence that climate change is happening. They will be seen by history to have been entirely irresponsible.

I am therefore not prepared to support this motion, which calls on the ACT government to make an unspecified financial contribution to a superficial response to the environmental crisis in our rural sector. I would prefer that it spend its money on more constructive long-term responses to Australia's so far poor adaptation to our variable rainfall pattern.

MR CORNWELL (11.40): The ACT is often criticised by the rest of Australia for being selfish, self-centred and out of touch with reality.

Mrs Dunne: And we have just seen why.

MR CORNWELL: Indeed, Mrs Dunne. We have just seen why. I must admit I am surprised at the parsimonious approach of the government. I am amazed that people should question the bona fides of Farmhand members. I note there are no new union bosses on the committee, and there is no Bob Brown either. That perhaps is significant—I do not know.

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What I have heard from other members, with the exception of my colleague Mr Humphries, is homilies about the overall problem. We had a science one from Ms Tucker. The analogy I can make—and I am sorry I have to bring water into this—is the *Titanic* sinking and somebody wanting to sit in the lounge discussing whether or not you could put double hulls in ships. It seems to me that what we have to do is address the immediate problem. This is what Mr Humphries' motion is about.

We heard all about the Wentworth Group. I was waiting patiently, but Blaxland and Lawson did not come along. That perhaps is a mercy. However, the unmistakable fact is that whether we like it or not we are part of the region. Indeed, we used to have an observer status at the division H shires meeting which is held in Queanbeyan every three months. We no longer have that representation.

Individual ACT residents have contributed to the television appeal for Farmhand. One has to ask, and they would ask: why shouldn't their government? The simple fact, as we have seen demonstrated this morning, is that with the exception of the Liberal opposition this Assembly is anti-rural. They are not concerned about the plight of people in rural areas across the country. How the Chief Minister, Mr Stanhope, is going to face the next regional forum of H division when he hosts it, if he hosts it, I do not know. The H division of local government shires association, which meets here at regular intervals, is chaired by none other than the Chief Minister of the ACT because we are part of the Australian capital region. How he is going to host the next forum I do not know.

The member councils of H division are Bega Valley, Bombala, Boorowa, Cooma-Monaro, Crookwell, Eurobodalla, Gunning, Harden, Mulwaree, Snowy River, Talaganda, Yarrowlunla, Yass and Young. Goulburn and Queanbeyan city councils are associate members. The vast majority on that list are drought declared. I wish you luck, Mr Stanhope, at the next meeting.

Admittedly, Farmhand is Australia-wide, but we still have a regional commitment to the surrounding rural centres. I believe that a contribution, therefore, by this government is not only justified but mandatory, particularly in view of a reply Mr Stanhope gave me in relation to a failure to send a representative or an observer along to the H division meetings in Queanbeyan. Mr Stanhope concluded by saying:

I have and will continue to host meetings of the Regional Leaders Forum three times a year. The RLF facilitates productive linkages between the Australian Capital Region and the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments. Significant contributions continue to be made to the economic, business, environmental, social and cultural development of the Australian Capital Region.

I would imagine that if we were fair dinkum about this commitment we would not be talking about what may be possible in the future, about what needs to be done about the terrible environmental situation or about the fact that, guess what, Australia is subject to drought. We need to do something right now to alleviate the pressures on people in the rural areas in surrounding shires, at whose meetings we are an observer and whose representatives we host three times a year in this spoilt national capital.

Yesterday we had a motion in relation to Bali expressing concern and a deeply-held commitment by this Assembly in the wake of blood staining the wattle. I would suggest to you we should have equally compassionate consideration for the fact that drought has parched the wattle.

I would strongly suggest that members support Mr Humphries' motion.

MRS DUNNE (11.47): I thank members for their lesson on the need for water policy. I am pleased that some members have started to recognise that this is an issue and have reservations about the wackier ideas espoused by members of the Farmhand Foundation about turning back the rivers. This is not a motion in favour of endorsing every aspect of the Farmhand Foundation; this is a motion about making a social contribution to a social crisis.

I thank members for their lesson on the great conspiracy theory. This is the best conspiracy theory since the one about the CIA undermining Gough. You expect to find it in this place. We have got all these people here together—this fellow from Telstra, this fellow from Foxtel and Kerry Packer. There must be a conspiracy. There must be an ulterior motive. It must be about money. As Mr Cornwell said, there are no union bosses and there is no Bob Brown, so it does not have any social responsibility.

This motion today is not about the environmental crisis. This motion is not in a sense about the drought. This motion calls on this government, this Assembly and this territory to show some leadership and some solidarity. This motion is about social and family crisis in the bush.

We talk about the bush—and we are sitting in Canberra. We might sound patronising. Quite frankly, I am about to patronise, because it seems to me that there is not one member of this chamber who has any idea of the impact of drought in this country. There is not one member who can sit here and say, “We need to have a better environmental policy.” I agree entirely, but there is obviously not one member in this chamber who has any idea what it is like to look out on your crops and see them wilt and die and see their income for this year and next year go. There is obviously not one member in this chamber who has ever had to put down stock because there was no water and the stock were going to die.

There is not one member of this chamber who has had to take their stock to market to sell them when they were underprepared, when the hide was falling off them and they knew that the only thing that was going to happen was that they were going to go to the knackers yards and they would get a dollar a head if they were lucky. There is not one member in this place who knows what it is like to put their cattle on the trucks and see their farm income not just for this year but for two or three years afterwards go.

We had sanctimonious assertions by the minister, who said, “We are not going to do anything, because the Commonwealth has not done anything.” This is utter rubbish. Governments come and go. The contribution of the Commonwealth towards drought relief is phenomenal. Since 1997 they have spent \$800 million on agriculture advancing Australia programs to help people on the land. At the moment there is scope for exceptional circumstances relief.

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But do you know what you have to do before you get exceptional circumstances relief? The Labor state governments have to agree to have you listed. Do you know what is happening? They are not listing areas. They are not listing them, because they would have to make a contribution as well. Farmers in places like Brewarrina, Nevertire and the Monaro cannot get exceptional circumstances relief because Bob Carr does not want to foot the bill.

This motion is a simple motion asking the people of the ACT to show some leadership, to look out from their privileged position and put their hands in their pockets. Individuals in this community have done so and will continue to do so. We are asking that this government put its hands in its pocket as it does on a multitude of occasions and as people expect.

We have seen it in the past with natural disaster relief after fires. Recently there was a donation to the fundraising campaign to send athletes to the Olympics in Greece in 2004. That is perfectly laudable, but on that occasion we did not sit back and say, "What is the Commonwealth doing? We are not going to do anything until the Commonwealth does something." We are asking you to show a bit of moral fibre, a bit of social concern.

The Greens say, "We are not going to do anything, because this is an environmental problem." It beggars belief. It leaves me gobsmacked that the party that claims to be the party of social concern does not care about families in rural Australia. This is a disgrace.

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (11.52), in reply: I am troubled by the fact that this motion will fail today. I am concerned that the losers in that process will be not the many bogymen which have been raised in the debate today but the Australians who are suffering severe hardship and for whom there is very little else providing wide-scale support to address their problems.

We have seen clear evidence that this motion has been sunk, not so much on the strength of the arguments put forward in support of the motion but because of people's prejudice against big business, the federal government, the sale of Telstra, farming practices in the nation, even Alan Jones.

I had trouble identifying a clear argument from Mr Wood as to the government's reason for opposition for this motion. It seemed to me that the vague points he was trying to make were amplified by Ms Tucker and Ms Dundas. It is a pity he did not have the gumption to put those arguments clearly on the table himself.

Mr Wood made much of the fact, as did Ms Tucker and Ms Dundas, that Farmhand was a private-sector-based charitable effort. By definition, every charity is non-government. As far as I am aware, there is no such thing as a government charity. Charities are all based in the non-government sector—the private sector, if you like.

I do not know what the distinction is between a private sector charity and a non-government charity or not-for-profit charity. If there is some suggestion that any money be left over and this might go back into the pockets of Mr Pratt, Mr Packer and Mr Mansfield, that is too low and contemptible a suggestion to bother to respond to.

There is no discernible difference between this kind of appeal and any other kind of charitable appeal that has been run in the last decade or longer in this country, except for the fact that this one happens to be extremely urgent and relates to a pressing social problem facing the ACT and the rest of Australia.

Members took exception to the idea of trying to develop drought-proofing measures. Again, those comments were laced with prejudice and with irrational statements. Mr Wood said that you cannot possibly drought-proof Australia, so measures to drought-proof it seemed to be futile and pointless.

Mr Wood: When did I say that?

MR HUMPHRIES: You did say that or words to that effect.

Mr Wood: Words to that effect?

MR HUMPHRIES: They were words to that effect. I cannot quote you exactly. I do not have a *Hansard* in front of me, but that is the argument you put. You made the comment that it is pointless to—

MR SPEAKER: Direct your comments through the chair, Mr Humphries. It will make it a little bit easier.

MR HUMPHRIES: I am, Mr Speaker. You said it is pointless to have a program for drought-proofing, because you cannot drought-proof Australia. You used those words. It is true that you cannot drought-proof Australia, but you can have measures towards prevention. We talk a lot in this chamber about prevention. We talk a lot about not being just reactive but also proactive.

Perhaps atypically for a major charitable exercise, a major appeal to deal with a natural disaster, this also talks about proactive measures. Disturbingly, members have chosen to pick up some of the as yet hypothetical propositions for proactively dealing with Australia's proneness to drought to sink this motion, to deny support to Australians who are suffering at the present time.

I do not know whether the idea of turning the rivers back makes sense. It does not sound like it makes much sense to me. I do know that the idea of covering water channels has a great deal of merit. I say that because I heard Professor Peter Cullen, formerly of the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology at the University of Canberra—

Mrs Dunne: And a member of the Wentworth Group.

MR HUMPHRIES: And a member of the Wentworth Group. He said it made some sense. We are not being asked to vote with our dollars as to whether we approve particular propositions any more than we are when we are asked to donate to an appeal run by any other charity which might also support preventative measures. We are not being asked to approve and tick off every measure they might be taking. We are being asked to take a step towards supporting the concept of prevention and action to assist those who are genuinely affected by this disaster. That is all that is being asked for.

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I have a suggestion to make to the government. If the basis for its opposition to this motion is that it does not approve of some of the ideas that have been put forward in connection with this Farmhand appeal for drought prevention in the future, then make a donation and specify that the dollars not be spent on anything other than relief for those affected by the drought. I have no doubt that money will be accepted and will be used on that basis. If you are fair dinkum about being compassionate about people being in strife, in hardship, in distress, then do that Mr Wood. Mr Wood finds something absorbing on his desk to have to refer to and does not respond to that suggestion. Didn't Jon Stanhope say that Labor would be a compassionate government? Actions speak louder than words, louder than Wood as well.

Mr Wood said that he wants to match the ACT to New South Wales in all sorts of other areas. Let us see what New South Wales is doing. New South Wales has funded a state-based package. We have not done that as yet. I believe it behoves the ACT to contribute to Farmhand on that very basis.

Mr Wood quoted the list of the business people associated with Farmhand. For what purpose? He did not make it clear why he was quoting those names. He seemed to suggest, rather slyly, to the members of this house, "They are big business people. They could not possibly have a social conscience. You do not want to be seen to be supporting big business, so do not support the Farmhand appeal." That is a rather disgraceful argument.

He mentioned the slow activity of the federal government with respect to this matter. He cited the argument which I have firmly condemned with my children that two wrongs make a right. If the federal government has not pulled its weight, then neither should we. Dear, oh dear, Mr Wood!

Finally, he said, "You did not approach me early enough on the matter, so I am not going to play ball and support this appeal."

Mr Wood: I did not quite say that either, Mr Humphries.

MR HUMPHRIES: No, you did not quite say it. You made no argument very clear. You hinted at various things and did not spell any of them out very clearly. I am yet to know exactly why you will support this motion, except for the fact this is occurring outside our borders. I come back to you with the remark that we support lots of measures which operate outside our borders. In fact, all the natural disaster appeals the ACT has donated to over the last 13 years have been outside our borders. That has not stopped us from donating on those occasions. Why now?

We are not voting in favour of big business, the federal government, the sale of Telstra, farming practices, or even Alan Jones, by voting for this motion. We are voting to support ordinary Australians who are doing it tough, who are looking disaster in the face, who are suffering. You might not like some of the other bogymen you have created today, but do not leave those Australians out on a limb. They deserve our compassion. They deserve our support. This motion is one way of delivering that support.

Question put:

That **Mr Humphries'** motion, as amended, be agreed to

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Noes 11

Mr Cornwell
Mrs Dunne
Mr Humphries
Mr Pratt
Mr Smyth
Mr Stefaniak

Mr Berry
Mr Corbell
Mrs Cross
Ms Dundas
Ms Gallagher
Mr Hargreaves

Ms MacDonald
Mr Quinlan
Mr Stanhope
Ms Tucker
Mr Wood

Question so resolved in the negative.

Tuggeranong Community Festival

MR HARGREAVES (12.06): I move:

That the Assembly:

- (1) notes the outstanding success of the 2002 Tuggeranong Community Festival and congratulates the organisers on attracting record crowds to activities in Tuggeranong Town Centre Park; and
- (2) believes events like the Tuggeranong Community Festival play a vital role in strengthening local communities and encourages the ACT Government to continue providing financial and logistical support.

I take this opportunity to raise the success of the Tuggeranong Community Festival for 2002 for a number of reasons. It was the fourteenth festival of the modern genre. In times of a somewhat depressing outlook, it is nice to celebrate some of the things that we actually do well within our community and point out how communities can promote themselves outside the ACT quite successfully with a bit of help from government, sometimes in competition with some of the bigger events. There were more than 7,000 people at a concert at night at which the band Mental As Anything performed. There were also fireworks on that night, as normal. About 12,500 people attended the activities just on the Saturday.

The ACT veterans shield soccer event attracted 16 teams. There were teams from Camden, Goulburn and Wagga Wagga. In fact, a third of them were from within the Tuggeranong region, a third from other parts of Canberra and the other third from interstate, which shows that sporting activities can be used to promote Canberra in the region. I pay tribute to Michael Lucas for his activities in that regard. He was brilliant in bringing all these teams together. There would have been more teams if the condition of the ovals had been such that it was not dangerous to play on them.

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Another highlight of the festival was that the five choirs within the Tuggeranong region came together and there were 300 people on stage singing at the same time, which was absolutely superb.

Mr Speaker, I want to pay tribute to the sponsors and raise a point about sponsorship. In the past when I was connected with the festival committee we had sponsorship from the ACT government. Initially, it was for \$6,000 and then it went up to \$12,500. That was under a Labor regime. The Liberals withdrew that funding and, for a period, the only support the festival got was in kind, for which the organisers were grateful, but the cash dried up. I want to express my appreciation to the current ACT government for the \$5,000 it gave in cash through artsACT.

The major sponsors provided an enormous amount in cash which enabled the organisers to pay for things such as the Mental As Anything concert. They were: LJ Hooker in Tuggeranong, Communities @ Work, Bunnings, the new Calwell/Wanniassa Community Bank, the Southern Cross Club in Tuggeranong, the Burns Club, the Tuggeranong Valley Rugby Union and Amateur Sports Club, artsACT, whose sponsorship of \$5,000 I have already mentioned, the Tuggeranong Hyperdome and the *Chronicle*.

They were the cash contributors. There were also lots of contributions in kind from people. That is where the various bits of the ACT government actually came in and gave assistance. I must set the record straight, as I do not want people to consider that the previous Liberal government was totally unsupportive of the festival. I do not want anybody to interpret my comments in that way. I can recall asking Mr Smyth, as the then Minister for Urban Services, for some assistance in rubbish bin collection and the provision of toilets or something along those lines and he was able to provide for that through the department. The in-kind support has been continuing and I would like to see it continue into the future.

ActewAGL, as always, was a huge supporter. This time the Country Comfort Motel in Greenway was also supportive. Interestingly, the motel was sold out that night. It is a fantastic thing for a motel right in the middle of Tuggeranong to be totally sold out. The reason was that teams coming from Sydney, Wagga and the region booked the place out. Domino's Pizza, Hoyts Cinemas Tuggeranong, Wanniassa Hy-Grade Meats, Valley FM, the local radio station, EcoWise, the *Chronicle*, which I have mentioned already, Duesburys Chartered Accountants, Broadleaf Capital International, Pratts Tackle Box—I hope there is no connection—and Dean's Trophy Centre also contributed much in time.

Mr Speaker, it is important to acknowledge the many community groups, clubs and organisations that got involved. These groups have come together without assistance from CTEC and do not necessarily need such assistance, but it would be handy to have them on board. I heard a rumour that CTEC are not all that fussed about the Tuggeranong Community Festival. I hope that there is no credence to that rumour. I would like to see the CTEC people come on board and provide some professional assistance to the festival's organisers.

The groups, clubs and organisations involved included the Rotary Club of Tuggeranong, Tuggeranong Community Arts, Lake Tuggeranong Sea Scouts, the ACT Emergency Services Bureau, St John Ambulance, Vikings Fishing Club, Burns Fishing Club,

Tuggeranong Valley Fishing Club, Canberra Model Yacht Club through Vice-Commodore Alan Edwards, Tuggeranong Vikings Cycling Club, Tuggeranong Vikings Women's Lawn Bowls Club, Guises Creek Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, of which Mr Smyth is a member, the Australian Federal Police at Tuggeranong, always a big supporter, Kambah Old Boys Soccer Club, the Tuggeranong Youth Resources Centre, Country Music Association, Vikings Social Tennis Club, the Women's Neighbourhood Group, Pines Tennis Club, Tenants Union, Lions Club of Lanyon, Burns Heritage Club, the ACT Hepatitis Council, the Australia Nepal Friendship Group, SIDS and Kids, Tuggeranong Scouts, and the Australia Sri Lanka Association.

I will outline the range of activities put on by the festival to demonstrate that it is a multifaceted festival. It is not like Floriade, the Canberra Festival or the Multicultural Festival, which are single-issue celebrations that have their own place. It should be noted, of course, that they are significantly supported in cash by the ACT government and sponsors and I would suggest that the crowds that they attract, if you take the proportionality in terms of the amount of support they get from government, are such that you would probably find that the value for the dollar is better at Tuggeranong than at some of the wider ones.

The committee members who brought off the festival deserve special mention. They have been doing so for a long time. My first involvement was back in, I think, 1991 and a lot of the people I am about to mention have been involved in it for a number of years. The president of the committee is Michael Lindfield, who has been president for the last couple of years. It was Michael who had the vision to reduce the festival to a couple of days and to change the format slightly. Rod Fishwick, the vice-president, and his wife, Andy, were responsible for getting Mental As Anything and providing all the technical support. There are some brilliant people living and working in the community. Danni Turner is the secretary and Michael Crozier OAM is the treasurer. The committee has Jill Faulkner, Charles Ironside, Dien Tran, Leanne Martin, Julie Chong, Ben French, Bruce Goleby, Frank Pompeani and Phil Nobal as its members.

Most people around here do not know any of those people. They are the unsung people behind the festival and I think that it is reasonable to bring them into the limelight very briefly every now and again. I am very pleased to be able to do that. I know that Mr Smyth, a former patron of the festival, actually knows the amount of work that the committee goes through for little or no recognition. I am absolutely certain that he will join me in congratulating them for their work.

Mr Speaker, I talked earlier about the festival being multifaceted. It always had the intention of providing for a range of activities. Sometimes that has worked to its detriment in terms of being able to acquire financial support from the government of the day because the bureaucratic mindset behind the provision of this sort of support has always been suffering from rampant tunnel vision and the bureaucrats concerned have not been able to think of two things at the same time.

I am suggesting now that the success of this festival demonstrates that they have to think outside the square, they have to start being a bit more imaginative. I challenge Ross MacDiarmid from the CTEC organisation to go there and see the sort of festival that we can run without big bells and whistles, consider the success of this sort of thing and fold it into his mindset for the promotion of Canberra. If we can bring people from

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Sydney, Albury and anywhere in the middle to a community festival in Tuggeranong, I think we need to have the expert tourism people exploiting that kind of concept.

I mentioned some of the sports that went on during the festival—fishing, tennis, soccer, lawn bowls, cycling, AFL, sailing, rowing, tae kwon do, callisthenics, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, netball and basketball. If you look at that lot, all taking place over a two-day period, imagine how many people were participating under the umbrella of the festival, coming together just to do that. Entertainment is provided by big name bands, such as Mental As Anything. I think they are trying to get Men At Work next year. You can take your esky, sit on the grass and listen to a band of that calibre for absolutely nothing. As well as entertaining the crowds, such attractions are a vehicle for our local talent to show themselves off. Mental As Anything brought them along and then we showed off the local talent through the choirs and a lot of the orchestral and band music.

Mr Speaker, I spoke about fishing. The carp catch has a double-barrelled reason for its existence. It is a bit of fun for the people who go fishing. Let me say, on behalf of my foot, that it is not always a lot of fun when one goes fishing! However, the carp catch is all about trying to reduce the number of carp in Lake Tuggeranong, and tonnes of them are caught. The community can help out in that way as it has an environmental aspect to it. That is something on which Dr Brian Pratt was congratulating the festival not very long ago.

Mr Speaker, there has been a multicultural aspect to the festival over the last few years through the provision of music, food and dance. Some new groups came and joined us this year and I pay credit to them for that. Members of the Sri Lankan community came along, as did Vietnamese and Nepalese people, and there was involvement by the Scottish community through some Celtic work and some involvement with the Irish people as well.

Mr Speaker, there was something there for young people. There was an extreme sports afternoon at the skate park. It was unbelievable to see young kids trying to injure themselves really badly and not do so. I tried harder than they did, obviously, but they really gave it a good hit. We had rap music down there. I think it is terrible stuff, quite frankly, but some people thought it was great. For the first time, we had stacks of kids actually listening to their own music in their own spot and all the old fogies could go somewhere else and listen to their band, choir or whatever. The kids had a great time and it cost them nothing. We put on youth group activities so that the young garage bands could have a go.

I have to acknowledge two other activities which have been the mainstay of the festival for some time. One of them is going to surprise you, I am sure. I need to pay tribute to Terry Flaherty, who brings the sideshows to the festival every year and has done so since I have been connected with it, which is about 13 or 14 years. He is there rain, hail or shine, mainly rain and hail and usually windy. He doesn't always make a quid, but he always comes and he has been a mainstay. He was there again this year and he appeared to take a big hit.

Mr Speaker, everybody looks forward to the fireworks. Harold Upton, who provided the fireworks at the festival—in the sky, this time—is probably the best pyrotechnician in town when it comes to putting fireworks in the sky. I will oppose to my dying breath

fireworks being let off on the ground by members of the community, as I have said in this place before, but I acknowledge that Harold did a fantastic job and is a very fine pyrotechnician.

Mr Speaker, the Tuggeranong community has got together and shown the rest of Canberra how it can celebrate itself and promote itself to the region. I would urge the people who are supposedly the professionals at CTEC to go on down and talk to these so-called amateur people, led by Michael Lindfield, and be told just how it is done. I think the Tuggeranong community can be very proud of its actions in taking the lead in this town.

MR WOOD (Minister for Urban Services, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services) (12.21): Mr Speaker, I acknowledge what Mr Hargreaves has said about the 2002 community festival and join him in congratulating the organisers. Festival activity plays an essential part in enriching our community's experiences and in celebrating Canberra, its people, and special characteristics.

The variety of festival activity in the ACT is a reflection of the diversity of our community and the uniqueness of what we have to offer. We have a wide range of quality festivals, such as the National Folk Festival, the International Chamber Music Festival and, something different again, the Tuggeranong Community Festival, with the emphasis on "community".

We have made a commitment to providing encouragement and support for the development of festivals through the newly established festival fund. The sum of \$250,000 has been made available through the fund to support existing and well-established festivals and to encourage new and developing festivals. Most importantly, this new program is in addition to the funding provided to major events through the Canberra Tourism and Events Corporation.

The new ACT festival fund will provide support for local community-based festivals and celebrations that are not normally supported by CTEC. It will enhance the vital role that local festivals play in creating a vibrant community spirit. Through the fund, the government will support festivals that, firstly, reflect the wide range of our community's interests and activities; secondly, enrich our community's experience of living in Canberra; thirdly, actively engage our community as participants and audiences; fourthly, are innovative and of high-quality; and, fifthly, are well managed and viable.

Needless to say, Mr Hargreaves, funding from the source I have indicated will be hotly contested by groups such as the Tuggeranong Community Festival, but you certainly have the runs on the board. You have the record. Applications to the fund are peer assessed by the ACT festival fund assessment committee. This committee is made up of respected practitioners from the events industry who bring with them a variety of specific festival interest, expertise and knowledge. The committee has currently 30 applications for consideration, and I am expecting recommendations from them shortly on activities proposed for 2003. Mr Hargreaves, I would expect the Tuggeranong Community Festival to have an application in for 2003.

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It is important to recognise the significance of festivals and the value they can hold. Tuggeranong is certainly a good example of that. The organising committee is made up of a team of dedicated volunteers who generously and effectively give their time and effort to the success of the event. I congratulate Michael Lindfield, the chair, and his committee. The event is in its 13th year. It is held over three days and this year's program included 30 events and involved over 40 community organisations.

There was a time in this town, as some members will recall, when there were a number of such community festivals around Canberra—three or four of them. This is the last one. This one has survived when others haven't. It is a measure of the continuing enthusiasm of people, including Mr Hargreaves, who was on that committee in an earlier life.

Mr Hargreaves: Half my life.

MR WOOD: I can remember giving you a cheque once when you were the treasurer.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, you did indeed, Mr Wood.

MR WOOD: I did indeed. But this festival has survived when others have not and that is because, I think, of the particular characteristics of Tuggeranong, the people who work there and the committee's effectiveness in winning sponsorship and community support. Mr Hargreaves mentioned the degree of sponsorship, and I think that is very important. It is a measure of the support that the festival can draw, because sponsorship beyond government support is always necessary. I commend the festival again and look forward to the festival in 2003.

Debate interrupted in accordance with standing order 74 and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

Sitting suspended from 12.26 to 2.30 pm

Questions without notice

Superannuation

MR HUMPHRIES: My question is to the Treasurer, Mr Quinlan. On 28 October, you were on ABC radio discussing the poor performance of the territory superannuation portfolio, when you said:

I never said I'd take more risky. I said I'd take less risky. I think you will find if you read my public statements before the election you will find that this government said that it would be a conservative investor.

Minister, I concede that I cannot find any reference to your support for higher risk investments prior to the last ACT election, but you most certainly have made different statements since the election. I refer you to page 35 of the Treasury annual report, which says, in relation to the superannuation provision account:

A revised Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA), consistent with the investment objective, was endorsed during the year that will result in a much higher percentage of the total portfolio (85 per cent) being invested in growth assets (such as equities and property) and a much smaller percentage (15 per cent) of the portfolio being invested in defensive assets (such as cash and fixed interest investments). The previous SAA was 64 per cent growth and 36 per cent defensive. This new SAA will be implemented during 2002–03.

This higher risk approach was also confirmed by the then Under Treasurer—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Humphries, this question is starting to get outside the borders of being brief, as required by the standing orders.

MR HUMPHRIES: I am not aware of a standing order regarding being brief, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Standing order 117 (a) says: “Questions shall be brief—

MR HUMPHRIES: It is certainly going to be a lot briefer than the answer, Mr Speaker. I can guarantee that. I will bring my question to a close.

Your statements, Mr Treasurer, in the budget papers suggest that the territory is taking a more high-risk approach. Your Under Treasurer confirmed that in the Estimates Committee, but the Acting Treasurer, Mr Stanhope, on 28 October, suggested that the territory was now in a more defensive position, with 58 per cent of its asset allocation in cash and fixed interest assets.

Which is right? There is a contradiction here. Are the budget papers correct in suggesting that a higher risk approach is now being taken, or was the Acting Treasurer right, on 28 October, when he said that a more defensive position was being taken?

MR QUINLAN: I remember a Jewish joke that ends with the punchline: “And you are right, too.” I think you will find that the ACT investment portfolio outside the superannuation fund is conservative, as described by the Acting Treasurer.

A year ago we set out to fund at least 90 per cent of the superannuation liability over a period of 40 years, starting three years ago. To achieve that, it is necessary to generate a real return of 5 per cent, and to generate that return you have to take a longer view.

I have met with the advisory group that assists Treasury, and we discussed this right through—and the use of derivatives. We have debated in this place the vehicles to allow derivatives to be used, and I discussed with Treasury the process of using derivatives defensively.

The best answer, and the only answer I can give you, is based on the best advice available. This split will achieve the result in the longer term, and I am assured that it is a reasonably conservative position to take, given that you have got 15 per cent in defensive derivatives.

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But we do have a difficult target to reach, and some politics will be made out of it. I said back in 1998 that we ought to be careful about how we treat investments in the future because we plug them through to the bottom line, and we are in a market that has peaks and troughs. But generally, the line of best fit has been demonstrated to be positive, and the markets will recover.

Whether the markets recover in the next year or two or three is difficult to say. There is certainly exposure to the market, but we are on a particular horse in terms of the superannuation schemes and investment and funding scheme we have in place, and the scheme we have now is based on the best advice available.

MR HUMPHRIES: Can you be a little bit clearer, Treasurer, about which is the succinct statement of the government's policy on the superannuation provision account at the present time? Is it the Treasury annual report, at page 35, that outlines the strategy, or is it the statement issued by Mr Stanhope on 28 October? They do not appear to be consistent.

MR QUINLAN: I was not here, but the figures supplied by Treasury—Mr Stanhope gave you the position today—and the Treasury annual report give you the position that is necessary to adopt to achieve a 5 per cent return or 90 per cent funding over four years.

Gungahlin Drive extension

MS GALLAGHER: My question is to the Minister for Planning, Mr Corbell. Can the minister advise the Assembly of the community response to the government's revised alignment to the Gungahlin Drive extension?

MR CORBELL: The ACT government announced a revised alignment to the Gungahlin Drive extension on 2 October this year. That followed a detailed and extensive consultation process with affected residents along the route and other interested stakeholders.

Four community feedback sessions were held in mid-October, which provided information on improvements and amendments to the alignment. The October feedback sessions were held in Aranda, Gungahlin, Kaleen and Bruce and attracted around 300 participants in all. Not surprisingly, 200 of those participants were at the Aranda meeting.

The overwhelming response from these sessions was that the government's revised alignment was a welcome improvement to the previous proposal—

Mrs Dunne: You're starting at a low base; you're not saying much.

MR CORBELL: And that residents—I know you don't like this, Mrs Dunne—were largely supportive of the changes that the government had made. Indeed, Mrs Dunne, both I and the Chief Minister have been stopped by individuals in the street, who said, "Thank you for making those changes in Aranda; you've addressed our concerns."

Rather than take the knee-jerk, quick-fix, easy approach adopted by Vicki Dunne and her colleagues, saying, “Just move it 200 metres to the east, and that will fix all the problems,” this government has been considered, has minimised the impact on Canberra Nature Park and has responded to the concerns of Aranda residents. The government will of course continue to work with the Aranda Residents Group, and other stakeholders, as we go through final elements of detail that have been raised by them since.

The general comment now is that the design is good and it is time to get on with it. Indeed, the only people who do not think it is good are the Liberals and their political bedfellows. Those are the only people who think the design is not good. I think the Liberal Party need to focus strongly now on what is in the public interest.

Is it in the public interest to build a road for the community of Gungahlin? Yes, it is. Is it in the public interest for those on the other side of the house to seek to delay and obstruct this government’s election commitment to build the road on the western alignment, given that there is now clear community support for it? No, it is not in the public interest for the Liberals to do that.

We saw yesterday how out of touch the Liberals were on issues affecting Gungahlin—for example, Gary Humphries saying, “Don’t give them local shops,” and Vicki Dunne saying, “Give them higher density.” I am sure they would go down really well in Ngunnawal, and I am sure they would go down really well in Amaroo. Now they are also saying, “We’re going to block you having your road.”

Yesterday the Gungahlin Community Council released a survey on issues of concern to Gungahlin residents. Roads and transport were rated highest by Gungahlin residents who participated in the survey. I am happy to forward a copy of the survey to the Liberal Party so they can try to get back in touch with community feeling on issues as they affect Gungahlin residents.

When will they stop colluding with their federal colleagues? When will they stop seeking to obstruct this government from building the road, on timetable, a road that has received strong endorsement by the community? When will they put aside—

Mrs Dunne: Mr Speaker, I have a point of order. Mr Corbell has made the inference that members of the Liberal Party in this place are colluding. This is not the case. If he wants to make the assertion that we are colluding, he should produce the evidence. Otherwise he should withdraw the statement.

MR SPEAKER: I do not think that is a point of order. Sit down, Mrs Dunne.

MR CORBELL: The government is now moving on, with the establishment of a draft preliminary assessment, which is expected to be released at the end of this month. The draft PA is an extensive piece of work and includes a number of assessments, including noise conditions, air quality, heritage, land use policy—particularly with regard to the National Capital Plan—the Territory Plan and issues at the AIS and in Bruce.

The government is doing its job. The government is moving to deliver the road Gungahlin residents deserve. When will the Liberal Party stop their collusion and stop obstructing the road that Gungahlin residents need?

WorkCover—explosives depot

MRS CROSS: My question is to Mr Corbell in his capacity as Minister for Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations. Minister, as you are aware, the ACT is heading towards the worst bushfire season in recent history—perhaps more severe than last Christmas. Have you been given advice concerning the bushfire safety aspects of WorkCover's Mugga Way explosives depot? Are you aware of community and industry concern that WorkCover is not compliant with its own regulations or appropriate bushfire prevention measures?

Minister, are you prepared to give the people of the surrounding suburbs of Narrabundah, Red Hill, O'Malley, Woden and Isaacs your personal assurance that their properties and families will be safe this Christmas?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mrs Cross for her question. The depot at Mugga Lane is a secure facility, which meets the necessary standards for the storage of the types of fireworks that are stored there. WorkCover recently had an audit undertaken, which identified that the facility is safe.

It is regrettable that the location of the facility has been made public by those in the fireworks industry, since it only attracts people, potentially, who are seeking to break into the facility or cause some other damage to it. It is far more preferable for the location of the facility to be kept confidential, so that the chances of burglary, theft, vandalism or attempts to damage the goods there can be reduced as much as possible. I am confident of the safety of the facility.

The fireworks industry previously made claims that we could have another Enschede, a town in Holland where a fireworks factory exploded, killing many people. It is important that this is not a manufacturing facility; nor does it contain the type of firework involved in the explosion at Enschede. It is quite inaccurate for those claims to be made and, yes, I can vouch for the safety of the facility and the fact that there is no serious risk to residents.

WorkCover have also put in place necessary measures, should there be an incident, for the evacuation of those surrounding suburbs, as part of planning for any bushfire or other event that occurs in any suburb in Canberra. The fireworks facility is safe and does not pose a risk to residents.

MRS CROSS: I have a supplementary question. Thank you for that, Minister. If it turns out that the advice you have been given by WorkCover is inaccurate, are you prepared to instigate an inquiry into the accuracy of WorkCover's advice to you? If an audit has been conducted, can you table the audit and advise the Assembly who conducted the audit?

MR CORBELL: Well, the first part of the question is hypothetical, and I am not going to try to answer a hypothetical question. In relation to the audit, I will take some advice from WorkCover. There may be some confidential matters, which it might not be appropriate to disclose, and I will come back to the Assembly and to Mrs Cross with further advice on that.

Treatment of superannuation

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Treasurer, Mr Quinlan. I refer to a comparison of the budgetary positions of the eastern seaboard states published in *Crikey* magazine. *Crikey* reported:

The budgeted \$500 million surplus in 2002-03 is predicated on the assumption of a 7 per cent return on investment markets. But the A-G has revealed that Victoria's investment returns dropped \$461 million in the September quarter and unfunded superannuation liabilities rose \$384 million.

With the smoking ban wiping out another \$100 million of budgeted revenues this year, Victoria is definitely in deficit as we speak. There are no smoke and mirrors in the Queensland budget. As state treasurer Terry Mackenroth revealed, the 2001-02 budget deficit blew out to \$900 million.

The article continues:

No marks to Egan and Carr for reckless tax and spend policies covered up by ... off balance sheet devices and the blatant disregard for superannuation liabilities.

Treasurer, your preference for off-budget treatment of superannuation investments is also well known. Given that the value of the ACT government's superannuation portfolio declined by 3.6 per cent during the September quarter, can we draw a connection between the deterioration in the investment performance and your desire to expunge such unwelcome information from the operating statements?

MR QUINLAN: No.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Mr Treasurer. I have a supplementary. Are you trying to take the effect of changes to the superannuation policy off budget, against the strong objections of the Auditor-General, due to a wish to be able to cover up this government's tax and spending policies, as Michael Egan does in New South Wales?

MR QUINLAN: Mr Smyth, if you had done your homework, you would know that I had been saying for several years that the superannuation investments ought to be in something like a trust and pooled separately from the operations of the ACT. Therefore, the question that you have asked is based on an entirely false premise and cannot be answered.

Commission of audit

MR CORNWELL: My question is also to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the commission of audit was established by your government and had three terms of reference. The commission reported on the first of these in March 2002. During July, the Estimates Committee was told that the report on the second term of reference was "some weeks off"; the third task for the commission at that time had yet to begin. The Estimates Committee was further advised that the second and third reports would be completed by this financial year.

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Treasurer, when can we expect the report on the exposure of the territory to significant financial risk from the operations of business entities to be tabled? Why were the four main entities—Actew, ActewAGL, CTEC and Totalcare—dropped from the terms of reference?

MR QUINLAN: ActewAGL was dropped from the terms of reference because it is an enterprise in which we now have only a 50 per cent interest. It is also a case of saying: “Am I going to pay for a commission of audit into a business that is quite obviously working profitably, like ActewAGL?” The answer is no, of course. It would be entirely stupid for us to—

Mr Humphries: You did originally.

MR QUINLAN: What’s that?

Mr Humphries: Your commission of audit was into that issue. That is what you published.

Mr Cornwell: So, if you think things are working well, you don’t have an audit? The business community will be delighted to know that.

MR QUINLAN: You want to audit ActewAGL, do you, Mr Cornwell? We will see what the risk is.

In the case of CTEC, it is largely government funded, as you know, and therefore is not an operating enterprise as such. I have already taken action in relation to CTEC and some of its activities, which, let me say, have received very positive feedback from all quarters of the tourism industry.

Totalcare has been examined directly by Treasury. It is no secret that we have enterprises within Totalcare that are not profitable, and it is quite clear to us, coming into government, that the way Totalcare was set up by the previous government was not about successful enterprise or about just introducing competition into particular activities that it is involved in. The Totalcare we inherited from the previous government, quarry included, was not in great shape. In fact, we are working directly with that.

There are many people’s jobs and livelihoods involved in this. There are many people who were employed by the ACT government and who had transferred into Totalcare whose jobs are at risk. This is not a matter we are going to fix in five minutes—you can if you just close it down and give them the sack, which would suit the far right wing.

Mr Cornwell: We’re talking about a commission of audit!

MR QUINLAN: We are working on the exposure of it, mate. Treasury has done a report on it, but that report needs to be worked through. I am sorry, we can’t work through that and the various dimensions of it in a public forum. It just cannot be done. Sure, we want to be open and accountable, but people’s jobs are involved. There are industrial negotiations involved in the operation of Totalcare.

You will notice the board of Totalcare change over time; you might notice other changes. But there wasn't much point in getting the commission of audit to tell us what we already knew and what we were already acting on. We were already acting on Totalcare. You have seen that we have already closed down the quarry exercise and stopped that haemorrhage. We will work on the rest. We will try to make it work and save people's livelihoods, but it is a major exercise.

MR CORNWELL: I have a supplementary question. Treasurer, in view of your comments, why did you announce the establishment of this commission of audit, on 15 January this year, to incorporate Actew, ActewAGL, CTEC and Totalcare Industries, as well as those still under scrutiny, which we presume have jobs involved—namely, ACTION, ACT Forests and the Australian International Hotel School? If you weren't going to look at the first four I mentioned, why did you put them in the commission of audit on 15 January 2002?

MR QUINLAN: Simply, as I put it, Mr Cornwell: I was going to, but now I am not—for reasons just given.

Affordable housing

MR HARGREAVES: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services. Safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing is essential to many things, including health, education and employment. Two weeks ago you attended a housing ministers conference to discuss the negotiation of a new Commonwealth/state housing agreement. What was the Commonwealth's offer, and how will this impact on the ACT?

MR WOOD: We haven't formally got the offer, but it was discussed at that meeting. The draft offer, as proposed by Senator Vanstone, will not solve Australia's housing crisis and, most especially, will not solve the ACT's housing crisis. I am pretty cautious in the words I use, and I have been using the word "crisis" to describe the circumstances. When, of all people, Mr Howard starts talking about housing, you know there is a serious problem.

Under the current Commonwealth/state housing agreement, each state and territory must enter into a separate bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth outlining the housing assistance to be provided out of Commonwealth funds and its own funds over the four years of the agreement.

Instead of rising, as you would expect in these circumstances, Commonwealth funding to the ACT under the new agreement will fall from \$24.6 million this year to \$18.5 million in 2003-04. Modest increases by way of indexation in subsequent years will be swamped by the loss of nearly \$6 million per year in GST compensation. That is a major concern for the ACT.

That GST compensation, you may recall, was an acknowledgment of the extra costs imposed on housing by the imposition of the GST. This loss will significantly impact on our housing operations. ACT revenue, as I understand, will break even by about 2006-07, at which time we will be arguing with colleagues about putting that into the ACT

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housing budget. This loss will have a severe impact on our ability to house those desperately in need and to address the already unacceptable ACT housing waiting list.

The current agreement ends on 30 June next year. At the housing ministers conference on 25 October, Senator Vanstone outlined the Commonwealth proposal, which has the following elements:

- the next agreement will be for five years;
- funds will be indexed according to movements in the wage cost index, but there will be an efficiency dividend nevertheless;
- there will be no GST compensation;
- current state/Commonwealth matching arrangements of 1:2 will apply;
- the community housing and crisis accommodation programs will remain tied programs; and
- 5 per cent of base funding will be held against performance and only paid to states and territories when they have reported against key performance measures—

I wish the Commonwealth would face up to some performance measures itself from time to time—

- which are “reduction of workforce disincentives” and “attraction of private investment funds to social housing”.

The Commonwealth will shortly make a formal offer to the ACT government in writing, and the ACT government will consider that.

Given the severe difficulties in housing, state and territory ministers at the conference also agreed to hold a national housing summit next year. I hope that will increase pressure on the Commonwealth.

Canberra International Airport

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Mr Stanhope, yesterday you congratulated Canberra International Airport on their well-deserved success in winning the major airport of the year award for 2002. I will take the liberty of quoting from yesterday’s press release, in which you said:

This is a particularly pleasing award. It is well-deserved recognition of the hard work and investment that Canberra International Airport has put into developing the airport and its precinct.

You went on to say:

The airport won on the basis of 15 initiatives completed during the year. Particularly outstanding were the development of Brindabella Business Park and the widening of the runway to accept head-of-state aircraft.

Unfortunately, Chief Minister, not all of your colleagues have been appreciative of the owners and management of Canberra International Airport. Your colleague Mr Hargreaves recently referred in the Assembly to the owner of Canberra International

Airport as “our own local version of Bob Jelly” and said that the “airport had got far too big for its boots”.

In light of the comments you made yesterday, Chief Minister, have you at any stage censured Mr Hargreaves for his remarks? Can you assure this place and the management of Canberra International Airport that Mr Hargreaves’ views are not the views of the government?

MR STANHOPE: Thank you, Mrs Dunne. Yes, and I would like to repeat my congratulations to Canberra airport for winning this prestigious award. It is a great credit to Canberra International Airport that they have been able to take off a national award such as the Australian major airport of the year. It is tremendous recognition for Canberra airport and a fantastic recognition for Terry Snow—of his drive, his vision and the effort, energy and resources that he has applied to developing the airport. I offer him and the airport my full congratulations.

Each of us who has used the airport over recent years has noticed and applauded dramatic changes in the amenity. Canberra airport is fundamental to the success and the growth of Canberra and the capital region. It is one of the most important attributes that we, as a city in a region, have, and this government will always give its full support.

Mr Hargreaves raised the issue of the development of Brindabella Business Park, which is a quite separate issue from the award Canberra airport achieved as Australia’s major airport of the year. There is a genuine debate that should be had about the orderly planning of Canberra and the region.

We see that even now in the disputation between Canberra airport and Tralee. Has the Liberal Party come out yet and damned Tralee as something that shouldn’t go ahead? How equivocal have you been in your statements about Tralee? Have you come out yet on Tralee, Mrs Dunne,? What is your position on Tralee? Are you going to bag it unequivocally?

Mr Smyth: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR STANHOPE: Are you going to make representations to the New South Wales government? Are you going to suggest that it shouldn’t go ahead?

MR SPEAKER: Order, Chief Minister! Mr Smyth has a point of order.

Mr Smyth: My point of order relates to the standing order on relevance. The question was about Mr Hargreaves and his position and whether the Chief Minister had admonished him. The Chief Minister should address the question.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Smyth. I am sure the Chief Minister is coming to that point.

MR STANHOPE: I am. Quite clearly, I am. Everything I have said is relevant to the issues that have been raised about Canberra airport and planning. That is what the question is about. The Australian major airport of the year is a significant award, which Canberra airport has achieved, and I congratulate them unhesitatingly.

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Mr Hargreaves has raised issues about the orderly planning of the ACT and region, and there is a debate to be had there. For instance, we know that from the debate we have had in this place about the need for development at Gungahlin, for further development at Tuggeranong and for us to support our major town centres.

Canberra was planned on a basis that presupposes significant employment bases within the town centres. That has stalled and has stalled quite seriously in Gungahlin, and it is stalling to some extent in Tuggeranong. Those were the issues that Mr Hargreaves was seeking to raise in the comments that he made. So we are talking about two issues here.

Canberra airport are to be congratulated. I have congratulated them unhesitatingly, and will support them fully, as I always have.

MRS DUNNE: I need some clarification, Chief Minister. When Mr Hargreaves called Terry Snow the “Bob Jelly of Canberra”, is it a case of him rushing in where angels fear to tread, or does he now just hobble?

MR STANHOPE: That was a bit too sophisticated for me, Mr Speaker.

Government Schools Education Council

MS DUNDAS: My question is for the minister for education. Minister, in the exposure draft of the education bill, the proposed Government Schools Education Council is to have members drawn from the fields of business and commerce. Can you explain how people with a business and commerce background are suited to advise on the education of children in kindergarten?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Dundas for the question. The Government Schools Education Council has 18 members and comprises a mix of community representatives and expert members. It has teachers from the different sectors; representatives of primary, secondary and college principals; students; educationalists; members of the general community; and representatives of the business community. That is a reasonable mix.

It is important to note that business is equally interested in the effectiveness of our education system in delivering citizens who have the skills and abilities needed in the contemporary workforce. I see no reason why business cannot have a seat at the table along with educationalists, teachers, parents and students when it comes to looking at whole-of-government education policies and priorities in the territory.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Dundas, do you have a supplementary question?

MS DUNDAS: The minister did not answer the point about the role of business in the education of children at kindergarten level. I get the point that business has a role in monitoring education. But wouldn't it be more appropriate then to have two education councils to address the separate issues that affect primary and secondary education?

MR CORBELL: No, it wouldn't. I do not accept that proposition. The Government Schools Education Council is there to advise on all matters relevant to public schooling in the ACT—whether it is primary, secondary, or high schools or whether it is alternative education settings. It does not look simply at the operation of schools per se; it also looks at funding arrangements, policies for volunteers in schools and a whole series of issues.

I guess we could break up the bodies so that you had one committee just looking at this and another committee looking at this—and this, and this. The Government Schools Education Council has itself established subcommittees to look at various issues that I have referred to it, as well as issues that it has decided itself to take up, and members of GSEC have indicated their interest in getting involved in the subcommittee that is of most relevance to them.

Given the increasingly prevalent activity of the VET sector in government schools, particularly high schools and secondary colleges, it is important that business representatives are engaged in the discussion on VET policy.

Ms Dundas: But not in kindergarten.

MR CORBELL: Mr Speaker, the premise is simply wrong. I doubt very much that business representatives are going to have much to say about primary school education. Equally, GSEC is not just there for primary school education; it is there for high school and secondary college activity as well.

Police Ministers Council

MR PRATT: My question is to the minister for police, Mr Quinlan. Recently, in response to a question from Mrs Dunne about why you did not attend the Police Ministers Council held recently, you replied:

The reason I was not in Darwin at the Police Ministers Council is that I went to Melbourne for the Racing Ministers Council. Unfortunately, because of the pressures of business and my other part-time portfolios, I could not stay for the Cup, and I did not attend the Cup.

The meeting of the Police Ministers Council was held on Tuesday, 5 November 2002, which was Melbourne Cup day. It was also held on Wednesday, 6 November 2002. I understand the Racing Ministers Council met on Friday, 1 November 2002.

Minister, what was the real reason you did not go to the Police Ministers Council? What was the pressing business that you had on Melbourne Cup day that was more important than discussing hand-gun control measures, particularly after the shooting at Monash University, as well as other policing and crime issues?

MR QUINLAN: The Racing Ministers Council meeting was originally scheduled for Monday. Arrangements were made for Mr Stanhope to attend the Police Ministers Council on the Tuesday. The Racing Ministers Council meeting, which had been scheduled for Monday, was at a later date brought back to the Friday.

Mr Humphries: So you could have attended?

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MR QUINLAN: Yes, I could have.

Mr Humphries: You said you couldn't before.

MR QUINLAN: No, Mr Humphries. Don't push it.

Mr Hargreaves: You're Gary-ing it.

MR QUINLAN: Don't push it. Listen. The sense of what I was saying is that I went to Melbourne and he went to Darwin. I don't apologise for the fact that this government sent its Chief Minister and Auditor-General to the Police Ministers Council.

Mr Hargreaves: Attorney-General.

MR QUINLAN: Attorney-General, sorry. I wish he was the Auditor-General; that would be handy. My being on leave officially until the Tuesday the arrangements were: he goes there. It was going to be on the Monday, the other one on Tuesday. Melbourne is down here on the map; Darwin is up there. There is a long way in between, and a lot of time to get there.

MR PRATT: Thank you for the geography lesson. I have a supplementary question. In terms of the sense of what you had meant to say, Minister, does your absence from the past three meetings of the Police Ministers Council—which discussed important issues such as gun control, the Australian Crime Commission and the international terrorist threat at home—reflect your lack of interest in the police portfolio?

Mr Stanhope: We might just go through the minutes of the last seven years of ministerial councils. How many ATSA meetings did you attend—how many Aboriginal affairs meetings in seven years? There is no record of the Liberals attending a single meeting in seven years.

Mr Smyth: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: is the Chief Minister out of order by interjecting?

MR SPEAKER: Order, Chief Minister!

MR QUINLAN: I overheard a very salient point from Mr Stanhope. I have forgotten the numbers, but I checked and you weren't particularly assiduous in your time. But I can understand that. As I have told this place previously, I am on, I think, 14 ministerial councils.

Mr Smyth: Is that all? I was on 23.

Mr Humphries: We all were.

MR QUINLAN: Yes, and you did not attend all the meetings, Mr Humphries. The point has been made.

Mr Humphries: That is exactly right. And you criticised us for not attending those meetings.

MR QUINLAN: Did I?

Mr Humphries: Yes, you did.

MR QUINLAN: I criticise? Did Hansard get that?

Mr Humphries: No, it was a press release.

MR QUINLAN: I have no recollection of me, personally, criticising you for not going to council.

MR SPEAKER: Order, Mr Quinlan! Just direct your attention to Mr Pratt's supplementary question. Mr Humphries, you stay out of it.

MR QUINLAN: This government did not attend two Police Ministers Council meetings, and one of those was a screaming joke. One of those turned out to be, as was always expected, a non-meeting—a meeting where the Commonwealth minister sat ensconced in an office, a corridor away from the state ministers, and refused to meet with them and deal with them.

Mr Pratt: That doesn't matter. The meeting was on, and we were obliged to go there.

MR QUINLAN: Well, that is pointless. I will go to meetings, Mr Pratt, if I judge that there is some use in me going to them. The meeting immediately before the one Mr Stanhope attended was always going to be what it turned out to be: a joke meeting, unfortunately, engineered by a state colleague of mine, Mr Costa. It was, nevertheless, a pointless meeting.

Advertisement for ministerial staff

MR STEFANIAK: Mr Speaker, my question is addressed to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, on 5 October this year, the *Canberra Times* carried an advertisement under the ACT public service headline for the position of "Chief of Staff to Jon Stanhope MLA". Mr Speaker, I now seek leave to table a copy of the advertisement that actually appeared.

Leave not granted.

Suspension of standing and temporary orders

MR HUMPHRIES: (Leader of the Opposition) (3.19): I move:

That so much of the standing and temporary orders be suspended as would prevent Mr Stefaniak from tabling a document.

MR SPEAKER: There is a way around this. If other members knew exactly what he was tabling, it might be easily resolved, but there is a question before the house at this point, and that is that standing orders be suspended.

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MR HUMPHRIES Mr Speaker, it has been common practice in this place over many years to table documents in connection with the asking of questions—and generally, if I might say, it has been the practice in this place to allow that to occur, even when members have not seen the document which is being tabled. But, in this case, this is not a document that the opposition has sort of cooked up from some nefarious source. It is actually the government's own ad that appeared in the *Canberra Times* on 5 October.

What is the practice here? Again, the practice is changing. In the past, documents have been tabled customarily by members of the opposition during the asking of questions, and I don't recall that they were, in general—or, indeed, ever—refused leave.

Mr Corbell: I can.

MR HUMPHRIES: You can? Well, why don't you produce that case? Well, I believe, Mr Speaker, that generally they were allowed to be tabled.

Mr Corbell: Generally, yes. Not always.

MR HUMPHRIES: Generally, yes. Okay, we're tabling an ad. What possible objection can there be to tabling an advertisement placed by the Labor government in the *Canberra Times*? Don't you know what you published in the *Canberra Times*? Why are you embarrassed about seeing what you published in the *Canberra Times*?

Mr Stanhope: Well, there's a question of trust here, Mr Humphries. You could have shown it to us.

MR HUMPHRIES: Well, generally, to take Mr Corbell's point, we trusted you, and we're prepared to take your word for it when you table documents during question time. I do not see why it should be any different now.

MR STANHOPE (Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for Women) (3.21): I do not want to labour the point, but there is a question of trust in relation to this. The last document that Mr Humphries sought leave to table was indeed highly defamatory of a member of this place, namely Mrs Cross. Since that particular incident, when we did not object to the tabling of a document in relation to the expulsion of Mrs Cross from the Liberal party room, I have to say that we on this side of the house later regretted that we had not stood up and at least sought some advice on what the content of that document was.

We saw the Leader of the Opposition tabling a highly defamatory document relating to Mrs Cross, in relation to her behaviour, in a circumstance where we had not seen it. So we simply now are just a little cautious. There is a certain issue of trust here, in the nature of documents that you seek to have tabled or incorporated.

If you had shown it to us and said you were going to seek leave, then we would not have hesitated, but we were burnt in relation to your absolutely outrageous behaviour in relation to Mrs Cross when you tabled what has to be regarded as nothing short of a highly defamatory and insulting document.

Mr Humphries: But this is your document.

MR STANHOPE: But we didn't know that, Mr Humphries, because we don't trust you. But, having said that, we are happy, Mr Speaker, for the document to be tabled—it now having been shown to us.

MR SPEAKER: On that basis, Mr Stefaniak, there is a question before the house. Do you want to speak to the question?

Mr Stefaniak: No. I thought the Chief Minister was technically agreeing that this be tabled.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Stefaniak, there is a question before the house and we have to deal with it. Ms Tucker, do you wish to speak to this matter?

MS TUCKER (3.22): Yes. I think Mr Stanhope has basically said what needed to be said. I thought it would have been communicated to the Liberal Party—because we certainly had that discussion in the Administration and Procedure Committee—that we do need to be aware of what is being tabled. In fact, I have been circulating something this morning that I will seek to table later, and it just requires the courtesy of showing people and letting them know, because people do feel burnt in this place after the document that you tabled and we gave leave for. So it is about understanding that people do want to actually see what it is that you are seeking leave to table. It is unfortunate that we have lost some of that trust in this place, but that is actually the result of your own activities.

MR CORNWELL (3.23): Mr Speaker, we have had a tradition here for quite some time—since 1992, as far as I recall—where items were tabled and trust was observed. I think it is very important that we realise, however, that if this new regime is going to run, then we on this side of the house have as much right to refuse leave for any tabling of documents that others may wish to. If you want to waste the Assembly's time by going through this suspension of standing orders when you people are trying to table documents, or the crossbenchers, then by all means do so. I suppose it is entirely up to the Assembly.

Mr Stanhope: Well, we'll look after you when you're about to be expelled, too, Greg. We'll be even-handed about it, when you get expelled from the party too, and we'll look after you—

MR CORNWELL: Actually, Chief Minister, you will end up being expelled before I do if you keep interjecting. Mr Speaker, won't like that at all. However, if we wish to waste the Assembly's time on each of these occasions when people wish to table documents, then let us go right ahead. But it does seem to me that we should have enough faith in individuals' honesty and integrity. Certainly, in this particular case, it is an advertisement that you people placed.

MRS CROSS (3.25): Mr Speaker, I do not want that document tabled, simply because I echo the sentiments of Ms Tucker and the Chief Minister that the Leader of the Opposition has brought this place into disrepute by tabling something defamatory against a member. Therefore, the trust of the members with other members in this place has been

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compromised. Therefore, maybe we need to install a new protocol in here where we see what is going to be tabled before we give leave to do so.

MR SMYTH (3.26): Mr Speaker, we are changing the way this place operates by refusing leave to table this document. Firstly, this is questions without notice. So now there is a new rule under the leadership of the Stanhope government that questions without notice must be broadcast so that people can agree to whether or not documents can be tabled. What is the point of questions without notice? We will be cancelling question time next.

Certainly for all the time that I was a minister leave was granted, and I have asked Mr Humphries if he has any recollection of leave ever being denied for a document to be tabled, and he has no memory of it. I defy anybody in this place to stand up and say that the right to table a document was refused. It is a right that we had—and I wonder whether or not it is a contempt of the parliament, and a contempt of my right as a member, or a breach of my privilege to bring documents into this place and table them.

Maybe we should have another privileges committee to look at that right, because I think what is happening here is a debasement and degrading of the fundamental principle of our right to come into this place and do our jobs. To stop us from tabling documents with a relative amount of ease, I think, is a terrible thing—and this from a government that said it was going to be far more open and consultative and honest. What are you afraid of about us tabling your own advertisement? It is your advertisement. What are you afraid of?

Mrs Cross: Mr Speaker, can I speak again?

MR SPEAKER: Mrs Cross, no you can't, I'm sorry, not without leave.

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (3.27), in reply: I'd like to close the debate, Mr Speaker. I just want to indicate that Mr Smyth is quite right to say that it has never been the practice in this place for members to show other members documents before they table them. I might say, if this is the new practice, it is going to work very much against the government of the day, because the government tables far more documents than the rest of the Assembly put together.

I suggest that the whips and the crossbench should have a talk about this afterwards because, with respect, the practice we might be setting by refusing to accept such documents would be most unfortunate. As far as the issues relating to Mrs Cross are concerned and documents being tabled in this place in the last sitting period, from my memory, the document was already a document published in the *Canberra Times*. The document was not a secret document, a document making any statements which were not already in the public domain. The *Canberra Times* obviously assessed that they were not defamatory. Otherwise it would not have published them, and we did not seek to have them, having been tabled in this place, published so that they could be used with the advantage of privilege outside this place. Mr Speaker, with respect, I think we are going down a path here which is unfortunate and which we should not go down.

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Questions without notice

Advertisement for ministerial staff

MR STEFANIAK: Mr Speaker, I table the following document:

Chief of Staff to Jon Stanhope MLA—Advertisement for position—Extract from *The Canberra Times*, dated 5 October 2002.

On 5 October, the *Canberra Times* carried this advertisement under the ACT public service headline for the position of Chief of Staff to Jon Stanhope MLA—the document now having been seen, as it is tabled, by Mr Stanhope and the three crossbenchers. To any reader it appears to be an ad for a public service job. It is in the standard public service template, complete with the ACT government web-page and the standard text describing the ACT public service obligations, such as equal employment opportunity, and the words “Successful applicants will become permanent officers (unless noted otherwise) of the ACT Public Service”.

Chief Minister, as there is nothing in the advertisement to indicate otherwise noted, since when has it been appropriate for a political position to be a public service position, and why should a public servant have a commitment to implementing Labor principles and policies, which appears in the guts of the document, as a condition of their employment? Finally, why is the public service paying for the recruitment of what is effectively your own political staff?

MR STANHOPE: Thank you, Mr Stefaniak. I sort of enjoy all these opportunities to highlight the appalling behaviour of the Liberal Party, and I thank you for that.

Mr Humphries: There’s not much for you to talk about these days, is there—you don’t answer the questions.

MR STANHOPE: Well, there’s so much to talk about. That is the trouble. There is so much to talk about. You know, we have barely started. We can hardly wait until tomorrow when we get onto these computers. Are you going to have a good restful night tonight, Mr Humphries? A good restful night tonight will be had by all in the Liberal Party. It goes from bad to worse, doesn’t it?

Mr Smyth: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. The minister alludes to, I assume, the tabling of the contempt report. How would he know whether the contents would give the Liberal Party a bad night or not?

MR STANHOPE: Well, it doesn’t require much imagination, Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth: Again, Mr Speaker, he alludes to a breach of the Privileges Committee.

MR STANHOPE: There’s nobody in Canberra that doesn’t know it’s going to be dreadful for you, mate.

MR SPEAKER: Order, Chief Minister! Come to the point of the question.

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Mr Smyth: On the point of order, Mr Speaker: the Chief Minister now confirms that there is knowledge of what is in the report that is to be tabled tomorrow. How does he know that?

MR SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mr Smyth: It is a very serious point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Well, you might think so, but I don't. Chief Minister, will you come to the point of the question.

MR STANHOPE: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, I will. Mr Stefaniak, I have to tell you that I had not seen the ad until I glanced at it just now when you brought it over to assure me that there was some integrity in your actions in seeking to table it and that it was actually what you said it was. So I have not actually looked at the advertisement until that quick glance, and I did not read it then.

I do recall some discussion in my office to the effect that there was a need to ensure that, in its placement and certainly in the payment of the advertisement, the appropriate arrangements were made. My understanding was—and I think this was checked by my office—that it was appropriate in relation to a vacancy in my office for that vacancy to be advertised and for—

Mr Humphries: As a public servant?

MR STANHOPE: Well, no, as I say, I recall a discussion in my office in which there was a mention or discussion of the fact that it was appropriate for a vacancy in my office to be advertised, it would be advertised in the *Canberra Times* and that it was appropriate that, effectively, the public purse be utilised for the lodgment and payment of that advertisement. My understanding is that the advertisement was lodged and paid for by the executive services unit, which is associated with and co-located with the Chief Minister's office.

I am happy to confirm that. I must say, I did not place the ad. I did not have detailed discussions in relation to it and I do not think anybody would expect that I would. I did not see the ad. I did not proof the ad. I did not agree to the content of the ad. As I say, I still have not read it; I still don't know what is in it. But if Mr Stefaniak has picked up a typo, or if he has a concern in relation to that, of course, I am more than happy to give a full response.

But my understanding or recollection is that the advertisement is placed by the executive support officers, co-located with the Chief Minister's office, and it was paid for from executive funds. I understand that that is the appropriate procedure.

MR STEFANIAK: I have a supplementary question. Chief Minister, is it not incompetent to not proofread an ad for what is the most important job in your office? Given your answer to the question, will you assure the house that you are not in any way attempting to politicise the public service and depoliticise LAMS staff?

MR STANHOPE: Well I am certainly not seeking to politicise the public service, Mr Stefaniak. We are seeking to undo the damage that you did in that regard, and that requires a pretty fair old effort. But I think we are just about there. No, I am not seeking to politicise the public service and I am certainly not seeking to—

Mr Humphries: So why is your position a public service position?

MR STANHOPE: Well, as I say, Mr Humphries, I did not place the ad. I did not proof the ad. I still have not read the ad. I have staff that actually handle those particular issues. Those matters are delegated and, as I understand it, the placement of the advertisement was done by the executive support staff connected to my—

Mr Humphries: Will you take the question on notice so I can find out?

MR STANHOPE: I have already said I would. I am just actually responding to the supplementary question. I said I would take it on notice and get the details, but that is my understanding. If there is some co-mixture of public service jargon or a public service heading to the ad, then I am sure that an officer somewhere, either in my office, the executive support unit or the Chief Minister's Department, at the moment is blushing.

Trees—removal

MS TUCKER: My question is directed to the Minister for Urban Services and relates to the recent investigation by the Commissioner for the Environment into the proposed development of a vacant block on the corner of Nettlefold Street and Coulter Drive in Belconnen. This block contains a stand of remnant yellow box and red gum trees, some of which are at least 300 years old. Twelve of these trees are regarded as significant under the tree protection legislation. One of these trees has been described by tree expert Robert Boden as the most outstanding yellow box tree in the ACT. He added that this tree “would come close to the top, if not the top, of a proposed significant tree register”.

However, this block was sold off last year by the previous Liberal government for the building of a liquor market. The commissioner found that the development control plan prepared before the sale of the block took little account of the value of the trees. After lobbying by myself and members of the community, the control plan was tightened up but the proposed development would still require the removal of six of the significant trees and groundwork within the root area of five trees. The commissioner has expressed grave doubt about the long-term protection of those trees identified for attention because of the significant alteration of their surrounding landscape.

Minister, given there is still scope to stop or alter this development because approval for the tree removal has not been finally given and the commissioner found that all development options that would protect the trees had not been considered, what action will you or the Planning Minister take to ensure that these outstanding trees are not destroyed for the sake of a fairly insignificant development?

MR WOOD: Yes, there was some media coverage about that commissioner's report, which was taken up, I might say, by the *Canberra Times* and run without direct reference to the commissioner himself. So there were some reservations by the commissioner around the way that that was printed in the paper. That apart, the matter is obviously an

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important issue, and one that is being examined. I am not in a position yet to tell you what the outcome will be.

MS TUCKER: Mr Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Given that the commissioner has raised a number of broader issues and recommendations to do with the need for better integration of tree protection into the sale and development of land, will you commit to providing the Assembly with a written response to this particular investigation, even though you don't have to? I am asking: will you do that please?

MR WOOD: I will not say yes or no on my feet; I will give that some thought. As the tree legislation has been implemented, there have been numbers of issues where we have to work it into the system so that it is thoroughly understood as developments occur and as plans develop. I would encourage members to have a look at the tree discussion paper that is presently out for consideration as we work towards a more permanent scheme for that.

Crime

MS MacDONALD: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections, Mr Quinlan. Can the minister advise the Assembly if offence rates such as those for burglary, motor vehicle theft, and assault are on the increase?

MR QUINLAN: Thank you. That is a very timely question, Ms MacDonald. Unfortunately, I have to advise the Assembly that the figures do show a 15 per cent increase in offences against the same time last year. In particular, property crime, motor vehicle theft and, unfortunately, assault offences have increased significantly. I will provide the Assembly with the full suite of statistics as soon as they have been finalised.

One of the reasons that have been advanced for the increase in offence levels is that many of the individuals arrested as a result of Operation Anchorage are now back on the streets and back in action. While this is anecdotal, the ACT police are looking at these issues as part of the normal tracking of crime levels.

MS MacDONALD: I have a supplementary question. Minister, given the increases, can you tell the Assembly what the police are doing to counter them?

MR QUINLAN: For some time the ACT police have been anticipating increases in offence levels and working on strategies to maintain low offence rates in the long term. And some of the practices and processes used in Operation Anchorage were continued in normal police activity.

Over the last two weeks, another operation, codenamed Halite, has commenced, with the AFP officially launching it this Friday. In brief terms, it is a 12-month operation aimed not only at those committing burglary and property crimes and stealing motor vehicles, but also at the related industries that naturally support these offences, such as the stolen goods trade, the vehicle rebirthing trade and drug trafficking.

The first phase of Operation Halite was commenced on 28 October this year with a team consisting of members of north patrol, south patrol, territory investigations group, and the operations monitoring intelligence support working from Woden station. Recent

results are extremely encouraging and indicate that they are having immediate effect on the criminal community. Members will have read about a recent warrant executed on a home in Oaks Estate that resulted in the seizure of approximately a quarter of a million dollars worth of stolen property.

I am also advised that, since the commencement of Operation Halite, it has resulted in the arrest of 22 individuals and the laying of over 80 charges, including burglary, handling stolen property, drug offences and many others. This level of activity is reflected in the numbers that have been received in the remand centre, and it is as well that we do have an ancillary campus for the remand centre all but open right now.

The AFP also will announce today the seizure of a large quantity of heroin as a direct result of operations under Operation Halite. The immediate impact on the criminal community can be measured by the fact that burglaries have fallen from a high of 181 recorded in the week ending 8 September to 129 last week, a figure comparable with figures recorded during and immediately after Operation Anchorage.

Obviously a great deal of work is still to be done. However, these are encouraging figures that point to effective intelligence-led policing and outstanding teamwork. The AFP has been able to take the initiative and I am confident that they will continue to produce similar results.

Mr Stanhope : Mr Speaker, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

University of Canberra—fraud allegations

MR STANHOPE: Yesterday, in response to a question from Ms Tucker in relation to the University of Canberra, I undertook to provide some additional information. I did in the adjournment debate yesterday clarify some ambiguity in the answer that I gave at the conclusion of question time. I have now sought more formal advice in relation to the issues that went to the supplementary question that Ms Tucker asked, as a result of which there has been further communication between the Chief Minister's Department and the University of Canberra today. As a result of that communication, the vice chancellor of the University of Canberra has written to the Chief Minister's Department in the following terms:

Re public interest disclosure

On behalf of the University of Canberra I confirm that the ACT Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994 applies to the university.

I understand that the point of the supplementary question that Ms Tucker asked was about the relevance of the date of 15 May, which was included in an earlier letter from the University of Canberra to the Ombudsman. The point that has been made to me in relation to that, that is made by the university to the Chief Minister's Department, is that until that time the university had held the view that the act did not apply.

It sought, in its reference to the date of 15 May, to avoid any ambiguity in relation to the date of commencement of its responsibilities in relation to the receipt of any further disclosures made under the act by referencing the date of receipt of the advice.

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So the university's position is, as I understand it, that on and from 15 May the University of Canberra accepts that the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994 applies to the university. It is making the point that it accepts all responsibilities in relation to its behaviour towards whistleblowers on and after that date. It obviously cannot accept them prior to that date insofar as it did not believe the act applied, and that is the point that the university seeks to make.

Having said that, the university, as I indicated yesterday, has every intention of fully cooperating with the ombudsman and with the Auditor-General's Office in relation to its inquiries to the extent that those inquiries go to matters that pre-date 15 May.

I hope that clarifies that particular issue. The university accepts absolutely that the Public Interest Disclosure Act applies. It accepted it came to that position on 15 May, having previously held a different opinion. As and from 15 May, it now accepts that all of its actions are and will be in accordance with that act—

Mr Humphries: Surely, it was always subject to the act.

MR STANHOPE: That is the position of the ACT government. The ACT Government Solicitor's advice in relation to this is that the university always was subject to the act. The university had, up until 15 May, disputed that, and I assume this is perhaps the first instance in relation to which that dispute became a matter of moment—

Mr Humphries: If you don't believe you're subject to the law, you're exempt from the law!

MR STANHOPE: I agree, and the ACT government's position and the advice of the ACT Government Solicitor is that the act has always applied. The university did not accept that position until 15 May. They now accept it. They act in accordance with it. But, in relation to the inquiry that is ongoing, they will cooperate fully, all documents will be made available and full cooperation will be provided by the university to the Ombudsman and to the Auditor-General's Office. The position of the government, of course, is to now await the outcome of those two independent statutory inquiries.

Advertisement for ministerial staff

MR STANHOPE: Mr Speaker, in relation to the question asked of me today by Mr Stefaniak, I have been advised—and I will, of course, confirm this formally—that the process that was used in relation to the placement of the ad was that my office prepared the criteria under the name Jon Stanhope, Chief Minister. That was passed to the executive support unit within the Chief Minister's Department. The Chief Minister's Department forwarded the ad, as they always do, to the advertising agency that handles all of the ACT government's advertising work. The advertising agency in fact formatted it—erroneously formatted it in public service format—did return the formatted advertisement to the Chief Minister's Department, and the Chief Minister's Department regrets that it did not notice that the advertising agency had formatted it incorrectly. The Chief Minister's Department, of course, apologises for its oversight.

Adopt a road program

MR WOOD: Mr Speaker, yesterday Mr Cornwell asked me about the adopt a road program and the liability issue. It has had problems with liability insurance. In July 2002 the government was unable to renew its cover for individual volunteers working on the program and, as a consequence, groups without their own cover in place were stood down. A solution was put in place in October 2002, which involved the ACT Insurance Authority indemnifying volunteers under the Civil Law (Wrongs) Act, the act that Mr Quinlan introduced in 2002. Since the commencement of this act, the volunteers to community organisations are protected from personal liability while they are undertaking volunteer activities for that organisation.

Advice was not sought about what would happen if a person was injured while working on a section of road, as Urban Services ensured that this was not a risk for the territory by standing down for that period all uninsured volunteers until the matter was resolved.

WorkCover—explosives depot

MR CORBELL: Mr Speaker, in question time today Mrs Cross asked me a question about the fireworks depot at Mugga Lane. For her information and the information of members, WorkCover, as I indicated, stores fireworks that are uncollected goods following seizures for illegal fireworks, abandoned fireworks and fireworks that have been forfeited to the government as part of any resolution of court matters.

The total quantity is approximately 45 tonnes and it is stored at WorkCover's fireworks depot. As soon as the Commissioner for Occupational Health and Safety became aware that some members of the fireworks industry had made public the location of the facility, she undertook a security assessment of the facility from an independent provider. She also put in place additional security, at some considerable cost, to ensure that the facility was absolutely secure. I need to stress that this is not a normal requirement for such facilities.

I am advised that the safety and security assessment cannot be made public for security reasons. Nevertheless, I can say that I have examined the assessment, and I have noted the findings, which are that the facility more than meets the safety requirements which are set out in the relevant legislation, including the fact that it is three times—I stress, three times—the required safety distance from the nearest house. The facility has security processes which appropriately address the concerns that arise when the location of such a facility is made public.

World summit on sustainable development

Paper and statement by member

MR WOOD (Minister for Urban Services, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services): Mr Speaker, for the information of members, I present the following paper:

World Summit on Sustainable Development—Johannesburg, 26 August—4 September 2002—
Report by Bill Wood (Minister for Urban Services)

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I ask for leave to make a statement.

Leave granted.

MR WOOD: Mr Speaker, I have earlier circulated this report to members and to interested people in the community. I table it today by request to facilitate debate, which I welcome. I do this in private members time, as it is my report and not an official report of the ACT government.

Tuggeranong Community Festival

Debate resumed.

MS MacDONALD (3.52): I rise today to support Mr Hargreaves' motion and to thank him for it. I also thank Minister Wood. I was very interested to hear what he had to say about previous festivals. Not being privileged to have spent as long as some people in this wonderful town, I am unaware of some of the history of Canberra—and perhaps I have the disadvantage of youth, Mr Speaker.

It is very sad to hear that festivals which used to be in existence in this town are no longer around. However, it is a wonderful thing to know that the Tuggeranong Community Festival is still in operation, and has been going strong. This year has been the strongest year in a number of years, to say the least.

I was heartened to hear about the money for festivals being provided by the current ACT government. I think that is a great thing. Hopefully, that will lead to counteracting any negative effects which have occurred in the past—where festivals and events have lost money to other things, or where funding has been totally cut, and sponsorship has not been able to be obtained to replace it.

I would like to talk about a number of events. These have been mentioned before, but certainly we had a wide variety of events taking place at the Tuggeranong Community Festival this year. Events included such things as the inaugural dinner-dance, the valley lawn bowls tournament, the junior indoor sports morning, the Lake Tuggeranong community sailing regatta—which went for both days—as well as the scouts branch canoe day.

Another water event held was the rowing club sprint regatta. There was also a soccer shield event which, regrettably, I missed. There was the women's AFL—and Stevie Wright giving a demonstration of kicking and hand-passing drills. Not being an AFL fan, which some would say is a huge disgrace, I did not attend that either. There was also a skateboarding competition called Frenzy—and Mr Hargreaves mentioned they were trying to injure themselves greatly. I am sure they are all very capable, and managed to not do that.

There was also the communities at work kids corner. That was great. You need stuff for the kids to do, to keep them occupied, especially the littlies of eight years and under. Things to keep them occupied included the fact that they got to meet Humphrey B Bear,

Casper the Friendly Ghost, and other characters I have not heard of—or which were not around in my day. I am sure it was very exciting for all the youngsters.

There were the fireworks over the lake and the battle of the bands—as well as other on-stage activities. There was the Tuggeranong bike festival and, as Mr Hargreaves has mentioned, the great carp catch. There were also the model yacht races and the marathon—another water event taking advantage of Lake Tuggeranong.

Then there was the tennis tournament, as well as a bowling fundraiser. As I said, Mr Speaker, a wide variety of events took place at the Tuggeranong Community Festival. The organisers of the community festival are to be congratulated for bringing together such a diversity of events. A community event such as this shows that a community, whether it is in good times or bad—and Tuggeranong has had a few bad times lately—will come together to celebrate their talents and achievements, and give their offerings. I consider that to be a great thing. It is something to be encouraged into the foreseeable years.

The other day, I attended a luncheon. The guest speaker at that luncheon gave a quote, which was: “Clever people come up with great ideas, and brilliant people steal those ideas.” In just such a fashion, I would like to see the ACT taking a few of the good ideas from other states. Although it may pain us to think of it, other states do come up with some good ideas. Rather than knocking them back as not being our own, I believe we should adopt the attitude that it is a good move to steal those ideas.

One such excellent idea that I would like to see adopted in the ACT—it relates to this motion that Mr Hargreaves has put up—is the Brisbane River Festival. Although we do not have a large river to celebrate here in Canberra, I would like to see us celebrating our lakes—not only Lake Burley Griffin, but also Lake Tuggeranong and Lake Ginninderra.

One of the fantastic things about the Brisbane River Festival is that it brings a whole lot of activities together. That includes things such as cleaning up beside the river. We could incorporate things like Clean-Up Canberra or clean up the rivers type of thing. They have had speakers talking about water conservation—and other features about water. They had a seafood festival, which we would not necessarily have.

Mr Humphries: I will be in that!

MS MacDONALD: You would be in the seafood festival, would you, Mr Humphries? I do not think we get any seafood other than yabbies out of our lake—or carp. I do not know that you can turn carp into any gourmet delicacies.

Mr Smyth: You have to prepare them in the right way. They must stand, you let the crap come out of them, and then you cook them properly.

MS MacDONALD: I believe you have to let a lot of the mud come out of the carp before you can eat it. As far as I understand it, it still tastes pretty muddy. It would not be my dish!

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The Brisbane River Festival incorporates a food festival. There is no reason why we could not do such a thing. We already have Floriade, and there are numerous other festivals and events which take place around Lake Burley Griffin. A number of those events could be brought together to incorporate the idea of community. They could be extended out so they are not based just around the centre of town. They could be extended into areas around Lake Ginninderra and Lake Tuggeranong, to celebrate what we have here in the ACT.

I commend the motion.

MS DUNDAS (3.59): The Tuggeranong Community Festival is certainly a wonderful event, embraced by the entire Canberra community. I wholeheartedly support government funding for events such as this. In this chamber, I have often lamented the attention successive ACT governments have lavished on central Canberra, to the detriment of Canberra's other town centres. It is good to see that the ACT government is doing something to address this imbalance. This government has almost doubled funding for the arts and cultural activities this financial year, but it remains to be seen whether this money will be distributed equitably across Canberra.

Belconnen, in the electorate of Ginninderra, has staged a community festival from time to time, but without an arts centre of the calibre of the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. It is more difficult for the Belconnen community to organise events like the Tuggeranong Arts Festival.

The Belconnen cultural planning group, along with the Belconnen Community Service, Belconnen Community Council and the University of Canberra, are hoping to secure funding to develop a plan for an arts centre for the section 187 site on the shores of Lake Ginninderra. I hope the ACT government will keep in mind the well deserved public funding for the Tuggeranong festival and Tuggeranong Arts Centre, when considering the proposal being put forward for a Belconnen cultural centre.

MS TUCKER (4.01): I will speak briefly to this. Members have spoken in detail about the festival, so I will not be repetitive.

In lots of ways, ours is quite an unnatural city, in that it is only recently that we have been able to count locally born residents as the majority. Although the community festivals were, in a way, artificially invented, they have now evolved into something with resonance and significance for people in the communities. I consider that to be a very healthy thing for community development, and for our social condition.

However, I am very disappointed that the Festival of the Contemporary Arts, which has been a very important event here for the past nine years, is apparently not going to be funded next year. I think that is a shame. Neither is it very strategic, because we have that history which has built up over the years. I believe that, with more energy behind it and support for it, it could become something which attracts a lot more people—and those from outside Canberra as well. Once again, we are seeing something good cut off—something which has been supported and built up. That is pretty disappointing.

Anyway, in this debate, we are talking about the Tuggeranong festival. I also am happy to commend the government for supporting that and the benefits it brings.

MR SMYTH (4.02): Mr Hargreaves is to be congratulated for putting this motion on the notice paper. He is also to be congratulated for his long-term involvement in the festival. John is one of the guys who are always there who, along with people like Michael Lindfield, help to keep it alive. Well done, Mr Hargreaves.

A great deal has been said already, and it is hard to say anything new without covering old ground. I would simply comment on what a wonderful variety of events there was at the festival—cycling, choirs, fireworks and concerts. Thanks to the community, organisations like the Guises Creek Bush Fire Brigade—which I belong to—made some money out of the festival. We always have a bucket on hand—to collect. It is great to see patrons willing to give of their time and participate in the festival—and willing also to support other people in kind. They rewarded us with several hundred dollars, which we will put to good use over the coming months.

Mr Hargreaves listed all the sponsors, so I will not go over them again. Suffice it to say that the sponsors are many and varied. They are incredibly representative of the support which comes from the Tuggeranong business community, as well as community groups from the clubs and social organisations down there. To Michael Lindfield and his committee, and the many silent workers who are never seen but who are heard—in the expressed joy of the residents of Tuggeranong at their festival—congratulations, and well done.

Mr Speaker, the beauty for me of the Tuggeranong festival is that it showcases a community. It shows a community that is diverse and accepting, active and involved—and willing to get out and spend time together, just in the sheer pleasure of one another's company, in the enjoyment of the events that are put on. The fact that it has been conducted for 14 years shows the huge amount of support from that community for its own festival. That is great. I hope to see it grow and remain a strong and vibrant indication of the sort of community the people of Tuggeranong see themselves being.

MR PRATT (4.04): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this motion. Like all festivals, the Tuggeranong Community Festival is important to the social and economic development of Tuggeranong. It has been very important for the Tuggeranong community to develop its own festival activities. It has been a great challenge to the community to be able to develop activities which are in competition with the wonderful array of established festival activities already existing across the ACT. This the Tuggeranong community has done, and the program of successful activities in the south is proof of that.

The fact that 7,000 people attended on the night of the concert and that 12,500 attended over the last weekend of the festival speaks volumes for the success of that festival. The pull of a big band—at least the pull of that band, to get it involved—reflects well on the organisation and determination of those behind the festival.

In answer to Mr Hargreaves' stated concern that Mr Pratt of Pratt's Tackle Box may be connected, I do not know about that. There is probably a relationship there somewhere. In debate on one of the earlier motions in the day, Richard Pratt was named. I suppose we can all be happy that the Pratt name is reflective of so many positive outcomes!

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It is pleasing to see government departments so supportive, and we trust this support will continue.

When it comes to youth, the festival provides the badly needed entertainment that youth in the Tuggeranong Valley are screaming out for. I hope the festival generates ideas and inspires further action for the design and development of perennial youth entertainment activities in the valley. We certainly need a lot of those and we—the community—have to find ways to do that.

I feel that the festival is an interesting test bed. Concepts can be tried and tested, and our youth are able to provide feedback to tell us what they think. That is an ACT-wide issue, but I would like to see the festival being able to contribute to the development of useful and entertaining activities for the youth of Tuggeranong Valley.

There has already been a lot said here today, and I do not need to rehash all of those points. I am very happy that the festival has progressed this year—and hopefully augers well for the future.

MR HARGREAVES (4.08), in reply: Mr Speaker, it always gives me huge pleasure to talk about Tuggeranong. I will refer to a couple of points that were raised. Before doing so, I thank members for their support for the motion and for their kind words about the festival and its organisers. In one of the years that the Tuggeranong festival did not get any money, there was, I believe, some \$10,000 allocated from the public purse for a similar festival in Belconnen. However, due to lack of interest in Belconnen, it never happened.

I would urge the good burghers of Belconnen to take a leaf out of the book of the people of Tuggeranong and get their community spirit together. They would be surprised at just what can come out of it.

Ms Dundas was talking about the need for an arts centre in Belconnen. I have certainly been to some shows in Belconnen and I agree with Ms Dundas—they could do with one. However, they do not just pop up—you must have a community that will use it. The festival in Tuggeranong was many years in the making. It was that groundswell of community support that delivered it. It was also that groundswell of community support that pushed members of this place to fund it.

Ms Tucker said that the festivals all sort of popped up accidentally and that they are now being driven by people born and raised in the ACT. In fact, it has been through the efforts of a few dedicated people, but it has been on the insistence of the community at large that the festival has continued. It is true that we now have many people who were born in the area insisting on it—and that shows the dynamic of Tuggeranong. Once upon a time, it was nappy valley, but not any more. We are now seeing the community in the Tuggeranong Valley being driven by young adults, who were born in a hospital that has been blown up and have grown up in Tuggeranong. Those people are pushing these things.

Mr Pratt talked about the festival and said that 12,000 people attended the last weekend of the festival. I remind Mr Pratt that there was only one weekend of it. If he missed out on things the first weekend, that is because the festival was not on. However, I congratulate the organisers in changing the format to the successful one that it was.

Mr Pratt also said he hoped that the activities which took place at the festival would generate more activities for young people. In answer to that, the activities of the festival were driven by young people this year. They emanated out of the youth centre, which had a sort of facelift a few years ago. It is now a vibrant youth centre—it is great. What goes on at the Tuggeranong Youth Centre is fantastic—music, activities, mentoring programs and the like. That is where a lot of the impetus came from to get that part of the festival going.

A similar sort of activity which shows the community's commitment and what the community can do, in addition to the festival, was the community's need for a youth centre at Lanyon Valley. The community down there decided they wanted it; the community pushed for it, and we brought the case to this Assembly. Mr Stefaniak, who was the minister at the time, concurred with the wishes of the community, saw the need and provided that youth centre.

They continue to say, "We want something!" The community is driving the activities in the Lanyon Valley. They want a skate park. I put the Assembly on notice that I am in support of the bid by the Lanyon Youth Centre and the youth of the Lanyon Valley to have a skateboard park included in the capital works program as soon as possible.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members very much for their good wishes and their congratulations to the festival and its organisers. I invite all of you to come down to the festival next year and enjoy yourselves. With a bit of luck, we will have Men at Work. Then you men and women who work here can go and see the men at work down in Tuggeranong.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

War on Iraq

MS DUNDAS (4.13): I move:

That the Chief Minister write to the Prime Minister informing him that this Assembly:

- (1) opposes a war on Iraq as proposed by the US and Britain and opposes any involvement by Australia in such a war; and
- (2) affirms the role of the United Nations as the vehicle for seeking a non-violent resolution of the issues.

On behalf of the ACT Democrats, I rise today to oppose any first strike action on Iraq. A first strike or indeed any war on Iraq will create further instability in the region and undermine international law. A first strike will not necessarily remove Saddam Hussein or keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists. There are dangerous and unpredictable consequences for the region and indeed for the world.

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Concern about a potential war against Iraq has been voiced by many people in recent weeks. There have been calls by former Australian prime ministers, former US presidents, senior security experts in both countries, the leaders of almost all nations, leaders of churches, many Islamic community leaders and the majority of the Australian public.

We have seen community rallies opposing a war on Iraq in all capital cities of Australia, including a rally held here in Canberra in Garema Place in late September. More rallies are being planned. The next one is planned for 30 November outside the US Embassy. A recent opinion poll commissioned by SBS shows that 50 per cent of Australians are against military action against Iraq. It should be noted that the strongest opposition comes from those over the age of 50, including those who have lived through wars.

The ACT is a small jurisdiction. We do not have the power to block the actions of a war-mongering US President. But we can continue to apply pressure to our own Prime Minister not to follow the US down this path to war.

Recent events in Bali have certainly affected the Australian psyche. National security is an issue that we are all concerned about. Bringing the terrorists to justice must be a priority. But we should not confuse the issues. There has been no link established between the Bali bombings or the tragedy of September 11 and Iraqi nationals. In fact, Iraq's past terrorist links have been primarily limited to secular groups in Palestine.

In the early 1980s the US dropped Iraq from its list of countries that supported terrorism in order to support Iraq's own war effort against Iran. Iraq was only reinstated to this list after the invasion of Kuwait, despite a lack of evidence of increased ties to terrorism. A recent CIA report indicates that the Iraqis have been consciously avoiding any actions against the US or its facilities abroad.

The American obsession with Iraq's potential threat to the Middle East region during the past decade is weakened by the fact that Iraq's military, and its real and potential weapons of mass destruction, were significantly stronger in the late 1980s than they are today. Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was once a real threat when he had his full complement of medium-range missiles, a functioning air force and a massive stockpile of chemical and biological weaponry and materiel. But today, in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent inspections regimes, virtually any aggressive military potential by Iraq has been destroyed.

Before the United Nations special commission was withdrawn, its agents reportedly oversaw the destruction of 38,000 chemical weapons, 480,000 litres of live chemical weapon agents, 48 missiles, six missile launchers, 30 missile warheads modified to carry chemical or biological agents, and hundreds of pieces of related equipment with the capability to produce chemical weapons.

Iraq's current armed forces are barely one-third their prewar strength. The navy is virtually non-existent, and the air force is just a fraction of what it was before the war. Military spending by Iraq is barely one-tenth of its levels in the 1980s, while here in Australia we see spending on the defence force increase by the day.

Though in the past Iraq certainly produced both chemical and biological agents, the US has never been able to present any credible evidence that Iraq currently has biological weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

International law is quite clear about when military force is allowed; it is permissible for individual or collective self-defence against armed attack until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. In recent days, resolution 1441 has passed through the UN, and it is already clear the United States and British governments are seeking to interpret this resolution as a vote to make war possible, not as a vote to make peace possible.

The resolution does not authorise military action. It requires the Security Council to meet if UN weapons inspectors report a breach of its terms. However, US officials are already arguing that the Security Council resolution does not prevent them from going to war. The military build-up now taking place suggests that both the US and British governments are keen to go to war.

Resolution 1441 has not brought America back under the umbrella of international law as many hoped it would. President Bush made it crystal clear that he is not going to be bound by the UN when he responded to the Security Council vote by announcing “the resolution did not jeopardise US freedom of action”.

There is every sign that the US believes that the UN resolution is a sign of support from the international community for an aggressive oil war. It does not. We should not be trading blood for oil. What happens if the US invades Iraq and they are successful in overthrowing Saddam Hussein’s regime? As it is becoming apparent in Afghanistan, throwing a government out is easier than putting a new one together.

Today in the Assembly, we have the opportunity to join with community leaders, religious leaders, union leaders, the Returned Services League and other political leaders to make a clear statement that we oppose a first strike on Iraq and we affirm the United Nations as the vehicle for seeking a non-violent resolution of these issues. We must remember that war is not a way to peace.

MS TUCKER (4.19): I move the following amendment:

After paragraph (2) add the following paragraph:

“(3) and further urges him to commit Australia to work towards a universal program for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction that involves all nuclear powers.”.

Real dangers and opportunities face Australia, and our national leaders are demonstrably unable to find an appropriate response. The possibility of Australian participation in an American war on Iraq is perhaps the clearest illustration of that failure, a failure which may lead to an inordinate loss of Australian lives, inevitably a substantial loss of innocent civilian lives in Iraq, an escalation of the brutal and destructive tensions in the Middle East, an increased encouragement and justification for terrorist organisations and terrorist activities around the world, and ongoing social and environmental catastrophe.

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Yesterday a publication entitled *Collateral Damage* on the impact of a war on Iraq was released by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. It was launched in Australia by the Australian sister body, the Medical Association for Prevention of War, at an event hosted by Greens senator Kerry Nettle at Parliament House yesterday. I seek leave to table it. I have circulated it to all members speaking today to see whether they approve of it being tabled, in light of concerns that have been expressed about tabling documents which have not been seen. As I understand it, everyone is happy with me tabling it.

Leave granted.

MS TUCKER: I present the following paper:

Collateral damage—the health and environmental costs of war on Iraq, Medact, 12 November 2002.

The media release put out by the Medical Association for Prevention of War yesterday stated:

A US-led attack on Iraq is likely to result in between 48,000 and 260,000 deaths during the first three months of combat, according to a study by medical and public health experts ...

“This report at least deserves a response from those who advocate war against Iraq ... If Prime Minister Howard already understands the human effect of modern warfare, then he has the responsibility to justify to the Australian people our likely involvement in this carnage. If he does not understand, then this report is essential reading for him. But let him not pretend that he just doesn't know.”

It is not enough for us to just say that we support this motion, to say no to war in Iraq or to say that the United Nations is the solution. It is time for us at a community level to begin articulating the steps we need to take.

In the context of the so-called war on terror, Howard, Blair and Bush's rationale for a likely attack on Iraq is that Iraq has or may be developing weapons of mass destruction. We should remember that neither the bomb attack in Bali nor the planned hijackings in the United States involved weapons of mass destruction, so we are given to recognise that there are other agendas at work in this decision to turn against Iraq—domestic political agendas, commercial agendas, geopolitical agendas. These are agendas we should resist.

Nonetheless, eradication of weapons of mass destruction, including all nuclear weapons and biological and chemical agents, is an essential step towards a more secure and peaceful world, without a doubt. To achieve this we need a commitment not just from Iraq or North Korea but also from the United States, Israel, Pakistan, Russia, China, the UK, France and India. A legally binding convention under the aegis of the United Nations, if ratified by all nations, including the most recalcitrant United States, could give us hope.

We do have to worry about nuclear disarmament. The cold war ended a decade ago, yet there are still 30,000 nuclear weapons stockpiled, with over 5,000 deployed on hair-trigger alert. Plans by the United States to develop a ballistic missile defence are prompting China and Russia to enhance their nuclear capabilities. India and Pakistan are preparing to deploy nuclear weapons following tests in 1998.

The terrorist attacks on the US represent an increased risk of nuclear weapons use as terrorists resort to mass destruction and states become more likely to threaten or use nuclear weapons in response. However, a window of opportunity exists to move toward a comprehensive and verified ban on nuclear weapons. There is thus a need to build political will amongst governments. There is an association of parliamentarians for nuclear disarmament. If anyone is interested in more information, I am happy to give it.

The United States must implement its obligation under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to proceed towards the total and unequivocal elimination of its nuclear arsenal and must not withdraw from the anti-ballistic missile treaty. The US should not set aside either the ABM treaty or its obligations. At a time when the US is working with a broad-based coalition of nations, including Russia and China, in the struggle against terrorism, unilateral withdrawal from an important arms control treaty sends a very negative signal to the rest of the world. Now more than ever the United States should be mindful of its international treaty obligations.

In the post-cold war era it is important to proceed with Russia towards the total and unequivocal elimination of nuclear arsenals and immediately remove weapon systems from launch-on-warning status. The agreements proposed for finalising in Moscow and Petersburg on 25 May do not do this. The deployment of an anti-ballistic missile system will make it unlikely that such agreements can be reached. Already the Russian duma has passed a motion urging the Russian government to examine Russian military options in response to the US withdrawal from the ABM treaty.

The deployment of a US BMD system will also give China a pretext to further upgrade its nuclear missiles from the current 20 single-warhead ICBMs to a system with 200 much more sophisticated warheads. This is not in the security interests of the US.

The deployment of a US BMD system would have been of no utility whatsoever in preventing the terrible events of 11 September. Such a system is of no relevance to the real security needs of the US but diverts vital funding and attention from the measures that are truly required.

It is unfortunate and alarming that the current nuclear posture review of the US seems to assume that nuclear weapons will remain a part of the US strategic posture indefinitely and envisages even the development of new varieties of nuclear weapons. This is directly contrary to US obligations under the NPT as reinforced by the final document of the year 2000 NPT review conference.

There is currently a court challenge to the President's right to have sole authority to override an international treaty, which he did. This court case started on Halloween Day in the US District Court. The case is Dennis Kucinich et al v. George W Bush et al. We watch with interest to see what happens with that challenge to his incredibly frightening power.

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A remarkable stench of hypocrisy hangs over the heads of the affluent world, and past and present military activities of the United States are simply one illustration of that. Britain as well needs to be condemned for its hypocrisy. Britain's presence at the special operations forces exhibition (Sofex) 2002 in Jordan recently is the latest in a long list of New Labour's broken promises on weapon sales. The British presence at Sofex 2002 tops them all. The British Army, British arms companies and a British government agency, not to mention Prince Andrew and the defence minister Lord Bach, are this week buying, selling, doing deals and sharing information at a Middle Eastern showcase for all kinds of weapons from small arms to land mines, battlefield tanks and fighter jets.

Official delegations from Iraq—one of which had an encounter with Prince Andrew that was described by Radio 4's *Today* program as a strategic jostle—and Iran are also attending the show. Both are members of Tony Blair and George Bush's so-called axis of evil. Did Mr Blair not notice them on the guest list? Did Jack Straw overlook the fact that delegations from Sudan, Syria and Libya, three more states defined as sponsors of state terrorism by the US State Department, would also be attending?

The British government agency attending the fair is the Defence Export Services Organisation, whose sole job is to flog British equipment abroad. The British Defence Manufacturers Association, which represents and lobbies on behalf of British weapons firms, is also there, and the British Army is participating at the fair in the official hand-over to Jordan of Challenger tanks.

Among the British arms manufacturers attending are the tank firms Vickers and the British arm of the US weapons giant Lockheed-Martin. Lockheed-Martin makes the Longbow fire-and-forget missile and the Hellfire II anti-tank missile, as well as the F16 fighter jet. All are likely to be deployed when the US attacks Iraq.

Among the 10 American firms exhibiting at Sofex is Raytheon, which I think we have given a subsidy to set up in Canberra. It is the world's largest missile manufacturer and purveyor of the Tomahawk cruise missile which rained down over Afghanistan earlier this year.

If Britain and the United States are serious about halting tyranny, terrorism and weapons proliferation in the Middle East, they should not be flogging arms there but acting to restrict weapons sales. I think that comes from the BBC news. I will confirm that later, for the record.

More broadly and perhaps more urgently, we need to learn together how to work for peace and coexistence in the Middle East, in East Asia and all around the world. To do that we need to learn the lessons from people like Nelson Mandela that there can be no coexistence without a process for truth and reconciliation, that restorative justice is built on a recognition of what has befallen us all, and that we cannot deny the damage that we, our policies, our actions, our consumption or our lifestyle does to the lives and the cultures of others. We have to start from there.

We simply cannot say, "Let us go to war." To achieve coexistence and acceptance, we need a commitment to more equitable distribution of wealth globally and within nations, in addition to a demonstrated commitment to the health of the planet. We need to

recognise that environmental and social calamities are hitting the poorest in the world, and we the richest must accept much more responsibility. We need to recognise our common humanity rather than seek to divide ourselves from others on the basis of religion, income, culture or race. This is as true and urgent internationally as it is within our own city.

We must find the politics of hope. It is as simple as that. Bush, Blair, with John Howard, just like the terrorists and totalitarians they believe they are opposing, are unable to give us that. Their flag waving, drum beating and heroic posturing demonstrate day after day that they are the wrong leaders for this time. We have to find the leadership closer to home.

War on Iraq is misguided and destructive, and the United Nations must play an increasing role in resolving conflict and supporting peace. But how can that happen must be informed by the workings and development of communities around the world.

I would to read a message from Parum Samigita from Banjars (village councils) of the Kuta, Legian, and Seminyak areas of Bali in October 2002:

We Balinese have an essential concept of balance. It's the Tri Hita Karana; a concept of harmonious balance. The balance between God and humanity; Humanity with itself and Humanity with the environment. This places us all in a universe of common understanding. It is not only nuclear bombs which have fallout, it is our job to minimize this fallout for our people and our guests from around the world.

Who did this? It's not such an important discussion for us to discuss. Why this happened; maybe this is much more worthy of thought. What can we do to create beauty from this tragedy and come to an understanding where nobody feels the need to make such a statement again? This is important.

This is the basis from which we can embrace everyone as a brother; everyone as a sister. It is a period of uncertainty. It is a period of change. It is also an opportunity for us to move together into a better future. A future where we embrace all of humanity in the knowledge that we all look and smell the same when we are burnt. Victims of this tragedy are from all over the world. The past is not significant. It is the future which is important. This is the time to bring our values, our empathy, to society and the world at large. To care. To Love.

Finally, I read a message to all extremists of the world from Australian Muslims. It was formulated by the Islamic Council of Victoria, but it was signed by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, the national peak body; the Islamic Council of the Northern Territory; the Islamic Council of Queensland; the Islamic Council of Western Australia; the Supreme Islamic Council of New South Wales; the Islamic Council of New South Wales; and Sheikh Taj Aldin Alhilali of New South Wales. Their statement reads:

Together, we send this message to the extremists of the world who come from all backgrounds, religions and ideologies. We speak out with two aims—first: in the hope that these extremists will re-consider their actions, and second: to make our stance clear to the world.

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We have felt the hurts of your ways and we want you to understand that what you have done was never in our name, or the name of any religion or God. Furthermore, never in our name or in the name of any religion or God, can you ever be aggressive, unjust or hurt innocent people.

(Extension of time granted.) The statement continues:

You have killed many precious people from all backgrounds and religions and you have hurt many more. There is no political, religious, racial, ethnic or ideological position that can justify victimizing the innocent and the defenseless. Tragically, the very communities you claim to represent have also been further victimized because of backlashes by those that have been hurt and angered as a result of your aggressive and criminal actions.

Of course, all people deserve the rights to self-defence, justice, security and peace, including you. But self-defence does not justify aggression and the random killing of unarmed and innocent people whom you cannot identify and are not fighting you. No one should have to live in fear.

We witness and confirm that your cause is never enhanced by aggression, and violence against innocent people. These methods are against every religious teaching in spite of what you may believe. These methods will only promote repulsion towards you and your cause and encourage good people to gather against you.

We appeal to the common sense and hearts of all the leaders of the world and ask that they do all that is in their power to ensure that justice and peace prevail and that injustice, oppression and human rights abuses are eradicated.

Good people have been criticized for not being vocal enough against the aggression and violence. There are no bystanders. Silence is perceived as a form of consent. So let those people who seek peace and justice further amplify the message and express it repeatedly in different ways and languages. Perhaps then others will understand and bear witness to our search for peace on earth ...

This statement reflects mainstream Islamic teachings in every way, and it is based on The Quran ...

We pray to God to bring peace to the world through this and other similar efforts. Amen.

MR STANHOPE (Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for Women) (4.37): This is a debate on a very important issue that is occupying the thoughts and thinking of all Australians and perhaps most people around the world—the very fragile and tense international situation the world is facing. I am very pleased to rise to support the sentiment and the concern expressed in the motion moved today by Ms Dundas in relation to the possibility or prospect of a war in Iraq that may involve Australia.

We within the Labor Party have had some discussion on the role of this Assembly in international or foreign affairs, acknowledging that I as a government and we as a parliament do not have any constitutional role in foreign affairs. It is important that we acknowledge that and not confuse our role as a territorial Assembly and distinguish it

from the role of the Commonwealth parliament as the parliament responsible for the conduct of our foreign affairs. I say that by way of explanation in relation to the range of issues that we within the Labor caucus discussed in determining our position on the specifics of the motion.

Certainly it is the view of the Labor Party—I do not know whether it is important that I distinguish between the view of the government and the view of the Labor Party—that paragraph (2) of Ms Dundas' motion should be supported. We have no hesitation in affirming the role of the United Nations as the vehicle for seeking a non-violent resolution of the issues. I think that is the view of each and every one of us. Certainly it is the view that has been adopted by the Labor Party's colleagues in the federal parliament. There is a position on this issue that has been adopted by each of the parties—the Labor Party, the Liberal Party, the Democrats and the Greens—in the federal parliament, the parliament that has direct constitutional responsibility for these issues. Of course, it is appropriate that we express own views and the views of the people of the ACT.

One of the major concerns that many have had, one which I share, is that untoward pressure not be brought to bear on the United Nations; that it be supported in its role; that we nurture, support and encourage the United Nations to fulfil its charter in relation to issues such as this. This is a prime example of the importance of the United Nations and its mechanisms being supported to the full.

It is vital that we do that in light of resolution 1441 of the Security Council, which directed Iraq to agree to allow completely unfettered access to UN weapons inspectors to any site they suspect of harbouring weapons of mass destruction. The UN has asserted its pivotal role in seeking a resolution to the situation that is faced by the world following the terrorist attacks in the United States over a year ago which precipitated a quite remarkable international coalition against terrorist attacks and the world at large being held to ransom by that sort of terrorism, which was very much an incident of international instability.

The world united and responded to the particular issue. That to some extent has now lead us to this tense stand-off with Iraq in relation to that country's possession of, and in the view of many a predisposition to develop and to utilise, weapons of mass destruction and in so doing pose a significant threat to world stability and world peace. It is in that context that the United Nations must and should be supported.

The Labor Party will support paragraph (2) of Ms Dundas' motion as the appropriate way forward. It reflects what is now happening, to the extent that we have a United Nations resolution in relation to these things. I think we are all hoping that Iraq will abide by that resolution and that weapons inspections in Iraq will be resumed.

Mr Hargreaves will move amendments to paragraph (1) in terms which support the United Nations. It seems to me that essentially there is an internal inconsistency in Ms Dundas' motion. It may be that the United Nations will sanction armed intervention, in which case Ms Dundas' motion, if supported as it is, would in effect fly in the face of support for the United Nations and the way forward as determined by the United Nations.

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The amendments which will be moved by my colleague seek to address the primacy of the United Nations in this process, the importance of there not being unilateral action by states—including the United States, Britain or Australia—without the support of the United Nations.

The Labor Party supports the amendment proposed by Ms Tucker. We believe it appropriate. With the amendments to be proposed by Mr Hargreaves and the amendment proposed by Ms Tucker, I believe there will be a strong motion which puts very clearly and succinctly this Assembly's view on behalf of this community that there should not be unilateral action against Iraq; that the United Nations should be supported to the full in its endeavours to seek a reasoned, peaceful outcome to the situation in Iraq; and that we all support the eventual aim of reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

These are important matters. There is an active national debate. It is appropriate that we express our support for the United Nations and that we express our support for a peaceful resolution to the situation confronting the world in relation to terrorism and Iraq's amassing of weapons of mass destruction.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, we have Ms Tucker's amendment to Ms Dundas' motion. If we settle that issue now, Mr Hargreaves can then move his amendments and we can continue the debate. If we do not move to Ms Tucker's amendment now, it means the debate can proceed for as long as we wish. We can debate Ms Tucker's amendment, and when that has been settled, we can move to Mr Hargreaves' amendments and debate them.

The question I have for the Assembly therefore is whether it the wish to resolve Ms Tucker's amendment now and move on to debate Mr Hargreaves' amendments.

Mr Stefaniak: Another simple way might be for Mr Hargreaves to move his amendments. This will enable speakers to make one speech in relation to all amendments.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would have done that, I must admit, but I am advised that we cannot do it. We must resolve Ms Tucker's amendment before we move to Mr Hargreaves' amendments. The Clerk has advised me that if you wish to address your remarks to Mr Hargreaves' foreshadowed amendments you may do that.

MR STEFANIAK (4.48): I will address the substantive motion first. The Liberal Party will be opposing the motion. Ms Dundas said that Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime are no longer a threat. There has been a lot of rearmament. A lot of chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction have been produced in recent times. Quite clearly the evidence is that Saddam Hussein is a threat. I do not think the United Nations would have issued such a strong resolution had that not been the case.

I was very concerned to hear Ms Tucker lump in with terrorists George Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard. That is somewhat obscene. I do not think she meant to be too nasty, but it is very wrong to put those people in the same boat as people who viciously killed at least 59 Australians, together with 100 other people, in Bali or who have carried out other terrorist acts around the world.

We do not live in a very safe world. In many ways the world is less stable now than it was during the cold war, when there was a so-called balance of terror. We live in a world where there is a great deal of instability. We live in a world where people do not feel safe. Since humankind has roamed this earth, there have been wars and conflicts. Sadly, it seems to be in the very nature of human beings that they should occur.

We are talking about possible military action in Iraq. I think I speak for my colleagues in saying that we hope that that will not be necessary. We hope that at this eleventh hour commonsense or self-preservation will prevail and that Mr Hussein—the man seems to have a very good ability for self-preservation—will back down, that there will be proper weapons inspections as proposed by the United Nations, and that under the auspices of the UN weapons of mass destruction will be destroyed. In other words, I hope he pulls back from the brink. That is not necessarily unlikely. Let us hope that happens.

If it does not, what should occur? Saddam Hussein has a dreadful record. He has used chemical weapons—chemical weapons are weapons of mass destruction—on the Kurds, against dissident Iraqis and against Iranians in the war with Iran in the 1980s. He had no compunction in using them on his own people.

The only reason he did not use them in the Gulf War of 1990-91 was the very real fear that if he went over the top the Americans might respond with nuclear weapons. That is something an American official told me about two years ago.

Hussein does not need to build weapons of mass destruction. He has very strong armed services, even after the Gulf War. He has a standing army of over 400,000, including about 100,000 very competent troops in the Republican Guard. His neighbouring countries do not have anything like that in their armed services. It is not as if he is being threatened by anyone.

Nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction could well be used by a vicious regime like that in Iraq, which has had no compunction about using them against their own people and against the Kurdish minority, or by terrorists.

Saddam Hussein runs a particularly nasty regime. He is a murderer. He was a murderer from a young age. He has personally shot cabinet ministers and generals. His family has done the same. He has executed or caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of his own people. He is probably one of the least pleasant individuals in the world, heading one of the least pleasant regimes. But he seems to be able to pull back from the brink. He has done it before. Hopefully, he will do it again.

The strong response from the United Nations, which came about only because of the unity of purpose shown by the Americans, backed up mainly by the British, has put Saddam Hussein into a corner. This strong resolution of the UN might work. It is backed up by military force.

I do not think appeasement is ever the answer. “An appeaser,” said Winston Churchill, “feeds the crocodile in the hope that it will eat him last.” In the Nazi era, in 1936, the Germans invaded the Rhineland. They sent in three battalions. I do not know whether they had ammunition for their rifles. They had explicit orders to pull back if the French

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moved in, which the French had every right to do under the Versailles Treaty. The French did not. They were in an appeasing mode. The Germans felt emboldened by that, and the rest is history.

Comrade Lenin said, "Push out a bayonet. If it strikes fat, push further. If it strikes steel pull back for another day."

They were two regimes which were quite happy to be bullies and to push things to the limit. If you appeased them, they would take a bite and then want another, bigger bite. When you are dealing with vicious, nasty regimes, there does come a time when you have to stand up to them; otherwise, we will go back to the Dark Ages.

Terrorism is something you cannot appease. No-one has said this so far in this debate, and that is good, but a number of letters to the editor have said that Australia should not be supporting the West or any moves against Iraq, as that would make us an open target for terrorists.

I read an interesting article recently, "They Want to Kill Us All", by Mark Steyn in *The Spectator*, a British magazine. Someone said the French had paid a price for their initial support for Mr Bush. Eleven French submarine technicians in Karachi were killed in a suicide attack not all that long ago on a French oil tanker off the coast of Yemen. They said that it now seems to be the turn of Australia.

There is a great fallacy there, because it seems that the French support for Mr Bush was very brief. The article said:

The French were supportive for about ten minutes after 11 September, but for most of the last year have been famously and publicly non-supportive: throughout the spring, their foreign minister ... was deploring the American [attitude] on a daily basis. The French veto is still Saddam's best shot at torpedoing any meaningful UN action on Iraq. If you were to pick one Western nation not to blow up the oil tankers of [or kill the citizens of] the French would be it.

But they got blown up anyway. And afterwards a spokesman for the Islamic Army of Aden said, 'We would have preferred to hit a US frigate, but no problems because they're all infidels.'

A former leader of Hezbollah, when asked, "Why are you fighting us?" replied, "We are not fighting so that you will offer us something. We are fighting to eliminate you." Those are the views of absolute extremists, by no means the views of the vast majority of people in the Muslim world.

Many people will benefit if Hussein pulls back from the brink and allows inspectors in. If he does not, if he absolutely refuses to let them in and armed force has to be used, then so be it. If that unfortunate situation eventuates, I hope that a much better Iraq and a much better deal for the average Iraqi citizen will eventuate.

Australia is a foundation member of the United Nations. We are a member of the Western alliance. As I said, sadly there have always been wars.

I might briefly address Mr Hargreaves' circulated amendment to substitute "not sanctioned by the United Nations". I would hope the United Nations will sanction it, and it seems they may well do so. But there is the veto. It does not take very much for the UN not to be able to sanction appropriate action. The only reason the UN intervened in Korea was that the Soviet delegate, because of some crisis, was away the weekend the UN met and the veto was not used in the Security Council. If it had been, the action in Korea would not have been a UN-sanctioned action.

Unfortunately, UN processes are so cumbersome that it may not be possible to get everyone to agree on appropriate action. One would hope that they would agree. The signs are that maybe they would, but they may not. That is the fallacy in Mr Hargreaves' amendment.

Unfortunately, we do live in a very unstable world. There are bullies around. There are countries and people who still feel that they can get away with using brute force to achieve their ends. Over the last 100 years or so we in Australia have shown that we are prepared to be part of an alliance that is dedicated to better ideals such as freedom of mankind. (*Extension of time granted.*)

We have been part of the Western alliance. We have contributed to a number of wars, the biggest in more recent times being World War II, when quite clearly the forces of Nazi Germany and the forces of Imperial Japan, had they won, would have imposed a very different type of world order, one I do not think any of us would have been particularly keen to live in.

We are an English-speaking democracy. Our values are very similar to those of the United States and Great Britain. That is something we cannot escape, or should want to. Those fundamental values have led to significant advances in humankind over the last couple of hundred years.

Our contribution would be somewhat limited because of our very small armed forces. But we did make a small contribution to the Gulf War. No doubt if war on Iraq does become inevitable we will make a small contribution. I know our people would acquit themselves well. We all hope that that will not be necessary.

This motion will not help the situation. It is something the federal government will decide. It is looking at the gravity of the situation. It is pulling out all stops to exhaust diplomatic efforts. Everyone seems to be doing that to try to get a peaceful resolution of the crisis. But at the end of the day that may not be possible. I do not think it would be right for us to attempt to fetter the actions of our national government by motions such as this.

At 5.00 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.

MR STEFANIAK: I hope that any further action will be sanctioned by the UN. Given the UN's history, that may not be possible. I would hope that as a result of the current UN resolution Saddam Hussein will back down at the 11th hour and allow in the inspectors. We all fervently hope that happens. But if those two things do not happen,

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there is a real need to ensure the safety of the whole world, and some other action—unilateral or whatever—may well have to be taken. That is just a sad fact of life.

We cannot roll ourselves up into a ball and pretend not to be part of the world. We are a part of the world. It is not going to save us by saying that we are not going to touch Iraq. We are part of the Western world whether we like it or not. Because of who we are, we are going to be targets for some types of terrorism. That is just a very sad fact of life.

It is our responsibility as a member of the Western alliance, as a civilised member of the world, as a country that has always tried to be a force for good, to stand up and be counted if we have to be. That is something Australia has always done.

I hope that sense will prevail and that Hussein will back down and accept the current resolution. If he does not, I would hope that the UN will then sanction action. If for some reason it does not, action needs to be taken.

MRS CROSS (5.02): Mr Deputy Speaker, none of us wants to see a war. In fact, the prospect of war—I believe quite rightly—is considered by most right-thinking and freedom-loving people to be abhorrent. I have lived in countries where wars have occurred. I was in Indonesia when the Dili massacre took place. I was in China when the student uprisings commenced in South China, which led to the massacres in Tiananmen Square. It is awful to see your fellow human beings cut down—many of them in their prime. In her motion, Ms Dundas asks that this Assembly:

- (1) opposes a war on Iraq as proposed by the US and Britain and opposes any involvement by Australia in such a war.

With respect to Ms Dundas, this is an oversimplification of the current situation. The regime of Saddam Hussein has been a menace to world regional security and its own internal security. Operation Desert Storm in 1991 was a direct and justified global response to the present Iraq leader's unilateral attack on Kuwait. Saddam Hussein is the same person. He is the same person who has used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He is the same person whom the Australian weapons inspector, Richard Butler, has told us cannot be trusted.

If we are in any doubt that other leaders in Iraq believe differently, let me quote something from the Iraqi parliament from last night. Members variously described the UN resolution as evil, unjust, provocative, aggressive, threatening, deceitful and lacking basic standards of fairness, objectivity and balance. Note that this is what a member country of the UN is saying about a position taken by the organisation to which it belongs and which it has toyed with, cheated, defied, abused and ignored for years.

How reasonable is that for a diplomatic discussion partner? The Iraqi parliament also took the opportunity to shower praise on Saddam with a committee chairman on TV describing the butcher of Baghdad as “fighter, mujahid, a man of values, unlimited wisdom, of extraordinary ability to measure events, of sharp vision, of courage in running the struggle and leading the confrontation, of devotion in leading the Iraqi people to safety on the secure side of the sea where the sunny future lies”.

Immediately after the allies withdrew at the end of the Gulf war, Saddam began attacking the Marsh Arabs in the south (Shiite Muslims) and the Kurds in the north. The instigation by the United States of America and the United Kingdom of no-fly zones was a defensive measure against Saddam's genocidal intent against the minority groups of his own country.

Former UN weapons inspector Richard Butler—a former Australian ambassador—has had on-the-ground personal experience in Iraq and says Saddam Hussein cannot be trusted. The Iraq of Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictatorship through, and with, its minority Sunni Muslims. It has a history of relentless oppression, including the commission of long-term atrocities against the majority Shiite Muslims and, even more so, the Kurdish minority.

Despite all that, Iraq is a member of the United Nations, whose charter it has treated with utter contempt for years. Diplomacy has been used to deal with Iraq by the UN, ever since Saddam deceived the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in 1998. The non-democratic and supposed parliamentary debate—as indeed Saddam's son Uday's letter to the parliament in Iraq stated—has been constructed to be yet another deception, in an attempt to misuse the honest and concerted diplomatic efforts to avoid war.

The other part of Ms Dundas' motion reads:

- (2) affirms the role of the United Nations as the vehicle for seeking a non-violent resolution of the issues.

Whilst it is true that the United Nations has an important role in diplomacy, the essence of the UN—and central to its existence—is the creation, role and function of the Security Council. This is a Security Council matter. This is now a matter in which the pre-eminent member of the UN Security Council, the United States, should show leadership in this area.

In conclusion: as if the Bali bombings were needed to remind us, people such as Saddam Hussein do not share our values. They share neither our respect for human life nor our strong and proud traditions of open and democratic government. I believe we cannot, as a nation, sit idly and allow such people to define the nature and scope of the rule of international law as a toothless tiger.

I believe in the continuation of a liberal democratic ideology as the mainstay of all governments. I do not want to see those democratic ideals undermined or destroyed by renegade and rogue regimes, such as that of this Iraqi dictator.

I will not be supporting the motion by Ms Dundas, as it stands. I have had time to look at all the amendments and understand the sentiments contained therein. They, however, do not detract from the essential message of appeasement which I believe to be the wrong message at this time. I regret I am unable to support them.

MR PRATT (5.07): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak against Ms Dundas' motion. Firstly, I fail to see why a matter in the national interest, in respect of international affairs, is being raised in this local assembly. As it has been raised, and as it represents a proposal for prescriptive action that leaves this country's hands tied in the face of

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a dangerous, intractable issue, endangering the peace and wellbeing of the world—including my country—I have no choice but to rise to speak against it.

Hopefully there will be no war. As an old soldier, I know the consequences of that. I do not like to see people going to war. Nobody wants a war, but war is the last instrument of foreign and international political policy, if it is needed—it is a legitimate instrument of policy. History is replete with examples of where it has been justified for the United Nations, individual nations or alliances, to go to war.

Whilst we in the developed world may aspire to—often naively—and pursue a wide range of peaceful initiatives, there are those in this world who have no respect for, and could not give a toss about, the sanctity of life or the sanctity of peace-loving nations which simply want to get on with life. That includes terrorists and terrorist regimes.

In the past decade, Milosovic fitted that frame, and so has Saddam Hussein. They are perhaps two of the largest monsters the world has seen in the past 20 years. Seventeen times, over about 11 years, Saddam Hussein has ignored UN resolution 687. After running an incredibly debilitating war against Iran which wrecked his country, which he started, and then undertaking some of the world's worst crimes against humanity in his own country, he invaded a peaceful sovereign state—Kuwait.

Ironically, Kuwait was then one of the Middle East's most flourishing democracies. Saddam simply could not tolerate its existence on his doorstep, in terms of the domestic political threat to his own country. Saddam Hussein's obligations under resolution 687 have required, since the end of the Gulf war, that he disarm. That is an obligation. He lost a war—a war he started. Over 11 years, he has played cat and mouse on this issue with the United Nations and the international community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, whatever we may think of the United States and its foreign policy—I am critical of their sometimes less than subtle foreign policy—we must respect the fact that, against the background of Saddam Hussein's intransigence, the United States has taken action.

I want to speak a little of my own experience in Iraq. In 1994, I spent 15 months in Iraq—mainly northern Iraq. I can tell you about some of the human rights abuses and the state of the place under Saddam's tutelage.

Let me talk about Anfal. Anfal is an Arabic term for an incredibly vast array of human rights abusers. In a program undertaken in 1989-91, 100,000 Kurdish men from the north were removed from their families. They were taken away, never to be seen again. Nobody—at least when I last checked—had found out where those poor men had gone.

In the 15 months I was in northern Iraq, I was responsible for delivering a number of humanitarian emergency programs to the widows of those people. We had a number of programs in support of about a million displaced Kurdish people. One of the major programs we ran was for the 40,000-odd widows, many with children, living in the mountains of Iraq, along the Iranian border, who had been left by their menfolk. It was a program we struggled with, to try to bring some measure of domestic and homeland security to those people.

This behaviour by Saddam was repeated in the south-east marshland areas, in the Arabic Shiite Muslim country, with the removal and disappearance of menfolk of fighting age. These are events matched only by Milosevic a couple of years later in the Balkans.

In my work in northern Iraq, in winter, I often delivered heating fuel and medicines to a village called Halabja—about 10 kilometres inside the Iranian border. Some four years prior, Halabja had been the target of weapons of mass destruction attacks by Saddam's troops. A minimum of 7,000 civilians were killed in those attacks.

When I was wandering through that place, the waterholes, creeks and foliage in the area were still carrying the scars of chemical attacks. The people of Halabja told me how, after those assaults, Iraqi troops turned up wearing their nuclear biological chemical defence war suits, so they could inspect the village to measure the results of that wonderful attack. By the way, many of those weapons carried Soviet markings. So clearly there had been a relationship between Soviet and Iraqi forces in carrying out experiments of these weapons.

This is the sort of man we are talking about—a man who has no value for human life and could not give a toss about his own society. Let us look at his actions during the sanctions. Indeed, he was quite happy not to alleviate the pressure on his own society with the sanctions that had been imposed. It happened to suit him to allow his own people to die. He used those deaths and the suffering of children in hospitals throughout the whole of Iraq to score international political points.

Saddam could have negotiated with the United Nations to have had portions of those sanctions lifted, to allow more of his oil to be sold for the production and delivery of medicines and food to those people. However, he deliberately chose not to do that, because it suited his political purposes for the survival of his regime. That is all that matters to animals such as the Milosevics and the Saddam Husseins—the survival of their regimes. They do not give a toss about their own people. It is against that background that we have to ask serious questions. Where does the world go from here in relation to this guy?

In 1994, an Australian colleague of mine was killed in northern Iraq. He was ambushed by a group of people known as Josh Kurds—Kurdish people bought and sold by Saddam Hussein. In those 15 months, four of my Kurdish staff were killed and eight more were ambushed. In that time, five foreigners from other international NGOs were also killed in ambush by Josh Kurds and Iraqi commandos who had crossed over the line of control into the UN safe haven.

Three of our trucks were blown up at Aski Kalash—the frontier line crossing the border. There the Iraqis would allow the Turkish truck convoys to pass through the frontier into the UN safe haven—but three of those were blown up by limpit mines placed on the bottom of the trucks. All of this was pressure by Saddam—continually applied and held on the UN international community, operating in north Iraq in protection of the Kurdish people.

Fundamentally, Iraqis are very good people. They are some of the warmest people I have worked with and met in my travels though Baghdad and in the south-east marshland areas. They can do nothing to change their regime—the regime is all-pervasive. There

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are 200,000 secret police. As Mr Stefaniak pointed out, the republican guards division is 100,000 strong. Members of the republican guards division are well paid and well fed—and to hell with the rest of the country.

These people are not going to be able to rise up and change this regime—they need help. Given that Iraq has a reservoir of weapons of mass destruction, the only way the international community is going to neutralise the effect of that reservoir of weapons of mass destruction is for regime change to occur. (*Extension of time granted.*)

I did not agree with the imposing of international sanctions on Iraq—they brought a lot of suffering to Iraq—but that is a lesson we learn from history. As I was saying earlier, the west underestimated Saddam's willingness to exploit those sanctions and use them against his own people.

How easy do you think it is for a battered Landcruiser—a typical two-tonne vehicle—to drive out of Iraq carrying anthrax, botulism, and chemical weapons in the back, to be thrown onto an Arab dhow and taken across the Persian Gulf? It is not that hard. In fact, that may already have occurred. It is a scenario we can neither avoid nor ignore.

Saddam Hussein was operating with a terrorist group in north Iraq known as Hezbullah Kurd. This group was working with both the Iranians and the Iraqis in the civil war that had broken out between Kurdish factions in north Iraq. Saddam was working with, arming, and supporting those people. Three years later, in approximately 1997, it was well known that Hezbullah Kurd had links with al-Qaeda. To me, that is an example of how things regularly change in the Middle East. The Byzantine nature of the place is that alliances change.

We cannot ignore the possibility that, even though Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are from opposite ends of the terrorist spectrum, they may join to pursue dual goals. That is why the international community needs to move quickly to nullify this concern. Mr Deputy Speaker, I say to my colleagues on the crossbenches, "Please, you need to see these things—you need to understand these things. You need to understand why the international community must take action."

Clearly Ms Dundas' motion is one which is morally and philosophically sound, because we all want to avoid war. If, for God's sake, we have to go to war—or the international community goes to war—we would prefer to see the UN go to war, if the current UN program fails to disarm Saddam. However, I think we must also say that it is the United States, with its strength, that has brought the situation to where it is now.

What are we going to do? Are we going to have an 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st breaking of the resolution—more cat and mouse games? Saddam is the expert of brinksmanship—playing games—playing on the weaknesses that exist within the Security Council to push these things along. Saddam cares about only two things—himself and his weapons of mass destruction. He does not care about his son, Uday; he does not care about his family in Tigris; he does not care about his people—he just wants to survive. The only thing Saddam does respect is fear.

It is the ability to maintain and keep the pressure on that will hopefully rid the world of this guy and get this regime change in place. I reckon that, when that occurs, we are going to see a ramping-up of peace in the Middle East. The removal of the Saddam Hussein regime, including his republican guards division and his secret police, would allow the people of Iraq self-determination. It would allow nations on the fringe of Iraq to finally settle down to control and manage their internal problems in a better way. It would help police sort out Islamic fundamentalist movements in their own countries—it would certainly take the sting out of them. It would also allow the United States and the west to refocus on sorting out this wretched Israeli/Palestinian problem—and it must be sorted out.

Arabs are peace-loving, warm-hearted people. Too many of them are under the thumbs of dictators, or living in the shadow of fundamentalist fear. The west may need to take tough action in the short term to bring things to a head. The west can then get back to what it should have been doing, and has not been doing properly, for the past decade—intervening in a humanitarian, diplomatic and political way in the Middle East, to help those nations rebuild and return to peace.

Amendment agreed to.

MR HARGREAVES (5.23): I seek leave to move two amendments circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

MR HARGREAVES: I move the following amendments together:

- (1) Omit the words “as proposed by the US and Britain”, substitute “not sanctioned by the United Nations”.
- (2) After the word “issues” add the following words:
“and urges the Federal Government to exhaust all diplomatic efforts towards peaceful resolution of the crisis, noting the United Nation’s continuing ethical duty to seek peace for the people of Iraq.”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I categorically support very significantly the sentiments behind the original motion, but I think there are a few things we can add to it. There are a number of points I would like to make in speaking to the motion and moving my amendments.

I am sure Mr Pratt is well versed as to, and aware of, how the people within the country of Iraq feel about having to suffer under such a horrendous regime. I do not think there is a member here who would feel anything but the greatest sympathy and compassion for them, and hold the greatest hope that they will have a an improved life under a better regime. The question is, however, how does that come about—and whether or not we have a responsibility to march in there and change it.

In a discussion of these matters around the dinner table not long ago, the question was posed to me: where was Australia leading the world when Pol Pot was murdering all of his people? In fact, where was Australia when Milosevic was doing the same? We can go on, if you like, to talk about all the other dictators. The question is: where was Australia?

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Was it leading the charge, or was it third in line? I do not think so. I will pose a question to the old soldier over the other side. Did we consider Cambodia close enough to invoke the forward defence theory? No, we did not.

Mr Pratt: But we did play a leading role in the UN intervention.

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Pratt says, “We played a leading role.” I have to say, nowhere near the leading role John Howard is presently trying to drag us, kicking and screaming into.

At the moment, the other issue is: “Is it our war? Do we in fact back Britain and the United States”—I impute something from what Mr Pratt said—“because the United Nations have no teeth?” If I remember correctly, he said, “How many more resolutions will this guy break? He has broken 17. Will we see 18, 19, 20 and 21? Is that an excuse for us, or for Bush, to say, ‘Well, if I do not get my way through the resolutions of the United Nations, I will do it anyway’?” To that, I say a categorical no.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not our war. It is not our war to go and start—not at all. We must understand a number of reasons for that, not the least of which is that it is not just the old soldiers who go across and fight. The old chesspiece concept of war disappeared ages ago. The war on terrorism is, in fact, at our back door.

Years ago, I was just a humble little citizen. I am happy to go and have holidays all over the place, if I can. I have a beaut holiday coming up—I am going to take my father to Malaysia for his 75th birthday. My father is afraid to go to Malaysia—we are going anyway—because he is a goose. He is afraid to go there because we are Australians and we are going to a tourist venue in Malaysia, which is an Islamic country.

Why do you think that is? It is because supermouth Howard has shot his mouth off enough that he is frightening the horses, the children and people like my father. I am not impressed with that. I do not want my family dragged into a war that they do not have anything to do with. My father is saying, “When you go through the entry points, don’t tell them you are a member of the Legislative Assembly—tell them you are a public servant.” That is because it will go down through Chinese whispers. The next thing is that people will think I am a friend of John Howard—shock, horror!—and I might become kidnap bait. It is a bit amusing but I have to tell you, colleagues, it is real.

We have no right to go into any other country and enforce our will, regardless of the regime. We have a structure within which to work, and that structure is the United Nations. I agree it is a bit toothless at the moment. Our attention ought to be given to sharpening the teeth in there. It is not to say, “You have another chance. If you don’t do it, bad luck.”

You will notice that the amendment I am proposing deletes the unilateral military action by the United States, Britain and ourselves, and substitutes any action which is not sanctioned by the United Nations.

If I had my choice, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I was the king of the world, I would say, "We are not going to war, United Nations or no United Nations!" However, we have a world wide obligation to be part of the global community, and we have to make our voice known. But we do not have to lead it—we are a small country.

Where is France? Where is Germany? Where are all of the bigger countries with hugely greater numbers of armed forces and more people? They are a heck of a lot closer to Iraq than we are, and they are more dependent upon Iraq than we are. Where are they? They are resounding in their silence!

I do not mind if we are part of a global approach to this, but we are not—it is a cartel. I am not impressed by this cartel, and I will not support it.

Mr Stefaniak: What, English-speaking democracies?

MR HARGREAVES: English-speaking democracies is a big old hoary one that that warmongering John Howard trots out. America is the only so-called democracy in the world that constantly talks about freedom. We do it and they talk about it. Then they go and ram the words down other people's throats unilaterally. They are empire builders and ought to act within the concepts of the United Nations.

Nobody has given the United States any tin sheriff's badge to be the global policeman in this world. They have no mandate from me—and from nobody I know—to be the global policeman. Nobody gave them that right. The United Nations has the mandate to be the global policeman, not the United States.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the second part of my amendment goes to the point that I thought Mr Pratt put quite eloquently—to seek peace for the people of Iraq. In every conflict—regardless of whether it is a terrorist war or a conventional one—armies get slaughtered and all that sort of stuff. They are professionals and they ought to try to avoid it. I was in the army a couple of times and was taught how to avoid it. I have to tell you that the civilians going about their business cannot avoid it; children cannot avoid it; the women who are not combatants cannot avoid it; and the old men cannot avoid it.

This approach from the United States and Britain misses one of the major points. There are two sets of casualties. There are the casualties of ourselves at home. Our people who got blown up in Bali were casualties. So too are the Iraqi people. Certainly Saddam Hussein's regime has wiped out huge numbers of the Iraqi people. We should condemn him for that action and work within the concepts of the United Nations to do something about it.

Let us not forget the United States Air Force presence in some of their villages. And let us not forget the United States Air Force's presence in Cambodia during the Vietnam war. They were not even in it. Laos was not in it. They got a couple of little presents from the sky, and it blew the hell out of them. That conflict was not sanctioned by the United Nations, and the Yanks lost it. What happened? They took their body bags and went home, leaving three or four countries in Indochina wrecked and devastated.

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In the process, they perpetrated a massive lie on the Australian public, telling us that forward defence is a great idea—and that we had to go and fight for freedom. Like I said before, I ask you to search your minds. Think of another country that constantly uses the words “freedom” and “fight for”—no. Incidentally, the US is the only country that has in its constitution the right to bear arms.

So, Mr Speaker, I cannot support any unilateral military action on the part of a cartel. I cannot support us slavishly going all the way with George W Bush. I do not want this town of Canberra to be the George W Bush capital. I will not be party to it! I move this amendment because Labor has been an opponent of this sort of action for years and years. Nevertheless, it has been a consistent supporter of these sorts of actions through the United Nations. (*Extension of time granted.*)

The United Nations decision—resolution 1441—is crystal clear. It requires Iraq to disarm, and gives a timetable for it. If nations who are members of the United Nations want to say, “Okay, get your blue berets on and go in there,” although I do not like it, and I am not going to be happy about it I will go along with it because that is why we signed up to the United Nations conventions. We do not have to like everything they do, but we are part of that process. I do not like it, but that is the way it goes. To echo what Simon Crean says, if those nations take unilateral action, then any approach to the Iraqi problem vis-à-vis a military solution will not have bipartisan support. It will not.

I think I am paraphrasing a very senior member of this place in saying that, if there are demonstrations out in the street, we will be at the front of them—because that is just not on. There is a global process within which we must work. We should be getting in there, trying to make it work. We cannot just say, “They have had 17 goes at it and they have stuffed it. We will march in there, boots and all!” That makes us no better than they are.

Mr Speaker, I commend my amendments to the house, and I signal our support for Ms Dundas’ motion.

MR CORNWELL (5.36): I rise, Mr Speaker, to participate once again in this great international debate by the ACT Legislative Assembly. I call it the mouse that roared.

Mr Stefaniak: John can be Peter Sellers.

MR CORNWELL: Yes. I have noticed this, however, Mr Stefaniak: the further from the actual decision-making, the easier it is to find solutions. It is wonderful to sit here in nice, comfortable little Canberra, make rhetorical statements about how dreadful the United States is, and quote various Indian or Sanskrit texts. I notice that *Karma Sutra* was not mentioned!

It is fine to sit here and make all those comments. The fact of the matter is that it is much easier to do it here. It is easier to stand here and talk about appeasement. That, Ms Tucker, is really what you were on about. No, we will not get involved. We must not get involved. We must seek peace. The world is not like that. With your travel around the world in the past 12 months, you must have seen some of that, Ms Tucker. It is not difficult to ignore it around the world—it is not a peaceful place. It will always be not a peaceful place, no matter how much you might like to dream.

I find it interesting, however, that we talk about this appeasement in relation to Iraq or, for that matter, any other country that is misbehaving. I use the word “country” advisedly, because although we like to talk about Saddam Hussein, the fact is that he is not alone.

My colleague Mr Pratt mentioned the republican guards and various secret police. Look, there are thousands of people in that country who are backing Saddam Hussein to the hilt. There are thousands—we should never forget that. It is all very well to set him up as some sort of terrible figurehead—

Mr Pratt: But it is not the millions of innocent people!

MR CORNWELL: No. I am not arguing that point. There are obviously many, many people in Iraq, as there are in any other country, who are not necessarily part of this. But there are a lot who are doing pretty well—thank you—out of what is happening.

I am concerned, obviously. Like everybody else, I do not want war. I am not only looking at the bloodshed that may occur in the war, I am also deeply concerned about the effect on the Middle East after the event. I know Mr Pratt is optimistic about this. Perhaps I am a little more cautious.

I am concerned about the destabilisation of the Middle East in the event that a war takes place with Iraq and we are the victors. In fact, it has been put in a number of articles that the reason Desert Storm did not go through to Baghdad was for that very reason—that the Middle East may have been seriously destabilised.

Nevertheless, I do not believe we can afford not to participate in this activity. The question of terrorists cannot be isolated to one or two near islands, so far as Australia is concerned. It is a worldwide problem. If we do not make an attempt to strike at possible—which I do not know—centres for terrorism, then we are not really ever going to defeat it. Part of the problem is that we stand up in this Assembly and make all these wonderful speeches, when we know very little about what is going on. That, of course, has never stopped people in this place before.

I also believe that, if we are going to take the view Mr Hargreaves talks about of not getting involved, we should not interfere in the activities of other countries. Let me ask you, therefore, Mr Hargreaves: why do you bother going overseas to Malaysia and places like that for holidays? Is that not an interference in the activities of the country? It would seem to me that, whether you go into a country wearing board shorts or a military uniform, it still represents an interference. In different cultures, people have different ideas.

Mr Hargreaves: Perhaps you could wear camouflage board-shorts!

MR CORNWELL: I do not blame him for turning his back on me, Mr Speaker, in view of what I am saying—it is all right. I think there has been a lot of misguided talk here. I do not know that any of us are really conversant with everything that is being said.

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I will certainly not be supporting the motion put forward because I think there is a lack of information. Indeed, it is presumptuous of the Assembly to even be considering such motions here in the ACT. I repeat: it is the mouse that roared.

MS TUCKER (5.42): I want to add briefly to the debate in respect of the statement I made before. I said I would reference an article which was actually a critique of the arms sales.

MR SPEAKER: You will need leave.

MS TUCKER: No. I am speaking to the amendment, really—although I guess I am not, strictly. I will seek leave. I thought I could take the opportunity to speak to the amendment.

MR SPEAKER: The difficulty you will find yourself in is that, if you do not confine your remarks to the amendment, you will be out of order. So if you want to speak again, you will have to seek leave.

MS TUCKER: Okay. I am talking about the amendment. What I am saying is that Mr Hargreaves' amendment was—

MR SPEAKER: Why do you not just seek leave to speak again? That will simplify the matter.

MS TUCKER: They do not seem to want to give me leave—so I can do it very quickly. I will say briefly to Mr Hargreaves' amendment that—

Mr Pratt: If it is applicable, we will be most supportive, Ms Tucker.

MS TUCKER: Could you ask Mr Pratt to be quiet, please?

MR SPEAKER: Order, Mr Pratt!

MS TUCKER: In Mr Hargreaves' amendment, he is dealing with his very strongly felt concerns about how the United Nations works, and the fact that they need to be acknowledged—or whatever the amendment is. I am sure that is related to the fact that we need to get a clear look at the actions occurring right around the world, including arms sales, as mentioned in the article by Gideon Burrows in the *Guardian* to which I referred before. That points out, in a very clear way, the hypocrisy of Britain and the United States—and the United Nations is certainly a good body to be looking at that hypocrisy.

Amendments agreed to.

MS DUNDAS (5.44): I thank the Assembly for the debate. By passing this motion as amended, as I believe we will now do, we are able to join with the Tasmanian parliament in sending a clear message to our Prime Minister that we oppose Australian involvement in a first strike on Iraq.

Throughout the debate, I have noted a great deal of passion on many of the issues that have been raised. It is a very complex issue, and I fully acknowledge that.

There were some concerns raised about whether or not the ACT parliament should even be debating this. To that I say yes, we are legislators and representatives for, and of, the ACT. However, we must also take on the role of community leaders and players in the national political scene. We have a voice, and we have the opportunity to join with other community leaders. Individually, we do not have control of foreign affairs, but together we make a strong coalition of opposition to war.

The Democrats have said from the beginning that supporting a first strike should be ruled out. We recognise that, if there were a war, it would be very difficult for Australia not to be involved, as we already have troops in the region—and of course HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Arunta* are serving in the Gulf blockade, enforcing sanctions against Iraq. It would be very difficult to suddenly withdraw if war broke out.

As has been mentioned, Australian troops have a proud role in protecting those in need. Nevertheless, that does not prevent us from doing everything in our power to urge the federal government not to rush into the proposed United States-led military action.

In Sunday's edition of the *Canberra Times*, there was a profile of the Uniting Church president, Professor James Haire. He said that, whilst he used to believe in a just war, he can do so no longer. He said that the vastness of the collateral damage on the innocent really makes it very, very much more difficult to apply.

I ask the question: what good comes from perpetrating a cycle of death? There are alternatives to military action and the gross loss of human life—and they must be pursued.

Today, I was hoping that all of us in the Assembly would be able to join together to support this motion. It is an opportunity to join, as leaders, with other leaders in the community—religious areas, the unions, the RSL and other political leaders across Australia and the world—to make a very clear statement that we oppose a first strike on Iraq, and reaffirm the United Nations as the vehicle for seeking a non-violent resolution of the current issues.

I thank the members for the debate, and I thank the Assembly for its support, as a majority, for this motion. As we have all agreed that nobody here wants war, I hope we will work to achieve this outcome.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Universal bushfire prevention and safety education in schools

MR PRATT (5.48): Mr Speaker, I move:

That the ACT Legislative Assembly:

- (1) decry the loss of property and the extensive loss of natural bushland and pine forest in summer 2001-2002; and
- (2) notes that but for the excellent work undertaken by the ACT Rural Fire Services and Emergency Services greater devastation would have occurred;
- (3) notes that the majority of the fires were caused by human intervention and in many cases deliberately lit – an issue this community must confront in order to minimise dangers to the community;
- (4) notes that the fast approaching summer contains bushfire conditions that are anticipated to eclipse those of 2001/2002 with severe weather conditions likely to exacerbate a desperately dry situation;
- (5) urges the Government to immediately introduce universal bushfire prevention and safety education for all schools in the ACT, planned and coordinated by the Education Department and delivered by Emergency Services personnel and other approved trainers.

Today, we are confronted with an extremely dangerous bushfire threat in the ACT. By all accounts, the conditions—indeed, all the planning indicators—for a bushfire have concentrated in a very cruel way, to the point where they form a pattern which eclipses the situation with which the ACT was confronted in mid-summer 2001-02.

The situation for the ACT stands as follows: we are in the stranglehold of one of the longest and most debilitating droughts on record for the region. There is clearly a huge amount of very dry fuel lying around forests and grassland areas. Regardless of the debate on management of our forests and grassland areas, it is clear that an accumulation of fuel over some years has occurred.

This issue forms the basis of another debate that we can afford to postpone, at least for a while. But today's debate has a real time urgency about it. The anticipated weather conditions over this summer will be crueller than we have seen for some time. I can only hope that that will be proven wrong—I would be happy to eat humble pie on that—but the combination of drought, fuel on the ground and weather spells extreme danger.

Mr Speaker, we all remember the destruction wrought upon the ACT last year. The scars of that destruction are still clearly visible. The landscape in the vicinity of the zoo, for example, previously dominated by stands of eucalypt and pine, now resembles that of Mars. It has been well documented that the ACT fires were started by a combination of human error and carelessness and also by deliberate acts of arson.

I do not need to table the reports that spelt out how severely pushed our firefighting resources were over the critical Christmas Eve-Christmas Day period. I do not think anybody in this place would argue that our firefighters, emergency services generally and the police did a great job to contain a very difficult situation. Indeed, on Christmas Eve on a number of fronts fire teams were successful only when the swirling and gusting north-westerlies abated right on sunset. Severe loss of property at the zoo, for example,

was only just avoided. Unfortunately, the wholesale destruction of hundreds of hectares of valuable pine and native bushland was not averted.

Clearly, the ACT community needs to do all in its power to prevent this happening again. Of course, you cannot legislate to rule out risk, but you can always do whatever you can to try to minimise such risk. This need takes on a new urgency, given the explosive conditions I have outlined. I believe that all ACT residents can be satisfied that our emergency services have done all that they can possibly do to prepare for this dangerous season.

Our bushfire and urban brigades have been out and about for months backburning and preparing the field. Where vulnerable neighbourhoods, particularly those fronting on to bushland on their western fringes and perhaps with western gradients falling away, have cooperated with fire units in preventive preparations and education, the fire units have been most willing and they have been proactive.

The same applies to school education. Where schools have been diligent and sought to undertake education on bushfire prevention programs, employing expert assistance, fire units have been willing. Contingency planning by the emergency services has been extensive and we on this side of politics salute their diligence and professionalism, as I am sure does everybody else in this chamber. In short, the emergency services have done about as much as they can possibly do. But, Mr Speaker, have we as a community done all that we can possible do in terms of both pulling our own weight and backing up our fire services and emergency services in general? The community generally could do a lot more, given the grave conditions that we face.

When I speak to the directors, senior officers and field personnel in the emergency services arena, they repeatedly tell me, as if one needed to be told anyway, that the key to combating the threat is prevention and educating ACT residents as to their roles and responsibilities in protecting our community and territorial forests and grasslands. These personnel advise that it is imperative that we hammer home the lesson to the community as a whole and to our youth in particular just how fragile and vulnerable our environment is in the warmer months and therefore make our residents aware of their responsibilities when working, travelling through or playing in this fragile summer environment.

Mr Speaker, let me touch on the very sensitive subject of arson. As was experienced across the country in the cruellest of fashions, a significant number of the fire breakouts that occurred here were also as a result of arson, too often by youths, some apparently in their very early teens. It is simply inexplicable what drives arsonists of all ages to risk starting conflagrations that are of dire consequences. That, too, is an important debate. But in terms of the real time urgency confronting the ACT community this year, perhaps that debate needs to wait just a fraction. From what I can determine, the community has in place reasonable programs for rehabilitating arsonists—the youths and, of course, senior people who are involved in that wretched behaviour.

While the whole subject of offences, deterrence and rehabilitation relative to arson needs re-examination, that is not of urgent concern at this point. Intervention before the act of arson is the most important thing. The emergency services and volunteer firefighters quietly insist that the only way to minimise the risk of arson is through community pressure and education. We desperately need the means to reach into the hearts and

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minds of young people who might be inclined towards arson and who in most cases simply do not appreciate how devastating the outcome of their actions could be should they seek the thrills of lighting fires. With regard to this very small—I stress, very small—but potentially reckless group within the community, the question is: how should we intervene in the hope of turning their minds to more positive pursuits and of building within them respect for the community and the environment?

Mr Speaker, that brings me to the point where we need to examine how effective our fire prevention programs are for children; that is, firstly, the need to educate the vast majority of youth who are sensible but may still be ignorant of the dangers of accidentally starting a bushfire and/or who need to be equipped with safety first knowledge to get them out of dangerous bushfire situations as they occur and, secondly, the need while undertaking such broadly targeted education programs to reach into the hearts and minds of the kids I was talking about before, the kids at risk who might be inclined to do something silly later.

Some schools carry out excellent programs, but many conduct inadequate training or nothing at all. That is not good enough. We cannot afford a haphazard approach to preventive education on an issue as important to the community's wellbeing as this one. This issue is serious enough to warrant departmental control. Indeed, like important curriculum and health issues, it warrants being taken out of the schools-based management arena and undertaken as a centrally controlled departmental program.

Mr Speaker, I would suggest roughly the following structure for education delivery: training teams of, for example, a couple of trained, experienced firemen joined, importantly, by a teacher in conducting training, perhaps with combined classes of up to 60 students at one time. The training period would cover approximately one hour. This would incorporate video and personal experience presentations. If logistically practical, fire units might display their vehicles and equipment in the playground at lunchtime.

A training team might spend up to five days in a particular school. As many training teams as possible would be drawn from the urban and bushfire units to undertake training in a number of schools concurrently. Teachers would be a vital part of the training team so that their authority was established to continue vital follow-up training and education.

I believe that the training should be commenced as early as possible, perhaps even at the year 2 to year 3 level, as an important though subtle component of this training is to intervene with children at risk who may go on to arson. It is most important that they be educated with their peers from the earliest possible age. Surely, teaching and then repeating the values of respect for our bushland and for property in general from the earliest possible age would impact positively on all kids—the majority who are sensible but uninformed and the minority who are at risk and need to be taught and have the values hammered home to them.

For example, I would commend an excellent video I have seen that was taken by Mr James Sandison, who has had a lot to do with regional and ACT bushfire programs and bushfire contingency planning. He lives on the land, he lives in the region, and recently—in fact, last year during the bushfire season—he shot a video which represents a harrowing battle to save a property which was burnt over, that is, the bushfire burnt

around and over the top of the house, but the house survived and the key assets of that property were saved. This video is very effective. It is typical of the type of video that could be used in school education. Indeed, it was used in school education.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

MR PRATT: Mr Speaker, I will continue from the point at which I was talking about a good video that I would recommend perhaps the education department and the fire services look at with a view to adapting something like it to universal education in schools. I was about to indicate how I had reviewed letters from schoolchildren ranging from seven to 14 years of age who had seen that video and their appreciation of the video and its constructive educative impact was very clear from an examination of those letters.

In order that all children at risk and others more likely to behave recklessly are confronted with this important education, it is essential that the training be conducted as a departmental, universally coordinated program. I cannot emphasize enough that the issues for the territory in terms of what is at stake are so serious that the current approach that schools may undertake whatever they like if they feel like it is simply not acceptable. We will not eradicate the bushfire threat, but we can go a long way towards minimising the threat by having a standard universal approach to training.

Mr Speaker, professionals in any walk of life associated with health, safety, security and emergency management will tell you quietly but firmly that the most important and effective initiative a community can undertake is prevention. In the emergency management field, that means education, training and the regular provision of information to the community. The ACT's emergency services, from top management down to the firemen, continually point out they would much rather put in greater training efforts in order to spend as little time as possible in the field fighting fires. That is eminently sensible and the community should take note of that.

Mr Speaker, I call upon the government to introduce immediately a universal education program in schools, according to the details I have outlined. Even though we are, regrettably, already a few months into the warmer months, it is never too late to start such a formal universal program, but it must start now. I repeat: the bushfire season that is upon us will be severe. I call upon the education minister and the minister for emergency services to work together now to introduce such a program, implemented universally, using expert staff who are well integrated into the schooling system and get it out there as broadly as possible.

MR CORBELL (Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (7.33): Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that bushfire awareness education is an important issue and one to which any community has to pay appropriate attention. However, it is not necessarily the solution, as proposed by Mr Pratt, simply to require schools to provide education on this matter. First of all, Mr Pratt's proposals actually ignore what already takes place in our schools, which is quite extensive. Secondly, Mr Pratt's proposition suggests that the responsibility is on schools, whereas fire safety education, including bushfire safety, is a matter for the whole community, not simply schools and teachers.

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Mr Speaker, the fact is that bushfire education is not something we can just dump onto our already busy schools and teachers; it is an issue for the whole community. Mr Pratt is acting without taking the time to look at what is already happening and whether what he is suggesting is feasible or even a good option. The ACT Fire Brigade has been delivering a fire education program in schools for a number of years. The program was adapted from a Melbourne initiative which was developed in conjunction with child education experts. Let me draw that to members' attention: the Fire Brigade already conducts a fire education and safety program in our schools.

In the ACT, the program is a fire safety program delivered to kindergarten and some year 1 children across all primary schools. The program is primarily aimed at fires in the home, but does not delineate between structural fires and bushfires, because at that level of education the emphasis is on the only good fire being a fire under the supervision of a responsible adult. For this age group, emphasis is also given to "stop, drop and roll" and correct use of the 000 emergency phone system. The program is, naturally enough, delivered in conjunction with teachers as part of the early childhood curriculum.

Mr Speaker, this program makes effective use of the availability of career firefighters, with the program being delivered when they are not needed for an emergency response. If, however, firefighters are called away, arrangements are made with the school to revisit and complete the program. So, Mr Pratt, we already have career firefighters in our schools giving a fire education and safety program to our children. If you had checked on that, perhaps you would not have seen the need for this motion. From time to time, ACT bushfire service volunteer brigades participate in community events and, on occasions, visit primary schools to raise awareness of their role in the community, but it is important to stress that the bushfire service volunteer brigade members are volunteers and their time is necessarily limited.

Another program which is important to mention is the juvenile fire awareness intervention program, which is aimed at children between the ages of three and 16 who have engaged in dangerous fire-lighting behaviour. It is an intervention program which has been an initiative of a number of state and territory fire services and has been implemented by the ACT Fire Brigade. Again, if Mr Pratt had checked, he might have discovered that the territory already provides this service for children and young people in the three to 16-year-old group. The focus of the program is to encourage the children involved to gain a greater respect for fire by education and raised awareness and to understand the consequences of the misuse of fire. The ultimate aim of the intervention is for the child to cease lighting fires maliciously or mischievously.

Mr Speaker, I would like to reinforce the message that bushfires are indeed everybody's business and are not something that should be just dumped onto our schools to fix. As members can see, there is already a range of programs operating in our schools to educate children about the dangers of fires. Our schools already have a very full curriculum. This issue is one that the community as a whole needs to be constantly informed about. The issue of children being taught about the dangers of fire is as much a home responsibility as it is a responsibility in the classroom.

Yes, our schools do their bit. Indeed, along with the ACT Fire Brigade and the department of education, we communicate very effectively issues about the dangers of fires, but parents also must reinforce the message at all times and as a community we

must always be aware of and vigilant against bushfires, particularly with the excessively dry conditions we are all facing.

Mr Pratt's motion is unwarranted, it is uninformed and it is unnecessary. The government has the issue in hand and there is a range of programs already in place actively educating our children and young people about the dangers of fires. The government will not be supporting the motion in its current form.

MR SMYTH (7.39): Mr Speaker, I wish to add a few words to what Mr Pratt said, although Mr Corbell would like to contradict it. Mr Pratt said that training is being undertaken as we speak through a number of sources, whether it be through the ESB, the volunteers or the schools, and he acknowledged at the start of his speech the programs that currently exist, but he said that we need to do more. He simply wants us to do more. He has come to this conclusion because people out in the field are telling him that they would like to see more being done.

I want to relate an incident that my brigade responded to three times in a row in early February at Oxley Hill. At 3.20 pm we all went out to look for smoke because 3.20 pm is when the kids get out of school and, in their first couple of weeks back, they are just settling down to the routine, all excited and still full of energy. We had one young individual who, at 3.20 pm, took it upon himself to relieve some tension, we assume, by lighting fires on Oxley Hill and we went back a couple of days in a row.

Yes, education is being undertaken in the system as we speak, but what Mr Pratt has been told, what I have been told and what members of my brigade have decided—we have put our time where our mouths are, in effect, by making sure that we go out as volunteers, and we are happy to do so—is that there is a need to do a little bit more. Even though you volunteer to put fires out, once you have done your training and spent time at a few fires, you would much rather spend your time talking to people about not having to put fires out.

We do it in a number of ways. My brigade accepts most invitations to attend school fetes, where we squirt water and hand out the promotional information provided by ESB. The kids get to hear sirens, see lights and climb all over the engines, but what we are trying to do is to instil in those young ones the need not to be going to fires.

We actually implemented a program whereby the concept of underage volunteers was raised with us. Some younger people who were not of legal age wanted to join the brigade, so we set up a cadet system at Calwell High School and, I think, Calwell Primary School and we went there and taught young people about firefighting and fire prevention. In raising their awareness of that, we hoped to decrease the number of fires that were lit.

I think it is disingenuous for Mr Corbell to stand up in here, not having listened properly to what Mr Pratt said, and say that we have got some programs in place. Mr Pratt acknowledged that we do have some programs in place, but he wants to have some more. Mr Corbell is right in saying that ultimately it is up to the community to do something.

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One of the things constantly talked about by the brigades—my brigade was talking about it on Sunday with the new recruits who were coming on line—is that part of the busy season is when school goes back in February. I am not sure and I do not think anybody else is sure as to the reason things suddenly get busy for us then—I guess it is just due to a sense of frustration amongst the kids and suddenly being released from school as they get back into their routine—but there seem to be more fires at that time of the year.

What we want to do, in the context of what happened in Canberra last year and in the context of what happened at Mittagong last weekend, is to see some more education being undertaken now, if it can be, or early next year, as it could be, to see whether we can minimise the number of fires that occur in the ACT. The fuel load is high. The highland clearing and the grassland clearing at the weekend was something like 70 per cent, so there is a bit more drying out to go. That drying out will occur in the next month as the temperatures in the early 30s continue.

What we want to do is to take the opportunity to make sure that we get as much information out as possible. Clearly, one of the ways that you can do that so quickly and so effectively, because of the quality of the education system that we have, is through schools. So, Mr Speaker, it is not unreasonable to request some more education, certainly of students, to be undertaken. A much broader program in the context of the year that might occur, given some of the dire predictions, would be even more desirable, and not just for the kids. A large number of older people seem to like lighting fires, which is a shame. With some education or identification of these individuals, perhaps we could minimise the impact on the community.

What we are simply saying—my brigade has done it before and I know that other brigades do it constantly—is that we would rather be out there educating than fighting fires. We will fight the fires if we have to, but we would like to stop them before they start. Education is a very important part of that process and part of the education process is doing it at school.

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (7.45): I guess you can't get enough of a good thing and, as Mr Smyth rightly pointed out, more would be better, but it is the easiest of politics, even though something is happening, to say, "Let's have some more," and we have seen some pretty easy and lazy politics this week in this place.

Last year, after the quite damaging fires, I gave instructions to the Emergency Services Bureau that they run an education program at the beginning of this season. I announced that, I think, in the media. Of course, with the drought that we have, the season is on us, effectively, before expected, so there is some fast tracking happening, but certainly the Emergency Services Bureau has been working on a public education program. It is not just for kids; it is for the whole family. It is for people who are out and about and see suspicious activity and says that they should err on the side of conservatism and the side of safety and report it.

I agree with Mr Smyth that from time to time children have been involved in lighting fires. They usually tend to be localised grass fires, but children have been involved. I can also assure this house that all the evidence from last year's major fires points to possibly

a single arsonist, and a single arsonist in a vehicle, because the fires started in such different places and with time spacing that it would have been highly unlikely to be anything else. Of course, there have been suspicions of a vehicle being used, et cetera. The major danger still lies with people that are not quite right in the top paddock, not with mischievous kids. I cannot imagine what goes through the mind of an arsonist, but it is a strange form of lunacy. There will be an education program and we hope that that education program will contact all members of a family.

Mr Corbell has pointed out that ample education systems have been put in place and, to some extent, I think it demeans the emergency services and the fire service to be asking that we have more, because it is just so easy to ask for that. From what Mr Corbell enunciated, there has been not only a comprehensive program of education, but also the intervention program, which is probably a lot smarter and probably the most appropriate application of resources. With that in mind, I move the following amendment circulated in my name:

Omit paragraph (5), substitute:

“Notes the importance of the Government’s current fire safety education programmes in ACT schools and also programmes aimed at arson offenders in the ACT.”.

While I am on my feet, I wish to assure the house that the bushfire fuel management plan will be released as a final document later this year. The plan outlines fuel management strategies that will be undertaken by the ACT over the next two years. We are talking about a forward-thinking program that will do something to mitigate the impact of fires.

MS DUNDAS (7.50): Mr Speaker, the Australian bush has adapted to fire after around three million years of regular bushfires. We will probably never eliminate the occurrence of bushfires and many native species would actually suffer if we did. However, bushfires can destroy homes, human lives and crucial infrastructure, so there are compelling reasons to try to minimise their occurrence.

A great deal of money and effort go into creating fire breaks and doing fuel reduction burning to reduce the incidence of uncontrolled fires, but even the best precautions will not prevent a severe conflagration if there has been prolonged drought and there are hot, dry winds and an ignition source.

In considering the substantive motion moved by Mr Pratt and the amendment by Mr Quinlan, it is helpful to consider the source of the ignition of bushfires. To my knowledge, figures on ignition sources have not been published for the ACT. However, such figures have been collected and published in Victoria over a long period. In Victoria, 26 per cent of the bushfires on public land are started by lightning and these fires are responsible for 46 per cent of the total area burned each year.

On average, fires started by lightning burn a much larger area than fires started by people, probably because the fire can start some distance from vehicle access. Camp fires cause 10 per cent of the bushfires on public land and burning off by land owners to control weeds or remove rubbish or crop debris causes around 15 per cent of the fires. In comparison, around 25 per cent of the bushfires are deliberately lit and they burn only 14 per cent of the total area. The deliberately lit category includes farmers lighting fires without permits, children playing with matches and arsonists.

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In short, it seems likely that we are focused on a relatively small proportion of fires and therefore a very small group of potential arsonists whose behaviour we are seeking to change. Antisocial behaviour is something that I doubt any government will ever succeed in wholly eliminating, despite concerted efforts and an arsenal of penalties. I was reluctant to support the substantive motion because I had serious doubts that it would have any real effect on the number of human caused fires in the ACT. However, I have little doubt that requiring greater emphasis on bushfire education in schools will place further strain on the already overcrowded school curriculum.

Fire safety is already taught in schools, as has been articulated by the ministers today, and I cannot see enough reason to expand on the current programs. Hence, I will support the government's amendment and the work that is already being done and hope that the community will take on the responsibility that we all need to accept to minimise the number of unnecessary bushfires occurring in our community. Almost every child sees the effects of bushfires on TV and learns about the dangers of fire. If a child cannot empathise with the people affected, I think it is unlikely that a few more hours of teaching would make the difference and enable these kids to grasp the full impact of their irresponsible actions.

MS TUCKER (7.53): The Greens will be supporting this motion as amended by Mr Quinlan. I understand why Mr Pratt wants to raise a debate on the question of the damage that is done by fires. I am of the same view as Ms Dundas in terms of the actual percentage of fires that are the result of the actions of children. From the work that I have done in looking at this complex issue, I think that it is one that can be addressed by having more education occurring in schools, given that we already do have education occurring, as has been explained by Mr Quinlan.

The question of the motivation for arson is highly complex. I am not an expert on it at all but, from what I have read, it is certainly not something that could be dealt with by having an education program; the causes are much deeper than that. If you are interested in addressing children in particular who intentionally start fires continually, so they are children who have a serious problem, then you have to look at the question of what to do with children with emotional disturbances, which is the sort of issue that was picked up in the kids at risk report and other work done in this place for children who are troubled for various reasons which, if you look into them, are wholly justified and usually have to do with the chaotic family environment that they have been born into. If he wishes to deal in this way with these sorts of really serious issues in children who are lighting fires on purpose, I would suggest that Mr Pratt should get on with it enthusiastically and support the work that has been done in the past and is continuing to be done in terms of making sure that there is support for children who are troubled or at risk in our school system.

Amendment agreed to

MR PRATT (7.56): Mr Corbell's comment that I had not checked the system to see which sorts of education activities were under way was a quite unwarranted misrepresentation. Indeed, when he reads *Hansard*, he might like to check the front end of the speech I have given tonight, as I stated quite clearly that we are aware of programs undertaken in some schools and we are aware that lots of fire units are involved. Indeed,

in my area of concern, I know that Calwell Primary School, for example, has participated in a number of activities. We know all about that. We already know about the intervention programs which are under way for children at risk. Mr Corbell, please read my speech, or at least listen when I speak in future.

Mr Corbell's comment that this problem cannot be dumped on schools was a rather strange comment to make—in fact, one that really reflects the derision and the lack of concern of the education minister. Minister, it is not a matter of dumping the problem or the responsibility on schools. Schools do play an important role in their integrated position within the community. Everybody in the community pulls together in terms of fire prevention education and community education programs.

Reflecting on Mr Quinlan's comments: we are aware of those initiatives and we acknowledge their worth. Those are good initiatives, Mr Quinlan. But, if I may both reflect on that comment and on your amendment, which I cannot support, I simply say again that the question here is the universality of the education and training program. Good programs are in place now, but they are not universal, which is the crux of this issue.

Ms Tucker says an education program would not address the problem of arson, but I don't see any concrete alternative being put up by Ms Tucker as to what might be done. I reflect on what she said about the social concerns that go to the heart of the question of the sorts of children at risk who may undertake arson. We know about those and, whatever interventions are in place socially to help children at risk in terms of generally coping with life, we applaud and support. That still does not go to the heart of the question of what we do about young children at risk who may be attracted to arson behaviour. Why not intervene early in schools in the hope of connecting with those kids, as I stated earlier? So I reject that approach.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that the government cares about community safety and the wellbeing of the environment. There is no question about that. We have confidence in the government on that, but I just think the government is not trying hard enough in terms of the facts. The fact is that last year we had a pretty horrific fire season. The fact is, according to information collected by the experts, that the 2002-03 fire season is going to be that much worse.

Mr Speaker, the lack of seriousness on the minister's part to grapple, through universal education, with the grave issues for which we need to prepare our children reminds me of his derision and laziness with respect to my call in the past for the introduction of drug education and other values-oriented education in schools. There are some things on which the department needs to undertake universal training. I do not know what the problem is with having departmentally coordinated universal activities where they are of such an importance that they ought to be more centrally controlled.

We very much value our heritage and our environment and, above all, we respect life and property. Today, we face a very grave bushfire risk. We have clearly in our minds the devastation of last year. We have clearly in our minds the actions of young arsonists and, for that matter, older ones too. We know that it makes great sense to educate our youth as to how to treat the environment respectfully and to value the sanctity of our community in terms of careless, reckless and deliberate acts of behaviour which may endanger the

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community. Prevention and education are far more preferable than putting firemen and others at risk. Therefore, it is important that the government take immediate action to introduce universal, departmentally supervised bushfire education.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Young Achievement Australia

MS MacDONALD (8.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) recognises the students in the ACT who have participated in Young Achievers in 2002;
- (2) congratulates all the students for their participation, but particularly those who won awards last Friday;
- (3) recognises and congratulates Young Achievement Australia for the good work it does in giving young people experience in business practice.

Mr Speaker, I wish to speak today about the many young people in our society who have just been recognised for their participation and achievements through the Young Achievement Australia business skills program.

All too often, young people in our society are portrayed as unmotivated and unimaginative. It is all too easy to portray our youth as unmotivated, as being “takers” from the community, while older heads sit back and reminisce about the “good old days” of youth where elders were respected and the young were model citizens. If we are honest with ourselves, everyone in this place has been guilty of the odd thought along those lines. It is an all too human trait to look upon our own youth with rose-coloured glasses, while we judge today’s youth in an overly harsh way.

Today I want to give credit where it is deserved—to the 250 young people from the ACT and the region who have recently participated in the Young Achievement program. I would like to recognise these students, from a broad geographic region covering the ACT and south-east New South Wales, who participated in the 2002 program. The commitment to the program and their individual companies has been remarkable and an inspiration.

Young Achievement Australia, or YAA, is a non-profit organisation which provides hands-on enterprise education programs to youth. Young Achievement Australia relies on commitment from the local business community for business advisers and mentors, consultants and sponsorship.

One reason for wanting to note the work done by Young Achievement Australia lies in my own personal experience. I profess, Mr Speaker, that in my school days—which now seem a long time ago—I threw myself into the young achievers program and found it to be one of the most rewarding and challenging tasks of my youth. The lessons and the experiences from my involvement with Young Achievement have travelled with me since and have provided me with a solid foundation for many challenges in my adult life.

I might speak a little about what I did within young achievers. Our company was based in the city of Sydney and we named ourselves Insight Ya. This was of great amusement to a number of people who were not sure about what we were “insighting”, especially as we produced tea caddies in which we placed three tins of Twinings tea. I don’t know that a cup of tea would necessarily insight people, but there you have it.

I might say that the tea caddies had a dual purpose in that they doubled as audio tape holders. If our product was made correctly, you could fit about 10 audio tapes into it. If it was made in a bit of a bodgie fashion and the inside was slightly slanted, you usually could fit in only nine tapes.

I didn’t have much to do with the actual production because, lucky me, I was the financial manager and as a result I learnt to balance an account sheet. I have to say that I also learnt that I never wanted to become an accountant, but the experience was very valuable to me. I have vivid recollections of one Saturday afternoon taking about an hour desperately trying to find five cents on the balance sheet. However, I learnt how to read a profit and loss statement.

Also, I was able to look at accounts and say, “There are problems with that.” This is a very important skill to possess, especially in a business capacity or in a voluntary capacity where you might be sitting on a number of boards; you might be involved with community organisations or even with your local parents and citizens council when you get to the stage of having your own kids, who may then go on to be part of Young Achievement Australia.

I know that YAA has changed quite a bit since I participated in it back in 1986. At that time I understand that we were eight or nine years into the program, so the program has been running for over 25 years. Of course, it has changed considerably since then.

The mission of Young Achievement Australia is to develop business enterprise skills, capacities and understanding in all young Australians through partnerships with business, education and the community. These skills will help contribute to the prosperity of Australia and our region. Young Achievement Australia aims to provide young people with the opportunity to access vital business enterprise programs regardless of location, circumstances, curricula choice, career paths or academic strengths.

In 2002, 11 student companies were established in the ACT and southern New South Wales under the business skills program. This program explores business roles and responsibilities and promotes development of entrepreneurial skill through hands-on involvement in setting up and running a profit-driven business.

Students give up their after-school time to participate in the program to develop the skills and networks which will enable them to become the region’s business leaders of the future. Participation in the program also helps students to make informed career choices and assists them in the transition from school to a career.

As the programs are often done across schools, you get to know people outside of your own school group. I can say that when I was participating in the program I got to know a number of people from both private and public sector schools from around the inner-city region. While I haven’t necessarily remained in touch with the people that I met

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outside of school, my experiences helped me form other friendships, and I think that is a good thing.

I am pleased to say, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, that last Friday night I attended the YAA awards night, which was held at Canberra Stadium. I think the young people who attended were also excited and we had a very pleasant evening at the stadium. My thanks go to the Canberra Stadium for their sponsorship.

The awards are presented in seven categories, and the major award of the evening was the young business person of the year award. While just participating is an achievement and a success in itself—whether it be to stop you from becoming an accountant when you shouldn't be one or learning that you want make business your future—I would like to mention the individuals and the projects that were awarded prizes.

The award for student company of the year went to the Now Ya Cookin cookbook project. The best product award went to FYASCO, which produced an excellent book for teenagers based on surveys of a number of teenagers from schools around the community. Anyone who has walked past my office in the last few weeks might have noticed that there is a poster in my window which is promoting the book *FYASCO*. I am glad to say that I do have an eye for a quality product. That attribute has remained undiminished and was borne out on the night by FYASCO being the recipient of the award for best product.

Three of the students involved with FYASCO gave a presentation to the Standing Committee on Health in the context of its inquiry into the health of school-age children. Those three students were incredibly impressive. I then went to the launch of the book *FYASCO*. The presentation in itself was absolutely amazing and stunning—something that all of those young people should be incredibly proud of themselves for having achieved. It was a real privilege to hear these three incredibly articulate students talk to members of the Health Committee.

The best annual report was awarded to the Now Ya Cookin report. The Now Ya Cookin project featured very prominently on the awards night. Bearing in mind my love of cooking, I will have to try to procure a copy of that cookbook.

The best business plan prize went to Funkyard, whose task it was to manufacture recycled clocks. The best e-commerce project award went, again, to Now Ya Cookin. The special achievement award was jointly awarded to two groups of students, and the winners were Yandy Dandy, who produced wizard and fairy costumes, and a group calling themselves Ya Mate, who produced a calendar promoting Leeton. As I said, the awards were presented to students from the region as well as from Canberra.

I would particularly like to recognise and congratulate the ACT young business person of the year, Jamila Rizvi. Jamila was chosen from a group of eight highly motivated finalists. I would like to also congratulate the other seven finalists—it is fantastic for them to have made it to that point as well.

I would also like to mention that the person who gave out the young business person of the year 2002 award was the young business person of the year 2001. I have his business card which he has had made up. I have to say, though, that he looked a bit nonplussed

when I told him that, based on the excellent and inspirational speech he gave, he could go into a career in politics or onto the speech-making circuit.

Jamila will compete with candidates from the other states and territories for the national Young Achievement Australia young business person of the year award in Sydney on 3 December this year. I wish her well and I am sure the best wishes of all members will be with her on the night.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, Young Achievement Australia has an outstanding record in developing business enterprise and entrepreneurial skills in youth from our region. YAA uses a number of learning tools. The program offers a management skills and team leadership day. This is an interactive learning event where participants have the opportunity to enhance their skills and teamwork, motivation, focus, initiative and discipline.

Student companies also participate in a trade fair, which provides them with the opportunity to finetune their selling techniques while showcasing their products and putting marketing strategies into practice. They also sell their products or services through less formal channels.

Mentors from ACT government and business provide strategic direction and practical advice to students to develop and manage their companies, products and services. I would like to applaud this group of committed professionals for their dedication and contribution to a worthwhile program and to the students with whom they work.

Because of this commitment from students and mentors of the 12 student companies operating in the ACT and south-east New South Wales region last year, three companies won a total of four awards in the Young Achievement Australia national awards, which is very good going indeed.

In closing, I would also like to recognise the outstanding efforts of Virginia Lette, Young Achievement Australia's manager for the ACT region. Over the past two years Virginia has been an excellent and, I have to say, enthusiastic ambassador for the Young Achievement Australia program. Not only has she coordinated the program, she has also provided a focus and a direction for students and has been a link between sponsors, business, students and the Young Achievement Australia organisation.

I commend the motion to you and I hope all members will join me in congratulating these hardworking and highly motivated young people. Again, congratulations to all 250 students and best of luck to Jamila Rizvi in bringing home the national prize for the ACT on 3 December.

MR SMYTH (8.16): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, Young Achievement Australia is a great organisation. They do tremendous work. They unfetter some of that enthusiasm, zeal and good ideas that young Australians, and particularly young Canberrans, have and unleash it on the world, and that's a great thing. You only have to look at the sorts of things that they get into. Over the last couple of years I have had the pleasure of being at some of their events and launching a few of their products—everything from CDs to massage oil. There are a lot of young fellows and young women out there who are thinking about what they want and how they can turn that into a profit.

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The value of the program is that it teaches them teamwork. They come together as groups, often as young people who do not know each other, who have never met each other, and they have to form a company. The company then decides on a product. They have to put together a business plan; they work out the costings; they elect a business manager, a production manager, a marketing manager; and then they go about selling their wares.

I think the whole concept, whilst also building up individual skills, is really important in teaching young Canberrans about the value of teamwork. You can see from some of the projects that have emerged over the years the tremendous thought that has gone into what it is that they have done.

Sometimes the plans don't work out. I know that the group that ended up producing massage oil in this year's round of projects didn't start out doing that. Suddenly, half-way through the program, they realised that, because of certain difficulties that I won't go into, they couldn't go ahead with their product. As a result of teamwork they very quickly turned it around and produced another product. These guys had a deadline to meet. They were only weeks away from that deadline when suddenly they didn't have a product at all. They got together, everybody helped out, they modified what they wanted to do and came up with a different product. I think that ability to work under pressure as a team is something that certainly those young Canberrans will treasure for all time.

I think, as a sign of generosity, that group then turned up as the guest speakers at a mental health awareness dinner that was held recently at the Southern Cross Club, and they donated a percentage of their profits to the dinner. So not only did they get something themselves but they were quite willing to put back into the community through assisting mental health awareness.

Ms MacDonald is to be congratulated on the motion, simply because it brings to the presence of the community through their Assembly the work that young people do in our community. She is right also to congratulate Virginia Lette. She and her predecessor, Melissa, who worked with YAA for many years and then moved on to BusinessACT, have had a lot to do with shaping young minds. I would congratulate Melissa, who got married about a fortnight ago and who is going on to bigger and better things.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, Young Achievement Australia are to be congratulated for the work that they have done in 2002. To those who go on to bigger and better things, well done. To those who look at business and say, "It's not for me," well done also because you have learnt something. To those who represent the ACT at the national awards on behalf of the ACT and the region, best of luck in the future because what you have done has not only benefited you but also has benefited us as a community.

MS DUNDAS (8.20): On behalf of the ACT Democrats, I rise to add support to this motion and thank Ms MacDonald for bringing the Young Achievement Australia awards to the attention of the Assembly.

All the students and colleges that participated in the Young Achievement Australia scheme are to be congratulated. The scheme helps students in their senior years with vocational training and real business experience, and Ms MacDonald has spoken about her own real business experience.

I understand that ACT young business person of the year was awarded to Jamila Rizvi, a student from Hawker College. We wish her well when she competes in the national finals to be judged in early December. As has been mentioned, the Now Ya Cookin gang of Katheryn Smith, Jessie Head-Gray and Lauren Ockwell were also winners. For these four young women, the awards night was one of success.

Not all young women will be business leaders and, while I think it is important that we do encourage and train young women for business roles, we also need to look at how young women are being successful in their everyday lives. We know now that many young women are getting involved with a high-level optimism, taking on life, embracing the challenges and looking to the future. Like the Now Ya Cookin group, they are achieving. So let us support these young women, celebrate their achievements and wish them well in the national awards and all who participate in the Young Achievement Australia scheme.

MR PRATT (8.21): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this motion. I quite enjoyed listening to Ms MacDonald's descriptions of not only the various young achiever activities that she has witnessed but also her own experiences as she flashed back to her youth.

Young Achievement Australia is clearly to be congratulated as an important vehicle for giving young people a framework for pursuing excellence in the business sector. Certainly, it is important that our youth be developed to enable them to be recruited into the business sector. Clearly, the ACT must have a healthy business sector and we need to encourage our young people to look for careers in that sector.

I would like to congratulate the young business person of the year and all of the other finalists of the Young Achievement awards. I would also congratulate the sponsors and the organisers for making this event more successful this year than apparently has been the case, and I hope that success grows.

There is not too much else I need to say, as a lot of good ground has been covered tonight by my colleagues. I will finish by simply congratulating Ms MacDonald for bringing this motion on. It is important to enshrine this event and to put it and the names of the achievers who have taken out the awards on the record.

MR CORBELL (Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (8.23): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I would like to recognise the 250 students, from a broad geographic region covering the ACT and south-east New South Wales, who participated in the 2002 Young Achievement Australian program. I also recognise their commitment to the program and their individual companies.

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YAA is a non-profit organisation which provides hands-on enterprise education programs to youth. YAA relies on commitment from the local business community for business advisers and mentors, consultants and sponsorship. Its mission, as Ms MacDonald has outlined, is to develop business enterprise skills, capacities and understanding in all young Australians through partnerships with business, education and the community. It is about providing young people with the opportunity to access vital business enterprise programs, regardless of location, circumstances, curricula choice, career paths or academic strengths.

This year 11 student companies were established under the business skills program. The program explores business roles and responsibilities and promotes development of an entrepreneurial spirit through hands-on involvement in setting up and running a profit-driven business. Students give up their after-school time to participate in the program and participation in the program also helps students to make informed career choices.

Recently, awards were given on the awards night under seven categories. The major award for the evening was that of young business person of the year. I would like to congratulate the following award category winners: student company of the year, Now Ya Cookin; best product, FYASCO, which produced a book for teenagers; best annual report, Now Ya Cookin; best business plan, Funkyard, which is about manufacturing recycled clocks; and in the e-commerce category, Now Ya Cookin. In the special achievement category the joint winners were Yandy Dandy and Ya Mate.

I would particularly like to recognise and congratulate the ACT young business person of the year, Jamila Rizvi. Karin MacDonald mentioned Jamila earlier. She was chosen from a group of eight highly motivated finalists. Jamila will compete with candidates from other states and territories for the national YAA young business person of the year award in Sydney on 3 December. I am sure members will join me in wishing her well.

Mr Speaker, YAA has an outstanding record for developing business enterprise and entrepreneurial skills in youth from our region, using a number of learning tools. The program offers a management skills and team leadership day. Student companies also participate in a trade fair, which provides them with the opportunity to finetune their selling techniques while showcasing their products.

Mentors from the ACT government and business provide strategic direction and practical advice to students to develop and manage their companies, products and services. It is because of this commitment from both students and mentors that of the 12 student companies operating in the ACT and south-east New South Wales, three won a total of four national awards.

Mr Speaker, it is particularly important to recognise the outstanding efforts of Virginia Lette, YAA's manager for the ACT region. Over the past two years Virginia has been an excellent ambassador for the YAA program. Not only has she coordinated the program, she has also provided the focus and direction for students and has been a link between sponsors, business, students and the YAA organisation.

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (8.27): I will be very brief, Mr Speaker. It is very clear that in developed micro-economies of individual cities in this modern world, innovation is going to play a large part in the growth of that economy. Certainly actions are being taken in many areas across the western world to actively promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

I was in Cambridge recently and I was told that talent scouts prowled—not literally but metaphorically—the campus looking for undergraduates who have innovative ideas or entrepreneurial capability. They are virtually recruited into participation in an innovation centre.

I do not have categorical proof but I am prepared to believe that people in this young achiever program are gaining invaluable experience. Young people are given the opportunity to become aware of their innovative capacity and entrepreneurship capabilities. At the end of the day, that in itself may change their lives considerably. They are given the confidence at a young age to pursue a more innovative career or develop an innovative and entrepreneurial enterprise.

Certainly, the region will gain from this sort of process. This is quite clearly a regional program and Young Achievement Australia is to be congratulated for that if nothing else. The others to be congratulated—and I think the winners of the YAA awards have been congratulated sufficiently tonight—are those businesses that have participated in the program. These are the people who provided the advice, the mentors, the consultation with the participants and the sponsorship, and therefore made the program what it is.

As the minister for economic development, I certainly hope to see more of this because the evidence is that economies will have to work very hard just to keep up, and they will have to work very hard to achieve economic growth. Certainly, industries of the future do relate to entrepreneurial activity and innovation. As the world shrinks, we need to be in touch with that movement, and this program goes a long way in connecting us to it.

Ms MacDONALD (8.31), in reply: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank members for their support of the motion. For all the reasons that have been mentioned here this evening, the Young Achievement Australia business skills program is an excellent program.

To show the degree of participation, I would like to mention some of the schools that were involved in the program. The list includes the names of regional schools. Students participating in the program came from the following schools: Batemans Bay High School, Bega High School, Bombala High School, Canberra College, Canberra Grammar (Boys), Canberra Grammar (Girls), Cootamundra High School, Copland College, Daramalan College, Dickson College, Goulburn High School, Hawker College, Hennessy Catholic College, Koorinal High School, Lake Ginninderra College, Lake Tuggeranong College, Leeton TAFE College, Marist College in Canberra, McKillop Catholic College, Merici College, Monaro High School, Mulwaree High School, Narrabundah College, Queanbeyan High School, Radford College, Snowy Mountains Grammar, St Clares College, St Edmunds College, Trinity Senior High School, Wagga Wagga High School, Yass High School and Young High School.

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All those high schools are to be congratulated for participating, and encouraging their students to participate, in the program. If the schools don't get involved then the students won't find out about the program, and it is crucial the schools let the students know in the first place.

I would also like to put on the record the names of the volunteer mentors this year. They are: Amanda Smorhun, Annie Ward, Ayesha Razzaq, Bill Palmer, Brian Weir, Chris Deschamps, David Bellew, David Leaney, Deborah Palmen, Denise Flopton, Eric Chalmers, Erin Pennay, Fiona McAnally, Geoff Perrem, Gillian Stephen, Glen Dewing, Jacey Neden, Jamal Hakim, James O'Brien, Julie Hyland, Julie Sutton, Karen Tandy, Kerry Sullivan, Leeana Gardiner, Liam Smith, Mayumi Smith, Nicole Kettmiss, Nicole Leedham, Paul Masson, Philip Melville, Phillip Kingsman, Renee O'Hare, Simon Lette, Susan McDonald, Toni Marsland and Trish Chalmers.

Without the mentors the program definitely would not happen. Somebody with some business experience is needed for the program to even start up, let alone achieve results and make a profit at the end. The mentors of the program I was involved in as a young person were from Westpac and there was much panic the day that the then chairman of Westpac came to listen to our general meeting. We were located on the top of Wales House in the centre of Sydney, which was next to a gym. When I was in the middle of giving my financial report somebody from the gym came out with a skipping rope and, without my noticing and much to the amusement of everybody else in the room, proceeded to do about 50 skips in front of the chairman of Westpac.

As has been mentioned, 11 student companies were involved in the program this year. I should say that the letters "ya" had to appear in the names of the companies, which explains why some funny names appear on the list. The following companies were formed for the program: Coz Ya Can! from Goulburn produced embroidered undergarments and their sponsors were Country Energy, Boyce Chartered Accountants and the Goulburn Workers Club. Deziya from Tuggeranong was sponsored by BusinessACT and the Tuggeranong Community Centre. Funkyard from Belconnen, which won one of the awards, produced personalised clocks from, as I think I said earlier, recycled goods. Their sponsors were the Department of Urban Services and the Canberra Churches Centres.

FYASCO, which produced a book for teenagers, was sponsored by eKonsulting Pty Ltd, Tower Software and the Woden Youth Centre. Junkyard Publishing 2 from Batemans Bay, whose product is not advised on the website, was sponsored by Country Energy and Campbell Page Recruitment.

Maniyak from Queanbeyan, who produced polar fleece scarves, was sponsored by Country Energy and the Queanbeyan City Council. Monshyac from Cooma, whose product is not shown, was sponsored by Snowy Hydro. Now Ya Cookin from Civic produced a recipe book and their sponsor was ActewAGL. Ya Mate from Leeton, whose product also is not shown, was sponsored by the New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development. Yakk from Civic was sponsored by BusinessACT and Yandy Dandy from Wagga Wagga was sponsored by Country Energy and the Wagga Wagga Commercial Club.

In closing, I would like to say that this has been a great effort. A large number of students participated and I wish them all well for the future. As well, I wish Virginia Lette and all of the other people involved with Young Achievement Australia a productive and successful future and hopefully all of their businesses break even, or even make a profit.

I might say that the year I participated in the program I was very relieved to report at the final meeting that our business, Insight Ya, was a blue chip company, and at the end of the day when we successfully liquidated our company we were able to give all of our shareholders a profit. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

General practitioners—bulk-billing

MS TUCKER (8.38): I move:

That this Assembly, noting:

- (1) recent decisions of General Practitioners practices to cease providing bulk billing services;
- (2) that this change has reduced the health system's capacity for early intervention in health problems, and seriously reduced access for low income people and families in particular; and
- (3) noting the reluctance of the current Federal Government to increase Medicare rebate payments to General Practitioners.

Calls on the Government to urgently develop a strategy:

- (4) to ensure that every person in the ACT, regardless of income, has adequate access to the services of a General Practitioner, during and after business hours;
- (5) including consideration of mechanisms to encourage and support General Practitioners to provide bulk billing; and
- (6) to report to the Assembly with the strategy and an implementation plan by the end of the December 2002 sittings of the Assembly.

The government will be moving an amendment to this motion that I will be supporting.

This motion calls for urgent action to deal with two related health care problems in our community—a shortage of GPs, and a shortage of GPs able to afford to bulk bill. The fundamental problem is that we are not able to be sure that ACT residents, particularly those on a low income, are able to access general practitioner services.

The rates of bulk-billing in the ACT have dropped, even from our low position relative to the rest of Australia in 2000-01. This has caused a lot of concern in the community.

The Interchange General Practice had to make the hard decision in May. Many of the practice's clients were disadvantaged, and the practice was bulk-billing 70 per cent of consultations. The Medicare rebate was not enough to cover their costs. Clearly this system is not working. Over the course of this year, we have heard of other practices making that same hard decision. The statistics also bear this out. These are not just isolated instances attracting attention.

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The percentage of all medical services bulk-billed in the ACT from April to June this year was 8 per cent less than in the same period last year. National average figures also dropped, but only by 1.9 per cent. The source of that is the Health Insurance Commission, table 3: Medicare—per cent bill type by state and various periods.

Between March 2000 and March 2002 bulk-billing rates for general practitioners in North Canberra fell from 67.7 per cent to 56 per cent. In South Canberra they fell from 60.3 per cent to 52.4 per cent. This contrasts to what the federal health minister claims—that over 70 per cent of people are bulk-billed and over 80 per cent of people are over 65.

In some regions, such as Civic, there are now no bulk-billing general practices. I have a list, from April, of extended-hours practices showing who bulk-bills. My office checked a sample of four of these practices this week and found that two of the four still bulk-billed as they did in April but one in Gungahlin has had to stop bulk-billing altogether. Another, in Tuggeranong, has further restricted its bulk-billing to children under nine, where previously it included pensioners. It is clear that the ACT has experienced a substantial drop in the percentage of medical services bulk-billed.

There is also a shortage of general practitioners in the ACT which the Chief Minister informed the Assembly in June was not acknowledged by the Commonwealth government. According to the Chief Minister's information, the ACT has around 68 full-time equivalent GPs per 100,000 people, whereas the national average is about 85. I understand from the minister's office that they are saying there is a need for around 50 more GPs.

It is difficult to understand in this context why the Commonwealth government does not recognise the extra needs in the ACT. But it is even more difficult to understand why the Commonwealth government is letting the Medicare system die. This means it is giving up on the aims of Medicare to make health care affordable for all Australians; to give all Australians access to health care services, with priority according to clinical need; and to provide a high quality of care.

Clearly the federal government has abandoned its responsibilities. The relative value study, jointly conducted by the federal Department of Health and Aged Care and the AMA, showed that patient rebates were underfunded by \$900 million a year. The Medicare payment for GPs has not been increased to keep pace with costs. Meanwhile, the federal government is spending more money on health care, but the \$2.35 billion put into the private health insurance rebate is doing nothing for equitable access. Unfortunately, that is a policy typical of this federal government.

My motion notes that this change has reduced the capacity for early intervention care, which is self-evident to a point. General practitioners are, or can be, an important part of early intervention, when they are allowed and supported to consult with their patients for decent lengths of time, when they are able to bulk-bill, allowing patients access without having to trade off the electricity bill or food for the week.

The reduction in bulk-billing makes it very difficult for people on low incomes to access primary health care. As the president of the AMA put it in the July 2002 *Canberra Doctor*:

Moving away from a failed Medicare system is a healthy process overall and will lead to better care for those who can afford to pay.

I do not agree with that. He went on:

It will however disenfranchise the less well off who will be left with diminished access to services.

I realise that the ACT government is aware of these problems and that there have been a number of explorations of possible initiatives. I understand that there are dangers in accepting responsibility for the costs of what is properly the responsibility of the Commonwealth government. But can we be satisfied holding disadvantaged people to ransom? Relying on the Commonwealth government means exactly that.

While this situation has been primarily caused by the federal government's failure to adequately maintain the Medicare system—and they should not be allowed to get away that—ultimately we in the territory have to take responsibility for protecting the health of the residents of the territory.

This motion does not specify how to go about boosting access. It is up to the government to work with all the stakeholders, community members and its resources. But the point of the strategy I have asked for—under the amended motion it will be a report—is that we will be able to see clearly where we are going. A strategy does not have to be bound and printed on glossy paper. It can be as simple as a set of dot points printed double-sided on recycled paper and tabled here in the Assembly. But having a strategy means that we have a plan in place, we have a vision of the scope of the problem and of what we can do, and we have time lines for putting the plan into action.

Though the government's amendment will remove the word “strategy”, the motion will say that the government will report to the Assembly on what measures it is currently taking and proposes to take, and the report will include time lines, so I am satisfied with that.

The ACT is not powerless. There are several options within our control that I can suggest—assisting bulk-billing doctors with their rent, reintroducing health centres and salaried medical officers, sharing premises with other health professionals, and making the best use of the coming medical school to try to increase the number of doctors in the ACT.

I want to talk a little bit more about the community health care model, because it illustrates so well the fact that we do have powers here. Unfortunately, as we remember, Mrs Carnell removed them but we could bring them back. The ACT in the past had a more robust system in the community health centres. Many people here will remember the Liberal government's changes to our system of primary health care in 1996. These changes are close relations of the other economic rationalism-inspired silo building, such as purchaser/provider, which have now been shown—for instance, by the Reid review—to reduce our ability to care for health. When Kate Carnell removed community health centres and salaried medical officers from the Canberra landscape, it was predicted that this would ultimately reduce the access of low-income people to GPs.

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Gwen Gray of the Australian National University, in an article in the *Canberra Times* in 1996, pointed out how the community health centres were valuable points of service of all kinds of health care—preventative, team work between GPs and other allied health professionals—and would be essential following deinstitutionalisation of mental illness care.

I heard from two social workers who at the time were caught up in the Carnell government's backdoor removal of the social worker positions from the Melba health centre via a series of three-month contracts and relocation to Belconnen. I read from their letter of December 1995:

The Belconnen community can ill afford the loss of this service altogether and already other related services are experiencing increased work demands. From our working relationship with the Community Mental Health Team we are aware of the increasing demand on their service which has coincided with the reduction of both the Belconnen and Melba Community Division Social Work positions from full to part time. There have also been reductions in staff available for direct service delivery in the Community Mental Health Teams. Alongside this is increased demand with the servicing of Gungahlin residents.

Sure enough, according to Ms Urbanc, reported in the Canberra Schizophrenia Fellowship newsletter last month:

[ACT Mental Health Services has been] pushing for shared care with GPs for the past four years, and it was cause for serious concern among carers, clients and mental health providers that few doctors were now willing to bulk bill. The Mental Health Services were working towards an arrangement whereby groups of GPs would be contracted to provide health care to clients on a bulk billing basis.

The AMA have traditionally resisted the model of salaried officers and raised with my office the view that any subsidy to bulk-billing doctors could be unfair competition in the small business model. But we need to consider the broader public interest, particularly in times when there are not enough doctors and when the aim is to service people who may otherwise go without care. How much can it be disadvantaging most GPs?

The Single Mothers Alliance wrote to me in April, also hoping that the ACT government would intervene to stop the Interchange General Practice closing. We need action and creative strategies from our territory government when we are being failed by the federal government.

Such a program would meet key policy directions of this government. The Reid report calls for emphasis on multi-disciplinary approaches. One of ACT Community Care's five core processes listed in their 2002-04 Corporate Plan is building strategic relationships with other service providers, including non-government organisations, other government agencies and the private sector, because they are essential to the provision of effective and integrated community-based services. This includes horizontal integration across primary care, along with balanced vertical integration with the tertiary sector.

Winnunga Nimmitjiah operates as a community-based health service using GPs and other professionals. Winnunga is a vastly successful model. It services an identity-based community rather than a geographical community, but the principle is similar; that is, there is a centre where you can get help.

I want us to remember what we had and to remember that we are not powerless in the face of an irresponsible federal government. The way we organise our health services can make a real difference. Mr Berry said in 1996:

The Melba Health Centre operated for 23 years and its closure will leave a gap in the health facilities in Canberra. The health centre was for years the target of the [Australian Medical Association] and the people will be worse off now that Mrs Carnell has bowed to the pressure.

I want the government to look for creative solutions. I think that salaried medical officers and community health centres are a good model. It would possibly address a lot of health system gaps and meet the Reid criteria, in addition to supporting the continued existence of bulk-billing general practitioners.

As I said, I understand the government will be moving an amendment, which I am happy to support, because it is going to achieve the ends we want to see achieved from this motion. It is important that there be a clear statement from the government about how they are looking after the interests of the community. I am sure people are well aware that if you do not have basic primary and preventative health care available to members of the community they are more likely to become acutely ill and have to use a hospital, making the costs greater.

MR WOOD (Minister for Urban Services, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services) (8.51): Mr Speaker, I have circulated an amendment to this motion. Ms Tucker indicates that it is acceptable to her. I move:

Omit all words after "General Practitioners" in paragraph (3) and substitute the following words:

"Calls on the Government to report to the Assembly on what measures it is currently taking, and proposes to take, to ameliorate these problems, including the timeframe for any proposals. The report should include

- measures to ensure that every person in the ACT, regardless of income, has adequate access to the services of a General Practitioner, during and after business hours;
- mechanisms to encourage and support General Practitioners to provide bulk billing.

The Government should provide this report to the Assembly by the end of the December 2002 sitting of the Assembly."

Ms Tucker has drawn our attention to the decline in the rates of bulk-billing not only in the ACT but all over the country. It is indeed a tragedy for primary health care that a visit to the GP is unaffordable for many of the most disadvantaged people in our society. Even for those who can afford to pay, often finding a GP is difficult because of the shortage of GPs in the ACT, as in many other places in Australia. We are all well aware of the problems for rural health caused by the shortage of GPs in the bush, but in the

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ACT the government is well aware of the shortage of GPs in the Lanyon Valley and in parts of Belconnen and Gungahlin.

While I acknowledge the seriousness of the issue, I cannot agree and the government cannot agree with Ms Tucker's original motion that the solution to the problems of GP costs and access lies in the hands of the ACT government. I am happy, the government is happy and Mr Stanhope is happy to report to the Assembly on what we are doing to ameliorate the problems. That is why I have moved an amendment. Primarily, the solution lies outside the ACT.

As we all know, the Commonwealth government has retained for itself control over funding for GP services, through the fee-for-service Medicare system, and control over the supply of GPs, through control of medical training in the higher education system. The Commonwealth had given the states and territories funding for public hospital services and community-based services through the Australian Health Care Agreement. It has not passed across the resources for GP services. There is no strategy which any state or territory government could develop alone that would guarantee affordable and easy access to GPs.

There can be little doubt that the current system for the delivery of primary health care is fundamentally flawed. The Commonwealth has set up a primary care health system for the nation based on the GP as a small business operator. Then, flying in the face of this small business model, the Commonwealth expects GPs to agree to be paid a set fee, which the Commonwealth sets, and to accept 85 per cent of that fee by bulk-billing the Commonwealth directly for each occasion of service.

This may have been a fine idea in the days when GPs thought the schedule fee was set at a reasonable rate. In those days, too, GPs had a percentage of bad payers, poor patients they never did get payment from or expect to get payment from. Bulk-billing of these patients meant GPs did get paid.

These days the schedule fee is highly contested by GPs and the AMA. It is not keeping pace with the rising costs of running a practice, certainly not with the increases in schedule fees which the Commonwealth agrees for specialists. GPs have not been treated as well by the Commonwealth as the medical specialists.

I must note here that the Commonwealth solution to the medical indemnity situation is to subsidise premiums for mainly specialists, at the expense of a solution which provides actual health care for the catastrophically injured who require long-term care, sometimes lifelong care. But that is a digression.

The bulk-billing rate is declining in the ACT. It has been declining since 1997-98. The 2001-02 rate of 51.2 per cent is lower than at any time since 1990-91. The story does not end with the decline of bulk-billing. Most GPs charge above the schedule fee, and patients are left to pay the gap between the Medicare refund and the actual cost of a GP visit.

The choice to bulk-bill or charge above the schedule fee is made by an individual GP, and many GPs still bulk-bill people with low incomes, such as those with a health care card. This shows that GPs are still demonstrating the social conscience they

demonstrated in the days before Medicare, when they often treated the poor for free. It is worth noting that, despite the decline in bulk-billing, just over 50 per cent of GP services in the ACT are bulk-billed.

The government is concerned that access to GP services is a problem for ACT residents, and lack of bulk-billing is a factor that reduces access to GPs for some people. But you cannot get away from the fact that the provision of general practitioner services is the responsibility of the Commonwealth government. If the Commonwealth would like to hand over Medicare payments for GPs to the ACT government, I am sure we could make a better fist of it than they have. We could not do any worse.

The Commonwealth has refused to fix the problem in the ACT. The government here has raised the shortage of GPs in the ACT with the Commonwealth, to seek their assistance. The Commonwealth has refused to help. We have now received three knock-backs from the Commonwealth to address the problems with the ACT arising from the failure of the Commonwealth's GP policies. The first of these is the refusal to designate the ACT as a district of work force shortage for GPs, which would have given us more scope to recruit GPs.

The second is exclusion of the ACT from the 2002 budget initiative to improve access to GP services in outer metropolitan areas. This initiative is restricted to the six state capital cities and specifically excludes the ACT and the Northern Territory. The third, which we have just learned of, is that the Commonwealth has rejected the proposal, developed by the ACT Division of General Practice and the Canberra After Hours Locum Medical Service in collaboration with ACT Health, for a model for improved after-hours GP services in the ACT.

The Health Minister will continue to work with his state and territory colleagues to put pressure on the Commonwealth to find a solution.

What are we doing in the ACT? While we are not able to solve the problems of GP shortages and a fall in bulk-billing, the government is working with GPs in the ACT to improve access to GP services and improve the relationship between GPs and other health services to improve access and to provide better care.

For example, the government is funding a primary care clinic at Calvary Hospital. While GP services have been declining, the number of people with less urgent conditions attending emergency departments in the ACT is increasing. The primary care clinic at Calvary is available 24 hours a day, free of charge to ACT residents, to provide services to people unable to access a GP. This is a good measure, but it will not solve the problems of after-hours access to GPs.

In this regard, the ACT is not the only territory or state which is concerned. You will be aware that all Australian health ministers meet on a regular basis. At the November meeting, the ministers placed on the agenda the issue of the impact of the decline of GP services on emergency departments. It is considerable.

Now that the Commonwealth has refused to fund our proposals for access to after-hours GPs, the government will examine funding to cover the cost of the Canberra After Hours Locum Medical Service, providing care on the graveyard shift, midnight to 6 am.

Mr Cornwell: Most unfortunate words.

MR WOOD: Yes, indeed. This would improve the coverage of CALMS. We will also discuss with GPs whether we in the ACT can progress other aspects of the proposal which the Commonwealth rejected.

ACT Health is currently engaged in 18 projects that actively involve general practitioners. These projects involve working cooperatively to address the needs of the ACT population and cover a wide range of health issues, including HIV/AIDS, diabetes care, youth health services, aged care, opiate addiction, mental health and self-management of chronic conditions. These programs demonstrate that the needs of the disadvantaged in our community are receiving attention from ACT Health and from general practitioners. These programs do not solve the GP shortage in the ACT or the lack of bulk-billing, but they do make the limited resources more targeted.

In summary, while I acknowledge the seriousness of the issue, I cannot agree with Ms Tucker that the solution is for the ACT government to develop a new strategy to ensure access to services of GPs. So I have moved the amendment you have in front of you, which enables the government to provide to the Assembly a report about the many projects we are currently involved in with GPs and our plans to augment after-hours GP services. This will improve access and hopefully take some pressure off hospital emergency departments after hours.

As everyone knows, the Commonwealth government controls the funding for GP services through the fee-for-service Medicare system. They control the supply of GPs through controlling medical training in the higher education system. But the shortage of GPs and the lack of access to bulk-billing are problems which the Commonwealth government must address.

In the meantime, this government will continue to work with GPs to ensure that everything in our power to meet the health care needs of Canberrans. The Health Minister is very happy to provide a report to the Assembly on what we are doing and plan to do. It is a great pity the Commonwealth government will not do the same.

MS DUNDAS (9.02): I will be addressing both the substantive motion and the amendment. The issue of access to general practitioners has been raised several times this year in the Assembly. Back in May I asked the Minister for Health what he was doing to improve access to affordable medical services. Mr Stanhope replied then that addressing the GP shortage was primarily an issue for the federal government, as has been repeated by Minister Wood today. It is clear that the federal government is not concerned enough about the welfare of Canberrans to tackle the problem. That means that it is left up to the ACT Assembly and the ACT government.

In his response to my question put in May, the Minister for Health pointed to the Canberra medical school as part of the longer term solution to the GP shortage. I agree that a local medical school will play an important role in training and retaining local doctors. But I doubt that it will solve the problem entirely.

I am informed that the ACT government will not be involved in setting selection criteria for the medical school. Because selection criteria are known to greatly influence the likely destination of graduate doctors, I certainly hope that ACT Health will turn its mind to this issue. It is important that new doctors who are trained in the ACT want to stay in the ACT. Otherwise, the problems we have now will remain.

A budget line for funding of the Canberra medical school falls far short of a coherent strategy to tackle the problem of poor access to bulk-billing doctors. For this reason, I support the development of a strategy to address our GP shortage as called for by Ms Tucker's motion.

It is clear that the ACT government has to reconsider employing GPs in community medical centres at a sufficiently attractive pay rate so access to bulk-billing doctors is improved. I believe that most employed GPs were sacked by the previous government, and access to bulk-billing doctors has declined as a result.

There are other more lateral ways of taking the pressure off existing GPs. A motion I introduced in September called on the ACT government to accelerate the accreditation of nurse practitioners to address Canberra's growing GP shortage. I was told that the report from the trial would be available within a few weeks, but it still has not appeared, so implementation of its recommendations has been further delayed. This is an issue the government does have control over.

I hope that Assembly support for Ms Tucker's motion will get the minister and his departmental officers consulting with health consumers and health providers about an effective strategy that can be implemented in the coming year. I say "strategy" because I am not happy with the amendment moved by the government, even though I understand that Ms Tucker is willing to support it. Her original motion made it quite clear that the ACT can and should be working to develop and implement strategies to address our GP shortage. The amendment merely calls on the government to report, firstly, on what it is currently doing and, secondly, on what it plans to do. I fear that the answer could be nothing and nothing—nothing except berating the federal government about the inadequacy of the current system.

There are obvious problems. The schedule fee is too low and too inflexible. The background of medical graduates is not diverse enough. And it is unsatisfactory that so much of public health care is delivered by private business people whom governments have little power to direct to areas of greatest need.

I understand that the amendment put by the government will get up. I hope the report that will now be called for by this amendment will include real proposals and real strategies and will result in real outcomes. A few suggestions have been presented this evening.

MR SMYTH (9.06): Mr Speaker, the previous government never believed or accepted that it did not have the ability to influence the number of GPs and the way they operated in the ACT; that only federal governments of the time could. Over the life of federal governments of both persuasions, we have seen an erosion of the Medicare rebate, making it particularly difficult for doctors to maintain their position as bulk-billers.

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A big factor driving whether GPs will come back to bulk-billing is the premium. But if you accept that, then nothing will happen and nothing will change. We certainly did not accept that. That is why we implemented the GP clinic trial. That is why we implemented the nurse practitioner trial. We were keen to make sure a medical school was established in the ACT. State or territory governments can do a number of things to influence how GPs operate and to maintain the number of GPs.

Most of the issues have been canvassed here this evening. Like Ms Dundas, I am concerned that the government is not willing to tell us what they will do by way of a strategy with time lines. I am disappointed that the motion by Ms Tucker will be watered down.

Let us take the government at their word and see what they come up with at the end of December. It will be interesting. The activity of this government is quite important. The GP trials were finished a long time ago, and we are yet to find out what the government will do on them. In their campaign they promised after-hours GP clinics. We are yet to see those. They are certainly not in this budget, as we have made abundantly clear. We treat that as a broken promise. I suspect it is a promise that will never be fulfilled.

The nurse practitioner trial is well and truly over, and the assessment should be well and truly over. We were promised a report. We are yet to see that report. That is the hallmark of this government in regard to health.

I have some personal disappointments. For five or six years several of us have been trying to get a GP at Lanyon. It is beyond my ken that we cannot get a GP to come to an area like Lanyon. You would think that an area with 12,000 people in a wonderful city like Canberra would be the ideal place for a doctor to set up. We have to work out what keeps doctors out of the metropolitan fringe.

I welcome the announcement in the federal budget this year of funding for a scheme to assist GPs to set up and remain in the metropolitan fringe areas of our capital cities. But the disappointment for me, as I have said in this place before, is that Canberra was not included in that. When I spoke to the federal health minister's office, they said, "We have done the numbers. We have done the surveys. Your need is not as bad as in other areas." We would all like to see need fulfilled where it is greatest. But that does not disguise my disappointment that we may have to wait some time before we can get assistance for the Lanyon Valley.

But there are things the local government can and should do. I do not believe there has been enough commitment to health by our part-time Health Minister as I characterise him. I will continue to characterise him as that until such time as we get a full-time Health Minister. We should have a full-time Health Minister, a fifth minister, and soon.

That notwithstanding, the government has given a commitment that they will report by the end of the December 2002 sittings. That is only four weeks away. I look forward with great interest to what the government will do and what innovation they will bring to this problem. Many things can be solved at the territory level.

MS TUCKER (9.10): I am a bit concerned about Mr Wood's response. In summing up, he said that the government were happy to produce a report which showed what they were doing and what they planned to do. That sounded good, but then he said that we were attempting to augment after-hours services. Clearly my motion covers much broader concerns than after-hours services. Of course, we commend the fact that there is now a service at Calvary, but there has to be more in other places. It is about bulk-billing, which I think I have made pretty clear in this motion.

While I accept the amendment because I think the will is there to produce proposals for future action with time lines, which is what the amendment says, if the future actions are just to augment after-hours services, I will be back here calling for a strategy. Clearly we need to see a much stronger response.

Mr Wood said, "We intend to do everything in our power to meet the health needs of the people of Canberra." A lot needs to be done to meet the health needs of people in Canberra who are on a low income. That is why I put this motion. So I am putting the government on notice that if we get a very small document telling us what we already know then I will bring this matter back.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Wood**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Cerebral palsy

MR SMYTH (9.12): Mr Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of members tonight that, on average, every fortnight another baby with cerebral palsy is born in Canberra Hospital, and that adds to the over 800 families already affected by this condition. But, rather than just talk about it, I want to talk specifically about one family and their response to having a child born to them with cerebral palsy. This is a family, I think, of great courage and a family that needs to be brought to the attention of Canberrans simply because their answer was to get out and do something, not for themselves, but for all those families affected by cerebral palsy in the ACT.

It is the Boulding family, and particularly Leah Boulding, who is the mother of young Chelsea, who has cerebral palsy. On 31 August this year, she and her family organised the Hart of Gold Dinner. It is spelt "H-a-r-t", because it was to raise money for Hart Walkers. Leah set herself the target that night of raising \$20,000 with a view to buying two of these Hart Walkers and donating them to the Spastic Centre of the ACT. I am pleased to report to the Assembly that they raised not \$20,000 but more like \$35,000—in a single night. The family that organised this comprises Leah Boulding, who is Chelsea's mum, her husband, Darren, who supports her in all of this, Chelsea's dad, and their six beautiful children. There are also their extended family and friends, particularly Kylie, Kellie, Emma and Leah's mum.

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They got hold of the Southern Cross Club for the night, they found a beautiful bunch of sponsors, and they gathered enough items for a live auction of 13 items—and Robert Evans is to be congratulated for the way he conducted the live auction. They managed to gather up another 60 items for a silent auction. Then they managed to fill the room full of people. They managed to get Michael Whitney down as the guest MC, and he brought his kids and his partner and they joined in and made it a wonderful evening.

But what they managed to do was educate a lot of people about cerebral palsy and what it is that we need to do. I just want to read a little bit from what Leah Boulding said:

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank each of you for attending ...

I would like to tell you about an event that recently changed the lives of my family.

My husband Darren and I have six young children, ranging in age from 10 years to seventeen-month-old twins. One of our twins, Chelsea, was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at 5 months of age. Chelsea will never walk unaided. As you can imagine, this was life altering news for our entire family. When Chelsea is 3, a Hart Walker may give her a chance to walk independently, these currently cost \$10,000 each.

It is my hope that tonight you will be able to assist our family and the Spastic Centre of the ACT by helping us to raise awareness of Cerebral Palsy and much needed funds for Hart Walkers.

So there is a response that I think is worthy of praise. There is a lady who has been able to con the Southern Cross Club, ZOO, Lindemans, Schweppes, Trendsetting, ClubsACT, framemaker picture framers, FM 104.7, the *Canberra Times*, Southcorp Wines, and Carlton United into coming up with the goodies.

She managed to then get more than 73 other really valuable items to be donated. Then she filled a room full of people with enough cash, who very generously bought the lot. The money raised was exceptional, and then she gave it all away to other kids of families that needed it more than her own. I think that is the sort of generosity that separates Canberra from the rest of this country.

Surveillance cameras Gungahlin Drive extension

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (9.16): I just want to respond to something that was said in debate, I think it was yesterday, by the Chief Minister. Actually, it was question time. It was a question about the use of surveillance cameras and Mr Stanhope made the comment in the course of his remarks that it had been a recommendation of a committee chaired by Ms Follett in the Assembly which had led to the setting up of security cameras in Civic during the Third Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I have gone back and checked the record and I just want to correct the record. First of all, the committee to which Mr Stanhope referred was the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs. In fact, it was chaired by Mr Osborne, not by Ms Follett. It reported in September 1996 in a report entitled *The electronic eye—inquiry into the*

efficacy of surveillance cameras. The opening paragraph, which indicates the provenance of the inquiry, says:

The origin of the inquiry arose from an approach by a private security company (Wormald Security) to the Attorney-General, Mr Gary Humphries, MLA. The Company offered the free use of surveillance cameras (known in the security industry as closed circuit television or CCTV) for a specified time to conduct a trial in Civic.

Of course, that is the case. That was the origin of the inquiry, and it was that which led then, after the government-led inquiry report was produced, to the government actually implementing security cameras in Civic.

I might say that one of the reasons the trial was not immediately implemented after the report was tabled was that the committee recommended there be comprehensive privacy legislation incorporating penalties for breaches of video surveillance protocols and that there be a government-appointed independent auditor or ombudsman with powers to audit the system—both random and specific-period audits—and investigate complaints.

The government of the day felt, I think quite reasonably, that that was an onerous and unacceptable burden to put in place a scheme in Civic, and I note that, despite supporting that recommendation, the new government has not in fact put those mechanisms in place to overview the position of security cameras in Civic.

I also want to respond to a remark made today, again by the Chief Minister, about the Gungahlin Drive extension. Once again, the government mouthed the shibboleth that the ACT Liberal opposition is blocking, holding up the advent of Gungahlin Drive extension by virtue of its opposition to the government's plans.

Mr Speaker, I put on the record, yet again, for all to hear, that the ACT Liberal opposition is not opposed to and will not take any steps to hold up the building of Gungahlin Drive extension. If the government proceeds to build the western route, while the opposition will maintain its view that that is the wrong decision, it will not take steps to hold up the implementation of that decision.

The basis on which the government is maintaining in the public at large that somehow the Liberals are holding this up in the Assembly, preventing it from proceeding, is that we express opposition to the government's plans. That is perfectly true. We do oppose the government's plans, but I think it is wrong to characterise that as somehow holding up the advent of the road. If we accept for a moment the argument that opposing equals holding up, or preventing from proceeding, then the question needs to be asked: did not the then Labor opposition, which opposed our plans for six years in this place, by the same measure, also hold up the advent of the road? It opposed our plans for the eastern route consistently for the whole of six years.

Clearly, that is a nonsense. Clearly, a party is entitled to express its opposition to something without necessarily stopping it from happening. The government has put no motion, no proposal, no budget before the Assembly which has been opposed by this opposition to prevent the advent of that road. The only reasons the road might be held up are possibly the going through of certain procedures at the federal level, pursuant to federal legislation, or that the government here has yet to make a decision in this

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Assembly about where it wants to go with that road and how it wants to proceed to build it.

World Masters Games

MR HARGREAVES (9.21): Mr Speaker, I want to speak very briefly about a couple of achievements by Canberra teams in the World Masters Games in Melbourne. I know that Mr Stefaniak takes a keen interest in this sort of information in adjournment debates.

There is a netball team called the Canberra Spirits, a composite team of people from around Canberra. It won seven out of eight games in Melbourne, against world-class opposition—we are talking about the World Masters Games.

I have an email here from Janelle Wheatley, who is one of the team, and she has been with us for a long time. It told about the buzz she got walking on the MCG in the opening ceremonies. I mean, what a buzz. They are representing the ACT and they win seven out of eight games—thank you very much.

I think we owe them a bit of congratulation. Interestingly, she was saying that that mob had applied for a grant from the sport and recreation department but they could not get a grant because they are not an incorporated body. Yet they could still play in the World Masters Games. So there seems to be something a bit odd there. I do not know the solution. I only point out the difficulties that are there. Maybe later on somebody will look at that. They are going to compete in the Australian Masters Games in 2003, and the Assembly should be aware that that will be held here in Canberra. So I'm hoping that it will be eight out of eight games on our own home turf.

I would also like to advise the Assembly of another team that had a bit of an achievement down there. We sent some composite soccer teams down to the World Masters Games. Of course, our esteemed Treasurer is a gold medal holder for that supremely active sport of lawn bowls. But this particular group of people went and played soccer down in Melbourne. Soccer is really huge down in Melbourne. People often think it is only an AFL town—it certainly is, but soccer is pretty strong there too, let me tell you. I advise the house that the Canberra over-45s team, which is a composite team from all over town again, brought home the gold medal.

We are talking about the World Masters Games, and the over 45s soccer team from Canberra brought home a gold medal, in that kind of company. The guy behind that team is named Mike Lucas. I would like to just pay tribute to those two teams, and I would like the Assembly to know the achievements of two great Canberra teams.

Statement by Ms Tucker

MR PRATT (9.24): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to place on the record my condemnation of Ms Tucker's comments today in the Iraqi war debate, where she likened this country's Prime Minister, John Howard, the USA's President Bush and the UK's Prime Minister Blair to those in the terrorist category. These were appalling and obscene comments. Where do you get off, Ms Tucker? Where is she? She is not here. Firstly, she has denigrated the commemoration of the victims of blatant civilian-targeted terrorism and

she has let down their families. Even a 12-year-old child would have difficulty in lining up Ms Tucker's comparison.

When I last checked, Messrs Howard, Bush and Blair had not planned and executed deliberate attacks on massive numbers of unarmed civilians. The problem with these sorts of comments and those of Ms Tucker's fruitloop comrades, Brown and Nettle, is that they are deliberately and dramatically misrepresentative. In fact, they reflect the worst excesses of chip-on-the-shoulder, divisive, wedge politics. They damage the country with this sort of rubbish. Whether or not Ms Tucker understands that these comments provide some sort of encouragement and comfort to those who would seek to attack our country is beyond me—I am unsure whether she is on track at all.

She is entitled to say whatever she likes. That is our freedom of speech. But she is also responsible to speak wisely and respectfully. Ms Tucker has clearly no idea of these essential principles. I would like to see Ms Tucker apologise in this place to the citizens of the ACT for those sorts of comments.

Australia Day festival in the park Statement by Ms Tucker

MR STEFANIAK (9.26): Mr Speaker, I rise to recommend to the government that it should, if it has not done so already—but I believe it has not—fund a very good event in Canberra, which has been funded in the past for many years, and that is the Australia Day festival in the park. I understand the festival needed \$50,000 this year to continue its excellent work. The festival is getting very concerned that that assistance—or any assistance from the government—has not been forthcoming. I briefly mentioned the matter on the stairs to the Chief Minister, who said he would mention it to Mr Wood. I am not quite sure who—

Mr Wood: I take it they've made an application.

MR STEFANIAK: I understand they certainly have done that. Indeed, Mrs Turbayne from the organisation has actually spoken to members of the department and could well have spoken to members of your government as well, Mr Wood. But they will not be able to produce the excellent Australia Day in the park we have all become accustomed to if they do not receive some assistance. I think the money they received last year was about \$45,000. I recall in the past they have probably received more than that. They do a lot for themselves. They get a lot of assistance from the Licensed Clubs Association of the ACT.

All of us here, I think—with the possible exception of some of the new members, but I think virtually all of us—have been to Australia Day in the park in recent years. It is truly a wonderful family day, an excellent celebration of this nation. There are some wonderful events there, ranging from the citizenship ceremonies through to the fireworks displays at night. I would strongly urge the government to ensure that this is supported.

Mr Wood: Well, we have processes now, Mr Stefaniak.

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MR STEFANIAK: Well, we had processes too, Mr Wood, and I am sure they have followed them, but I would hate to see them miss out on funding. We had a motion earlier today, and rightly so, about supporting things like the Tuggeranong festival, another great event. I think these festivals certainly are deserving of great support.

On another point: might I also indicate that I was also very concerned to hear Ms Tucker liken John Howard, Tony Blair and George W. Bush to actual terrorists. Those three gentlemen are all leaders of democracies. I have never met Mr Bush or Mr Blair. Mr Blair is probably not as good as my old mate Margaret Thatcher. Nevertheless they are leaders of democracies. Of course I think our own Prime Minister, while some people would not agree with him, is a great Australian and a very decent man—just as I could say many members opposite whom I know personally are very decent people, even though there is a lot they do that I do not agree with.

In a democracy you do not have to agree with someone to respect them as a decent human being, and John Howard is certainly that. As someone who knows him quite well, I take offence at stupid comments like that and I hope she learns her lesson and does not make comments like that. It was otherwise, I think, a very useful and reasoned debate where everyone had an opinion and the motion was ultimately passed. That is part and parcel of a democracy. But I do not think comments like that serve any purpose and I certainly hope that she will not make comments like that again.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 9.29 pm.