

# THE QUEENSLAND *onLINE*

WITH SENATOR SUE BOYCE



January 27, 2010

## THE YEAR AHEAD

Sometime later this year, presumably around October/November if the Prime Minister sticks to his word and runs the full term, there will be an election.

Parliament resumes next week and it promises to be a no-holds-barred contest between the government and the coalition on a range of issues, not the least of which will be the ETS legislation.

At the end of last year and for reasons which I have previously explained, a Liberal colleague and I crossed the floor in the Senate and voted for the ETS Bills which had been negotiated on behalf of the opposition with the government prior to the change of our leadership.

I believed then, as I believe now, that the compromises achieved by that negotiation – and about 80 per cent of what the opposition was seeking was incorporated into those Bills – offered the best available choice.

There have been new developments this year.

The Greens have put forward their own option in an attempt to break the impasse and broker a deal with the government which has said it is looking at it.

That proposal was sent to me by the Greens and I am also looking at it.

Frankly, I am not impressed for a range of reasons but chiefly because it would impose unrealistic deadlines on business to comply with the proposed \$20 a tonne a tonne pollution tax starting on July 1 this year.

There is even uncertainty in the Greens' proposal about just how much their new tax would be. Their statement talks about "a fixed carbon price of \$20 a tonne from July 2010 to July 2012" but also confusingly states that it would be "**approximately** \$20, based on the Garnaut Review proposals". The Garnaut Review proposed a \$20 a tonne tax in 2005 dollars which would translate now into about \$23 a tonne.

It is just unrealistic to think that the machinery of bureaucracy could possibly even begin to have arrangements in place to meet the proposed collection date of this tax and, even if it was possible, the impact on business plans would be very severe.

It would cost jobs and constrain the international competitiveness of industry.

Shortly the Opposition Leader will outline his plan to tackle climate change to Shadow Cabinet and this will then go to the Party room for debate.

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In recent weeks there have been some embarrassing disclosures demonstrating sloppiness and alarmist behaviour from some in the scientific community who believe climate change is real. It has all been grist for the mill of the climate change sceptics.

However, I still believe that climate change is happening and to a large extent is being caused by human activity.

That requires a response. It cannot be ignored.

How I vote when the Bills are reintroduced will depend on a number of factors – what those Bills contain and what the Coalition response to them is but, most importantly, if I sincerely and honestly believe the Bills will realistically and with minimum disruption to business and the economy address the climate change challenge.

Australians have always been very generous people but whether we donate \$20 or \$200,000 to international disasters such as the earthquake in Haiti, we don't expect our individual effort to fix the problem. And we don't wait to see what other individuals or nations donate.

We must adopt the same attitude to climate change.

Our actions, as individuals or as a nation, won't fix the problem but it will help and it will encourage others to do likewise.

## **AUSTRALIA DAY - WELCOMING NEWEST CITIZENS, ACKNOWLEDGING GENEROUS VOLUNTEERS**

On Australia Day I was delighted to attend two impressive ceremonies to welcome new citizens.

It was an honour and a privilege to preside at the ceremony hosted by the Windsor Rotary Club in Brisbane when 28 citizenship candidates officially made Australia their permanent home.

I said then: *"Australian citizenship represents commitment to Australia and its people, the values we all share and our common future. It also symbolises our sense of belonging to the country where we have been born or where we have decided to make our home."*



*"By becoming Australian citizens we who are already citizens are not asking you to renounce or forget your former home country, your country of birth."*

*"Australia is a multi-cultural nation and, except for our indigenous people who came here some 40,000 years ago, we are all immigrants or descended from immigrants. So many of us, irrespective of how long our families have been here and what generation we are, still like to think fondly and with affection of our family's country of origin and that is only human and very understandable."*



*"While you may still have a lot to learn about your new country, there is much that you can teach us about your country of birth and your culture."*

Later in the day I attended a similar and equally impressive ceremony hosted by the Nundah Rotary Club.

What impressed me at both was the sense of commitment and enthusiasm that our newest citizens showed. For many, it had been a long and often difficult road to their special day and their pride was heart-warming.

The second ceremony was preceded by the Lilley Awards – a local initiative to honour volunteers from a wide range of organisations working in Brisbane's northern suburbs.

These Awards are now well-established and highly prized and each and every recipient had a story that reflected a selfless dedication to the community.

It was wonderful to meet native-born Australians at both functions who had come along to see "what happens" at a Citizenship ceremony.

They joined the rest of us - old, new and intending citizens - in making a public affirmation of our loyalty to Australia.

## **UPDATE ON THE 'HARRY BOYS'**

Just before Christmas I sent an urgent request for donations on behalf of [Scott and Daniel Harry](#), two young men with muscular dystrophy. Thank you to those who responded. I'm pleased to report that the boys are very close to reaching their target of \$45,000 to purchase three non-invasive diurnal ventilators (a portable machine that sits on the back of a wheelchair and has a mouthpiece that allows the user to take an easy breath - no face masks, no power cords, no confinement).

Donations currently stand at \$39,780, and the offer of a 25 per cent discount on the purchase of three ventilators has been extended until the end of February.

To donate contact Deborah Robins on 0407 438 965, or email [deborah.robins@duchennefoundation.org.au](mailto:deborah.robins@duchennefoundation.org.au) - donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

## **CHRISTOPHER MONCKTON, CLIMATE CHANGE DENIER, VISITS AUSTRALIA**

Leading climate change denier Christopher Monckton is currently touring Australia spreading the message that all talk about climate change – and the need to address it – is not just nonsense but, very possibly, a thinly veiled attempt to impose a one-world government.

Last year, he went on a tour of North America to campaign against the Copenhagen Conference claiming if President Obama signed any treaty on climate change it would “*impose a communist world government on the world.*”

On January 20, 2010 *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* (Melbourne) reported that Lord Monckton was “*proving too hot for some of Australia's most prominent climate sceptics – including Barnaby Joyce.*”

The report stated; “*Joyce, who famously said that climate change sceptics were being treated like holocaust deniers and likened environmental campaigners to eco-Nazis, believes Monckton is on the fringe of the debate and unhelpful to those who question human induced climate change.*”

The story noted that Lord Monckton claims that the global effort to curb emissions “*is a plot to establishing a world government and give power to the World Bank*” and that “*after the Berlin Wall fell, the communists needed another way to centralise power and have created climate change as their Trojan Horse.*”

Senator Joyce was reported as saying that while he would listen to Lord Monckton, "*people should not read much into it*" and, further, "*Obviously I and my constituency have some doubts (about the science) but when you find yourself waltzing with the fringe you should take a step back.*" The story also quoted a spokesman for Opposition Leader Tony Abbott as saying that Mr Abbott would not be meeting Lord Monckton.

Lord Monckton, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Monckton of Brenchley, is nothing if not a tireless self-promoter and Senator Joyce and Mr Abbott are wise to be very cautious of him.

His various writings have been sent to me by his apostles and adherents with the plea that I heed his warnings and not be "tricked" into believing that climate change is real and that it needs addressing. He asserts, "*The global warming theory is not true and no amount of bluster will make it true.*"

Before considering Lord Monckton's views, I'd like to look at just who he actually is.

His CV has gone through various changes – and much is made of the "fact" that he was an adviser to then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher; in some instances he has been described as Mrs Thatcher's science adviser.

Lord Monckton is not a scientist – he studied the classics and journalism – and the closest he got to Prime Minister Thatcher was as an adviser on economic matters to the Prime Minister's Policy Unit from 1982 to 1986. He has no qualifications at all in climatology and has no qualifications of any kind in any branch of science.

While he is scathing about those who accept the reality of climate change, Lord Monckton is careful not to actually mention what Mrs Thatcher's views on the matter were. Perhaps if he did, his "role" as her "science" adviser would appear somewhat less than effective.

In November 1989, Prime Minister Thatcher shocked the UN with a major speech on global warning.

She said: "*What we are now doing to the world, by degrading the land surfaces, by polluting the waters and by adding greenhouse gases to the air at an unprecedented rate – all this is new in the experience of the earth. It is mankind and his activities that are changing the environment of our planet in damaging and dangerous ways.*"

"*The result is that change in future is likely to be more fundamental and more widespread than anything we have known hitherto. Change to the sea around us, change to the atmosphere above, leading in turn to change in the world's climate, which could alter the way in which we live in the most fundamental way of all. That prospect is a new factor in human affairs. It is comparable in its implications to the discovery of how to split the atom. Indeed, its results could be even more far-reaching.*" Mrs Thatcher went on to say – and this is more than 20 years ago – "*In some areas, the action required is primarily for individual nations or groups of nations to take. But the problem of global climate change is one that affects us all and action will only be effective if it is taken at the international level.*"

As *The Guardian (UK)* noted (June 30, 2005), Mrs Thatcher's advisor then adviser on climate change was Sir Crispin Tickell, "*the farsighted British Ambassador to the UN who had taken time off from the Foreign Office to study climate change*". No mention of Lord Monckton at all.

Many of his other claims do bear examination – for example, he asserted in an open letter to two US Senators that he was "*a member of the Upper House of the United Kingdom legislature*" which he is not. Hereditary peers are elected by their colleagues to the House of Lords and in March 2007 he stood for election for a Conservative Party vacancy and received no votes. The ultimate peer review!

Only last year, Lord Monckton joined the UK Independence Party, an eccentric far-right party, as "*chief spokesman on climate change*" according to party leader Malcolm Pearson who said: "*He was Margaret Thatcher's Special Adviser in Downing Street on a number of areas, including science.*" ([UK Independence Party website](#))

Even her worst enemies wouldn't believe that Margaret Thatcher – who was a qualified research chemist before turning to the law and then politics – would accept scientific advice from somebody who had no qualifications.

Lord Monckton has previously been an “expert” on how to handle the AIDS epidemic.

In the January 1987 issue of *The American Spectator* he argued that “*there is only one way to stop AIDS. That is to screen the entire population regularly and to quarantine all carriers of the disease for life. Every member of the population should be blood tested every month ... all those found to be infected with the virus, even if only as carriers, should be isolated compulsorily, immediately, and permanently.*”

At the time, that would have meant isolating between 1.5 and 2 million people in the USA (“*not all together impossible*”) and another 30,000 in the UK (“*not insuperably difficult*”).

A curious event in 2001 illuminates Lord Monckton's views about telling it how it is.

He had invented a 209 piece 3-D jigsaw called Eternity and offered a prize of £500,000 to anybody who could solve it within a certain timeframe. Well, two British mathematicians did exactly that. Lord Monckton told the media then that he had been forced to sell his 67-room home to fund the prize which, by his own later admission, was not true.

In 2007, he launched a new version of Eternity and admitted the story about selling his house in 2001 was just not true. He admitted to *The Scotsman* (24 Jan, 2007) it was “*the story which the PR people dreamed up after we had three months of the best sales that any puzzle ever had. They said, ‘Don't you mind being made to look an absolute prat?’ and I said, ‘No – I'm quite used to that.’ History is full of stories that aren't actually true.*”

Yes history is, Lord Monckton – and you have contributed your fair share.

On 7 January last, *The Sunshine Coast Daily* reported that the two organisers of Lord (and Lady) Monckton's visit to Australia – locals Mr Case Smith and Mr John Smeed – expect the visit to cost \$100,000 including a “stipend” for his lordship of \$20,000 for the thirteen-day tour.

## SENATE COMMITTEES

### UPCOMING SENATE INQUIRIES

*[I'm a member of the Senate Community Affairs Committee, deputy Chair of the Joint Parliamentary Committee of the Australian Crime Commission, and a member of the Joint Committee for Corporations & Financial Services and the Joint Committee on Migration.]*



The *Community Affairs Committee* has announced inquiries into the following:

**[Planning Options and Services for People Ageing with a Disability](#) - closing date for submissions is May 28, 2010, to report by September 2, 2010.**

This inquiry will look at access to planning options and services for people with a disability to ensure their continued quality of life as they and their carers age, and to identify any inadequacies in the choice and funding of planning options currently available to people ageing with a disability and their carers.

**[Consumer Access to Pharmaceutical Benefits](#) - closing date for submissions is March 31, 2010, to report by June 30, 2010.**

This inquiry will examine Consumer access to pharmaceutical benefits and the creation of new therapeutic groups through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

**[Suicide In Australia](#) - to report by the end of April, 2010. Due to the considerable interest generated by this inquiry, the Committee is continuing to receive submissions.**

This inquiry will examine the costs of suicide in Australia, particularly the disproportionate effect on young, indigenous and rural Australians. We'll also be looking at the effectiveness of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, and ways improvements can be made.

**[Hearing Health In Australia](#) - to report by the end of February, 2010.**

This inquiry will look at the current state of hearing health in Australia, and the effect poor hearing has on our community.

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The *Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission* has announced a new inquiry into the following:

**[Adequacy of Aviation and Maritime Security Measures to Combat Serious and Organised Crime](#) - submissions have now closed.**

This inquiry will look at the methods used by serious and organised criminal groups to infiltrate Australia's airports and ports, and the extent of infiltration. This includes illegal imports of drugs, firearms, money laundering and people smuggling.

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The *Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Migration* is currently conducting hearings.

**[Inquiry into the Migration Treatment of Disability, to report back during 2010.](#)**

The Committee will investigate the assessment of the health and community costs associated with a disability as part of visa processing in Australia. While the formal submission period has closed, the Committee will continue to accept submissions and encourages people with a disability, employers, business organisations, disability and community services providers, and any other interested individuals or organisations to make comment.

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## **OTHER INQUIRIES**

**[Liquidators and Administrators](#) - submissions should be received by February 12, 2010 to report by August 31, 2010.**

This inquiry will investigate the role of liquidators and administrators, their fees and their practices, and the involvement and activities of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, prior to and following the collapse of a business.

**[National Broadband Network](#) - to report by April 30, 2010.**

This inquiry will examine the National Broadband Network, including the economic underpinnings of the scheme as well as the decision to establish the NBN.

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## **FAIR WORK AUSTRALIA**

On January 1, we entered the brave new world of Rudd/Gillard industrial relations, with many of the changes winding the clock back to the pre-Howard, pre-Keating and even pre-Hawke eras.

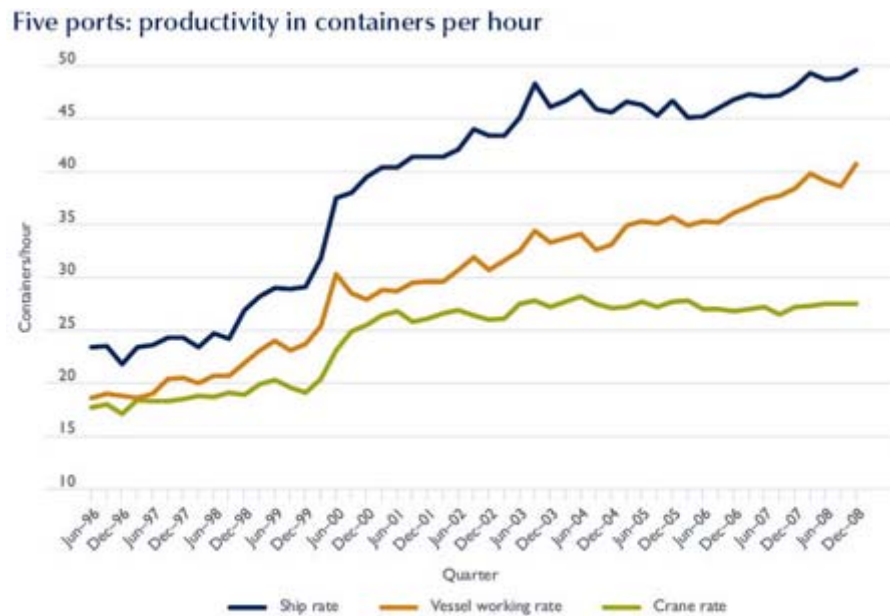
Workplace Relations Minister Julia Gillard wouldn't be out of place in the Whitlam Ministry, dismissing employer concerns with a none-too-subtle warning to "expect a greater union presence in workplaces this year".

In the 70s and 80s when the unions had virtually unfettered power over workplaces, more than 1.5 million days each year were lost to industrial action. Strikes in the resource-rich states of Queensland and Western Australia affected our ability to negotiate contracts with Japanese and US buyers, as we couldn't guarantee supply. In the Pilbara, one mine experienced almost 160 strikes in a year, with claims over such "important" issues as the range of ice-cream flavours in the staff canteen.

The first tranche of reforms introduced flexible industrial relations laws across the country, including Australian Workplace Agreements. Australia was ideally positioned to take advantage of the mining and resource boom as unemployment reached the lowest levels in decades and real wages increased.

These structural changes ensured Australia was able to withstand the full effect of the global financial downturn.

Unions such as the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and the Construction, Mining, Forestry and Energy Union (CMFEU), faced with declining membership and relevance in the Howard years, are back.



Sources: Patrick 2009b and DP World 2009.

*These ports - Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Fremantle - showed a huge productivity increase after the Howard Government introduced badly needed reforms in the face of union and ALP opposition.*

Recently, the MUA rejected an offer from Total Marine Services of a 29 per cent pay rise over three years and an allowance of \$175 a day. The MUA originally sought a \$500-a-day construction allowance but reduced their claim to \$200 a day after lengthy negotiations.

Of course, the MUA is unlikely to confine wage claims of an additional \$70,000 to \$100,000 a year for unskilled workers to the North West Shelf or Bass Strait.

In Opposition Kevin Rudd government claimed to be against pattern bargaining and said it would be illegal under his new legislation.

Of course, it is no such thing. Labor's new laws do not outlaw pattern bargaining, only industrial action in pursuit of it. The very definition of what activities constitute pattern bargaining is determined by the new Fair Work Australia.

Is it any coincidence [five of the six recent appointments](#) to Fair Work Australia come from union backgrounds? These include former union leader Anne Gooley, former senior union official John Ryan, ACTU senior industrial officer Michelle Bissett and Australian Manufacturing Worker's Union national president, Julius Roe. Former West Australian public servant Danny Colohan also has a union background, while South Australian appointee Peter Hampton is the only one with any experience in employer organisations.

While the mining and maritime sectors are the most vocal, the changes are likely to be felt first in the retail industry.

Following a survey of their members, the Retailers Association have indicated the new regulations could cut more than 3,000 retail jobs in NSW, Queensland, the ACT and South Australia.

The survey also found:

- 12 per cent of retailers will shed staff to cope with the new laws;
- 36 per cent of retailers will limit hiring new staff;
- 41.5 per cent of retailers will make rostering changes;
- 32 per cent of retailers will give employees less hours;
- 45 per cent of retailers aren't sure how the new IR laws will impact their business;
- 40 per cent of retailers expect increases in wage bills and operating costs;
- only 17 percent are fully compliant with the new laws.

The Opposition has called for a moratorium on prosecutions against small businesses for unintended breaches of the new workplace regime, with most major employer organisations supporting a grace period before penalties are issued.

Could we survive another financial crisis with a government hamstrung by the dead weight of an antiquated industrial relations system? Are Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard betting our businesses and jobs on a "union-led recovery"?

## **YOUNG WOMEN AND VIOLENCE**

A new study by a University of Queensland research team has revealed an alarming growth in violent behaviour among young women.

Based on an ongoing survey of more than 8,000 children, the study, head by the director of the University's Alcohol and Drug Research Education Centre Professor Jake Najman, has concluded that female adolescents were now as aggressive and violent as young males.

*"We know that in recent times females have been smoking as much as males; we know females are starting to experiment with illicit drugs at about the same rate as males; we know with females particularly in the 15 – 20 age group there is a blip in the terms of binge drinking to excess, so we are seeing a number of behaviours that are linked to delinquent behaviour where the female rates have been changing in recent years,"* Professor Najman said.

*"To some extent, we are starting to think women are becoming more like men in terms of their social behaviours that expose them to adverse outcomes."*

Professor Najman also believes that public acceptance of bad behaviour in both male and female adolescents could be a contributing factor.

This violent behaviour by young women was highlighted in May of last year, when a 15 year old girl was savagely beaten by three other girls in a premeditated attack on the Gold Coast; and in a case in Ipswich the following month, when a group of high schools girls bashed a fellow female student. If that wasn't disturbing and appalling enough, in both cases crowds of students, including other girls, looked on, and even filmed with their mobile phones.

Professor Najman said researchers found that part of the shift in violent behaviour among girls in recent years was because they were fatter and hit puberty earlier. The study also showed that the incidence of violence among boys had remained fairly consistent in recent years – the big news was the rise in violence among teenage girls and young women.

However, this trend has been apparent for some time.

Writing some four or five years ago in her book *What's Happening to Our Girls?: Too Much, Too Soon*, Australian researcher Maggie Hamilton noted that in the previous decade there had been a increase nationally of 32 per cent of girls in their mid to late teens involved in physical assaults and more than a third of children aged 10 to 14 served with Apprehended Violence Orders in New South Wales in 2005 were girls.

In 2008, British statistics revealed that teenage girls were now responsible for 15,000 violent attacks every year.

In November 2008, Queensland Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young, released a report showing that young women had the riskiest drinking profile, with 13.6 per cent of 14 to 19 year old females consuming alcohol, compared with only 9.1 per cent of similarly aged males.

At that time, Dr Young said alcohol advertising should be banned or, at least, severely restricted – a call backed by the Australian Medical Association.

Premier Anna Bligh said then that she would canvass community views before deciding what policy to adopt – it seems that “canvassing” is still on-going, given the failure to produce any firm policy.

Clearly, this situation deserves an immediate and national response.

Parents and society generally can start by providing a better example.

A 2001 survey of 5,000 young Australians by the Commonwealth Education Department found that one third of all 12 -20 year old girls and boys who had been in a dating relationship experienced violence in that relationship; 14 per cent of females aged 12 – 20 have been raped or sexually assaulted and almost a quarter of teenagers had witnessed physical violence against their mother or step-mother.

It was estimated in 2003-2004 one child in every 25 was subject to some form of abuse – and the evidence is that it has only gotten worse since.

“Girl power” – the mantra at the forefront of the feminist movement – did not seek or encourage, or even anticipate, this sort of “equality” that degrades women and girls.

Governments at all levels need to consider integrated strategies that specifically target young women as well as young men.

Girls and boys need to be taught to make healthier choices, respect themselves and each other, and be aware of the dangers of excessive alcohol. It may sound simple and old-fashioned, but encouraging honest communication, respect and good manners would be a great start.

## **COMMUNITY CLUBS IN QUEENSLAND**

Queensland has 939 community clubs with almost 3.5 million members throughout the State according to a recent report.

It is a large network and significant business, with combined assets of more than \$2.4 billion – including almost \$1.8 billion (at replacement value) of community assets. The clubs provide direct employment to about 27,000 people and employ 3,500 contractors.

Combined revenue is now about \$1.9 billion a year and State taxes and levies alone total \$377 million a year.

The main types of licensed not-for-profit clubs (about 70 per cent of the total) in Queensland are RSL/Ex-Services Memorial Clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs and general interest/cultural clubs.

“Not-for-profit” means that no individual or group can derive any personal benefit from the operation of a club. Any surplus must be used for the benefit of members and the community. Every year, millions of dollars are spent building and upgrading sporting and other facilities.

In 2008, these clubs contributed \$668 million in direct benefits to Queensland communities, via a wide range of benefits from school and charity donations to legacy and seniors’ services.

Virtually all of this money comes from poker machines.

According to Clubs Queensland, the industry organisation, the incidence of problem gambling in Queensland has declined from 0.83 per cent in 2001 to 0.37 per cent in 2008 -2009 and 98 per cent of the total population are either non-gamblers, recreational gamblers or low-risk gamblers.

The number of poker machines in Queensland has been fixed by law to 24,705.

Last year, the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, of which I am a member, investigated the effects of poker machines as part of its inquiry into the Poker Machine Harm Reduction Tax (Administration) Bill. We had some excellent and very informative submissions.

My two Coalition colleagues and I submitted additional comments to the final report.

We noted that there were *“devastating economic and social impacts of problem gambling in Australia and the commensurate need for governments to act to contain and reduce this problem.”*

We stated that effective harm minimisation measures should be implemented and that *“these measures would not be technically difficult to engineer or deliver and would not impose a serious financial burden on clubs and pubs where these machines are located.”*

We added: *“On the contrary, we feel that the passage of such legislation would send a strong signal to Australia’s gambling industry that a fresh take on the scale and nature of our problem with gambling is warranted, and that this industry needs to be prepared to innovate and cooperate in achieving reductions in the level of problem gambling.”*

At the direction of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the Productivity Commission has been undertaking a public inquiry into gambling that includes the impact and operation of these clubs.

The final report is due at the end of February.

In its draft report released last October, the Commission noted: *“While far from certain, problem gambling prevalence rates appear to have fallen somewhat. It is unclear how much this reflects natural adaptation or the impact of government policy, though both are likely to have contributed.”*

The draft report notes, however: *“Adult population prevalence rates can be misleading about the extent of problem gambling – the key concern is the proportion of regular gamblers who have problems.”* Nationally, the Commission believes that there are between 90,000 and 170,000 people suffering significant problems from their gambling every year – between 0.5 per cent and 1 per cent of the population, similar to the Queensland Clubs’ finding.

The Productivity Commission study covers all forms of gambling, from on-line to racing, to lottery/casket tickets, and not just gaming machines.

One finding specifically about gaming machines was that about 5 per cent of adults play these machines weekly or more often; about 15 per cent of these would be classified as “problem gamblers”, with an additional 15 per cent at moderate risk. The conclusion: *“Altogether, around one-third of regular gaming machine players face significant risks.”*

The Commission’s final report is expected to propose a wide range of education and control strategies and some of these, if adopted, could adversely impact community clubs.

If, for example, shutdown periods for gaming rooms in clubs were extended, it would reduce income.

But there could be offsetting factors – the Commission notes that effective harm minimisation policies for gaming machines “will inevitably erode gaming revenues in the longer run; however, technological changes may attract a wider base of consumers.”

The national debate after the release of the final report next month will have important implications.

## **QUEENSLAND AT A GLANCE**

Ever wondered what the population of, say, Cairns is? Or how many kids go to school in Brisbane? How the retail industry is coping?

Welcome to a very useful website: [www.oesr.qld.gov.au](http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au)

It is the website for the Queensland Government's Office of Economic and Statistical Research and it's an extremely valuable – and user friendly – site.

A highlight is the *Statistic of the week* – and this week it is the fact that net overseas migration to Queensland in the year to June 30, 2009 was 54,410, which is the highest annual figure recorded since this statistic has been kept by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1971.

The information is presented clearly, without any political bias and you can sign on to get free updates.

## OUR FATAL ATTRACTION

Australia's love affair with water has again proved fatal over the holidays, with drownings over the Christmas and New Year holiday period rising from 24 in 2008-2009 to 41 over the same period in 2009-2010.



Last year 302 people drowned across the country - the first time it has topped 300 in six years. I'm proud to have been appointed a Royal Surf Life Saving "Guardian of the Surf" in 2008 and I find these figures deeply distressing.

There have been a number of common factors in recent deaths:

- alcohol was a factor in more than 40 per cent of adult drownings last year;
- many recent surf deaths were due to people's inexperience with rips and ocean currents. The Surf Lifesaving Association has set up a new [website](#) specifically to educate people about the dangers at [www.ripcurrents.com.au](http://www.ripcurrents.com.au);
- most child deaths occur when children wander off - not just on beaches but also in swimming pools and dams. It's important to be aware of where children are at all times.

Please stay safe - it's important to remember that of all beach drownings last year, not one occurred when swimming between the flags.

***If you know someone who'd like to receive Queensland onLine, please email the office at [online@sueboyce.com.au](mailto:online@sueboyce.com.au)***

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Liberal Senator for Queensland**

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