

consideration of the issues surrounding the sale? Does the government accept that trying to rush this process will inevitably result in more mismanagement and incompetence?

Senator MINCHIN—What is scandalous is the fact the ALP has cost Australian taxpayers \$54 billion. By their cynical opportunistic blocking of the full sale of Telstra in 1999, the ALP has cost Australians \$54 billion. That is the scandal.

Family Law Reform

Senator HUMPHRIES (2.25 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Family and Community Services and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues, Senator Patterson. Will the minister inform the Senate how the Howard government is looking after the best interests of children in separating families?

Senator PATTERSON—I thank Senator Humphries for his question. The Australian government realises and recognises the impact of family breakdown on hundreds of thousands of children each and every year, and not only the impact on the children but the impact on the community as a whole. I am extremely concerned to find that in a recent Australian Institute of Family Studies publication it was reported that over a quarter of non-resident parents have little or no contact with their children. There may be significant issues in some cases preventing this contact but I am still concerned that the figure is far too high. The Howard government is committed to tackling this difficult issue to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved for children, and the best outcome for a child is to have contact with both parents, if at all possible. That is why we are introducing the most comprehensive reforms to the family law system for the last 30 years.

Every picture tells a story, a report of the Joint Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs on the inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation, highlighted the need for reform. In this year's budget, we announced a \$397 million investment in the family law system. The centrepiece of the package is the establishment of 65 family relationship centres. In July this year, the Attorney-General announced sites for the first 15 of these. The family relationship centres will provide a doorway to people seeking to strengthen family relationships and prevent separation and will assist parents to resolve conflict after separation. We are also expanding mediation and contact order programs to assist highly conflicted parents so that children maintain relationships with both their parents. Let me just say here that the whole focus of the reforms is about children.

The package also recognises that some families need extra help to stay together. Therefore, the government is significantly expanding early intervention services,

including up to 40 new premarriage and family relationship education centres, 35 relationship counselling and skills services to assist people achieve and sustain relationships and 45 men and family relationship services to help men manage relationship difficulties with partners and children.

Every picture tells a story also highlighted community concerns regarding the child support scheme. A recent study by the Australian Institute of Family Studies found that almost two-thirds of separated fathers and half of separated mothers felt the current scheme was not working well. Similar proportions of separated mothers and fathers also felt that the system was unfair. In response, this government established a ministerial task force, chaired by Professor Patrick Parkinson, to examine the child support formula. The task force was aided by a reference group made up of representatives from advocacy groups of payers and payees, and professionals with experience in parenting after separation, relationship mediation and social policy. Professor Parkinson has delivered to government a detailed set of recommendations based on a comprehensive evaluation of the cost of children benchmarked against international studies.

I would like to acknowledge that the report received broad public support. I would like to thank Professor Parkinson for his dedication and professionalism. The government is currently considering the complex and interrelated recommendations of the report. Any changes to the child support system must, as I said before, be in the best interests of the children. Through our family law reforms, this government is helping separating families ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved for children.

Federal Election Pamphlet

Senator BOB BROWN (2.29 pm)—My question is to the Special Minister of State. Will the minister investigate a pamphlet headed 'Keep Howard in Bennelong: what John Howard promises, he delivers'—and the first item is lower interest rates, believe it or not—that was circulated in Bennelong during the last election campaign and had an authorisation from an address of MET School 32 See Street, Meadowbank by S. Hale? Would he investigate whether that is an Exclusive Brethren church, whether it is funded by taxpayers and whether any taxpayers' money directly or indirectly found its way to supporting the Prime Minister's campaign? I also ask the minister: will he establish whether the Prime Minister met with Mr Bruce Hales, the world leader of the Exclusive Brethren church, which advocates that people should not vote?

Senator ABETZ—I think we have just witnessed for all to see the extent of tolerance in the Green dictionary. Tolerance is only meant for those that actually agree with the Greens. If you happen to pursue a different ideology or a different religion such as the Ex-

clusive Brethren, you are then to be pilloried in this chamber by the likes of Senator Bob Brown. The sort of tolerance that the Greens preach has just been exposed once and for all by Senator Bob Brown by that stunt. In relation to the brochure, if it made the claim that Mr Howard has been responsible for low interest rates and if the brochure was produced by the Exclusive Brethren, can I say the Exclusive Brethren were spot on. They were absolutely right, and the vast majority of Australians fully accept that because of the stewardship of this country's finances we do have lower interest rates. The person who presides over all of that, apart from the Treasurer, is of course the Prime Minister. That is why the Prime Minister does deserve credit for the low interest rates.

It is within the province of every individual citizen of Australia to make a complaint to the Australian Electoral Commission if they believe that a document may somehow breach the Commonwealth Electoral Act. Nothing that Senator Brown has disclosed in his question would suggest that there has been any breach whatsoever of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, so why on earth would I seek to refer that brochure 10 months or so after the event—

Senator Barnett interjecting—

Senator ABETZ—Thank you for that, Senator Barnett—when it is so patently truthful when it talks about the low interest environment that we enjoy in this country? It might surprise Senator Brown but it also gives us an insight into Senator Brown. I do not go around trying to track down as Special Minister of State everybody that happens to authorise political material. The suggestion that I, as Special Minister of State, should undertake such an activity shows yet again the sort of Stalinist approach that could well be taken by the Greens if they ever got the numbers in this place. That is the sort of behaviour that you would expect from a totalitarian regime, especially when on the face of it nothing has been disclosed in the brochure that might somehow be in breach of the law.

I think most senators would be aware that the Exclusive Brethren hold to a view that they do not vote, and that is their religious view. They have certain other religious views with which, I respectfully say to them, I do not agree. I understand the Jehovah's Witnesses similarly take a view that they should not be engaged in worldly activities. That is why Exclusive Brethren do not belong to any worldly organisation, as they put it, and that is a view that one would have thought those that preach tolerance, like Senator Brown, might be willing to accept and respect. Even if you do not agree with them, at least accept it and respect it. I hope Senator Brown does ask me a supplementary question, because undoubtedly that will give us a further insight into the Greens' approach. *(Time expired)*

Senator BOB BROWN—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Was Mr Bruce Hales, who may or may not have met the Prime Minister and who heads up this church, associated with the authorising of that leaflet in John Howard's electorate? Is it the same Bruce Hales who orchestrated \$500,000 to support the campaign of George Bush last year and is that the same Exclusive Brethren church which now in an international conspiracy—

Government senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Senators on my right will come to order.

Senator BOB BROWN—and a shadowy conspiracy have turned up in New Zealand with a \$500,000 campaign against Labour and the Greens using brochures with the exact same template as those that were used in Tasmania during the last election campaign and supporting Mr Brash, the leader of National, who at first lied about the existence of this support but then had to back down? *(Time expired)*

Senator ABETZ—I thought Pauline Hanson's bid to get into the Senate had been thwarted but instead of wearing a dress she now seems to be wearing a suit, because the talk of international conspiracies was exactly the sort of talk that One Nation used to engage in. Isn't it strange that the political spectrum seems to be a circle where the extreme Right meets with the extreme Left and you really cannot tell much difference between One Nation and the Australian Greens? If we are onto international conspiracies, the Australian Greens might like to explain to the Australian people whether they had ever benefited from international funds coming to the Australian Greens, in particular from the Swedish Greens, from a country where there are no disclosure laws for political donations. So Senator Brown might like to explain that to the Australian people before he makes these ridiculous assertions about people that are genuinely Christian Australian citizens. *(Time expired)*

Money Laundering

Senator FERGUSON (2.37 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Ellison. Will the minister update the Senate on measures being taken by the Australian government to address the global problem of money laundering and terrorist financing?

Senator ELLISON—I thank Senator Ferguson for what is a very important question in today's environment. Australia has a very good name internationally in the war that we wage against money laundering—in particular, our international efforts are recognised. We are a founding member of the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering. In fact, we have been working in the region to set up financial intelligence units which can tackle money laundering in our region—in both the

from the government in this chamber that this would not occur.

The message from the one-day inquiry was clear: there are faults with the legislation as it stands. And very soon we will be asked to pass this legislation without real consultation—without interested parties having a real opportunity to scrutinise the bills and put their point of view. This is not the Australian way. This is not a fair go. And now we hear that the minister is prepared to put some guarantees in place in an attempt to satisfy Senator Joyce's genuine concerns about the money for the bush. What else is missing? What other consequences, gaps, deliberate omissions or deceptions are lurking in the legislation that the inquiry was given only hours to consider?

A privatised Telstra is all about profits, not people. And even then it does not seem to be about honesty to its shareholders, as illustrated by the withholding of information about where its dividends come from. Telstra has not been up front with the shareholders, and its major shareholder, the government, appears to be complicit in its deception of how Telstra is operating. Labor is continuing to take up the fight, representing the vast majority of Australians who oppose the sale of Telstra—the thousands of Australians who have taken the time to write to their parliamentarians, government and opposition, saying categorically they do not want Telstra sold. 'Fix Telstra, don't sell it,' is the message coming across loud and clear.

How can the people of Australia trust a fully privatised Telstra to look after services? A fully privatised Telstra will desert communities where it cannot make a large enough profit. No amount of money thrown in the direction of Telstra after the sale has gone through can be guaranteed to be spent in the areas where it is needed. Telstra CEO Sol Trujillo admitted that Telstra has under-invested in its telecommunications network and estimated that it will cost over \$5 billion to even get the network anywhere near up to scratch. Currently, 1.4 million Australians have a faulty telephone line because Telstra has under-invested in its network.

The telecommunications sector has the distinction of being the most complained about to the ACCC. The services to remote, rural and regional areas of Australia are inadequate. Even if the billions of dollars which lured the Nationals to the sale do eventuate, will future technological advancements be embraced? What happens if telemedicine, remote education and other forms of e-health and e-education beyond what we can imagine today do not generate desired profit under a fully-privatised Telstra? Will Telstra deliver? Already, Australia is falling behind the rest of the world in infrastructure investment. Out of 30 OECD countries, Australia ranks 21st in the use of broadband.

It is not only our remote areas which are suffering. Major cities in Australia suffer black spots in telecom-

munications. Join any group of people, mention Telstra and listen as the horror stories spill out. Last year, Telstra was the subject of almost 27,000 complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. The complaints came from rural and metropolitan Australia, and it is no secret that, since the government commenced its privatisation agenda, services have plummeted and prices have increased.

Labor regards telecommunications services as essential services. They should be accessible and affordable to all Australians. In government hands, and with the proper adherence to parliamentary procedures, investment in the infrastructure needs of Australia and therefore its economy can be ensured.

Question agreed to.

Federal Election Pamphlet

Senator BOB BROWN (Tasmania) (3.32 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Special Minister of State (Senator Abetz) to a question without notice asked by Senator Bob Brown today relating to election pamphlets.

The answer given by Senator Abetz in relation to electoral spending by certain entities should be noted. A question has arisen in New Zealand about the funding of pamphlets which have been dropped nationwide in the run-up to that country's elections on Saturday. I was in New Zealand two weeks ago and warned that some of the dirty-tricks campaign that was used in the election campaign here in Australia might surface there. I had no sooner left the country than, on Saturday a week ago, a pamphlet was dropped nationwide condemning the Green Party in New Zealand, which, of course, has nine members of parliament and will have a lot to do with who forms government after the election on Saturday.

The following day, a pamphlet was dropped nationally about the Labour Party, and more have followed since. To cut a long story short, after a lot of denials by the leader of 'National' as it is called there, the leader of the opposition, Dr Don Brash, it has now surfaced that he had known that a series of pamphlets was in the making, and that these were being funded by the very shadowy Exclusive Brethren church.

A couple of days ago, seven business people who are members of that sect admitted that they were behind the pamphlet drop. It is interesting that one of the seven, Greg Mason, according to the *New Zealand Herald*, said on Sunday—that is, the Sunday before last—that the pamphlets were created from scratch, without overseas inspiration. However, that is not true. I find this very difficult to believe—that somebody, on behalf of a church which does not vote and looks askance at politics, should be so clearly able to deceive people on the public record.

A pamphlet that was distributed in Tasmania, and authorised by one M. William Mackenzie of 11 Baden Powell Place, North Rocks, New South Wales, in October of last year, against the Greens, was the template for the pamphlet that has now been used in New Zealand against the Greens. In other words, Mr Mason was not telling the truth. The fact is that the information from Australia has been injected into the election campaign in New Zealand to try to ensure the election of National against the election of Labour and/or the Greens in New Zealand.

Why should this matter? Well, everybody has a right to take part in election campaigns, even if they do not vote—and of course in New Zealand voting is not compulsory. But what is emerging here is that the Exclusive Brethren is in fact orchestrating an international campaign to have right-wing governments elected. It has spent some \$500,000 on advertisements in the United States on behalf of what was called ‘Thanksgiving Committee 2004’, to support the re-election campaign of President Bush. It emerges that here in Australia a pamphlet, or a number of pamphlets indeed, that circulated in Prime Minister Howard’s own electorate of Bennelong were authorised from an address in Meadowbank, which I gave during question time, in See Street, which turns out to be a school of the Exclusive Brethren.

The question, which was not answered by the minister but which should be answered, is whether that was a legitimate use of that address and whether the S. Hales who used that address is related to the Mr Bruce Hales who is the world leader of the Exclusive Brethren.

All I say is: ‘Let this information be out in front of the public.’ It is quite wrong for a Christian church, one which believes in telling the truth, to not be telling the whole truth. They might look at the ninth commandment, because it is important that the public not be misled on the way to the ballot box. If people are authorising pamphlets on behalf of a religious group, or an organisation of any sort, they ought to say so, and not deceive people into believing that individuals, of their own vocation, are authorising and funding these pamphlets, when in fact that is not the case—it is the Exclusive Brethren church. I will have more to say about this because I intend to pursue the matter with the Electoral Office. (*Time expired*)

Question agreed to.

CONDOLENCES

Dame Nancy Eileen Buttfeld DBE

The PRESIDENT—It is with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death on 4 September 2005, of Dame Nancy Eileen Buttfeld, a senator for the state of South Australia from 1955 to 1965, and 1968 to 1974.

Senator HILL (South Australia—Leader of the Government in the Senate) (3.38 pm)—I move:

That the Senate records its deep regret at the death on 4 September 2005 of Dame Nancy Eileen Buttfeld DBE, former senator for South Australia, places on record its appreciation of her long and meritorious public service and tenders its profound sympathy to her family in their bereavement.

Nancy Buttfeld was born into the famous Holden family on 12 November 1912 in Adelaide to Ted and Hilda Holden, later Sir Edward and Lady Hilda May. She was educated at a private school in Girton, Woodlands Church of England Girls’ Grammar School in Adelaide and at finishing school in Paris. As a part-time student at Adelaide University, she studied psychology, music, logic and economics. She became heavily involved in charity work, especially in relation to migrants, child-welfare, handicapped persons and maternity hospitals. She married Frank Buttfeld on 19 February 1936.

Dame Nancy’s interest in politics began after she joined a model parliament where members learnt to speak in public and to think on their feet. After seeking advice from family friend Robert Menzies, she became a member of the Council of the South Australian Liberal and Country League. She won Liberal Party endorsement in 1954 to contest the federal seat of Adelaide and, although achieving a swing towards the Liberal Party, was defeated at the polls. The following year, Dame Nancy was nominated by the South Australian parliament for the vacancy left after the death of Senator George McLeay. In doing so, Dame Nancy became the first South Australian woman in the Australian parliament and the fifth woman to serve in the Senate. Dame Nancy served as a senator until 1965 and was re-elected in 1968, serving until 1974.

Dame Nancy was a tireless advocate for the interests of her home state and a woman who served her state and the Liberal Party with dignity, dedication and a great sense of public duty. Dame Nancy was an early advocate for women’s rights. She lobbied fervently for equal pay for women and the ending of the marriage bar for women in the Public Service. With the encouragement of Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, Dame Nancy also demonstrated her feisty approach, breaking down long-established barriers at Old Parliament House by becoming the first woman to drink at the previously male-only members’ bar. Dame Nancy was a member of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council and served as a member of several Senate and joint committees, including being chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Health and Welfare. After politics, Dame Nancy continued her service to the public by involving herself in a variety of arts and charity work, with a particular focus on helping young people. She was created Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, in January 1972 in recognition of her public service. On behalf of the government, I extended to her two sons, Ian and