



# Hill side

*This is the side of Capital Hill the media doesn't usually cover. The stories and issues that backbench Members are raising in the House that have meaning for them and their electorates.*

Some 800,000 Australians could benefit from a new lens that helps people with colour blindness to view a much broader and clearer spectrum of colour. Teresa Gambaro, Member for Petrie (Qld), told the House about the Gold Coast-based company, ColorMax Technologies, which is producing the ColorMax lens that enhances the visible colour spectrum. The technology for the lens was developed over a 10-year period involving vision scientists from around the world. Australia is the only country outside of the United States where the lenses are available.



Members from both sides of politics have spoken out against child abuse and called for the establishment of a children's commissioner. Jann McFarlane, Member for Stirling (WA), said there is a need for a coordinated and resourced national policy and strategy for the protection of children. She referred to disturbing research, published in the journal *Psychiatric Services*, which indicated that 76 per cent of women and 72 per cent of men with severe mental illnesses have been abused as children. Danna Vale, Member for Hughes (NSW), supported the call for a children's commissioner and referred to a Queensland study which estimated that 50 per cent of children within the juvenile court system in one region were victims of incest. Leonie Short, Member for Ryan (Qld), said there needs to be a more coherent national approach to mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse as one part of a greater strategy to prevent such abuse.



Member for Parramatta (NSW), Ross Cameron, recently gave the House an interesting take on the collapse of HIH insurance company. "I would advance the heretical proposition that it represents market success," said Mr Cameron. "I do so because it is essential that we have a mechanism to shake out the inefficient and perhaps the fraudulent from the efficient, the competitive and productive." Mr Cameron argued that business failures of the magnitude of HIH should create a greater pressure in the marketplace for disclosure of current financial information and should create a more acute awareness among directors of their fiduciary obligations. He warned of the risks inherent in governments stepping in to bail out such corporate collapses. "The risk of government intervention is that the power of failure to teach hard lessons will be diminished," Mr Cameron said. "The moral hazard is that bailing out one failure will make future failure more likely."



The Australian cement industry is suffering from unfair competition from other countries, according to Stewart McArthur, the Member for Corangamite

(Vic). Mr McArthur claimed that other countries, which do not have the same environmental safeguards as Australia, are dumping cement into Australia, impacting on the prices that Australian companies can get for their cement. Last year the Australian Customs Service rejected claims of cement dumping by the Chinese, but the cement industry strongly disputes the finding. Mr McArthur called on Customs to look again at the evidence and "come forward with a finding so that the dumping of Chinese cement on the Australian cement market will not cause the material damage that is being alleged by the cement manufacturers".



Prime Television has been criticised in the House for its decision to terminate its local television news service in the region covering the eastern coast of NSW and the ACT. Allan Morris, Member for Newcastle (NSW), said the decision was an absolute travesty. According to Mr Morris, the debate on television aggregation, which allowed Prime to extend its market, was underpinned by the need to maintain regional television and provide a comprehensive service. "For Prime to now say, as it seems to be trying to say, that because someone else provides a service it does not have to do so, is absolutely immoral," Mr Morris said.



BHP has achieved a world record. Tim Fischer, Member for Farrer (NSW), reported to the House that BHP recently operated an iron ore train in the Pilbara (WA) which carried some 90,000 tonnes, had eight engines, and was around 7.4 kilometres long. "It proved that on standard gauge, when properly operated, you can achieve huge greenhouse benefits by unit train-loads of a particular commodity," Mr Fischer said. "There is a grand future for efficient and effective rail operation right across Australia, notwithstanding the fact that we still have five different operating gauges in this country."



Positive work that is being done in schools to stamp out bullying is at odds with the trend in some television programs, Michelle O'Byrne, Member for Bass (Tas) told the House. Ms O'Byrne was critical of the television show *The Weakest Link* for denigrating individuals and for advancing the proposition that not winning is unacceptable and that individuals must bear the personal shame of failing. "These shows encourage players to get rid of someone simply because they do not like them or they see them as a threat," Ms O'Byrne said. "My concern is that this type of glorification is much at odds with the message we try to instil in our children. On the one hand, we are busy telling them that bullying is bad and, on the other, we glorify it on television."