

lions of taxpayers' dollars on the hybrid Toyota Camry? This was supposed to be an energy-saving and emissions-lessening exercise that would also provide jobs—excellent, except the scientific facts do not bear this out. The evidence shows that the policy decision would not give any environmental gains at all.

There have been many other decisions made for show and photo ops rather than good policy based on sound evidence—the alcopops tax hike and, worst of all and most ridiculous, the politics of envy behind means-testing the solar panel rebate. We now know that the solar tax rebate cut was just a cynical pre-election promise which was amended and then gutted. That is how many Australians feel about this policy dishonesty—angry and gutted. The evidence clearly shows that this government is totally ideologically driven, and hopes for the smarter, cleaner, richer, advanced technology Australia have been dealt a cruel blow by this backward-looking budget. (*Time expired*)

National Secondary School Computer Fund

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (9.20 pm)—by leave—In the speech in the grievance debate that I just heard from the member for Tangney, he mentioned that science and nuclear were not mentioned in the budget. I would point out to him that they were not mentioned in the budget reply speech either. His pronouncement that science is dead is probably, to quote someone, a little premature. I assure him that he can take some joy this evening in the fact that I know that he actually is very committed to the investment in science and the importance of science to our future. Whilst I appreciated the entertainment of his speech, I think he might look at the scientific bases of some of his accusations. I think they are little on the exaggerated side.

I want to make the point that, for the 11½ or 12 years of the Howard government, we actually did see a winding back of the percentage of the gross domestic product that was spent on education across all levels. One of the things that caused me a great deal of concern for many years as I watched my two sons go through the schooling system—and they have now gone through, sadly—was that, for our young people going out into a modern workforce, the computer literacy and ICT skills they had would be critically important and that applied not only to those who might be going into the IT sector itself but also to those undertaking trade training. I always give this example. If you get a plumber out to the house, in the front seat of their ute will be a laptop computer on which they will be doing their ordering and invoicing. Those skills are critically important in a world where the service sector and the trades are increasingly also computer based.

There are very few jobs these days where, if you are not computer literate, you can still manage to flourish. This is particularly so with the growth of the independent contracting sector and the small family based business sector. Therefore, I was very pleased over a week ago to announce at a local level that there were 3,258 computers allocated to local high schools in the Illawarra region under the National Secondary School Computer Fund. This was particularly welcomed by the high schools in my area. I want to put the numbers on the record so that people can see what a significant investment this is: Bulli High School, 223 computers; Corrimal High School, 90 computers; Figtree High School, 255 computers; Edmund Rice College, 151 computers; Keira High School, 187 computers; Smiths Hill High School, 209 computers; Woonona High School, 201 computers; Wollongong High School, 249 computers; Para Meadows—a school that deals with children with a disability—five computers; and the Elonera Montessori School, three computers. That is a total of 1,573 computers, which will

mean that young people in my area from years 9 to 12 will have a real opportunity to learn not only computer based skills in a well-resourced computer room but also the myriad other wonderful things across the curriculum that they can do on computers.

I met some students while I was there. One group were learning design skills. They were designing layouts of the school and buildings. Another group were doing their online yearbook. The yearbook such that I have in the dusty old cupboard in my study has been transformed. With an online yearbook, you can watch the video of the school swimming carnival and interviews they did with visiting students from Korea. There is a bloopers section, which I imagine the teachers would dread somewhat—with old, candid snapshots of colleagues who are much of an age, taken from our old black-and-white, roneographed yearbooks. It is truly amazing. There are two very disparate areas—one journalism and reporting and the other architecture, design and town planning—in the one classroom, and the kids are really engaged. That is the difference that these computers can make, and they are particularly important in our high schools. They will be very welcome. It is highly commendable that Kevin Rudd, as a new Prime Minister, recognised that this was an important commitment to bringing our kids into the 21st century.

My sons went to school with backpacks that just about pulled them over—loaded up with old-fashioned textbooks. It is something that will never be repeated in their life experience. I want to see in the future all our kids working on computers and accessing information in a way that will relate to their life after school. It is an excellent program and I welcome the first rollout.

Australian Energy Markets Amendment (Minor Amendments) Legislation

Mr TREVOR (Flynn) (9.26 pm)—On indulgence, I would like to correct the parliamentary record. On 19 June I spoke about a project of some significance to my electorate, the Calide-A oxy-fuel demonstration project in Biloela. I advised the House that this important project received \$206 million in public funding. In fact, it received \$50 million. The \$206 million figure is the amount of funding this project has received from both public and private sources.

Debate adjourned.

Main Committee adjourned at 9.27 pm