

SCHOOLS STATE
CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Australia is a good global citizen

Legislative Assembly Chamber

Parliament House

Melbourne

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Hannah Teesdale
Ben Mahoney
Staci Radcliffe

Avila College
Avila College
Ballarat Secondary College — East Campus
Ballarat Secondary College — East Campus
Bellarine Secondary College
Bellarine Secondary College
Bellarine Secondary College
Bellarine Secondary College
Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Brauer College
Bundoora Secondary College
Camberwell Grammar School
Doncaster Secondary College
Eaglehawk College
Eaglehawk College
Eaglehawk College
Eaglehawk College
Elwood College
Elwood College
Elwood College
Elwood College
Elwood College
Galvin Park Secondary College
Geelong Grammar School
Geelong Grammar School
Hallam Senior College
Hoppers Crossing Secondary College
Hoppers Crossing Secondary College
Hoppers Crossing Secondary College
Hoppers Crossing Secondary College
Isik College
Isik College
Lalor North College
Lalor North College
Lalor North College
Lalor North College
Lalor Secondary College
Lalor Secondary College
Lalor Secondary College
Lara Secondary College
Lara Secondary College
Mildura Senior College
Mooroolbark College

Sara Bolch	Mortlake College
Maddison Alford	Mount Lilydale Mercy College
Gabrielle Stolzenhain	Mount Lilydale Mercy College
Thomas Filippou	Mount Waverley Secondary College
Arif Alizadeh	Noble Park Secondary College
Zainab Haidery	Noble Park Secondary College
Mehran Sultani	Noble Park Secondary College
Lloyd Connolly	Northcote High School
Oscar Jolly	Northcote High School
Kelsie Miller	Northcote High School
Alex Vollebergh	Northcote High School
Hareesha Rangarajan	Nossal High School
Taylor Cations	Overnewton College
Chloe Fabbro	Overnewton College
Timothy Neville	Overnewton College
Stephanie Trajcevska	Overnewton College
Dino Vlachos	Overnewton College
Michael Swift	Padua College
Kate Mililli	Padua College Mornington
Simone Murphy	Padua College Mornington
Madeline Pappas	Padua College Mornington
Dianaimh Yau	Padua College Mornington
Jackson Ford	Phoenix College
Maddison Sharp	Phoenix College
Samuel Young	Phoenix College
Molly Dixon	Portland Secondary College
Megan Husband	Portland Secondary College
Hajar Benamar	Preston Girls SecondaryCollege
Purdy Matthews-Barnard	Preston Girls SecondaryCollege
Melissa Muscat	Preston Girls SecondaryCollege
Hosai Totakhil	Preston Girls SecondaryCollege
Jack Harrison	Red Cliffs Secondary College
Quentin Bell	Scotch College
Blake Dunne	Scotch College
Max Ferguson	Scotch College
Zhengyang (Daniel) Liu	Scotch College
Sam Proietto	Scotch College
Catherine Dent	Siena College
Kate Clark	St Catherine's School
Timothy Eastwood	Suzanne Cory High School
Adithyan Natarajan	Suzanne Cory High School
Abdullah Sheriffdeen	Suzanne Cory High School
Will Crabb	The University High School
Luke Dundon	The University High School
Sam Wen Huang	The University High School
Martha-Rose Loughnone	The University High School
Catherine Treloar	The University High School
Zaahirah Ali	Thomastown Secondary College
Aneta Gorgieoska	Thomastown Secondary College

OPENING

Welcome and introduction

The CHAIR (Mrs Fyffe) — Good morning everyone and welcome to the Legislative Assembly. I hope you will enjoy your day today.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, past and present, and everyone who has contributed to the success of our wonderful country.

I welcome all delegates from the schools to the Schools State Constitutional Convention 2012.

It is my pleasure to introduce to you now our first speaker, the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon. Martin was first elected to the Victorian Parliament in 1996. He is the current member for Nepean. Prior to coming to Parliament he was a schoolteacher and then a principal for 15 years. He has had a longstanding interest in education, so it is fortunate that he was appointed as a minister in an area where he has such expertise.

Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) — Good morning everybody. I thank the Chair, Christine Fyffe. Christine does a great job as our Deputy Speaker. As you can probably imagine, being in that chair is an interesting experience when there is a full and frank debate going on in Parliament. Welcome to the Victorian Parliament and to the convention.

This room is a historic chamber for both Victoria and Australia. It has been the seat of democracy in Victoria for over 155 years now, but for about 27 years in the early 1900s this was Australia's Parliament. The very first laws of our country, from 1901, were made in this room. The first Prime Minister of Australia sat in that chair over there. It probably looked a bit different then; it has been reupholstered. This is a very important room for democracy in our country and our state.

The debates that go on in here are very important to the people of Victoria. I do not know whether you have watched Parliament. You might see it on the news. The bit that you often see on the news is usually from the most exciting and noisy part of the day, question time, which is really a bit of a show. Governments use it as an opportunity to make announcements and get the positive news out there, and oppositions use it as an opportunity to try to point out the deficiencies of the government. That makes for entertainment. All the journalists come into the media gallery up there for question time, and the public gallery is usually full as well. All members have to be in the chamber for question time.

For the rest of the day when Parliament is sitting there is a totally different atmosphere as we participate in debate. Good debate takes place about legislation and various issues that affect our electorates. Even though I am Minister for Education I can stand up and speak on a bill or raise an issue regarding my own electorate. It is very important for all members, no matter who they are — whether they are the Premier or a new opposition backbencher — to represent their electorates; that is their main job. Without their electorates they would not be here doing the other jobs they may happen to have. That all happens in this room.

I encourage you to make the most of today's debates and discussions. This is a great opportunity for you. As you can probably see, there are students here from all over Victoria, from government and non-government schools, and it is a great opportunity to listen and learn. You will have input from guest speakers, and there is a lot to take in. Thousands of Victorian students just do not get this unique opportunity, so make the most of it.

I am aware that in March next year about 25 of you will be heading up to Canberra to represent Victoria at the National Schools Constitutional Convention 2013. That will be a wonderful opportunity for those 25 people. I understand Victoria has a very good record in the national constitutional convention because of the great work that has been done in the process leading up to the state constitutional conventions and what is learnt from them on the day.

Your topic today is about Australia as a world citizen. That is something well worth discussing. It is one of the issues that has a very important link to education here in Victoria. We in Australia and Victoria are quite isolated from the rest of the world. Our mother tongue is English, and most of the world speaks English in some form. It is the international language to a large degree, even though there are more people who speak other languages.

As I said, we are a long way from the rest of the world, but you might know or have even experienced — and certainly you would know if you have older brothers, sisters and friends — that young people are travelling the world; the world is shrinking. It is absolutely nothing for young people to set out and travel and work overseas. In fact my son is in St Andrews in Scotland, staying with American friends who are studying at the university there. People are out there exploring the world. That is where the future lies.

When you are in your place of work, no matter what career path you take, most careers in the end will involve interaction with the rest of the world. It is very important that Victorian and Australian citizens, including students, be well equipped to tackle that world in terms of not only knowing a language other than English but understanding what it is like and what happens in other countries, why their people think the way they think and what are the stories behind their cultures and languages. You need to have that sort of understanding in order to understand Australia's place in the world. You also need to understand Victoria's and Australia's history and culture, why we do what we do and our relationship with the rest of the world.

To me that is a great challenge but an exciting one. There is a great opportunity for education in Victoria. We have to prepare our students to move into that world, and that is an important job for our schools. It is about learning another language, but it is also about understanding other cultures, getting the skills you need to work in a global world and collaboratively with people throughout the world. The topic you will discuss today is an important part of that future.

I would like to finish up by thanking the state committee — the planning committee — for organising today and the schools and teachers who have taken responsibility for this program, preparing you for today and bringing you here. They will also be working as a group of teachers and carrying on with further work with you into the future. I thank the teachers for that. As I said at the start, this is a great opportunity for all of you. I really want you to make the most of it, and I thank everybody responsible for making today happen. I officially declare open the 18th Schools State Constitutional Convention in Victoria. Have a great time and learn a lot. Thank you.

The CHAIR — I would now like to call on Braidon Pace to do the official thankyou.

Mr PACE — On behalf of the students attending the Schools State Constitutional Convention I would like to thank Martin Dixon for giving some of his valuable time to come to see us. It is good to know that you have dedicated so much time to hearing the voice of the youth and what we have to say, and we thank you for this learning opportunity.

The CHAIR — I will now introduce our next speaker, Professor John Langmore, a professional fellow in the school of social and political sciences at the University of Melbourne. He currently teaches a graduate subject on the United Nations and is developing another on international development strategy. Between 1963 and 1976 he worked in Papua New Guinea as a public servant and university lecturer where he led the preparation of the first national plan. Between 1976 and 1984 he was an economic adviser for the Labor Party and proposed negotiation of the accord.

In 1984 he was elected as the federal member for Fraser in the House of Representatives and was re-elected four times. He retired from Parliament in 1996 to become director of the United Nations division for social policy and development in New York for five years and then representative of the International Labour Organisation to the United Nations for two years. He was responsible for the organisation of the 24th special session of the General Assembly, which was the first world conference to agree on a global target for halving serious poverty. I call on Professor Langmore to address you.

Prof. LANGMORE — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to begin, as the Deputy Speaker did, by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, past and present, and recognising their stewardship of the land. It is a privilege for all of us to be in this chamber, and I thank the Deputy Speaker for allowing that to happen. It is a delight for me to have the opportunity to talk with you. I congratulate the organisers on the importance of the subject they have chosen. It is a centrally important subject and one that raises concerns and also many positive things that can be said.

I want to begin by reflecting on half a dozen ways in which our record as a global citizen is not ideal and then conclude with eight ways in which I think our record is quite constructive, is one that we can be proud of and one which may point to ways of improving things in the future. At the end I really look forward to hearing what

the 15 representatives are going to say. I hope you will have suggestions to make about ways in which Australia could become a more effective global citizen as well as comment on the subject itself.

One way of judging what a good global citizen would be like is to look at the purposes of the United Nations. The United Nations charter, which was negotiated at the end of the Second World War, is the foundation document for international law and international practice now, and the goals that were set then are still some of the central goals of good international relations.

The charter begins by emphasising that the purposes of the United Nations, of which almost all countries are now members, is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. That is the first purpose. It means to aim for international peace and security. Its second purpose is to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights — and we can talk more about that in a moment. Thirdly, it aims to respect treaties and other aspects of international law, and fourthly, to promote social progress, better standards of living and larger freedom, which means social and economic development. Of course the purposes of the United Nations have expanded since 1945. One of the most important is building up concern about sustainable development.

First of all, regarding ways in which Australia could have been a more effective international citizen, I imagine when you have been reflecting on this subject yourselves the first criticism you might have had is about our treatment of asylum seekers, which is entirely inconsistent with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, negotiated in the late 1940s. It was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1948 when the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Herbert ‘Doc’ Evatt, was in the chair. Included in article 14 is that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries. That is an unequivocal statement of a commitment that a human right exists for people who feel they are being persecuted in their own country to seek asylum somewhere else.

What are we doing? We are putting people in prison just for wanting to live here. This is an absolute disgrace, and both major party groupings are involved in doing it. The practice began under a Labor government, about which I am intensely ashamed, and it has been continued and intensified by both parties ever since. It is inconsistent with our international legal obligations, and it is inconsistent with any proper understanding of human rights. I am glad to say that there was a time when we did not do it. Under Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and Minister Ian McPhee the way we handled Vietnamese migration to Australia was very much more constructive and suggests a way forward now, if we choose to use it.

A second way in which we fail the test of good citizenship is that we participated in the Iraq war; we joined with the aggressor in invading another country. We could debate at some length whether there was adequate justification for that, but it was inconsistent with the provisions of the charter. The charter of the UN sets out two conditions under which force may be used: either when the security council agrees that force should be used or in response to an attack or threat of attack. Neither of those applied in the case of Iraq. Australia participated in an illegal invasion, and this is a real repudiation of a proper way of handling conflict.

A third way in which it is possible to see inconsistencies in the way we operate with the provisions of our commitments through the UN charter is in the balance between our defence expenditure and our expenditure on diplomacy. The central purpose of the charter is about peaceful conflict resolution. It was set up after the Second World War to find ways of resolving disputes without the use of force. We give very little attention to diplomacy, which is the first way in which dialogue between countries can be improved, let alone to mediation or other mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution. We tend to imagine that we are made more secure simply by increasing our military expenditure. Of course it is responsible for the government to have a defence force; do not misunderstand me. The question is how much is spent on that and how much is spent on diplomacy, and in each of the recent years under the present government the increase in military expenditure each year, except this year, has been greater than the total expenditure on diplomacy by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Defence.

That is not sensible. Australia now has fewer diplomats overseas than in 1995 — quite a number fewer — despite the fact that our capacity to place them overseas has grown. Other countries have many more overseas missions and diplomats posted. Australia has 94 missions overseas. The average for developed countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development is 133 — that is, there are 94 Australian missions and 133, on average, for all the other developed countries. This is not sensible. It would simply be more sensible to have more people involved in the capacity to have dialogue with and negotiate with

other countries, and one way to do that would be to be a little more restrained in our military expenditure so that more of those funds could be allocated to peaceful conflict resolution.

Yet another problem with our performance, and this applies to all major parties, is that our aid is relatively low. It is true that the present government is increasing aid — that is very good — but it is still only 0.35 per cent of national income. The UN target is 0.7. Half a dozen countries have reached that target. Others are much closer to it. The average level for European countries is 0.5 per cent of national income; we are at only 0.35 per cent. We are one of the most well-off — even wealthy — countries in the world, yet our aid to developing countries to contribute to the reduction of poverty and the other millennium development goals is substantially less than it could and should be and less than we have the capacity to provide. Of course it is true that to some extent individuals in Australia offset that by their individual contributions to aid, and many of the churches and trade unions and some companies are generous donors, as are many individuals. But the government should be building up its aid even faster than it is doing.

Altogether those are about five negative comments about Australia. I am glad to say that there are also a lot of positive ones that one can emphasise. These are not in order of importance, but to me they are all important. One is that we have always paid our dues to the UN in full and on time, and in that way we are different to the United States, Russia or a couple of scores of other countries that have not always paid their dues on time. In that way we have fulfilled our minimum contribution to the UN.

Secondly, we have always been fairly active in our support for peacekeeping. Arguably Australia provided the first peacekeepers in 1947 when we, in response to a request from the UN, sent several people to what was becoming Indonesia to act as inspectors to ensure that force was not used between the Dutch and the Indonesians in the war of independence there. Since then about 65 000 Australians have worked overseas in peacekeeping, and that is something about which we can be quite proud; in fact I think it is something we should be celebrating rather more fully and effectively than we are doing. Our responsibilities have been particularly clear in relation to countries in our region. The biggest overseas contingent was in Timor-Leste, but we also had major contingents in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. We have also contributed to peacekeeping missions that are in situations far more distant from us. Our contribution has been impressive, is still significant and there is still a strong commitment to taking our fair share of that.

Another very important way in which we have been a good citizen is in reducing our tariffs. This may not immediately occur to you as an example, but it is centrally important in building up trade between countries. Australia has in some ways led the way in reducing tariffs. We have had a policy since the Whitlam government in the 1970s, followed through by all governments since then, of steadily reducing tariffs so that they are now very low. That means it is easier for other countries to export to us and that we are contributing to the growth of international trade. Of course international trade is in everybody's interests — not only the countries that export to us but ours as well, because we receive goods more cheaply than we otherwise would.

A fourth way in which it is possible to say we are a good international citizen is that we are a relatively tolerant multicultural society. We are a diverse society in origin, and that is a very attractive feature of Australia. This has been a policy of all governments since the Second World War. We are not absolutely perfect in that regard, as I began by saying in relation to asylum seekers, but in general we have welcomed people who have wanted to come here. We have welcomed them, and there is a pretty high level of tolerance. Also I think there is a recognition of the value of that migration; it has contributed to the economic growth of Australia and the enrichment of Australian cultural life. That is a major benefit to all of us.

As the minister said, a fifth aspect of our good citizenship is that in fact Australians are great travellers. At any one time about 1 million Australians are overseas. We are one of the countries that travels most actively. Most of us want to have experience in overseas countries, and with that experience comes knowledge of and greater acceptance of those countries. I think that is a very constructive feature of our society and our life.

A sixth very positive aspect of our foreign policy is that we have been active in trying to lead the establishment or improve the effectiveness of international blocs of countries. We been active in not only the UN but also the commonwealth. We have contributed to establishing, for example, the Asia-Pacific economic conference and also in building up links between countries in our region: the Pacific Island Forum, attending the ASEAN leaders extended meeting and so on. We have been very committed to that and to improving the opportunities for leaders to meet and coordinate their activities.

A seventh very important way we have acted responsibly recently is introducing a carbon tax. I know that has been controversial, but it should not have been. It is absolutely clear that greenhouse gas emissions are leading to global warming. It is the responsibility of every country to contribute to slowing down the growth of greenhouse gas emissions and, one hopes, eventually stopping them so that it is possible to stop the increase in temperature with all the consequences for the weather and constructive life that that will involve. There has been agreement reached at UN meetings on taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and Australia has done it. We have joined with many other countries now in taking some effective action on that. We are not leading it, but we are participating, and that is very important.

The final point I want to make is that some of our foreign policy leaders have been very important global leaders. It was very important when Richard Casey introduced the Colombo Plan; it was very important when Malcolm Fraser contributed to the decolonisation in southern Africa; and, for example, what Gareth Evans did when he was foreign minister was very important in trying to get a solution to the conflict in Cambodia in the negotiations at the chemical weapons convention and since then in the introduction of the new global norm called ‘responsibility to protect’. That is the potential response to situations where governments do not take care of their own people and where, as was the case in Rwanda, they allow genocide to occur or contribute to it occurring. In that kind of situation the question has been asked: what is the responsibility of the rest of the global community in preventing that? One of the lessons that has been learnt from the appalling events in Rwanda and in Srebrenica is that the rest of the world has to have some way of taking action when governments are ruthlessly brutalising their own people.

The norm that has been proposed and is now well on the way to being accepted is called the ‘responsibility to protect’. It means that governments have a responsibility to protect their own people, but when that does not happen the rest of the world has a responsibility to intervene. This norm has now been accepted by the UN General Assembly. It was applied effectively in relation to Libya. The leading advocate of it has been Gareth Evans, so we can be proud that one of our political leaders was actively involved in that. Gareth has also been involved in arguing the case for nuclear disarmament, which is a hugely important issue as well that involves lots of countries.

It seems to me that on balance there are many things that we can be proud of, but there are also many ways in which our performance needs to improve. I hope you will identify some of both of those, and I look forward to hearing what you have to say. Thank you very much.

Delegates applauding.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Professor Langmore, for sharing your experience and your knowledge of Australia’s role in the world, and also for expressing your personal opinions about many of the issues that you discussed. Normally when a speech is made in Parliament there is a speech from at least one other person, and, depending on how many parties there are, you might have two or three other speeches. But Professor Langmore’s speech was to set the foundation and understanding for you for the debate. I also thank Professor Langmore most sincerely for coming at such short notice. We deeply appreciate it.

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

Australia is a good global citizen

The CHAIR — We are now opening up statements by delegates. This will take up the last 65 minutes. Students from 14 schools will be speaking for up to 2 minutes each, and there will be 1 minute in between speeches for a question or a point of clarification from another delegate. We will take this slowly and steadily and see how we go during the debate. We might refrain from interjections for this session this morning, if you are all okay with that, so we can set the pattern and proceed in the time allocated. We might be able to have interjections this afternoon. Our first speaker is Jack Harrison from Redcliffs Secondary College.

Mr HARRISON — Good afternoon, Chair and ladies and gentlemen. We are here to talk about whether Australia is a good global citizen. I am here to inform delegates that in regard to peace and security it is. We are the 12th highest financial contributor to the United Nations, this planet’s peak peacekeeping body. According to the UN 2011 financial report Australia contributes over \$51 million, which is almost 2 per cent of the entire financial contributions to the UN. This makes sense, especially as we are one of the founding members of the

United Nations, which shows Australia's keen interest in this peacekeeping body that makes the world a better place.

Our current attempt to gain a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council demonstrates our commitment to UN activities. If we are successful in gaining this seat, then we will be able to promote our ideas and values as well as the regional concerns we may have. Given our history of political stability and involvement in global peacekeeping, this must be a good thing for the world.

Why do we need peacekeeping? Global military expenditure was estimated to be \$1.73 trillion in 2011, but we know that not all those funds are buying weapons for good global citizens with the intention of keeping the peace. We only have to turn on the news to see who is buying these weapons for evil intentions and disturbing global peace. Their aggression and unprovoked actions are killing innocent human beings. To the argument about why we should stop building these weapons and think about all the hospitals and schools we could build I say all the hospitals and schools in the world will not do us any good if a neighbouring dictator or terrorist group chooses to act aggressively, maybe even killing civilians.

Luckily Australia does not face any of these issues, but we must continue to have a strong military because not all countries are as lucky as we are and not all countries have the knowledge that their democratic institutions are as safe as ours are. This is why we have Australian personnel serving in East Timor and the Solomon Islands — to give those countries the democracy some of us take for granted. We must keep up these efforts and if possible extend them, because all the world should enjoy the freedom and liberty we do. That is what a good global citizen does.

The CHAIR — That was a very good speech.

Ms CLARK — We have all heard the argument that we should put ourselves in an asylum seeker's shoes and we should empathise with them and grant them asylum in our country, yet this argument has failed to work. It is well and good to push this argument; however, the Australian government and many Australians are looking out for only their own interests. For the government to change its policies we need to highlight the benefits for Australia that accepting more asylum seekers can bring. The two arguments I am going to put forward are that allowing more refugees into Australia will improve Australia's reputation in the international community and that increasing our intake of asylum seekers will give Australia more people who are determined and desperate to work.

Australia has bid to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for two years. To succeed we need to be voted in by the countries in our group. To gain these votes Australia needs to show that we are a good global citizen and that we are going to make fair and just decisions. If Australia is seen to be offshoring our asylum seekers into sub-humane conditions, it will not get us any respect from the other countries in our group. I am not saying that it is going to be a make-or-break factor, but it may be a good bidding point that we could use to gain us support. If Australia wants to appear as a fair democratic country, which we pride ourselves on being, then we need to treat those who are fleeing persecution with dignity and respect.

Refugees have risked their lives to make their way to our country and have legitimate reasons why they cannot return to their own. These people are not lazy. They have had terribly hard lives and just want a safe place to live. They have often come from very menial jobs that have not paid them enough to survive or have had no job at all. If we give these people a second chance, they will work hard for the rest of their lives to repay the favour. These people are not only willing but happy to take on the jobs that are the foundation of Australia but not entirely glamorous or that other Australians do not want to take on. If we allow more asylum seekers into Australia, we will increase demand for goods, which can also help to support our local businesses so that they can expand their business, hire more people and support our economy. Refugees are hardworking and can greatly benefit Australia as a whole.

From the points I have outlined it should be clear that allowing more refugees into Australia is not just beneficial for our country; if we allow more asylum seekers into Australia, it will mean that Australia can call itself a good global citizen in this area.

The CHAIR — Does anyone have any questions or a point of clarification for Kate?

Ms APPIAGYEI — I was thinking some European countries are taking in large numbers of refugees. What is holding back Australia from taking in a couple of thousand?

Ms CLARK — I think Australia should be taking in thousands. I think they are holding back because of the arguments that everyday Australians are putting forward, that they think they might lose their own jobs or that Australia cannot support these asylum seekers, whereas I think it would benefit Australia to take in these extra people, so these arguments are not truly valid.

Mr MAHONEY — The issue of climate change is a global and ensuing crisis that must be prevented for the future of our earth's environment and the welfare of the people upon it. That last 100 years have seen a global increase of 0.73 degrees Celsius. For those of you already comparing the miniscule change with such a long time frame, I urge you to think about the environmental changes that have been occurring around the world. In the last 100 years surface coalmining, innovations in energy production and revolutionary engineering have all contributed to the greenhouse missions we strive so hard to control and compensate for.

Australia's latest contribution to the fight against carbon emissions, the infamous carbon tax, has many thinking it is purely a way to pick the pockets of the people of Australia for yet another stupid tax. Aside from the monetary implications, I implore you to look more at the long-term effects that this mechanism is aimed at achieving: reducing and moderating carbon emissions. The introduction of a climate change authority will take on the role of an advisory body on insight into pollution levels as well as progress towards any national pollution targets.

The Australian government's initiatives in the field of climate control and the retention of our environment are seen as some of the world's leading initiatives, and as such it is up to Australia to continue leading the world in the battle for a cleaner and more stable future today. In setting this global and national standard of climate control Australia as a global citizen will arise as a positive body and will continue to be so for years to come.

Mr LIU — While many people say that climate change is indeed real and sea levels are rising and all of that, lots of people also claim that this is just a natural cycle. Billions of years ago we had an ice age, and then there was a period of rising temperatures and then we had another ice age. Lots of people say this is just one of those cycles; it is just going up again.

Mr MAHONEY — I will agree that there is a natural cycle to our climate change, but as I said, in the last 100 years and with the innovations of human technology I personally believe that we have been speeding this process up with our major engineering productions. I believe this carbon tax is just a step to stabilise our climate for now and work to a better tomorrow.

Ms BOLCH — The following quote comes courtesy of Australia's national youth mental health foundation, headspace:

Marriage equality is primarily about ending social exclusion and giving all Australians the same basic rights. Lack of equality has strong links to mental health issues among same-sex attracted young people. We want to see an end to the unnecessary stigma and isolation that yet another generation of young Australians could face because of this inequality.

Good morning, students, teachers, Chair and convention organisers. I live in regional Victoria, and today I will be discussing with you the issue of the current debate in government surrounding marriage equality amongst all Australians.

There are those for gay marriage, such as UK Prime Minister David Cameron, who said:

Conservatives believe in the ties that bind us. The society is stronger when we make vows to each other and support each other, so I do not support gay marriage despite being a conservative; I support gay marriage because I am a conservative.

Then there are those against, such as Australian Christian Lobby Group national head Jim Wallace, who said:

But what I am saying is we need to be aware that the homosexual lifestyle carries these problems, and normalising the lifestyle by the attribution of marriage, for instance, has to be considered in what it does by encouraging people into it.

Then there is the just plain confusing:

I think that gay marriage is something that should be between a man and a woman.

Thanks, Arnold Schwarzenegger!

What if, moving forward, Australia was clear on what gay marriage meant for most of its citizens? Very little; perhaps a happier friend, family member or even child. I believe in gay marriage because its only possible consequence is someone's happiness. At today's convention I wish for you to ask yourselves and each other two simple questions: firstly, why are we delaying something that is destined to be implemented; and secondly, why moving forward are we plateauing and as a global citizen moving back?

Mr O'BRIEN — Do you believe that this one issue completely undermines every single good thing that Australia does for the wider community and deems Australia to be not a good international citizen?

Ms BOLCH — No. I think Australia is a good international citizen in many ways, but this issue represents us to the rest of the world in a bad light because we are not being a global leader and not even a global participant on this issue. Whenever we can contribute to change and something that is destined to happen, why not be a leader? Why wait for everyone else to make changes? I am not saying we are a bad global citizen; I am saying we are a bad global citizen when it comes to marriage equality.

Mr GRAHAM — Even though gay marriage in most people's eyes would make us a good global citizen, would it not also make us in the eyes of those of more religious backgrounds and countries a bad global citizen?

Ms BOLCH — I see where you are looking at it from. Religion is great, and I am religious to a degree, but there is change. There are some laws for slavery in the Bible, and we have moved forwards from that. Why can we not move forwards with this issue? Why are we just picking and choosing what can change and what must stay the same?

Ms BENAMAR — All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of sisterhood. That is stated in article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 1948 Australia adopted this declaration, and in doing so it accepted the moral obligation to uphold all of the values and codes encompassed in that document. We chose to honour the importance of the rights of each individual human being, regardless of their race, age, religion or gender. But have we upheld our responsibility to humanity? Have we lived up to our reputation as a compassionate, democratic and good international citizen? I think not.

In 2001 when a coalition force of NATO troops, 1400 of whom were Australian, invaded Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom we accepted responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the Afghan civilians. They trusted our intentions to improve their way of life, and although we made some progress in defeating the Taliban and establishing democratic institutions we also betrayed that trust by bringing chaos, bloodshed and instability to the civilians.

Never will I understand how anyone can justify murdering 12 793 innocent civilians in an attempt to better their way of life. Twelve years on the British, American and Australian governments have only achieved and ever-rising death toll and a generation of children who have only ever known war as a way of life. While we sit comfortably in this room debating the ethics of whether Australia is a good international citizen these same innocent men, women and children are arriving on our shores, in desperate need of help — people who have been forced to leave their families, their homes and their lives behind in pursuit of a better way of life and people who have lost absolutely everything, who have been to hell and back. They come to us seeking help, and yet we insist on tormenting them further by stripping them of their basic human rights and locking them up instead of treating them with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Australia was built on compassion and multiculturalism. Is what we are doing to the asylum seekers compassionate and accepting? We assume that cruelty will deter these innocent people, but it only shows that our government has neglected its international obligations. Australia has openly breached both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the refugee convention, which clearly stipulates that no-one shall expel or return a refugee against his or her will in any manner whatsoever to a territory where he or she feels a threat to life or freedom.

If we are willing to spend over \$30 billion on a war intended to better those people's way of life, why are we neglecting our moral obligation to help them? If we are willing to send 1400 of our Australian troops 9597 kilometres across the globe to fight for their rights, why are we so reluctant to give them the opportunity of a better life when they arrive on our shores with nothing left but hope?

I do not have the solution to all of these problems, but I do believe if the government of this country spent a little less time attempting to secure a seat on the United Nations Security Council and more on ensuring that it does not send these desperate people — because, in case you have forgotten, that is what they are, people like you and me — to places like Papua New Guinea and Malaysia, with their questionable human rights records and more time dealing with the real issues facing our nation maybe we would come to reflect the true values of our country.

Mr HARRISON — You mentioned Australia's involvement in Afghanistan. Do you believe the average Afghani civilian was better or worse off under Taliban rule prior to the invasion?

Ms BENAMAR — I believe they are worse off than they were before the invasion.

Mr MITCHELL — That was a great speech, but do you personally feel Australia should have had anything to do with the war in Afghanistan?

Ms BENAMAR — No, I do not believe Australia should have invaded Afghanistan. We invaded illegally; we did not actually have the support of the UN. What we did was illegal, and I do not believe we should have had anything to do with it whatsoever.

Ms SAVAGE — I would just like to say I support the sentiments expressed by the keynote speaker and the first speaker when it comes to international peace and security. That is the topic I have come to speak to you about today: whether Australia is actually a good global citizen when it comes to international peace and security. Personally I believe we are a very good international citizen when it comes to global peace and security.

Firstly, before I give you any of the countless examples of the way Australia has positively contributed to international peace and security, I would just like to make the assembly aware of what the terms 'peace' and 'security' mean. 'Peace' refers to a political condition which ensures that justice and social stability are achieved through formal and informal measures, while 'security' refers to a state in which individuals and groups feel free from threat, anxiety or danger.

As has been said, Australia has had a long and prosperous record with the United Nations. Here are some examples. As the keynote speaker said, since 1947 Australia has contributed more than 65 000 personnel to various peacekeeping missions, both for the United Nations and with other nations. Alongside our commitment to peacekeeping missions Australia is also a signatory to numerous international treaties. These treaties cover a range of issues, but many of them cover global disarmament, in particular nuclear and chemical weapons — weapons which have the ability to disrupt global peace and security. Australia is currently campaigning for a seat on the United Nations Security Council to ensure that it is in the best position to help maintain international peace and security, to put its views forward and to make an active contribution to ensuring international peace and security.

As I have said, Australia has played an integral part in global peace and security efforts for more than six years, and its expertise in this area is often requested by nations that wish to develop a framework that will maintain international peace and security. Australia is always willing to do that. It is a capable and reliable partner in international peace and security efforts, and I believe this will remain so for many years to come, as evidenced by its campaign for a seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Ms VUKELIC — You said 'peace' means people feeling free and safe to be able to live in their countries and things like that. Do you really think that Australia participating in the UN, being in favour of peace and security and participating in Afghanistan and other military exercises is contributing to those people being safe and secure in their countries?

Mr SAVAGE — Many of the international exercises that Australia has been involved in, both with the UN and with other countries, have been in countries where the governments are not looking after their citizens and

are committing genocide and torturing and terrorising their citizens. I believe by participating in UN missions and other multilateral missions we are ensuring global peace and security and safety for all the peoples of the world.

Mr FERGUSON — I have much the same question. As the speaker preceding you outlined, our illegal invasion of Afghanistan caused stress and harm and really lowered the quality of life of the people living in that country. Do you not think illegal acts of war just undermine all the ideals that you have just said you stand for? Even if we do sign treaties that support international peace, are they not just undermined when we join with the US in illegal invasions?

Mr SAVAGE — Our record in this area has been exemplary, but it is not without its blemishes — as you say, we have been involved in wars that are illegal, and your comment about life being made worse off by invasions is debatable. Overall I think our standing in the global community has not really been damaged by our invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq because we continue not just in those areas but also in others to ensure that we work towards achieving global peace and security.

Ms HAIDERY — In 2008 my only brother, Yasin, decided to catch a boat to Australia because Hazara people were being killed both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. At first my parents did not allow him to go because they did not want to risk their only son's life and also because we did not have that much money to pay the smugglers. But my parents also could not see a safe future for us. They wanted us to be educated and work for our nation. Before he left, my brother told me, 'I am risking my life for my family because I can't tolerate my parents taking their every breath in fear of the Taliban and because I don't want my sister to remain illiterate'. My brother's boat was the first to arrive after the new Labor government policy. In November 2010 we were reunited under the refugee protection visa policy. Only 13 750 people were granted visas that year. Now I am thankful to the Australian government that provided safety for my family, but surely all those people who can just dream of such things deserve a chance too.

Mr ALIZADEH — Good morning. My name is Arif Alizadeh. I am from Afghanistan. In 2010 I had to leave my home due to inappropriate circumstances for Hazara people and due to being Shia Muslim. My family decided to send me away. At age 16 I had to leave my family behind in Kabul and go to India. I had to put myself into the hands of smugglers to get to Malaysia, then Indonesia and on to Australia. On this journey I had to suffer really hard times as I did not have any legal documents to travel safely through these countries. From one part of my journey I suffered so badly that I still have trauma and stress when remembering that part of my life. I suffered many days of hunger and thirst. Every movement of it was dangerous, and I was losing my hope of being alive.

The smugglers said we were meant to be in the boat for a maximum of 8 days, but it took 25 days to reach Australia, without any lifeguard or facilities. I was in detention for 11 months. It was really hard and frustrating as I was afraid of being sent back to Afghanistan, which was very dangerous for my life. Now that I am in Australia I am really happy and, most importantly, safe. I am really grateful to Australia and the people of Australia who support me in every way. It was too hard for me in detention. I do not know how hard it will be for asylum seekers who will now be processed offshore. I am feeling really sad for them.

Ms VO — I just want to know whether life as a refugee is very hard for you and whether living in Australia is a suitable and different option besides living in your home country.

Mr ALIZADEH — It is important for us to live safely in our country. Safety is the most important thing for every human in the world. The only thing that was suffering was our safety, so that is why we left Afghanistan to come to be safe in Australia. It is important for a refugee to be safe, so that is why we came to Australia to seek safety. The only thing we are seeking is our safety and to be alive.

Mr BELL — From your speech I would like to ask a question. You found the reception of the community in Australia very good, but you were disappointed by how the government received you when you first arrived. After that, once you got into the community, was the reception much better?

Mr ALIZADEH — Yes, it is better, but this is the government policy. I think it sounds crazy, but we cannot do anything with the policy of a government. The first time I was 16, and they put me in detention for 11 months. We were never in school for whole days; we needed to stay in detention. That was a very big

problem for everyone. Other people the same age as me were going to school and getting their education — but me, I was in detention.

Ms CLARK — You talked about how you were in detention for 11 months. Do you believe that the way the Australian government treated you when you first came to Australia was fair and just, or do you think that it should change how it treats asylum seekers?

Mr ALIZADEH — From the time I got to the Australian navy ship from the border the behaviour of the Australian navy, customs and the detention people was good. The only thing is that they put us in detention, which was like prison. You could do nothing. The other things were very good. I am grateful to Australia and the people who helped me in every way. The only thing that was wrong was that they put us in detention. That was the main thing.

Ms HAIDERY — I want to tell that when my brother was in a detention centre he used to call us and tell us that the government was treating them in a good way; they were providing good food and a good lifestyle. He was in Australia; he was safe and he was here, but he needed safety for his family. We were all in Afghanistan. We were having a hard time. It was really hard for us. It took almost three years for us to come here to find safety.

Mr BILLMAN — Today global interdependence is a reality. Whether it is the clothes we wear or the technology we use, our daily lives are affected by what people on the other side of the planet are doing. It is important to know how our neighbours live and what effect we have on them. ‘Citizenship’ is a term that dates back to the ancient Greeks. Back then a citizen was someone who played a role in advancing Greek society. ‘Global citizenship’ is a new term, but it is based on the ancient concept. A global citizen is anyone who works to make the world a better place.

As a country in the Asia-Pacific area of the world we are assisting the area with food supplies, shelter, water and basic medical attention. But we do not stop there; we also have branches in the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. Even though we may not have the leading role in all of these areas, we are assisting more than 800 million people. That shows me that Australia, as a citizen of the world, is doing its part to help.

Chinatown is a distinctive and well-known area of Melbourne which dates back to the gold rush days of the 1850s. It is the longest continuous Chinese settlement in the Western world. The national capital city, Canberra, has developed a tradition of the National Multicultural Festival, which is held over a week in February. Additionally Canberra has numerous other inter-cultural events, such as the Thai food festival held at Canberra’s national Thai temple.

Australia welcomes other countries and cultures into its society with open arms. This shows that as a country we are able to put aside our differences and unite ourselves under one nation and one world. But what are we doing as citizens of this country to assist others in the world and their plights? How, as a citizen of this country, am I being a global citizen for the world? As a student I am being educated on many subjects and learning about many new topics. At the moment world politics is something that I have just touched on. Already there is so much I know, but there is so much that I still want to learn. If not only senior students but intermediate or even junior high school students were educated in world politics at this time, I believe the younger generation of children would have a much better understanding of world issues and why Australia is not only a good global citizen but a great one. I am going to do what I can to carry on this legacy.

Mr PACE — You said that a citizen was somebody who advances the culture. You brought up how we have been aiding people, but how are we actually advancing the world?

Mr BILLMAN — That is a very good question. The way I see it is we do not necessarily have to be advancing the world, because as the human race we advance at our own pace. If we can assist each other and work together to all advance at the same time, that is what I believe is going to lead us to the high standing of understanding.

Mr FERGUSON — You said that we were providing regional and international aid and that as a country we are doing our bit, but at 0.35 per cent of GDP provided in aid, that is still only half of the UN target. Shouldn’t we be doing more to aid people, both in our region and further afield?

Mr BILLMAN — That is also a good question. I believe that, yes, we can do more to assist the world, but we also have to take care of the problems we have in this country as well. I believe we are doing enough right now on our part because we do not only have to help in other countries, we also have to assist our citizens in our country at the time as well. So I believe we are lending as much as we can, and we are doing quite well with that.

Ms STOLZENHAIN — Refugees, migration and even boat people, also known as asylum seekers — what a controversial and complex subject, with lots of different opinions and solutions on this issue. We have one extreme, which is that we should let everybody in as they all deserve a chance at living the great Australian dream. But on the other hand there is the Australian saying that we should not let anyone in, as Australia does not have enough resources to support a growing population. Personally I and many others believe in more of a middle-ground approach. This may be seen when people say, ‘We cannot accept any migrants, refugees or asylum seekers’, but unless we come from an Aboriginal heritage either we or some of our family members migrated to Australia in hope of a better life. Not accepting anyone would be hypocritical in how we came to become part of this wonderful country known as Australia. On the flip side, accepting everyone would cause there not to be enough infrastructure, like roads, public transport and health care, to provide adequate support for these people.

Refugees, migrant and asylum seekers want to come here to have a better life. The difference is, though, that refugees come here because they are in fear of their lives — because they feel they could be prosecuted if they return back to the country they originated from. Over the years Australia has received 750 000 refugees and, up until now, has had one of the most successful resettlement programs in the world, with large numbers being successfully integrated into our society. Considering that there were over 6000 refugees to Australia last year while there were 58 000 to Italy and Malta and an astounding 100 000 to Yemen, it can be seen that this is a global problem, and it needs to have a solution quickly to protect these people. As Australians we need to ensure that a solution is found so that this issue is not swept under the rug any longer. We need to make sure that we accept these refugees and migrants into our country and ensure that the refugees we take are properly cared for and able to be successfully integrated into our society.

Mr JOLLY — I just want to ask what exactly it is you want, because you are saying that we cannot let everyone in, but who do you choose? The small percentage we have compared to many other countries — even the US, with their foreign policy, still have tenfold the refugees we have. I just want to know exactly what plan you want to put in.

Ms STOLZENHAIN — The plan I want to put in is that if we accept all the migrants and everyone who actually wants to come into Australia — we are struggling enough as it is with the health-care system, but not accepting anyone would be hypocritical. I feel that a good solution would be to increase the number of refugees we are taking in and make sure that the number we take in can have enough housing and that we can set them up properly instead of taking in a whole heap and them not being able to have housing and jobs and not being able to be educated properly. We need to make sure that we increase the number we take in and that, of the amount we take in, they get the lifestyle here that they deserve.

Ms APPIAGYEI — Some people affected through moving from one country to another are not having the same basic rights as us. Why are they not having the same rights as us? These people are not having the right to education and the right to freedom. What is holding Australia back from giving these people some of the basic rights they need?

Ms STOLZENHAIN — I see your point, but the other issue is that maybe instead of having everyone come out here Australia could put a bit more effort into trying to make sure that there is some more stability in those countries so that people who live there are not in fear of their lives, but we also can take refugees in, if that makes sense. We can take them in, so, yes, they can come to this country and get the basic rights, but also maybe stop it at the root of the problem so that we fix it so that they are not in fear for their lives in the first place.

Mr EASTWOOD — May I please put forward an alternate proposal? What happens if we were to increase funds into, say, doctors and medical help over there?

Ms STOLZENHAIN — That would be a part of it. I understand, and I actually think that would be a great idea — also, making sure, if we do that, that we have political stability and that that country is able to be safe and that there are not warzones coming in and that people are not in fear for their lives. We also should be accepting people because we are a multicultural country. How did most of us get here? We have all migrated. There are a few here who have been refugees. We cannot say that we cannot let anyone in, but we also need to fix it at the root of the problem, and solutions like that could be an option as well.

Mr DANIELS GARDINER — Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Madam Speaker, Professor Langmore and convention holders. Australia, as a global citizen, has an opportunity to be a global leader in environmental issues and influence how the world reacts to the growing international problem of climate change. Our national anthem quotes, ‘Our home is girt by sea’. As we are all aware, an effect of climate change is rising sea levels and is the biggest current threat to all coastal areas. The CSIRO predicts that an excess of 150 million people live within 1 metre above sea level. It has also been predicted by the CSIRO that sea levels are rising by 25 millimetres a year, which means that in 400 years there will be displacement of 150 million people, and Australia is directly affected by this.

‘Our land abounds in nature’s gifts’. Australia’s economy is dependent on iron ore, with it producing above \$60 billion in 2011, but it is responsible for making in excess of 15 per cent of Australia’s CO₂ emissions. However, Australia’s biggest contributor to climate change is the energy industry, making up above 50 per cent of all greenhouse emissions, mainly relying on fossil fuels and coals instead of moving to the abundant solar power we have. Why not use these gifts?

‘Of beauty rich and rare’. The Great Barrier Reef is beauty. It is expected to have completely died out within 100 years from today. It is directly linked to climate change, showing that humanity can destroy the beauty of the world and the beauty of the future. Climate change is a fascinating issue. Climate change is not specific to a country; it is not specific to a political system or a religion. It is truly a global problem with a global reaction needed. Australia, a global citizen, has an opportunity to create a green future. Australia, a global citizen, has an opportunity to change the future.

Mr NEVILLE — You said that the Great Barrier Reef was being destroyed by our impact on the environment; however, at the moment the largest percentage of damage to the Great Barrier Reef is being contributed to by foreign species that are destroying the coral and other forms of life on the reef. How do you believe that changing our impact on the environment is going to save the Great Barrier Reef completely from being wiped out in the next 100 years?

Mr DANIELS GARDINER — I would address that quite simply. Humanity has a responsibility to care for everything within the world. The issue is what the current problem is with environmental issues: if it is not going to affect this generation, let the future generations deal with it, but I think we should address the issue by saying, ‘If we stop it now, we will not have to deal with it in the future’. If the government or international bodies like the UN were to sanction some sort of defence for it, like netting or whatnot, that would be the best solution.

Mr O’BRIEN — You mentioned that Australia should be a world leader in protecting the environment, but do you not think that the recent carbon tax is a very good, positive step forward into being a greener nation and supporting the environment?

Mr DANIELS GARDINER — Yes, it is a positive step, but it is a small step. We do not need a small step; we need a giant leap. If you look at the problem, why deal with something small? Why not just address it head on and take it all? But no, it is a fantastic step in the right direction. I do agree with you, yes.

The CHAIR — Thank you, gentlemen. Please stay on your feet, Howard, because you are our next speaker.

Mr O’BRIEN — Good morning, Madam Speaker, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Howard O’Brien and I am from Camberwell Grammar School. You do not have to look far to recognise the amount of work that Australia does for the international community. It is often on the front line of disasters in countries miles away from our own shores, providing food, human and financial support to people when they need it most. We have been on the ground and been major participants in many peacekeeping and humanitarian initiatives, notably with East Timor, the Boxing Day tsunami, the Indian floods — and the list goes on.

Although we do not contribute to the UN foreign aid target, we provide something much more valuable than money: human resources. Australia is committed to providing countries with more than just money as we seek to physically help them rebuild and repair their lifestyles. This can be seen in places like Darfur, an African region with a relatively low profile where up to 300 000 people have been killed and 4.7 million have been displaced by militia attacks. It is also a region where up to 1000 Australian humanitarian workers are helping the displaced population and trying to achieve stability in the region. The fact that Australia goes into these countries that need assistance and that are not getting much public attention shows the nation's commitment to humanitarian work and the authenticity of the cause, the fact that it is not being done by a tick of approval or to play popular politics. This is reinforced by the fact that in 2005 Australia was voted the fourth best international citizen in the world, showing our consistency in being a good international citizen and the persistence in improving the quality of life for people around the world.

A point raised as to why Australia is not a good international citizen is to do with asylum seekers. It has been argued today that Australia does not take its fair share of asylum seekers, as we take considerably less than other countries such as France and the US. While this is true, it is also true that Australia has a much smaller population than either of these countries, and when our asylum seeker intake is compared to our population, it can be seen that Australia takes in 0.06 per cent of its population in asylum seekers annually, while other countries, like the US and France, take in only 0.002 per cent and 0.007 per cent. This outlines that Australia does do more than its fair share for asylum seekers when it is put in perspective to our population.

Another point brought out in relation to asylum seekers is the maltreatment of some individuals in detention. While it is a minority, it is still not a good occurrence. Nevertheless, this is a small incident in the scope of the amount of work that Australia does, and it does not discredit all of the positive things listed that this country does for the wider community. As with everything, as good as something is, there is always room for improvement. Australia is not a perfect international citizen, but it is certainly a good one.

Ms DIXON — You said that we take our fair share of asylum seekers, but putting aside that for a second, do you not think we have a moral obligation to help people? Putting aside all of the stuff about how much money we spend, don't you think it is about heart and being compassionate?

Mr O'BRIEN — Thank you for your question. It is about heart, and our country does show that it has a lot of heart in these examples where we are on the front line in disasters and where we take in asylum seekers who are seeking safety in our country. We are in many places that have very low profiles. We send financial assistance and, as I said earlier, we always pay our money to the UN on time and in full. This shows that Australia does help people, that it does have heart and that it does care.

Ms FABBRO — How can you claim that an issue such as mandatory detention is minor or small? On something as significant as that there should be plenty to say about any sort of good reputation Australia has as a good global citizen.

Mr O'BRIEN — Thank you for your question. It is very small when it is put into perspective with a region like Darfur, where 300 000 people have been killed. I am not denying that it is a bad blemish and that there is room for improvement, but when you put it in the scheme of things, 300 000 people have been killed and 4.7 million have been displaced. I think that should be the priority, and that is one of our focuses, and we are doing a very good job in all areas.

The CHAIR — There are a lot of hands up. I am sorry, but we will have to keep moving, otherwise some of the other speakers will not get the opportunity.

Ms BELCHER — Global citizens are described as being active about an involvement in education, development and volunteering on an international basis. A country that is concerned with the welfare of and actively helps others might be considered a good global citizen. Human rights are often defined as justifiably belonging to every person. Equality, freedom of thought and expression, and life and liberty are strongly believed to be basic human rights by the general global society. Australians do not have human rights comprehensively enshrined in any one piece of legislation, which leads us to question whether Australia truly and inherently values human rights. Who is to say that the only reason a bill has not yet been introduced and passed which would protect human rights are the citizens of Australia? Currently it would seem that the only thing protecting Australia's human rights is its citizens, and this is neither setting an ideal example nor

representing views that are in line with those of the greater global community. Effectively Australia is saying that human rights are a cute idea — nice and pretty, but not very important, or at least not important enough to bother with updating and approving legislation.

As a school we commend Australia on its consistent and speedy assistance to countries in post-disaster situations. Australia is quick to step in and help other countries which have been struck by natural disasters, helping them pick up the pieces, both literally and figuratively, after a catastrophe. Help comes in the form of first aid attention, supplies of fresh food and clean water, amongst other things. In this respect Australia is a good neighbour. However, Australia does not fare quite so well in relation to the protection and security of other countries when we are not immediately threatened. Australia is not generally considered to be at the forefront of actively going out of its way to help other countries. Australia has chosen to lead by example as an advocate of all things humanitarian, and through its example encourages other countries to follow suit. But Australia's legitimacy as a worthy example is weakened by the absence of a comprehensive human rights bill.

Mr EASTWOOD — If a bill of rights were to be proposed tomorrow, what would you personally put in there?

Ms BELCHER — It is not so much what we would put in it, it is more that we would like to encourage the discussion and introduction of a proposal.

Mr DUNNE — Unlike the neoconservative position that we should enshrine some form of a declaration of human rights within our constitution, certain law-making authorities stipulate that in fact this is a negative thing which can potentially have bad repercussions as it actually provides a definite legal loophole. Instead, Australia presents something which is the assumed bill of rights under which courts may, if they decide to do so, invoke the human rights clause as a method of preventing certain laws from being carried through. Do you believe this system, which has worked in Australia for such a long time and which has been evidently used in the past in the context of things such as blocking the Malaysia solution, is better because it allows our government to extend human rights to things which a more definite and lettered-down form may potentially prohibit?

The CHAIR — I think that probably should have been a question on notice rather than a question from the floor. Can you make any comment, Ms Belcher? You do not have to.

Ms BELCHER — No, I do not think I can.

Mr NEVILLE — Australia is a country founded on migrants. The prosperity and individual liberty of our nation, paired with our geographical location, has made Australia a key front for asylum seekers seeking political refuge and security from their home nations.

The government's proposed solution to the crisis is the Malaysia solution, where asylum seekers attempting to arrive in Australia by boat would be re-exported to Malaysia for processing. However, the High Court's verdict that Malaysia is not an adequate location derailed this solution completely in a 6-to-1 vote. The opposition's proposed solution to the crisis is the Pacific solution, where asylum seekers would be re-exported to Nauru for processing. This solution is as flawed as the Malaysia solution, as it fails to meet the same criteria that would make it a suitable location for re-exporting refugees. The criteria include: access to assessment of refugee claims and protection before, during and after the refugee claims are assessed.

In a recent turnaround the Gillard government attempted, and failed, to pass legislation that would enable it to reopen Nauru for processing. This attempt was met with condemnation from humanitarian bodies globally, including the UNHCR, as well as the Australian public, as was evidenced in the polls. The question of people smuggling is integral to the management of asylum seekers. A fitting solution to this problem is tightening control of refugee visas and strengthening border protection to deter people smugglers from targeting Australia. Without the financial benefit of smuggling people into Australia the trafficking of individuals across borders will lessen, allowing Australia to move forward in its refugee policy.

Australia's feeble attempts to push for offshore processing are insufficient and unlawful in the eyes of the High Court. To solve the crisis, Australia needs to shorten the processing procedure while still allowing room for medical testing, legitimacy classification and identification confirmation. Essentially it is a problem without a solid solution. It is through the government's management of refugee claims and its influence on international

policy towards solving the refugee situation that it affirms its international responsibility as a global actor on the issue.

Ms MILILLI — Getting on a boat and coming to Australia is very dangerous. Over the past few years we have seen that a lot of people have died when the boats have sunk or have crashed. Do you think Australia should be taking some responsibility for the journey as asylum seekers come to Australia?

Mr NEVILLE — Absolutely. As part of my contention I said being able to accept more refugees and being able to provide more aid to these people is what Australia needs to do to improve its standing as an international or global actor on the issue.

Ms DIAMANTOPOULOS — You said the Gillard government failed in its plan to send people who come to Australia by boat to Nauru, when several people, specifically Sri Lankans, have been sent over there and have been enduring conditions very similar to those in the mandatory detention centres here. What do you have to say about that?

Mr NEVILLE — Firstly, the Gillard government has attempted and has failed to pass legislation necessary to open detention centres in Nauru. However, specific cases of shifting people across borders, however small that effort may be, is within Australia's obligation to the UNHCR as the third highest contributing formal member out of the 20; and Australia's temporary use of the facilities on Nauru is not recognised by the Australian High Court, which does not regard it fitting for open, full detention.

Ms DENT — It has been said each choice we make causes a ripple effect in our lives. Each choice that our nation makes causes a ripple effect in the international community. It is our moral obligation as global citizens to create opportunities where peace and security can prevail for all peoples. Greater pre-emptive efforts to avoid tragedies are essential. For lasting, long-term outcomes I propose a focus on the next generation, promoting dialogue and tolerance over war and tyranny. I believe Australia is a good international citizen. Our country gives millions of dollars in aid and it has long been involved in peacekeeping missions, but we can do more.

The fact that so many young people have gathered here today is testament to the fact that work is being done locally which has the potential to cause ripple effects with the spread of knowledge.

The first point of action is education about local and global affairs. With more knowledge about other cultures, more empathy and understanding of differing points of view, and more diplomacy and technical skills, peaceful relationships with our neighbours can be enhanced from a local level to the national and global community.

The second point of action should be more dialogue and forums between the youth of the world to foster understanding and tolerance, as we are the leaders of tomorrow. We need to discuss ways in which Australia can maintain its peace and security and globally assist in making this a reality for all our tomorrows.

Would it not be nice if through the ripple effect all citizens of the world could create environments that allow human rights to thrive so that all the people of this world could share in opportunities that would help create peace and security?

Ms VUKELIC — I would just like to ask you whether you really think these peace and security missions are an effective solution to what is happening, such as war missions, in other countries in the global community.

Ms DENT — Thank you for your question. I think current peace and security measures are effective, but the focus needs to be on a future long-term outcome that can prevent problems and catastrophes in society even happening in the first place. The way to do this is through education and through dialogue with youth from around the world in order to develop tolerance of other cultures and communities. I think that approach really has the potential to do good for the world.

Mr NATARAJAN — In terms of your mention of Australia needing to increase their support overseas, recently Australia's official development assistance group stated that there would be an increase of \$5.2 billion in the 2012–13 financial budget to increase Australia's support overseas. That is an overall increase of 60 per cent on the 2007 Labor government, so what do you have to say to that?

Ms DENT — Thank you. I believe that is a great effort from what is within Australia. I think more of this needs to occur because, if you think about it, there are so many people around the world who do not have the

opportunities that we do. I understand that this is taking place, and I think this is a great effort. I would like to thank you for putting that forward. This movement of money, services and aid in general really has potential to improve the current situation of the world. But again we need to look to the future and future generations so that we can make the future world a better place for all.

Ms HUSBAND — Good morning, distinguished delegates and Deputy Speaker. My name is Megan Husband, and I am proud to represent the views of my classmates from Portland Secondary College. Last week my fellow delegate Molly Dixon and I conducted a survey to unearth the most important issues concerning the youth of Australia and the world. We surveyed students from three classes in years 7, 9 and 11. The students were asked which of the following issues were most important to Australia's role in the wide world: peace and security, refugees and migration, climate change and environment, human rights, and international aid. The biggest worldwide issues decided on were climate change and environment and human rights.

On the topic of climate change, we believe that the carbon tax is not enough and that the Australian government is not directing its time, energy or money in the right direction. We want the talk to stop — action is what we need. At Portland secondary our school student body feels that more money should be spent on developing energy and technology. Educating Australia and other countries' youth about climate change would be a good place to start, but the generations before us have created a bigger problem, one that cannot be fixed just by throwing money at it. We need to get the Australian people involved in such a way that promotes helping our environment in a positive way and removes the negative stigma that has been attached to saving energy by the carbon tax. I will now hand over to Molly, who will complete the second part of our speech.

Ms DIXON — On the subject of human rights, when my fellow delegate and I conducted the student survey students said they felt their human rights were respected. They agreed that human rights laws currently in place in Australia are enough but that more work should be done helping other countries develop their own human rights laws. An agreement was made that more effort should be spent in doing this, as everyone deserves the right to feel safe, equal, respected and acknowledged as an individual.

The CHAIR — I am sorry; we have now run out of time for this part of the program. Thank you very much, ladies, you are going to avoid the questions. We are now moving to speakers from UN Youth Victoria. Robbie Nyaguy has been president of UN Youth Victoria since May of this year. His involvement in this organisation spans over three years in the executive, helping grow UN Youth through his involvement in various roles. Outside of UN Youth Robbie is involved in local politics and ran for state Parliament in the seat of Sandringham in 2010. Robbie is currently running for local council in the City of Banyule and aspires to use his involvement in politics to bring positive changes to the people around him. He is currently undertaking a bachelor of arts and a diploma of languages (Hindi) at La Trobe University.

Mr NYAGUY — I might sneak up to the front so you can all see me and so that I can look at you all at the same time. I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and thank Madam Deputy Speaker and all the speakers in the chamber today. I have been very impressed by the way you have all spoken. This is an issue of great importance to me as president of UN Youth Victoria, but I think it is an issue that is also of great significance to all Australians, particularly young Australians. The issue of whether Australia is a good global citizen is something we need to consider all the time. It is very easy for us to focus on the stuff we do inside our own country and to forget the broader context of other countries and people in the world and other issues that affect the world.

UN Youth Victoria is an organisation of young people between the ages of 16 and 24, and it is completely run by young people. We are part of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, and our aim, through that body, is to create an avenue for young people to engage with the United Nations and international issues. After what happened in the first and second world wars it was decided by many of the founders of the UN that in order to solve the issues of the world we needed not just to have countries and diplomats coming together but to have the broader global community coming together. We needed every person in the world to be engaged with the international community, situations and issues. If we are going to achieve peace and security, we need to have every single person in the world involved in peace. I often say, 'Waging a war of peace', if that is possible.

There are a couple of things I want to note today regarding your speeches. I will talk about the specifics of arguments in a minute, but I want to talk about the broader context with the way these options are. The thing

with deciding on an answer to this question is that it is not just about the arguments in favour but also how you frame the situation. When I first came and listened to you guys one of the key things I noticed was that there was a big gap in people talking about the perception of Australia as a good global citizen and people talking about the reality of Australia as a good global citizen. Those are two different yardsticks to use, if you are going to measure whether Australia is good or not. One is based on whether, in the eyes of the other 192 countries in the world, we are a good global citizen. The other one is a measure of things like our aid contribution, our contribution in foreign conflicts, our contribution on international issues and also the way that we treat our own citizens within Australia. Those two are very different arguments. A lot of you leaned a little bit between the two. Some of you will lean completely to one side, and others will lean completely to the other. But when you are analysing your arguments on these issues, consider that there is a big difference.

A good example to use is the argument about marriage equality. You could argue that in a reality sense and in the sense of non-discrimination and treating all citizens equally that marriage equality would be the right thing within Australia. You could also very easily argue that considering that most countries in the world are developing and do not recognise any kind of same-sex relationship — in fact many of these countries make same-sex relationships illegal — moving on this issue would mean that there would be a number of countries in Africa and the Middle East that would dislike Australia and say we were a bad global citizen and that it would bring Australia into some kind of global disrepute. I think it is an interesting argument to make.

Ultimately what you need to do is decide within yourselves what the most important issues are. Today you raised things like refugees, UN contributions, climate change, marriage equality, Afghanistan, aid, human rights and diplomacy. There are a couple of interesting exceptions. I noticed none of you spoke about trade and tariffs. Not many of you spoke about disease and our contributions to health care around the world. I think what you need to do when discussing these issues is look at the net impact of what we are doing. Whether it is perception or reality, look at the net impact. Ultimately we do a lot of things in the global community; Australia is very involved overseas. I think it was John who said before that there are 1 million people overseas at any one time from Australia. That is pretty amazing, and that means that we have a big impact on the global community. Balancing that up is important.

When you get all these things together you then realise you are comparing apples and oranges a little bit. From my experience personally with UN Youth and the general UN context, I would say that peace and security are the most important issues and form the most important yardstick. But there are other issues, such as health care, education and human rights, that are also important and not just subject to the stock standard peace and security, and preventing war arguments. Keep that in mind. I think ultimately once you have decided whether you want to favour that sort of perception or the reality and when you have added all these things together and looked at their net sum, you then come out with the answer to whether Australia is a good global citizen or whether it is not. I think that is a pretty hard thing to do, but I think you have all done a very good job. When you are going away from this discussion now, think about that. Think about, ‘How can I plus all these arguments up in my head, and what is the ultimate outcome?’. I think that is the best way of doing it.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Robbie. Our next speaker is Toni Henderson. Toni was the convener of the Thant-Evatt trophy debating competition this year, attracting over 600 students from around the state. It was the largest model UN Security Council competition ever held in Australia. Originally from Ballarat, Toni is passionate about engaging the widest variety of youth in political processes and decision making and has always supported causes that bring issues-based education to students otherwise left out by the system. Toni is currently studying a bachelor of science at the University of Melbourne and is majoring in geology. Toni hopes to travel the world as an exploration geologist researching diamonds and enjoys writing for the international science magazine *The Triple Helix*.

Ms HENDERSON — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you, Robbie, for your inspiring words. I would like to expand on what Robbie has said today and reflect more on some of the specifics of what you have said in your debates. I have heard from Kate over here, who mentioned thinking about the practical aspects of implementing these ideas. It is good to have these ideas. To have these ideas means we can grow as global citizens, but we also need to consider the practical aspects behind implementing some of these ideas and whether or not they are actually even possible.

You also mentioned the complications around getting people together to discuss these ideas and to discuss these problems. That is one of the wonderful things about the United Nations: it is a platform for everybody. In the

General Assembly everybody gets one vote, so no matter whether you are a global hegemon like the United States of America or whether you are tiny little Tuvalu out in the Pacific Ocean, you still get the same vote, and you still get the same amount of say.

It was also mentioned that Australia has the opportunity and the obligation to be a world leader in refugees, peace, security and climate change. Australia is one of those countries that is so well positioned between the established powers of Europe and the rising powers in Asia. It has one of those unique geopolitical positions where it has the ability to be a discussion platform for these countries and for the rest of the world to discuss these ideas in a neutral, calm and considered manner. Whether Australia has the ability in the eyes of other countries to move forward on these issues is also another idea you raised in your discussions, and it is one I would like you to think about more as you move on into your workshops — whether Australia has the ability in the eyes of other countries, in the eyes of those 192 countries, to be a leader in these situations.

I would now like to talk to you about what it means to be an Australian citizen as a youth. Individuals today are represented all around the world at all times. You can express your opinion with the click of a button or a tap of your finger these days, and the stocks of the world are traded 24/7. Everything is happening at all times. This also means we get the ability to express our attitudes and our actions towards these international issues all the time. As Australians, as members of this global community, we have a responsibility to make sure that all of our opinions are heard — to make sure that our government moves forward on these ideas and policies, and to make sure that they hear those opinions. It is our responsibility as global citizens to be our best selves, and it is our responsibility as Australian citizens to represent Australia on the global stage.

When we think about our future on the global stage, we think about the youth. Everyone always says the youth are our future, the youth are the people who are going to be making the decisions for our future. That is one of the things the United Nations and UN Youth Victoria strongly likes upheld. As United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon mentioned in his annual speech towards the United Nations General Assembly this year, young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow but the partners of today. So you have the ability, and you have that opportunity, to take part in leadership that is happening today. You are partners in these decisions, and you are deciding for the people of the future. You are deciding for your peers, for the future and for the world you would like to be in. It is now your time to take that opportunity.

Dan Ryan, our UN Youth rep to the United Nations this year, has gone over there and decided to speak for Australian youth on issues that affect him and issues that affect youth around the world, such as bullying, poverty, refugees — all kinds of issues. He has taken that opportunity to be a leader as a member of the youth for Australia on the global stage. What I would like you to do is take your time within these workshops and take the opportunity to become, as Australians, the best Australians and global citizens you can possibly be.

Delegates applauding.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Robbie and Toni, for coming here, your contributions and your analysis of the speeches. I would like to invite you to stay and have morning tea with us. Professor, if you could also stay for morning tea and perhaps have some casual conversation.

Sitting suspended 10.56 a.m. until 1.37 p.m.

REPORTING SESSION

The CHAIR — We are starting a little bit later because of getting through security. This is the reporting session, with each group reporting on their report. You are going to have 2 minutes each to report, and then there will be 1 minute for a question. We are going to try running the clock, so we will try running a clock as a practice at the moment. You will see the clock is set at 3 minutes. There is a clock there and a clock here, so the person who is reporting will speak until it hits 1 minute. I will then stop you, and we will open for questions. When the 1 minute is finished — when it is down to zero — we will start on the next group. When we are speaking in Parliament we get a warning buzzer just before our time finishes. Who is speaking for group 1? You must say your school and your name for the benefit of Hansard.

Group 1: International aid

Mr GORNIAK — Hello, ladies and gentlemen. My group, being group 1, was assigned the discussion topic of international aid. We came to a general consensus that Australia does give significant and generous international aid to the world. As I said, Australia's contribution is generous and needs to be praised, because it is significant, but we also came to the conclusion that more can be done and more should be done.

The most pressing issue that we found in the way that Australia distributes its international aid and help is how we should be doing this and how much in the sense of manpower and in the sense of finance and obviously currency. The way that we think it should be addressed in the way that we distribute aid is in small steps to increase the amount of money and percentage of our GDP in how much we donate to different organisations which would help people in need. The way that we want to do it is through the delivery of goods and services, which means people and humanitarian aid in the sense of simply food and water the people need urgently. There is also the building of local institutions through training staff, improving management and institutional cultures so the people really do get the sense of living with the benefits that we can experience in a Western civilisation.

The CHAIR — Order! The speaker's time has expired. Is there a question?

Ms CLARK — What would be your group's position if there was a sudden natural disaster where extra money would be needed?

Mr GORNIAK — My group had many opinions, and we were very segregated in our opinions, but I am sure that the members of my group would agree with me that if a natural disaster were to occur, money would be spent on it, including the money we had saved up before a natural disaster occurred in terms of donations made specifically for that sort of scenario.

Mr DUNNE — What you have just said is that we should be doing more to increase aid, but at the same time we should be getting praised for it. Why should we be getting praise when there is still more we need to do?

Mr GORNIAK — For the very fact we are a huge contributor already, and that countries like Australia — not only Australia, but countries like Australia — if we are not praised, there is not anything to be working towards. Mankind should acknowledge another country's contribution as aid as they reach out to another country. If we do not appreciate these things which would mean so much — —

The CHAIR — Order! The speaker's time has run out. This is going to be difficult, so I think you will have your 2 minutes and then perhaps just one question. We will see how we go with that.

Group 2: Human rights

Ms RADCLIFFE — Group 2 had the topic of human rights. We had a lot of discussion about this one, and we came to the conclusion that the most pressing issue globally, other than the right to live, is education. In some countries, like Australia, we do not have the problem of trying to fight for our freedom or fight for our right to live, so we decided that education is something that is needed in all countries, and not just to a primary school or high school standard but to a tertiary or TAFE standard as well.

On that note, we decided that human rights in Australia are really good. Globally we do quite well in comparison to a lot of other countries, but admittedly we do have flaws, as in regard to asylum seekers in our detention centres. There are people there who admittedly do not get an education. Through our discussion we saw that if we can teach these people even basic English — we know there would be a long process in finding out where they are at — that would then get them into society once they have been cleared. Even if these people were ultimately returned to their country, at least we would have done something to help give them a better life and a better future by teaching them a language that is universal and can do so much.

The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, stated the following in a speech in New York:

We are a global people. One-quarter of Australians were born overseas ...

That tells us that whether the people have come here as skilled workers or have come here because of family or even as refugees, the asylum seekers need to be integrated into society, and it needs to be done well. Through human rights we have decided that education needs to be an important part of their program.

The CHAIR — The speaker’s time has expired. Can we have a question from this side — someone who has not been on their feet before?

Mr PROIETTO — How do you propose that teaching these people English alone would be enough to fully integrate them into our society beyond the teaching of more practical knowledge and perhaps and more cultural change to our society as a whole?

Ms RADCLIFFE — I did not say it would be the complete way to integrate them, but the start of it. If they cannot speak English, how can they talk to people? How can they tell people what they need, what they require or anything like that? Basically they need a form to communicate in the first place. If they do not have that form to communicate, they cannot get anything.

Group 3: Refugees and migration

Mr NASH — Our group was discussing refugees and migration. There is a huge issue facing us today. The perception of asylum seekers instigated by the media is misleading. The false betrayal creates a stigma and antagonism towards those who seek opportunity. The government’s attitude and legislation towards asylum seekers is contradictory to our nation’s morals and values.

Refugees flee destruction and persecution in fear for their lives. They risk their lives for their families in search of safety, education and a brighter future. We feel that Australia has a unique opportunity to integrate aid and accept these people into our society. We are a resource-rich population with a huge potential to create infrastructure and facilities to accommodate those in need. An approach whereby asylum seekers are not imprisoned is needed. Sending our forces overseas costs billions of dollars annually, and we believe this money could be better used for building houses and general support facilities in the community.

Assimilation initiatives are necessary, particularly for children, who find it easy to make friends and develop a cultural understanding, as we have seen with the Italian, Greek, Chinese and Vietnamese communities who have come to Melbourne.

In conclusion, Australia has the capacity and resources to take more people. The core of this argument is that these are people. In times gone by the issue was black rights, women’s rights and gay rights, but now it is mandated as human rights.

The CHAIR — I now call on a questioner from this side who has not been on their feet before.

Mr HUANG — Great speech, Phillip. I am just wondering what is the benefit of assimilating these people into our community straightaway as opposed to keeping them in detention centres and improving the facilities in the detention centres?

Mr NASH — I think by getting them into our society it is creating more job opportunities that have become less available in recent years, and bringing more people in brings more cultures. We can learn more about ourselves, and it brings a greater and wider education for us to learn about.

Group 4: Peace and security

Mr LIU — We were assigned the subtopic of peace and security. First off we want to define a good global citizen as one who is actively involved in the advancement of human rights for all. With that in mind, we believe no nation can say they have a perfect record of peace and security. We do admit that there exist blemishes in Australia’s history, but to a certain extent we believe we are balanced and a good global citizen because we uphold the definition provided by the United Nations.

You cannot be a proper global citizen without first ensuring national security, and despite some criticisms, we believe that Australia has tried its best to equally balance both national security and being a good global citizen. The most pressing issue we discovered was the Afghan issue. Despite what people may say about the US military the reality is that it is the strongest in the world. Because they have guaranteed to pull out by 2014, Afghanistan will likely fall back into chaos and anarchy, being run by the most powerful warlords with the biggest guns.

The Afghan forces cannot provide the \$8 billion a year needed to sustain the status quo. The issue is: should Australia stay in there and fulfil its obligation to protect the Afghan civilians and risk our soldiers' lives? Or should we pull out and protect Australian lives but risk undermining what we have done and everything we have worked for? In terms of a solution, we have found that there is no easy solution — —

The CHAIR — Your time has expired. Does the other side have a question?

Ms MURPHY — Yes. What was your solution going to be?

Mr LIU — We found that there was no short and easy solution, but perhaps the best way to get this issue out is to raise awareness of the importance of providing this \$8 billion a year for the Afghan people, because after all the people of Afghanistan are people just like us and they are suffering. They are not terrorists, as the media commonly portrays them. They deserve human rights as well. So basically it is a case of just getting the message across, and hopefully someone with a kind heart will rescue them.

Group 5: International aid

Mr FILIPPOU — We believe, as a group, that on a global scale Australia is a bad global citizen, but in terms of international aid specifically, which was our topic, we believe Australia is a good global citizen. We believe a strategy which we could put to action, in terms of the pressing issue which will be discussed shortly, is more commitment by the government in terms of their solutions. How often do they go through with their schemes? And we also believe in better distribution of aid and more coordination by the government in terms of aid.

Ms FABBRO — Whilst in discussion we broke the issues into three different branches. The first was sustainability and distribution of the effect of the aid. It should be noted that as a global citizen Australia contributes a fair amount to international aid. However, we believe the key focus of improvement should be on sustainability. Sustainability is a key, and it has been recognised that no matter how much money we pump into a country's economy, it will not help the country in the long term. There is a saying, 'Give a man and a fish and he will eat for a day; teach him how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime'. Therefore we must endeavour to teach with the use of aid rather than occasionally feeding a country.

The distribution of aid has been unique. In terms of Australia we have been greatly supportive of Pacific nations such as Papua New Guinea, and we believe we should continue this support as well as broadening our scope. Secondly, Australia commits 0.35 per cent of the UN's recommendation of 0.7 per cent of our nation's income, and although below the recommendation, Australia continues to contribute several human resources — for example, food, water and several peacekeeping units. The main issue for this is the continued risks — —

The CHAIR — The speaker's time has expired. I need one question which must be directed to one of the speakers.

Mr GILLIES — In terms of sustainability, it can take a long time to train an Australian doctor — many years of education. If we are to provide teaching to people in countries that need aid, do you recommend that we train them to Australian standards? It is irresponsible to let doctors that are not trained to Australian standards work, but at the same time is it too expensive to train them to our standards?

Mr FILIPPOU — By training them in more sustainable aid, we mean such as providing training as to how to grow your own food and provide for yourself as well as eventually branching off into more forms of aid such as medical care. Medical care could be provided for the time being as the economy of the country develops, and the people's wellbeing and liveability of the country would develop.

The CHAIR — Your time has expired.

Group 6: Refugees and migration

Ms VUKELIC — Ladies and gentlemen, we have heard that refugees' fates are uncertain. They worry constantly about whether they will be sent back to their own country or whether they will even live. Group 6 decided that the solution lay in education. We need to educate the Australian public to reduce the stigma associated with people in detention. We also need to educate those in detention with basic skills so that they can be integrated into Australian society, which will benefit from activities such as their drive to work.

We do not want to disadvantage children by taking away their education. As we have heard, many refugees miss out on this — something we take for granted. We also decided that we should put a limit on the amount of time refugees and asylum seekers spend in detention centres. This will prevent having an even more traumatic experience.

We also decided unanimously that offshore processing is not sustainable and not the right pathway. Onshore processing should be implemented as well as our model. We think that detention centres should be made a more livable and friendly environment. This would include activities for children and learning for them, such as a teacher to come in and teach them basic skills, so that then when they go out they are not disadvantaged, as we have heard some other refugees have been.

As a global citizen Australia should not be breaking laws and infringing on human rights. As a youth of Victoria I believe that we are making a change. We can have our say and make sure that these refugees are not disadvantaged and can live a happy, safe life. With our model they can be integrated into society easily, leading to a better future. We believe that Australia performs well but that there is much that we can improve on.

Mr JOLLY — You say that in detention centres we should be teaching kids how to learn English or whatever, but if you are saying that it is a traumatic experience, why should they be learning that in the detention centre rather than learning that outside of the detention centre later?

Ms VUKELIC — As we have said, we want to reduce the time they spend at the detention centre. We have heard from other people during our speeches that they missed out on vital education that could affect them in later life. This could even lead to bullying. By bringing in a teacher and being able to learn — and we all know that children love to learn — they will have time to actually have some fun and learn about something they can use in later life, which we believe, as group 6, is really vital and important to their future lives.

Group 7: Climate change and environment

Mr BELL — We as group 7 on the topic of climate change and the environment have decided to describe a good international citizen as a country that promotes sustainability; education, both locally and globally; more research into climate change and protecting the environment; aiding overseas countries that are not as well off as they are; setting realistic goals in climate change; and having an awareness of and a positive attitude to changing climate change.

We found that Australia is certainly not the best in climate change. We could be a lot better, as our relative environmental footprint is huge for our GDP. However, this is something that we can improve on, and we have a very real ability to improve both our own environmental impact and that of nearby countries in our region. The way that our group decided we should do this is by taking small steps. We should be providing incentives to reduce personal and corporate footprints on the environment and on CO₂ emissions. There must be education of the people both in Australia and overseas more deeply on the reality of climate change and environmental problems in our current time.

To go along with this, there needs to be assistance for those who struggle to assist themselves. We need to be helping the underdeveloped countries — the people who cannot afford to switch over to renewable energy because it is just too expensive for them. We need to be helping those who cannot properly help themselves in this area. We also need to remove the media stigma that causes things like the carbon tax to become hated around Australia because of how the media has portrayed it.

Mr FORD — You said that you would give incentives to people to improve their individual and business CO₂ emissions. What incentives are you planning on?

Mr BELL — The incentives that we propose would be to offset the cost of the renewable energy option, so if they decided to buy a solar panel, we would offset the cost of that, and those companies that continue to belligerently refuse to become more environmentally friendly would then be taxed higher, as with the carbon tax.

Group 8: International aid

Mr O'BRIEN — We as a group believe that Australia, while it is consistently good in the interests of humanitarian aid, could do a lot better, with specific reference to Iraq and more recently Taiwan. We believe that in both cases economic and political ties have prevented us from acting in the interests of humanitarian aid, where we have been more concerned with our economic and political ties with the US and China, and have bowed to their wishes to try to save a few jobs. We believe that Australia recently should have paid less attention to economic interest and done more for the benefit of international citizens. We believe that there is too much interest in these economic reasons, and we believe that — —

The CHAIR — Your minute has finished.

Ms DENT — Following on from Howard, we think that we have to weigh up moral obligations against political interests and economic interests in our country. Today we have heard that there are issues facing human rights, and yet we discuss what practical measures we could take to actually deal with these and make a change amongst the global community. We thought this would best be done through small steps. Idealistically government aid and government support would be great, but we thought that leaving it to the populace and their general moral obligations and moral views — because I think we all have our sets of morals and we all agree that something needs to be done — to support NGOs and INGOs without hindering international relations and aid — —

The CHAIR — Your time has finished.

Ms RANGARAJAN — About the economic pressures that you say different countries put on each other — I mean, Australia — to act a certain way, to what degree do you think this is influenced by capitalism and what alternative is there?

Mr O'BRIEN — We believe that capitalism is a large influential factor in this, but we believe that, more importantly, recently for the large majority of the people their moral obligations and the government's moral obligations have superseded that. As a result of that we get relations in East Timor where very good humanitarian aid has been provided. We believe that has slipped a bit in Iraq, but we believe that on the whole it is positive and there is room for improvement.

The CHAIR — When you were making your speech you said 'Taiwan'. Did you mean East Timor?

Mr O'BRIEN — I meant to say that with Taiwan we have not been helping with humanitarian problems there because of economic ties with China. Sorry.

The CHAIR — That is fine. I just had to clarify.

Group 9: Security and peace

Mr SWIFT — Our group decided that Australia is a global citizen, but it is neither the best nor the worst. However, we also decided that it is good country that acts in a manner that it deems the most possible and acceptable. Australia needs to be a supporting power in all regions of the world in ways that may be appropriate to the people of the region and to the people of Australia, also acting on what is economically and socially possible. Our group concluded that the most pressing issue facing Australia in regard to peace and security is the continuation and expansion of peacekeeping efforts on a worldwide scale.

Our group would like to see Australia become more involved in the projection of aid, especially specifically to our region. Which leads me then to our action. The action that we believe Australia should take is that if a crisis were to break out where gross acts of violence were occurring — i. e., genocide — Australia should take it upon itself and have a moral obligation to help these people and institute a change in their society. We should provide support with the boots on ground and also, for those people in desperate need, provide humanitarian assistance as well as boots on ground.

Mr NEVILLE — You said that in the event of genocide Australia would be able to take it upon themselves to act upon the issue. What means exactly would Australia have to take it upon themselves and act by themselves without regulation from the United Nations?

Mr SWIFT — Obviously we would approach the United Nations and ask for assistance in this matter. We are talking more specifically about our region — that is, more in the Pacific Islands that are close to us and are smaller countries. Those people who are involved in mass acts of genocide and people who are involved in instrumental acts of disaster need assistance. Australia would be there to help them, specifically in our region. We would obviously not be sending people over to Syria at the moment to help them. It is not economically viable; we cannot do that. However, we are talking specifically about our region and the sense of moral obligation that all Australians have to help people of their own community.

Group 10: Climate change and environment

Mr FERGUSON — Our group had the topic of climate change. To the question of whether Australia is a good global citizen we said, no, unfortunately it is not. I am sure you can compare us to countries like China, as people often do, and say, ‘We’re far better than them’. I am sure we are, but we should not let developing countries be our yardstick. We have the financial capabilities and people have the will to change things far more than other countries do. We do lead in areas like the carbon tax, but we need to do more. That was a main theme through our discussion.

We highlighted some main issues and problems that will arise for Australia in the next few years. There is the problem of water rising. Certain Pacific Island nations, which are topical for us because they are in our immediate region, will be swamped in coming years by rising sea levels. Where will those people go? They will come to us.

We need to help reduce CO₂ emissions. Australia emits an incredibly disproportionate amount of CO₂ for our population; we have a tiny population but enormous emissions. We need to reduce that.

Another issue we raised was destruction of natural habitat, such as the Great Barrier Reef, along with deforestation et cetera. You have all heard of these. There is also the mining of resources to the point where they have just gone.

We have outlined things to solve these problems. The CO₂ issue can obviously be solved by renewable energies. In order to raise the funds needed to develop these energies we have decided to raise the carbon tax or tax certain CO₂ producers for their environmental damage.

The CHAIR — The speaker’s time has finished.

Ms HOLDER — Recent satellite images show that the Arctic ice shelves are expanding, and this is extremely contradictory information to what we have previously been told. How do you plan for the government to get the Australian society to rally behind it to support the carbon tax and other potential plans?

Mr FERGUSON — I do not really think you can look at one satellite image and say, ‘Ah! Ice shelves are expanding, therefore climate change is a myth’. No, you have to look at the average over a number of years. You have to look at the mean temperature around the world. You cannot just look at isolated events and say, ‘There was a cold day in Melbourne, therefore climate change is a lie’. You have to broaden your field a bit and look around and see what the rest of the world looks like.

SOAPBOX

The CHAIR — We are moving on to soapbox. I have allocated 30 minutes. I am going to give you 1 minute each. To start the process I have chosen the first three speakers. I am sorry, but this is going to seem very sexist: I have actually chosen three ladies. It was by ballot. While they are speaking you can assemble your thoughts. You will have about a minute — so about 120 to 130 words — and I will try to be fair and take equal numbers from each side.

Ms DIAMANTOPOULOS — Many Australians and Australia’s Parliament are inflexible on the idea of changing the mandatory detention law for people who arrive by boat or by other unauthorised measures. Many citizens of our country assume that there are thousands of people bombarding our shores annually, which is not the case. They are worried about terrorism and overpopulation. It has been shown that no person to arrive in our country by boat has been a terrorist.

We have a population of 22 million people. This is compared to countries like Italy, which has double that and is the size of Victoria. These people — and I reiterate that they are people — come by boat and are still being locked up in prison-like detention centres. Some are facing things like mental illness and suicide. I suggest that Australia should instead keep the refugees in community areas where they can be in a more supervised and safe environment.

I finish by saying that Australia has not only the capacity to accept more asylum seekers but the capacity to at least house them in safe community areas. By doing so we would be respecting their rights and we would be one of the final countries to move out of the mandatory detention law.

Mr BOBSAID — Australia has a renowned reputation. This reputation gives us a legitimate reason to call Australia a good global citizen. We are known for our multiculturalism and for accepting diversity with open arms and enjoying exploring the different cultures. We are known for having the most livable cities in the world, and Melbourne specifically stands above the rest. Australia has established several aid programs for neighbouring countries along with others further abroad. Thanks to Australian aid, diseases such as polio have been almost completely eliminated from the Pacific. Thanks to our aid we have seen more than a staggering 1.5 million people immunised against measles and polio in Papua New Guinea alone. We have provided assistance to countless Third World countries, including in Africa. Our aid to Africa has increased tremendously in recent years and now represents 5 per cent of the aid program. Thanks to our aid programs African civilians living under the most tortuous conditions are able to obtain clean water.

Ms TEMIZKAN — I just want to start with the way our Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, has stated that Australians are proud of their modern multicultural people. We are a global people. Australia is a country of peace and has a heart of tolerance when it comes to helping countries worldwide. Unlike countries like Switzerland we do not remain silent on the global issues and we at least try to give a helping hand with our aid and services. Please let us not denigrate our country by arguing that we are not a good global citizen. Nobody is perfect.

Australia is a shining star, and it will continue to shine as we keep moving forward in the coming years. We have provided the first peacekeepers, and we should be proud of this. We have opened our doors to numerous refugees and asylum seekers. We have created a multicultural society. Not only are we one of the wealthiest countries but we are also one of the most accepting, hardworking and enthusiastic countries of the world.

I finish off with reference to Julia Gillard's statement about making a difference for the small and medium countries of the world: we are a beautiful country; let us all be happy.

Ms ALI — I think that Australia is actually a pretty good global citizen. We are not perfect; we have made mistakes in the past. But I think we should learn from our mistakes, as we are doing right now, and go from there. We can always do more for other countries, because I think sometimes even our attitude towards life as modern-day Australians is that we want to do more for ourselves — we want the latest technology and stuff like that — but then we miss out on the important things in life. Don't you think it is more important that someone gets food or that someone goes to sleep not being hungry? I think that, yes, Australia is a good global citizen, but we can always do better — as we learn in school, to be the best we can.

The CHAIR — Your time has expired.

Mr SHERIFFDEEN — Australia, like the rest of the planet, has several problems growing with climate change. Take the mining industry as an example: our reliance on brown coal has affected us as a whole. Our mining industry heavily relies on the burning of coal to generate electricity for our population. Consequently the coal burnt in this process generates carbon emissions, which contributes to air pollution, the greenhouse effect, global warming and damage to the environment. Fortunately our government has taken action towards this by placing a tax on carbon as well as signing the Kyoto protocol.

Another issue about climate change concerns the excessive ultraviolet rays entering our planet. Ultraviolet rays can cause global warming to occur. Global warming itself can result in sea levels rising and temperatures increasing by 0.5 degrees Celsius every year. All of this is solely due to — —

The CHAIR — I am sorry; your time has expired.

Mr STOJCEVSKI — I just want to speak about all the issues I have heard today. On the whole I believe Australia is a good global citizen; however, I believe we can do more to improve our status in the world, especially with the other developed countries. I heard one of my fellow students say we should not be comparing ourselves to China, which is true; we should be comparing ourselves — say, on the issue of climate change — to another developed country, such as Germany, which uses 90 per cent solar electricity.

What I believe as well is that it stems from the perception versus reality. I believe that whilst the public often sees climate change as a negative thing, the government's introduction of the mining tax was a good thing. The companies themselves have taken it on board, and they have not really caused too much havoc for the citizens. However, I believe the citizens need to embrace it more, and that stems from basic education at a grassroots level.

The CHAIR — Time has expired.

Mr CONNOLLY — Today at this convention there have been two clear sides in the asylum seeker debate: one side has said we need education programs in detention centres, and the other side has said we need education programs by integrating asylum seekers into the community. I agree with integrating asylum seekers into the community. After about a one or two-week period of working through medical and security threats to Australia, asylum seekers should be integrated into the community, where they can attend classes to learn English and skills. Apart from this book education they would also get a firsthand experience in the Australian lifestyle and culture. Being in the community is less depressing and scary than detention centres are.

Today we have been talking about Australians as global citizens — —

The CHAIR — I am sorry; your time has expired.

Mr HAIDERY — Some Australians have the wrong perception of refugees. When they hear the word 'refugees' they think we are here to take their jobs and get money, but the real reason we come is for safety. Let me tell you a story. I was in Pakistan, and there was a city called Quetta. There was a place called Bazai that was far away from our home. It was 30 minutes to go there and come back, taking our daily things from there. We were going to Bazai, then after that we were saying goodbye to our mum because we did not know if we would come back or not. I am very lucky that I am here in Australia, and I am very thankful to the people of Australia and to the government of Australia for giving us a place. It is the best thing to be here and a good thing that I am safe here.

Mr VLACHOS — Throughout today climate change and the issues we face have been discussed in depth. The biggest fallacy is assuming that government must be in charge of this campaign. Private enterprises can lead this charge with an innovative and true free market. Before the 1900s the major source of oil was from whales. It was a huge inefficiency and very expensive. This was changed almost overnight by the Rockefellers, as they found that oil could be produced from the ground at a lower cost and without killing whales. A private business saved whales. Why is it that this could not happen again with the challenges of climate change? Government always produces inefficiencies. Private businesses do not.

Ms ALFORD — Basically I am just going to say why we are a good citizen. I have heard a lot of people say that we are not because we do not do this or we do not do that, but I would just like to say that before you can be a good international citizen and before you can balance international responsibilities one of the main things you first need to balance is your national responsibilities. Because Australia has those down pat at the moment and has balanced them, I can truly say that we are a good international citizen; not only are we handling our own national responsibilities but also other countries' responsibilities as well. I think that is great.

Saying this does not mean that things cannot be done, but it is ridiculous to say that we are a bad international citizen just because more can be done. We need to praise the things we have done and actually accept that they are good and that we have actually been able to handle this. Look at how many things our country itself has faced with the global financial crisis, which we just missed out on, and everything else we have been facing. Now we are helping out.

The CHAIR — The speaker's time has expired.

Mr FILIPPOU — ‘Aspire not to have more, but to be more’ is a quote from Oscar Romero. Australia keeps developing, but we need Australia to be more, not to just have more. This can be achieved by improving our standing as a global citizen. The whole of Australia itself is a good community, but this community spirit needs to be extended to the global civilisation. Constantly we argue with other countries about who is better, but why don’t we consider, rather than who is better, what we can do better to help the rest of the world? Australia can also become a better global citizen by improving the way we deal with issues such as peace, security or the way we help the people around the world. These are just a few of the ways Australia can become a better global citizen in the world.

Ms STOLZENHAIN — Australia’s stance on refugees and immigration is all right, but there is a lot of area for improvement. I do agree we should take in more, as we have the means and resources to. It also goes with our culture; we like to help out people, we are very multicultural and most of us have migrated out here, so accepting refugees and making them have a better life is what we are all about. But I just point that the topic has been refugees and migration, and no-one has brought up the 48 000 illegal migrants who were in Australia last year. Refugees are not illegal, but illegal migrants are.

Mr DANIELS GARDINER — ‘Australians all let us rejoice, for we are young free’. Australia is a living example of multiculturalism and a society where people live free from fear. Australia has the potential to become a leading global citizen. It is one of the few places in this world free from discrimination. However, Australia must remain in foreign countries, restoring stability. History shows us that a stable country generally progresses faster. A country is only truly independent when it can control stability and allow peace. Once everyone in the world is politically represented, then global peace may be a reality.

Ms NOUROZI — As my fellow delegates have said, we need to focus on our national aid first. I think that is a point to be noted. Being a part of Australia I personally believe that Australia should first prioritise the national issues and after that the international issues. Amongst our national issues we have couch surfing, unemployment and many more. These issues have been raised in relation to teenagers and the younger generations generally, and they require more money and attention. This will make Australia a good global citizen both nationally and internationally.

Ms GORGIEOSKA — What I think about the topic of ‘Is Australia a good global citizen?’ is that we are, but we could be better. I think the way to do it better is to educate people more about what is going on around the world. Sometimes we get so caught up in our lives that we forget there are people out there who are suffering, not just as refugees but from the effects of climate change. We do not realise what we are doing until it is too late. We need to be better educated about all the things that make up a good global citizen. That is the only way we can improve.

Mr YOUNG — I want to mention that Australia is a very good national citizen and is on the verge of becoming a very good global citizen. To become a very good global citizen you have to be a very good national citizen, which Spain has failed to prove as its economic status has dropped. In contrast, Australia’s is on the rise.

Ms BOLITHO — I believe Australia is a good global citizen, but when it comes to asylum seekers we could do a lot more. The media tends to force us to label them as illegals or boat people. It dehumanises them and makes you feel as if they should not be here when they have every right to be here.

Ms VUKELIC — As a global citizen Australia must focus on what is most important at this point in time. We have still not found a solution to the refugee problem. If we were to send refugees back to their countries, they would risk persecution and even death. Instead we should improve our detention centre system. As a global citizen we must show the world that we care about these people and are willing to lead the world in showing that we can come up with an effective system.

Ms NOUROZI — ‘Australia is a good global citizen’: this is another superficial statement intended to instil patriotism, nationalism and pride in our country. Australia is a lucky country, even a great one, but I am not sure it is a great global citizen. In 2011 Australia was rated in the top 10 in the world by GDP per capita. In 2012 four of our capital cities were rated amongst the most livable in the world. Yet we are ranked 65th in the world for the number of refugees per capita that we take in. Even though we have survived the global financial crisis unscathed, even though we have the best standard of living in the world, even though we have huge areas of

untouched arable land and even though we have a ridiculously low population density, we still refuse to take in our fair share of refugees.

Conflicts such as the Arab spring and the government-controlled slaughter of the Tamils in Sri Lanka have caused the displacement of massive numbers of people. Yet we sit here and listen to politicians and shock jocks who tell us that asylum seekers are bad and pose a threat to us. But we are the ones who pose a threat to ourselves through our selfishness, our greed — —

The CHAIR — The speaker's time has expired.

Ms RANGARAJAN — On the matter of asylum seekers, if we open up Australia to absolutely everyone, the influx of asylum seekers to the country will increase. There is no way Australia can take in every single person who wants to move to our country and who the media labels 'illegal immigrants' at this point in time. There has to be a proper balance between improving the detention centres and opening our doors more, because if we completely get rid of one idea and totally depend on the other, then the whole process will be unmanageable.

I think there should be a priority system in place to determine who comes in first: the youngest children and the people who most easily integrate should be the first people to come in as well as the people who face the most threat where they are coming from. If we cannot fit in more than a certain number at a given time, then they should probably be processed offshore for a while and perhaps let in as soon as — —

The CHAIR — The speaker's time has expired.

Mr DUNNE — I reject the concept of a good global citizen, and I do not believe Australia would be one anyway. We have been slack with the millennium development goals that the UN required of us. To quote the Spanish Prime Minister, 'We may be a bad country and bankrupt, but not the poor. We will not hurt the poor.'. This country is a wealthy country and we have complete forsaken them. We demand discussion in this assembly today, but like most things in Australia, we silence those whom we have oppressed.

Our problems begin overseas and they should be solved overseas. We need to work in Afghanistan to make sure that the people do not need to come to this country. We need to stop the violence and end the bloodshed. And we need to stop the boats, not because they are bad and not because they bring the migrants, but because people die in them. We have 300 people coming to Australia every year and 700 more are in that water — —

The CHAIR — The speaker's time has expired.

Mr HERMA — I would like to make just a short point — probably two. I was listening to the previous speaker and I noticed that he was using a lot of the terminology I have heard politicians using. That is interesting, because none of them have said that we have already said we will take all these refugees. We have signed the UN convention and charter. We have said we will accept them. We are contravening laws that we have agreed to in refusing them entry to our country. We cannot send the boats back; that is illegal.

I would also like to point out that we may be a good political global citizen but our population increased by 18 per cent between 1997 and 2007 yet our waste production — the waste that goes into landfill and into the ocean — increased by 93 per cent — —

The CHAIR — The speaker's time has expired.

Ms FABBRO — I am going to play the devil's advocate by saying Australia is a global citizen but by no means a blooming good one. This is clearly reflected in our handling of asylum seekers. We have signed the refugee convention and the human rights convention, yet we are more than willing to go to something like the Malaysian solution, which is in contrast to anything Australia has ever stood for.

I turn now to climate change. We have been nothing but slack in terms of finding a source of renewable energy and we continue to use coal and fossil fuels, which are damaging to the environment. We are doing a fairly good amount in international aid, but so much more could be done.

I will return to asylum seekers. How can we sit here and call ourselves a democracy when we are doing nothing but abusing that power by infringing human rights and putting up any sort of solution which is — —

The CHAIR — The speaker’s time has expired.

Mr GILLIES — There has been a lot of talk about comparing Australia with overseas countries, but why can we not make it so that the other countries compare themselves with Australia? Australia is a hardworking, generous and wonderful society which we can share with everyone. We have to understand that we are part of a global community now. We live in a much larger community than we used to; it is a global community. We can hear and see global problems as they happen, and we need to accept now that if everyone is part of a global community, then it is our job to promote and protect their rights as we would the rights of the people of our own nation. This means we have to put nationality above humanity. That is being a good global citizen, and I do not think any nation at the moment meets that standard. But I think if there is any nation that can meet that standard, it is Australia. Vote no today so that in the future you can surely and proudly vote yes.

THE VOTE

The CHAIR — We are going to take a vote. Normally when a vote or a division is called for in the house the bells are rung for 3 minutes. The question is then put, and the house divides. The purpose of this vote is to determine your position on the proposition that Australia is a good global citizen. If you believe Australia is a good global citizen, you should move to the side of the chamber that is on my right. If you believe Australia is not a good global citizen, you should move to the side of the chamber that is on my left.

The CHAIR — The question is:

That Australia is a good global citizen.

Question agreed to.

CLOSING

The CHAIR — Order! We will now have a report on the national convention from Isaiah Graham from Lara Secondary College. Isaiah attended the 2012 National Schools Constitutional Convention in Canberra. He is going to give delegates an overview of the 2012 event and speak for approximately 5 minutes.

Mr GRAHAM — Hi everyone, I am Isaiah Graham from Lara Secondary College. As the Chair said, I will be talking about the national convention. I will start with a story.

A long, long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away — or at least on 15 September last year in this room — there sat a group of bright and educated students much the same as ourselves, discussing various issues such as renewable energy, alternate cost-effective living styles and other quite bizarre subjects such as Harry Potter and magic money. But I digress. At the end of the day we were all given a pamphlet showing us how to apply for the national convention, which was really just a step up from this. We were all really excited about it. We filled out our applications and sent them back in a timely manner, and of course the department, being thrifty and responsible as it is, got our applications back to us very quickly.

The bad news was that we actually had to leave Hannah behind, but 125 students from across Victoria, and I think 25 Victorian students, were all accepted to attend the 17th National Schools Constitutional Convention on 21 March this year, which ran for three days, until 23 March, in Canberra. Most of the convention was held in Old Parliament House, which is much like this place.

On the first day we attended a session of question time. As our keynote speaker said, it was really funny watching politicians bicker like little children. We were welcomed in a speech by the Honourable Peter Garrett, and then we went back to our hotel, which was a rather fine establishment.

The second day yielded various activities such as guest speakers from a whole bunch of different institutions and organisations around Australia. We then split off into focus groups made up of the representatives of our states and territories, much like we did today, although today we are all from Victoria. The mixed discussion groups talked about the different topics that we were all assigned to and then reported back, much as we did today. That evening we attended a fine, fancy dinner at the High Court of Australia, where we all looked really flash and presentable — including in green pants!

By the third day we had made really close friends with a lot of people, either from our own state or other states. We all integrated fairly well with each other, and it was really joyful to see a whole bunch of strangers from all across one country completely sticking together and working closely in a friendly manner. It is really unusual to see that, but most of us did it again today — we integrated with people we do not know in a positive and productive atmosphere.

Some of the funnier sessions at Parliament House were the soapbox sessions. Much as happened today, we were given an opportunity to get up and talk about other topics. The topic for the convention was: ‘Australian Federalism — A Question of Balance’, so we learnt all about federalism, but during the soapbox it just went off on a tangent. Other topics were, for example: ‘Should Western Australia become an independent country?’ That was funny. Gay marriage also came up, and one of the most unusual was: ‘Australia shall be renamed Tasmanialand, and the former state of Tasmania shall take all power over the ruling government’. Of course not many people agreed, because there were only five representatives from Tasmania.

By the third day, unfortunately, we had to leave, but most of us had made great friends and new Facebook pages, and I have kept some great friendships with some people. I just want to say that it took only a few minutes to fill out our application forms, and I am sure that this year you will all have that information. It was a great learning experience for three great days in a really positive atmosphere.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Isaiah, for giving us that report. I will now introduce our final speaker for the day, Colin Brooks, shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education. He was elected to the Victorian Parliament to represent the electorate of Bundoora in November 2006. He served as a councillor at Banyule City Council for eight years, with two terms as mayor of the city. Colin serves on the Parliament’s Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee and has previously been a member of the Parliament’s Law Reform Committee. I introduce Mr Colin Brooks.

Mr BROOKS — Thank you very much, Chair. I thought I would take my place on this side of the house because that is where I currently sit. I am Colin Brooks, from De La Salle College in Ashfield, New South Wales, a long, long time ago. I am here representing Daniel Andrews, the Leader of the Opposition, who unfortunately could not be here today but sends his apologies and has asked me, as the shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education, to come along and say a few words in closing this conference.

Firstly, I acknowledge the organisers of this convention, which has been a great success. Many people have been involved, and I think there was a committee that helped to organise today. I acknowledge staff from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, all of the people from your schools who have helped to make this possible and the parliamentary staff who have been involved in running today as well. They do a fantastic job all through the year for us members of Parliament, but of course they have assisted you as delegates today. I understand that Hansard, as an example, are recording the proceedings of today’s contributions. Hansard reporters are not supposed to change the content of what you say, but they do have a handy knack of making your speeches look much better than they actually are, so that is a service that I am sure you will enjoy as much as I do.

You have heard from some great speakers today. Aside from the discourse between yourselves, I understand you have heard from Robbie Nyaguy and from Toni Henderson, two young people who made an address earlier this morning, and of course Martin Dixon, the Minister for Education, opened the convention this morning. You also heard from Professor John Langmore, so you have had a great range of speakers to contribute to the convention today. I am sure that that has helped to frame the discussion and debate you have been engaging in.

I was able to pop in for about half an hour this morning before I had to run off to other meetings, but I was able to catch some of the contributions that people were making earlier on and then the questions they were receiving, and I was also here for the last half an hour or so, watching from the public gallery. I congratulate you all on the way in which you have approached the convention today. What I witnessed was a level of articulate, passionate, knowledgeable and well-researched debate.

Someone made an off-the-cuff remark around the behaviour of politicians in Canberra and those here in Victoria, and I think there is a serious side to that. Those of us who sit in this chamber, when we come back here next Tuesday, have something to learn from the way in which you have all handled the debate today and the respect with which you consider each person’s point of view. There is a level of concern about the public

discourse currently taking place in Australia and here in Victoria and the way that politics is debated. Jürgen Habermas, who is a German scholar, described that place where all of these debates take place in a civil society and a democracy as ‘the public sphere’ — wherever there are ideas and discussion coming together — and that is a central part of a healthy democracy. In many respects what you have been a part of today is a miniature public sphere.

As I look around the room, because you are all of a similar age, I see you as very similar, but you have obviously come from a whole range of different backgrounds. There are people here from secular schools, different religious schools, different cultural backgrounds, different parts of the state and different socioeconomic backgrounds, and I think that is a great thing. For you all to come here together and debate these hefty issues is fantastic. The issue that you have been debating today is not a lightweight matter; it is, by definition, a matter of life and death, and you have handled that debate in an extremely intelligent and responsible fashion. I think you should be commended for the way you have done that.

I hope those of you who perhaps had only a fleeting interest in public service in later life, those of you who are thinking about what you do post-secondary school, will consider how you might contribute to that public discourse further in life. I am not necessarily talking about devoting your whole life to public discourse or representative politics, but I do hope that many of you think about the way in which, in whichever vocation or career you choose, you are able to contribute to furthering public discourse and debate in this country on some really important matters because, from what I have seen today, you will make a great contribution. Thank you very much.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Colin, for coming here to close the conference and to speak. I would like to echo your thanks to Hansard and the way they have handled today. It has been terrific in recording all of your words, and I also thank those who organised the event. But most of all I want to thank all of you. I have thoroughly enjoyed today. The efforts on the soapbox were fantastic — that you could jump up and speak for a minute on a topic just like that was fantastic. You are passionate, committed and caring. Please do not lose that. We have a great democracy because people speak out. It is terribly important that you speak out because for every voice that speaks out, another one will add to it, and people like myself, politicians, will eventually hear and act on what you want.

Australia is terrific. You can become whatever you want to become if you work hard enough. I have really enjoyed today. Next week I will be sitting in this chair and sending people out of the room for 30 minutes or an hour, depending on how badly they have behaved. I will be saying, ‘Order! Order!’ many times. But you have been so nice to each other — so warm, friendly and respectful — even though there is disagreement on some points across the room. Thank you very, very much.

Mr EASTWOOD — On behalf of everybody who attended Parliament today, I would like to thank the Chair for attending today and making this commitment.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Convention adjourned 2.52 p.m.