

National ocean outfall strategy needed

Australia needs a national ocean outfall strategy, the Member for Flinders (Vic), Greg Hunt, has told the House. "Ocean outfalls fall within the province of state governments," Mr Hunt said "None of these governments, with the exception of the South Australian government, have taken it as a priority to (a) reduce the waste, and (b) reduce the environmental impact." Mr Hunt wants the federal government, through the department of the environment, to coordinate a single strategy. Using the Gunnamatta outfall in his own electorate as an example, Mr Hunt spoke of the threat to the environment and public health that results from the release into the ocean of waste water treated to secondary stage. He also praised the efforts of the volunteer group Clean Ocean Foundation, who have increased awareness and understanding of the problem.

What's hot in renewable energy

Hot granite could be the renewable energy source of the future, says the Member for La Trobe (Vic), Bob Charles. "Australia is particularly well placed to exploit the potential of hot dry rock geothermal energy, because of our known geological conditions in our hot granite," Mr Charles recently told the House. Across the country, particularly in the Cooper Basin and Hunter regions, there is a range of high heat producing granites that can be tapped to produce steam and electricity. Research and development funding has been approved for Geodynamics Ltd to help it develop a demonstration hot dry rock geothermal power plant. "The energy is environmentally clean and does not produce greenhouse gas emissions," says Bob Charles. "It has been classified as renewable by national and international authorities. Our resource could potentially supply all of Australia's power requirements many times over."

Tourism the key to regional revival

Incentives to invest in and expand tourism infrastructure are sorely needed right now, the Member for Bass (Tas), Michelle O'Byrne, has told the House of Representatives. Ms O'Byrne said the three areas of tourism—the holiday market, conferencing and events—are capable of providing the basis for renewed growth in rural and regional Australia. But the tourism industry has been hit hard by the events of September 11, the collapse of Ansett and the rise in public liability insurance premiums. What is needed now, said Ms O'Byrne, is a "massive injection of investment and faith" in the tourism industry. "All three tiers of government have an opportunity to help all Australians. Government, the business sector and local communities can work together with a common purpose, but leadership from the top is required." Ms O'Byrne noted that the Tasmanian government has already bitten the bullet, investing \$200 million in Bass Strait passenger shipping to reposition the state as a tourist destination. As many as 90,000 extra tourists per year are being predicted as a result. "Much of rural and regional Australia is capable of participating in the tourism revival which is sure to come in the immediate future, and surer to come if programs are put in place to encourage tourism and enable areas to be viable tourism locations," Ms O'Byrne said.



Nelson Falls (Tasmania). Photo: Tourism Tasmania/Geoffrey Leu

Support for rainfall research

John Forrest, the Member for Mallee (Vic), wants the CSIRO to take a serious look at rainfall research being conducted by Professor Daniel Rosenfeld from the Institute of Earth Sciences at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Mr Forrest is concerned about changing levels of rainfall in parts of Australia and considers that Professor Rosenfeld's work may offer some solutions to the problem. Professor Rosenfeld has been using satellite imagery to research pollution plumes from Australia's metropolitan areas. "He is able to measure the

capacity of the ensuing rain clouds, which have moisture in them, and the impact that the airborne pollution has on the cloud in limiting rainfall," Mr Forrest told the House. Professor Rosenfeld's work has been used in a number of places around the world, including Texas, and has been endorsed by NASA. "Water restrictions are already in place over significant parts of the southern continent," Mr Forrest said, "and I think Professor Rosenfeld's work is worthy of some considered research and support."