

Hillside

Surf's down

AUSTRALIA'S surfboard manufacturing industry has hit troubled waters and the Member for McPherson (Qld) Karen Andrews has asked the federal government to step in with some assistance.

With around 200 surfboard manufacturers located between Burleigh Heads and Coolangatta, Mrs Andrews said this is a very significant industry for the Gold Coast. "We cannot afford to lose it," she said.

The current high Australian dollar, increased competition from surfboard manufacturers overseas and surfers hanging on to their boards for longer in response to higher costs of living are the main reasons why the Australian industry is struggling.

Imported surfboards from countries like China typically retail for about half the cost of an Australian made board.



TIDE'S OUT: Surfboard sales slump puts jobs at risk. Photo: Thinkstock

Book hunt for autism

A fundraising campaign for 1,000 books in 12 months has been launched by Autism Victoria in a bid to boost the resources available to families raising children with autism.

The Member for Flinders (Vic), Greg Hunt told the House of Representatives about the 1,000 Books Campaign during a parliamentary debate on the value of public libraries and their role in combating illiteracy.

With around 200,000 people in Australia suffering from autism, Mr Hunt said one of the great challenges for families raising children with autism is accessing literature tailored specifically to the needs of these children and their parents.

"It can be deeply debilitating or it can be something that can be addressed at an early age through very targeted early intervention," Mr Hunt said.

Making more resources available through initiatives such as the 1,000 Books Campaign is vital, he said.

A 500km walk later this year will also help raise funds to deal with the challenges of autism.



A GOOD READ: Book campaign to help children with autism. Photo: Thinkstock



Photo: Thinkstock

More screening could save lives

INCREASED funding for a highly successful bowel cancer screening program has the potential to save lives, according to the Member for Pearce (WA), Judi Moylan.

Bowel cancer currently kills around 73 Australians every week, yet nearly all cases could be cured if detected early, Mrs Moylan told the House of Representatives.

She described the National Bowel Cancer Screening program as the most effective measure available to immediately reduce cancer deaths in Australia and called on the government to expand the program to include two-yearly screenings for all Australians aged 50 and over.

"Bowel cancer is preventable and if it is detected early the survival rate is excellent," Mrs Moylan said.

"In planning its health budget, I urge the government to strongly consider funding a biennial screening program. If fully implemented, this program can potentially achieve a major breakthrough in bowel cancer treatment."

Mrs Moylan said estimates for the annual cost of a fully implemented National Bowel Cancer Screening Program have ranged from \$39 million to \$140 million.

"Even at the higher end, the program is by international benchmarks a strong public health investment. Multiple studies, both in Australia and internationally, have demonstrated the cost effectiveness of bowel cancer screening," she said.