



the

# EGGLESTON

report

Senator Alan Eggleston: Working for Western Australia

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## Trade tariffs must go

**A**gricultural subsidies in some of the world's wealthiest nations are distorting world markets and condemning third world farmers to a life of poverty.

While representing Australia at the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum in Vietnam in January I had the opportunity to argue the benefits of free trade and the abolition of subsidies.

Agricultural protectionism is a major area of concern to Australia and reform was long overdue.

In no other areas are trade barriers as high, with average tariffs more than three times higher than in non-agricultural goods, with some tariffs reaching as high as 800 per cent.

Similarly, in no other area does domestic support distort international markets to the extent that it does in agriculture. Similarly, in no other area are export subsidies tolerated in the same manner.

In 2002 protection for agriculture in OECD countries was almost US\$320 billion – this is six

times the total spending on aid and twice the value of all developing country agricultural exports.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, agricultural protection reduces prices for all agricultural output worldwide by a massive 12 per cent annually. The USA's and European Union's agricultural subsidies encourage over-production, depress world market prices, and lower the return to farmers throughout the world.

Given the dependence on agriculture in developing nations, this effectively holds back and damns people to a life of impoverishment.

Australia, via its leadership of the Cairns Group of agricultural exporting countries, has been active in agitating for liberalisation of the world agricultural trading environment.

Freeing up global agricultural trade would be undeniably beneficial to developing countries. Up to 75 per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas and most are dependent on agriculture.



inside



Page 2



Page 3



Page 3

## RFDS senior pilot retires

After a career spanning more than 30 years with the RFDS, Senior Pilot David Munns, retired at the end of 2004.

David spent his early years in the RFDS at the Port Hedland base, and there was quite a gathering of former Port Hedland doctors and flight sisters who had flown with him at the farewell picnic lunch held at the Point Walter Reserve on a Sunday morning last December.

David Munns was a dedicated pilot whose career reflected the great traditions of the RFDS.

I wish him well in retirement.



## Valuing Our Veterans builds bridges between generations

The *Valuing Our Veterans* program is an initiative under the Australian Government's commemorations program, *Saluting Their Service*.

*Valuing Our Veterans* supports links between schools and veterans to share understanding and experiences. Young Australians are eager to learn about Australia's involvement in wars, conflicts and peace operations and the experiences of veterans who have served. In both primary and secondary schools, students learn about Australia's wartime history and commemoration.

The Internet is frequently used by students as a source of information for research about wars and conflicts.

To balance this information, it is essential that primary sources (recorded at the time or by those who lived through the time of an event) related to war experiences of Australian veterans, students can become aware of the human aspect of past events and appreciate the meaning of days of remembrance and commemoration.

Through this understanding, young Australians can

participate meaningfully in commemorative events and carry these traditions into the future.

Veterans from all wars, conflicts and peace operations have experiences relevant to students studying Australia's wartime heritage and commemoration. In telling their stories, veterans not only assist students to learn but often the telling serves to clarify memory and deepen understanding of those experiences.

It does not matter if some of the details have become clouded over time. Communicating what is remembered of the events and personal feelings is what is important.

Collaboration is the key to participating in the *Valuing Our Veterans* program. Through contact between generations, students gain a greater understanding of the human aspect of history. Many veterans will be pleased to share their wartime experiences, particularly so students can understand the individual cost of war and the importance of preserving the freedom and democracy we continue to enjoy today.

## Former Indonesian president Wahid visits Australia

After becoming chairman of the Indonesian-Australian Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Federal Parliament last December my first duty was to host a luncheon with the former president of Indonesia, Abdul Wahid, otherwise known as "Gus Dur".

Former President Wahid spoke of his delight about the recent democratic elections held in Indonesia for the Congress and the Presidency.

Australia and Indonesia are close neighbours and while there is extensive contact

(particularly in Western Australia) between our countries in business, education and tourism, when I visited the Indonesian National Assembly, I found that many Indonesian politicians had misconceptions



about Australia. As chair of the Indonesian Parliamentary Friendship Group I would hope to see more Indonesian MPs come to Australia as a means of improving their understanding of our country.

## Australia Day, Port Hedland style

Each year I attend Australia Day in Port Hedland and this year was no exception. The day started with a citizenship ceremony under the palm trees overlooking the Indian Ocean. Among our new citizens were Canadians, Swiss and other European nationals who no doubt found the warm weather of Port Hedland more congenial than that of the northern hemisphere in January.



## Technical colleges to address skills shortages nation-wide

The Australian Government has identified 25 locations across the country for the establishment of Australian Technical Colleges to address the pressing skill shortages which Australia currently faces in a number of traditional trades. The effective establishment and sustained success of these colleges will rest upon the comprehensive support and engagement of local communities, especially local business.

The colleges are to be based in regions with reported skills shortages, a strong industry base and a significant youth population. In Western Australia, these locations are southern Perth and the Pilbara.

Skill shortages are often a symptom of a strong and growing economy with very low levels of unemployment. If Australian businesses are going to continue to provide valuable services and be competitive in a global economy

we need to address skill shortages through new approaches to attracting and training young people into skills shortage trades.

The Australian government is committed to ensuring that vocational education and training, including starting a school-based New Apprenticeship, is a valued and well recognised choice available to young people and their families.

Each college will have up to 300 year 11 and 12 students. Students will be selected, through an open and closed competitive process, on the basis of capability and interest in pursuing a career in the trades on offer at the college. The involvement of local employers in the enrolment process will ensure that each student is able to commence a New Apprenticeship while at school.

For details, visit [www.dest.gov.au/schools/technicalcolleges](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/technicalcolleges).

## Grants go to Perth businesses

Perth company Tieline Research Pty Ltd has been awarded an Australian Government innovation grant to develop a digital multimedia listening system for the covert surveillance market.

The company has been awarded a *R&D Start* grant of almost \$1.1 million to develop the system which will result in higher performance products in the surveillance field.

Other Western Australian companies to be awarded funding are:

\* **International Mining Technologies, of Osborne Park**, an *R&D Start* grant worth almost

\$2.3 million for a multiple technology software project to prevent collisions between equipment and personnel operating on mine sites;

\* **Downunder Geosolutions, of Subiaco**, a \$1 million *R&D Start* grant to develop software and procedures to improve the imaging of seismic data in the Australasian region;

\* **IO Digital Systems, of West Perth**, awarded a \$64,000 *COMET* grant to help commercialise a data hub to streamline the handling of exploration and mining data.

Innovative companies are now encouraged to apply under the

Australian Government's new competitive grants program, *Commercial Ready*. It will help about 1700 businesses develop new products and services between now and 2011.

*Commercial Ready* builds on programs such as *R&D Start* and the *Biotechnology Innovation Fund* but it throws a broader net — supporting proof-of-concept, early R&D and commercialisation.

It is part of the Australian Government's innovation strategy which aims to help businesses bring their smart ideas to the marketplace.

The full grants list can be found at [www.ausindustry.gov.au](http://www.ausindustry.gov.au)