

**STIRLING BUSINESS ASSOCIATION — CHRISTMAS DINNER**

*Statement by Member for Scarborough*

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough)** [4.14 pm]: Last night I attended the Stirling Business Association's Christmas dinner held in the newly refurbished function rooms at the Scarboro Surf Life Saving Club on the Scarborough foreshore. This annual event was well attended and spirits were high despite the global financial crisis and the downturn that many businesses are experiencing at present and expect to encounter into the future. It never ceases to amaze me that small business operators can be so optimistic in the midst of the crisis. Many business operators were looking at not only expected trade downturns, but also prospective job cancellations, with the view that perhaps a holiday might be a good thing next year! All the business operators were looking at ways to ensure they could maintain employment for all their employees in the face of rising costs and decreasing sales. Many of them were deeply concerned at the prospect of having to increase prices to their customers in light of a weakening exchange rate and increasing import costs.

True to form, the generosity of the small business community was evident last night. The highlight of the evening was an auction of donated prizes to benefit a Western Australian charity organisation called Equal Health. Established in Western Australia, Equal Health is an apolitical, non-religious charity that provides opportunities for volunteer health professionals and students to participate in overseas assignments to provide health and outreach care to people who live in developing countries. More than \$4 000 was raised last night for Equal Health, and members of the Stirling Business Association—I am one—should feel proud to have contributed in a meaningful way that will benefit the lives of the poorest of the poor in places such as India, Bali, Thailand and South Africa.