

Message from the Premier of New South Wales

I send my warmest wishes for this special time of the year to your readers and their families.

Christmas is of course the major religious and family celebration for many people in New South Wales. It is also an important time for people from other faiths for reasons we all share: it coincides with the end of the school year and the beginning for most Australians of holidays.

Religious festivals are very much part of our calendar, and we can all partake as neighbours with festivals not our own. This is what friendship means. This sharing and understanding makes us a more harmonious society.

It is a time for all of us to be with our families and our loved ones, to take a rest, and prepare for the challenges of the year to come.

As your new Premier, I pledge to make this State an even better place to live in – to improve frontline services in health, transport, education, community protection and care. I have made a start with some tough economic decisions. I value the support and the contribution made by your community.

These difficult times are strengthening our beliefs in fairness, in opportunity, and our duty to others. These are the true foundations of our future prosperity.

On behalf of the Government, I wish you and your families a safe, happy and rewarding holiday season.

Nathan Rees, MP
Premier of New South Wales

Audit 'finds asbestos in schools



It's been revealed that more than 2,200 NSW public schools and TAFE campuses are riddled with asbestos. The Daily Telegraph says a \$3 million audit has uncovered evidence of asbestos material in classrooms, childcare facilities, children's toilets, canteens, ceilings and buried under playgrounds in schools. An analysis of every asbestos site register by the paper shows that just 109 of the 2,375 schools and TAFE buildings are completely free of the potentially deadly fibres - worse than previous estimates. The NSW government has launched a statewide management plan and program of works to minimise the risk to students, staff, contractors, parents and other visitors. The Department of Education and Training says the asbestos registers will help protect parent and citizen groups on holiday working bees as well as professional builders and maintenance workers. "When hammering a nail or screwing something into a wall they will now be able to know whether the material they are putting it into contains asbestos and take precautions," a department spokesman said.

More than 100 schools have material classified by experts as "medium risk", but Deputy Director-General, Finance and Infrastructure, Alastair Hunter, said the "vast majority of materials containing asbestos" are safe.

"Studies show that if the material is left undisturbed and is in sound condition it poses no risk to health," Mr Hunter said.

JPMorgan banker found guilty in \$150m super fund fraud case

The following article appeared in The Australian Newspaper on December 19, 2008

FORMER JPMorgan Chase banking employee Greg Bouchier appeared for sentencing in the Sydney district court in relation to what may be the biggest fraud attempted in Australia's history.

A jury found Bouchier, 36, guilty of conspiracy to cause a loss in relation to a near successful attempt by a gang to defraud the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme of \$150 million on December 24, 2003. Bouchier left

JPMorgan in early 2004.

JPMorgan Chase, whose office was in the AAPT building, was the custodian of the CSS. It was faxed a fraudulent request on that day to send \$150 million to four different bank accounts: two in Hong Kong, one in Switzerland and one in Greece.

The jury found Bouchier, who was in what was called the trades and cash team at the bank, to have been involved in the earlier removal and copying of documents showing how to do cash transfers from client funds to overseas accounts. His handwriting was on the

documents.

According to the Australian Federal Police, the sting had been at least six months in preparation.

The case reportedly revealed shortcomings in the bank's security, most particularly in using fax messages when more secure ways of sending formal banking instructions are now available.

The bank is understood to have since tightened up security. The 12 man gang, run out of Sydney but peopled by a multicultural cast, including a Russian-born Israeli living in South Africa, at least two Chinese citizens and a Cypriot, was tripped up because Greece's Laiki Bank queried the use of "pty ltd" in the name of the local addressee when the bank expected to see the name of an individual. A note from Laiki bank, sent on December 24 and only picked up in Sydney on December 29, after the Christmas holiday break, was the trigger for frantic and eventually successful efforts to freeze the transfers. The name of the gang leader, a Sydney identity, has been subject to a District Court suppression order because of a trial going on elsewhere.

A central element in the highly sophisticated scheme was the involvement of telephone technician Barry Osborne, of Waverley in Sydney, to hack into a usually secure line via a Telstra

exchange in Dalley Street, in Sydney's CBD, to send the fraudulent instructions. He had a "swipe" card that gave him access to the exchange. Fellow defendant Ernst Hufnagl, also of Sydney, posed as an employee of State Street Global Advisers, another intermediary, in calling Bouchier to verify that the transfer should go ahead. This was a reversal of the security call arrangement that was meant to take place.

Despite the fact the fax had the wrong date on it, November 29 instead of December 29, Bouchier's superiors told him to action the cash transfer. But a hurried late December 2003 action by authorities to freeze the accounts and unwind the transactions, triggered by the Greek bank's query, resulted in all the money eventually being recovered by repayment or insurance. A major investigation by the AFP resulted in charges being laid against all the main players in the gang, several of whom are already in jail.

If the tiny addressing error relating to the transferee had not been spotted by the Laiki Bank, it is quite possible the funds could have been retransferred on and \$150 million of Commonwealth Government public servants' superannuation would have been lost to them.

Bouchier, Osborne and Hufnagl was sentenced by Justice Robyn Tupman.

End of year message from Laurie Ferguson

The Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, today extended warm wishes to all Australians as they celebrate Christmas and other key religious events over the coming month.

"The festive season is many Australians' favourite time of year – a chance to enjoy our glorious summer, spend time with loved ones and celebrate religious beliefs," Mr Ferguson said.

"Many of Australia's 13 million Christians will celebrate Christmas, sharing gifts, a special meal and other family rituals. In our nation of diverse cultures and religions, Christmas will be recognised in different ways and on different days.

"Gift giving around Christmas varies from St Nicholas' Eve [December 5] through St Basil's Day [1 January] to Epiphany [6 January] and may be delivered to children by Sinterklaas, Santa Claus, Father Frost and the Snowflake Girl, or Befana [a kind witch]. Other Australians will make nativity scenes to display or light candles in the lead up to Christmas.

"Australians belong to more than 80 Christian religious denominations and more than 40 other religious denominations. "While many celebrate Christmas, it is also a significant time for other faiths, including Australians of Jewish faith who will celebrate Hanukkah – the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah is a time when families come together to remember their heritage and share time with their families. Traditionally, a candle is lit on each day of the Hanukkah period.

"These important events have a common focus on love, peace, compassion and family. "They present a great opportunity for Australians to embrace the diversity of our community and our shared hopes. As you celebrate your faith in your special way, I wish all Australians a safe and happy festive season," Mr Ferguson added.

Laurie Ferguson MP- Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services