

Adrian Pederick's Christmas message to all Hammond residents

**... but there is one wish above all else ...**

In the colour and excitement of the season, it can be easy to forget that Christmas is a religious festival, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ some 2,000 years ago. Christians all around the world come together at Christmas to honour their faith and share their love and generosity with family and friends.

Australia's heritage determines that we are essentially a Christian country and Christian events dominate our calendar. But we must also accept in this shrinking and rapidly changing world that we share our land with others who have diverse customs and beliefs.

Australia has been regarded internationally as a model society for multi-culturalism. Our immigration policies have allowed and encouraged people from distant lands with vastly different cultures to join us in building our national dream.

While customs and practices vary greatly, one thing is common for all true religions; love and respect for yourself and your fellow man. There are many among us who choose not to follow any particular religion, yet they too have love and respect for others.

One word describes how love and respect can be applied – Tolerance. Tolerance will help deal with and overcome these differences. I ask each of you to practice Tolerance and guarantee a happier, more harmonious life for all.

This quality is vital right now as the whole country battles with the worst drought on record. The strains and pressures on people, the land and its waterways are all too easy to see. To endure this drought we must be tolerant of the different needs of our neighbours, near and far, and accept that none of us is going to get exactly what we want.

Since being elected in March to represent the people of Hammond in state Parliament, my and my family's lives have changed dramatically.

My wife Sally and two young sons Mack and Angus have had to deal with my busy and demanding timetable. Parliament House, meetings, committees, presentations and other community events take great sheaves of my time. I thank my family and friends for being so patient and generous with their time to enable me to serve all Hammond constituents who have put their faith in me.

If there is one wish above all others this Christmas, it is that the skies turn dark grey and the Heavens open up! I look forward with great anticipation to the sound of the first raindrops on the iron roof, their dusty thud on the parched land and their pitter-patter turn to a roar.

I can smell it even now!

Have a Happy and Safe Christmas and New Year and I look forward to catching up with you around the electorate in 2007.