

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

6 June 2001

(extract from Book 7)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. W. THWAITES

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. D. V. NAPHTHINE

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Mr P. J. RYAN

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Leigh, Mr Geoffrey Graeme	Mordialloc	LP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

¹ Resigned 3 November 1999

² Elected 11 December 1999

³ Resigned 12 April 2000

⁴ Elected 13 May 2000

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Wednesday, 6 June 2001

The SPEAKER (Hon. Alex Andrianopoulos) took the chair at 9.36 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITION

The Clerk — I have received the following petition for presentation to Parliament:

Won Wron prison

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria express their utmost support for the retention and continued operation of the Won Wron prison near Yarram on the basis that its closure would —

- cause a loss of almost 40 jobs in a community of 1800 people
- remove approximately \$2.5 million of expenditure from the district economy
- result in the loss of benefit of a range of community work presently provided to the region through prisoner effort
- deal a substantial blow to a rural community which to date has been proactive in managing difficult economic conditions.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the Victorian government support this initiative.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr RYAN (Gippsland South) (2683 signatures)

Laid on table.

PAPER

Laid on table by Clerk:

Report of the Auditor-General on ministerial portfolios, June 2001.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Bennettswood: justices of the peace

Mr WILSON (Bennettswood) — I place on record my congratulations to a number of local residents who have recently been appointed as justices of the peace (JPs). I was delighted that so many local residents responded to my call for appointment to the position of JP. In the International Year of Volunteers we should pay special tribute to those members of the community

who perform the important duties associated with being a JP.

Cr Tom Morrissey is the current mayor of the City of Monash and has served the Damper ward for many years with distinction. He has also served the community in many other areas, including through his involvement in Rotary.

Mr Bryan Nitz's voluntary service has been through the Bennettswood Neighbourhood House. His other community services have included St Scholastica's parish and the scouting movement.

Mr Cyril Ashton was founding president of the Waverley Ratepayers Association and is a life member of Mount Scopus Memorial College in Burwood.

Mr Robert Carmichael is a presenter with Whitehorse-Boroondara Community Radio 94.1 FM, and was chief executive officer of the Asthma Foundation Victoria for more than two decades.

Mr Don McLeish is a past president of Archery Victoria, is a member of Waverley City Archers and has been involved in the scouting movement for many years.

I congratulate these five outstanding Victorians and wish them well in their new roles.

Consumer affairs: Morwell fraud

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — Barry Patrick, from Bridle Road, Morwell, in the Latrobe Valley, and Karl-Heinz Veljkovic, from Harkaway Road, Berwick, have been terrorising people for perhaps as long as 30 years. They are con men and thieves with a twist. They are predators who prey on innocent, hardworking people, systematically tearing their lives apart. They are a perfect operation, with Mr Veljkovic acting as the front man and real estate agent, selling businesses and finance under his company name, Teilis Financial Services. He then places the unsuspecting person with Barry Patrick, who has a multitude of businesses for sale and who is portrayed as a struggling entrepreneur.

Most people who have become involved with them, if not all, have lost their homes, superannuation, savings, cars and eventually their credit rating. Basically these two men are in partnership on paper and in person. They use company names as though they were tissue paper, inventing and dumping them like there is no tomorrow. They systematically trap people in a web of lies and deception. Between 1993 and 1998 at least 25 companies came and went as these two men acted

together, and they used at least half as many again trading names for them.

Most of these unscrupulous practices occur from a premises in Centre Road, Morwell, from where they operate their sinister empire. Their talents extend into the banking industry where the National Australia Bank, the ANZ and IOOF have fallen victim to their craftiness in fraudulently taking out personal loans and credit cards in other people's names. It is reported that when interviewed by the fraud squad, the NAB alone had at least 15 separate cases where Patrick and Veljkovic had acted fraudulently, yet for some obscure reason the banks decided not to press charges and chose to wipe off debts that have amounted to thousands and thousands of dollars. However, the devastation does not go away for the victims whose signatures have been used. They are left to fight these institutions —

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Fundraising: north-eastern licensed clubs

Mr KILGOUR (Shepparton) — I am glad to be here today to say welcome to everybody on this very special morning after a magnificent evening last night! I am disappointed that we did not hear the cries of honourable members on the other side that were heard in the last Parliament about family-friendly hours. What did we hear all the time? We heard talk about family-friendly hours! There were new members in that last Parliament and all they wanted to do was to say what terrible people the now opposition members were when they were in government. They said we were terrible and they had to have family-friendly hours. However, that is not what I stood up to say.

I congratulate the licensed clubs in north-eastern Victoria — my colleague the honourable member for Benambra will support me — on raising money for the State Emergency Service (SES). In recent days 18 Tabaret venues raised somewhere in the vicinity of \$63 000 by having sausage sizzles and various entertainments at their venues on a Saturday. I was involved, as were other honourable members in north-eastern Victoria and the Murray Valley area, and the clubs did a magnificent job for 25 local State Emergency Service operations. Tabcorp matched the money that was raised for the purchase of communication equipment. It was a magnificent day. While many negative things are heard about pokies venues, the licensed clubs and Tabarets in north-eastern Victoria have done a magnificent job and I am sure that the SES is thankful.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Springvale Primary School

Mr HOLDING (Springvale) — I congratulate the staff and students of Springvale Primary School, which is in my electorate, following the confirmation that in this year's budget it will receive \$1.6 million for the implementation of the school's master plan. The confirmation of this funding will enable the school to commence the plan shortly and will ensure that the community can realise its vision for a safer school. It will be consolidated in one area and have better curriculum development. The funding will also facilitate the provision of better sporting and recreational facilities, and it will all be done in the context of preserving the main administrative area of the school, which is a beautiful Federation heritage building.

The school was subjected to a cruel hoax at the last election when the Liberal Party promised \$300 000 for major capital works. Clearly the opposition had no idea of what investment was required to enable the school to realise the vision of its master plan. This was not surprising, given that the project was completely unfunded and one of a series of electoral stunts performed with the desperate aim of hoping that the electorate would forget the chronic underfunding of our public education system that occurred under the previous government.

I congratulate the school principal, Vince Curatore, all of the parents and staff and most particularly all of the students, as they realise the redevelopment of their school and the implementation of their master plan.

Tertiary education and training: BIGS

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — The Building Industry Group Scheme (BIGS) was a group training scheme run by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and in particular government mate Martin Kingham. BIGS was given a clear bill of health by the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment just last year, but BIGS collapsed in April this year. More than 220 apprentices were displaced, and considerable sums of public money were lost. The minister immediately moved in an orchestrated campaign with the CFMEU to place the blame for this collapse on the Master Builders Association. The MBA runs its own entirely separate scheme.

According to the minister the MBA's failure to accept her proposal to merge the two schemes was responsible. But now the minister has failed to make available the administrator's report on BIGS and the terms of the deal she put to the MBA. That deal included assumption of all the massive debts and liabilities of BIGS, which no organisation in its right mind would have accepted. It was never anything more than a blame-shifting exercise.

This minister wants to protect factional Labor mates from scrutiny, particularly those involved in union elections, and she is running a vendetta against the MBA, embarrassed by her own failure to resolve quickly the MBA's own legitimate problems with HIH. The minister who endorsed BIGS financial status was also the Minister for Finance. This failure is hers. She should immediately release all details, and order an independent investigation.

Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — I acknowledge the work of the Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network. The networks were established and funded by the Bracks government with significant responsibility for planning post-compulsory education and training in their areas.

The inner northern network is made up of a number of organisations — the Darebin, Moreland and Yarra councils; the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE; adult, community and further education; secondary colleges, including Reservoir District in my electorate; the Adult Migrant Education Service; and welfare organisations. It is chaired by Cr Peter Stephenson from the City of Darebin, and I congratulate him for his leadership and work in the community and the direction he has been giving to the interim committee.

The inner northern network was established early this year following a successful expression of interest last December. In the first year particular priority has been given to improving employment and training outcomes for Kooris. The network has ongoing funding over three years of \$400 000 per year, which is substantial support from the Bracks government, and a number of major education institutes in and around my electorate such as Latrobe University, RMIT and the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE. With traditional areas of high unemployment, the success of this organisation is critical in bringing employment opportunities and education closer together.

Member for Chelsea Province: Southcorp Wines

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I am concerned about an allegation that a union official demanded that Southcorp Wines supply him with 24 dozen bottles of premium wine at no charge. In a letter dated 15 November 1995 the joint branch president of the Australian Workers Union, Mr Bob Kernohan, wrote to Southcorp Wines stating that this practice of officials of the union requesting goods free of charge from companies is not supported by the union and is not union policy. Mr Kernohan went on to state that such a practice compromises those who do it. The question that now must be asked is whether this particular AWU official kept the 24 dozen bottles of premium wine for his own use. Alternatively, did he sell the wine and, if so, what did he do with the proceeds? How does this union official justify this tactic of standing over a company and demanding goods free of charge? Did he declare the so-called gift to the taxation department? These questions need to be answered and should be answered by the union official who did this. That union official is now a member for Chelsea Province in another place, the Honourable Bob Smith.

Wallan Primary School

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — I inform the house about Wallan Primary School, which is one of the very good schools within the Seymour electorate. Recently I visited the school and talked with the principal, Mr Phil Sutton, who is obviously a proud and enthusiastic advocate for his school.

In the state budget the Bracks government gave \$2.5 million to the school, which has more than 500 students, to build 18 new classrooms, a multipurpose facility and a canteen and to develop its library. The plans for the facility are well thought out and appropriate to the needs of the local community.

The principal also broadly talked about the school, which is the first state government school in the southern hemisphere to be accredited to run the Primary Years Program of the International Baccalaureate.

The Primary Years Program (PYP) is a method of teaching based on the inquiry model focusing on developing children's research and learning skills. All staff are professionally developed in many learning strategies including Blooms Taxonomy, De Bono's six thinking hats and multiple intelligences. The PYP compliments the Curriculum and Standards Framework, and I congratulate all the staff and community of Wallan Primary School for their

commitment to excellence in education and daring to be different in offering what they feel is the best for their students.

Mount View Primary School

Mr SMITH (Glen Waverley) — I raise the matter of a local primary school in my area that has expressed its concern over the funding proposals released in the state budget. Mount View Primary School principal, Pat Waring, took the step of writing to the parents of all the 725 students at the school to outline his concerns over the direction of school funding in the budget.

Mr Waring expressed concern that his classroom sizes were still above standards and that no funding had been allocated to alleviate this. He was troubled by the lack of transparency in the allocation of upgrade funding and noted that it appeared as if school funding was being used as a political tool to buy favour with the electorate. Further, he said it seemed that any needs-based funding was going only to those schools that were badly run down.

I have a child attending the school and I think it is appalling that schools must be in such a state of disrepair before the government will commit any serious funds to upgrade them. We do not want a situation where schools are deliberately neglected in order to attract much-needed funding.

Mr Waring, who is a well-respected principal in the Monash community, suggested an alternative system whereby upgrades were prioritised and funding objectively distributed on a needs basis. This would allow schools to plan their maintenance schedules with certainty. For a government committed to a world-class public education system, the Bracks government's budget has sadly failed the children at Mount View Primary School. It is a disgrace that the funding decisions of the state government are so blatantly politically motivated.

Essendon citizens advice bureau

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — In this International Year of the Volunteer I would like to pay tribute to the Essendon citizens advice bureau. This worthy organisation celebrates its 32nd birthday this month. It has for those years been providing excellent services to the people of Essendon and surrounding districts. Under its current president, Jack Filling, it continues to do that, not only running the emergency relief scheme on behalf of Moonee Valley City Council but also working with a number of other organisations

in the Essendon area, particularly local lawyers, in providing a free legal service.

It is an indication of the dedication of some of the people who work for the bureau that looking through last year's annual report I recognise a number of names of volunteers who were there when I was the Essendon council representative in 1985. Women like Betty Somerville, Betty Allanson, Terry Cartwright, Fay Speer and Joyce Tatum have given over 17 years of excellent work in this voluntary capacity. Some of those women are rostered on at least once a week and sometimes twice a week. The sort of work they put into this organisation and to the community on a voluntary basis if costed out would cost the council or another organisation a huge amount of money.

Apart from a short period for rebuilding, the bureau has always been at the Moonee Ponds town hall, which is now the Clocktower Centre. It has continued to operate in a worthy and responsible manner. It is a great asset — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired. The time set down for members statements has also expired.

GRIEVANCES

The SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Attorney-General: former Chief Magistrate

Dr DEAN (Berwick) — I wish to grieve about the situation which is currently being referred to as the Adams affair. I make the general point that it would be regarded in the legal community that there could be no greater sin for any Attorney-General than to conspire to remove a member of the judiciary. Such a thing would be regarded as low and as improper as any Attorney-General could be.

You might find that an Attorney-General could set fire to the Supreme Court and still survive as an Attorney-General. You may find that an Attorney-General could run off with the wife of a chief justice and still remain the Attorney-General. But if an Attorney-General conspired or colluded with others to remove a member of the judiciary you would find that that Attorney-General could not remain the Attorney-General.

When this matter concerning Michael Adams first came to my attention some time in September 2000 I already

knew he was a robust character. I had run into Michael on more than one occasion during my involvement with the Pathfinder project, and it was clear to me that he was an individualistic and sometimes very testy character. When these conflicts in the court came forth it seemed to me that what could be done and what needed to be done to fix the problem was for the Attorney-General to engage in some form of mediation or other work.

When the Attorney-General sat on the seat just behind me and said to me, 'I think we should have a bipartisan approach to this', I took him at his word. At that point it seemed that the robust character, Michael Adams, had run into some problems with his magistrates and if we were bipartisan in our approach to the matter the problems would be fixed. However, it concerned me that as time went by the matter was not fixed. Not only was it not fixed but it got worse and worse.

When the motion of no confidence was finally brought by the magistrates I still thought the Attorney-General may try to fix the problem and that I should remain bipartisan. When the Attorney-General asked me to be bipartisan it was the first time in my entire relationship with him that he had ever asked me personally to do anything. Many of my colleagues told me that this man's history would suggest that I should be suspicious, but I was not. I said to them, 'No, I will not be suspicious of the Attorney-General. I will take him at his word'. Someone also asked me, 'Why is it, Robert, that for three and a half years Michael Adams has had this relationship with his magistrates, yet nothing like this has happened before? Why is it that as soon as the new government and this Attorney-General came to office this problem started to bubble over?'. Still I said, 'No, I take the Attorney-General at his word'.

The Victorian Bar Council is a very small place, and little happens in the legal profession without its members knowing the truth. Even at that stage I was starting to get some feedback from members of the bar and other members that all was not right. Nevertheless, I took the Attorney-General at his word, went in front of the cameras and said, 'So far as I am concerned, I wish Mr Adams well, and I hope all will be right'.

As the weeks went by someone suggested to me that not only was there a bad smell about it but that an advice existed. The advice went directly to the removal of the Chief Magistrate — not any Chief Magistrate but this particular Chief Magistrate. I again passed that up as being just talk. When the next thing I heard was that the press was submitting freedom of information (FOI) requests to the Attorney-General to get hold of that

advice, I pricked up my ears. I was then provided with a copy of a document that contained both the first and last paragraphs of the alleged advice. I will remind honourable members of what the first and last paragraphs say. The first paragraph says:

I am asked to advise on:

- (a) What means are available to remove the Chief Magistrate from his position as Chief Magistrate? and
- (b) What are the consequences for the Chief Magistrate's pension entitlements in so removing him?

The last paragraph says:

The current Chief Magistrate if removed from his position this year would not satisfy the requirements of section 14 of the County Court Act 1958 and so would not be entitled to a pension in accordance with that section. Accordingly, as he would remain a magistrate, his pension entitlements would be the same as any other magistrate.

Then I started to get seriously worried.

Honourable members interjecting.

Dr DEAN — Any lawyer reading an advice with such first and last paragraphs would be extremely concerned, and it would not be a matter that they would laugh about, as I suspect members of the government wish to do. I started to make some inquiries. What I found out was probably the crux of why I became so concerned. I found out not that the advice was prepared when the allegations came to light in September or October 2000, but that it was prepared in January of that year — some nine months before any of the allegations surfaced. I was concerned that in September or October the Attorney-General had said out there in public in front of the cameras that that was the first time he had heard about the allegations and he would therefore try to act on them. Yet here was an advice that said that something was being done as early as January.

The next fact I found out was who actually prepared the advice: it was Mr Dreyfus, QC! Everybody in this place and everywhere — and it has been admitted by the Attorney-General — knows that Mr Dreyfus, QC, is a close friend and confidant of the Attorney-General. The next thing that happened was that I got a copy of the advice. Silly me, apparently everyone at the bar except me had a copy of the advice. Anyway, the next thing this Johnny-come-lately did was look very closely at the advice. What did I find? First, that it referred not only to how you could remove the Chief Magistrate by going to the Supreme Court but to the fact that another mechanism that could be employed to get rid of the Chief Magistrate would be to demote him, which would be an executive act that did not require going to the

Supreme Court, and make him an ordinary magistrate. There were two mechanisms in the advice designed to get rid of the then Chief Magistrate.

The next thing I found was that there was a big section about how much it would cost the government to remove Michael Adams. Then the *Herald Sun*, which was hot on the trail of the advice and everything that surrounded it, went to the person who actually produced the advice. What did he say? He said that he did the advice which says, 'I am asked to advise about how to get rid of a Chief Magistrate' and he did it for his own personal amusement! Nobody in this Parliament or in Victoria believes that that is the case. Then he said that at the time there was some confusion and the bar was concerned about Michael Adams. Is he saying that he produced advice on how to get rid of the Chief Magistrate to the Victorian bar — that it wanted advice on how to get rid of the Chief Magistrate? I think not.

If you read his advice closely one thing is very clear, and that is that the only person who can do anything about the advice or to whom it is remotely relevant is an Attorney-General. Why? Because only an Attorney-General can take an executive action to demote a Chief Magistrate, only an Attorney-General can take a matter to the Supreme Court to remove a Chief Magistrate and only an Attorney-General is at all concerned about how much it will cost him and his government to pay off or get rid of a Chief Magistrate. So no-one believes that Mark Dreyfus, QC, prepared the advice for any other purpose than to advise an Attorney-General.

Honourable members interjecting.

Dr DEAN — And so the questions were asked. I came into this place and did — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Dr DEAN — Mr Acting Speaker, can I have a bit of protection?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! Could I have a bit of silence? I am having difficulty hearing the honourable member for Berwick.

Dr DEAN — I did what any shadow Attorney-General would do — that is, I came into this place and asked questions. I asked the Attorney-General questions that were absolutely direct. Let me tell you that there are three things you can do with a question: you can admit it, you can deny it or you can avoid it. That is a well-known legal principle. I came into this place and asked the Attorney-General

questions that he could either deny, admit or avoid. Direct though the questions might have been and easily denied by simply getting up and saying, 'That is not true', every single question was not denied — it was avoided!

Let me tell the house this: another legal principle is that if you avoid — and deliberately avoid — a question, that is as good as a plea of guilty, because you had the option. What were the questions I asked the Attorney-General? I asked him whether he got the benefit of that advice. What was his answer? He said, 'I didn't ask for that advice to be made and I never saw that advice'. We asked him again 'Did you get the benefit of that advice? Did you discuss it?'. His answer was, 'I never asked for this advice to be made and I never saw it'. He absolutely and clearly avoided answering the question whether that advice was discussed with him. Why? Because we all know it was! How ridiculous to assume that when he was going through the process of a magistrate being removed, he does not discuss it at all with his friend and confidant, Mark Dreyfus, QC — who just happens to be full bottle on the very topic! Absolute rubbish!

Then I asked him a lot of other questions. I said, 'Did you call Mr Adams into Parliament and say "You're a disgrace"? Did you say that you would not have appointed him? Did you say, "If I hear a mention of a no-confidence motion the press will hear"?'. I asked him those three very simple questions. What did he do? Did he say, 'I deny saying that', 'I deny calling him in' or 'I deny saying he was a disgrace'? Not at all. He gave an airy-fairy answer, which left him not admitting or denying but avoiding. Then I asked, 'Did you ring a magistrate early in 2000 and say, "You are gutless for not moving a motion of no confidence"?'.

Why was that important? Because if he had done that, it would show not only that he was aware of and involved in a motion of no confidence early in 2000 — which would put the finger on the suggestion that he did not know it until then — but also that he was promoting such a proposition. The fact is he avoided that question again.

I then asked, 'Did Bob Stary, your friend, ring around with your authority and collect information against Adams?'. It was a very straightforward question to which he should have leapt up and said, 'That is a lie' or whatever he wanted to say. He avoided it again. I then asked, 'Why \$750 000 extra? Surely that was because Adams wasn't going to leave?'. What did he do? He avoided it again. I asked, 'Did you make secret visits to the courts and talk to them about Adams in early 2000 and say, "He's got to go"?'. Again, the

Attorney-General got up and avoided the question. I asked, 'Did you discuss the matter with an appointee to the Magistrates Court — who had just gone into the court and then made complaints — before she went in?'. Again he avoided the question.

The situation the Attorney-General is now in is this: he is faced with a raft of allegations, all of which he has failed to deny, and if he does not deny them he is pleading guilty!

Won Wron prison

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — I rise today to grieve on behalf of the people of Yarram. Today a petition has been tabled in this Parliament signed by 2683 people from Yarram and district. It proclaims the intent on behalf of the people of Yarram that one of the community assets, which ironically is the prison that was established there some 38 years ago, should remain open.

This issue has come about because this caring and sharing government, this government that proclaims its intentions of looking after country Victoria, this government that says it will govern for all Victorians, this government that says it will make decisions in the interests of all Victorians, this government that will be inclusive and involve people in how it goes about making its decisions, came like a thief in the night and on budget day dropped the bombshell that the prison at Yarram would close.

The people of Yarram will not accept that decision and will not take the matter lying down. They intend to fight the decision constructively. As I said, the prison has been in the area for some 38 years and is an important part of the community: it employs 42 staff and has a payroll of \$2 million; it is worth an estimated \$12 million to the local economy; it has established rehabilitation and integration programs; it has an established mechanism for convenient visitation by people coming to see the prisoners; it expends \$1 million in the local community; and has an estimated annual operating budget of \$3 million.

The facility brings many other benefits to the region, not the least of which is that over the 38 years of the prison's existence, and particularly over the past 10 years or thereabouts, a program called Prisoners on the Run has been established, which is designed to benefit the disadvantaged in the Gippsland community. During its existence it has raised something of the order of \$770 000 — \$50 000 this year — and all of that money has been dedicated to the needy and disadvantaged people of Gippsland.

In addition, the prisoners contribute to the local region some 15 000 hours of community programs of all sorts, shapes and kinds in a variety of spheres. It is appropriate to say that the prison is essential to the life and times of the district of Yarram, yet what has the Bracks government done? It announced in the budget a decision which will have the effect of closing the prison over the course of the next two years and the community of Yarram will lose the benefit of this local facility.

These have been tough and difficult years for the community. They have suffered drought — —

Mr Maxfield interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Narracan is getting under the skin of the Chair. I ask him to be quiet and not to interject.

Mr RYAN — Isn't it lovely to hear the interjection coming from a Gippslander! On behalf of this Labor government one would expect him to support the people of Yarram in requiring the prison to remain open, but what does he do? He sits on the backbench bagging those poor people who have been subjected to that process by this mob, and he is one of their number!

Mr Maxfield — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the Leader of the National Party said I was bagging the people of Yarram. Under no circumstance have I bagged the wonderful people of Yarram.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! What is the point of order?

Mr Maxfield — The point of order is that I ask him to withdraw his allegation that I was bagging the wonderful people of Yarram who have suffered under the pathetic Kennett government.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr RYAN — Isn't it lovely! What a great exhibition on behalf of a Gippslander. One would think he would back those people and look after them at a time when the government, of which he is a part, has closed one of the great community assets of the area. It is typical. They are in complete denial. They have had problems with the subsidence issues and ongoing difficulties with the Basslink program which the government wants to completely ignore. There are difficulties with the marine parks issue, which is an absolute circus visited upon those people by this government. Appalling decisions have been made and

the government now discovers it cannot even get the legislation right, which apparently will be rewritten in some way, shape or form. It is a further element of the uncertainty brought to the Gippsland community by this lot that claims to be a government on behalf of good old country Victoria! The reality is that it could not give two damns!

There are other difficulties also. Not far away, Prom Meats was closed. To his credit — and he is in the house today — the Minister for State and Regional Development has recently seen a delegation on this issue and the National Party hopes that something can be done to assist. Those are the problems faced by the people of Gippsland — 85 jobs lost within 45 minutes of Yarram.

One of the great ironies is that the township of Yarram and its community is currently participating in the Alberton project, which is funded in part through the Department of State and Regional Development. It is a pilot project intended to enable small towns in country Victoria to play an important part in the design for their way ahead and making their way into the future, being able to think laterally and being able to accommodate the needs of their communities in times to come.

What have we here? In the face of this project funded in part by the minister's own department, with no more ado the government comes in on budget day and takes the heart out of one of the great community assets of the township. The government says the prison has two years to run. The community will not cop the decision and there will be more about the issue over the intervening two years. A team is travelling to Yarram this day, which in part comprises representation from the Department of State and Regional Development, and I do not detract for one moment from their competence. They are good people and they do a good job. They will meet with community and shire representatives to examine what they regard as some sort of option to the closure of the prison.

I assure the house that the people of Yarram and the Wellington Shire Council will work with the government to explore every possible option to replace those 40 jobs that could be lost through the prospective closure of the prison. The jobs to be lost include not only the 40 direct jobs but also about the same number of jobs elsewhere because of the carry-over effect. Without qualification, the people will work with the government to see if a replacement enterprise can be located. The National Party hopes that something will turn up to provide those alternative forms of employment. However, history tells us it is a big ask; history says it will be very difficult.

Six years ago I was involved in the establishment of the timber mill in Yarram. It stands on what was about 100 acres of bare paddock. The mill was established from nothing with assistance from the previous government and in concert with the local community. That timber mill now employs 41 people in a town of 1800 people. It is a magnificent symbol of what can be done when a government works constructively with a relatively small community to get an outcome that everybody — including the previous government and the present government if it had done anything about it, and it has not as yet — would be proud to say is a great symbol of that joint effort. That took a lot of work on behalf of a lot of people and it tapped into a competitive edge in the community.

What will this government do to replace those 40 jobs? It will be interesting to see what happens. I say without any qualification that the community will work with the government to achieve the outcome that is wanted. However, I fear that despite the best efforts of all concerned we will not get an outcome remotely like 40 jobs.

Let us go forward in time for a moment and presume for the purposes of the discussion that in six or nine months time we are no further advanced. What will the government do? It will be faced with what I think is an almost inevitable choice. Will it pursue this stupid decision to close this prison? I will come back to the rationale in a moment. Will the government cost this community the 40 jobs there plus the extra 40 jobs that are dependent on the operation of this facility? Will it persist with this and take those jobs out of this town?

Will this caring and sharing government cut the heart out of this place or will it continue the operation of this facility and ensure that a tremendous local resource is maintained and the benefits that currently flow from it continue to flow? That is the nub of the question we will be considering in the coming months and years. I want the government to know that I will be here to ask the question on behalf of these people with monotonous regularity. It is a question the government will have to answer and an issue on which it will have to deliver.

The background to this decision is that the prison has been there for about 38 years. It is a minimum-security prison and employs about 40 people. It contributes to the economy to the extent that I have indicated and provides various additional benefits. The Minister for Corrections was good enough to give freely of his time to meet with a deputation a few days ago and that was appreciated. We found out in the course of that deputation that a 10-year master plan had been developed, and inevitably that master plan involved an

examination of the Yarram facility. It looked at the capital expenditure that might be required to bring the facility up to speed. It looked at the various services provided through the prison to the prisoners themselves and the community at large. It looked at the way the community generally benefits. In the course of that deputation we were assured that when the decision was made those issues were taken into consideration and balanced against the needs of the corrections system.

I ask you rhetorically, Mr Acting Speaker, wouldn't you think that when this was happening the government would have had the good grace and courtesy to at least talk to the local community in some way, shape or form about what it was proposing? Wouldn't you think that in the course of meetings the government was having with the municipality in other forums it would at least talk to the local council about what it proposed to do? Wouldn't you reckon that it would have had the common decency to provide some sort of opportunity for the local community to have some input into this? We now have the A team going down there and picking up the pieces when we could have had a much better outcome.

That is what the people of Yarram are putting to the government. A true win-win situation can come from this; it can be salvaged from the wreck created by the government, and it can be done in this way: it should be possible to ensure that Won Wron can continue to provide the service it has historically provided to the prison service. Honourable members know that on any given day in Victoria about 300 prisoners who should be in the corrections system and in jails are in police cells. We know that there is a 10-year master plan. We do not know all the details but we know that the government intends to build a new 600-bed prison and a new 300-bed prison in metropolitan Melbourne. We also know that the government will build two smaller prisons to hold 100 to 120 prisoners.

However, what is supposed to happen in the next two years to provide the additional beds the government will invariably need in that time? How the blazes is the government going to provide the additional facilities otherwise provided by the Won Wron facility? What will happen at the end of two years when the government does not have any more beds built and there is an additional number of prisoners floating in the community?

There has been some discussion about portables being built. I am not sure where they are to be located but I believe the government has leapt into this on an ill-informed basis. It could have done a full and proper examination of the capital required to bring Won Wron

up to par, worked with the local community in a way that would have seen that achieved and ensured that Won Wron could continue to provide the service it historically has to the prisoners who are kept there. However, we have the government coming in like a thief in the night and dropping this bombshell on the people of Yarram on the day of the budget announcement.

The people of Yarram are anxious to work with the government. They want to achieve the best outcome for their community and for the government. They want to achieve a situation whereby that prison, which has historically provided such a tremendous service to the prison service and I understand is regarded by the prison system as being the singularly most commercially efficient operation in the system overall — the best — can continue to play that important role. They want to ensure that the community can continue to benefit as it now does in the ways I have outlined, and importantly, that the prisoners can continue to draw the benefits they receive from being located in this area and doing the work they do in the community. These are the sort of outcomes the community of Yarram wants. However, above all else, it will not wear this; it will not cop this on the chin.

Today the community is working with the government to see if options exist, and I guarantee honourable members that the National Party will be back to check on this as the years go by.

Member for Warrandyte: share portfolio

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I grieve today about the standards of behaviour in corporate and public life and the need for higher standards of propriety. The recent collapses of HIH Insurance and One.Tel have put this issue squarely in the spotlight. The public demands higher standards to counter the rorts being perpetuated on shareholders, policy holders and staff in those two companies, many of whom are decent, hardworking Victorians. I note that one of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission investigations under way into One.Tel involves claims of possible insider trading, a very serious offence that prohibits trading in shares based on knowledge of market-sensitive information not readily available to the general public.

Today I wish to concentrate on a Victorian example of corporate propriety gone walkabout. The case in point is Melbourne IT, a company the main function of which has been a domain-name register. Melbourne IT commenced life as an arm of the University of Melbourne or Melbourne Enterprises International Ltd

(MEIL). In July and August 1999 the university chose to take advantage of the share market information technology boom and float this entity. My recollection is that the previous government assisted the development of Melbourne IT shortly before that with a grant of some \$500 000. However, the float was conducted in a way that raised serious concerns when it was examined by the Victorian Auditor-General last year.

I refer to page 37 of the Auditor-General's *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* dated June 2000, which states:

The prospectus stated that a proportion of the offer was to be reserved for clients of the broker and secondary broker. The prospectus did not indicate that only around 8 per cent of the 42 500 000 shares on issue would be available to the general public who were not on a broker's list.

...

We were aware of some criticism in the media that very few members of the general public, including staff of Melbourne University were able to obtain shares in the float. This factor is reflected in the above table which indicates that the general public only received around 8 per cent of the total shares allocated.

The Auditor-General's report found a few other things. It identified a failure to obtain an independent valuation for the float. It remarked that the notification of a vital contract with a United States software company was withheld from the Australian Stock Exchange for a month. Significantly, and in a damning indictment of this process, the Auditor-General identified a deliberate undervaluing of the company.

I return to the Auditor-General's report. At page 36 he states:

Despite what we considered were indicators that the market would have valued the company much higher prior to the float if updated market forecasts had been made, MEIL was not prepared to pursue this avenue ...

Further on he states:

The published results of Melbourne IT for the period ended 31 December 1999 provide evidence of an earnings capacity far beyond the level stated in the prospectus. Revenue was 19 per cent higher than forecasts. The reported revenue of Melbourne IT for the first quarter of 2000 increased against budget by a massive 585 per cent to \$11.3 million. This was only \$3.6 million short of the company's entire revenue for 1999.

It is obvious from the public record that ordinary investors were given far less information and far less opportunity to invest in this float than others closer to Melbourne IT.

At a time when we can see the slippery dealings that appear to have been entered into with the high-flyers at

HIH, One.Tel and other corporations, Victorians are entitled to feel uneasy about this matter. This is especially so when we understand that those who got on board early in this share float were rewarded handsomely: the subscription price was \$2.20, yet on the day of the float the share price hit \$9.10!

The Auditor-General found that the jump in Melbourne IT's share price was the second highest percentage gain in the history of the Australian Stock Exchange. That works out at an appreciation on one day of 413 per cent, which in anyone's book is not a bad day's work.

It is appropriate that we recognise the good fortune and the timing of those who got in on the ground floor and managed to secure a shareholding before the public float on 14 December 1999.

Mr Brumby — How would you do that?

Mr ROBINSON — Let us recognise the Melbourne University council member identified in the Auditor-General's report. Let us also recognise the MEIL director and the three advisers on the share float. Let us then recognise the at-least nine directors and staff of Melbourne IT, all of whom are mentioned in the report.

While we are at it, let us recognise as well the extreme good fortune of the 4 per cent of shareholders who, prior to the public float, managed to secure for themselves parcels of more than 10 000 shares — remembering that on the first day the shares appreciated by 413 per cent. Christmas must have truly come early for those very fortunate shareholders.

We should not let the scrutiny stop there. After all, scrutiny is a good thing, especially when it comes to share dealings. I am sure that ordinary hard-working Victorians who were denied a slice of this pre-float action might want to join with me today in recognising the less well-known and more anonymous shareholders on the Melbourne IT shareholder register — for example, Phillip Neville Honeywood, of 82 Michael Street, North Fitzroy. Coincidentally this is the same property in which the honourable member for Warrandyte — who also goes by the name of Phillip Neville Honeywood — declared an interest in the June 1996 pecuniary interest register.

Do not get me wrong, Mr Acting Speaker, I do not have a problem with honourable members holding shares — I hold shares, and I know many others do — but the circumstances in this case are extraordinary.

What makes the honourable member for Warrandyte unique among the list of those who secured shares prior to the public float is that of the 5312 shareholders he was the only one — the only single one — who had been, up until 20 October 1999, the Minister for Tertiary Education and Training in the state of Victoria. That is rather unusual.

What also makes the honourable member for Warrandyte unique as a shareholder is that until 20 October 1999 — —

Dr Dean interjected.

Mr ROBINSON — I thought we were into conspiracy theories! I thought conspiracy theories were the flavour of the morning — and this is a ripper! If we were to prosecute on the basis of conspiracy theories, we would hire the honourable member for Berwick. He would love this one!

What also makes the honourable member for Warrandyte unique as a shareholder is that until 20 October 1999 he was also the only person in Victoria principally responsible for the Melbourne University Act. He was the only shareholder of the 5312 shareholders recorded at the time of the public float with the power to appoint members to the board of Melbourne University. If I am not mistaken, he was the only shareholder who at an earlier time had approved and licensed the university to operate a new private university. These are all extraordinary coincidences, I am sure.

Dr Dean — Have you debated bills relating to Coles Myer?

Mr ROBINSON — Yes, and I declared an interest — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Mitcham will ignore interjections, and the honourable member for Berwick will stop interjecting across the table.

Dr Dean interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Berwick! The honourable member for Mitcham, without assistance.

Mr ROBINSON — In the dying weeks of the Kennett government no-one would have been more acquainted with the dynamics of Melbourne IT than the honourable member for Warrandyte.

Mr Honeywood — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, impugning a member of Parliament — —

Government Members — Guilty!

Mr Honeywood — We'll come to you in a moment! Impugning a member of Parliament's integrity in a grievance debate goes against standing orders. I ask that you draw the honourable member's attention to that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Warrandyte takes offence. Will the honourable member for Mitcham withdraw?

Mr ROBINSON — I am not sure what I am meant to withdraw, because I am not impugning anyone. I am just stating facts. I am happy to withdraw whatever it is that the honourable member takes offence to, although I am not sure if that is what he asked.

Unless I am mistaken, the honourable member for Warrandyte, in those various unique capacities which I have outlined to the house, would have had a rare insight, or the privilege of gaining a rare insight, into the operations of the University of Melbourne and the planned float of Melbourne IT.

The public record, as evidenced by the Auditor-General's report of last year on ministerial portfolios, shows that prior to his resignation as Minister for Tertiary Education and Training, the decision had been taken to float Melbourne IT. Honourable members know that happened in July and August 1999 and that expressions of interest had been sought from brokers to underwrite and facilitate the float. We know that happened on 6 August.

However, I am advised from my own inquiries that only two weeks after resigning his ministry, and still weeks before the public float, the honourable member for Warrandyte sought shares in the float. I understand he secured those shares on 10 December — which, by another coincidence, happened to be the same day the existence of Melbourne IT's contract with the United States-based software firm Intuit was announced to the Australian Stock Exchange — which helped to boost the share price to an extraordinary level on the first day.

The honourable member for Warrandyte did that as someone who had much greater access to information than a member of the public. Honourable members should remember that the public did not become aware of the extent of the undervaluation of the business until the company's first-quarter results for 2000 were released many weeks later.

Victorians are entitled to be gravely suspicious about the circumstances of this case because it has, I feel, a certain odour to it. I am sure the honourable member for Warrandyte, as someone who has had a modest record as a share investor, will want to assure all Victorians that he exercised absolute propriety in this matter, and I look forward on behalf of all Victorians to receiving some advice from him. In particular, he might like to explain precisely how he obtained the shares and how many he obtained; what advice he received about the investment before he staked his claim; what he knew about the true value of these shares before he purchased them; and whether anyone else associated with him as a minister — for example, ministerial staff — gained access to the shares before the float.

While the honourable member is considering advice on these points he might like to advise Victorians why it seems to have taken him seven months to declare this shareholding. The honourable member did not register his shareholding until the September quarter last year, almost a year after he became a shareholder. By my reading, he would have had at least two opportunities before that: one in the summary of primary returns of November 1999, with variations between 1 October and 15 December 1999. Now, I can understand that the stag party might have gone on for a few days, and the recording of a great statistic might have slipped his mind. It might have been a stag party hangover, so perhaps we could forgive him one slip.

He had a second opportunity in the May 2000 return. It must have been quite a hangover! The matter did not come up in that return either, and we had to wait until the June 2000 return to learn of the variation.

It seems the honourable member for Warrandyte was able to muster far more speed registering his share interests with stockbrokers than with the Parliament, otherwise he would have missed a fantastic return for those who got in on the ground floor. The honourable member and his leader — and let us not forget his leader in this case — need to answer a couple of simple questions. How many shares did he get his hands on? How much money did he make on the float? Do honourable members opposite seriously expect decent, hardworking Victorians to believe that, had the honourable member for Warrandyte not been the responsible minister in the lead-up to the float, he would still, with his very modest record of share ownership, have pushed as hard as he did to obtain shares ahead of the float?

The honourable member and his former leader need to think very carefully about this question before they provide the advice that is so desperately needed in this

tawdry affair. In conclusion, the honourable member should provide that comprehensive advice now. Honourable members should not have to wait seven months to get some answers.

Member for Warrandyte: share portfolio

Mr HONEYWOOD (Warrandyte) — It is always interesting when a member of Parliament chooses to impugn another member's character and integrity. It is even more interesting when, as in this case, the honourable member's words are crumbs from the table of Kim Carr, who has been trying to get this story up for three months. He has tried twice to sell it to the *Age* as an exclusive story and used exactly the same information, no more and no less, at Senate committee hearings a month and a half ago which were open to the general public.

At the end of the day there is absolutely no story. Why is there no story? Because, for one thing, state ministers for tertiary education and training have nothing to do with universities' financial affairs or with any issues to do with company floats or whatever. I would not have had a clue about Melbourne IT when I was minister because the federal government provides all the funding for universities and a state minister is not privy to the financial relationships between a university and any other entity. State ministers deal with TAFE issues more than anything else.

For another thing, I have been a client of J. B. Were for many years. That company issued a public statement to Michael Gawenda, the editor of the *Age*, when Kim Carr was trying to float the same yarn some weeks or months ago, making it quite clear that J. B. Were allocated to Phillip Neville Honeywood exactly the same allocation of shares in the float it was underwriting as to any other of its clients.

Government members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Mitcham has made allegations; and the honourable member for Warrandyte is attempting to answer. I would appreciate a bit of silence while the honourable member is attempting to answer the questions.

Mr HONEYWOOD — J. B. Were issued a public statement to Michael Gawenda at the time Kim Carr tried to throw this up. What it said was that Mr Honeywood got exactly the same — —

Ms Delahunty interjected.

Mr HONEYWOOD — Mary, I would be very careful if I were you. When we look at the Delahunty family trust — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Warrandyte will refer to other honourable members by their correct titles. The Minister for Education is interjecting and is out of her place. I do not appreciate that.

Mr HONEYWOOD — J. B. Were issued the public statement that I received the share allocation on the same basis as any other client of J. B. Were according to a strict formula based on the number of share transactions I had had with the firm.

The other key point is that when I was a government minister I had a strict rule of not being involved in any single share transaction that had anything whatsoever to do with any government affiliation. At the time of this float I was an opposition member of Parliament. J. B. Were was appointed the underwriter, and no nexus can be made between my former role as minister in the previous government and subsequently as an opposition member who happened to be offered shares by J. B. Were, as were many of J. B. Were's clients at the time. I never sought them; I was offered them as a J. B. Were client. I am not a very astute investor because I sold them for \$1.20 a share and they were purchased at \$2.20 a share!

Member for Berwick: conduct

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — I grieve today for the damage inflicted on Victoria's judiciary at the hands of the opposition. Earlier the honourable member for Berwick said there was no greater sin than for an Attorney-General to conspire to remove a member of the judiciary. When he said that it was clear that he was not talking about the current Attorney-General, because there was no conspiracy in relation to former Chief Magistrate Michael Adams. As we all know, Mr Adams resigned after a series of serious complaints were made against him. In his earlier contribution the honourable member could only have been talking about another Attorney-General who conspired not only to remove 12 accident compensation judges, but also, of course, infamously, the Director of Public Prosecutions. She conspired to do that with the current shadow Attorney-General.

Yesterday, in a cowardly attack in this house, the shadow Attorney-General launched a political campaign against a member of Victoria's judiciary.

Dr Dean — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I am not sure whether I correctly heard the honourable

member for Richmond, but he may have accused me of conspiring with a previous Attorney-General. If he did, he knows the rules of this debate — that is, you are not entitled to impugn the character of any member of this Parliament — and if that is what he said — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Dr Dean — Rob Hulls was not here! If that is what the honourable member said, I want him to withdraw it.

Mr WYNNE — If the honourable member takes offence, I withdraw it.

The shadow Attorney-General used the protection of Parliament to make what would otherwise be highly defamatory accusations about a member of Victoria's magistracy.

Dr Dean interjected.

Mr WYNNE — In a number of previous contributions the shadow Attorney-General has said that he held in very high regard his mentor, Sir Reginald Smithers, a former Federal Court judge for whom the honourable member was an associate for a number of years. Sir Reginald Smithers would be shocked and appalled at the behaviour of his former associate, the shadow Attorney-General.

In an unprecedented attack, the shadow Attorney-General alleged that a member of Victoria's magistracy was not appointed on merit, nor because of her outstanding abilities and contribution to Victorian justice, but as a political plant purely by virtue of her marriage. Those accusations are not only blatantly sexist, but display the shadow Attorney-General's unconcealed disdain for the Victorian judiciary and the separation of powers.

Ms Caitlin English was appointed a Victorian magistrate on 22 June 2000. She was appointed under a process established by the previous government. She was interviewed by a panel and recommended for appointment without reservation by that panel. The appointment was made solely on merit and reflected Ms English's ability and her contribution to the legal profession.

Ms English has a significant background in pro bono work as a first executive director of the Public Interest Law Clearing House and a number of years in legal aid work. Ms English has significant experience in both criminal and civil matters. I reiterate that she was appointed under a process established by the former government. The shadow Attorney-General's

accusations suggest that not only was she appointed — —

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, my understanding of the standing orders, which Labor members frequently want to use, is that if the honourable member wants to make accusations against another honourable member he has to do it by substantive motion. The honourable member for Richmond is making accusations against the shadow Attorney-General, which he should not be doing.

Government members interjecting.

Mr Leigh — You are the first guys to get up and complain about it. You cannot have it both ways!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Richmond is close to making accusations against the honourable member for Berwick. I ask the honourable member for Richmond to be very careful.

Mr WYNNE — Thank you for your advice, Mr Acting Speaker. That the magistrate was purely a political plant — —

Dr Dean interjected.

Mr WYNNE — The shadow Attorney-General suggests that Ms English was engaged in some form of conspiracy. That is the imputation of what you said yesterday in the house, shadow Attorney-General.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Richmond will make his remarks through the Chair and not across the table.

Mr WYNNE — To say that Ms English engaged in a conspiracy to dispose of her chief judicial officer is a baseless and outrageous accusation. The shadow Attorney-General is, frankly, not fit for the office he holds of shadow Attorney-General. This slur on a magistrate — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Richmond continuing, without assistance.

Mr WYNNE — The opposition's accusations undermine the integrity of each magistrate in Victoria. The shadow Attorney-General has gone too far, as was acknowledged last night by the Victorian Bar Council, which said that the allegations reflected badly on the opposition and should not have been made. I refer to that public view of the bar council. The honourable

member for Kew and the shadow Attorney-General had distinguished careers at the bar, and the bar council is the professional association that represents barristers in this state. I refer to what its chairman, Mr Derham, said about the accusations of the shadow Attorney-General. Mr Derham is reported as having said, in part:

'The allegations made against the magistrate are very serious but no evidence was produced to support them. It is very unfair that such unfounded allegations were made.

'The magistrate concerned has been placed in an extremely difficult and unfair position', Mr Derham said. 'The nature of a judicial position makes it hard, if not impossible, for a judge or magistrate to respond publicly to complaints or criticism without compromising ...'

Dr Dean interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! So far I have been lenient with interjections across the table. The Chair is now having difficulty in hearing what the honourable member for Richmond is saying. I ask the honourable member for Berwick to contain himself.

Mr WYNNE — The opinion continues:

... without compromising the independent and neutral position that he or she occupies. This is particularly so when the allegations are made without any clear basis. This position is worsened by the protection awarded to the maker of the statement by parliamentary privilege. The allegations reflect badly on the opposition and should not have been made.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WYNNE — That is the bar council!

Dr Dean interjected.

Mr WYNNE — What do you think they are saying about you?

This is not the first time the shadow Attorney-General has attempted to undermine the Victorian magistracy, having previously levelled an unprovoked attack on all magistrates suggesting they were lazy and undisciplined. In the same attack the shadow Attorney-General accused the Acting Chief Magistrate of having no control over the magistrates. That was entirely without foundation and flawed in every respect, including the failure of the shadow Attorney-General to get the Acting Chief Magistrate's name right. He could not even get the name of the Acting Chief Magistrate right! Further, the shadow Attorney-General referred to there being 130 judges sitting in the Magistrates Court when there are in fact 94.

The shadow Attorney-General was prepared to bring Judge Kent before the Parliament with no regard to proper process, natural justice or indeed procedural fairness. On 17 May he sought leave to move a motion in the lower house following the conviction of Judge Kent on 11 May, and quite appropriately leave was refused. This should have been evidence enough for Dr Dean that the overwhelming majority of Parliamentarians — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! the honourable member for Richmond should refer to members of the house by their correct titles.

Mr WYNNE — That should have been enough evidence for the shadow Attorney-General that the overwhelming majority of parliamentarians view the doctrine of the separation of powers as absolutely fundamental. However, not to be perturbed by any notions of decency or fairness the shadow Attorney-General persisted, continuing his pathetic political antics, bringing only disrepute to himself and to the party he seeks to represent.

The shadow Attorney-General has made all sorts of unfounded calls for resignations and inquiries, yet the former administration of which he was a part repeatedly refused all cries for investigations into the systematic massacre of democracy in Victoria. I give a couple of quick examples. The former government rejected the call for accountability when it plotted to undermine the Director of Public Prosecutions; disbanded the Accident Compensation Tribunal and dumped 11 respected judges; and abolished the Office of the Equal Opportunity Commissioner because she dared to question the former government's treatment of vulnerable members of the community

It abolished the Law Reform Commission because it dared to be independent; abolished the state Industrial Relations Commission; and replaced three members of the planning division of the then Administrative Appeals Tribunal for purely political reasons. There is a long history. This is a serial offender. He goes around — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The Chair is having difficulty hearing the honourable member for Richmond.

Mr WYNNE — The shadow Attorney-General goes around peddling gossip and innuendo. He has talked to Bluey off the trams and Billy the Pig from Mexico. Everyone has a yarn — and all unsubstantiated. I repeat, all unsubstantiated!

This kind of behaviour cannot be tolerated in a member of the Parliament. Frankly, Mr Acting Speaker, the shadow Attorney-General is not fit to hold the high office he enjoys at the moment. His leader should stand him down for this outrageous attack on the magistracy in this state. He should be stood down. His behaviour is absolutely outrageous. He seeks to undermine the magistracy in this state and he simply does not understand the fundamentals of the separation of powers. He should be stood down!

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! Are we all settled?

Fishing: Gippsland Lakes

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I can understand the excitement of honourable members considering they were here until about 4 o'clock this morning. I wish to change the subject.

I grieve for the recreational anglers of Victoria, particularly those of my electorate of East Gippsland.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr INGRAM — Honourable members should keep their shirts on because I am not talking about marine parks. The matter I grieve on this morning is the impact of the current water release rules from major storages that seriously threaten the viability of our inland freshwater and estuarine fisheries. As part of the debate of the past few days a forum has been held at RMIT where the future water needs of Melbourne and the potential of Melbourne Water to build a new water storage were discussed. In the past few days the debate about the impact of major storages on the ecology of the river systems has been focused on by the ABC.

My electorate of Gippsland East contains the Thomson Dam, the major storage for Melbourne Water, which provides about 50 per cent of the water consumed in Melbourne. That storage has had a major impact on the ecology of the Gippsland Lakes and the Thomson River. I will focus on the impact on the fisheries in the Gippsland Lakes.

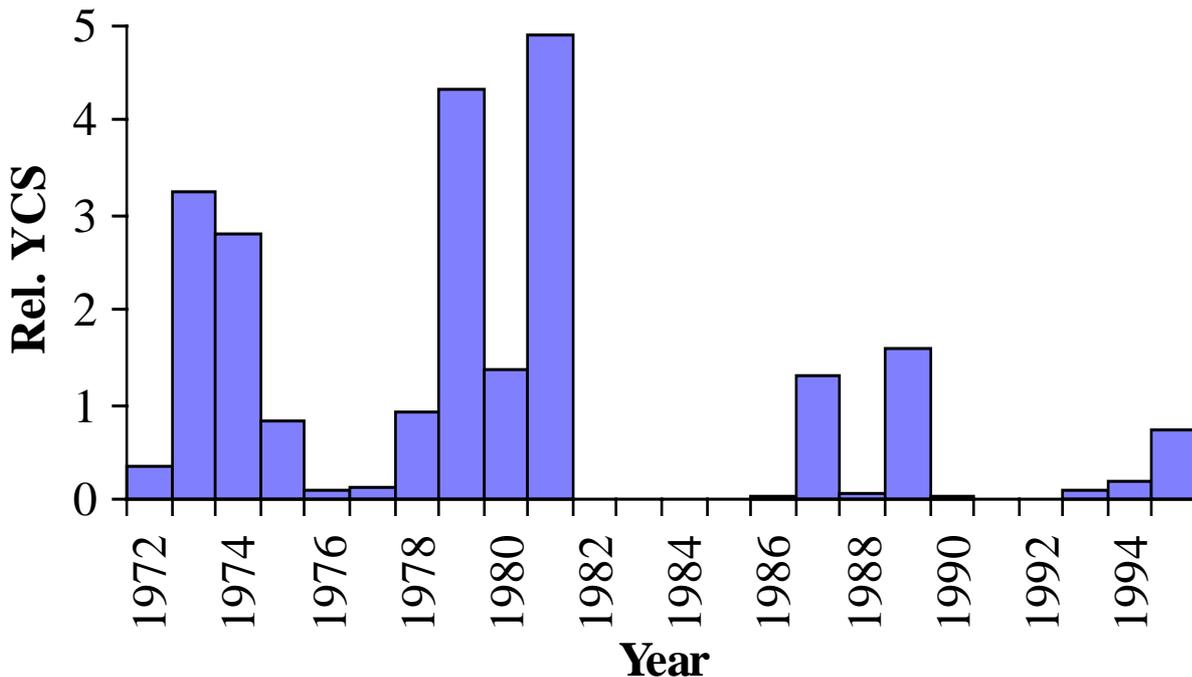
One of the last major storages to be built, the Thomson Dam came on line in the early 1980s. It is interesting that since that time there has been a major decline in the recreational and commercial bream fisheries in the Gippsland Lakes, which are important for both tourism and the commercial fishing industry. With that decline, much of the debate has focused on recreational anglers blaming professionals for overfishing, the professionals

blaming the large take from the recreational sector and the ongoing impact of cormorants. A large number of people will call always for the culling of cormorants because of their impact on the fisheries. The major impact on bream fishing in the Gippsland Lakes has

been the coming on line of the Thomson Dam. I ask leave to have a graph that I presented earlier to the Speaker and Hansard included in my presentation.

Leave granted; graph as follows:

Relative year class strengths from 1972 to 1995



Source: Walker et al. (1998), *Development of an environment-recruitment model for black bream: a case study for estuarine fisheries management. FRDC Final report*

Mr INGRAM — The graph shows the recruitment and the relative year class strengths of the black bream population in the Gippsland Lakes. It shows what spawning has occurred in particular years and the strength of that year's year class of small bream.

Coincidentally, for the first four years after the Thomson Dam came on line in 1981 there was no spawning of black bream in the lakes. Most of our native fish are batch spawners: they produce large amounts of larvae and eggs in the years when conditions are favourable. The worst aspect is that the peaks of the spawning recruitment in the big years have evened out. It is about a third of what the production was since before the dam went on line. I am not saying it is the only thing that has impacted on the bream population of the Gippsland Lakes, but it is a major one and will have long-term implications for both recreational fishing and tourism. Not only will it affect the health of the Gippsland Lakes, it will also continue

to aggravate the debate between recreational and commercial fishermen. That needs to be looked at, because what we have lost are those large spring flows that the native fish require to spawn.

Another issue is the impact of cold water pollution — that is, the release of cold water from below major storages in Victoria and Australia. A forum to be held on 18 and 19 June at Lake Hume Resort will discuss the impact of cold water pollution on freshwater native fin fish in the Murray–Darling Basin and the rest of Australia. I quote from a report from June last year of the River Murray Scientific Panel on Environmental Flows entitled *River Murray — Dartmouth to Wellington and the Lower Darling River*. It addresses a range of impacts on the Murray–Darling Basin, but it identifies river regulation as the major impact:

Because water lower in storages is cooler and has a different water quality, releasing water from lower level off-takes sends this bottom water downstream ... Temperature

depression of several degrees can occur for a few hundred kilometres as a result.

The report also states that this would be the case for the Dartmouth and Hume dams, where river zones immediately downstream have lower water temperatures. Consequently there is an overall reduction in all forms of productivity in those river systems.

The report continues:

Secondly, some species require temperature thresholds to be reached to trigger spawning ... Lowering river temperatures is likely to favour introduced fish.

In other words, the current water release rules benefit fish like carp, which proliferate in the Murray–Darling Basin, above native fish. When we hear about the impact of carp on our rivers we should realise that it is our manipulation of the environment that is preferencing the carp and allowing them to thrive. We have lost three warm water native fish from the Mitta Mitta River immediately below the Dartmouth Dam and from there until the river reaches the Murray. These are the Murray cod, the trout cod and the Macquarie perch. This is an issue that affects regulated rivers across Australia. For large distances downstream from storages all the native fish populations that once existed have been lost.

The report continues:

The only way to address temperature depression in the River Murray is to ensure that water is released at more natural (higher) temperatures during the spring–summer season.

As a general rule, this would mean releasing water from the surfaces of those storages.

The report also identifies the years in which the Dartmouth Dam was constructed — between 1977 and 1990 — when it almost reached full capacity, and it shows the impact on the Mitta Mitta River below the dam when that storage was totally full.

The flows released from the dam are not part of a natural flow regime, and they have no seasonal or daily variability. More importantly, the summer water temperature only briefly rises above 16 degrees Celsius, a temperature that is crucial for the breeding of native fish species. That is why we have lost the Macquarie perch, in particular.

Rarely does it get above the optimum temperature for Murray cod, which is 20 degrees, so in large sections of our rivers we are killing off our native fish. We are trying to deal with this by restocking large numbers of fish such as Murray cod and trout cod and other

freshwater natives, but the impact is such that they do not recover. We are not achieving their spawning requirements.

The report shows the actual spawning requirements for the Murray cod, the trout cod and the Macquarie perch in the rivers outlined. Since 1990, when the dam was filled, there have been no seasons when any of the three native species could have spawned in the Mitta Mitta River below that storage; and since the dam was built there have been very few seasons in which those species have had favourable conditions.

This was addressed recently in a report I obtained from New South Wales. The report, which contains the most recent data on cold water pollution, is entitled 'Eternal winter in our rivers — addressing the issue of cold water pollution'. It was written by Allan Lugg, the senior conservation manager with the New South Wales Fisheries at Nowra. The report has not been released because it includes assumptions that because of cold water pollution in that state the New South Wales government would be at severe risk of legal action for polluting its rivers. This would go across the Victorian acts as well. The Victorian government and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment would be at risk of polluting our rivers below major storages by not addressing the cold water pollution issue.

The report found that 3000 kilometres of New South Wales rivers are seriously affected by cold water pollution. It states that:

Failure to address the issue will jeopardise the attainment of benefits from environmental flows recently put in place.

It would seriously jeopardise the benefits we hope to obtain by increasing environmental flows, particularly in the Murray River. Increased environmental flows in the Murray would be irrelevant: we would not gain any benefits from them because of the way we are affecting the fisheries.

The report also states:

More recently the New South Wales Fisheries has undertaken research at Burrendong Dam. Native fish were kept in six paired channels — three fed with warm water drawn directly from the spillway pondage and another three fed with cool water drawn from the same source but via a heat exchanger in the river.

They did a 31-day growth test of silver perch. In the warm water channels the average growth was 25 per cent in length and 112 per cent in weight, whereas the fish in the cool channels grew an average of only 2 per cent in length and 16 per cent in weight. Only 25 per

cent of the fish in the cool water — the same water quality, only colder — survived the full 31 days.

While we are stocking large numbers of native fish into our inland rivers we are killing them off, so we are not gaining any benefit. More importantly, they do not have the conditions to spawn even if they survive, and their growth is severely retarded. The report continues:

Alien fish species, most particularly, trout, redbin perch and carp, have much lower breeding temperature thresholds. Cold water pollution has enabled these species to enjoy greater recruitment success and proliferate, which has placed additional pressure upon native species through predation and food/habitat competition.

The report further states:

Given these findings, it is reasonable to assume that CWP is severely reducing the productivity of rivers and associated ecosystems such as wetlands, and probably contributes to lower abundances of many species including fish, water birds, frogs and bats, which depend upon aquatic invertebrates.

The report addresses the fact that the government would be liable for this problem:

It could be reasonably argued that by omission to install appropriate storage release infrastructure, cold water from storages of changed chemical and physical characteristics to inflows is being introduced to downstream reaches to the detriment of aquatic life and downstream uses and thus pollution of waters is occurring.

It continues:

To date, no person or organisation has yet brought an action for a breach of the legislation on this issue.

The minister needs to take appropriate action to implement these measures, including a plan to fix the situation. A number of solutions have been identified, and things would be similar in Victoria. I ask the government to take note of the outcomes of the forum to be held at the Lake Hume Resort on 18 and 19 June.

The report continues:

Indeed, failure to raise water temperature will greatly reduce the potential benefit of environmental flows —

in the River Murray —

as the temperature of the water is likely to be an even greater limiting factor than the volume or timing of flows.

Attorney-General: former Chief Magistrate

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — I grieve that this state does not have an Attorney-General that understands the doctrine of the separation of powers. Although he may talk the talk of open, accountable and transparent

government, he certainly does not walk the walk of open, accountable and transparent government!

Last week I raised in this place my concerns about an article that the Attorney-General had written in the *Age*, in which he talked about the separation of powers. He spoke about there being three limbs of government — the judiciary, the executive and the legislature. I am concerned when he says that each is independent of the other and must operate separately from the other, because while the judiciary may be completely separate from the legislature and the executive, the most important factor is the executive. The government and the cabinet and its ministers are all drawn from this place and are fully accountable to this place.

The only forum in which the people of Victoria can hold the Attorney-General to account for whatever reason is this place. There is no doubt that the Attorney-General must have found himself in an invidious position in late 1999 or early 2000 when it appeared, even on his own admission, that concerns were being raised about the Chief Magistrate.

I pause to bring a bit of sanity back into the debate. I must disclose that I have known Michael Adams for almost 20 years. I knew him before I was a member of the bar, which I joined in 1985. My firm used to brief him from time to time, and that was when I first met him. I served on the bar council with Michael Adams, and I have remained an acquaintance of his since.

I also know one of the other principal players in this drama, Mark Dreyfus. I certainly would not call Mark a friend, but he has been an acquaintance of mine at the bar. We have been opposed on at least one occasion from my recollection, and certainly I was aware of his involvement with the Labor Party, because it received a deal of publicity when the party was restructured. Likewise I am sure he knew of my Liberal affiliations when I was at the bar.

I have also known a number of magistrates who have been mentioned in despatches, robing rooms or otherwise. All of the people were meritorious appointments to the Magistrates Court. They are fine lawyers, and they discharge their jobs to the best of their abilities.

There is no doubt that in about December 1999 the Attorney-General became aware of tensions in the Magistrates Court. He was no doubt aware, as was I, that there were tensions about three principal rules that Michael Adams had promulgated. There was the 4 o'clock rule, which said that no magistrate could leave the precincts of the court until 4 o'clock, even if

they had finished their list or discharged the business before them in the court. They could then take overflow work from another magistrate or another court. Michael Adams also introduced a rule rotating magistrates around different courts and in different locations around country Victoria in an attempt to address the perception that there was a closeness between magistrates, police and certain others. There was also a concern about the taping of proceedings, which was adopted perhaps to address the perception that magistrates were not really fully accountable in an appeal process because there was no true record of what was going on in a courtroom.

There were other concerns on which I do not necessarily need to elaborate. However, on the Attorney-General's own admission there were rumours of complaints about the behaviour of the Chief Magistrate. Perhaps the Attorney-General found himself in an invidious position, but he is accountable to this place. If those rumours were of concern to the point of his actually getting to the decision to remove the Chief Magistrate — I am not saying that the Attorney-General got to that point then — surely honourable members should have known, because he is accountable to this place.

The advice I have seen, which seems to be factually based, was produced in about January 2000. The Attorney-General, not the honourable member for Richmond or others, needs to explain and to answer a number of questions. I will list the questions I want answered as the representative of the people of the Kew electorate and, with many others in this place, as a representative of the people of Victoria. When and where did the Attorney-General become aware of those complaints and what was the nature of those complaints? There is no doubt that the Attorney-General appears to have asked Mark Dreyfus to provide advice about the restructuring of the Magistrates Court. Precise details need to be provided about the advice that was sought and the timing and nature of that advice. The Attorney-General was talking about the restructuring of the Magistrates Court, which is an act of the executive and the legislature. He is fully accountable for those matters and he owes this place answers to those questions.

On his own admission Mark Dreyfus was a friend of the Attorney-General's, and indeed in a newspaper article the Attorney-General describes Mark Dreyfus as a confidante. The Attorney-General needs to explain why he was seeking advice from Mark Dreyfus, his confidante, about the restructuring of the Magistrates Court. He was aware of complaints about Michael Adams, so why is he still persisting with the suggestion

that he did not discuss these matters with Mark Dreyfus, and why should we believe that Mark Dreyfus had nothing to do with it and commissioned this advice from a junior barrister, Anthony Klotz? It starts to stretch the credibility of the argument to say that a confidante is briefed to advise about the restructuring of the Magistrates Court but the issue of the complaints being made about the Chief Magistrate is not discussed.

I do not propose to reread the excerpts from the advice the honourable member for Berwick read earlier this morning. There is no doubt that it is a detailed advice that does two things: it discusses how you can go about removing any magistrate and the process the Attorney-General has to go through to present an argument to the Supreme Court to get a magistrate removed. That is canvassed in the advice, and the opinion given by Anthony Klotz to Mark Dreyfus was apparently for no other purpose. In a newspaper article Anthony Klotz said he did not know what its ultimate purpose would be. The advice also discusses the proposition that Michael Adams could be removed by the executive, not by the legislature, from his position as Chief Magistrate and demoted to an ordinary magistrate; that natural justice did not need to be accorded to Michael Adams and the executive could do that at its own whim. The executive is fully accountable to this place for its every action.

There is another matter that needs to be dealt with — that is, what happened after this process? Honourable members know that a number of tensions were disclosed in an article that appeared in the February edition of the *Law Institute Journal* about a discussion that took place between members of the executive of the institute about judicial appointments, particularly in the Magistrates Court. I quote from the journal at the point where the Attorney-General is answering a question about the process of the appointment of people to the Magistrates Court. It states:

There's no real process. There's a bit of a protocol now for the magistrates, put in place by the former attorney. You had to undergo a course before you could become a magistrate. A group of people was short-listed from all those who had undertaken the course. I've since found out that you had to be invited by the Chief Magistrate to do the course, which again perpetuates the problem.

I read that — there may be another explanation — as an explicit criticism of the Chief Magistrate and the way he apparently went about making appointments to the Magistrates Court.

Michael Adams responded in the following edition of the *Law Institute Journal* by saying that was not true. While he may have been a member of a particular panel, ultimately it was a person in the Department of

Justice who made the decision to invite people to do this course. It had nothing to do with the Chief Magistrate; it had to do with an officer in the Department of Justice. That started the process.

Concerns were being raised by the Attorney-General in December 1999, yet we now see this opinion that clearly talks about removing Michael Adams. It may not be a criminal conspiracy. However, if the Attorney-General is criticising the Chief Magistrate about the appointment of magistrates to the Magistrates Court; if he is concerned about the rumours of tensions between magistrates and Michael Adams; and if he is aware of the rumours of tensions created by the rules Michael Adams was implementing, surely he should be accountable to this place. He owes this place a full, open, accountable and transparent explanation of the process he went through in removing Michael Adams.

Greg Levine, a senior magistrate, wrote a letter on behalf of the magistrates association to the Attorney-General making a number of complaints, and it was somehow leaked to the press. The letter may have been released, but I have certainly never seen a copy of it. It seems to me that it was leaked from only one or two sources — either from Levine or the Attorney-General. If that is the case, we are owed an explanation as to how and why it was leaked and thereby became the public document that initiated the whole process that resulted in an unprecedented vote of no confidence in the Chief Magistrate, and ultimately his unprecedented resignation.

That is what I grieve on. Until we have a full, open and accountable explanation of the process the Attorney-General went through, this matter can never be put to bed. Considering that the honourable member for Richmond raised all sorts of allegations about the previous Attorney-General, all these matters should surely be irrelevant. The government has set the high bar, and if it has not, the Independents have. The Independents have already ruled that out, which seems to me incomprehensible. For the betterment of the Magistrates Court and Victoria generally we need to get a full, open and accountable explanation from the Attorney-General soon.

Gaming: problem gambling

Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Community Services) — The rapid expansion of the gaming industry has brought with it wide-ranging social implications for the Victorian community. I grieve on the lost opportunities during the term of the Kennett government to introduce strategies for a responsible gaming industry and to minimise the incidence of

problem gambling, and measures to assist problem gamblers.

I contrast that with the Bracks government's responsible gaming policy and its clear strategies to minimise problem gambling in Victoria, which are now recognised nationally. The measures introduced by the government have proved successful in encouraging problem gamblers to obtain assistance. The Bracks government through the Department of Human Services has directly responded more effectively to problem gambling issues. This government has developed an integrated and comprehensive problem gambling communication strategy, which is recognised all around Australia.

I am proud to say that the — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! The minister, without assistance!

Ms CAMPBELL — I am proud to say that the government's communication strategy has now become nationally recognised — it will soon be internationally recognised — as having a proven track record in getting results. The government has not approached the issue of problem gambling in the same way as did the Kennett government. This government took the issue seriously, and it has brought the broader community on board.

Let us look at some of the things the Bracks government has done, including the proactive measures it has taken to ensure that under its responsible gaming policy people have freedom of speech. The government has enabled research to be released, and it put a considerable amount of money into the problem gambling communication strategy. The government has also ensured that its advertising message hits the mark. The government considers the effectiveness of its campaign and evaluates its strategy. It has ensured the problem gambling telephone number is the property of the government and not that of an independent organisation. The government is also ensuring that the data collected is made known to the wider community instead of being buried in the vaults of some research organisation or the Department of Human Services.

The government has also ensured that brochures are available in different community languages. The agencies and sites for problem gambling services across Victoria have been widely acclaimed. Even the Productivity Commission's data shows that Victoria has more agencies to counsel problem gamblers than anywhere else, and the commission has recognised their

effectiveness. The government has engaged in partnerships with the wider community and ensured that the messages are specifically targeted at different subgroups. Specific messages are targeted at women, men, young people, older people, the Koori community, children and adolescents, and it is formulating a specific rural and regional strategy.

The problem gambling communication strategy of the Bracks government is in stark contrast to the very weak approach of the Kennett government.

I will go through some of those items individually. Freedom of speech has been given back to organisations and individuals who wish to speak on gaming in Victoria. Contrast that with the former Kennett government, which defunded the Victorian Council on Problem Gaming. The Bracks government has established a problem gambling secretariat that is free to speak.

Under the former Kennett government the funding and service agreements for what was then known as Break Even — what a misnomer that was — but is now called Gamblers Help were stifled. Under the Bracks government the funding and service agreements enable people to speak out and enable organisations to record the number of people accessing their services in their annual reports. Under the former Kennett government annual reports could not contain data about which the wider community should be informed.

The government has ensured that members of the wider community have opportunities to speak. As an example, members of the Interchurch Gambling Task Force were threatened and told that if they spoke up not only would their problem gambling services be at risk but so too would services for which they were able to tender. Clearly under the former Kennett government although organisations were underfunded, their funding was threatened if they spoke out. They are no longer treated in that way. Organisations are able to present data in their annual reports, are free to speak with the local media and are able to communicate with Victorians in a free and open manner.

Research information that was locked in the Department of Human Services never to be released is now available to the wider Victorian community, and in February the government was proud to present to it the results of research into problem gambling. The reports that were stifled under the former Kennett government contained substantial advice. A report that the Bracks government was proud to release is called *Playing for Time — Exploring the Impacts of Gambling on Women*. It contains strong advice concerning recommendations

that I am pleased to say the Bracks government has not only released but has acted upon. The recommendations under the heading 'Solutions' suggest that community education strategies should be undertaken. The Bracks government has acted on a recommendation not released under the former Kennett government! Suggested interventions include strategies directly designed to impact on women. The advice and recommendations were stifled under the former Kennett government but delivered by the Bracks government.

A person who has now found the opportunity to put his views on gambling to the world is none other than Lloyd Williams, a man who made a considerable amount of money from gaming. He has found his voice, and it is interesting that he is no longer mute on the effects of gambling addiction. He has freed himself of his pecuniary interest, which has given him the freedom of speech.

Under the former Kennett government the ethnic media had no opportunity to be briefed, nor did it have a strong message delivered to it. The Bracks government has invested in advertising in the ethnic media and keeps it constantly informed on what is happening with problem gambling. The results are spectacular. More people from a range of culturally and linguistically diverse communities are now linking in with problem gambling services.

It is worth placing on the record the funding put into gambling solutions by the Bracks government. The 'Think of what you're really gambling with' message has been launched with strong funding behind it. Last summer \$1.8 million was invested in the summer offensive, and \$6.1 million will be put in this financial year. It is interesting to compare those figures with the communications funding under the former Kennett government of \$2.5 million over three years in the first instance, and \$5 million for its Walk Away campaign, which was an absolute waste of money in terms of results for problem gamblers.

I turn now to the contrast between the Bracks government and the Howard federal government. The Howard government made a pathetic announcement a couple of weeks ago that it had allocated the princely sum of \$8.4 million to problem gambling over three years, of which \$1.5 million is allocated to research. Nationally that amounts to the princely sum of \$2.3 million per annum, which is an insult.

I contrast the expenditure of the Bracks government with that of problem gambling programs in other states. As I said, last summer Victoria put in \$1.8 million, and

that will rise to \$6.1 million this year. In the last financial year South Australia put in \$480 000 and \$555 000 has been allocated for the next financial year. Western Australia put in the grand total of \$5000 for brochures, and Tasmania put in \$115 000. The government is very proud to contrast its strong investment in problem gambling programs with the pathetic efforts of the Kennett government.

I also want to cover the results of the problem gambling communications strategy. That is a proud record. It is copybook communication campaign management. It was research and evidence based, and it has hit the mark. As I have previously informed the house, there has been a 91 per cent increase in telephone counselling services and a 118 per cent increase in face-to-face counselling as a result of the government's campaign. It has been effective because it has sought to achieve attitudinal change and help-seeking behaviour among Victorians affected by problem gambling. It was researched and tested, benchmarks were set, and every step of the process has been evaluated. It makes the previous government's 28 per cent response to its miscampaign a non-effective farce.

I turn now to the evaluation of the government's communication strategy. The government has ensured that Victorians have thought about what they are really gambling with: 80 per cent of Victorians recognise that message and the government's television advertisements. It has ensured that the Gamblers Help telephone line is owned by the Department of Human Services in contrast to the pathetic management by the Kennett government, where the gambling help line was owned by an individual organisation that tried to take that number with it when its contract expired. It was only as a result of considerable work by the Department of Human Services and the Western Australian government that we got that back here in Victoria. I thank those concerned.

To sum up, the communication strategy has been extremely successful. It has been combined with the gaming policy initiatives implemented by the Bracks government and led by the Minister for Gaming. The strong results are recognised throughout Australia, and the government is very proud of its work. I conclude by saying the government has provided a strong strategic approach to the Victorian problem gambling strategy. It has learnt from the mistakes of the Kennett government. It is working hand in hand with the Minister for Gaming, the Honourable John Pandazopoulos, in increasing the influence of local communities in the assessment of gaming licence applications, the display of dollars and cents on machines, the restrictions on advertising, public

awareness, clocks, and the list goes on. This is in stark contrast to the pathetic efforts of the Kennett government.

Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: performance

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I rise to grieve for tertiary education in Victoria, for rural and regional students and those students in the fibre and agricultural industries and for apprentices and trainees in Victoria. I grieve because we have a Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment who has dropped the ball and whose concentration is on her other portfolio in the finance area.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! The honourable member for Hawthorn, without assistance.

Mr BAILLIEU — We have a minister who takes her lead from Senator Kim Carr in Canberra and the Australian Education Union. We have a minister who has an ideological bent against non-TAFE providers and who is quite willing to use students in a political battle with the federal government despite her outrageous freeze. We have a minister who has basically done nothing, or certainly has not done enough in her portfolio.

I want to look first at the International Fibre Centre (IFC).

Ms Campbell — She has got it back on track.

Mr BAILLIEU — The minister at the table interjects that the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment has got it back on track; we will come back to that. The International Fibre Centre was established by the previous government with the support of industry and the Geelong community. It was conceived and implemented as a visionary project with cutting-edge technology set to lift the sights and horizons of the wool and fibres industry. It was launched with great appreciation from the industry and had a driven chairman. It was driven by the government and there was a commitment to it.

Tragically, the fibre centre has been scuttled. There is no other way to describe it. The tragedy is that this government set out to scuttle the centre because it was a Kennett government project. I remember that one of the first things the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment did in this

Parliament when the government came to office was to stand in this chamber and bag the fibre centre, undermine its staff, undermine the visions and foreshadow its demise, and she achieved her aims. That is a tragedy for the industry, the fibre centre, the students and all of those involved. In December 1999 the minister described the fibre centre as an unmitigated disaster for Victorians. She said:

The Bracks government inherited a disaster with the IFC.

She described it as 'the mess left by the previous government', 'the mess associated with the International Fibre Centre' and 'one of Kennett's dreams that turned into a nightmare — an absolute disaster'.

Mr Stensholt interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — The honourable member for Burwood intervenes and says, 'She is right'. Unfortunately the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment had not visited the centre. She did not know what she was talking about. In mid-2000 the minister visited the centre and after that visit she said:

The IFC has world-class facilities, equipment and staff. It is a national asset.

...

The IFC offers world-class facilities, equipment and expertise.

...

I can't help being impressed by this fantastic facility, the investment, the terrific staff, and the links with education and training. Looking around there are so many ideas and possibilities.

...

There is a sense that the IFC can be a driver for the wool and fibre industries.

The reality is that this minister did not know what she was talking about in the first place and set out to scuttle the IFC, and, tragically, that has occurred.

The shame of that is confirmed in the Auditor-General's *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* tabled today. On page 54 the Auditor-General says:

The operating results of the International Fibre Centre deteriorated during the year due to a conscious decision by the Victorian government to reduce the funding allocation ...

A conscious decision to destroy an institution that had the support of industry and was a visionary project! Along the way the minister undermined the confidence of the staff and the stakeholders in the institute. I am

sorry to say that they sought all along to find somebody to bail them out, but the net result is that the IFC is all but gone despite the misleading statements of the honourable member for Geelong North, who said that funding of the centre would be guaranteed. He said that full funding would be confirmed until July of this year and that a commitment from the federal government was not required in the form of cash. However, the reality is that eventually the government went looking for a political solution and the federal government had no choice but to move the IFC's resources to the CSIRO. That is the tragedy of this demise. The students have missed out and the institution has been effectively scuttled. As is reported by the Auditor-General:

The bulk of the equipment from the Geelong campus of the International Fibre Centre will transfer to the CSIRO, while a small amount of the equipment will transfer to the Brunswick campus of the international fibre centre.

Brunswick may survive, but the IFC in Geelong is scuttled.

Let me move on to the Institute of Land and Food Resources (ILFR), which was established after a merger between the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture and Melbourne University's faculty of agriculture in the 1990s. ILFR provides training and education in both vocational and higher education forms in natural resources, horticulture, agriculture, food industry and forestry. It has several campuses around Victoria including Dookie, Glenormiston, Longerenong and McMillan. I have had the pleasure of visiting Glenormiston a couple of times, as well as Dookie and Longerenong. The minister has not been anywhere near them.

When ILFR sought to change the structure of its courses in 1997, which would have inevitably led to reduced access for higher education and vocational education students, the Kennett government stepped in to prevent it. In October last year the institute issued a discussion paper on its restructure. As a consequence ILFR has moved to downgrade Glenormiston and Longerenong by removing access to higher education at those campuses. I quote from page 4 of the paper:

Despite repeated representation by ILFR and the VFF, the PETE —

that is, the post-compulsory education, training and employment department —

has refused to include ILFR in an additional funding distribution of \$14.3 million to regional TAFE institutes in September 1999.

I raised that matter with the minister in November last year, and she said, 'No way, we're not giving money to

ILFR. ILFR is a university. We don't do that. We'll play political games and say that's a federal government responsibility'. Tragically, the restructure went ahead. There will now be reduced access to higher education at those campuses.

I quote from the editorial in the *Weekly Times* of 11 April, which is headed 'Rural towns the losers in uni shake-up':

But the restructure will also mean fewer choices in courses and their location.

ILFR is certainly within its rights to make these decisions — but where is the minister's vision for access to higher education in country Victoria? There is none. Where is the driver? Where is the minister saying, 'This is what we want to happen. This is where we want students in western and northern Victoria to have access to higher education.'?

That reduction in access will be poorly received in rural and regional Victoria. The minister is to be condemned on two accounts: for her failure to respond to that request for funding, as a result of which these campuses have been moved to the TAFE college realm; and for her failure to provide a vision for access to higher education in rural and regional Victoria.

I will quickly mention the Building Industry Group Scheme (BIGS), the financial collapse of which the minister has overseen. Despite the fact that BIGS is run by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and her factional mate, Martin Kingham, she has sought to shift the blame onto the Master Builders Association by saying, 'Gee, they refused to merge with BIGS when the government put the deal to them. Therefore, they're to blame for its collapse'. Although the minister gave BIGS a clean bill of financial health last year, it has since collapsed. She is the Minister for Finance, and she has the responsibility. She cannot shift the blame onto an organisation that has not had any involvement.

I refer to driver education training, a report on which has been sitting on the minister's desk for months and months. Despite requests to have it released and acted upon, there has been no action. As a consequence, driver education training in Victoria is under threat. You have only to refer to page 47 of the Auditor-General's report to have that confirmed.

I also mention the freeze that the minister imposed on private providers of traineeships in November 1999. It was implemented without any consultation or warning, supposedly to allow the minister and her department to review quality issues in traineeships. The minister

appointed her own consultant, Professor Kay Schofield, to do a report. She indicated that the freeze was a disaster and, as we had been saying, that it had not assisted quality issues because it had frozen in bad quality providers and frozen out those who were growing through market support.

After that 12-month period the freeze was extended in November last year to 30 June this year. I suspect it is about to be extended again, and that will be a tragedy for those providers. We have seen providers go to the wall, apprentices and trainees miss out, and the industry undermined. We have also heard claims of dirty deals done along the way and the minister refuse to release material under freedom of information that would give the truth to those claims.

The management of the freeze is a disaster. The minister has been playing political games with the federal government. She has sought additional growth funding for trainees — but what has occurred? Although the federal government has come good with \$230 million in growth funding, this minister is refusing to lift the freeze, yet again.

I also mention the passing of the Lavin Institute, which was the largest private provider of aged care nursing training in Victoria. Despite the minister's dealings with Lavin — including her covert dealings with it before the election — she turned her back on the institute. Consequently hundreds of students were displaced and Lavin went to the wall. The trade-off is that the minister has been forced to spend even more money on providing aged care nursing training than she would have had to if she had supported Lavin in the first place.

I also refer to TAFE colleges. I note in the Auditor-General's report that was tabled this morning that last year 6 of the 22 public TAFE providers were considered to be operating under financial difficulty. The minister has chucked tens of millions of dollars at TAFE colleges, but what has been the outcome? Now we have five colleges in financial difficulty. There has been no financial improvement in the TAFE colleges, and one of the reasons for that is highlighted on page 51 of the Auditor-General's report:

We recommend that the Office of Post Compulsory Education Training and Employment undertakes a thorough review of the outcomes of enterprise bargaining, particularly over the management of unfunded salary increases, in order to ensure that the stated efficiency improvements are achieved and that such costs do not adversely impact on the overall provision of education and training by institutes.

This is the agreement the minister signed off on, and the one imposed on institutes without any regard.

The actions she has taken in the tertiary education sector in Victoria have been a disaster. She has not done enough, and as a consequence both public and private providers are suffering, apprentices and trainees cannot get access to the courses they want and access to higher education by rural and regional students is diminished by her lack of vision.

Banks: closures

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — Today I grieve for the residents and traders of the Strathmore and Essendon area, who have been treated badly by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, and even worse by the National Australia Bank (NAB). I congratulate those same residents and traders for their determination to establish their own bank in response to the branch closures in their area.

Unfortunately closures of bank branches are nothing new in recent times in Victoria and Australia and have caused considerable hardship to many communities. Nevertheless the situation in Napier Street, Strathmore, is perhaps the worst situation I have heard of. Napier Street has a small but very successful shopping strip in the northern part of the electorate of Essendon. It is in a substantially residential area that has a large number of older residents, as well as a fair sprinkling of young families.

I can remember when a series of bank advertisements on television appealed to older people to put their money in the bank. The advertisements showed a rather scared-looking older couple and advised them not to put their money under the mattress, because that was unsafe, but rather that the bank was there to help them and they should give the bank their money to look after safely. As their interest in profits has risen the banks' concern for the safety of residents' money has correspondingly decreased. The actions of the National Australia Bank, in particular, make that quite clear, reinforcing the view of banks that many people now hold — that banks are not at all interested in small consumer accounts.

Originally two banks, the Commonwealth and the NAB, had branches in Napier Street. The sad story of Napier Street started when the Commonwealth branch closed in 1998. At that stage the NAB gave the local traders and the community a guarantee that its Napier Street branch would stay open. That was very comforting to the traders, and a lot of them transferred accounts to that bank. You can imagine their surprise when only 18 months later the NAB announced it was going to close its Fletcher Street branch. The

Community News, one of our local newspapers, reported:

Strathmore Village Trader Association spokesperson Geoff Kirschner said last week the NAB's announcement would 'make it very difficult' for the centre's 30 or so retailers to maintain their customer base and to conduct their own banking.

'Its disappointing for a number of reasons. When the Commonwealth closed, we did receive an undertaking from the NAB that the branch would continue on', Mr Kirschner said.

'A lot of traders switched across to the NAB to support them continuing on ...'

...

A spokesperson for the National Australia Bank, Haydn Park, said the closure was due to 'a declining level of activity' at the branch.

...

Mr Park said customer accounts would be transferred to Fletcher Street, Essendon, or to other alternative branches, and customer information evenings would be held 'to explain what we're doing, why we're doing it and other banking services available' before the closure on 17 September ...

It came as something of a surprise to the traders and me that although a number of them had transferred their quite substantial business accounts from the Commonwealth to the NAB only 18 months before, the NAB would say its branch was no longer profitable. I made a number of phone calls to the NAB at the time trying to find out why that was so. I discovered the branch was not unprofitable; indeed, it was quite profitable but was not reaching the level of profitability the bank had now determined was appropriate for local branches!

I also learned of a most interesting accounting procedure. The NAB has two accounting streams, its business customer stream and its community customers. The bank assessed the profitability of the Napier Street branch only after excluding any profits from business banking from the calculation, because Fletcher Street was now its business branch. Therefore, while the traders actually used their Napier Street branch for all their financial transactions, those transactions were not counted at Napier Street but at Fletcher Street, even though some of the Napier Street traders had never been to the Fletcher Street branch in their lives.

In those circumstances the claim by the NAB that activity in Napier Street was declining was hardly surprising. We could all easily produce such a result in our finances by, for example, not counting a part of our income. At the time, the NAB sent out a number of

letters to various people who had spoken to them, including me, telling us about the brave new world they were organising for the people of Strathmore. In a letter to the Strathmore Village Traders Association in August 1999, the bank said:

This letter is to advise you that we will soon be moving from our premises at Strathmore. We will be moving to Essendon — 100 Fletcher Street Essendon 3040 — and we will be ready to deliver quality financial services from 20 September 1999.

...

To make the move as a smooth as possible for you, we will take care of transferring your accounts to Essendon ...

We believe you'll find the services at Essendon to be to your satisfaction and we will work with you to understand your requirements.

When I wrote to the bank explaining that many of the residents in that area were older and therefore unlikely to find Internet facilities an alternative, it responded by me telling me once again that those people could go down to Fletcher Street. The bank concluded its letter to me with the words:

The electronic channels include, but are not limited to, automatic teller machines and EFTPOS terminals in supermarkets and stores. Telephone services are available to make invoice payments or transfer funds and to make accounts inquiries outside normal banking hours. Business customers can carry out these functions without leaving their offices or shops by using personal computers.

There is nothing so far about elderly residents. The letter continues:

We acknowledge that some customers, particularly the elderly, at first may be unsure or nervous about using some of these alternative channels. Demonstrations can be arranged to overcome their reluctance.

One of my residents, who received a similar letter, rang up the NAB to see if they could get one of those demonstrations but could not find anyone in the organisation who knew anything at all about them.

While it might serve some people well, according to some research electronic banking is failing a lot of customers. The Finance Sector Union (FSU) has prepared a paper using some of the research relating to electronic banking it has been able to unearth. That research shows:

While EFTPOS and ATMs do offer extended services, there is a considerable body of evidence that indicates that people are still reliant on face-to-face banking. A recent survey of *Choice* magazine readers found that 88 per cent used bank branches at some point.

Users of banks might not all use branches at the same time, but they frequently have specialist needs that cannot be met via an electronic teller. The Finance Sector Union research further states:

In addition, the Pricewaterhousecoopers annual survey of customer attitudes to financial services over the Internet lends further direct support to these findings. The survey found that:

In 1998, 67 per cent of respondents were not comfortable if financial products and services are only available over the Internet. By 1999 this number had increased to 70 per cent.

In 1998, 66 per cent of respondents were not comfortable about providing personal details over the Internet. By 1999 this number had increased to 71 per cent.

Seventy-six per cent of all respondents knew nothing or little about financial services available over the Internet. This position remained unchanged.

In 1998, 91 per cent of respondents said they needed a good or very good knowledge of the institution before using its products or services over the net. By 1999 this number had increased to 95 per cent.

Those figures demonstrate that a large part of the community does not find Internet or telephone banking an acceptable solution to over-the-counter branch banking.

The residents and traders were told that they could still use the Fletcher Street branch, where they would get an excellent service. Honourable members can imagine my surprise when on 17 April I received the following letter from the National Bank:

I am writing to officially inform you that due to a decline in customer traffic and over-the-counter transactions, the National Australia Bank will close its branch at 100 Fletcher Street, Essendon, on July 18th 2001.

So much for the excellent service when the Napier Street branch closed. The letter further states:

An ATM, or automated deposit machine, and EFTPOS facilities will however remain in the area for our personal and business customers.

Our branch at Moonee Ponds will continue to provide full branch services ...

If I were working at Moonee Ponds I would be getting a bit nervous by now, because we know what happened to the last branch from which they promised excellent services:

Customers will also have access to our Niddrie and Keilor branches located nearby.

Staff there should feel a bit nervous as well. The letter continues:

... the National Australia Bank recently announced that our customers are now able to use Australia Post ...

I do not know how much research has been done on people's attitudes to Australia Post, but I have lot of anecdotal evidence from my constituents, especially older constituents, that shows that they do not feel comfortable discussing their personal financial transactions in post offices surrounded by their neighbours and where often there are no areas where they can have private conversations. Certainly there are no offices such as the ones found at banks when there were over-the-counter facilities. The suggestion that this is a reasonable alternative will not be readily accepted by a large part of the community. Of course, ATMs are fine if you have an automatic telling machine card, but many people in my electorate do not.

Branch closures not only impact on residents but can have a dramatic effect on local shopping centres. As I said, there is a vibrant shopping centre in Napier Street and a major transport hub and shopping centre in Fletcher Street. Both shopping centres will be severely disadvantaged by the National Bank's decision. It is obvious that if people cannot go to a bank in Napier Street, they will more than likely do their shopping in an area that has a bank they can use — though goodness knows where that will be now.

Some of the business impacts identified by the FSU research were:

Increased use of cheque cashing by customers —

which obviously can make a business more liable to fraud —

loss of cash sales;

accumulation of excess cash;

increase in bad debt;

delays in depositing cheques;

increased security concerns and risks;

difficulties in obtaining cash and change;

farming businesses may be particularly disadvantaged by the loss of bank staff with intimate knowledge and experience in rural banking matters.

The community impacts include:

Average decrease in spending by individuals after closure of bank branch in their town put at \$320 a month.

The loss of \$320 per user per month in a small retail shopping centre is a substantial decline. Other community impacts included losses of about four jobs per branch and indirect job losses because of businesses

not being able to sustain their livelihoods when there are fewer people shopping in the area.

I thought the National Bank might have been doing something useful for the community when on 24 May it announced major community banking initiatives. The national concession card account provided by the National Bank will allow a free rebate of \$40 a month, which is equal to 13 free over-the-counter transactions a month. That is fine if you can find a counter to use. For my constituents that has proved fairly ineffective.

The traders and the residents of Strathmore decided not to be continually at the mercy of the National Bank, which obviously had little concern for their welfare, so they started a community bank with the assistance of the Bendigo Bank. This month they launched their prospectus inviting people to buy shares in the bank. I am happy to say that I have made a small investment, which will be on my next return to the members register.

The local traders have worked exceptionally hard. They have conducted many public meetings and set up stalls in Napier Street on Saturday mornings to encourage people to join. Over a year they managed to get the number of pledges necessary to proceed. I congratulate the directors of the Strathmore Community Bank, who are all traders from the Napier Street area. They include Craig Jenkins, Mark Burgin, Geoffrey Cullen, Nino D'Agruma, Geoffrey Kirschner — he is the local pharmacist who was a pivotal player in getting the community bank off the ground — Vincenzo Moro, Murray Sykes, Catherine Tyrrell, Pierre Werden and James Griffen. They have all worked hard with other traders and the local residents to bring back banking services to the Napier Street shopping centre.

The bank will be formally launched by the Treasurer next Saturday morning. At last the traders and residents of Napier Street will have a bank the management of which cares about their welfare, and they will have banking services that will be at their convenience. Once again older people will be able to bank easily and to shop in their local shopping centre.

Kingston: councillors

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — Today I grieve about two matters. One is a local matter, and the other is about corruption in the state bureaucracy going back some years.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr LEIGH — Yes, going back some years. First, I refer the Minister for Local Government to the situation

in the City of Kingston, which is in crisis. One of the senior councillors — he is the only one who understands anything about finances — has quit. He is quoted as saying, ‘I’ve had gutful. The conduct of some councillors has left me in an untenable position’. He has complained about verbal abuse from officers and profanity by the mayor. The entire planning department of the City of Kingston’s strategic planning team has resigned. It is frankly in utter chaos.

However, worse than that is the fact that a former mayor, Arthur Athanasopoulos — better known locally as Arthur Daly — is the only person who has had his dual occupancy developments passed by council. The four Labor councillors in the city — the present mayor Cr Elizabeth Larking, Cr Johanna Van Klaveren, who works for the honourable member for Carrum, and two others — have blocked every dual occupancy development that has gone before council except Arthur’s. When he was the mayor he said the City of Kingston was a wonderful city. The moment they dumped him and would not give him a second term, he left the City of Kingston and now lives in the City of Monash.

According to Cr David Normington, who resigned from the council — —

Mr Nardella — Say it outside!

Mr LEIGH — He does say it outside.

According to Cr David Normington, who resigned from the City of Kingston:

I became increasingly frustrated at the Labor clique’s blatant and obvious refusal —

and I make this available; this is a transcript from a local paper —

of every planning application to come before council with the exception of the then mayor. He saw no reason for the continued delays in projects around the city tying up millions of dollars worth of building projects despite the recommendations and the approval from councillors and knowledge of senior officers.

In virtually every one of these instances the proposals were passed when they went to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This council is treating the development of the city as a joke. It has misused its position to protect a Labor mate who, frankly, is not the real mayor of the City of Kingston. There are two of them: one is the federal shadow Treasurer, Mr Simon Crean, and the other is the Honourable Bob Smith in the other house. They are the two who are running our city, and it is a scandal. It is being run by the Clayton mafia branch of the Labor Party. They are a pack of

shady shysters who are taking money from the rest of our city, putting it into Clayton and ripping our city off.

They have ripped the guts out of the City of Kingston. That is what is going on! It is the Labor Party through to its soul! This is what it did in Darebin and Oakleigh in the past, and the City of Kingston can now be compared to the City of Darebin. I call on the minister today to bring in an administrator, or at least someone to investigate what the hell is going on in the council, because it is in crisis and chaos.

Even worse, the government says councils should not increase rates above 2 per cent. What did this Labor clique do? It put up the rates by 7.8 per cent to cover its shenanigans. The Labor clique is incompetent and the officers have lost control of the city. I think Cr Johanna Van Klaveren should be identified. She continually verbally abuses the city officers — she screams abuse at them. At public meetings the mayor tells the citizens that they are idiots — abuses residents! What is going on is an outrage. I call on the government today to show some guts and dump this pack of idiots who are running our city into the ground.

The City of Kingston had some reasonable councillors but a plot was orchestrated by the Australian Labor Party, with the result that we got a group of politically corrupt councillors — the Gang of Four, as Cr Normington refers to them — run by Mayor Larkin. These people have no idea what they are doing to our city. They are destroying the heart and soul of a great city and it is a shame. I know what they are doing in Mordialloc. They are stripping cash intended for the foreshore and putting it into Clayton to prop up the Labor Party. Why has the mayor refused to allow me access under freedom of information to the investigations of the local government department of his antics? It is corrupt in the extreme. It is the Darebin council of the south-eastern suburbs! No matter what Colonel Klink over there says, this city is in crisis and the residents are entitled to — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! The honourable member will refer to honourable members by their due titles.

Mr LEIGH — I am happy to refer to the honourable member for Springvale, whom I called Colonel Klink, as the honourable member for Springvale.

A government member interjected.

Mr LEIGH — Well, his teeth have been melted. The fact is that in this city — —

Mr Nardella — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the honourable member for Mordialloc has just gone against your ruling by referring to the honourable member for Springvale in a derogatory manner. I ask you to direct him to withdraw that derogatory remark.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! I listened to what the honourable member for Mordialloc said in his response. He referred to the person he had addressed as the honourable member for Springvale, using that terminology. I do not uphold the point of order.

AWU: political connections

Mr LEIGH — The second matter I wish to draw to the attention of the house is a serious matter of corruption. We will play guess who. I am happy to make the documents available to the house. I refer to notes and a document that I am prepared to make available to the house, and I quote:

I have been actively seeking an independent audit of the Australian Workers Union since 1990.

Following a short break in the continuity of employment with the Australian Workers Union between 1990 and 1993, I worked for a short period for Senator Robert Ray, who was then the Minister for Defence, and Allen Griffiths, federal member for Maribyrnong. I was re-employed with the Australian Workers Union in late 1993.

As I said, I am happy to make the document available to the house. It goes on:

During my period of employment with Senator Ray I was told to work exclusively under the charge of ... (who I believed worked for state minister David White as an adviser, and Rowland Lindell ...

Everyone today will know him as a bagman for the Labor Party. He runs around with the brown paper bags and is obviously the husband of the honourable member for Carrum.

Mr Maxfield — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I just heard an appalling comment made about a bagman of the Labor Party. Rowland Lindell is the most honourable person I know. He is a man of incredible integrity, and for such a cowardly attack — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! What is your point of order?

Mr Maxfield — I ask that the honourable member opposite who has made these cowardly and despicable comments withdraw those comments because I am

appalled that he could make such appalling comments about a fine individual and a wonderful man.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! The honourable member for Narracan has asked for comments to be withdrawn. Unfortunately, I was not listening at the time. However, I do not believe the point of order can be upheld because it did not deal with a member in the chamber.

Mr LEIGH — The document continues:

... who worked for Senator Gareth Evans). Both of these people work from 1 Treasury Buildings at Treasury Place and I was told to work with them on the same level (level 4), the same level that Senator Ray's Melbourne office was placed.

The work that was performed from this building was exclusively dedicated to preparing literature and flyers for union elections. I was told by ... and Lindell that I could claim overtime to make my salary 'reasonable'. I queried this practice and was told that it is normal practice in all electoral offices whether they are state or federal. Whilst I never claimed overtime I did not work, I observed on many occasions on a Friday afternoon Rowland Lindell clearly falsifying his overtime claim form.

Between November 1989 and 1994 the phone bill and photocopying paper usage, including replacement photocopiers due to burn-out, must have totalled many hundreds of thousands of dollars. I know for a fact that on numerous occasions both Senator Ray and Senator Evans cautioned Stephen Conroy ...

He was cautioned about the high cost of the bills. The fact of the matter is that the people involved were:

... Rowland Lindell, Bill Shorten, Bob Kernohan, Marsha Thomson, John Lenders ...

Government members interjecting.

Mr Nardella — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, The honourable member has just impugned a minister from the other house. I ask him to immediately withdraw those imputations. They are against standing order 108 and I ask him to withdraw them immediately.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! Will the honourable member for Mordialloc withdraw the comments?

Mr LEIGH — Yes, thank you. The document refers to the state secretary of the Labor Party and to:

... Bill Noonan and a majority of young Labor aspirants.

I am calling for two matters to be investigated: the misuse of the offices of a federal senator and the misuse of state taxpayers' money. The amount of \$40 676 was spent by this state employee, who was in the office supposedly working for a state member of Parliament

but in fact was working for a federal minister on union elections. I am outraged and seek federal police investigation into the misuse of the facilities at 1 Treasury Place and, secondly, the fraudulent misuse of taxpayers' money by the shadow Minister for Finance, one Stephen Conroy, who has ripped off the Victorian taxpayers. This 27-year-old was getting \$50 000 in today's terms.

Mr Maxfield interjected.

Mr LEIGH — The guy is a crook. Here is the evidence.

Mr Maxfield interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! The honourable member for Narracan!

Mr LEIGH — He misused taxpayers' money in those days. This grub wants to be the Minister for Finance in a Beazley government. He is a grub and ought to resign from the Senate along with Rowland Lindell, the bagman of a corrupt — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! That is terrible behaviour from both sides of the house!

The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Question agreed to.

TRANSPORT (FURTHER AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) introduced a bill to amend the Rail Corporations Act 1996 and the Transport Act 1983 and other acts to make provision for the winding-up of the Public Transport Corporation, to amend the Melbourne City Link Act 1995 and the Melbourne City Link (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2000 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Local Government) — On behalf of the Attorney-General, I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to make provision in relation to offences relating to trafficking and cultivating drugs of dependence, to amend the Magistrates' Court Act 1989, the Bail Act 1977, the Confiscation Act 1997, the Sentencing Act 1991 and the Juries Act 2000, to make consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — Will the minister provide the house with a brief explanation of this legislation?

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Local Government) (*By leave*) — Essentially this legislation revolves around two matters. It deals with the Mr Bigs in the area of crime and drugs and it increases the penalty for trafficking. In addition it will enable drug matters to be combined into the one offence so that those drug traffickers will be sentenced for the true extent of their drug trafficking and its harmful effects in our community.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

CRIMES (VALIDATION OF ORDERS) BILL

Introduction and first reading

For **Mr HULLS** (Attorney-General), **Mr Cameron** introduced a bill to amend the Crimes Act 1958 to validate certain orders purported to have been made for the taking of forensic samples from offenders and for other purposes.

Read first time.

VICTORIAN MANAGED INSURANCE AUTHORITY BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 3 May; motion of **Ms KOSKY** (Minister for Finance).

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — The opposition does not oppose this very small machinery bill. However, I will

make a few comments in relation to it. The Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) is a body that was established under the previous government in 1996. This is the first opportunity the government has had to review it, to ask for comment on its operations and to see whether as the insurer and risk manager for government departments and participating bodies it needs any additional powers or whether any housekeeping needs to be done in relation to it.

The authority is the body charged with looking after risk for government sectors. Indeed, according to its annual report for 2000 the authority's mission is to provide high-quality, cost-effective and timely risk management and insurance services to its clients. The authority's objectives are to create and promote an environment and culture within client organisations that will proactively identify and manage risk exposures by providing risk management advice, profiling and monitoring risks and offering a range of risk management and insurance solutions to clients.

The third objective of the authority is to establish and maintain viable financial operations of the authority through the prudent management of insurable risk, through developing appropriate pricing policies, through managing a sound investment platform and through the accumulation of adequate financial reserves. Its further objectives are to deliver a consistently high-quality, cost-effective services and to provide that they are administered in the most effective and efficient manner.

The chairman, Mr Keith Fitzmaurice, observed in the foreword to the 2000 annual report that the authority faced a challenging year in 1999–2000 with the consolidation of operations of the public health care agencies insurance program of the Department of Human Services, which was a major program undertaken by the VMIA in that year. In that year it achieved an operating surplus of \$19.7 million, and obviously has performed well so far. These amendments form part of a group of amendments in relation to which the authority itself has approached the government. The authority has embarked on a review — and it is referred to in the annual report — and wishes in a legal sense to tidy up the powers that enable it to operate.

As at 30 June 2000 funds invested by the authority amounted to \$357.3 million, so clearly there is an imperative for it to give maximum service to Victorian government departments. As at May 2001, 130 departments or public bodies were clients of the VMIA. I will not read them out, but a whole range of bodies and government departments opt to use the

VMIA to manage their risk. This bill is the result of the authority's large review of its operations, although to an external observer the amendments are not earth shattering. Indeed, I recall from the second-reading speech that the minister made some reference to the fact that the act is narrow in scope and would probably interest only a small number of people. However, if this body failed in its duty — and I am not for one minute suggesting it would — there would be much broader interest because of the financial exposures across the Victorian government that would result. The bill will be seen as a series of housekeeping amendments in the first review of the VMIA since 1996, the year in which it was established by the former government.

The bill amends several definitions, the key one being the definition of 'participating body' to automatically include all budget sector bodies, rather than, as is the current requirement, the government's having to publish notices in the *Government Gazette* on an individual basis regarding every single body it wishes to gazette. Clearly that is not practical in terms of the time of the government, ministers or the VMIA. The bill attempts to pick up all participating bodies and define them in legislation. A participating body will now be defined as a statutory authority receiving more than 50 per cent of its funding from the consolidated fund, and a body corporate receiving more than 50 per cent of its funding from the consolidated fund, and in which the state has a controlling interest. These bodies will now be automatically caught under the act rather than there having to be a process of individual gazettal, which was the case previously.

Further, the bill allows the minister to declare a department of the Parliament as a participating body, provided the President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly agree. Indeed, the President of the Legislative Council informs me that the Parliament does get its insurance through the VMIA, although I also understand there is some legal doubt about whether a department of the Parliament can be gazetted. This amendment will put beyond doubt the fact that the Parliament of Victoria can be a participating body as defined under the VMIA act.

The bill also allows a minister at any time to revoke a declaration of a participating body to be part of the VMIA system. At the moment the act is silent on this aspect, although it is implicit under the Interpretation of Legislation Act. Nevertheless the bill completely clarifies that issue and attempts to put the matter beyond doubt.

The bill also provides more rigorous requirements for management within government departments and

statutory bodies in compiling asset registers and risk management strategies, the rationale being that departments are to take full responsibility for such preparation and the VMIA is to report to the minister and the department or participating body on the adequacy of the registers and strategies. At the moment departments and participating bodies are required to lodge these strategies, but there has been a perception, possibly at the VMIA, that bodies were not taking ownership of their own risk analyses. This bill makes it crystal clear that the onus will be on individual participating bodies and government departments to take ownership and responsibility of those issues.

Obviously VMIA intends to work with departments, but the strategy is for departments to take full responsibility and ownership of their own risk management strategies. Indeed, I refer to the VMIA 2000 annual report, where the chief executive officer observes:

A risk management strategy needs to be 'owned' by the entity preparing it so that it reflects elements that are particular to the organisation and expressed in language acceptable to its culture.

That is the thinking behind this amendment. The bill makes it clear that the VMIA does not cut across either the Accident Compensation Act or the Transport Accident Act — the obligatory insurance schemes required by state law.

The bill also provided for the VMIA to provide insurance to a participating body, jointly or by arrangement with the department. For example, it covers all public hospitals but does so through an agreement with the Department of Human Services rather than with each individual hospital.

It was the establishment of that agreement that featured in the annual report of the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority as one of its major projects for the year 2000.

The bill also clarifies the VMIA's capacity to offer indemnities to members of statutory authorities that do not have boards of management. Keith Fitzmaurice, the chairman of the VMIA board, has written to me and made it clear that the VMIA in conjunction with the Department of Treasury and Finance has reviewed the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (Amendment) Bill and supports the identified changes.

This would appear to be a sensible clean-up operation. It is the sort of bill that realistically one would have expected to be part of omnibus legislation. It shows that the government does not have an overall legislative

program and is bringing routine housekeeping matters before the house.

In the interests of honourable members speaking on the budget, which is obviously of far greater significance, I will curtail my remarks and leave it at that.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — In accord with the sentiment latterly expressed by the shadow Treasurer, the honourable member for Brighton, I will also be brief because I am conscious that others want to speak on the budget in particular.

The National Party supports the legislation. The establishment of the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) in 1996 was a tremendous initiative of the former government and has led to many benefits for Victoria. The general structure and outline of those matters has been detailed by the shadow Treasurer in her contribution.

I want to make three specific points. The first is that it is to the great credit of the VMIA that Victoria has sustained effectively minimal damage through the HIH Insurance Group collapse. The VMIA has been active in the marketplace in ensuring that Victoria's position has been protected. When one looks at the relative devastation that has been caused by the collapse of HIH across the border in New South Wales and the damage it has wrought in that state, it bears witness to the efforts of the management of the VMIA to preserve Victoria's position in a way that best serves the people of our state. I place on the record on behalf of the National Party the appropriate approbation to the management of VMIA for that outcome.

Secondly I refer to the issue of insurance for country hospitals. This is an ongoing matter of great concern to the provision of health services in country locations. It is a particular concern for the medical profession as well as for health services generally. I appreciate that it is an ongoing challenge for all those service providers. I would like to think the VMIA will be able to take a pivotal role in achieving an outcome there which is better than that which the health services now have to accommodate. I have great confidence in the management of VMIA to achieve that outcome. It is a matter of pressing concern for country health services.

Thirdly and finally, I would like to reflect on the fact that VMIA is responsible for the insurance of the mace which is beside me. I am not sure to whom the insurance claim went when the last one was pinched, but suffice it to say that my faith in VMIA is such that if this one here is pinched, we will get appropriate cover and appropriate return.

With those few words I support the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LENDERS (Dandenong North).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

TRANSFER OF LAND (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 3 May; motion of Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation).

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — The opposition will support this legislation, but during the course of debate I will raise some concerns raised by, for instance, the Law Institute of Victoria about some of the consequences of the bill. My contribution would have been very short indeed save that today's *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* by the Auditor-General refers to this project in some detail, and it will be appropriate during the course of debate to refer to it.

The most important provision of the bill is clause 9, which enables the making of regulations to set differential pricing for land registry services provided via the Internet and/or other electronic means. The regulations will need to go through a regulatory impact statement process and public consultation and scrutiny by the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee.

The reason this set of regulations comes into place is a result of the now long-running automation of the Land Registry. As you might be aware, Mr Acting Speaker, before I came to this place I was a lawyer, and before becoming a barrister I did my articles with Mr Noel Tregent, who was very active in the campaign for the automation of the land titles registry system, although at that time he may have been said to be ahead of his time. It took quite some time for Land Registry and its predecessor bodies to adopt the suggestion that the system become electronic.

At page 253 of his June 2001 *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* the Auditor-General states in paragraph 3.5.28:

In its current form, the land titles register comprises a collection of mainly paper-based land titles and supporting documentation including:

3.9 million land titles of which 2.5 million are current and 1.4 million have been cancelled;

300 000 plans which define the boundaries of new land parcels created through subdivisions;

270 000 survey reports which contain documents prepared by land surveyors in support of plans of property subdivisions; and

13 million instruments which are source documents for new details registered on land titles including mortgage amendments, transfer of land titles to a new proprietor, caveats and creation of multiple land titles from existing land titles.

That vast amount of documentation is perfect for reduction to electronic data format, after which it can be made available via the Internet to those people who need the information. The Attorney-General has examined the process because, having commenced in 1989, it seems to have taken an unconscionably long time, and there has been a cost blow-out from about \$62 million to \$91.6 million.

The Minister for State and Regional Development has included the additional funds made available for this project as part of what he describes as his commitment to providing information technology (IT) services in Victoria. I will not get into a quibbling match about that, because there is no doubt that it is a bipartisan project. My suspicion is that the cost blow-out is the responsibility of neither this minister nor his predecessors but relates to the project management and technical issues referred to in the report.

For the record I will look at the steps taken to automate the Land Registry. In 1989 the automated land titles system was introduced to enable the conversion of paper titles to computer titles. In 1991 approximately 28 per cent of paper titles had been converted to electronic format by in-house staff. In 1992 the automated land titles system was expanded to enable the online update of computer folios by the Land Registry and to facilitate remote title searches by interested parties. In 1993 the conversion of paper titles to electronic format within the automated land titles system was suspended because of a lack of resources, with only 28 per cent of titles being converted.

In 1994 a report by the Department of Premier and Cabinet on the business operations of the former Land Titles Office, now the Land Registry, recommended the automation of all paper titles. Between 1995 and 1997 a proposal to attract private sector funding for the titles automation process was unsuccessful. In 1997 approval was obtained from the then Treasurer, Mr Alan Stockdale, for the automation of all land titles, with initial funding of up to \$62 million and the final funding allocation to be determined once tenders were received. New tenders for a titles automation service were called, with the cost of automation to be funded from excess fees generated from the operations of the former Land Titles Office.

In 1998 tender evaluation was completed and three contracts were entered into for project management services, land titles data conversion and the development of the new Victoria online titles system (VOTS). In 1999 the implementation of the online titles system commenced, and in 2000 there was a revised cost estimate of \$91.6 million and a revised completion date for the initial implementation of VOTS of November 2001, with minor enhancements to be finalised by April 2002.

The Auditor-General also undertook an analysis and overview of the project. In essence, his conclusion was that the concerns about project management were:

... further compounded by changes within the Land Registry's internal project management structure, due to a number of key staff departures since 1998, which have adversely impacted upon the continuity of knowledge and expertise in relation to the Titles Automation Project.

I am in no position to know precisely who left and why. The Auditor-General does not make any adverse finding as to the reasons for them leaving. At this stage, that matter is better left alone.

After having looked at the current titles automation project (TAP) management framework, the Auditor-General concludes at page 263 of the report:

The revised management framework should improve the overall management of the titles automation project and the level of accountability provided to senior management. However, it will be vital that the ongoing effectiveness of this framework and associated management processes are continually reassessed to ensure that adequate control is maintained over the progress and emerging costs of the project.

From my perspective as the shadow Minister for Conservation and Environment and the shadow Minister for Multimedia, I will be observing these matters with interest. I hope there will be ongoing briefings as they proceed.

The benefits of the project are set out in table 3.5E at page 255 of the Auditor-General's report under the heading 'Expected reduction in processing times for land title transactions'. The current service time for computerised titles is 1 hour, but the automated service time will be less than 2 seconds. The current service time for paper titles is 24 hours — the automated service time will, of course, not be applicable. The current service time for instruments is 24 hours, but the automated system service time will be 1 to 10 seconds. The current service time for the registration of documents lodged is 3 weeks for 80 per cent of dealings, but the automated service time will be less

than 15 minutes for simple dealings and one to five days for complex dealings.

The advantages for the users of the services — obviously every home purchaser, vendor and other person dealing in real estate in any way whatsoever — will be dramatic. In those circumstances, it is appropriate for there to be a differentiation of fees so that services delivered over the Internet with such remarkably more efficient timing will be charged at a lower rate.

I have written to the Law Institute of Victoria. While the committee has not made a formal submission through its processes, Mr Peter Lowenstein, the senior research solicitor, has written to me on its behalf saying that the law institute does not see anything overly contentious in the amendments. He states also:

Bearing in mind that the Land Registry is converting to electronic titles in place of paper ones, the amendments, so far as they affect the register book, seem to be appropriate.

There is, however, one aspect of the bill of which you should be aware. That is section 9, which adds a new subsection (3) to section 120 of the Transfer of Land Act. When the tenor of the new subsection is considered, it is obvious a whole new raft of fees will come into existence for what is essentially supplying information from a vital public register. In my view — and I hasten to add it is my view, not that of the law institute — it may well be that the general public will be discouraged by fee differentials from visiting the Land Registry and, instead, will be encouraged to use DNRE-appointed service providers, whether they wish to or not. Once again, in my view, this is not in the best interests of the public who should not feel discouraged from visiting the office of a public register established for their benefit. The subsection also opens the way for information splitting. That is, a certain level of fee is charged for what is deemed by DNRE to be basic information. A different, and higher, level of fee is charged for what is deemed by DNRE to be non-basic information. You need to appreciate the fee levels could be quite artificially set, and, not necessarily, represent any real cost differences in sourcing and providing information to the public. You have to query — if this sort of information splitting should occur — whether it is in the best interests of the public, bearing in mind the information held at the Land Registry is vital for the day-to-day operation of the state's economy, and has been compulsorily provided by the public themselves, when lodging documents at the registry.

Finally, bearing in mind the date on which your letter was received, and the need to respond to you by today, the comments set out above have not been endorsed by the institute's executive committee ...

Mr Lowenstein then asks that I indicate that to the house and say that it is a speedy response. It is also a well-informed response.

I ask that the Minister for State and Regional Development pass on to the responsible minister those concerns of the Law Institute of Victoria and that in

setting the new fees under the new regulation clauses the government bear in mind the fact that it is a public registry with information compulsorily acquired from the public. The Victorian Land Registry system is one of the best in the world and maintaining public access and confidence is very important.

Clauses 4 and 8 deal with the present requirement in the act that when a Crown grant of land is made a duplicate must be created. The purpose of the amendment is to do away with the duplicate document for a freehold Crown grant and enable the Registrar of Titles to immediately convert such Crown grant to electronic form, in accordance with the manner in which the bulk of land titles and related information is now held.

Clause 5 deals with the current requirement in the act for the Registrar of Titles to always create a copy or extract of the original title information held by the registrar. The requirement is very cumbersome and serves no purpose when the new title has been created but is cancelled immediately within Land Registry.

I have received a letter from Ms Pam O'Connell, who is a teacher of property law at Monash University. She has written:

I have been looking at fraud issues in land registration for an article I am writing. At the recent real property teachers conference in Melbourne in February there was some discussion with delegates from Queensland about whether the abolition of duplicate certificates of title had led to any fraud problems. Apparently there have been no identity frauds since this change. However, there was resistance from some solicitors and some landowners and it was found politic to provide that a certificate could issue on request. If a certificate issues it has to be produced for registration of a dealing. The general opinion at the conference was that duplicates of title were as likely to promote fraud as to prevent it, given that most forgeries are committed by trusted agents and confidants of the registered owner. Abolition of duplicate titles prevents mortgage by deposit, but this loss would not be mourned. Queensland has abolished this type of mortgage, and elsewhere it is now caught by credit legislation. This is probably the most controversial aspect of the legislation, but it seems inevitable if we are to progress to electronic conveyancing.

The letter concludes with some information about forums. Is this a convenient time, Mr Acting Speaker?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! This is a convenient time to break for lunch. The honourable member for Doncaster will get the call immediately after question time.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The SPEAKER — Order! It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the gallery Mr Hamdy Zaki Hussein, the Consul General of Egypt. Welcome, Sir.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Essential Media Communications consultancy

Mr DOYLE (Malvern) — Can the Minister for Health confirm that the cost of a consultancy for a drug communications strategy awarded by his department to Essential Media Communications blew out by 200 per cent and that Essential Media Communications continued to charge the department without proper departmental approval?

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — The government has a comprehensive drug strategy worth \$77 million. Part of that strategy is to go into better communications, because we have to communicate right across the community to inform people about the damage caused by drugs — and that is what the government is doing.

The allegations made by the honourable member for Malvern are incorrect. The advice I have received is that Essential Media Communications (EMC) was engaged to provide communications advice in relation to drugs. The contract was varied, and all appropriate procedures were met. The reason the contract had to be varied was that extra work needed to be done. It was appropriate that the work was done, and it means that the public is able to get a better service.

As I said, I am advised that the initial contract was varied and additional work was done. I am also advised that the Department of Human Services had a variation that was approved by the DHS legal unit. There was a concern about the variation. I had that followed up, and the subsequent advice I received was that the variation was properly carried out.

Marine parks: establishment

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — Given the government's admission yesterday that it has been caught out trying to introduce section 85 provisions for fishers that are unrelated to the current marine parks proposal, will the Minister for Environment and Conservation now reveal the government's true agenda for the destruction of the current rights of Victorian commercial and recreational fishers to fish our marine waters?

Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation) — The government has been clear about its intention, which was to limit — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms GARBUTT — Keep going. Carry on! The no-compensation provisions of the bill clearly went further than the government intended. That has been made absolutely clear right from the beginning. We will be moving a house amendment to bring it back to where it was intended. It was simply a drafting anomaly.

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to cease interjecting.

Docklands: job creation

Mr LANGUILLER (Sunshine) — Will the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism inform the house of the latest investment in the booming Docklands development and indicate how many jobs are likely to be generated by this important project?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Major Projects and Tourism) — There has been heaps of great news coming from Docklands, the biggest major project in town, over the past 12 months. The honourable member for Prahran acknowledges that. She has recently been there to look at many of the developments.

I will quickly run through some of the things that have been happening at Docklands. In April the Premier announced that Lend Lease Corporation Ltd had won the bidding rights for the \$1.8 billion development of the Victoria Harbour precinct. Last month I announced that the winning tenderer for the Collins Street bridge extension into Docklands was Thiess Contractors Pty Limited.

Last December I announced that Digital Harbour Holdings had won the development rights to the 4.4-hectare site in the Commonwealth Technology Port precinct. The Seven network's new Melbourne headquarters and digital broadcast centre was completed in May, and digital broadcasting will commence next January.

Some 1100 residential apartments have been pre-sold by the Mirvac Group and MAB, and the companies are way ahead of their sales schedule. The waterfront will be opened up, with views across Victoria Dock, through the development of Harbour Esplanade. That is

all great news about the biggest major project in Melbourne — Docklands — over the past 12 months.

Today I am pleased to announce more great news for Docklands. The first parcel of land in the Batman's Hill precinct has been awarded to Pan Urban Corporation, which will construct a \$150-million environmentally-savvy, multi-use twin-tower development. That will create 1000 jobs in addition to the many thousands of jobs already created — and growing — in Docklands.

One of the great things about the development is that it is not only savvy, it is environmentally friendly in adopting the principles of environmentally sustainable development. It is a smart design that does not trade off good design and good environmental outcomes. Instead it provides the best of both worlds. Energy consumption for airconditioning will be reduced, and there will be an appropriate maximising of sunlight in winter and its minimisation in summer. It will be built next to the Collins Street bridge extension, which is starting construction next month, and it will open around the same time.

There is much great news about what is happening in Docklands. The government thanks Pan Urban Corporation and the many other companies for their interest in and commitment to creating more and more jobs in the biggest major project in Melbourne.

Essential Media Communications consultancy

Mr DOYLE (Malvern) — Will the Minister for Health advise the house how the Essential Media Communications consultancy, which was meant to run for 10 working days at a cost of \$19 050, blew out to cost \$63 900.25 without producing anything?

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — The honourable member for Malvern obviously did not listen. Extra work was done because extra work was needed. This is not something that is surprising. If extra work needs to be done, you ask for it and it gets done — and it was.

The last time the honourable member for Malvern said there was a blow-out he referred to the Austin Hospital. He went to the press saying that the contract involving one Bernie McKay had blown out from \$46 000 to \$98 000.

He was wrong because additional work was required and was done. Exactly the same thing has occurred in this case: additional work was needed and was done. The Department of Human Services indicated that extra work was required because it flowed directly from the

earlier services that had been provided, and it was not practical to let another tender at that stage because that would have required a repetition of work.

It is appropriate to vary contracts, and provisions in the government purchasing guide relate to this very issue. The government provision says under the heading 'Commercial contract variations' that contracts approved under delegation may be varied by up to \$50 000 without notice to the accredited purchasing unit. That is exactly what occurred. In this case there was a provision whereby the director of public health prudently sought legal advice from the Department of Human Services legal unit, which endorsed the contract variation.

I should also say that there was an internal memo from an officer of the Department of Human Services which stated that that variation would contravene departmental guidelines. Having seen that document I was concerned about that and asked my department to advise whether there was any breach of guidelines in relation to this. I subsequently received advice from the department that that internal memo was incorrect, that all provisions were properly adhered to and that the variation complied with the Department of Human Services purchasing guide in all respects.

What's more, at the end of this process it was determined that more work was required and that a larger contract would be involved. For that reason there was a new competitive tender involving anyone who wanted to bid for the larger project. Unlike under the previous government, Essential Media Communications was appointed according to a competitive tender. I compare that to the previous government's actions — time after time it breached tender guidelines and spent millions of dollars on consultancies! In summary, in this case, unlike with the previous government, all the guidelines were properly followed and the government did what was appropriate right the way through.

Trams: dynamic fairways system

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — Will the Minister for Transport inform the house of the new deal the government has negotiated with City Link on behalf of all Victorian motorists, this time in relation to Toorak Road?

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — If you listen you might learn something too.

Mr Leigh interjected.

Mr BATCHELOR — There is no hope for the honourable member for Mordialloc.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister, answering the question!

Mr BATCHELOR — That is right, the honourable member for Mordialloc is only prepared to blockade trains and oppose good initiatives like this one. I remind honourable members that this government is prepared to negotiate with Transurban to try to get a better outcome for the state and the motorists of Melbourne.

As I have announced previously, the government has reached an agreement with Transurban whereby the company will not exercise its contractual rights in relation to clearways on Toorak Road. As part of that arrangement the government was to trial the introduction of a dynamic fairway system to improve the running times for trams. I am pleased to announce that as of this week that dynamic fairway system is up and running, and is operating successfully on Toorak Road. The dynamic fairway is a new signalling system that is designed to give priority movement to trams over the other vehicles that are causing congestion.

Mr Leigh interjected.

Mr BATCHELOR — The honourable member for Mordialloc would not be aware of the traffic conditions on Toorak Road, but most honourable members would. Toorak Road is one of Melbourne's most notorious bottlenecks, and the levels of traffic congestion have a deleterious impact on the running times of trams. The dynamic fairway system has been installed at four intersections on Toorak Road — at Punt Road, Chapel Street, Williams Road and Grange Road. Electronic signs have been mounted over the tram tracks and flashing markers have been installed on the road, both of which are activated when an approaching tram passes a sensor. These signs direct vehicles either to move off the tram tracks to the left or, where a right-hand turn is permissible, to do a right-hand turn. That will improve the traffic management along Toorak Road for cars, trucks and trams.

This system has been made possible because the Bracks government was prepared to negotiate with Transurban and ask it not to exercise its contractual rights, which were bequeathed to the company courtesy of the Kennett government. It gave Transurban the right to force cars and trucks onto the tollway. It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition, who voted for that policy when he was in government, still proudly supports it. That is in stark contrast to the great benefits

that have been provided to the people of Victoria through the introduction of this program.

I congratulate the City of Stonnington, M Trams and Transurban for their support of this excellent initiative. Unlike this current opposition, the Bracks government is committed to developing an integrated transport system to try to solve traffic management issues and improve public transport in Melbourne.

Planning: broiler farms

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — Exactly when does the Minister for Planning intend to insert the new Victorian code for best practice for broiler chicken farms into municipal planning schemes? Will this insertion be sufficient to give councils the authority to refuse inappropriate applications without such refusals being constantly overturned by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The house will come to order!

Mr Maclellan — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, as the honourable member for Gippsland West knows, the Minister for Planning approved the code yesterday and issued a public statement saying so. Therefore, I ask you, Mr Speaker, to rule which parts of the question are in order.

The SPEAKER — Order! The question asked by the honourable member for Gippsland West sought information from the minister in regard to the planning process. The question is quite in order to be posed to the minister.

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — The government has accepted most of the recommendations of the advisory committee, which supports a new code of practice for broiler chicken farms. The key aspect of a code is to classify broiler farms into different categories depending on their distance from other sensitive uses. The only departure from the committee's recommendations is that the government will be requiring tougher rules in relation to odour monitoring.

In relation to the honourable member's question, I have written to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and will shortly write to all councils, advising them of the release of the report and the government's response. The code can now be considered as formal government policy in any pending VCAT applications or council decisions on broiler farms. I have asked VCAT to bring this to the attention of parties that may

be potentially affected. The code will not affect any permits that have already been granted by VCAT, but will affect future applications. The new code will be inserted in municipal planning schemes as soon as possible, but the advisory committee report requires that certain steps be undertaken first. Most importantly, a generic environmental improvement plan is to be approved by the committee established by the Minister for Agriculture.

In the meantime, the government's policy on the code is to be classed as seriously entertained planning policy to guide councils and VCAT and enable them to refuse inappropriate applications for broiler farms. In all such applications, as in all planning applications, VCAT will be an independent planning appeals body.

Essential Media Communications consultancy

Mr DOYLE (Malvern) — I refer the Minister for Health to his previous answer. Given that the Department of Human Services briefed the minister's office regarding Essential Media Communications contract breaches on 19 September 2000, and further that the department advised that there were breaches of Department of Human Services guidelines and conditions regarding appropriate invoicing, cost variations, expenditure and total contract value relating to the contract, did the minister, his parliamentary secretary or any members of the minister's private office approve the variations to this contract?

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — I have already indicated that the departmental officials appropriately approved the variations — and that was done according to appropriate departmental guidelines. In addition to that, because I was concerned about the matter and the fact that there was advice that in one way the appropriate variation procedures had not been followed, I asked the department for advice on that. The advice subsequently received from the department on 1 June specifically indicates that the departmental purchasing guidelines had been followed, that they were correct, and that the previous memo, which indicated that there was some contravention in relation to that, was incorrect.

Tertiary education and training: funding

Mr HOLDING (Springvale) — Will the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment inform the house of the cost to Victoria of changes to commonwealth labour market programs?

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment) — As many in

the house will know, this Friday I will be debating with the federal minister, Dr Kemp, and ministers of the other states and territories, the current Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) agreement funding offer, which is on the table. However, that offer, while it is definitely better than the previous offers — and Dr Kemp, for the third time, has increased it after he said that he would not — has to be considered within the context of cost shifting that has occurred within the recent federal budget.

As honourable members will be aware, there has already been cost shifting in relation to training — almost \$1 billion has been cut out of labour market programs at a commonwealth level just to shift cost to training, and those costs are being picked up by the states and territories. Victoria has also budgeted for \$20 million to cover costs associated with the Common Youth Allowance program, which was a commonwealth decision. In effect, cost shifting has already been taking place in relation to training in Victoria.

If we look at the most recent announcements in the 2001–02 commonwealth budget over the next four years, we see that training credits of up to \$800 are provided for 64 500 eligible job seekers under the Work for the Dole program and training credits, again of up to \$800, are provided for mature-age and indigenous job seekers. All honourable members would know that \$800 is totally inadequate for proper training. If you are going to have a proper training program that will be recognised according to industry needs and standards, then \$800 is a pittance — and of course the commonwealth expects the Victorian government to pick up the shortfall in that funding. The commonwealth makes an announcement and expects the states and territories to pick up the costs.

It is estimated that the cost from the 2001–02 Victorian budget will average around \$74 million over a four-year period. That is an additional \$74 million that Victorian taxpayers will have to pay for announcements made by the commonwealth government in its most recent budget.

On the one hand they offer a few crumbs for the ANTA training agreement, and on the other hand they take them away by making announcements of proposals the cost of which will have to be picked up by the states. At a time when Victoria is experiencing almost 50 per cent growth in its apprenticeships and traineeships, the commonwealth must meet its mutual obligation by properly funding training for young people.

Essential Media Communications consultancy

Mr DOYLE (Malvern) — I ask the Minister for Health whether it is true that the only reason Essential Media Communications was chosen for this bogus consultancy was because of the impeccable credentials of its senior consultant, Mr James McGarvey, whose résumé submitted to the Department of Human Services consisted entirely of working for a federal Labor MP; for a Kirner government minister; for Greg Sword, the ALP president; for John Brumby as his private secretary from 1994 to 1996; for the ALP as a key organiser for the 1996 election campaign; and most recently, as the campaign manager for his own parliamentary secretary, the honourable member for Frankston East.

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — The answer is no. The honourable member has a certain problem in that there was a full competitive process for this appointment.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Mornington!

Mr THWAITES — There was a full competitive process.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Monbulk!

Mr THWAITES — That process was overseen by the appropriate departmental bureaucrats. They chose this organisation on the basis of criteria.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr THWAITES — Members opposite laugh because they never did this. They never had a competitive process. They are judging — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Wantirna!

Mr THWAITES — They look back on the time they were in government, when time after time proper process was breached. Before honourable members opposite get too excited, we are talking about a contract worth around \$60 000 — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition is showing disrespect to the Chair. I shall not warn him again.

Mr THWAITES — When the honourable member for Malvern was the parliamentary secretary, in one year alone Corporate Kudos got \$493 000 for a contract on communications advice!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer!

Mr THWAITES — Corporate Kudos is the company that took over the business of KNF. Or what about this: in the year the honourable member was there Turnbull Porter Novelli got a contract for \$512 000, so let us just look at the other side. Time after time it happened in relation to various privatisation contracts. In respect of Latrobe Regional Hospital there was a bungled contract, and a consultancy of \$496 000 just for public relations around that contract!

As I have already indicated to the honourable member for Malvern, proper process was followed throughout this, both in the competitive process at the start and in relation to following the guidelines of the Department of Human Services right throughout the whole process.

Rural Victoria: arts projects

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — Will the Minister for the Arts inform the house of the actions the government is taking to promote community-based arts projects throughout regional and rural Victoria?

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for the Arts) — I thank the honourable member for his question and for his interest in the arts. On this side of the house we have an interest in the arts and culture in the state, rising to an absolute passion.

I am delighted to announce today a boost of \$7.9 million for Victorian artists and arts organisations. Contrast that with the former Kennett government's arts policy, which, as all honourable members recall, was an edifice complex based in the central business district. The government is delighted to announce that a component of that \$7.9 million extra boost for the arts includes \$5 million for regional arts, particularly regional arts infrastructure.

It might be worth noting that the shadow Minister for the Arts was quoted in the *Herald Sun* recently as saying:

There has been nothing new or fresh from government.
There have been a few add-ons in rural areas ...

Add-ons! Well, \$5 million is not a bad add-on! I am talking about performing arts centres right around the state, including at Geelong, Bendigo and Swan Hill; the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery; and that lovely little gallery in Nicholson Street, Bairnsdale, will also receive some extra money. But we are not neglecting the city. The government is providing assistance for Craft Victoria's relocation and funds for the lovely and innovative Theatreworks in St Kilda, in the seat of Albert Park, which is held by the Deputy Premier.

The government has also increased its support for access and participation in the arts. We want Victorians right across the state to feel they can participate in arts and culture, and particularly in the festivals. To mention just one, the Dunnolly Gold Rush has now been supported by this government.

It is not just regional Victoria; we are taking arts to the world. We are promoting regional artists and arts organisations in touring projects from Taipei to Tokyo, Singapore to Seoul, Milan to Moscow, Paris to Portugal, and Dublin to Dili.

One group that is flying overseas to represent Victoria internationally is the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, which is touring Hawaii and New Zealand. The opposition might be interested to note that at the moment it is the only group in Victoria doing more backflips than the opposition! Another production touring at the Vienna festival is performed by Tom E. Lewis, and I recommend it to the Leader of the Opposition. The production is called *Lift 'em Up Socks*.

Finally, we are seriously investing in young musicians and rock music development. The government's policy in arts and culture is to ensure there is access and participation. We want to support rock musicians and contemporary music development. So far as the arts are concerned, Victoria is definitely the place to be.

TRANSFER OF LAND (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — Before the luncheon break I referred to clause 5 and to a letter from Ms Pam O'Connell from Monash University. Finally, I refer to clauses 6 and 7 which do away with mandatory destruction of old or historic certificates of title and allow the registrar to save out-of-date certificates of title so long as the certificate of title is altered so that it is

clear that it can no longer be used to support land transactions.

I have had the benefit of advice from Middletons solicitors, in particular Mr Derek Begg, who looked at the proposal and wrote that the amendment:

... is technical in nature, to assist the LTO, there is nothing proposed that causes any concerns to me. In fact the non-destruction power (new section 27BA) is the current procedure anyway — obviously someone has realised there was no legislative basis for the procedure.

In other words, for some time there has probably been a breach of the law but the sensible course has been to allow people to keep documents and certificates of title that have sentimental value and have been altered in a way that prevents them from being used for land transfer purposes.

With those precautionary statements, the opposition supports the bill and will not be moving any amendments.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill) — The Transfer of Land (Amendment) Bill represents almost an end to the work that began in this place in about 1985 when we set out to achieve what we then called Landata and to bring online all land transactions. Some 15 years later we are getting towards the end of that work.

The program has spread over three governments and has been embraced by all, as well as by the industry. It is an example of where technology, having been introduced into land transfers, shifts the power and influence from departments through to the people involved in the industry and eventually the general public. People will have access to all impediments on land titles. Instant information, for which we used to have to pay a lot of money and wait a long time — and in some cases employ solicitors and real estate people to get — will now be available online.

It is a large bonus for country Victoria that we have been keen to achieve. Access to the land titles office and all things relating to it will be virtually instantaneous and we will not be faced with the long drawn-out procedure that existed in the 1980s and 1990s. The bill will provide for fees for online services to be set by regulation, which is a breakthrough. In a number of areas we have had trouble getting the fee structures for online services adopted.

An area that is particularly important to us is the telemedicine operation. We have introduced telemedicine services to many isolated areas but have been unable to reach a fee structure or fee payment system with the commonwealth so as to fully utilise it.

The legislation overcomes that problem and will enable fees for online services to be set. Of course, those fees will vary depending on the service and the way in which it is activated.

The bill will also enable out-of-date paper certificates of title to be saved for historic purposes. In the changeover to electronic form, our historic titles will be able to be saved and looked after. Victoria's titles office has been one of the best and the systems it has had in place over the years have been very good. Because of their historic nature, to lose those paper titles to new technology would have been an indictment of our society.

The bill will provide for a Crown grant of land to be immediately converted to electronic form and will enable related activities to be instantly available and understood. Also, when land is resold quickly — for example, off-the-plan sales — there is no requirement to produce a duplicate certificate of title.

This legislation has been ongoing over many years and has achieved total support from all sides of the house. I note that it is a little behind; it was due for completion in March of this year. There is now a revised target for April 2002. It is also interesting to note that the cost of this operation is expected to blow out to \$91.6 million, an increase of more than \$29.4 million or 47 per cent of the original cost estimate, which is a reflection of the effort and work that has been involved.

This was a huge task back in the 1980s, when it was first tackled. As I said, it began in the early years of the Labor government, continued through the Kennett years and continues on under the Bracks government. With all of us working together the task will eventually be completed and the people of Victoria will be given access to the information. Gaining access to much of that information has been difficult for power-type reasons. The capacity to identify impediments to land titles through the Internet will be of great benefit to everyone. No longer will it be the case of only one person with the information having the power.

National Party members support the legislation and wish it a speedy passage through the Parliament. I trust that as we progress we will be able to achieve the goal we set ourselves and provide good service throughout Victoria for those involved in the sale of land.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

LAND SURVEYING BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 3 May; motion of Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation).

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr PERTON (Doncaster) pursuant to sessional orders.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — The bill comes to the house as a result of a review of professional regulations required by national competition policy. In preparing the opposition's response on the bill I was grateful for the briefings I received from the department and the Surveyor-General, Mr Keith Bell, who was accompanied by Mr Mark Cleary and Mr Alan McPherson. I am also grateful to the Victorian division of the Institution of Surveyors and Consulting Surveyors Victoria, which proved to be very helpful in providing not only its resources but also those of academics teaching in the field. In addition there has been wide interest in the bill.

While articles on surveying do not appear on the front pages of the newspapers on a daily basis, surveying is one of the foundations of the certification of land ownership in Victoria. As you are aware, Madam Acting Speaker, Victoria and New South Wales, together with South Australia, are international shining lights in the field of land registration certainty. The system of surveying in this state is very much part of that.

The bill provides for a new system of registering surveyors. It saves those surveyors who are already registered but requires them to take part in an annual registration system accompanied by professional development, which is the modern way of regulating professions and professionals and ensuring they remain up to date.

The bill also sets out anew the role of the Surveyor-General as it relates to land survey. It establishes the Surveyors Registration Board of Victoria and outlines its role, as well as providing a system of appeal to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for those who are dissatisfied with the board's decisions. It also puts in place a system of offences.

I will not go over all the information referred to in the second-reading speech and provided at the briefings, as many members still want to contribute to the budget debate. Most of the opposition's views on the bill will be put during the committee stage.

One of the amendments I have circulated relates to the role of the Surveyor-General. I have also circulated amendments relating to the method of appointment to the board and to a provision that legislatively puts in place the minister's undertaking to appoint the Surveyor-General as the chairperson of the board.

The Surveyor-General has played an important role in Victorian history. The reason Melbourne is such an easy city to live in, travel around and navigate — —

Mr Wilson — It is the world's most livable city!

Mr PERTON — As the honourable member for Bennettswood says, in undertaking assessments of the world's cities, including looking at natural and artificial environments and a number of other factors, the Centre for Population Biology in the United States has rated Melbourne, together with Seattle and Montreal, as the world's most livable city.

Mr Wilson interjected.

Mr PERTON — As the honourable member for Bennettswood rightly points out, so much of that is a tribute to the work of the early surveyors and surveyors-general like Hoddle, who set up a grid system for the city of Melbourne and ensured that it was easy to get around, live in and work in.

As shadow minister my contact with both of the professional associations and their members has been positive. They were much involved in the review of the profession.

The drafting of this bill does leave something to be desired. Members of the opposition are aware there are some power plays at work within the department and that the position of Surveyor-General, which has had such an historically important role, appears to be being downgraded in status, control and responsibility. Other public servants are seeking greater power at the expense of the Surveyor-General. The surveyors professional associations do not like that and their members have made that clear during the drafting process.

Obviously between the early drafts that were produced between December and January and the draft that came into the house, a number of the concerns of the surveyors were made good. They now support the general tenor of the legislation, but they believe the amendments I am suggesting ought to be made in an objective and cooperative drafting process. That is the reason I will be moving them.

With those few comments I indicate that the opposition is not opposed to the legislation but will be seeking to make amendments in the course of its passage through the Parliament.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill) — As is the case with the Liberal Party, the National Party does not oppose the bill and will support the amendments to be moved by the honourable member for Doncaster. I trust that the government will give close consideration to the adoption of those amendments.

I noted the honourable member for Doncaster's comments about the surveyors of the past and the role they played in making Melbourne worthy of its tag as the world's most livable city. I can assure you that the surveyors have also played a very strong role in country areas, and probably made their greatest mark in country Victoria during the gold rush, when they became experts in their chosen field.

As technological change has come about some of the mistakes of the early surveyors have been able to be corrected, but it is amazing just how accurate they were in their day. I remember some of the changes which came about during my time as a councillor with the former City of Swan Hill and which affected the oldest part of the community. When the surveyor's line was put over it using the new technology the whole place was found to be a little out of line. That is common in many areas where improved technology is used.

This bill comes to us as a result of national competition policy (NCP), which is something I suppose the Parliament is getting used to handling. I am amazed at how the Parliament handles some NCP reviews with great gusto and runs away from others. With the amendments to be proposed the measure has the support of this Parliament.

The purpose of the bill is to replace the Surveyors Act 1978 and introduce annual registration for licensed surveyors. It establishes the Surveyors Registration Board and provides for investigation into the professional conduct of licensed surveyors, which I am sure is welcomed by the industry as well as by all who deal with them. It also provides for fees for the maintenance of the survey control network.

The National Party has consulted quite a lot on this bill, and there has been general support throughout the whole industry for the changes it will bring to the land surveying industry. I trust the bill will have a speedy passage and there will be a committee stage to handle the honourable member for Doncaster's amendments. I am not sure what the arrangements are for today. By the

look of the honourable member for Ballarat East, I think it's not looking good, mate! He has got that lower lip — —

Mr Perton — That intransigent look which says — —

Mr STEGGALL — That look of arrogance of those in power!

Mr Perton — And which says, 'We've stuffed up but we're not going to admit it!'

Mr STEGGALL — That's right! But I am sure that if he really considered the approach that the public believes the government has towards life that he would bring it on and make sure that we could introduce, debate and discuss those very well-formed amendments that will help this legislation gain the support of the industry.

The National Party is not opposing the legislation and will support the amendments to be moved by the honourable member for Doncaster. I trust that this bill will have a speedy passage through the Parliament.

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — I am pleased to speak on the bill, which recognises the significance of surveyors to this state as a result of 150 years of outstanding work. We have heard about the work they did in surveying Melbourne and other cities of this state, as well as the work they have done in surveying the countryside across the state. They are clearly vitally important in terms of any transfer of land and in determining what will be the appropriate boundaries for that land.

This legislation has been brought forward after significant consultation with surveyors around the state. It is my understanding that through that consultation various changes have been carried out. The legislation initially puts in place an annual registration of surveyors and sets a fee which will be paid to the new regulatory board within the government to perform the regulation as it applies to cadastral surveying in Victoria.

In following through on the annual registration the surveyors will need to provide their details of qualifications so they can be formally registered. The annual licence fee will be applied to this registration and will be passed on to the regulatory body to be used for professional development of surveying and to ensure that the surveying industry is well supported and maintains and improves its place at the forefront of work in this area.

The Surveyor's Registration Board is established by the bill. It will be a skills-based, eight-member board which will advise government on the administration, policies and strategic directions of land surveying and related infrastructure. It will perform an important role in helping to oversee the work of the surveying industry in the state.

The bill also establishes the Surveyors Registration Board of Victoria Fund. All fees or any fines and penalties paid or recovered and any expenses incurred by the board in carrying out its functions may be paid into or out of the particular fund that will be established

The bill also retains reciprocal arrangements that are in place to facilitate mutual recognition between states, territories and New Zealand, so we are keeping in touch with other states and also with New Zealand in terms of ongoing work and arrangements in the surveying area.

It provides for investigations into professional conduct of licensed surveyors through a system of preliminary investigations and formal hearings so that, again, we can be assured of the standard of those carrying out work as surveyors in this state.

It enables appeals through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for any party affected by determinations of the board with regard to refusal for registration or renewal of registration and the imposition of conditions of registration. They will be referred to VCAT if any challenges are made in this regard.

The bill also provides a regulation-making power to support the introduction of a survey infrastructure maintenance fee at a later time, something we will continue to work with the industry to develop. It enables a licensed surveyor to continue to have the power to enter land, after giving reasonable notice to the occupier, for the purposes of carrying out a land survey. However, the surveyor will not be able to enter into residences unless he or she has obtained written consent. It relates to the conditions upon which any surveyor can enter a property or residence and it clarifies those issues. The bill provides for all current so-called cadastrals, meaning land surveyors, to be deemed to be licensed under the new bill upon payment of their fee and it repeals the Surveyors Act 1978 and makes consequential amendments to other acts.

As I have also stated, in working through the bill members in the industry have expressed concern about a number of issues from time to time. This government has worked with Keith Bell, the Surveyor-General, and the industry overall to attempt to redress those issues,

clarify them and ensure that the legislation is presented in the best form to enable this industry, which is very important for the state, to work effectively. I am pleased to see that through those consultations we have ensured the position of the Surveyor-General will continue to be a highly regarded position in this community and that professional standards and development can be maintained.

The many changes of recent years, where fewer surveyors are required to work for the state, as it were, and more surveyors are working in private practice — the movement of the industry from the public into the private sector is a move that has clearly been observed over recent years — have left surveyors in an uncertain position regarding their future, so I am pleased the bill has been brought forward by the government.

With regard to the amendments proposed by the honourable member for Doncaster, the government will clarify its position on those later this day. I support the bill and trust it has a speedy passage.

Mr WILSON (Bennettswood) — I am pleased to join debate on the bill, which provides for a new regulatory framework of land surveying in Victoria. It has six main goals: firstly, to provide for the annual registration of licensed surveyors to perform land surveying in Victoria; secondly, to provide for investigations into the professional conduct of licensed surveyors; thirdly, it establishes the Surveyors Registration Board of Victoria; fourthly, it establishes the Surveyors Registration Board of Victoria Fund; fifthly, it repeals the Surveyors Act of 1978 and makes consequential amendments to other acts; and finally, it provides for fees for the maintenance of the survey control network.

The minister's second-reading speech reveals that a review of the Surveyors Act was undertaken in accordance with the national competition policy requirements as part of a joint departmental and industry review of surveying regulation. The review recommended that professional regulation continue in order to protect the integrity of the cadastre, because it underpins the government's guarantee of title and therefore provides significant benefits to the community. However, the current regulatory arrangements have become outdated and require modernising to ensure the profession continues to provide a high quality surveying service to the Victorian community.

As the shadow minister, the honourable member for Doncaster, outlined in his earlier contribution, opposition members have consulted widely on this bill.

We have ascertained that there is still a degree of angst within the profession about this legislation. Indeed, I have received representation from surveyors within my own electorate, and therefore I hope the government takes on board the shadow minister's amendments and, with the support of the National Party, produces a piece of legislation that will enjoy broad support.

In his contribution the shadow minister gave a brief outline of the reasons behind the amendments being moved in his name, and I look forward to his further contribution on those amendments.

Other honourable members have spoken of the importance of the role of the Surveyor-General. Following some research on his role I want to reflect on comments made by the Honourable Alan Hunt in another place in debate on the Electoral Commission Bill as long ago as 1982. In debate on the bill he stated:

Both bills —

He was referring to the bill before the house and an earlier electoral commission bill —

provide for an identically constituted commission chaired by the Chief Judge of the County Court or his nominee, complemented by the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor-General.

The speech continues:

The first of these safeguards is the absolute protection provided by clause 4 for the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor-General against political interference in the performance of their duties.

Mr Hunt made the point that the legislation provided:

... the same protection as the Auditor-General enjoys for the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor-General so that they will have absolute confidence in performing their roles with the impartiality and integrity demanded of them and will be seen to be impartial and independent by the public at large.

It is important to place on the record how important the opposition believes the role of the Surveyor-General to be in Victoria. I commend the amendments of the shadow minister to the house and hope that we see support from the National Party and the government to enable them to go through.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms DUNCAN (Gisborne).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

APPROPRIATION (2001/2002) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 15 May; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).

Ms DUNCAN (Gisborne) — It is with great pleasure that I speak today on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill, commonly referred to as the budget — and what a wonderful budget it is! I particularly like the theme of the budget, which is delivering today and building for tomorrow. That is exactly what this budget seeks to do and in fact does. It shows the government's enormous foresight, something that was lacking in the previous government, which was all about cutting services and reducing money on infrastructure in order to give Victoria a big, fat surplus. It did not do a whole lot about delivering services and doing the sorts of things that governments should do. That is its primary role. It is not about accumulating large surpluses; it is about delivering services to Victorians for their taxes.

The budget builds on the achievements of the first 19 months of the Bracks government and is intended to equip Victoria for the future, and we see this in all ways in this budget, in the short, medium and long term. As the Treasurer has said, it is a budget that is right for the times.

The budget is certainly good for the people in my electorate of Gisborne and for all Victorians. It continues with the government's rebuilding of our health system and reinvesting in our schools and TAFE institutes. It is about protecting our environment, overhauling the corrections system and building stronger communities. The budget brings particular benefits to the electorate of Gisborne in the areas of education, health and community safety, and with regard to community safety the benefits are wide and many.

The Bracks government has provided an additional \$51 million for the construction of eight new police stations. I am happy to say that the township of Gisborne will be getting one such new police station. In addition the \$51 million will help to replace 15 outdated stations around country Victoria. Again, the township of Romsey in my electorate is another beneficiary of this policy. The very old police station will be replaced because it is inappropriate and no longer able to meet the needs of the community. I visited the Romsey police station several weeks ago and saw first hand just how difficult it is for police to

operate in that facility. Apart from being physically inappropriate it has more than served its purpose.

The new Gisborne police station will be a 24-hour one. It has been long and eagerly awaited by the people of Gisborne. Honourable members may recall that I have spoken about the police station previously. It has quite a history. Essentially the previous local member of Parliament had made promises in several previous elections that the Gisborne police station would be upgraded from its very poor facilities to a 24-hour police station.

I believe the commitment has been made during the past two or three election campaigns, yet we have seen no police station on the ground nor any forward estimates in the previous budgets to indicate it was on the horizon. In fact quite the opposite occurred: not only was no funding allocated for it in any of those budgets, but an attempt was made to sell the land in Robertson Street, Gisborne, which had always been earmarked for the police station. It was only good luck that at the time a number of councillors noted that although the land had been declared to be in surplus it was not.

The station will no longer operate from its existing site; the new station will be built on land that is appropriately located near the premises of the Country Fire Authority, the State Emergency Service and the ambulance station in what will appropriately become a services precinct. Much concern dating back many years has been expressed to me by the residents of Gisborne about the response times they can now expect given that when their police station was closed they had to rely on the police station in Kyneton for most of their servicing, which caused them much angst because they feared that if they required police attendance it would not be available in the time they needed it. The allocation of \$5 million to Gisborne for its new 24-hour police station is a fantastic achievement that will give the people in my electorate, in the township of Gisborne and the surrounding areas, enormous peace of mind. They will now have a fully equipped and serviced 24-hour police station.

The township of Gisborne has grown considerably over the past few years, as have the surrounding areas, and it is appropriate and timely that work on the police station be commenced. It will provide state-of-the-art infrastructure for up to 50 police and other staff, and as I said, it will give peace of mind to the people of Gisborne and the surrounding areas.

The work is due to commence in March 2002, and I hope it will be completed by December 2002. The

\$545 000 allocated for the replacement of the Romsey police station is also welcomed by the electorate. It will bring its facilities and infrastructure up to scratch and equip it for modern policing. As I said, the station, as it currently exists, is very inappropriate.

The Bracks government will spend \$30 million on an innovative information technology project to link rural hospitals and health professionals throughout Victoria. The funding will also put patients and doctors in contact with specialists at major city hospitals. The Bracks government is committed to closing the gap between the health services provided to rural Victorians and those provided to urban Victorians. No longer will rural Victoria be the toenails of the state; instead it will be an integral part of the foot. This initiative is a step in that direction. The health technology project will ensure that health services to Victorians, regardless of where they live — whether they are in the heart of Melbourne or the far reaches of the state — are state of the art, highly effective and able to deliver an improved health service to all Victorians, which is what the government is on about.

In the last budget, as part of the government's election commitment, the Gisborne electorate was lucky enough to secure \$11 million for the redevelopment of the Kyneton hospital. At that time it was envisaged that the costs would be closer to the \$12 million mark, so this budget delivers an additional \$1.7 million for the project to ensure that the Kyneton hospital is able to provide the best facilities possible. The \$1.7 million allocation is indicative of the emphasis this government places on health services, and the Gisborne electorate has been a beneficiary, yet again, of that commitment.

The government's ongoing commitment to education is one of the key planks of this budget. All the schools in the Gisborne electorate will benefit from the \$23 million statewide allocation for computer upgrades, including additional computers, hardware improvements and networking. Those things are always very welcome in schools, and the schools in my electorate have communicated that to me. The Labor government has also injected a massive \$283 million for education infrastructure that will contribute to the government's goals of increased retention rates and participation in the knowledge economy. Under the Middle Years of Learning program, money is allocated to specifically target that area of great need in education: this government and this minister understand those middle years are critical in a student's education.

I am pleased to say that one of the great beneficiaries of the \$283 million investment in educational infrastructure will be the Bacchus Marsh Secondary

College, which has received an allocation of \$4 million. The minister and I were privileged to go there to make the announcement shortly after the budget was released, and the feeling among the students and the staff at the college was fantastic. The staff at the school were extremely pleased with the budget and the great benefits it would bring to the school and students now and in the future. It reflects the theme of the budget: delivering today and building for tomorrow.

The purpose of the new science and technology centre at the Bacchus Marsh Secondary College campus is to provide specialist facilities for aquaculture, horticulture and viticulture studies, and it will also be the venue for the science component of the Middle Years of Learning program. The government will organise the redevelopment of the centre in partnership with the Ballarat TAFE institute and the Shire of Moorabool, which will ensure maximum return on investment. The staff and the school community are very excited about the project and the prospect of being involved in its development. As the minister said at the announcement, it is state of the art; it is about innovation; it is about making sure that our students have all the facilities and the specialist staff that the centre needs to ensure it can produce the best possible outcomes for Victoria in science and technology.

Increasingly we see how important those areas are to our economy and our society, and how our students must be equipped to work in them. I was pleased and privileged, as was the minister, to make that special announcement at Bacchus Marsh. It will be exciting to watch the project develop.

In addition, Tylden Primary School will receive \$843 000 for the redevelopment of its staff and administration facilities and further money for technology-enhanced classrooms and improved toilet facilities. Again, that is a clear example of the government's commitment to small rural schools. Towns such as Tylden were given nothing by the former Kennett government. It is fantastic to see this small community with the school pretty much at its centre so excited at the prospect of its redevelopment. The community has been given a fresh start after feeling left out under the previous government's administration.

The Bracks government has again illustrated its commitment not just to education itself but to education in Victoria's regional and rural towns. This government and this minister are not about closing schools but about enhancing and building on what we have by investing today for the future of not only students but towns and communities.

As I said, all the schools in my electorate will benefit from the statewide allocation of \$23 million for computer upgrades. This additional funding will take the average computer-to-student ratio in Victorian government schools to 1 in 5, which is fantastic. Again, all schools in my electorate will benefit from the \$40 million statewide allocation for purpose-built information and communications technology centres. These state-of-the-art e-learning facilities will be provided in every government secondary college.

These are some of the immediate and direct benefits that electorates such as Gisborne are seeing. The budget sets the scene for continued economic and jobs growth. The government is about investing in new infrastructure, about getting the climate right for Victorian business and small business, and encouraging a creative and innovative economy.

A key plank of the budget is the targeting of employment. Victoria must have continued employment growth. In the year to March 2001 some 68 500 jobs were created, which is fantastic for the whole state. Again, it needs to be emphasised that while we saw employment growth under the previous government it was almost exclusively generated in the Melbourne area. The wonderful thing about employment growth in this term of the Bracks government is that one in three of the jobs created is in regional Victoria. The climate is being set across the state so that towns in my electorate of Gisborne and throughout regional Victoria will benefit from improved employment growth. We do not want people having to move to major cities to gain employment. We need to create employment in those areas so that communities in small towns can continue to develop and thrive.

I turn to the great transport benefits the budget delivers to our communities. My electorate has seen great benefits from the wonderful Linking Victoria program. There has been a substantial investment in the Woodend railway station, which is aimed at ensuring that train links from Bendigo to Melbourne benefit all the communities along the way and that everyone gains from the fantastic growth to be generated as a result of a more efficient service and reduced travelling times.

The government recognises that it is trying to run a rail system that aims to deliver 21st century rail services while relying on 19th century infrastructure. The investment in standardising the rail gauge is another illustration of the progressive policies and the preparedness of the Bracks government to invest in infrastructure to generate benefits for the future. The government has shown enormous foresight in putting

together the budget. As I said, the emphasis is on jobs growth, which has been delivered by investment in infrastructure, reducing business taxes and encouraging innovation. All of those things are enunciated in some detail in the budget.

Businesses in my electorate have expressed their appreciation of the business tax cuts. The tax reform package announced in April is delivering better business taxes, lower taxes, fewer taxes, no new taxes and a simpler tax system — and there are fewer taxpayers as a result. It has also reduced the paperwork and cut red tape — and as I said, small businesses are grateful.

The government is investing \$193 million over four years in initiatives to improve Victoria's environmental sustainability and biodiversity by tackling salinity, protecting Victoria's marine environment and restoring flows to the Snowy River. We can see the government's commitment to the environment in the allocation it has made to the marine national parks project.

This is a fantastic budget. I heard opposition members going on about the things that were not in the budget. Some called out, 'Where are the major projects?', when government members were speaking. I point out that they are right under their noses; they are in my backyard and their backyards. They are happening at Victoria's rail stations, schools and hospitals. Those are the major projects, not the icons in the middle of Melbourne. They are the serious investments that will stand Victoria in good stead not just for today but for the future. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — *The Australian Financial Review* got it right in its editorial of 16 May when it said:

The Bracks government's second budget is a disappointing document. The Victorian general government sector is about to be pushed back into cash deficit, and that deficit is projected to rise to almost \$300 million in 2002–03.

In a comment piece in the paper on the same day Alan Mitchell said:

Victorian Labor, it seems, is settling uneasily into the financial discipline of government. The Bracks government has budgeted to go from a cash surplus of \$1.2 billion in 2000–01 to a deficit of \$22 million in 2001–02. On present policies, the general government cash deficit is projected to increase to \$300 million in 2002–03.

...

Needless to say, these figures are not exactly highlighted in yesterday's budget papers. They are tucked away at the back of the 300-page budget statement, where the Victorian

government complies with its obligations to present comprehensive budget figures according to the national uniform standard.

They certainly are tucked away, but when one goes through the budget documents one can find other references that are also disquieting. Table D4 in the budget paper 2 for 2001–02 is the general government sector balance sheet and shows that net debt in 2001 was \$1.767 billion and that that will steadily grow from 2001 through to a figure of \$2.363 billion in 2005. Table D1 is the general government sector operating statement and it shows the net lending and borrowing figures, which go from a plus figure of \$606 million in 2000–01 to a minus figure of \$477 million in 2004–05. This indicates that the kind of financial restraint that is needed to keep the state ship afloat is sadly missing.

All of this brings back memories of the appalling financial management, or lack of financial management, that this state saw between 1982 and 1992 and that the Kennett government then had to redress between 1992 and 1999. To its eternal credit, that is what the Kennett government did, and the Bracks government inherited a significant financial surplus. I think all Victorians would hope that that financial surplus will not be wasted — that it will not be put to the sword by a government that is drunk on spending but very low on sensible financial management.

If members were looking for headlines on this budget they could come in the following forms: higher spending, lower growth, lower employment growth, reduced investment levels, increased borrowings, increased deficits, and an increase in the unfunded superannuation liabilities of the state. These are the kinds of headlines we are seeing.

Mr Baillieu interjected.

Mr COOPER — As the honourable member for Hawthorn says, it all sounds terribly familiar. It starts to give all of us, particularly those who were here prior to 1992, the sorts of nervous tremors that we got around budget time with Labor Treasurers ranging from the now infamous Rob Jolly — the modern money manager, as he liked to call himself — through to the last in the line, Tony Sheehan, who had the appalling task of having to try to sweep up the mess and do something about it. To Mr Sheehan's credit, he did the best job he could, even though it was a task that nobody could have turned around.

This budget is forecasting things such as lower employment growth, reduced investment levels, increased borrowings and increased deficits while also

looking at higher spending and the consequences of lower growth. It is a matter of concern and one that should be of concern to this government. It is something members opposite should be taking very seriously. They were warned 12 months ago and they are being warned again. They are being warned by very sober and experienced economic commentators in newspapers of some renown such as the *Australian Financial Review*. Those commentators are saying to this government: stop and have a bit of think before you continue down the path you have set out upon.

Of course the government is setting its credentials in regard to its spending. It is saying that it is going to spend a lot of money. That is welcome and the community will see some results for its money. In my electorate, for example, a new primary school is to be built in East Mornington. That will be welcome, as we have seen five primary schools in the Mornington area trying to cope with a significant increase in growth. Over the past four or five years the bureaucracy in the education department has maintained that those five schools will be able to accommodate the school population growth in Mornington. The school principals in the area, the local member — me — and others have said that we do not accept that; we do not believe that is right, and finally the penny has dropped and a new primary school is to be built.

On the other hand, while we are getting a new primary school in East Mornington, a new secondary college is needed in Somerville, which is another high-growth area, but not only has the Minister for Education said that a new secondary college will not be built but she is intent on selling off the land so that no future government can build a secondary college in that area. The minister has outraged the community of Somerville with her determination to get rid of a site which was, interestingly enough, bought by Joan Kirner when she was Minister for Education. Joan Kirner recognised that there was growth in Somerville that would need to be accommodated, but the present Minister for Education says that she knows better. While I did not agree with Mrs Kirner on many occasions, she certainly made the right decision when as Minister for Education she bought that land. She was under no pressure to buy it. In fact, from the point of view of economic sanity it was a purchase that the government of the day could well have done without, given that it was trying to save some money by that stage because the financial ship was going down. However, Joan Kirner recognised the need in a high-growth area, bought that land and now it virtually has a for-sale sign sitting on it because of the decision of the present Minister for Education.

Along with a few other members who have a significant interest in the major project of the Scoresby freeway I attended an information forum for the transport industry at the City of Greater Dandenong's Springvale offices on 20 April. Everybody in this house now acknowledges that the Scoresby freeway is highly necessary. The Labor Party has gone from a position of total opposition to it when it was in opposition to now being a major proponent of the project. The Minister for Transport spoke at that information forum and I took some notes. Those notes reveal that he said the government is committed to the Scoresby project. Victoria, meaning the Victorian government, wants the Scoresby project declared a RONI — a road of national importance — and the government wants road funding to go towards the freeway.

The minister said that the Scoresby project could not proceed without federal funding. His plea to all who were there, including a number of members of the Liberal Party, was to apply pressure to and get funds from the federal government for the Scoresby freeway project.

The project is something that all the people who were at the forum are committed to. It came as pleasant news when the Prime Minister announced that the federal government would commit \$220 million towards the project. Virtually everyone welcomed the announcement, but there were a couple of exceptions.

One was the Labor candidate for the federal seat of Dunkley, the current mayor of Frankston, Cr Mark Conroy. The *Frankston Hastings Independent* of 15 May quotes him as saying:

... the \$220 million announcement was 'a disaster'.

We are all waiting with bated breath for his next announcement. Those of us who pay any attention to what Cr Conroy says are looking forward with great anticipation to his comment on the magnificent allocation by the state government of \$2 million to the Scoresby freeway project — I repeat, 2 million! Cr Conroy, the Labor mayor of Frankston, described the federal government's contribution of \$220 million as a disaster, yet he has been strangely quiet about the miserly \$2 million announced by the Victorian Treasurer, Mr Brumby, in the state budget.

Cr Conroy has also not commented on the article in the *Herald Sun* of 17 May headed 'Freeway backtrack':

Treasurer John Brumby appears to have become lukewarm about the \$1 billion Scoresby freeway, infuriating federal transport minister, John Anderson.

Asked on radio about the project, Mr Brumby said Victoria did not have the capacity to pay for it even with the federal government's \$220 million contribution.

Although the federal government has kicked money in, the state Treasurer is now white-anting the commitments of his colleague, the Minister for Transport. We already have two voices coming from the government on this — and no doubt there will be a third and a fourth. The government is showing that even though it pays lip-service to the Scoresby project, it is still committed to the original position it held prior to the state election in 1999 — that is, that Scoresby is not on its priority list. The Bracks government is not interested in committing funds to the project. When the pressure comes on — when it has a chance to kick in \$220 million to match the federal government dollar-for-dollar and get the project started — it walks away. Putting in \$2 million is an insult! It might as well have not put anything into the budget.

However, I find it strange that Cr Mark Conroy is so quick to blast the federal government but so slow to say anything about the state government's response — in fact, he is so silent that one would have to describe him as a hypocrite. The people of Dunkley are still waiting to hear him comment on this issue.

People like Cr Conroy and others, who are so quick to condemn, should also be talking about the forecasts in the budget for lower economic and employment growth in this state. The government has made those forecasts because the proof is there already. It can be seen in newspaper articles, such as the one that appeared in the *Herald Sun* of 29 May under the heading '3300 jobs lost in industry shifts', as well as the lists that detail lost jobs and investments.

The Liberal Party is keeping those lists because it wants to know what is going on. The list I have, which is not complete, shows that from January 2000 to May 2001, 12 662 jobs were lost as a result of businesses either closing down or shifting interstate or overseas. Is this the kind of record the government wants to stand on? Is it the kind of record the government believes will be welcomed by the community? The government has a surprise coming if it believes that!

I go back to the days prior to 1992, when Victoria was rightly described as the Rust Bucket State. It seems the Bracks government has not learnt from the past; it seems intent on repeating the mistakes of the Cain–Kirner governments. Do we believe Mark Phillips, the industrial reporter for the *Herald Sun*, is wrong when he says:

Victorian manufacturing has lost or is to lose more than 3300 jobs — and another 2650 are at risk.

...

Employer groups and unions warn the pain is likely to continue, particularly in the traditional manufacturing sectors of textiles, clothing and footwear, and engineering.

...

Bill Shorten, of the Australian Workers Union, believes jobs are being axed because company managements are making knee-jerk decisions.

'There are some bad business decisions being made', he said.

He would be a good judge, would he not? He has been in business and risked his own money.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr COOPER — Bill Shorten has never risked a dollar. Have you ever risked a dollar? Of course you haven't! You have never risked a dollar. Virtually no-one on the government benches of this Parliament has ever been in business or risked their own money in business. The head of the Australian Workers Union criticises businesses for trying to survive, but the reality is they can survive when they go interstate or overseas — they just do not seem to be able to survive in Victoria.

And is it any wonder? Look at the tax regime the government is applying to business. Workcover alone has forced many businesses out of action. Taxes in other areas have forced businesses out of the state or out of business, yet the government proclaims itself to be a friend of business. Well, it does not fool business! Businesses are not fooled. They are walking away, and that is not good news for the state, for young people or for investment.

As I said earlier, when the government produced its budget 12 months ago it got some warning signals. Not only speakers on this side of the house warned government members — although I can understand government members wanting to ignore advice proffered to them by members on this side. I do not accept that it is a sensible response, but it is understandable that they might walk away from any advice opposition members might offer. However, rational, sensible, middle-of-the-road commentators are also offering advice to the government and the government is ignoring them, too. It is about time the penny dropped and the Treasurer and the Premier started to think about some of the things said in the editorial of the *Australian Financial Review* that I quoted at the start of my contribution.

It is a disappointing budget. A big-spending budget, yes; but in all the parameters that make a state grow, it is sadly lacking.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — I will talk about the budget today, but first I will mention St Augustine's prayer, which might also be called St Liberal's prayer. It goes something like, 'Give me chastity — but not yet!'. The Liberal version might be more like, 'Give me a decent opposition leader — but not yet!', 'Give me a decent opposition leader who is not being constantly challenged — but not yet!', 'Give me unity within the Liberal Party — but not yet!', 'Give me a leader with the numbers in his new seat, wherever that may be because of the redistribution — but not yet!'.

What a pathetic response to the excellent budget handed down by the Treasurer a couple of weeks ago, producing \$774 million in tax cuts for business.

An Opposition Member — But not yet!

Mr NARDELLA — That is something that the Liberal and National party members only dreamed of when they were in office. They do not know a good budget when they see one.

What a pathetic carry-on about the Scoresby freeway! What a pathetic response! Government members had to drag the federal government members kicking and screaming to the Scoresby freeway altar to get them to put their own money in. They did not want to put their money in. The only thing that forced them to put money in was the Aston by-election and the tragic passing of the former federal member for Aston. That is the only thing that dragged them to the Scoresby freeway altar. But it is not a fair dinkum marriage; they want to get a little bit pregnant. They do not want to put half the money into a RONI — a road of national importance.

The state puts half the money into a road of national importance and the federal government puts in the other half. In this case half the money is about \$400 million. However, that miserly lot, which does not communicate with its federal colleagues and does not care about Victoria, put in only \$220 million. What a pathetic response to a really serious issue in the Scoresby area!

I congratulate the Treasurer on his excellent budget. It is indeed excellent, especially for people in the west and the outer west. That is my concern, because the people out there are the electors I represent. My constituents have received a large in-flow of capital into their services. The budget brings \$7 million into schools in my electorate. Compare that to the situation four years ago under the Kennett government!

The honourable member for Mornington wants to talk about running businesses. He was a minister who could not run a business. The only thing he could do was flog a business off so someone else could run it. He did not have the capacity or the capability to run businesses when he was a minister; yet he says government members have no experience. Of course we have experience. Government members probably have more business experience than honourable members on the other side ever will, because we know how to run businesses.

We know what it is to struggle. We on this side do not have a silver spoon in the mouth from the time we are born. We do not create the One.Tels of the world. My constituents go out and create real businesses and do real work without the silver spoon in the mouth and without the silver service. Members on the other side have businesses created for them by mummy and daddy. 'Mummy and daddy will give me the money, they will fix me up' — that is the type of business they run. Put them into government, however, and they cannot run anything.

Look at their record in education. The former government's record in education was appalling: 360 schools were closed, especially in country Victoria; 8000 teachers went down the hole and were sacked; 2000 cleaners got the bullet just before Christmas 1993 — what a great Christmas present! For seven years those great economic managers devastated the Victorian economy — education, health and the ambulance services — and I refer to the Metropolitan Ambulance Service and the \$32 million that was wasted on the grubs who were pocketing that money. Yet opposition members have the gall to say they are the economic managers and the ones who look after my constituents. Four years ago, not one red cent for education was allocated to the western suburbs. Yet they want to tell my constituents that they are better economic managers. What a load of rubbish!

They are not even united. On one side there is the National Party and on the other the Liberal Party. Last night we saw that they are disunited. They cannot make a decision together. They hate each other.

Last week the honourable member for Brighton, the shadow Treasurer, responded to the budget. Her mate, the honourable member for Warrandyte, had his own press conference and stabbed her in the back because he wanted all the kudos and the glory. He could not handle the shadow Treasurer getting all the attention. What a pathetic bunch! They do not care and have never cared about my constituents. At least there is now a government and a Treasurer that do care.

Today I want to talk about broiler farms, which are a concern in the Rockbank region. Local residents have been drastically affected by the establishment of broiler farms at Rockbank. They are facing a massive battle in my area. Representations have been made to me and I have gone out and talked to residents at various meetings. I have put leaflets out informing the community about the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) hearings both in Melbourne and out at Paynes Road. I have made representations to the Minister for Planning on this issue, as has the community, and we have been listened to.

Broiler farms are being built close to schools and houses and are affecting people's health. The odour is driving people away from their homes and is bringing down the value of properties in the region. There is inappropriate planning and control in the area. During discussions with the Minister for Planning I called on him to adopt the draft broiler code of practice to bring certainty within the area and, more importantly, for the residents and farmers in areas such as Rockbank.

The honourable member for Gippsland West also has a concern about broiler farms in her electorate. They are insidious. There are no controls; they cannot control the odour. I welcome the adoption of the important direction given to VCAT on Monday by the Minister for Planning.

Broiler farms are a major concern in my electorate. It is an inappropriate industry for the area. I will continue to work with the community to ensure I bring whatever influence I can to bear on the broiler industry, along with Melton Shire Council, which is appealing to the Supreme Court against the last decision of VCAT — and I support that action to stop broiler farms being in the region.

The second issue I want to discuss concerns Leakes Road. Leakes Road crosses the Western Highway at Rockbank, which is an extremely dangerous intersection. Honourable members who travel along the Western Highway will know the intersection I am talking about. Currently, a flyover is being built at Hopkins Road, but a Leakes Road flyover needs to be built. The Leakes Road intersection is past Hopkins Road going towards Melton and Ballarat on the Western Highway.

In the past I have raised the issue with the Minister for Transport and have asked him to make representations to the Honourable John Anderson, the federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services. I have also raised it directly with Mr Anderson. I appreciate the reply I

received from Senator Ron Boswell, the federal Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and Regional Services. He reported that investigations and preliminary work were occurring through Vicroads as an initial step to building the flyover. On behalf of my constituents in Rockbank, and other motorists using the Western Highway, I asked that the work be commissioned as soon as possible once that preliminary work is completed. It is a federal highway and is not a road of national importance like the proposed Scoresby freeway, where the state government will fund half the project and the federal government will fund the other half. The federal government is responsible and the work needs to be undertaken as quickly as possible.

The next issue I raise concerns the Deer Park bypass, a \$175 million project, and again a federal road project. The bypass is needed to relieve the congestion and improve the safety in and around Deer Park, especially around Station Road and Robinsons Road and the Caroline Springs area. It is important that money be allocated to this project. This work needs to be done for the economic benefit of the region.

The final road project I refer to is Anthonys Cutting between Bacchus Marsh and Melton on the Western Highway. I raised this issue with the former Minister for Roads and Ports, the Honourable Geoff Craige, when I was in the upper house before the last state election. This stretch of road is dangerous. It has been made safer by the erection of some barriers in the middle of the road that stop cars crossing the median strip and causing head-on collisions. However, it is important that it be raised to freeway standard so that there can be freeway conditions all the way from the West Gate Bridge to Ballarat.

I welcome the extra funding allocated to Delahey and Sydenham for bus services. Local residents and I have asked the Minister for Transport to introduce the bus services, which are extremely important to service schools and residents who currently do not have any bus services whatsoever. That is a legacy from the past seven years of the Kennett government. These are new estates where the previous government did not plan or allocate money for bus and public transport services. Mr Anderson from the Delahey residents association and other residents have been calling for such bus services for many years. There will be community consultation on the new services. I want the local community to get involved over the coming months — and it is important the community is consulted.

The budget builds on the other \$20 million put into the Melton electorate over the past 18 months, adding up to around \$28 million. It is gratifying to see the

technology and music wings at Melton Secondary College coming to reality, and I would like the Minister for Education to attend to open those facilities. The government is building for the future in a real sense.

I take the opportunity to thank the Treasurer and his parliamentary secretary, the honourable member for Dandenong North, John Lenders, for coming out and consulting with my constituents when the Harvey review was being conducted. The honourable member for Dandenong North listened to what was being said by business people in my electorate. I ticked off what they were saying and all of their concerns were addressed. They were matters such as a reduction in payroll tax, which is occurring over time, and the lifting of the threshold rate for payroll tax. One of the matters not discussed, although it was alluded to, was that the threshold for land tax should go up, and it has gone up to \$120 000. That is a bonus for many of the medium to large businesses in my electorate.

A raft of other measures were put in place. The removal of the five taxes and the \$774 million saving put in place by the government are extremely important to the business community. The Bracks government listens to business. It wants job growth in Victoria. The great problem — the Minister for Manufacturing Industry, who is at the table, knows this — is that the federal government does not care about Victoria.

I leave you with this quote from a comment by Rivka Pile, which appeared on page 14 of the *Age* of 1 June:

I understand Louise Asher's frustration with the government's promises 'we shall — but not yet'. Her Kennett government was all 'now'; cuts to schools, now! Cuts to public hospitals, now! Cuts to public transport, now!

The contrast is remarkable. The government really has turned the corner in Victoria with the budget.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill) — I always enjoy following the honourable member for Melton. I am sorry he has to leave because I enjoyed his comments on the stewardship of the Labor Party in government in the 1980s. When the coalition took over it was discovered the budget was only three-quarters funded and that 25 per cent was funded by debt. We in the then coalition knew we had enormous difficulties and problems. It was very different from the budget position this government found itself in some years later.

Today I will traverse issues with thoughts and ideas on where country Victoria might travel, and I will pose some of the questions that need to be asked and answered. It is interesting to listen to the nonsense that comes out of the mouths of so many honourable

members when they refer to the country, which they have no knowledge of at all, and to understand that — —

Mr Maxfield — Do not talk about the National Party like that!

Mr STEGGALL — I will talk like that because if you can get your colleagues to understand what country Victoria is about, what it is doing and what it is, instead of using it as a political football, then you and I might get on a lot better.

The changes made by the coalition changed the face of country Victoria. I note the presence of the honourable member for Ripon. He and I are working through what would be the end of one of the most difficult changes in the provision of health throughout small country towns. It could not be left the way it was; we had to change it and put it into a structure that would work.

Mr Maxfield interjected.

Mr STEGGALL — The honourable member for Narracan might be surprised that the honourable member for Ripon and I have been working with the minister, both here and in Canberra, together with John Forrest, the federal member for Mallee, to achieve what I believe will be a good structure for the delivery of acute and aged care when we eventually get the solution for our isolated communities. Without the change most of the hospitals in the area would have been lost. The same could be said of the schools — 13 schools closed in my electorate and today have been replaced by 5 or 6 top-class schools — and not one parent or community would want to go back to the little schools of 10 to 15 students. Those changes were vital for our children. One of the biggest problems secondary school principals throughout country Victoria had was catching up the education of students from small schools, and in some cases it took up to three years.

The National Party contributed to changing the face of country Victoria, and National Party members are proud of it. We did it not because it was popular but because it was right. I am proud of where we took country Victoria. Obviously we did not win the politics, but we won a strong base for the country to move on from.

I take the opportunity now to look at some of the issues that need to be addressed — the next range of issues that I hope governments and oppositions will consider as we go through the policy areas in the future. Technology has changed our approach to the country, particularly in many of the dryland areas, where huge

machinery and the latest technology is changing the demographics and structure of our vast society.

We need to maintain human settlement that offers quality of life in sparsely populated areas. How are we going to do it? How do we protect the biodiversity and conserve our natural resources and maintain a labour force in country areas? The Europeans do that through a huge range of subsidies, payments and grants they make to the land managers, mainly the farmers. That is not available to us in the current situation; with a population of 20 million people throughout Australia, that is not something we can expect to plan for.

The community infrastructure upgrades are needed in the interests of on-farm cost savings and efficiencies. Community road, bridge and rail networks must be brought to a high standard to ensure reliable product movement from farm to market. All our communities are involved in exporting food and fibre production. When we consider our transport and infrastructure needs we must be aware that farmers, communities and country towns are not competing with the town, city or state next door: they are competing with the total structures and infrastructure of South America — including Chile and Argentina — South Africa and, in some instances, America. In Thailand our dairy industry competes with the industries of Poland and other countries of Eastern Europe. We must try to identify our needs for community infrastructure upgrades and understand why we are doing the upgrades.

In the future the government must respond to the ageing populations of many areas of country Victoria by ensuring that services and facilities are put in place to meet people's needs. Last year we had a marvellous conference with La Trobe University in Melbourne on small towns and the ageing. We considered the demographic changes in our community in relation to similar changes, particularly in the Midwest of America. We all need to be aware and must appreciate that active aged people will remain active until they are in their 80s. The aged population now is different from that of a few years ago. In country areas we are finding that whereas people retire and go away — to the north coast of New South Wales, the Mornington Peninsula or somewhere else —

Mr Hulls — Niddrie?

Mr STEGGALL — No, not Niddrie! We are finding that whereas those people go away while they are active, as soon as one of the partners dies or gets sick, the remaining one usually comes back home to the small town. We must be careful to ensure that we do

not deny services to small towns because we are finding that people who go away in retirement are later coming back to the small towns.

We look to governments and to society to develop and promote alternatives to land ownership. Leasing, sharefarming, networks, alliances, joint ventures, cooperative ownership and clustering of business are already starting throughout country areas. I am aware that the brothers of the honourable member for Wimmera are involved in those types of land ownership. We must consider alternatives so that the burden of ownership of farms will not be the negative it is in many areas and industries as we compete in the international marketplace.

The right to farm is something about which I have spoken many times. I am pleased that the government has now responded to the paper produced and that the committee responded to the issues we were looking at. I understand that by the end of this year legislation will be introduced that addresses some of those right-to-farm issues.

I am delighted that the Attorney-General is with us. We must get a system in place so that we take some of the fear out of native title claims. We have some coming up in my community right now. While most of it settles down to the federal government through the National Native Title Tribunal, the future operations of acts relating to native title by which we will resolve many native title claims will be the responsibility of state governments. We will need the cooperation of the minister and the department to ensure we achieve that.

On the issue of farms and ecotourism, the government must nurture creative approaches to the operation of non-farm businesses such as tourism in conjunction with the farm business. We need to be able to create knowledge, education and training. People talk about the gap between the city and the country. The real gap is in the understanding. The people of Melbourne have so many pressures and things on their minds that they do not understand what life is in the country and the strengths and the needs there. We understand that the people of Melbourne have enough hassles and problems of their own. They dominate us politically, financially and culturally, but they must take time out to try — and governments must make sure that they do — to understand what we do.

Earlier I was surprised that a member from the country, the honourable member for Narracan, showed how little people know and understand. He comes from a beautiful part of Victoria in Narracan, which is an area that has changed. It is one of the two different types of

country in Victoria. Narracan and Gisborne would be the two seats where the people have chosen a lifestyle. They protect very strongly what they have. They are not looking for new development, production or industries, because they have a lifestyle and Melbourne as a commuter base. That makes them different; I understand that and I just ask that those members try to understand the problems of some of our areas and what we need in them.

One of the matters we are looking at and that I hope the government may consider is payroll tax concessions for investment in country areas. We must ask the question: should we put in place positive discrimination such as tax breaks in favour of businesses or community operations in targeted small towns of, say, up to 1000 people? I will give honourable members an idea of what that would mean in an electorate such as Swan Hill so that they understand that things are quite difficult. In my electorate such a scheme would include the small towns of Sea Lake, Charlton, Birchip, Wycheproof, Donald, Inglewood, Boort, Pyramid Hill, Wedderburn, Serpentine, Manangatang, Nyah, Lake Boga, Nyah West, Ultima and Piangil. If the redistribution is put in place, the most likely additions will be Murtoa, Minyip, Rupanyup and Warracknabeal. That is just one electorate.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr STEGGALL — No, St Arnaud has more than 1000 people. I was referring to positive discrimination for communities of fewer than 1000 people.

I refer to some of the new country industries that I would like to see us and our science programs, universities and education system move towards. We need planned land use change on a large scale if we are to position farmers and small rural businesses to make more money without degrading the natural resource. Planned land use on such a scale is new and will challenge us. Only when farmers make more money from sustainable industries will the social and environmental capital of country areas be enhanced rather than run down.

We must invest in the development of profitable agricultural industries based on suites of different perennials for different soils, systems and climates. Those industries will have to stand the triple bottom-line test of economic, environmental and social benefit to offer long-term regional growth and development. Believe it or not, those things are starting to be talked about in northern Victoria and, I am sure, in other parts of the state.

On the production of alternative fuels such as ethanol and other biomass-based products, we must begin the transition to a biomass-based economy, which has the potential to help restore the landscape and create thousands of new jobs in Australia by halfway through this century. This will require the planning of thousands of hectares of sustainable crops including oil-producing Mallee scrub and other food stocks. Plantings could also produce eucalyptus oil, activated carbon, green electricity and other products for increased farm profitability. Small regional power plants would lower the cost of fuel in regional areas and returns would stay in the local area. That is interesting to look at, think about and consider. Only an hour ago an email arrived for me from America which summarised advances in ethanol production from corn. It claimed that it is now possible to get an economic return from ethanol. I will not read the article now as it would take too much time.

These issues are not the stuff of dreams; they are happening around the world. The minister would be aware that in Western Australia Woodside and some other companies are investing in large-scale production of Mallee scrub — oil Mallees — for their water table. These companies are building a plant which will convert the scrub to eucalyptus oil, activated carbons and the production of green electricity. As many honourable members will already be aware, each of our distributors has to supply a certain amount of green electricity over the next few years. These types of things are possible and, in some cases, already exist.

The minister has been involved with part of the Murray–Darling Basin studies and the work that is being done there. The past few years have seen developments in land care, salinity plans and other things that have been absolutely fantastic in the country. They have changed people's minds and thoughts about the way they approach land use. That is just about over for the major operations. Now there need to be large-scale operations to make sure the Murray–Darling Basin, particularly in the Mallee where I come from, the Lachlan and some parts of New South Wales and South Australia are able to get a stable operation in place.

It is very exciting, but I do not see much of this sort of development in the budget. I do not see or hear much discussion in this place of these types of things. I wish we had more, but we do not. Maybe the Minister for Agriculture, who has been good enough to join us, might consider coming into this place one day and making a ministerial statement on the future of agriculture as he sees it and let this Parliament, with the majority of its members coming from Melbourne, hear and discuss the issue for a couple of hours, at

10 minutes a go, so that we could examine and explore some of the issues which we as a society need and can move toward. Today, enormous scientific knowledge from both around the world and locally is available to us. I believe there is a lot of goodwill in the corporate sector. The federal government has shown similar goodwill through its commitment to the Murray–Darling Basin and the states. They can put up a lot of money to tackle the issues in these areas. It has a huge spin-off in all our country areas — country towns, schools and hospitals, the whole box and dice.

That knowledge is available to us. The minister might consider making such a ministerial statement. I hope he does. This Parliament has not seen anything like that, and I would very much appreciate it. It is only on a debate such as the budget that honourable members can move into that type of discussion which needs to happen in this place. When you listen to the comments that are made against the country by the city members, mainly from the government, you are horrified to think just how little they know.

I have to tell the house this: I had some friends up to Swan Hill at the weekend. They suffered from a real lack of knowledge and could not understand what was happening in that area. However, they were fascinated by what was going on and how we handled these things. They do not know anything about that. The media in Melbourne will never tell them of what we are doing. Metropolitan-based people need to have a far better knowledge of what this great country of ours is. Gippsland, the south west, the north east, the north west or northern or central Victoria are all very special places and I am very proud of country Victoria; its potential is fantastic. We must identify exactly who we are, what we stand for and what our ability is to be able to sustain our land and people bases and our business, which is basically the export market. This is what we have to do.

That is just a very short summary of some of the subjects that I would have liked to have seen in the budget.

Government members interjecting.

Mr STEGGALL — We've got a few more pages here!

Members of the National Party would have liked to see a little bit more in the budget. Some initiatives are in it, and I hope we will be able to improve the operation of country Victoria in the future.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Richardson) — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — The Bracks government's budget is one that reflects the balance between economic responsibility and the needs of the community. I note with interest members of the National Party leaving the chamber and ignoring the debate on the budget and the issues.

Mr Lupton interjected.

Mr MAXFIELD — I will not be diverted by the comments from some departing members who obviously do not want to hear about a budget that looks after rural and regional Victoria. This budget delivers for rural and regional Victoria. Certainly, it is a budget on which I am very proud to speak. As I go through my electorate I see where this budget has delivered in spades. For example, the Ellinbank Dairy Research Centre took delivery of \$12.5 million to rebuild its research facility. The excellent Minister for Agriculture has put a huge amount of effort and resources into this project. He deserves to be congratulated for showing faith in the centre, which has already shown world leadership in a range of areas. It will now be enhanced and expanded by a fantastic development.

During my speech I will go through a range of other issues, but I want to get on to a point where, sadly, there have been some negatives in our community. For example, the National Party has targeted the Latrobe Valley in some sort of vicious and hateful way. Personally, I cannot understand why.

Several weeks ago the honourable member for Shepparton stood up in the house and made some sad comments about the Latrobe Valley, which showed his ignorance and indicated the view of our regions held by the National Party.

He said that in the mid-1990s he visited the Latrobe Valley. During his speech he suggested that SEC stood for 'slow, easy and comfortable'! He claimed that workers in the Latrobe Valley were looking for an easy life and suggested that they wanted to do as little work as possible. The house has just been debating the vilification legislation, yet sadly the National Party wants to vilify the workers in the Latrobe Valley who have delivered power to this state for many years. When we switch on our lights we enjoy the benefits of the power generated in the Latrobe Valley — but what does the National Party say about that, through the honourable member for Shepparton — —

Mr Maughan — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I wonder what this has to do with the appropriation bill. The honourable member is spending a lot of time referring to comments made by the

honourable member for Shepparton on an electricity bill. What he is talking about is irrelevant to the debate, and I suggest you bring him back to the debate before the Chair.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Richardson) — Order! The budget debate is wide ranging, and traditionally a great deal of freedom has always been extended to honourable members.

Mr MAXFIELD — If honourable members listened to my speech they would know that I am getting to the rescue package in the valley. But the honourable member for Shepparton said that workers in the Latrobe Valley tried to do as little work as possible and attempted to cut productivity. Those comments are a tragic indictment of the views held by the National Party.

The workers of the Latrobe Valley have suffered under economic rationalism, including seeing their jobs slashed. Did the Kennett government look after the valley and show support for the people who lived there? No, it just attacked the workers who delivered power to this state.

I want to know whether the Leader of the National Party supports the views expressed by the honourable member for Shepparton. More importantly, I want to know whether one of the upper house members for Gippsland Province, the Honourable Peter Hall, who supposedly represents the valley, also supports the comments made by the honourable member for Shepparton. I call on him to tell the Latrobe Valley whether he supports those disgraceful comments. I will wait with interest to hear their responses to the appalling attack on workers in the Latrobe Valley.

Under the guise of protecting the people of Yarram the Leader of the National Party has made a song and dance about the closure of the Won Wron Prison. This is a major issue in the area, and it needs to be handled carefully to ensure the people down there are looked after. Sadly the Leader of the National Party has decided to play politics with this issue.

On hearing about the closure of the prison, the chief executive officer of the Shire of Wellington contacted Bill Bolitho, the Labor Party candidate for Gippsland, and said, 'Can you give us some assistance?'. Bill Bolitho organised for a delegation to meet the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and obviously knowing that it was important to have a local member involved, he also invited the Leader of the National Party to attend that meeting.

The Leader of the National Party tried to pretend he had arranged it all, when in fact he was just invited to come along. Unfortunately he was not putting his community first; he was putting the desperate chase for votes first, playing politics on an important community issue.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Richardson) — Order! The honourable gentleman is now crossing the line. He is engaging in direct attacks upon another member of this institution. I caution him to return to the matter before the house, which is the appropriation bill. While he can range widely, there ought to be at least some reference to money!

Mr MAXFIELD — I acknowledge your advice, Acting Speaker! The budget makes me proud to be a member of the Bracks government. In going through my electorate I realise that education is a high priority in the budget. Providing more than \$10 million through the education precinct in the Latrobe Valley is an example of the Bracks government's budget commitment to educating youth in the City of Latrobe.

The young people of Latrobe have suffered from neglect in the past. The Bracks government's commitment to the education precinct and the funding announcement made by the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment will certainly hold our region in good stead. Additional funding of \$1.6 million has been allocated to Warragul Secondary College as part of an ongoing refurbishment program. I recently visited that school, which looks like a complete bomb site as major renovations are being undertaken. The additional \$1.6 million will see it develop into a wonderful secondary college that everyone in the Warragul area can be proud of.

Moe is a town with tremendous heart and spirit. The Moe police have worked under the most extreme conditions imaginable. The previous Labor government promised the people of Moe a new police station, but sadly the Kennett government reneged on that promise, so for the duration of the seven dark Kennett years we had no police station.

The funding provided for the new police station in Moe means that will soon see construction commence. Moe will have a police station that will provide for the needs of our police now and into the future. The police do a wonderful job in Moe; it is certainly a force we can be proud of. We need to give local police officers a police station that will stand them in good stead.

In Trafalgar the Baw Baw Technology Centre is going from strength to strength. The move towards establishing a community bank to replace the

Commonwealth Bank branch that was pulled out of the town is certainly good news. It is a disgrace that the Commonwealth Bank has removed itself, but the town is moving towards a community bank, as is the Newborough township, which is next to Moe. Sadly Newborough has also lost some of its banking facilities, so it is going down the track of setting up a community bank.

While we are on the topic of community banks, I point out that the Neerim South Community Bank is open and performing according to expectations, if not exceeding them. A community bank is also being established in the township of Drouin. Although it is not in my electorate at present, given the draft boundaries I look forward to representing the town in the future. The local people have jumped all the hurdles, so the construction of the bank building in the township should start very soon.

We are seeing a revitalisation of banking services right across the area. As a local member I am proud to have assisted in some small way to ensuring that we have a banking service. The big banks abandoned us, but we know our community banks will not. Who would vote to close down their banks? That is why I am excited about the community banks, which will be wonderful for our area.

Mount Baw Baw is a ski resort that we inherited from the Kennett government in bad shape. Government funding has been invested in the mountain in the past few months, and the lifts have been upgraded and their safety improved. There has been a range of problems on the mountain, which have resulted in a lot of turmoil. However, the Bracks government is committed not to sweeping these problems under the carpet but to facing them head on and dealing with them.

I look forward to the successful future of Mount Baw Baw. I will be up there next weekend for the opening of the season, although I doubt that there will be any snow. I also look forward to meeting members of the local community and examining the plans for the development of the great mountain and great resorts we have there.

Below Mount Baw Baw the plans are progressing well for the refurbishment of the Toorong Falls area, which has fallen into neglect over a long time. The government is looking at proposals with its working group to open up the Tarago Reservoir for recreational uses, which will see a tremendous focus on tourism through the region. Improvements are also being made at Walhalla, with new caravan parks being installed. Already through the community jobs program the

unemployed have built a replica of the original Walhalla railway station, which I had great pleasure in opening the other day and which will be a great bonus to the Walhalla community. The budget has taken into account the focus on tourism in the area and the Bracks government is committed to growing not only my electorate of Narracan but the whole state.

The Minister for Agriculture is part of the ministerial task force that is looking at a rescue package for the Latrobe Valley. Soon honourable members will be hearing the results of its report, which looks at the wonderful revitalisation to be achieved with the support of the Bracks government. It will be in stark contrast to the neglect of the seven dark Kennett years.

Moving through my electorate to Noojee, by combining three different government programs and with local government support the streetscape and surrounds of the Noojee township are being revitalised at a cost of more than \$180 000. Situated at the foothills of Mount Baw Baw, Noojee is a fantastic and beautiful town, and more and more tourists and people from the community in general will come to enjoy the wonderful environment there.

Unemployed people are doing a lot of the work. It is not part of the work-for-the-dole scheme but real jobs through real work programs, and includes training so that when people finish their project they have a certificate saying what experience they have gained. They can say to a future employer, 'This is the work I have carried out. This is what I have done'. I am excited about the work that has been carried out in Noojee and about the community jobs program. Those types of programs are now happening in other parts of my electorate and the Bracks government should be congratulated on them. Not only are they giving work to unemployed people, they are also giving training, hope and a future.

The government inherited some bad planning decisions from the previous Kennett government in the form of Boralla Farms at Labertouche. I value the Labertouche area and I am working with the community on the Boralla Farms issues and the potential threat to the dairy industry. The government is looking at the code. The protection of our farming regions is something that I can describe only as very important.

To finish my comments on the budget and how it has affected my area, a disappointing note for me as the local member has been the Yallourn Energy power station. Yallourn Energy has treated its workers in a manner that can only be described as sad and disgraceful. As somebody who has represented workers

over many years it is sad for me to see a company that is not really interested in negotiating genuinely with its workers. It is not interested in working through the issues in a way that can deliver a proper outcome.

I contrast that with Hazelwood Power, which operates the neighbouring power station and which has recently managed to reach agreement with its workers. That agreement provided security for the workers, a reasonable pay increase and efficient operation of the power station. It means the operators can give the workers reliable work and at the same time deliver a good outcome to the power station owners.

I strongly urge Yallourn Energy to look at what has happened at Hazelwood and to follow that path with its own workers in working through its industrial relations problems. The community cannot afford the mine workers losing their jobs. It cannot afford to have 200 people made redundant. I plead with and implore Yallourn Energy to care for its workers and to negotiate properly with them towards a decent outcome that will deliver security for the power station and mine workers while at the same time delivering a good outcome for the company. It is possible to achieve that, and I strongly urge the company to sit down and negotiate genuinely with its workers rather than engaging in the appalling and heavy-handed tactics it has used up to now.

I finish my comments on the budget by saying that it is a wonderful budget. I am thrilled with the work that has been achieved in my electorate over the past 12 months. There are difficulties but with goodwill they can be worked through.

Mr ROWE (Cranbourne) — I suppose one can understand the theme from the film *Deliverance*. Florian Andrighetto must have been terrible as a mate!

I rise to speak on what people call a Bracks government budget, but it is a Brumby budget, and like the wild, elusive horses known as brumbies this budget is certainly wild and elusive because it is the 'not now' budget. There is no direction in it for Victoria or Melbourne. The budget has let down rural Victoria and south-eastern and eastern metropolitan fringe. That there is absolutely no commitment of funds to this rapidly growing area of Melbourne shows that the Bracks government and the wild Brumby have totally neglected those people of Melbourne.

This high-taxing, high-spending government's own budget papers show there is going to be a cash deficit. The government is going to spend more money this year than comes in from its revenue sources.

Mr Wilson — Old habits die hard!

Mr ROWE — Certainly old habits die hard. It reminds me of the 1986 and 1988 big-spending budgets of previous Labor governments that delivered nothing and created nothing but lost everything for Victoria.

One wonders how that has come about, because if one looks at the budget on a percentage basis and compares it to the federal budget one sees that the surpluses inherited by the Bracks Labor government as a percentage of gross state product are far in excess of the surpluses created as a percentage of gross national product under the federal government. On a percentage basis the Victorian government had a lot more money to spend, but where has it gone? It certainly did not go on creating employment in outer south-eastern Melbourne or on completing roads or major projects. It has gone on recurrent expenditure — that is, paying wages and paying back favours to the teachers union, the Transport Workers Union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and all those other sectional interest groups that supported the ALP while in opposition and funded its election campaign.

When we look at the budget papers we find that this year the Labor government has had windfalls in stamp duty, land tax and payroll tax. One would think that when a government has windfall gains and record surpluses it would return at least the excess of what it received over what the predictions were. But not this government, despite its claiming to have given tax relief to businesses and the wider Victorian community. It certainly did not do that. Its so-called tax package is in fact less than the windfall gain it received on land tax this year.

Let us look at the tax relief it has provided. The land tax amendments were trumpeted as being a great benefit for the small investor in Victoria, but the government forgot to tell the people of Victoria that the new valuations are yet to come into effect. Over the past four years since the previous valuations, because of the efforts of the Kennett government while running the finances of the state, people have come back to Victoria to purchase properties and establish businesses, which has forced up land and house prices. So, what is the net result of the land tax changes? More land tax! The amount of land tax has increased to more than the government collected last year. The government will also receive more stamp duty than it collected last year.

Let us look at payroll tax. The government has trumpeted the payroll tax changes, but all the land tax and payroll tax changes will occur in the future. They will not be a net cost to budget at all. In fact, there will

be a net increase in payroll tax, land tax and stamp duty tax. On top of that, the government will receive the increased revenue coming in from the GST which goes directly to the states. This government has a bag full of money, but it is wasting it and it has put Victoria into a cash-deficit position some 20 months after taking government.

We need only look at the Auditor-General's *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* tabled today to see a \$600 million unfunded liability in the Workcover system. This government said the Workcover scheme would be fully funded. It reintroduced common law and brought the lawyers back into the system, but who is getting the benefit? Not the injured workers; certainly not those in my electorate — one woman had to wait seven months for a benefit to be paid on the death of her husband — —

Mr Maclellan — Slater and Gordon.

Mr ROWE — Slater and Gordon and the Labor lawyers are pocketing the money.

We will not see any dramatic increase in capital spending this year, because all the government's capital spending is put down for future years. We will not even see it next year: the government will not create even one job in Victoria out of capital expenditure next year. It all represents future spending. The government has successfully put Victoria back on the road to debt. It has put Victorian and Victorians — every man, woman and child — back in the red.

I turn to my electorate, which is fairly representative of outer Melbourne. It is one of the areas, like Knox, Casey, Dandenong and Whittlesea, that has been neglected by the Labor government. I refer to roads funding for the Cranbourne electorate. I have been running a black spot program — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr ROWE — It is certainly part of a marginal seat campaign. I always work in a marginal seat — if you work hard the people appreciate it. I thank the honourable member for his interjection. You need to be in your electorate to understand your electorate. I am afraid the Labor Party has lost that notion after just 20 months in office.

In the Cranbourne electorate I have been running a black spot funding program by utilising one of the avenues provided by the minister responsible for roads, and I thank for him that. It has certainly given me an opportunity to communicate with my constituents and to be able to put projects up for funding. However, not

one of the 13 projects has been funded. Not one! One should not be surprised at that. One need look only at the Cranbourne–Frankston Road, which the former Kennett government put into the forward estimates of Vicroads for funding two years ago!

Mr Maclellan — I remember a former Minister for Transport, Jim Kennan, receiving a deputation about that.

Mr ROWE — That was 15 or more years ago. The Cranbourne–Frankston Road through Langwarrin has not had one red cent committed to it. Conroy and company and the honourable member for Frankston East are running around making all sorts of noises and blaming Vicroads, but it has been the no. 1 priority of the City of Frankston for three years. It is the minister for roads who has failed to allocate the funds. Freedom of information documents show that although Vicroads has it as its no. 1 priority for funding in the Frankston area not one red cent has been allocated.

One can imagine that when a federal election campaign comes along the minister will all of a sudden come up with a magic pot of money so that Mark Conroy, the Labor candidate for the federal seat of Dunkley, will be able to race out and announce it. However, it is the Labor Party and its political tricks — the Conroy tricks, the Viney tricks — that have stopped this road from being funded until now.

Thompson Road is a road for which the former government announced a three-stage strategy. The first stage was funded but stages 2 and 3 still require funding — and not one red cent has been allocated.

I turn to the Berwick–Clyde Road. Plenty of money has been spent in the electorate of the Minister for Gaming, but the most dangerous section — the section the former government declared a government main road so that the state government would take responsibility for it and fund it — is narrow, has B-doubles and semitrailers carrying produce from farms and farm machinery travelling on it. It also has mothers and children travelling on it to the Clyde Primary School. Again, not one red cent has been allocated.

I turn to the Cranbourne–Narre Warren Road. The intersection of Greaves Road with Pound Road and Centre Road has not had one red cent committed to it, not even for the overpass or underpass — whatever the government decides to do — at the Narre Warren railway crossing.

I turn now to transport. During the election campaign the Labor Party promised it would extend the electrified rail line to Cranbourne. When formerly in government

the Labor Party wanted to use federal funds to put Sprinter trains on this line. However, through the good work and dedication to an area that he once represented, the honourable member for Pakenham, who in the Kennett government was a senior minister in the Department of Infrastructure, along with Alan Brown, a former Minister for Public Transport, negotiated with the then federal Labor government to electrify the line. It was cheaper to electrify the line than to run Sprinter trains.

What the Bracks government is now proposing is a mickey mouse extension. When I worked with the former Minister for Transport, Robin Cooper, we knew that the cost of extending the line to the Cranbourne complex would be \$28 million. To maintain the train separation and train timetable the line from Cranbourne to Dandenong had to be duplicated, which meant building a new line from the intersection south of Dandenong into the Dandenong railway station.

The Bracks government has announced that it is looking into a project — all the planning for a duplicated line was done by the former Kennett government — but it is looking into a mickey mouse solution that will not provide the promised public transport system. In addition, there has been no allocation within that project for grade separations at the Cameron Street intersection or at the South Gippsland Highway.

Turning to schools, no money has been allocated for stage 2 of the Tooradin Primary School, which has comprised portable classrooms for 30 years. The former government committed the money for stage 1. What happened to stage 2? No money has been allocated for stage 2! Following last year's budget I had to embarrass the minister by raising the funding issue in the media, and miraculously the money was found.

In an announcement to be made in the next three weeks, Rangebank Primary School will possibly receive some planning money. The former government was going to replace the portable classrooms at the school. There is no announcement on the upgrade of the badly needed Cranbourne Secondary College Victorian certificate of education facility, and the government has reannounced the building of classrooms at Courtney Gardens and Langwarrin Park schools.

There is also no money for Carrum Downs Secondary College. In referring to that college, I wonder about the honourable members for Frankston East and Carrum and their gratuitous intervention by sticking their noses into the project. The former government commenced to purchase all the land, and only one title remains to be

purchased. It is currently up for compulsory acquisition and the government is negotiating a price, which obviously is a sensitive issue. What do the honourable members for Frankston East and Carrum do but stand on the damn block of land and say, 'We definitely want this land; we will get it and open a school within 12 months', which will be miraculous, as the school is not even planned.

They have driven up the price and not taken into account the fact that an 84-year-old widow lives on the property. Her distressed family rang me to say that the government was pressuring her, and that the remains of her husband are buried in the front yard of the property. Obviously, the stories about the honourable member for Frankston East moving to Carrum and the honourable member for Carrum moving to Chelsea Province are true. One would hope that they try to do something in their own electorates rather than mucking up the early completion of a school in my electorate.

I turn now to parks and the environment. The Kennett government announced two years ago that it would fund the \$20 million Australian garden project at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne. This very good project will create hundreds of ongoing jobs in tourism as well as complementary occupations within Cranbourne, but not one red cent has been allocated to it in this budget. I have spoken to the people at the botanic gardens, and they are hopeful they might get a handout for some planning money. However, the former Minister for Planning and Local Government would be able to tell us that the planning has already been done. The former government was to fund the construction over five years, but not one red cent has been allocated to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne this year.

Mr Maclellan interjected.

Mr ROWE — Of course, the government will want to bring private money into it instead of recognising that it should be funding a great project for Australia, Victoria and the people of Cranbourne.

This government has made an art form of opening completed Kennett government health projects. The Cranbourne Integrated Care Centre was an initiative of a former Minister for Health, the Honourable Marie Tehan, and the current Leader of the Opposition, Dr Denis Naphthine. The completed building was opened in August 1999 by the then Premier, Jeff Kennett. However, this government has only now got around to opening the operating theatres, 20 months later.

That is a demonstration of the Brumby budget, which has been handed down by this wild-horse, elusive, hard-to-find, hard-to-catch and hard-to-get-to-deliver Treasurer. The budget has ignored outer eastern and south-eastern Melbourne. In particular it has ignored the electorates of Cranbourne, Berwick and Pakenham, which are growing at the fastest rate of any municipalities in the state. Where has the money gone? Nobody knows. Nobody could find the money under Cain and Kirner, and nobody will be able to find the money now, as has been demonstrated by some of the goings on in the Department of Human Services in feeding money out to projects that do not exist. This government needs to recognise south-eastern Melbourne.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I have been listening to the honourable member for Cranbourne, who comes from the former 'gunna do' government, which was gunna do this and gunna do that. It was going to rebuild the Geelong road, but it never got around to it.

Mr Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order! The honourable member for Cranbourne has had his chance.

Mr TREZISE — That is why they are on that side of the house and we are on this side. The former government was going to do it but never got around to it.

It is with pleasure that I support the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. In doing so I take this opportunity to congratulate the Treasurer, the Honourable John Brumby, on handing down his first Bracks government budget, which is a progressive document. This budget continues to fulfil the Bracks government's commitment to grow the whole of the state. It also continues to build and place emphasis on regional and rural Victoria. It is not a Melbourne-centric budget; it does not stop at the West Gate Bridge to the west.

The budget promises growth and progress across the entire Victorian community, including Geelong and the broader south-west of Victoria. No longer are regional areas like Geelong being treated like the toenails of Victoria. No longer do regional or rural Victorians have to travel to Melbourne to see progress in their state. Their communities are benefiting from the refocusing of priorities under the Bracks government. Regional and rural schools are being upgraded and teachers are being recruited rather than sacked. Regional and rural

hospitals are being upgraded and nurses are being recruited, not sacked. Police stations are being opened, not closed, and of course, police officers are being recruited, not sacked.

The key to growing regional centres and rural towns is jobs. As the honourable member for Ripon understands, jobs are essential to growing communities. Unless they have jobs, rural centres will slowly die. Hence the focus of the Bracks government on job creation. The government fully understands the value of jobs, especially in country areas. It is a credit to this government that more than 50 per cent of the jobs created in Australia over the past 12 months have been created in Victoria — and it is significant that one in three of these new jobs has been created in regional Victoria. Jobs are crucial to the survival of country and regional centres such as those in my electorate of Geelong. The Bracks government is delivering on jobs.

Prior to coming into this house I was employed as the shipping manager at the port of Geelong.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr TREZISE — The port of Geelong was devastated to lose my employment! I know that the port will be significantly boosted by the standardisation of the freight rail system. The end of different rail gauges after more than 100 years will be a great boost for regional Victoria, especially for cities like Geelong, which are so dependent on efficient transport services. Geelong is well positioned as an extensive transport hub, and the standardisation of the rail gauge will stimulate regional markets by providing efficient and effective transport routes.

The 2001–02 budget offers more in transport than just the standardisation of the rail system. The Bracks government recognises the importance of ensuring that regional centres like Geelong are linked to Melbourne and interstate centres. The current upgrade of the Melbourne–Geelong road is just one fine example. In partnership with the federal government the Bracks government has provided the \$270 million needed to upgrade this vital transport link — something which, as I said before, the Kennett government was going to do but never got around to. In the end it was the Bracks government that had to initiate the upgrade of that road.

At the completion of this project Geelong will no longer be relying on an outmoded and dangerous road link to Melbourne. A three and four-lane dual carriage freeway will ensure that Geelong's road transport linkages serve it well into the 21st century. As a member of the parliamentary Road Safety Committee

and as someone who has seen first hand instances of carnage on the Geelong road, I must say that improving the safety aspects of the road cannot be measured in dollar terms. The Geelong road upgrade is a great boon for my electorate of Geelong.

The fast rail link between Geelong and Melbourne goes hand in glove with the Melbourne road upgrade. The government has committed more than \$550 million to fast rail projects across regional centres such as Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and the Latrobe Valley. The link to Geelong will result in a highly reliable 45-minute trip to Melbourne, shaving around 15 minutes off the current service. As a person who commuted to Melbourne daily for nearly 10 years, I can assure the house that my former fellow commuters will see this as a major step forward in their commuting lives. It should also be noted that more than 2 million passenger trips are taken on the Geelong–Melbourne rail line annually.

Combined with the Melbourne road upgrade, the fast rail link to Melbourne will make Geelong a more attractive place to live for people who now work and live in Melbourne. In travelling time the Melbourne central business district will be just as close to Geelong as many of the outer metropolitan suburbs. The fast rail link and the Melbourne road upgrade will provide a significant and ongoing economic boost to Geelong through increased business and population growth.

As a father of two primary school children education is important to me, as it is to all parents across Victoria. As council president of my local school, Geelong South primary, which is a great little school, I have seen first hand the cruel effects of the Kennett government's education policy.

Mr Helper — The black hand!

Mr TREZISE — As the honourable member for Ripon says, it was the black hand of the Kennett government, which was an absolute disgrace! State schools in Geelong are significant winners in this budget. Around \$13 million will be pumped into Geelong's state schools to upgrade facilities such as libraries, science laboratories and information technology facilities. In my electorate alone Herne Hill Primary School, which became run down under the Kennett government, will receive \$1.4 million for a total refurbishment. Fyans Park Primary School will receive more than \$800 000 for similar works.

James Harrison Secondary College, which is a great school, will receive \$2.5 million for a complete rebuild. That is typical of the Bracks government's commitment

to state school education. In October 1999, just after being elected, I visited the college at the invitation of its principal, Diane Joseph. As I have noted on a number of occasions in this house, what I saw was an absolute disgrace and blight on education in Geelong. What was once a proud technical school had been run into the ground through a lack of maintenance funding. With its boarded-up windows, holes in the walls, broken clocks and holes in the floors, the place was a shemuzzle.

The previous government's obvious plan was to close the school by stealth. Because of the lack of funding parents would not be prepared to send their children to the school, and because of the resulting lack of numbers the school would be closed down. That was the Kennett government's secret plan for James Harrison Secondary College.

The allocation of \$2.5 million is the dawning of a new era for the college. The once proud technical college will again serve the students of East Geelong, Whittington and Breakwater by providing quality education with an emphasis on vocational education and training subjects. The school's strategic links with the Gordon Institute of TAFE, which shares the school site, provide a focus on technical-type subjects from year 7 through to post-compulsory education.

The Gordon Institute of TAFE is benefiting significantly from the Brumby budget. The institute, which has been an icon of post-compulsory education in the Geelong region for many decades, will receive \$15.6 million for an extensive upgrade. The funding will ensure that the institute's older buildings, which front onto Latrobe Terrace, will receive a major overhaul. The institute's information technology network will also be upgraded, ensuring that the institute's resources centre has the most modern facilities. As I said from the outset, the Brumby budget delivers on education in my electorate.

For the people of Geelong, health is also a winner in this budget. As honourable members are aware, health was one of the policy pillars of the Bracks government when it came to power. The 2001–02 budget delivers on health right across Victoria, including Geelong. The people of Geelong have received their fair share of the record \$1.6 billion that this government has pumped into the public health sector.

I am pleased to record that the Grace McKellar Centre will receive \$19 million to kick-start its major overhaul. Under the previous government the centre, which is an icon in the city of Geelong, was allowed to become run down. The plan was to privatise this great Geelong institution, but history has shown that the election of the

Bracks government saved the Grace McKellar Centre. As I said, it has now received the green light for its upgrade. Its assured future as a provider of quality aged care services in the region will be most welcome by people in my electorate. I look forward to working with Barwon Health in fulfilling the project over the next six years.

The Brumby budget was warmly welcomed by the Geelong community. A measure of its acceptance was seen in the results of a poll conducted by the *Geelong Advertiser* two days after the budget was handed down. Of the 40 people who replied to the poll, 38 supported the budget.

In closing, I turn to the report in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 18 May, headed 'State budget 2001: our readers react'. It quotes the comments of a few of the readers who took the time to register their thoughts with the newspaper. Mr Paul Turner of East Geelong said:

I think the budget was quite reasonable. It's creating jobs, putting money into the schools, the roads and the hospital, which is really a major issue in Geelong ...

Miss Elizabeth MacPherson of Bell Post Hill said:

I just think the Bracks government has done a great job, particularly after Kennett destroyed everything in Geelong. They are starting to put it back.

Ian Williams of Hamlyn Heights said:

In health and infrastructure, I strongly believe this budget is a good one for Geelong. The overall capital expenditure in the budget is very good and Geelong is bound to benefit in a number of areas.

This budget has delivered for all Victorians. It has delivered to regional and rural Victorians, and it has delivered to Geelong.

Mr WELLS (Wantirna) — I will start by recapping the early period of my parliamentary career when I first entered the house in 1992. At that time the new Kennett government was faced with the results of financial mismanagement by the Cain and Kirner governments, which had had a number of advisers including the now Premier and the now Minister for Health. The one figure that always sticks in my mind is the \$33 billion of public sector debt that the former Kennett government was faced with. Victoria was spending more on interest repayments than on education and health services. You would think that was scarcely possible; but that was the result of the intellect and the mismanagement of the Cain and Kirner governments.

To take that point one step further, let us go back to 1982 when John Cain first won government. Public

sector debt in that year was \$11 billion. Think about it: the state took 140 years to rack up \$11 billion in debt, then just 10 years of Labor government to triple the debt from \$11 billion to \$33 billion. What a disgrace!

As a young member of Parliament — younger, at least — I joined the team that had to do an extraordinary amount of hard work making tough decisions to clean up the mess created by the irresponsible actions of the Cain and Kirner era.

It is sad to find in the *Australian Financial Review* an editorial headed 'Bracks budget disappointing'. I will quote a few small parts from that editorial:

The Bracks government's second budget is a disappointing document. The Victorian general government sector is about to be pushed back into cash deficit, and that deficit is projected to rise to almost \$300 million in 2002–03.

For the non-accountants in the chamber at the moment let me explain that it is important to make sure your cash flow is steady, because if you rely on asset revaluation for a cash flow for current expenditure in the forthcoming financial year you will come unstuck very quickly. You will then have to go back to borrowing on your credit card for current expenditure — or, in government terms, for paying police wages, nurses' wages and teachers' wages. A word of caution, therefore: if you do not keep your cash flow higher than your actual expenditure flow you will go into cash deficit very quickly, and to make up any shortfall you will have to borrow.

As the *Australian Financial Review* predicts on the figures issued by the Treasurer, there will be a \$300 million cash deficit by 2002–03. Victoria is going to relive the Cain and Kirner days because the Bracks government cannot manage its finances.

I now move to the budget as it affects my shadow portfolio, the area of police. It was pleasing to note that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services declares in the budget papers that Victoria Police remains on schedule to meet its commitment to provide an additional 800 operational police by June 2003. That matches the election promise with which the Labor Party went to the last election. The opposition will be very keen to see if the government can achieve it.

Once again, however, the figures are not stacking up. The minister is very keen to fudge the figures. The police annual report of 30 June 1999, the last official figures given to the Parliament, shows that the state had 9360 effective full-time police officers in Victoria. As of 31 January 2001, we had 9402. I stress that those are not opposition figures but figures from the police

annual report and from the police force itself. Deduct the 9360 from the 9402 and you find that the net increase for the period from 1 July 1999 to 31 January 2001 was 42. That makes the budget claim look very likely to be misleading, because the claim is that the government is on track to achieve an increase of 800 by June 2003.

Last week the Minister for Police and Emergency Services again reiterated that the government was on track to reach its target. The Liberal Party is checking his figures, because he now says there has been an increase of 422. The opposition will research his claims and hope he is not including in his figures recruits in training. The figure of 9360 in the annual report for 1999 does not include recruits in training. The Victorian community was promised 800 police on the beat doing operational work, not including police being trained at the academy or being instructed on the beat. The election promise is for fully sworn police in accordance, and the minister should stick to that. The opposition sincerely hopes he is not backing down on that point.

The minister does not mention anything in the budget papers about the police force rate of attrition. Surely a promise of 800 additional police will take account of attrition rates. Last year 450 police officers quit the force and another number retired, making a total of 550 officers leaving the force. They are leaving in droves. I believe there is a slow-down in departures at the moment, but only because police want to see what is happening with the Police Association log of claims. Those who are on the edge of deciding whether to leave the force await the outcome of the log of claims with interest.

The opposition has made clear its position on the Police Association's log of claims. Firstly, the police deserve a decent pay rise, which most people in the community would agree with. Secondly, police should have decent promotional opportunities. In other words, young policemen or policewomen coming up through the ranks should not be blocked in one position for eight or nine years before they can apply for another bunk up. Thirdly, they deserve better resourcing, a proposition that would have bipartisan support. It still does not make sense to me that after going to a crime scene police have to write out notes, take them back to the station, transfer the details to another book and take that to the senior sergeant, who signs it off and faxes it in before the information goes onto a computer. The end result of all this is that experienced police from Bendigo, Ballarat or Bairnsdale — those with 20 years and 30 years experience — need to be kept in the force for as long as possible!

I was amused by a point made by the Premier on 3BA in Ballarat. I refer to page 107 of budget paper 2, which states that a total police and recruit strength of 10 300 will be achieved by June 2003. Yet on 5 April the Premier said on 3BA that he would increase police numbers to 11 300 in his first term, which in effect is an increase of 2000 members. The Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services have obviously mixed up their figures. I am sure it was an innocent mistake, but it has not been corrected. The Premier said on 3BA there would be a total police force of 11 300, but the opposition will be happy if it gets to 10 300.

The minister's statement that the government would build four new prisons was welcomed by the opposition. The government said it would build a 600-bed maximum security remand centre, a 300-bed medium security prison and two new minimum security prisons — a 120-bed facility and a 100-bed facility — in rural Victoria. A 26-specialist bed unit was to be built at Ararat prison. Opposition members welcomed the announcement, because it added up to 1146 new beds. However, when we looked at the budget papers we found that the overall permanent capacity will increase by only 716 beds, which means 300-plus beds would have to be shut for the budget figures to be right.

On the one hand the government is promising 1146 new beds, while on the other hand it is promising a net increase of only 716. That means, as stated in the budget papers, that the Bendigo prison will be shut and Won Wron will be closed — and the futures of Beechworth and Langi Kal Kal prisons, given the redevelopment of the prison system, are currently being considered. 'Currently being considered' means they will be shut. The government has no choice: they will have to be shut if the net increase in beds is only 716 beds.

What can be done about the loss of valuable jobs at Bendigo, Yarram, Beechworth and Langi Kal Kal? I know a commitment has been made that there will be no job losses in Bendigo, but if you shut down the prison you will need to build a new one in the area to secure those jobs. If the minister shuts down Won Wron and Langi Kal Kal, I hope he takes into consideration the fact that a couple of new prisons will need to be built in those areas to protect the jobs. The government also needs to consider the culture of those country towns. They are accepting of prisons, so it is easier to build new prisons in those areas.

The prison population figures do not stack up. I suggest the minister review the figures before he shuts down those four country prisons. At the moment the prisons

are running at 115 per cent occupancy. If one looks at world standards — and I am sure Victorian standards would be the same — prison occupancies should be running at 85 per cent to 90 per cent. Putting that aside, a 115 per cent occupancy rate equates to there being 450 prisoners too many in the prison system. Add to that the 200 who are locked up in police cells and there are 650 prisoners too many in the system. A net increase of 716 over the life of the 10-year master plan shows that the figures do not stack up. It means we will have crowded prisons for the next 10 years. I suspect that when the opposition gets into government it may have to open up some of the prisons that have been shut down.

I refer to an article about the minister in the *Bendigo Advertiser* — and I am glad to see him walking into the chamber. He made a commitment to the people of Bendigo that the prison should remain open. However, something went wrong. Perhaps he was poorly advised, because he went back and said that that would not be the case. My view is that if the prison in the centre of town were to be shut down, so be it. The site could be used for better purposes, such as building a new school. It is important that the minister give a guarantee that those jobs in Bendigo will be protected. The prison does not have to stay at its present site in Bendigo. It is the protection of those jobs that is important.

In the minutes that remain I will talk about the Scoresby freeway, which will run straight through the Wantirna electorate. The government has made more backflips over the Scoresby freeway than anyone could possibly have imagined. At the last election Labor campaigned on not building it, arguing that a planned \$786 million freeway link should be scrapped. Dr Paul Mees from the Public Transport Users Association was excited when it decided to scrap the freeway. Suddenly Labor realised that it was not undertaking any new projects and that all it was doing was finishing off the Kennett government's major projects. The Minister for Transport said that Stud Road would be upgraded instead. I do not know how Stud Road could be upgraded, because there are houses on both sides of it. The government would have to start buying real estate!

We then found out that the government was so opposed to the freeway that it put \$2 million into a Scoresby transport corridor study. There has been so much public consultation and so many studies on this road that I am not sure what \$2 million could have been used for. Fortunately, the Prime Minister announced a funding boost of \$220 million to get the freeway project started. What has the government done? Suddenly, there has been a three-way backtrack.

I will quote from an article in the *Herald Sun* on a radio interview given by the Treasurer, Mr Brumby:

Asked on radio about the project, Mr Brumby said Victoria did not have the capacity to pay for it, even with the federal government's \$220 million contribution.

The government has been moaning and groaning for at least six months about the need for the federal government to come to the party on the Scoresby freeway. The Prime Minister has declared it a RONI — a road of national importance — which means funding will be provided on a fifty-fifty basis. Funding of \$220 million has been set in concrete by the federal government. We are now waiting for the Minister for Transport to come up with his money so work can commence on building from the Eastern Freeway to the Monash Freeway. That is what we want done in the first instance.

A government member interjected.

Mr WELLS — I am pleased with the minister's contribution. We can at least make a start by putting it towards a cab fare!

We are now in limbo. The people of Wantirna and Aston need to know what the Minister for Transport is doing about the Scoresby freeway. The Liberal Party believes that, based on available figures, the link from the Eastern Freeway to the Monash Freeway can be built for around \$440 million. The federal government has put up \$220 million, and if the Minister for Transport comes up with the other \$220 million a start can be made on linking the freeways. We do not want the link built halfway to the Burwood Highway and have all the traffic dumped there. That would not make sense.

We await the minister's announcement with anticipation. There will be a clear difference between Liberal and Labor at the Aston by-election. The Liberals will make a commitment to build the Scoresby freeway, Labor will not. That is an important difference for people to take into account in deciding how they will vote in the by-election.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Appropriation 2001/2002 Bill. In speaking on the second budget of the Bracks government, it is appropriate to reflect on the handing down of its first budget only 12 months ago. The building blocks for this and future budgets of the Bracks government were provided in our first budget. This second budget delivers for today and builds for tomorrow. The Bracks government is injecting desperately needed funds back into the key areas that

people are interested in — education, health and infrastructure.

The legacy of the former government will linger long in the memory of many country Victorians. They remember the 176 country schools that were closed; the 12 country hospitals that were forced to close; and the country rail lines that the former government cruelly closed.

Compare that legacy to the legacy of this and the last budget. Since coming to government the Bracks government has injected over \$600 million into education, and more than 2000 teachers are now back in our schools. This budget alone puts \$1 billion back into our health system, which is sorely needed. The government is also building for the future. The \$500 million in capital works for our health system in this budget alone is a significant investment.

Most importantly, I also refer to the money in this budget for the re-opening of four closed country rail lines, on top of all the initiatives in the first budget of the Bracks government. The re-opening of our country rail lines, which were closed by the former government, symbolises — —

A government member interjected.

Ms ALLAN — It is a great decision, and it is great to see the minister who has done such a lot of that work in the house. What better symbol can there be for country Victorians than a government that cares for and believes in its people? Ours is the government that is re-opening their vital transport links. I believe that is the most important decision the government has made over the past 18 months, and it will serve those country areas well long into the future. Compare this government to the former government and its former Premier, who preferred to call country Victorians ‘the toenails of the state’. That is their legacy to country Victoria.

It is interesting to note the budget replies made last week by the shadow Treasurer and the Leader of the National Party, which contain many similarities. They are clearly two people who have not jumped off the Jeff Kennett bandwagon, even though it was long ago halted by country Victorians and even though the wheels have well and truly fallen off.

The two budget replies given by the shadow Treasurer in 2000 and 2001 have focused on the Kennett government legacy. I remind the shadow Treasurer that that legacy continues to haunt Liberal and National Party members throughout country Victoria. Indeed you could almost call the shadow Treasurer’s last two

budget speeches the ‘Asher apparitions’, given the continual references to the ghosts of the Kennett era.

I refer to the comments by the Leader of the National Party that this budget does not have the vision that country Victoria is looking for. I find that incredibly hypocritical. I believe this is the budget the National Party wanted to hand down when it was in government, but National Party members did not have the guts to stand up to the former Premier when he was closing schools, hospitals and train lines in their electorates. They were beaten into submission by the former Premier and forced to take whatever he handed out to country Victoria. They did not stand up for their electorates, so for the Leader of the National Party to criticise the budget for not having a vision for country Victoria is incredibly hypocritical. As I said, this is the budget he would have dearly loved to hand down if he had had the opportunity. Given the National Party’s dwindling numbers in this house, I do not believe he will have that opportunity.

In some ways this is a typical National Party budget because it provides for great and historic initiatives in the area of rail. It also builds bridges. The honourable member for Murray Valley must be happy with the bridges that are being built with money from this budget. I will quote specifically from the *Weekly Times*, which is often held up as a paper that is in tune with what country Victorians are saying. They welcome this budget. The editorial of 16 May states:

The 2001 Victorian budget marks a reversal of fortunes for rural and regional Victorians, who have suffered from years of neglect.

Years of neglect! The honourable member for Benambra is nodding in agreement. The editorial goes on to say:

... the government has set the groundwork for reviving what has been for too long regarded as Melbourne’s back paddock.

That sums up the feelings of many country Victorians. When you hear National Party members continue with their criticisms it continues to highlight their irrelevance throughout country Victoria.

A recent poll in the *Bendigo Advertiser* based on the federal electorate of Bendigo was published on 6 April. It had the National Party vote at 1.8 per cent — I repeat, 1.8 per cent! That does not bode well for the future of the National Party throughout country Victoria.

I turn to the area of infrastructure in particular and remind the house of the former government’s legacy in this area. It spent \$2.1 billion on major projects in metropolitan Melbourne and only \$17 million in

country Victoria. Again, this illustrates another shameful legacy of that government.

I am pleased to say that I am part of the government that has turned this spending ratio on its head. It highlights the expenditure on fast rail links between Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, Gippsland and Melbourne. This is a key initiative for the government and it is welcomed by country Victorians.

Mr Delahunty interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I'm a lot younger than you, Hughie! It is interesting that — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order! The honourable member for Wimmera is out of his place and being disorderly.

Ms ALLAN — It is interesting to note comments by the Leader of the National Party, who is trying to pull a bit of a stunt by calling on the Minister for Transport to explain to the people of Bendigo, when Parliament sits in Bendigo on 16 August, the details of the fast rail project between Bendigo and Melbourne. The Minister for Transport does not need to do this because the people of Bendigo already know the details of the project. They know who promised the fast rail link feasibility study during the 1999 state election campaign: they know it was the Labor Party that promised to do this study. They know it was the Bracks Labor government that last September saw the Premier and the Minister for Transport announce that fast train links between Bendigo and Melbourne were going full steam ahead.

People in Bendigo already know that this project is under way. They know the details and that planning work is being undertaken at the moment. Indeed, the Minister for Transport has made two visits to Bendigo in the past few months alone when he talked to the people about this project. He has done the same in the electorate of the honourable member for Ballarat West and has talked at first hand with the community, as I have done, about this important project.

However, the Liberal Party seems to be a bit confused on the fast train links. There seems to be some contradictions on their side about where their policy is on fast train links. The shadow Treasurer constantly carps on about budget blow-outs and the amounts this government is spending. Then the shadow Minister for Transport turns around and says, 'Oh, there's not enough! We need to spend more money on fast train links'. Where does the Liberal Party stand on the issue of fast train links in country Victoria? Quite clearly it shows that its members are not interested in it. Fast

trains do not matter much if you are travelling between Brighton and Spring Street. You do not need a fast train if you are only travelling there, but I can tell you that they matter greatly to the people of my electorate in Bendigo East and throughout central Victoria.

Another important transport infrastructure project in my electorate is the Calder Highway. This budget allocates \$13 million as part of a three-year allocation of \$25 million. However, it is interesting to follow the honourable member for Wantirna's comments on the Scoresby freeway. We have been duped and duded by the federal Liberal-National government on the Calder freeway. There have been constant delays in the allocation of funding.

Mr Plowman interjected.

Ms ALLAN — They have to be dragged kicking and screaming. I will repeat that for the honourable member for Benambra in case he did not catch it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order! The honourable member for Benambra will have his turn.

Ms ALLAN — It is interesting to note that the honourable member for Benambra is not within cooee of the Calder Highway and it would be interesting to note if he has ever travelled down it!

The John Howard government had to be dragged kicking and screaming to provide money for this vital transport link between Melbourne and Bendigo. It passes through the honourable member for Gisborne's electorate. These delays have blown out the time lines on this project, and unnecessarily so. The state government is committed to a completion date of 2006 for the Calder freeway between Bendigo and Melbourne. However, the federal government will not come to the table on this. It will not pinpoint a completion date, and people in Bendigo and central Victoria continue travelling down a second-rate highway completely unnecessarily and continue to be duded by the federal government.

I turn briefly to three important and specific projects for Bendigo. The first of these is the new air ambulance service. This budget provides funding for the service to be located in Bendigo. It is a service provided to country Victoria and one that will help save lives. Critically ill patients can now be transported to Melbourne in around 30 minutes — a vast improvement on the 100-minute trip that has to be taken by road. The honourable member for Ripon will be pleased to know that this is an election commitment that has been delivered by this government

A second major project in the electorate of Bendigo East is the radiotherapy unit at the Bendigo Hospital, which is a greatly needed facility and one for which increased funding has been provided in this budget.

The third major project is an exciting new initiative in my electorate which comes with an allocation of \$10.7 million for programs and works at the Epsom site of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. The funding is for research and science and will help make Epsom and Bendigo a hub in this area of country Victoria.

I conclude on another major announcement that the honourable member for Wantirna touched on in his budget reply speech — that is, the closure of the Bendigo Prison. This has been called for from a number of quarters for a number of years. The prison is located slap bang in the centre of town. It is a 140-year-old prison that is quite outdated and certainly does not come up to the standards of modern-day prisons. As I said, a number of people within the Bendigo community have been calling for the prison's closure. The opportunities for this site have also been highlighted, in particular by an editorial in the *Bendigo Advertiser* of 20 March this year, which says:

A vacant jail does, however, raise countless possibilities for the use of the vacant complex.

There are many opportunities for the use of the complex, and this has been welcomed. The City of Greater Bendigo wanted the prison to be closed. The council did not feel it was an appropriate facility in that area. It has undertaken a master plan of the entire Rosalind Park precinct and has called for the Bendigo prison to be closed over time — so that was certainly in the council's future planning. The feedback from the prison workers is that they are welcoming this announcement, particularly considering that not one job will be lost — all jobs and prisoners will be transferred to a modern and expanded facility at Loddon.

This closure provides a unique opportunity for my community to look at proposals for redevelopment of the site. However, it is interesting to note that an honourable member for North Western Province in another place, the Honourable Ron Best, has been desperately trying to lift his measly 1.8 per cent of the vote in Bendigo and whip up a campaign around the location of the new prison there. It is interesting when you consider that Liberal Party and National Party members have now announced — I think the minister can confirm this — 18 different locations in country Victoria for the new prison, promising every community from the border to the sea that they will have a prison in their electorate. The honourable

member for North Western Province has joined this wild-goose chase.

In 1994, when the former government was looking at locating a private prison in country Victoria, which was eventually located at Sale, it dragged 56 country towns into the net — into the sham — led by the former Minister for Corrections, who was also the Deputy Premier and Leader of the National Party. It forced 56 country communities to go through planning amendments, as the City of Greater Bendigo did. That city went through an extensive rezoning of land at Huntly against the wishes of local residents, only to be thwarted by a government that had no intention of ever locating the prison in Bendigo. This government will not do that, and that is why the minister has made clear statements around the closure of the Bendigo prison. We will not unnecessarily waste the council's time nor alarm community residents.

The minister has received a letter from a constituent who is supporting the prison not being located in his area, and he asks the question, 'Would Mr Best like the idea if the prison were in his street?'. I think we all know the answer to that — you bet there is no way he would like the idea of a prison in his street!

This budget continues the good work of the government on the task of rebuilding country Victoria after the seven-year legacy of the former government. It is a legacy that will not be quickly forgotten. The rebuilding will take a long time to complete, and this is the budget that rebuilds for the future.

Ms McCALL (Frankston) — I was tempted to start my speech with a joke, just to try to change the nature of the debate, because we were all getting a bit over-serious, overzealous and excited. I suggested a joke to a couple of my colleagues, but I was warned it might be a bit politically incorrect, so I will begin with a couple of quotes instead.

Let me ask first: what are budgets all about? They are about taxes — the raising of them and the spending of them. Benjamin Franklin said in a letter to Jean Baptiste Le Roy in 1789:

But in this world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes.

What is the role of government? The role of government is to raise taxes, and on the question of taxation, I have a definition here that states:

Taxation is a form of theft permitting the government to bludge on your earnings. The amount and the forms of taxation reflect the sociopolitical prejudices of the party in power.

On the other side of that equation is something called tax cuts, and a quote related to tax cuts is as follows:

Tax cuts.

An impossibility. Apparent tax cuts conceal the fact that the government is in fact always going to end up with more of your money.

That is what this budget is all about. It is all about high taxes that enable the government to be a high-spending government. I relate this specifically to the seat of Frankston, and to the issues that are important to the community of Frankston. These are the things that I bring to this Parliament, as they are part of my experience as the member for Frankston for the past five years.

The first one has to be transport. The issue of transport on the Mornington Peninsula has been enunciated by the honourable members for Mornington and Cranbourne. It is an issue I have raised in the chamber many times. It is a standing joke on the Mornington Peninsula that if you want to get your child a job you buy them a car because transport has, was, and always will be a major issue because of the shape of the Mornington Peninsula and the difficulty of the road infrastructure. The previous government endeavoured to meet some of those necessities by increasing the private bus lines, by moving towards the widening of the Moorooduc Highway in my electorate and by moving to encourage plans for the Scoresby freeway and revisit the issue of the Mornington Peninsula freeway.

It is therefore very disappointing that neither the second stage of the widening of the Moorooduc Highway, nor more particularly the installation of a set of traffic lights at the corner of Robinsons Road and the highway, will take place. The latter intersection has become notorious among the community of Frankston as a black spot because it serves an elderly people's home, an aged care facility, two senior schools and one primary school. It has been a total miracle to me that nobody from any of those institutions has yet been killed, but we have had a couple of serious injuries.

I go from there to the Mornington Peninsula freeway. I know it has been talked about for the past 15 years and will probably be talked about for the next 15, but the most important thing is to keep talking about it, because the more we do the more likelihood there is that it will stay on the agenda and move closer to the top.

However, the project the opposition puts at the top — the former government was keen to move on this, and I am happy to say the federal government has agreed to

put money into it — is the Scoresby freeway. As my colleagues from Wantirna, Mornington and Cranbourne have said, it is an integral part of a road network that will link Ringwood to Frankston. Frankston and the northern boundaries of the electorate of Frankston will be very well served by the opening of the freeway.

Recently I went down to look at the Frankston end, where there is already part of the slip road and a construction around Rutherford Road. I urge the current government to think beyond the mere \$2 million it has allocated in this budget so that at least we can start work and the people of the Mornington Peninsula will not feel their freeway has been scotched or backtracked.

There is cause for concern, as was evidenced in the *Herald Sun* on 17 May:

Treasurer John Brumby appears to have become lukewarm about the billion dollar Scoresby Freeway.

Even worse, the mayor of Frankston, who seemed to be so quick to criticise the federal government for its investment of \$220 million, suddenly went quiet when the state government was prepared to give a paltry \$2 million.

From transport I move to the issues of safety. I am very pleased that the police minister is in the chamber. I am not going to take the opportunity to take a cheap shot at him — I'm sure I can use another opportunity to do that — but I will talk about the issues of safety, police numbers, the lockups, the Magistrates Court, and so on. Those issues are very important to the community of Frankston.

I begin by commending the police at the Frankston police station. They get awfully bad press. They are continually criticised, and they were for the 18 months of the Labor campaign of the member for Frankston East. They were vilified in a number of ways for their behaviour or for their non-response to calls. The Frankston police do a remarkable job in very difficult circumstances. They would argue there have been management issues, and there have clearly been understaffing issues, but the community of Frankston would recognise that it is much more satisfactory to have experienced police working on the streets than it is to rely too heavily on rookies. Although I acknowledge the Labor government's statements that it will increase the number of police on the pavement by 800 — and I am still intrigued to know how it will get to that figure — the community is just as concerned to retain the experienced police it already has. That is one of the most important needs.

One of the biggest problems in the police force is natural attrition. I endorse the comments of the honourable member for Wantirna that the police need to be reasonably paid and reasonably supported. They are a most important sector of the community who at the moment are obliged to perform duties that are probably not within their ambit — that is, as prison wardens in the lockups at police stations. I know the police find this an onerous task, particularly at the Frankston police station, where the lockup has been filled to capacity for a number of months.

It is a very difficult situation. I am constantly lobbied by members of the community who have loved ones in the lockup. Whatever the community's view on whether the people are guilty or not, the fact is that access to their families is difficult and limited. Sometimes the police have to deal with exceptionally difficult drug-related cases because they have nowhere else to send these people. The rhetoric is terrific but in practice we have to deal very rapidly with the issue of the overcrowded lockups, particularly in Frankston.

The Magistrates Court does an excellent job; I have spent some time there and intend to spend further time there. I commend the registrar at the Frankston Magistrates Court, Ian Sigg, and the staff who have been instrumental in setting up a pilot program for a diversion program for young people and first offenders. It is an exceptionally good move given the community's recognition and concern that sometimes first offenders need to be given a second chance. That does not mean that the community would turn around and say, 'We think that what you did was wrong and we will let you get away with it', but it is a recognition that all of us are entitled to make a mistake in this life. I commend the government and urge it to keep supporting the diversion programs for as long as it can. They are well received by the community and by the Magistrates Court as an alternative to imprisonment.

However, I am disappointed with the government's budget figures for victims of crime. This chamber is well aware of the interest I take in issues of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual abuse and their causes. I am concerned that there has been a severe cut in funding for victims of crime. I know that my community legal centre and legal aid people have been concerned and disappointed about that.

Ms Duncan interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order! The honourable member for Gisborne!

Ms McCALL — I turn now to the issue of health and community services. A couple of groups in Frankston are very dependent on funding from government and have looked to this government and certainly to the previous government for support. One of them is Anglicare. Its Strengthening Families policies and pilot programs have been remarkably successful on the Mornington Peninsula. It also has a program for dealing with difficult children, as well as one I particularly like for dealing with difficult parents. The programs have been extremely successful and well received, particularly within the primary school community, where staff are stretched to capacity dealing with social difficulties and problems that have not come anywhere within the realms of a primary school in years gone by.

It is recognised that these programs play a fundamental role in the communities of Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula. I urge the government to look carefully at the continued funding of Anglicare, given the good job it does.

I have some real concerns about the commitment of the Minister for Community Services to preschools. The shadow Minister for Community Services has raised this issue a number of times, and I am disappointed that there was not a greater recognition in the budget of the phenomenal work done by our preschools. I would like to suggest that always giving the money to parents of preschool children does not solve the problems as much as supporting and sustaining the excellent staff and teachers who work in the preschools. There are wonderful preschools, both state and privately owned, in my electorate. They do a phenomenal job for the community and I would like to see them more adequately resourced through a budget process.

For five years I have been a fan of the famous Frankston Hospital. I have defended it and will continue to do so. The hospital serves one of the largest growing communities in the state. There is no question that there are considerable strains on its capacity, whether through ambulance deliveries to the accident and emergency department or the provision of aged care, given the lack of aged care facilities on the peninsula. It is not totally the fault of either the commonwealth or the state governments. It is recognised that the aged community on the peninsula is short on resources and facilities, and this has put a phenomenal strain on the Frankston Hospital.

There has been a policy decision that so far as possible our public hospitals do not take on the role of providing aged care facilities. There has been a move to try to discourage patients from going into aged care beds in

hospitals and blocking the system from access by more urgent cases. The budget gives the Frankston Hospital a further \$9 million. That is good, although it is not exceptional. Over five years the hospital got \$30 million. I hope that trend will continue because the hospital serves a very grateful community. It works under difficult circumstances and does an excellent job. I would like to think that the money that is currently being frittered away on an ambulance royal commission would be better served helping public hospital communities in a more appropriate way.

When it comes to drugs and rehabilitation the Frankston electorate is probably no different from any other. A percentage of the community are addicted to drugs. There is no question that difficulties are experienced around the Frankston railway station because it is the end of the railway line and people tend to congregate there. It is easy for them to come along and do a deal in the street. I have been there a number of times and watched these deals go down.

I have pushed for five years and I intend to push for many more years as the member for Frankston for more detoxification and rehabilitation services. I do not support safe injecting rooms but I urge the government to look within its budget coffers to find more money for the areas of detoxification and rehabilitation.

They are the areas of most concern. We have to take seriously the problem of drugs and get people off them and keep them off them. It is all very well saying, 'Get them off the street and into a safe injecting room', and it is all very well to pump as much money into education and the school system as possible — I support that. In fact, I urge the government to put as much money as it can into education programs to assist students from as early as primary school and to continue the great work done by the Kennett government through the Turning the Tide program.

I also encourage the government to continue to support the Freeza program, which provides drug-and-alcohol-free entertainment. On the Mornington Peninsula we are looking at projects relating to safe partying so young people can rave on — that is the term used, but I am now almost too old to appreciate it — and enjoy themselves while their parents know they are safe. I urge the government to continue to support those initiatives commenced under the Kennett government. They were good initiatives that were visionary and forward looking.

In the time remaining to me I would like to make some observations about the loss of the slogan, Victoria — On the Move. I have said it before in this chamber and I

will say it again: one of the great things about that slogan was that it was positive. It meant we were active, enthusiastic, prepared to take risks, visionary and able to look to the future. We now have a government that says, 'We will do some things in the future, but not yet. We will consider doing a number of other things, but not yet'. The Liberal Party when in government was visionary, and I refuse to apologise to either the community or to this chamber for what it did. It looked to the future — at major projects, long-term investments and at jobs.

The previous government would not allow such things as the drain of 3300 jobs from Victoria, many of which have gone to South Australia and Queensland. We need a government that recognises that having a vision means creating a positive environment for everyone. I am disappointed with this budget, but I am sure that — as has been written many times on children's school reports — if they try harder they may do better.

Mr LONEY (Geelong North) — It is with great pleasure that I make a contribution to the budget debate. I support the budget and congratulate the Treasurer on this, his first budget. I say without any hesitation at all that this budget is the most magnificent first budget brought down by a Treasurer in this place since the previous Treasurer delivered his first budget!

The contribution we just heard from the honourable member for Frankston was interesting for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it appears she is yet another Liberal who cannot say sorry. Secondly, near the end of her contribution she talked about jobs performance under the former government. I take up that point, because in the area in Geelong where I come from, the Barwon South Western Region, the record on jobs shows that during the seven years of the Kennett government not one new full-time job was created in the area.

An Honourable Member — How many?

Mr LONEY — There was not one. In fact, there was a net loss of full-time jobs over those seven years. If the honourable member for Frankston East cares to check the current figures she will see that that trend has been remarkably reversed and that the Barwon South Western Region is now enjoying the biggest jobs growth of any part of Victoria, and the unemployment rate is now below the state average.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LONEY — It is good to hear the shadow minister applauding that achievement of the Bracks government. It is wonderful that he is applauding the

fact that today we have jobs in Geelong, whereas under his government we did not.

This budget is very much about rebuilding Victoria, and it certainly needed rebuilding! When looking at the budget papers it is instructive to consider where we have come from to this point. For seven years I sat in this house, as did the honourable member for Melton and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services who are both in the chamber now, during which time we saw many things being brought in through budgets. In the area of education we saw hundreds of schools closed and thousands of teachers sacked. We saw, for example, in my area a huge increase in the number of students who were not staying at school and completing their education, and retention rates fell remarkably. In the area of health, we saw the closure of hospitals, thousands of nurses going out of the system, the cutback in programs and the bizarre experiments with ambulances. All those sorts of things went on during those seven years.

In the area of transport, we saw the closure of rail lines and the privatisation of Melbourne's bus fleet. Later — and I must get this right; it was not the privatisation of the trams and trains — we saw, if I remember the correct term, the periodic franchising of trains and trams. In the area of energy, we saw the total destruction of the former State Electricity Commission. It was broken up in such a way that we are now not able to guarantee the delivery of electricity to the citizens of Victoria on the days when they need it.

Mr Plowman — You know that is not true.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order! The honourable member for Benambra will get his turn.

Mr LONEY — I will take up the interjection from the honourable member for Benambra. He knows very well that under the former government the Victorian Power Exchange produced a document that mapped out the future and said that if Victoria continued down this path it would have power shortages in the summers of the years to come. That is precisely what we are having. The warning was there and is publicly documented.

Mr Plowman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order! The honourable member for Benambra is being disorderly.

Mr LONEY — It is attributed to the types of changes made by the former government and the destruction caused to the energy industry by its disaggregation. Even more destructive was the way in

which it was done so that the greatest attack was made on country Victorians. Members of the opposition come in to this place today and say they are proud of that fact. It is amazing stuff of which to be proud, I should have thought!

Mr Plowman — We have cheaper power.

Mr LONEY — We are still to see that one. This is the great gleaming light, the light in the sky. It is the UFO of the Liberal Party that it keeps chasing down the street. Somewhere out there as a result of the Liberal Party's electricity experiment a dim light exists that is called cheaper power prices. Its members say, 'One day we will get there', but like those UFOs in the sky, they are light years away. The opposition must carry that one.

The opposition, when in government, decided that it did not want to govern because governing was too hard. It decided to behave like a liquidator and went in to cut, slash and sell. Governing was too hard so it decided not to govern but get rid of everything — put it out so that someone else would make the decisions. The people of Victoria got to a situation where at the 1999 state election they said, 'Enough!'. It was a simple message — enough and goodbye. It was a bit like *The Weakest Link*: the people of Victoria decided who was the weakest link and said goodbye. Since then, what has occurred in the past two budgets, and this budget builds on it significantly, is the restoration of the infrastructure that is needed so that Victoria can again properly operate as a community.

In the seven years the former Kennett government was in power the Victorian community was attacked. The infrastructure required by communities was attacked aggressively and non-stop at every opportunity. There were few icons going up outside Melbourne — and the former Kennett government was very much a government of icons. It was convinced that so long as you had an icon somewhere there was no need for people to eat, go to school or visit a hospital. So long as people had an icon they would be satisfied and happy. The whole approach of the former Kennett government was the provision of icons. It was not about a community, building a society or putting in place the infrastructure people rely on in their day-to-day lives to fulfil them in some way and be better able to participate more fully in the community. Nowhere was this more apparent than in rural Victoria, which was left for dead.

Mr Mulder — Rubbish.

Mr LONEY — The honourable member for Polwarth is part of the toenail brigade.

Mr Mulder — I live in rural Victoria — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order!
The honourable member for Polwarth is out of his seat.

Mr LONEY — I turn to a paper that the honourable member for Polwarth is probably not familiar with — the *Weekly Times*! The edition of 16 May issued after the budget carries on the front page the heading ‘Freight rail boost at the heart of \$700 million regional budget’. An article written by Peter Hunt states:

Massive investments in freight rail, education, science and innovation, are the hallmarks of what Victorian Treasurer John Brumby has labelled his ‘Big Picture Budget’.

More than \$100 million has been committed to rural and regional schools, \$50 million to Agriculture Victoria’s research institutes and \$96 million to upgrading the state’s dilapidated freight rail system.

Who allowed it to become dilapidated, one might ask?
It goes on:

These projects are part of a \$700 million budget package for regional Victoria, announced in yesterday’s state budget.

Inside the *Weekly Times* on page 4 you find statements like ‘Rail gets a \$160 million injection’. It goes on and on with various articles about the effect of the budget on regional Victoria. In relation to rail it says on page 4:

The state government is steaming ahead with almost \$160 million in freight and passenger rail investments in regional and rural Victoria.

Even at Swan Marsh!

Mr Mulder — Pirron Yallock railway station!

Mr LONEY — Sorry, Pirron Yallock. It goes on:

Mr Batchelor said the government’s investment was not just about standardising the complex network of broad gauge lines.

The upgrade will also free up the movement of rail freight from the other states, where Victoria’s broad-gauge lines have been incompatible with standard gauge rail lines in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies) — Order!
Before honourable members become too excited, the time has come to halt proceedings for the dinner break. The Chair will resume at 8 o’clock whereupon the honourable member for Geelong North will have the call.

Sitting suspended 6.30 p.m. until 8.02 p.m.

Mr LONEY — Prior to the suspension of the sitting I was explaining to the house how the previous government had ripped the guts out of the social fabric

of this state. I want to continue some of those remarks. I had been making the point that nowhere was this worse than in rural Victoria. In the current budget we are seeing the turnaround in fortunes of country Victoria. I would like to refer to one of the great rural newspapers, the *Weekly Times*. On 16 May this year, in an editorial headed ‘A budget that delivers to the state’s forgotten residents’ the *Weekly Times* had this to say:

The 2001 Victorian budget marks a reversal of fortunes for rural and regional Victorians who have suffered years of neglect.

Seven long dark years of neglect!

A Government Member — Especially around Lara.

Mr LONEY — Fortunately the local member was able to do something for the people around Lara. The *Weekly Times* goes on to say:

Treasurer John Brumby has delivered on electoral promises to revive regional health, education, science, rail passenger and freight services.

...

The Brumby budget is also set to help small rural and regional hospitals turn the corner after struggling to cope with the impact of case mix and rising salary costs.

The budget has already poured \$160 million into freight and passenger rail after years of line closures and asset sales.

...

... the government has set the groundwork for reviving what has been for too long regarded as Melbourne’s back paddock.

That was the case. But if one looks at this budget and what it delivers, and if one takes a single region of Victoria, such as the Barwon–Western District region, part of which I am fortunate enough to represent, one can see the massive injection of funds into infrastructure. The \$19 million for the aged care facilities at the Grace McKellar Centre is long overdue. The centre was totally neglected by the Kennett government. In fact, it was worse than neglected, because members on the other side wanted to sell the hospital beds at the centre — they put them on the auction block. This government has not only said that those beds will stay in public hands but has committed itself to refurbishing that facility.

Honourable members can see in the budget an expansion of some \$12 million to \$13 million at the Barwon prison in my area, which will create a large number of jobs. There is more than \$15 million for the Gordon TAFE facility and even more money to ensure that Geelong Road is above flood level — another \$15 million. Numerous schools in my electorate have

received funding for capital works and programs, particularly for innovative programs. I am delighted about that because the schools of Geelong's northern suburbs are fantastic state schools and deserve the support they are getting from this government.

I could speak about this budget, its effect on my community and the positive nature of it for hours. However, I am noted in this place for brevity. Victoria has turned the corner with this and the last budget. This state is now motoring along very well. Services are being delivered to the community. The ripping apart of the social fabric that even Lloyd Williams talked about last week, that even he recognised on his road to Damascus conversion, is over.

I conclude the way I started. I congratulate the Treasurer on the budget he has brought down, and I congratulate the government for delivering on the promises it made to Victoria.

Mr LUPTON (Knox) — It just goes to show what the government benches are like after honourable members have had a couple of wines, or something else. I have never heard so much rubbish in my life. I do not like to talk about the past but I feel I must because of the contributions made by a couple of members opposite. Statements have been made about what the Kennett government did. The honourable member for Geelong North spent the first 10 minutes of his diatribe talking about the past and how the Kennett government had done this and had done that. However, he really got up my nose when he talked about how the Kennett government had destroyed the State Electricity Commission (SEC).

The honourable member for Narracan made a magnificent contribution earlier in the day! It was wide ranging; he talked about everything one could think of with no basis of truth or fact in the whole thing. He talked about how the SEC in the Latrobe Valley had been decimated and how it was all the fault of the Kennett government.

Let me tell you a couple of facts, Madam Deputy Speaker. On 1 September 1989 the Cain–Kirner government decided it would downsize for the purpose of privatisation —

Mr Trezise interjected.

Mr LUPTON — That is right. I did say I did not want to talk about the past, but the rubbish that you people have been throwing up has got to be answered.

In 1989 Cain and Kirner decided that they would downsize the former State Electricity Commission, the

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) and the Gas and Fuel Corporation. Because of my involvement with the SEC from 1989 until December 1991, I am aware that the SEC experienced a cut in staff numbers from some 24 000 people to 14 000. Twelve months later, when the Kennett government won office, the number was down to about 8000 — that is not bad for a government who claims it did not turn around and rip the guts out of country Victoria. Similar trends occurred with the Gas and Fuel Corporation and the MMBW. I say to the government: don't come into this house — unfortunately the honourable member for Morwell is not here at the moment — and talk about the Kennett government ripping out the guts of country Victoria!

I can remember sitting in an office in the SEC when the unions came in to discuss with us the possibility of the SEC superannuation fund purchasing a supermarket in Traralgon. That was to be used to help workers who had been displaced by the Cain–Kirner governments. In looking at it as an investment opportunity the unions were saying that we should purchase the supermarket so that we could make a long-term investment because of what the Labor Party had done. I am getting sick and tired of hearing people who have no idea of what went on — such as the honourable members for Narracan and Geelong North — saying that the Kennett government cut the staff numbers.

It was not the Kennett government. I was there administering the superannuation fund; I was there and oversaw the getting rid of the 10 000 people from the SEC on the direction of Cain and Kirner over a period of two years.

Mr Maxfield interjected.

Mr LUPTON — If the honourable member for Narracan wants to keep on interjecting I am happy to take him on because I have more facts than he will ever learn in 100 years! It was an absolute disgrace.

Mr Maxfield interjected.

Mr LUPTON — While you keep on interjecting, just go back to who sold off half of Loy Yang — was it Cain and Kirner or was it Kennett? It was Cain and Kirner.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LUPTON — Add to that the MMBW and the Gas and Fuel Corporation. They mucked up the whole lot because of the way they tried to run the state. Bear in mind the fact —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LUPTON — When the Kennett government came to office there was something like a \$32 000 million — —

Mr Maxfield interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Narracan!

Mr LUPTON — Madam Deputy Speaker, I would truly love to take him on — he just invites me to respond. All it shows is that you do not have to have a long neck to be a goose.

When the Kennett government came to office there was something like a \$32 000 million debt. I repeat: \$32 000 million!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LUPTON — In the case of the federal government, there was an \$80 000 million debt when Howard came to office. You people cannot handle money!

Let me get on to the current budget. In the Brumby budget — this man is the Treasurer! — he said that this is the budget that is right for the times, and that this budget delivers today and builds for tomorrow. Unfortunately, we are getting back to the Cain–Kirner days where we are delivering today and will have to pay off tomorrow.

The honourable member for Geelong North made great play of quoting articles from the *Weekly Times*, which is a well respected newspaper, about how good the budget was. Let me quote from the *Australian Financial Review*, which probably has a bit more credence than the *Weekly Times*. In the editorial of 16 May — —

Mr Maxfield interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Narracan!

Mr LUPTON — You're going to learn! But it cannot get into a thick head.

The editorial of 16 May headed 'Bracks budget disappointing' states:

The Victorian general government sector is about to be pushed back into cash deficit, and that deficit is projected to rise to almost \$300 million in 2002–03.

The principal reason for the deterioration of the cash budget is the growth of recurrent spending. The primacy given to spending can be particularly seen in the treatment of superannuation liabilities. The government says all of its unfunded superannuation liabilities — estimated to be \$12.4 billion at the end of June 2001 — will be funded by 2035.

By 2035! Half the people in this joint will not be here! By then you might have the books balanced. It states further:

Cash deficits and growing unfunded superannuation are expected to increase the Victorian general government sector's net financial liabilities by almost \$1 billion to \$15 billion by 2005.

Now listen to this bit:

All of this is hardly ruinous, but it does reflect a disappointing lack of fiscal discipline from this new Labor government.

Further in the same editorial it states:

New resource companies with operations in Queensland and Western Australia are now less likely to locate their head offices in Melbourne.

Yet honourable members have heard the Treasurer in this place, week after week, saying that the government is doing a magnificent job and is bringing new industries to the state.

I turn to another article in the *Australian Financial Review* of 16 May headed 'Numbers are not looking good for the Premier'. Alan Mitchell comments:

Victorian Labor, it seems, is settling uneasily into the financial discipline of government. The Bracks government has budgeted to go from a cash surplus of \$1.2 billion in 2000–01 to a deficit of \$22 million in 2001–02.

The government is budgeting for a deficit. That is not good economic management. Yet here we are with this government — under this Brumby, the Treasurer — turning around and going for a deficit! The article goes on to say:

More than half the turnaround is the result of a \$700 million increase in recurrent spending, although capital spending is up by \$460 million. Higher recurrent spending is the main driving force behind the projected increase in the cash deficit in 2002–03.

I find this very disappointing. We have heard all the talk from government members side saying that this is a wonderful budget, yet here they are planning for a deficit in this current year. We are already expecting growth to be less than the national average. Unemployment will increase, of course, and things will go from bad to worse.

One of the problems that will really touch us is the situation in relation to Workcover. In the Auditor-General's *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* he said that Labor has fallen short on its management of Workcover with an extraordinary \$600 million blow-out in a mere six months.

Six hundred million dollars in a mere six months! Yet the Labor government, the government that fell into office because of three Independent Labor people —

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr LUPTON — The honourable member for Frankston East interjects out of his place to say that the Independents were elected. The Labor government is in place only because of the Independent Labor members, yet the government still mucked up Workcover. The former Kennett government was moving towards a surplus, but instead the Labor government has produced a \$600 million blow-out in six months.

I refer again to the Auditor-General's report —

Mr Viney interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Frankston East!

Mr LUPTON — The Auditor-General further said that the most significant development impacting on the blow-out was the Bracks government's enactment in May 2000 of the Accident Compensation (Common Law and Benefits) Act 2000. This is a loss 10 times greater than in any financial year under the previous government.

Yet the Minister for Workcover stood in this house and said the department was in the red. There it is: the Auditor-General has found that what the minister said is totally incorrect.

A government member interjected.

Mr LUPTON — Labor government members, who know they are in government because of the Independent Labor members, skite about how much they have got.

Turning to education funding for the Knox electorate, Heany Park Primary School will get \$561 000 and Lysterfield Primary School will receive \$161 000 to modernise facilities.

Mr Robinson — That is good!

Mr LUPTON — The honourable member for Mitcham interjects, but what he has to remember is that

I have raised in this house two or three times the fact that those two schools were built to take 450 kids and both now have over 670 kids — and next year it will be worse — yet there has been no response to the report I requested. The report tabled by the government was flawed and incorrect, and the government is now revisiting it. In the period from 1998 to the present I have not been able to get the facts on whether we need a new primary school in the Rowville area.

Fairhills High School gets \$35 682 and Ferntree Gully College gets \$21 777. That is as far as education funding goes in Knox. Fairhills High School has had an enormous problem with safety. The parents cannot get in and out of the school with their children, and the school is on a busy road, but they will not see any funding to relieve that matter.

The former Kennett government was planning to build the Knox hospital. It was promised and was to be built all in one stage. Then the Labor government came into office and canned it straightaway, just as it scrapped the Scoresby freeway. That was in 1999, so it all turns around. The Labor government scrapped the hospital and is now planning to put money into the Angliss Hospital and the Maroondah Hospital, according to Cr Scates, the mayor of Knox. He has been quoted in the *Knox Leader* of 22 May as saying:

The state government promise to Ferntree Gully's Angliss Hospital would not be enough to solve its long-term problems ...

If honourable members look at what is happening at the Angliss Hospital, they will see that waiting lists are growing.

On the matter of transport, what roads have been promised for the Knox electorate?zilch! The bus service from Rowville to Glen Waverley and Ringwood is to be improved, but no funding is available.

Mr Pandazopoulos interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Will the minister please lower his voice!

Mr LUPTON — That would be appreciated, Madam Deputy Speaker. Road projects commenced under the previous government and not finished off by this government include the duplication of Wellington Road between Stud Road and Taylors Lane, Kelletts Road between Stud Road and Taylors Lane, and a third lane between Scoresby Road and Ferntree Gully Road on Burwood Highway, which was meant to offer three lanes of traffic all the way from Stud Road near Knox

City to Upper Ferntree Gully. It is with regret, however, that I find there is no money in the budget to provide those facilities, which would ease traffic in the Knox electorate and improve travel from the electorate to Ferny Creek, Gembrook and other places.

Getting back to the Scoresby freeway, the freeway land is there, the environmental impact studies have been done, and everything is ready. Some media releases on the matter are extremely interesting.

Mr Holding interjected.

Mr LUPTON — The honourable member for Springvale, who interjects, would not even know where Stud Road was. On 8 August 2000, the then acting Minister for Transport in another place, the Honourable Justin Madden, was reported in a media release from the Ministry of Transport as saying:

... construction of the long-awaited project could begin as early as 2002.

...

In the first stage, \$65 million is being sought from the commonwealth government to begin work on the section (stage 1) between Ringwood and the Burwood Highway in 2002–03. Matching funding would then be required from the Victorian government.

It is only about three weeks ago that the Prime Minister announced the allocation of \$220 million to the Scoresby freeway project, to be available from 1 July, yet the acting Minister for Transport said \$65 million was being sought from the commonwealth government ‘to begin work on the section’ — his words, not mine.

And how much money is allocated by this government in its budget to the Scoresby freeway project?
Two million dollars!

The acting transport minister also said in his press release:

We’re seeking a commitment from the federal government to back this initiative so that design work can proceed without delay.

The feds have done it, so where is the money from the state government?

I quote again from a press release of 28 November 2000, this time the words of the Minister for Transport:

Victoria stands ready to fund its share of this vital piece of transport infrastructure and the commonwealth needs to commit its fair share.

I emphasise again that the federal government has given \$220 million, effective on 1 July this year.

I refer to another media release dated 9 February from the minister, which states in part:

Planning for the freeway has been completed. An environmental effects statement (EES) has been finalised and examined by an independent inquiry panel which recommended the construction of the Scoresby freeway and associated public transport improvements.

The project is ready to proceed.

The federal government has given \$220 million; where is the state government’s money? A media release dated 16 May, again from the Minister for Transport, states:

An important breakthrough for the Victorian government and the people living in the Scoresby corridor ...

That is in relation to the government’s promise. It continues:

The Victorian government welcomes the initial offer from the commonwealth and congratulates the Prime Minister on declaring the Scoresby freeway a road of national importance.

...

Yesterday’s state budget also included \$2 million for a study to investigate all public transport options in the Scoresby corridor.

The government cannot have it every way. It is having two bob each way and yet nothing is coming out of it. The people of Knox and the surrounding areas all the way down to Frankston expect something.

I turn to look at the enormous amount of funding in the budget — and I am talking about increases in taxes. I refer to budget paper 2. At page 219, it states:

Revenue from conveyancing duties in 2000–01 is estimated to be some \$220 million higher than the budget forecast ...

increased revenue from stamp duty on marketable securities of \$62 million, reflecting buoyant share market activity ...

an increase in mortgage duty of \$22 million ...

an increase in financial institutions duty of \$18 million.

Under the heading ‘Taxes on property’ it states:

Taxes on property include land tax and the metropolitan improvement levy ... \$27 million higher than the budget estimate.

Payroll tax is expected to be up by \$86 million, taxes on insurance are expected to be \$11 million higher, taxes on motor vehicles are expected to be \$17 million higher, revenue from fines is expected to be up \$96 million, and public authority income up \$24 million. Total grants received are expected to be \$74 million higher.

Budget paper 2 tells us what the government is earning but it does not say how the government will expend it in the Knox electorate. The money that has been allocated is minuscule. The federal government has given a guaranteed \$220 million for the Scoresby freeway effective from 1 July but where is the state government's money to match it? It has been bleating and moaning for so long yet has put in only a four-paragraph submission on the Scoresby freeway. Now it has upped it a little more but where is the money for the freeway, which will benefit both people living in Knox and those living in the area all the way down to Frankston?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Major Projects and Tourism) — I am pleased to speak on the second Bracks budget. I will refer to my electorate and to my portfolio areas, but it is a bit hard to do too much in the short time available.

It was interesting to listen to the honourable member for Knox, because cabinet met out at Knox recently. I noted all the good things the council said the government is doing. One can see from all the road signs, including those on black spot funding, what Labor is doing in electorates it does not hold. Councils will say they want the government to do more, and it will tell them it wants them to do more.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! If the honourable members for Springvale and Mordialloc want to yell at each other they can take themselves somewhere else.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — The government is delivering a lot more in the basic areas where the community expects its tax money to go.

Mr Holding interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Springvale will cease interjecting!

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — Those areas are education, hospitals, law and order and infrastructure — and that is exactly what the budget does. My electorate is the fastest growing in the state and the largest, as shown by the redistribution map. There is a huge pent-up demand for new schools and in allocating an extra \$18.9 million the budget delivers more for schools in the south-east, particularly in the City of Casey.

Last year the government allocated resources to areas that were promised during the election campaign. Funding has been allocated to stage 1 of a new secondary school in the southern part of Berwick. The honourable member for Berwick has said that the government made a commitment to open it in 2002 but that it will not open until 2003. He has not been down there to see the school under construction and probably does not read the local papers now that he does so much work on conspiracy theories. The budget delivers on stage 2 of the new secondary college in the southern part of Berwick, which will open in 2002. Later this year it will employ a principal and take enrolments for next year.

All that was confirmed at a large public meeting, which the honourable member did not attend. Not only was a new secondary school announced for the southern part of Berwick last year, but a new primary school and secondary school, which the community wanted to be a combined primary-secondary school, will also be funded. The government agreed to it being a unique model. In the past such schools have been the result of forced amalgamations by the former government of neighbouring primary and secondary schools. This school has been designed for a greenfield site and is a smart design. It is a smart way of doing things when land is reserved for a primary school adjacent to land reserved for a secondary school.

The government announced stage 1 funding for the school last year and stage 2 funding has been announced in the budget. That primary-secondary school will also open next year. It was overlooked for a long time by the previous government. Young kids were required to travel 7 kilometres as the crow flies to get to the nearest secondary school. It is an area with many one-car families and poor public transport. The government is delivering schools closer to where people live in the growth corridor, as well as upgrading existing schools.

The budget also delivered on stage 2 of the final upgrade of Hampton Park Secondary College. Last year there was money for stage 1, and there is money in this budget to complete that project as well. That is an example of another school that was bursting at the seams and had been forgotten by the previous government. There is much catching up to do and many schools in the growth area are bursting at the seams, so the government is pouring money in to open new schools and fix up existing schools to reduce that pressure.

The government is also putting money into areas other than capital infrastructure, such as the Middle Years

program, which in the City of Casey is about \$750 000. Last year the government put resources into the primary to grade 2 years, the very early formative years in literacy and numeracy. It is also reducing average class sizes, but a lot of work still has to be done. Many schools are overcrowded and it will not be possible to do that completely in all of them, but there is a need to keep focusing on it. More resources have been provided, with an 2200 extra teachers last year and this year. The government has put a lot of effort into that and is continuing it. However, this year more effort is going into the Middle Years program, those early years of secondary school where young people need assistance.

The government has also put \$2.1 million into technologically enhanced classrooms in the same region. In the past schools had a formula — the ratio objective being one computer to five kids — but they had to come up with \$3 for every \$1 provided by the government. Schools in lower socioeconomic areas such as Hampton Park, Doveton and areas of Dandenong in my electorate rely on the education maintenance allowance. How could they raise money from parents on low incomes, whether they were working or not, to buy computers to meet that ratio? That formula was changed in the budget and the government will make sure it is not about who can raise more money locally. Irrespective of their ability to raise resources, all communities have student learning needs, particularly in information technology for young people.

The budget commits \$1.9 million for planning the redevelopment of the Chisholm TAFE Dandenong campus on Stud Road. That TAFE institute is bursting at the seams and needs a new capital works upgrade to meet the demands on it. At the moment the area to be redeveloped is the site of the old Dandenong technical school, which was closed in the early 1990s. The facilities are obviously in need of upgrade to ensure that the students have the best facilities.

The key part of the budget is the \$2.13 billion investment in infrastructure, the largest in any single year. The previous government focused on civic projects, which are important — they are also targeted in the budget — but it overlooked spending on roads, schools, hospitals, law courts, police stations and technical and further education colleges. That is where this money will be reinvested so that the best facilities are made available to the community. That also helps in reducing ongoing recurrent costs. You can do your job much more efficiently in better designed and lit buildings using new electronic technology. The way workplaces are organised can affect costs.

Part of that funding will also go into transport. It is good to see that in the budget a further \$800 000 has been allocated to improve bus services in Hampton Park, Narre Warren, Berwick and Lyndhurst — all fast-growing suburbs in the City of Casey that have been overlooked in the past. This extra funding will ensure that bus services run into residential estates to encourage people to use public transport rather than discouraging them from doing so because it is too far to walk to the bus from their homes.

The budget also provides for a large reinvestment in buses. Dandenong is the heart of the bus industry, and companies such as Volgren will no doubt have the opportunity to be big winners as a result of this new investment. It means jobs for the Dandenong region and good, modern, energy-efficient, disability-friendly transport for the community. The budget also puts another \$54 million into the Hallam–Narre Warren bypass, which continues to progress well and on schedule. That will be a huge bonus for the local community and beyond into Gippsland.

I heard the honourable member for Knox talk about the importance of the Scoresby freeway. The government agrees that it is important, but the honourable member, like the Prime Minister, is trying to dud the community. It is not possible to build a \$1 billion-plus freeway as a road of national importance (RONI) — which means fifty-fifty funding — if you are given only \$220 million. The sums do not add up, and the local communities and councils also know it. The chair of the local government group on Scoresby transport, Cr Kevin Walsh from the City of Greater Dandenong, also understands that the federal government is trying to dud the eastern and south-eastern suburbs. Enough money is available to extend the Scoresby freeway to the Burwood Highway and dump the traffic on the doorstep of Aston, with nowhere to go but through residential streets.

You would think that the Prime Minister would be smart enough to realise that if he did that he would be caught out. How does the Victorian government pay for the rest of it? It would be irresponsible for the government — when it is supposed to be a fifty-fifty arrangement — to say it would do the rest. We cannot afford to do the rest when we have so much extra work to do across Victoria, particularly in building new roads in municipalities such as the City of Greater Dandenong and the City of Casey.

The federal government should stop ripping off the people in the eastern and south-eastern suburbs and make sure the Scoresby freeway is funded on a fifty-fifty basis. If the government accepts a 22 per

cent-funded project, all other RONI projects around Victoria, such as the Pakenham bypass, might get not a fifty-fifty contribution from the federal government but a 22 per cent contribution. The federal government does a fantastic job of shifting costs onto state governments — and it did so again in the recent federal budget.

I now refer to my portfolio areas, where so many great things are happening. In tourism, an extra \$4 million has been allocated to international marketing. The marketing budget is currently \$8.2 million, so an increase of \$4 million is phenomenal. The industry is rapt because it knows not only that Melbourne will be promoted but that regional Victoria will be promoted as well. The government believes regional Victoria is capable of flying the flag for Victoria internationally much more than it has in recent years. People know about Melbourne, but they can forget that this is a compact state. It is easy to get to the fantastic locations across Victoria, and visitors need to know there is more to the state than Melbourne.

The international tourism market is now more nature based. Tourists know cities — they like Melbourne as a romantic, cultural and event-focused city — but the market is also moving to offer experiences that are perceived as natural. That means ensuring that visitors have a city experience and a regional experience. The government will use the \$4 million to work out plans for those regions that can raise money from the private sector and from local tourism agencies, so the extra funding will result in tourists spending more dollars. If we can double that, it would be a great effort for Victoria.

The Victorian government has long complained to the federal government that it is not doing enough to show Victorian product. The commonwealth said, 'You are putting in only \$8 million. If you put in more we will consider doing the same, and we might be able to join up together to spend the dollars on marketing'. We put in the extra, but the commonwealth did not.

In real terms commonwealth funding has fallen by \$2 million. The federal government is telling Victoria to wave the flag for Australia, yet while we are increasing funding it is not. However, we will work with the tourism regions and the airline and accommodation industries to see which regions we will put those dollars into so we can get the best value for them while promoting more regional product.

The federal government has increased the departure tax by \$8 to \$38, which will raise of the order of \$64 million. Has any of it gone into tourism marketing?

No, absolutely not. You would think that the commonwealth would put a little of that increase — \$2 of the \$8 would have raised \$16 million — into working with us on overseas markets. Victoria has one quarter of Australia's population. If we put in \$4 million, the federal government could put in \$16 million for the rest of Australia.

Mr Spry interjected.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — The honourable member for Bellarine, who represents a great tourist area, asks why I am not talking about the state. I am talking about the state. If the federal government put in more money and we worked with them on marketing, we would get a better result for the state.

The government is also delivering on an election commitment to provide \$2 million for the upgrade of the Bonegilla migrant settlement centre. We are working with the Albury-Wodonga communities, including those involved in Albury-Wodonga parks and Albury-Wodonga investment, so that the great opportunity for Bonegilla to be a museum and educational and interpretative centre is not lost but realised. Bonegilla is a celebration of our multicultural past. More than one million Australians are descendants of people who came through the centre.

As some of those former residents become nostalgic and their children and grandchildren begin to want to know where their parents and grandparents came to, imagine the marketing opportunities and the capacity to create a tourism experience that is also an education experience! The government has committed itself to that vision, and together with the local communities it is working towards achieving that. The government said during the election campaign that it would deliver, and it will do what it said it would. The government is celebrating multiculturalism, but we are being smart in creating another tourism product for north-eastern Victoria that will no doubt be very popular.

Funding of \$5.4 million has been provided to identify potential sites for and operators of new facilities to treat and store the hazardous waste that is unavoidably produced by Victorian industry. The previous government had a crash-through approach, trying to force decisions onto local communities and dumping waste in landfill. The government made an election commitment that no more prescribed and toxic waste will be dumped in landfill such as at Lyndhurst, which has a mixture of commercial, household and prescribed waste.

The government has committed the budget dollars to enable it to work with industry and communities to come up with better solutions. It wants to make sure that the focus is on industry looking at its waste treatment processes, including the increased use of recycling and the recovery of hazardous waste products. Companies make choices about the materials they use and how much waste they produce. Households are good at recycling and reducing their waste, and the hazardous waste industry needs to do the same. The government has put in place a process by establishing the hazardous waste siting advisory committee, which consists of representatives of industry, conservation groups, local government, academics and the community, all of whom agree on the need to work together to meet that challenge.

We all have to lift our game if we are to achieve sustainable and long-term economic outcomes for our community. We all use products that end up in the hazardous waste stream, so let's not be hypocritical about it. We will always have it; the issue is what we do with it. We either do it the old way, by dumping it in landfill, or we find new ways of doing things by putting pressure on industry, developing new technologies and working with local government and local communities to produce good results.

The committee is working well, and in July expressions of interest will be sought for the establishment of soil recycling facilities. Forty-one per cent of hazardous waste is in soils that can be recycled. The work is also being carried out in consultation with the Environment Protection Authority and planning authorities.

The government has also made a funding commitment of \$2 million for the Royal Melbourne Showgrounds. The government is committed to redeveloping the showgrounds, but some estimates put the cost as high as \$150 million. In the interests of the community the government must assess what is a reasonable amount to spend on a good economic outcome so that the future of the showgrounds is sustainable. The \$2 million will go towards some essential work. The government will work to ensure that it has something that is more realistic and appropriate to fund. If the government did not have to put \$160 million into Federation Square, all of the \$150 million worth of work at the showgrounds could have been done. We can thank the previous government for denying us that opportunity!

This is a great budget that delivers on the basics. It delivers on rebuilding community infrastructure and on restoring people's confidence that the government listens to what they want, including the services they want. The budget is also about continuing to build the

economy, so it is exactly what the government is on about — social development and good economic, sustainable development.

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — It is a pleasure to speak on the appropriation bill. It was good to hear the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs talk about the Bonegilla museum. It is unfortunate that he has failed to save the Hellenic Museum, which closed because he was unable to come to an agreement with the Greek government, despite the fact that the Premier travelled all the way to Greece to try to get an exhibition for Melbourne.

Mr Pandazopoulos interjected.

Mr KOTSIRAS — You have failed.

This is Labor's second budget. It contains no surprises, because it is from the same mould as those produced by the Cain–Kirner governments. Today we found out that the Auditor-General has uncovered mismanagement in the Workcover system, with \$600 million having been lost in just six months. Under this government Workcover has had bigger deficits and increased premiums. I challenge the government to rule out any further premium increases as a result of the blow-out.

All that does is reinforce in people's minds the fact that the Labor government believes in high taxes, high spending, lower economic growth, lower employment growth, reduced investment, increased borrowings, increased deficits, increased unfunded superannuation liabilities, no major projects and nothing for ordinary Victorians. In the short term this budget delivers nothing but increased recurrent expenditure.

It is interesting to read an article that appeared in the *Australian Financial Review* of 16 May under the heading 'Bracks Budget disappointing'. The article states:

The Bracks government's second budget is a disappointing document. The Victorian general government sector is about to be pushed back into cash deficit, and that deficit is projected to rise to almost \$300 million in 2002–03.

...

Cash deficits and growing unfunded superannuation are expected to increase the Victorian general government sector's net financial liabilities by almost \$1 billion to \$15 billion by 2005.

...

... it does reflect a disappointing lack of fiscal discipline from this new Labor government.

Another article by Alan Mitchell on the same day states:

Victorian Labor, it seems, is settling uneasily into the financial discipline of government. The Bracks government has budgeted to go from a cash surplus of \$1.2 billion in 2000–01 to a deficit of \$22 million in 2001–02. On present policies, the general government cash deficit is projected to increase to \$300 million in 2002–03.

More than half the turnaround is the result of a \$700 million increase in recurrent spending.

...

This government ... is dipping into its fiscal inheritance.

This is a bad budget. There is not one new project and there are no major tax cuts, despite the fact that Victorian businesses are moving interstate or closing. The Bracks government is not doing enough to win new industry investment to this state. Instead we are losing industries to other states. The government has increased Workcover premiums and reduced its opposition to extreme union behaviour. Its failure to make large and consistent cuts in payroll tax is hurting industry.

The companies that have closed operations or moved interstate include Virgin Airlines, BHP, Kraft Foods, Nestles, Heinz, IBM — and the list goes on. In just six months a total of 12 662 jobs have been lost. In two years, members of the government have shown they are more interested in themselves and in enjoying the extras that come with being in government than in the wellbeing of Victoria.

Education has suffered as well. This has been the worst budget for education for 10 years yet we all agree that it should be our no. 1 priority. There are no year 7 national targets for reading, no additional money for professional development and fewer students receiving the education maintenance allowance. The retention rates for senior year regional students have gone down. This government is underspending in capital works, and class sizes have gone up. It seems that it is all talk and no action.

My electorate of Bulleen misses out once again. It has received no new major funding despite the fact that I have raised a number of issues with ministers and departments about the need to upgrade Thompsons and Templestowe roads. I have spoken to Vicroads about Bulleen Road. I was advised that I needed to go through the minister's office. Last year I did so in writing but have received no reply. So far the process has taken almost six months.

If you look at the budget papers you will find that most of the major cities receive a mention, with the exception of the City of Manningham. The cities of Greater Dandenong, Boroondara, Knox, Monash, Whitehorse,

Casey, Glen Eira, Mornington and Kingston are all mentioned, but no mention is made of the City of Manningham. This shows that the government does not consider that Manningham is a major city. That is an insult to the city's residents, because they are treated as second-class citizens. The rhetoric and slogan of 'Growing the whole state' is simply misleading. This slogan should really be about growing the areas that the Bracks government wants to win again at the next state election.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr KOTSIRAS — No, it is a press release. Not a single mention was made of the City of Manningham.

I turn now to the area of multicultural affairs. Unfortunately the minister has left the chamber. According to a press release dated Tuesday 15 May:

Government departments would continue to address the needs of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds under new initiatives announced in today's state budget.

Unfortunately there has been no major initiative — absolutely none. The budget papers for 2000–01 put aside \$0.8 million for advice, \$0.1 million for consultation, \$2.4 million for excess and \$1.6 million for grants. This totals \$4.1 million for the year.

The budget papers show that advice has gone up to \$2.1 million and consultation and grants to \$1.8 million. These amounts total \$3.9 million. The difference between funding for 2000–01 and 2001–02 is \$1 million. The government has taken away \$1 million from the area of multicultural affairs. This shows that from a total budget of \$23.5 billion the government is spending only \$3.9 million. This is approximately 0.02 per cent of the total budget.

It is interesting to note how much it costs this government to provide its bureaucrats with a brief. In 2000–01 500 briefs were written at a cost of \$2.9 million. This worked out to be \$5800 per brief. In 2001–02, 420 briefs were written at a cost of \$2.1 million or \$5000 per brief. That is an enormous amount of money for briefs, let me tell you!

In 2001 money was put aside for funding to enable the resources for the development of web pages for ethnic organisations. It was \$10 000 for 2000–01, \$10 000 for 2002–03 and \$10 000 for 2003–04. Unfortunately, in this year's budget there is no money for that type of funding.

Despite these cuts, the government has been able to look after itself. On page 270 of this year's budget

papers under the heading 'Ministerial and parliamentary support' it says:

Additional funding has been provided to support ministers to more effectively carry out their duties, and to assist government in the development of economically, socially and environmentally responsible policies.

That is costing \$3.8 million in 2001–02, \$3.8 million in 2002–03 and so on. However, the government has not provided any extra money for language services, Multicultural Arts Victoria or ethnic advertising to ensure that all Victorians are aware of the initiatives and policies of the government. There has been no increase in community grants and no additional funds for anti-racism campaigns and no mention of the office of business skills migration.

Under this government, multicultural affairs has dropped from the agenda. The government is happy to spend \$35 000 on research on the Racial and Religious Tolerance Bill but is not prepared to put more money into services that are required by ethnic groups.

As I said, those in the government are more than happy to look after themselves. They have provided \$3.8 million for more staff to advise the ministers on what they should do.

Another feature of interest is that last year's budget showed that the Independents received \$1 million in 2000–01 and \$0.7 million in 2001–02. That comes to \$333 000 for each Independent member of the Parliament for the first year and \$233 000 for each of them in following years.

It is also interesting to see that the Independent member for Mildura said why he is supporting the ALP. In a press release dated 17 October 1999 he states:

With the support of the Independents, it will be accountable and democratically reflective.

...

My decision has been made on the basis that I have two difficult choices. I believe Labor will listen and act upon our needs ...

I would like to know how they have spent the \$333 000. They talk about being open and accountable and yet they are not prepared to come into this house and tell us where they have spent the money.

As I have said, this budget does not deliver. It is disappointing and represents a lost chance. Victorians will pay for it in the future.

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I have pleasure in supporting the bill. I congratulate the Treasurer on an

excellent budget, which is forward looking and builds jobs in Victoria now and into the future. Having listened to speeches on the budget for a large part of the day there has been a clear example of people hearing only what they want to hear. In fact, an observer of these speeches today might well wonder if we all live in the same state.

The views expressed on the state of the government's economy and what is happening in relation to jobs in Victoria has been disparate, but there are some facts that support the case that Victoria is in a very healthy economic position. They are all written in budget paper 2, if honourable members care to read them.

I was a little surprised that in his address the honourable member for Bulleen spoke about declining jobs in Victoria. I am not sure where he got that from, because on page 39 of budget paper 2 in figures provided by Treasury — not by the media machine of the Labor Party or the government — it says:

Labor market conditions were much stronger in Victoria than in the rest of Australia over the past year. Some 68 500 new jobs were created in Victoria, which was well over half of all new jobs created in Australia during this period. Of the new jobs in Victoria, more than one in three were created in rural and regional Victoria.

That is more jobs than were created in the whole seven years of the Kennett government — and if Treasury says it, it must be true — yet the honourable member for Bulleen would have us believe the jobs situation in Victoria is not good. So, I direct him with enthusiasm to page 39.

Other members on the opposition side have spoken about what they see as the poor economic situation for Victoria, and I direct them to the bottom of page 41, where it states:

State final demand ... grew by 0.9 per cent in Victoria during 2000, compared with a 0.1 per cent decline in the rest of Australia. Consumer spending growth was softer in Victoria than nationally over the past year although this followed a number of years of growth well above the national rate. While housing activity fell sharply following the introduction of the GST —

and we all know which government was responsible for that —

it held up much better in Victoria than in other parts of Australia. Victorian business investment stabilised at record levels in the first half of 2000–01. Victorian merchandise exports grew strongly in the first half of 2000–01, helping to offset weaker domestic sales.

Labour market conditions were also much better in Victoria than in the rest of Australia. Employment increased by 3.1 per cent in Victoria over the past year compared with only 0.7 per

cent in the rest of Australia. Similarly, Victoria's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 6.2 per cent in March was below the national rate of 6.5 per cent. Victoria's population growth also exceeded the national average supported by a continued influx of people from other states and territories.

The economic position in Victoria is excellent, and with the budget that has been put forward by the Treasurer honourable members can look forward to that growth continuing. It is a very sensible budget, relying strongly on growth in infrastructure. That growth has two strong benefits; firstly, it provides jobs in the short term in building that infrastructure; and secondly, it also creates job opportunities in the long term.

Policies in budgets of all governments should address what to me is the most important issue in our country and state — that is, providing jobs for people who want to work. It is a sad state or country that does not see that as its major priority. I am pleased to say that the budget does that, because the effects of being unemployed on people who want to work are quite massive. Not only does it personally affect their self-esteem and happiness, but it frequently leads to serious social problems that cost the economy a great deal of money. The sorts of programs the Treasurer has outlined in this budget are essential to ensure that job opportunities in Victoria are maximised.

In the budget papers the Treasurer outlines what we will be doing as a government. Firstly, we will be investing heavily in social and economic infrastructure. Of course we will be building infrastructure that all of Victoria can benefit from, such as the railway lines to the country, and not programs such as City Link, which provide tolls for one section of the community. The residents of Essendon and the surrounding areas still believe it is unfair that the Tullamarine Freeway should have a toll on it because it has been there for 20 years. Under the previous government's road policies a section of the community had to pay for using one road while the rest of Victoria paid centrally for all those roads. It is unfair and unjust.

Mr Jasper interjected.

Mrs MADDIGAN — People from the country were strongly affected by the tolls. I know people from Bendigo in particular — perhaps it is one of the reasons Labor won both seats in Bendigo so well — were outraged by having to pay a toll every time they came to the city to go to the doctor or for some other type of appointment.

Secondly, the Treasurer identifies the building of a creative and innovative society, and some of the initiatives in biotechnology are important in that regard.

These are areas where there will be job and export opportunities in the future. I also strongly endorse the establishment of the Victorian Endowment for Science, Knowledge and Innovation. The government is lucky to have someone of the stature of Barry Jones involved in that. In partnership with private industry Victoria can look forward to getting great opportunities.

Thirdly, there is improving environmental sustainability. The Minister for Environment and Conservation is in the house. The work she is doing in relation to salinity, marine parks and other environmental issues is appreciated by all Victorians. I congratulate her on her budget initiatives.

Fourthly, the Treasurer identified enhancing Victoria's business environment through the Better Business Taxes package. Even the Liberal Party had to admit this has good parts to it. It has been widely endorsed by the community, and is seen as a breakthrough in attacking problems with business taxes. It is the first time any government has been game to stand up and put forward a package that will be of great benefit, particularly to small business, which is the biggest employer of people in Victoria.

The fifth element identified by the Treasurer was new programs to strengthen the Victorian community through multi-year strategies in the key areas of health, education and community building. Of course there needs to be a lot of community building after the years of the Kennett government, many of whose policies were divisive — they further divided the wealthy and the less affluent. The policies the government is now bringing into Victoria in relation to large spending on health, education and other community programs are to be endorsed.

I particularly congratulate the Minister for Education on her capacity in developing great employment strategies. Strathmore Secondary College in my electorate is one of the schools benefiting strongly from the Victorian Space Science Education Centre, and \$6.4 million is being put into that project. This is a great triumph for one of the young teachers at the college, Michael Pakakis, who heads the science school there. It was his idea. He came forward with a proposal last year. That proposal was sent to the minister, who asked her department to investigate it. From that has come this massive proposal, which will benefit not only Strathmore Secondary College but all of Victoria's students and teachers. It will be an education centre for teachers to learn about teaching space education, as well as for students to experience space education technologies.

It is interesting that the federal opposition leader has identified space technology as a huge growth area for the future, and one that the future federal Labor government will be investing in heavily. Obviously having this centre already developed should give Victoria a great edge.

Strathmore Secondary College will also benefit by getting stage 3 of its technology-enhanced classrooms as the last stage of its master plan. It will receive more than \$1 million for that completion. Essendon Keilor College, another first-class secondary college in my electorate, will be given more than \$600 000 to modernise its technology facilities, which places it more than halfway through its technology plan.

Both the secondary colleges in my electorate — Strathmore Secondary College and Essendon Keilor College — are centres of excellence in education, as indeed are the excellent primary schools. The middle schools funding will support not only these two excellent colleges but also one of the few schools in Victoria that goes only to grade 8, Moonee Ponds Central School.

A number of other budget items are of benefit to my community. I was surprised when the honourable member for Bulleen informed the house that there was no money in the budget for community legal services. That would come as a surprise to the Attorney-General, because he is under the impression that there is \$4 million extra a year for such services. The state has been forced to put this money into the budget because it is another area where the commonwealth government has not met its responsibilities. I know that community legal services across the state, including the well-run Essendon Community Legal Centre, will be keen to share in the increased funding.

I have an interest in funding for other projects, including the provision of \$1.6 million for library and community networks. The Treasurer has shown a commitment to improving information networks, and this funding for libraries will be widely welcomed by Victorians.

Overall my community is very satisfied with the sorts of policies that the Bracks government has introduced since it was elected in 1999. Some of the more recent initiatives that have been welcomed include Rescode and the introduction of the single dwellings bill. Essendon, as a middle suburb with little spare land, was severely affected by the lack of clear guidelines and prescriptions in the *Good Design Guide*. During the Kennett government era, Essendon residents were continually having to mount major campaigns to try to

save the character of their neighbourhoods, and as a result many people in Essendon are now instant town planning experts. Following an extensive consultation process that enabled large numbers of Victorians to participate, the introduction of Rescode will bring about a much better planning system. It has already been greeted with much enthusiasm by community and planning groups in my electorate.

The Racing (Racing Victoria Ltd) Bill, which was recently passed, has been strongly endorsed by the premier racing club in Victoria, the Moonee Valley Racing Club. The club wrote to me saying how delighted it was with the bill and the minister's second-reading speech. According to the club the new body will bring an independent and fresh approach to racing and will therefore have its support. I understand that that view is shared by not only city racing clubs but country clubs as well.

As a result of work done by the Minister for Environment and Conservation, Moonee Ponds Creek, which was almost totally neglected throughout the years of the Kennett government, is at last getting attention. The government has already committed a large amount of money to a litter program along the creek, and I look forward to further work being done to restore Moonee Ponds Creek from the concrete drain it has been allowed to become. If you look at the creek you can see that over the past 10 years or so little money was spent on its upkeep. I am glad to say that is changing.

The other issue over which the people of Essendon will forever hold a grudge against the Kennett government is the closure of Essendon hospital. The previous government closed the hospital with no consultation and no concern for the efforts of Essendon residents over the years in donating money to the hospital, often when they had little money to spare for themselves. I am pleased to say that although the contracts were almost completed by the time it was elected, the Labor government has been able to negotiate with the developers, and I thank them very much for their cooperation in returning some public health services to the site.

Mark Santini and Mark Casey, the main partners in the development at Essendon hospital, have allowed the government to use 800 square metres of space in the building rent free for three years, which will enable it to move back some badly needed community health services that were lost to the people of Essendon when the Kennett government closed the hospital. My community is proportionally an older one, and that is expected to be so until at least 2021. The closure of day

services at Essendon, including rehabilitation, podiatry, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and diabetes support, disadvantaged older and frail residents. The previous Premier's response — that they could go to other hospitals like Epping — perhaps more than anything else showed his total lack of understanding of the western and northern suburbs. Even though the planning has just started, residents are keen to see those services return.

The other problem in Essendon that I lay at the feet of the commonwealth government is the lack of aged care beds. I know how hard the Minister for Aged Care has worked to try to get the federal government to fulfil its responsibilities, especially when the state budget has provided more money for aged care support.

Overall this is an excellent budget that has been received well by the people of Victoria because it provides for growth not only in the short term but also in the longer term.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — It is with pleasure that I join the debate on the appropriation bill. It is hard to know where to begin, given that honourable members have only 20 minutes in which to present their views on the budget.

As I have said many times during debates in this place, I have a clear idea of what I seek to do in representing the people of the Murray Valley electorate, which is based around the great city of Wangaratta and has as its northern boundary the Murray River. Country people have always faced special difficulties. I get annoyed when I hear honourable members talking about what is or is not happening in country Victoria. Many of those comments are made by city-based members of Parliament who have not travelled into country Victoria or experienced what is going on in the north-east or in other parts of the state — and I will return to that issue later.

A member of Parliament who represented the Liberal Party in the 1980s always talked about how the Parliament was performing when he spoke on the appropriation bill. He believed the Parliament should perform better. Over the years I have seen changes made to the sitting hours. When I first entered Parliament, on Tuesdays the sitting commenced at 4.00 p.m., on Wednesdays it started at 2.00 p.m. and on Thursdays it started at 11.00 a.m. Some people would call them family-friendly hours, and I suppose they were, and some honourable members, particularly some Labor Party ministers, have called for a return to those family-friendly hours.

We used to sit during the day for three days, and we rarely had a Friday sitting. If there was to be an extension of the sitting, it took place the next week. I recall the former Leader of the National Party, Peter Ross-Edwards, saying on many occasions after we had found out the dates of the autumn or spring sessions that we should write off the week following the last scheduled sitting week because we would need to return to the house to complete the sessions.

It certainly suited the country members of Parliament better to sit on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at those times. City members have no idea of what the position is like for country members of Parliament in with having to travel long distances. For instance, yesterday — —

Government members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order!

Mr JASPER — They can keep talking, Madam Acting Speaker, because I will keep raising my voice above theirs. Hansard will certainly hear it. Government members may hear some of the comments made in the 1980s, which they would not know about — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr JASPER — They may learn something. The honourable member for Pakenham, who has been in this Parliament longer than I have, would recall and relate to some of the comments I am making.

Yesterday I rose at 5.30 in the morning and left home at 6.30 a.m. to drive to Parliament to be here by 9.30 for a National Party meeting. We then had a sitting of the Parliament that went through to 4.30 a.m.! We then had to be back here at 9.00 a.m. to start the sitting at 9.30 a.m. We do not have family-friendly hours.

On many occasions during the previous Parliament we heard the honourable member for Altona, the current Minister for Finance, saying that we needed to have family-friendly hours. She suggested that the house should complete its sittings by 6.00 p.m. or 7.00 p.m. Country members are quite happy to have the sittings extend into the evenings because we are in Melbourne for three days each sitting week. I live 3 to 4 hours away, and the honourable member for Wimmera lives much further away than that. On Thursday evenings when we finish the sitting at, say, 6.00 p.m., I usually wait until 7.00 p.m. for the traffic in metropolitan Melbourne to die down before driving for 3 hours to get home, so I usually ring my wife to tell her I will be

home between 10.00 p.m. and 11.00 p.m. Sometimes it is suggested that the sitting be extended until a bit later on Thursday evenings, and we sometimes sit until 10.00 p.m.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! The level of audible conversation in the chamber is a little too high. Even the Chair cannot hear the debate. The honourable member for Pakenham!

Mr JASPER — What does the member for Murray Valley do about that situation? Should he stay in Melbourne overnight and drive home the next day? Of course not, because he has appointments in his electorate on Friday, so he leaves at 10.00 p.m. or 11.00 p.m. to drive home. That is the sort of situation we have had.

I congratulate the government on the way it handled the legislative program last week, which I believe is good so far as the sitting of the Parliament is concerned — that is, it stated at the beginning of the sitting week that six bills, or whatever number it may be, would be debated.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr JASPER — I acknowledge the comments made by the Leader of the National Party that that method was introduced by the previous government. However, the mistake that has been made in the past is that if six bills had to be debated by 4.00 p.m. on Thursday and the debates of only two of them had been completed by then, the other four were not debated. Many honourable members would simply say, 'They are going to the Legislative Council, let it debate them. It will return them to the Legislative Assembly if it has amendments'. Often there was no debate on certain bills in this house. I have seen less debate taking place in recent years than I have ever seen before. In years gone by this Parliament certainly debated legislation.

The sitting times of the house are set down by the Leader of the House in conjunction with the manager of opposition business and the National Party Whip, whom I know has had discussions on this matter. When bills are introduced into the house on Tuesdays, they decide which bills should be debated further and which honourable members will be able to speak on them. Last week was one of the most successful weeks of debate in this Parliament for many years. We have seen that change, but last night everything was blown apart.

Mr Richardson — No, it was good!

Mr JASPER — The honourable member for Forest Hill is another member who, like me, entered Parliament in 1976. He also has a long memory.

I think we should continue with the way the program was handled last week; it was a step forward in allowing an appropriate amount of time for debate. Legislation that comes into Parliament should be able to be debated.

In recent years, probably over the past 10 years, we have seen honourable members referring to various clauses when speaking in the debate on the second-reading of a bill. The second-reading debate of a bill should be on the principles of the legislation and not on the various clauses. Because we often do not have time for bills to go through the committee stage, honourable members tend to speak on clauses during second-reading debates, so committee-style debates often take place during the second-reading stage. As a result, honourable members tend to speak for longer, particularly the lead speakers for the Liberal Party and even those for the National Party.

The Standing Orders Committee, of which I have been a member for many years, has had its ups and downs. Former Speaker Coghill worked very well in making sure the Standing Orders Committee met on many occasions. Even back in the 1980s, before the time of former Speaker Coghill, when the Honourable Robert Fordham was the Leader of House and the Labor Party was in government, the Standing Orders Committee met regularly. The committee reviewed the standing orders and made many changes to them, and reports were prepared for Parliament. Many of those recommendations have never been implemented. Former Speaker Coghill made sure that the committee met on many occasions, but I must say he did not handle it well.

I was a member of the Standing Orders Committee from 1996 to 1999 and it never met once during that Parliament, which was a disgrace. I am not sure why it did not meet. I raised the issue with the Speaker but never received what I thought was an appropriate response. I applaud the current Speaker because the Standing Orders Committee is meeting and seeking to address the issues that we as members of Parliament must address, including the sitting times of the Parliament and what we should be doing. I am not suggesting that changes should not be implemented, nor am I suggesting that the changed sitting times, where the Assembly now sits earlier in the day, have not been an advantage. However, honourable members saw the results of that yesterday, when after a very long sitting

we returned at 9.30 a.m. today. That should not happen. Parliament should sit for a reasonable number of hours.

I believe Parliament should sit in the evenings, as has always been the case since I have been a member. Sitting until 10, 11 or 12 o'clock causes no real difficulties because all honourable members handle such hours even when the Parliament is not sitting when attending functions in their electorates. Those issues should be examined.

All honourable members should remember what country members have to do. Country members have a second-home allowance, which has been the subject of some criticism by former Labor Premiers. The issue was not addressed through the 1990s and I do not think will be addressed now. Peter Ross-Edwards, a former Leader of the National Party, strongly supported a home in Melbourne for country members to enable their wives and families to be in Melbourne on occasions.

City members can return to their homes at night or their families can come to this place, but put that to a country member! My wife says that she has brought up our two children, and she is right, because I have been away so much. City members are also away, but a country member suffers more. I am of the view that many city members of Parliament do not understand what happens so far as country members are concerned. When the Parliament finishes at 6 p.m. on Thursday city members can attend functions in their electorates, but try doing that as a country member!

I return to the second-home allowance. Country members who are members of committees and who attend committee meetings outside sitting times do not receive an allowance because they receive a second-home allowance. There is no comparison between a second-home allowance and an attendance fee for a committee meeting. Given there is no allowance country members are not encouraged to come to Melbourne on a Monday or stay through until a Friday, unless they are keen on the committee — —

Mr Spry interjected.

Mr JASPER — Do you agree or disagree? I do not care what side of the house a member is on, if I do not agree with what is said I will respond accordingly. Clearly the issue of an allowance for attending a committee needs to be addressed. I strongly support country members setting up a home in Melbourne should they wish to do so in order to have their families with them on occasions, or to rest overnight — if they

can get enough sleep — for the next day. City members do not understand those issues.

I have listened with interest to speakers, particularly those on the government benches, and I say again that I am sick to death of hearing city members and some country members saying that nothing has happened in country Victoria for the past seven years. Don't tell me that! Honourable members should come to my electorate of Murray Valley. The Minister for State and Regional Development understands. North-eastern Victoria is not going backwards. The redistribution took nothing out of Murray Valley; it shifted a small piece.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr JASPER — I am talking about the north-eastern part of Victoria. Don't say it is going backwards. Country Victoria wants more; we all want more. There are difficulties for people living in country areas. I heard the honourable member for Essendon talking about City Link and the difficulties faced by her constituents in paying tolls. So far as I am concerned there was one way only to build City Link — that is, by a private enterprise company hooking those roads together. How do you pay for it? Not by a levy on petrol, for goodness' sake! All people in country areas would be paying for city roads, and they have an absolute need for fuel that people living in Melbourne do not. I support a toll that is paid by the people who use it.

I become angry when I hear those sorts of things. The honourable member for Bendigo East still wears rose-coloured glasses. I said in a previous debate in this place, 'Come to north-eastern Victoria and you will see what is going on'. Some \$8 million is currently being spent on schools, and the 35 schools across my electorate of Murray Valley will all benefit. Although some of the projects were approved prior to the change of government, I give credit to the government for carrying those projects forward and ensuring that the money is there.

Difficulties have occurred in Wangaratta, where an industry has recently closed, of which the minister is aware. I strongly support the action taken by him and his department in meeting with people and trying to assist them. Wangaratta is not going backwards, it is going forward, as is the rest of the electorate, because of its industry, primary production, water, tourism, great lifestyle and great climate. Those are the pluses. I attend meetings where people say, 'We haven't got this and we haven't got that', to which I reply, 'I know all the negatives, let me hear the positives. There must be

something good going on'. What we must do is expand those positives.

There is no doubt that I was not the former Premier's white-haired boy. He and I disagreed on many things, not the least being trains in country Victoria. I applaud the fact that trains are returning to country Victoria. I would like to see more money committed to trains in north-eastern Victoria, and I have spoken to the minister about helping the north-east by bringing the broad rail gauge back to the standard gauge.

Members say that we are going forward and that the previous government did not do anything. What they have not said is that in 1992 the debt was over \$32 billion and the coalition government had to change that. It had to ensure that there was a major turnaround in the state so far as the economy was concerned because in 1992 we were broke. I applaud the actions of the former coalition government in turning the finances of the state around. We hear the Treasurer saying that the debt is down to \$5 billion and that the government will reduce it by half over the next few years to \$2.5 billion. I applaud that, but the Treasurer should acknowledge what the debt was and what it is now, and that the government is now sitting in a very good position with a pot of gold. It has the state in a strong financial position to go forward.

I listened to the comments of the honourable member for Geelong North over the intercom, and he was making derogatory comments about country Victoria. We will go forward into the future. I heard the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism talking about what is going on in country Victoria and promising that the government would support the country. For goodness' sake, he can start by helping the winery walkabout next weekend.

Another great function taking place this weekend is the Rutherglen Country Fair. I am pleased that the Minister for Sport and Recreation has accepted my challenge to come to Rutherglen and meet me on the celebrity grape tread. It will be a great weekend. Thousands of people will come to north-eastern Victoria to taste the great wines that come from our region and to participate in the country fair.

I mention the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz. Ten years ago a small group of people started the jazz festival and now Wangaratta is the jazz capital of Australia and well known throughout the world.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! The level of audible conversation in the chamber is too high.

Mr JASPER — The Minister for Major Projects and Tourism has said that the festival of jazz is a hallmark event. I asked him what money the government was putting in and was told it just goes on publicity. However, we would like to get funding support. If the minister is so keen on what is happening in country Victoria, he should have a look at the major events and ensure they are funded. We do not want a lot of money, but the government should ensure that funding support is provided.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr JASPER — The bridges are another huge issue, but unfortunately I cannot cover that in the time available. I said at the outset that I wanted to cover a huge range of issues and I have covered one of the issues I think is important — that is, the operation of the Parliament itself. Members should never forget that country members are in a special position compared to those in metropolitan Melbourne, and we want to see that we get the quality of assistance that is being provided to members in metropolitan Melbourne. We are going forward, but never forget that the strength of the state of Victoria emanates from agriculture and other support provided by those living in country areas. Melbourne is a great city, but without country Victoria it would not be what it is today, and nor would the state. The budget needs to address these sorts of things into the future.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! Before I call the honourable member for Springvale, I advise all honourable members that the level of audible conversation in the chamber is much too high. I ask members to lower their voices. It is quite difficult to follow the member who is on his feet.

Mr HOLDING (Springvale) — It is a great pleasure to make a contribution this evening to the debate on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. Like the previous Bracks budget this budget delivers a lot for my constituents in Springvale and the people of Victoria. As a member of this government I have much to be proud of in this budget.

I listened carefully to the contribution made by the honourable member for Murray Valley, and I certainly recognise the unique role played by members from rural and regional constituencies in representing their people in this Parliament, but I hope members from rural and regional areas also maintain an interest, involvement and engagement in the unique problems facing people in metropolitan areas.

In her contribution the honourable member for Essendon mentioned the problems that were addressed by the Minister for Planning through Rescode. In my electorate of Springvale we face an awesome illicit drug problem — used syringes and drug paraphernalia as well as the chaotic street drug problem on the main road in Springvale. I hope that as honourable members from metropolitan areas reach out and engage with members from rural and regional areas the dialogue goes both ways and members from rural and regional areas are able to appreciate and maintain an interest and engagement in the unique problems faced by many metropolitan areas.

This budget has a great deal of good news for Springvale. I mentioned this morning in a member's statement the massive capital investment in the Springvale Primary School — the \$1.6 million upgrade announced in this budget. This is an opportunity for the Springvale Primary School community to realise its vision and to have its master plan implemented. The master plan will improve safety at the school and enable the school site to be consolidated into one physical location. It will enable better curriculums to be delivered and better sporting and recreational facilities to be provided. At the same time it will protect the heritage features of the school in a way that enhances the urban environment in the Springvale area. It is terrific news for the Springvale Primary School that that capital investment has finally come through.

In the past the Bracks Labor government has approved injections of capital for neighbourhood houses. It has introduced the best-value legislation to improve the accountability of local government and do away with the divisive and retrograde measures in the compulsory competitive tendering regime. We have seen an injection of funds to provide more affordable kindergartens for young families. That is certainly appreciated in the Springvale area.

We are now seeing the implementation of the Smart Bus scheme on route 888 down Springvale Road between Nunawading and Chelsea. That is great news. It means public transport is being provided to people outside the normal bus hours. It means a better range of services and more accessible and relevant public transport.

We have seen lower classroom sizes in our primary schools. That is very important in focusing on early years of education. The government is ensuring that people get a good start in life and that their educational opportunities are optimised by focusing on the critical early years, prep to year 2. It is doing that by meeting its election commitments in relation to classroom sizes.

We have seen increased black spot funding. This is extremely important. The state government has announced through the Minister for Transport \$240 million for the special statewide black spot program. This is the most significant investment in black spot funding by any state government in Australian history. It is a genuine attempt to reduce our road toll. It demonstrates a willingness by the government to put its money where its mouth is and to make sure that local communities have the resources needed to tackle the critical problems caused by black spots.

The government will make sure that a significant amount of the money goes to rural and regional areas, where road infrastructure is such an important issue. At the same time, in keeping with so many of its policies, the Bracks Labor government provides for community input. It asks local councils, communities, organisations and individuals to nominate black spots for the program so that the widest possible body of experience is drawn on to make this program a success.

The Bracks government is involving the Victorian people in many other areas of public administration by asking them what they think. These things are often derided by opposition members. They call it government by committee or by task force. They are quick to criticise the range of committees and consultation processes that are in place. They see it as an excuse for not making decisions when in fact it is a recognition that by providing opportunities for people to participate in the decision-making process we make them stakeholders in the outcome. It is a critically important hallmark of all of the things that the Bracks Labor government has been doing.

Ours is a government with a progressive social agenda, and I want to say something here that comes up again and again in my role as the member for Springvale. People approach elected members about different pieces of legislation, and three pieces of legislation that have come before the Parliament come to mind in particular. The first is the legislation in relation to supervised injecting facilities, which was passed in the lower house but which I was sad to see was defeated in the upper house. The second is the Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Bill, which provided legal recognition of gay and lesbian relationships. Thirdly, and as recently as last night, this chamber debated the racial and religious tolerance legislation. Those three significant pieces of legislation are evidence of the progressive social agenda set by the Bracks Labor government.

Often in my electorate people approach me and say, 'The majority of people in your electorate disagree with this piece of legislation'. It is a commonly held view that as an elected member you must slavishly follow the majority opinion in your electorate, particularly when the majority of submissions, letters, emails, or correspondence you receive in your office might disagree with proposed legislation, and they seek that you vote against it. It is important to put on the record that I see the role of a local member not as a delegate of an electorate — you are not required to simply slavishly follow whatever your assessment of majority opinion is — but rather as a representative. If you are a representative of your electorate then you owe it your best judgment on what the best response is to the various pieces of legislation that come before the chamber.

Some residents have approached me in good faith and said that I must do what the majority of electors in the seat of Springvale — or Lyndhurst, or whatever it might be called in the future — seek that I do. However, I say to them that as members of Parliament we have to make sure that rather than slavishly following majority opinions we instead provide the best judgment that we can for our constituents.

I am proud to be part of a government which has a progressive social agenda and which is willing to tackle difficult issues that often are not popular in electorates. Elected members are willing to use their best judgment to decide what is the best social agenda for the community to best place it to meet the challenges we will all face going into the 21st century.

I will focus the remainder of my remarks on something I also canvassed in my speech in the appropriation debate last year — that is, the important issue of the Commonwealth Grants Commission's (CGC) report on funding relativities between the different states and territories. This is a critical issue that all Victorians need to get across. The government has a critical role to play in educating Victorians about existing anomalies and discrepancies in the current CGC formula and making sure they understand that we, as Victorians, are ripped off by the formula. We must be active and vigilant in making sure that the formula is addressed and reconfigured to provide a fairer distribution of commonwealth funds to the states and territories. I use as my resource chapter 7 of budget paper 2.

Mr Perton interjected.

Mr HOLDING — For the benefit of the honourable member for Doncaster, it is at page 127. Under the heading 'An unfair and growing burden', it states:

The CGC's assessment of the relative needs and revenue-raising capacities of each state and territory has a major impact on state finances as the commonwealth government typically accepts the CGC's recommendations on relativities, which are issued annually in February.

Therefore the relativities that are presented to the Victorian people each February via the CGC are providing a disproportionate level of funding to states other than Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia — and the discrepancies are growing year by year. Budget paper 2 goes on:

In its 2001 update of relativities, the CGC reduced Victoria's relativities for forgone financial assistance grants substantially.

It goes on to say:

It shows an effective subsidy from Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia to the other states and territories of about \$2.2 billion in 2001–02 ...

That is \$2.2 billion on the CGC's figures.

Let us take instead the test of GST revenue that is returned to the state where it is raised. If we allocate Victoria's share of GST revenue raised versus GST revenue returned to it, the state is getting 83 cents in every \$1 Victorians are contributing. This means that if we use this as the basis for calculating it, the subsidy from Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia to the other states and territories rather than being \$2.2 billion actually becomes \$2.7 billion.

It has to be asked whether the states and territories that are being subsidised by Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia are as deserving as would originally have been believed. None of us would disagree with funding a territory such as the Northern Territory, which is a diverse, decentralised territory that has unique service delivery and tax revenue raising opportunities at its disposal. No-one would disagree with states that are relatively revenue and service rich providing a subsidy to the other states to make sure they can enjoy the same services. No-one would disagree with providing a subsidy to a state such as Tasmania, the economy of which is perhaps not as developed as the economies of other states or does not have the same opportunities available to it as the economies of other states.

However, should we be subsidising Queensland? Queensland has a negative debt position and has the lowest state-based taxes of any state or territory in Australia. Why should the people of Victoria fund what is effectively a low-tax strategy being pursued by the people of Queensland to entice business in other east coast and southern states to shift to that state?

Why should we subsidise the Australian Capital Territory, which has the second-lowest net debt of any jurisdiction and the highest level of per capita disposable income? According to the budget documents its per capita disposable income is \$29 000. Victoria is the next highest with \$22 000, but the people of Victoria are expected to subsidise the people of the ACT. That is unfair.

The budget documents go on to reveal that the subsidies from Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia are large and growing. I am pleased to note that information in the budget documents shows that, finally, the major subsidising states, if we want to call them that — Victoria and New South Wales, and possibly now also Western Australia — have shown a willingness to tackle the issue in a sophisticated and coordinated way. We saw it arising out of the historic Albury-Wodonga meeting held between the Victorian and New South Wales governments on 26 March 2001, and the commissioning of:

... a major review to investigate the current system of commonwealth grants distribution and to propose alternatives ...

Those words are from chapter 7, page 132 of *Budget Statement 2001–02*, or budget paper 2.

It is significant that Victoria has finally shown that the government can address such problems in a coordinated way involving other states to ensure that Victorian people are not continually ripped off by the Commonwealth Grants Commission formula, which is biased and disproportionately impacts on Victorian people. That results in Victorians subsidising low-taxing and low-debt states such as Queensland, and territories such as the ACT, which has a higher disposable per capita incomes than the people of Victoria to the tune of \$29 000 per capita compared to \$22 000.

The budget implements the government's response to the business tax review. I am pleased to see that Victoria will have a lower business tax regime, making its businesses more competitive. Business taxes and charges will come down, and that is all good news for Victorian businesses.

Overall, it is a tremendous budget for the people of Springvale. It addresses the problems that Victoria faces going into the 21st century. It invests in infrastructure and in critical services such as health and education. It looks to the future, but in a financially responsible way. There are still great challenges, and I urge the government to continue its forthright policy of

tackling the chronic problems posed by the unfair and biased Commonwealth Grants Commission formula.

Mr SPRY (Bellarine) — The budget debate is, once again, an opportunity for honourable members to review the government's aims and objectives, and its performance, particularly over the past 12 months.

It is not a pretty picture. It is clear to me, for example, that the Bracks Labor government is already showing signs of beginning to unravel. The budget has given the government a big opportunity to demonstrate its leadership and its future intentions for all Victorians. However, there is basically nothing in the budget papers to give Victorians much inspiration, especially country Victorians and the people of the Bellarine electorate.

By doing nothing, a government can fool most of the people some of the time; but towards the end of its second year of office the Bracks Labor government in action is already beginning to wear very thin indeed. Instead of living up to its pre-election rhetoric on the social reform policy accompanied by fiscal responsibility, it is characterised by vacillation, potential fiscal irresponsibility and the return, sadly, to the Cain and Kirner years of government.

The government has absolutely no idea about clear, directional policy. It does not tell it the way we would like to hear it. It provides Victorians with no vision for the future and seems to have no idea of what makes an economy take. It has no idea that the private sector is the wealth generator. Probably the reason it does not understand that is that most honourable members on the government side of the house have never been involved in the private sector.

The government seems to think that to solve the unemployment problem it has only to put on more public servants. It has no idea that the public sector is paid for ultimately by the private sector. It is as simple as that. Sure, modern society cannot function without a focused public sector, the sector responsible for facilitating and sometimes providing essential services such as health care, education, law and order and public transport. However, if those services become top-heavy, they will cripple the economy as they did in the Cain and Kirner years of government, those sad years of total fiscal neglect.

There are signs in the budget that the government is already starting to spiral downwards. Recurrent costs fuelled by union demands have that ominous look about them already. The huge current account surplus of \$1.2 billion delivered to the government by the

former conservative government, boosted by net overall tax revenue increases, provided the Labor government when it came into office in 1999 with the best opportunity ever for creating a competitive future for Victoria and driving the state into a brilliant new era. Instead, however, that huge surplus has already been squandered by the Labor government.

The electorate has not forgotten that in 1992 the former Cain and Kirner governments, which were Labor governments, left to the incoming coalition government a legacy of a \$2 billion current account deficit. Is it any wonder that in those early years of the coalition government spending had to be cut significantly? Yet honourable members on the other side of the house complain about the cuts introduced by the former Kennett government. It had absolutely no option but to introduce those cuts. Victorians have not forgotten the pain that caused, and they do not want to go through that again.

Mr Trezise interjected.

Mr SPRY — In response to the interjection from the honourable member for Geelong, I am not the only one who is saying this. Well-respected commentators such as those who write for the *Australian Financial Review* have criticised the budget for its growth in recurrent spending, as indeed did the Auditor-General in his November 2000 report on the finances of Victoria.

Apart from its inherent paralysis, which I cannot understand — the only way to explain it is to say it shows a lack of understanding of how to properly manage an economy — there are signs that the government is losing confidence. Its inability to launch major new projects is worrying. It cannot even deal with the projects the former government left it, and that, too, is worrying. The Bracks Labor government has had plenty of money in its Growing Victoria reserve to fund vital infrastructure projects, but if its handling of its rail infrastructure initiative exemplifies its capacity to put ideas into action, the government must be judged a failure.

The people of Geelong were buoyed by the promise of faster and more comfortable rail services to metropolitan Melbourne, and so were the people of Ballarat, Bendigo, and Traralgon. Almost two years later we are still waiting. Constituents are asking whether this government is capable of delivering. The answer is apparently not.

I refer to the \$80 million question. That was the figure Labor quoted in its pre-election policy, which was

signed off by Access Economics, to cover its fast rail projects. That suddenly and miraculously turned into a \$1000-million nightmare. How did it grow from \$80 million to \$1000 million? Does the government have any idea of budgeting and forecasting? Again, apparently not. In the meantime the much-vaunted private component of Labor's public-private partnership seems further away than ever.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! Under sessional orders the time for the adjournment of the house has arrived.

Farm dams

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — I ask the Minister for Environment and Conservation to at long last live up to and deliver on something she has promised to do — that is, release the final report of the Blackmore committee on the farm dams review. The minister promised she would release the report on 8 June, which is this Friday. I call on the minister to live up to her promise and make the report public. She has been in receipt of the report since early April, and she announced in a press release dated 11 April that:

... she would now take time to consider the report and would release the report and a government response by 8 June 2001.

The problem is that the minister took her response to the report to cabinet. Cabinet was not satisfied with the minister's proposals and sent her packing. Cabinet members told the minister they were not prepared to tick off the proposals until she had done some more work on them. Unfortunately for the minister this was quickly leaked, and is a further embarrassment for an accident-prone, bumbling minister.

The problem for the minister is that there is no way she can deliver on her promise to release her response by 8 June because cabinet does not meet again this week and will not meet next Monday, so it will be 18 June before it meets again. The first part of the minister's promise has not been met. However, she can still deliver on her promise to release the report on 8 June, and I call on her to do so. There is no reason for her to withhold it. She knows what she has to do, even though she has failed to do enough to satisfy her cabinet colleagues.

The report is critical to farmers and people in rural communities across Victoria, who have a keen interest

in it. It does not matter whether they are horticulturists in the Dandenongs, members of the south-eastern growers network in Cranbourne, dryland farmers in the north-east who wish to include irrigation in their operations or viticulturists in the Grampians or Pyrenees. They are all desperately interested in the results of the review and the recommendations in the report.

The minister's failure to release the report is holding up significant agricultural investment across the state. Tens of millions of dollars of agricultural investment is on hold because this minister has not yet come in with a solution to a problem that she said she would address by the start of this year. She delayed the draft report by two months last year, and she has delayed the release of the final report by two months again this year. She has failed to meet her own promise, and she has failed to satisfy her cabinet colleagues. It is about time she delivered.

Housing: Thomson estate

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I refer the Minister for Housing to an issue relating to the redevelopment of the Thomson housing estate in East Geelong. For the information of the house, the Thomson housing estate is currently undergoing a major redevelopment, which includes the construction of about 70 new public-sector homes, 50-plus private sector homes, and an upgrade of 5 already established homes on the estate. I ask the minister to advise the house of the status of the Thomson redevelopment.

Last year I was pleased to accept an invitation from the minister to chair the community steering committee that is overseeing this magnificent project. The committee is made up of local residents, the principals of the Tate Street and St Margaret's primary schools — with whom I enjoy working and who have a major role to play in the community of Thomson — representatives from the City of Greater Geelong and officers from the Office of Housing. Administration officers from the Office of Housing have assisted me over the past 12 months and have played an important role in helping out people who need relocating.

The committee ensures that all residents are kept fully informed of the progress of the development. That role is important when one considers that the homes being replaced are around 50 years old. In many instances families moved into the houses soon after they were built. They have raised their children in the houses, so they have lived there for their entire married lives. Many residents are elderly and widowed, so the redevelopment can be a source of anxiety or concern.

Thus it is vital that all residents are kept fully informed of the development, and any issues must be dealt with effectively and efficiently to reduce the anxiety of the elderly residents in particular.

Improving the quality of housing on the estate has benefits for the entire Geelong community, as the honourable member for Bellarine will certainly tell the house.

Mr Spry interjected.

Mr TREZISE — The estate redevelopment will be finished; the honourable member should not worry about that.

Murtoa College

Mr DELAHUNTY (Wimmera) — I refer the Minister for Education to the situation at Murtoa College, which has concerns about, firstly, budget allocations for capital works; secondly, the occupational health and safety of students and staff; and thirdly, physical resource management system (PRMS) allocations.

The history of the two campuses is as follows. The first Murtoa Primary School was established in 1873. The Murtoa Higher Elementary School, which opened in 1922, became a high school in 1956 and a secondary college in 1990. In October 2000 the primary campus of the college celebrated 125 years of providing education with a fantastic weekend. During 1999 a proposal to bring the two schools together to form one campus created a lot of debate across the Wimmera community.

The school communities were given leads that if they became a one-campus school they would receive capital funding. The budget was a great disappointment to the Murtoa community.

Last month I wrote to the minister regarding this matter and requested a deputation. The urgency of the need for capital was highlighted late last week. Structural engineers were requested to check both campuses. The primary school's classrooms, sick bay, first aid rooms, recovery rooms and toilets all have gaping cracks, plaster falling away and walls totally separated. Bolts are holding the place together. The senior campus also has failed brickwork and termite problems. I am not sure who to blame for that; the problems are not only because of the age of the buildings but because of the current dry conditions.

Last Thursday the structural engineer declared the buildings unsafe. The college council president, Fay

Cousin, said that the welfare of the students and staff is the major concern. The staff and students have been moved into cramped classroom conditions and inadequate facilities. Department of Education, Employment and Training staff have moved quickly to place a mod 5 classroom at Murtoa school on Monday. The school and the government now have to spend a large amount of money to address the safety concerns. The community of Murtoa wants a move onto one campus and the college is worried about whether the PRMS allocation will be sufficient to address the maintenance concerns.

The action I request from the minister is that she review the current situation at Murtoa College; provide funds to address the occupational health and safety concerns and give a commitment to total project funding to facilitate a combining of the two campuses as soon as possible. Fay Cousin and her college council look forward to a response on these concerns.

I finish by wishing the minister a happy birthday for tomorrow.

High Street, Preston: clearway

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Transport the clearway in High Street, Preston. Tonight I am calling for the scrapping of the clearway. I request that the minister refer my request to Vicroads, which is the body responsible for making the decision.

Darebin has the sixth-highest number of road injuries for all road users, and over the period 1994 to 1998 had the fourth-highest number of pedestrian injuries when road casualties are compared in the 31 metropolitan municipalities in Victoria. In fact, Darebin has the second-highest number of pedestrian fatalities for the five-year period, only one fatality behind the City of Melbourne — and 30 per cent of all pedestrian casualties occur in High Street. The section of High Street in question is some 7.2 kilometres long and is considered by Vicroads as among the worst 10 per cent of black spot lengths.

While the road is primarily managed by the City of Darebin, as I said earlier, Vicroads is the body responsible for deciding whether the clearway should be scrapped. As local member I have worked with the council to take a number of measures, such as installing illuminated signs that impose a 40-kilometre-an-hour speed restriction on High Street during the day. That is one positive measure in slowing down the traffic, but I believe the next step would be to scrap the clearway altogether.

I am particularly concerned about the evening peak hour traffic, when there are no parked cars. There are two lanes of traffic and cars come through considerably faster than 60 kilometres an hour at the same time as the shops are operating. One of the concerns is that young kids could easily rush out onto the road after being picked up by their parents from school.

As well as being primarily a safety traffic measure, I believe there would be a commercial advantage to the local traders in extending the time they could operate if people were able to park on High Street. It would be a win-win situation for the municipality, for road safety and for local traders. I know the council is doing a lot of analytical work at the moment. I ask the Minister for Transport to consider my request.

Mornington Peninsula freeway: extension

Mr DIXON (Dromana) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Transport regarding the extension to the Mornington Peninsula freeway through Rosebud, Tootgarook and Rye. I am not asking for a lot, just an early commencement to the planning for the freeway. It needs to be extended west, or inland, from the towns I have just mentioned. The Mornington Peninsula has a vastly increased population and is becoming more of an all-year-round tourist destination, being popular on weekends and during the busy summer months, from Cup Day through to Easter.

The amount of traffic is affecting the amenity of the local area, especially the strip shopping centres, where people like to dine outdoors. On some days up to 35 000 cars a day move along Point Nepean Road, and the fumes from the traffic are overwhelming. There are also safety concerns for pedestrians who want to cross the road to the beach, and concerns about cars using the rat-runs down the back streets causing traffic congestion and pedestrian safety problems.

There are a couple of options for extending the freeway. One is to extend it as a full freeway, and the other is to extend it as a two-lane arterial road through those three townships. About 90 per cent of the land is already reserved so it is not a huge undertaking in terms of the buying up of the land. Only a small amount of land needs to be bought for the freeway extension. Part of the reserve goes through the Tootgarook wetlands, so an environment effects statement would be an important part of the early planning.

There is a great deal of push in the community for the extension to the freeway, and it would be to the benefit of the local tourism industry as more golf courses come on line. The Professional Golf Association tournament

will be held in Rye in two years and the infrastructure is needed for the tourism industry. The extension needs to be looked at not only for the amenity of the local area but for the future of the economy of the area. I ask the minister to start that early planning now.

Disability services: Warragul

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — I raise an issue with the Minister for Community Services. Disability services in Warragul are something that I have had a close involvement with since I have been the local member. Indeed, I had a strong interest in the issue prior to being the local member. A member of my family has been utilising the services in the past and, as a result, it is an issue that is close to my heart.

Warragul has had a strong reputation for looking after those with disabilities, and the Mawarra organisation has some fantastic day programs that not only give great support for those who have, in some cases, suffered quite severe disabilities but also have provided services that attracted families to our region and to our town. Families move into the area to access the town's services and now the parents in those families are getting older. The result is a increased need for homes and housing for people suffering disabilities. Looking across the state, I see the need for such services is obviously great. I want to pay tribute to the Bracks government for its commitment to increasing funding in this area. It is something that I am proud to be a part of and involved with.

In Warragul, preparations have been under way for some time for a new home of this type. It should have been well under way by now, but unfortunately inaction by the previous government slowed the process down. However, the Bracks government is getting on with the job. Even though there has been difficulty in accessing appropriate land, I pay tribute to our local Shire of Baw Baw, which has seen fit to amend planning regulations and make available land that it owns.

Mr MAXFIELD — The results are that, after a long wait, the community is now seeing the fruits of its hard work and lobbying with the previous government and, following subsequent lobbying of the Bracks government, a home for elderly people with disabilities is now in the process of being contracted out and preparations are being made to build on land that has been purchased.

I ask the minister to ensure that things are proceeding well and perhaps also give some advice and assistance in regard to how the house will operate. I hope that shortly we will have a great facility in Warragul of

which we can all be tremendously proud. I look forward to Warragul having another tremendous facility where the Bracks government looks after those in need in our community.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Dorset Road, Ferntree Gully: extension

Mr LUPTON (Knox) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for Transport a request made by the Knox City Council, apparently to all local members of Parliament. It relates to the Dorset Road extension project, which has been going on for a number of years. The City of Knox has been acquiring land for the purpose of the road reservation. Much to my surprise I have received a letter from the Knox City Council indicating that it is now called the Dorset Road extension project, which covers the duplication of Wellington Road, Taylors Lane to Napoleon Road; the reclassification to main road of Napoleon Road, Wellington Road to Kelletts Road; the duplication of — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Polwarth is out of his place and is disorderly.

Mr LUPTON — The project covers the duplication of Napoleon Road, Wellington Road to east of Dorset Road; the construction of the Dorset Road extension, to be duplicated, Burwood Highway to Napoleon Road; the upgrade of Dorset Road, Boronia Road to Burwood Highway, involving five-lane treatment and signals, Frances Crescent to Commercial Road; and last but not least the construction of a link to Lysterfield Road, Napoleon Road to Lysterfield Road.

The cost of the first five items will total \$54 million. The minister should be aware that the local members have endeavoured to find out what the priority has been on the construction of these roads, to no avail. I notice now that this becomes the Dorset Road extension project, but it is evident that there is a real problem as far as traffic is concerned in the area of the City of Knox in the Dorset Road area. It is important and I support the City of Knox in its request from Vicroads and the minister to try to find out what is going on with the Dorset Road extension project. Along with other local members in the house, I must admit that I was rather surprised to find that it had become a project including six items. However, there is no doubt that this project is important and I would have hoped that the City of Knox would have itemised it and set a priority for the items.

I urge the minister to investigate the matter so that we can come up with some future works program that will cope with traffic volume in the area.

Children: Vietnamese foster care

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Community Services and request that she assist the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria in the recruitment of people of Vietnamese background for positions as foster caregivers. Mr Acting Speaker, you are probably aware that in your area the challenge of recruiting foster caregivers is a never-ending task. It is a program that requires constant effort and investment from both the public dollar and a lot of volunteer and community effort in order to not only deliver services but also to sustain and rejuvenate the level of commitment to the foster care system. It is not only a challenge to ensure that those services are maintained, but it is also a difficult task.

It has proved extremely difficult to recruit people of Vietnamese background into the system. Despite considerable effort, the people running the three regional foster care programs in the western metropolitan region report that they have been unable to recruit any caregivers from Vietnamese background into the system. That is despite the fact that more than 24 000 residents of the western suburbs were born in Vietnam, so when the entire populations of all the families are taken into account the figure is probably three to four times that number.

The Children's Welfare Association of Victoria has been most generously granted \$38 000 from the Brambles Industries Charitable Fund to set out on that recruiting task. It estimates that the total cost of the project to recruit these folks will be around the \$55 000 mark, leaving a shortfall of around \$15 000. It is in finding that figure to help out these good-minded folks that I am looking for the assistance of the minister.

The partners in the project will include the Australian Vietnamese Women's Welfare Association, with the formidable Mrs Cam Nguyen — a prominent local identity working in a well-organised service — involved in the steering committee, plus the officers from the western metropolitan region of the Department of Human Services. This project is ambitious but there is an extreme need for it in the area.

Residential tenancies: review

Mr SPRY (Bellarine) — I raise with the Minister for Housing on behalf of the constituents of

St Leonards an anomaly in the Residential Tenancies Act. This apparent anomaly is a loophole that tenants can drive a truck through. One tenant in my electorate seems to be exploiting the situation ruthlessly, and in the process is driving his landlords to distraction. The problem concerns section 263(2) in part 6 of the act in relation to termination by the landlord for no specified reason.

As soon as a tenant occupies a residence they can immediately initiate a claim for repairs, excessive noise or any other specified reason if they suspect that their landlord may be about to give notice to terminate under section 263. If the landlord then seeks to exercise a right to terminate the tenancy a tribunal, or in my constituent's case a judge of the Supreme Court on appeal, is obliged to find in favour of the tenant. This situation can basically go on ad infinitum. If the tenant is cunning enough they can virtually take over the property and make the property owner's life an absolute misery.

I ask the minister whether she will ensure that this situation is specifically addressed in the current review of the Residential Tenancies Act and advise what, if any, action she can provide for my constituent's relief in the meantime.

Aged care: fall prevention

Mr VINEY (Frankston East) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Aged Care the prevention of falls by older persons. What action can the minister and the government take to assist older members of the community, particularly in my electorate of Frankston East, which has an ageing population, but also generally in the whole Frankston–Mornington Peninsula region? We know the Victorian population is ageing, but the Frankston–Mornington Peninsula region in particular has a growing ageing population.

People over the age of 65 who live in their own homes are likely to experience a fall: one in three is likely to experience a fall each year; 10 per cent will have multiple falls; and more alarmingly, more than 30 per cent will sustain injuries requiring medical attention. These percentages become even higher when we include people living in aged care facilities or staying in hospitals.

I am aware that the government has been taking some action in this area, and I was pleased to be involved last year in the launch of a CD for aged care professionals at the Mount Eliza Aged Care and Rehabilitation Service. The aim was to help those professionals ensure their patients minimise the potential for falls.

The Mount Eliza service and Peninsula Health are doing a great job in aged care. I differ with the honourable member for Frankston on this issue. In her member's statement yesterday she made some very unfortunate attacks on Peninsula Health because she had been left off a community consultative committee. Apparently in her address she did a lot of whingeing, moaning and whining about being left off the committee, but she fails to understand that such a committee is about having community representatives, not parliamentary representatives. Parliamentary representatives have plenty of access to information and are able to advise the hospital on issues. The idea of a community consultative committee is that it is actually made up of members of the community. Of course this is something new to members on the other side.

Housing: Moorabbin refuge

Mrs PEULICH (Bentleigh) — I raise with the Minister for Housing her failure to meet with concerned residents regarding the development proposed by her department for a youth refuge on the corner of Wickham Road and Nepean Highway, Moorabbin, as well as the proposed development of the former Eastmoor Primary School site. We have had public meetings — the minister has not turned up; we have had information days — the minister has not turned up; I have tabled petitions; I have requested her to receive a delegation — she has refused. She has to stop dodging her responsibilities; these people deserve to be treated with respect. I call on the Minister for Housing to agree to receive delegations immediately. D-day is coming. She has to face the people!

Sandringham and District Memorial Hospital

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I ask the Minister for Health whether he can advise Dr Jim McDonald, a local medical practitioner in my electorate, whether all the locally raised funds from Southern Health have been returned to the Sandringham and District Memorial Hospital as a result of the restructure — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr McArthur — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I direct your attention to the administration and management of the adjournment debate and refer you to *Rulings from the Chair 1920–2000*. In particular, I refer you to chapter 4(j) on page 12, which sets out the procedures for an adjournment debate. Members are requested to set out the complaint or issue, indicate the

minister or department involved, give a brief résumé of the facts and finally suggest the action that is sought.

It is in relation to the final point that I seek your assistance and advice. As all honourable members are aware, this house sat until 4.13 this morning as part of yesterday's sitting. It was forced to do so because in discussions the Premier refused to have an adjournment at a reasonable time, despite his pledge to introduce family-friendly hours. Because divisions were scheduled he kept all honourable members here until 4.13 a.m., including all of his ministers. Tonight he knows there are no divisions scheduled between dinner and the end of the debate so he can send his ministers off for their beauty sleep and treat with contempt all other honourable members who will raise issues in vain because there will be no minister here to give a response to the actions sought.

I seek your assistance in encouraging the Premier and the Leader of the House to suggest that their ministers treat this Parliament with respect and take the adjournment debate seriously. They should earn their stipend, attend to their duties and attend the adjournment debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! There have been numerous previous rulings that say there is no compulsion for ministers to attend the adjournment debate.

Responses

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for Education) — The honourable member for Wimmera referred to issues affecting the merged P–12 college. Those issues have been raised not only by the honourable member but also by the school council president, Ms Fay Cousin. The issues are quite serious and go to the provision of quality education learning spaces — —

Honourable Members — Happy birthday to you — —

Ms DELAHUNTY — Not yet. You are a wee bit premature!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! Honourable members will cease singing 'Happy birthday'!

Ms DELAHUNTY — The boys choir is very charming. I thank them very much.

This issue concerns the merged Murtoa College, which was formed by the former Murtoa Primary School, of which I have many nostalgic memories, and the

secondary college, which I know the honourable member for Wimmera attended briefly. The matter was about the adequate provision of learning spaces and the health and safety of students, which has also been raised by Ms Cousin. The honourable member asked how quickly the government can deal with structural problems in a couple of areas of the school.

The moment the government was alerted to the problems I instructed the regional office to carry out a structural audit, which was done on 29 May, to determine the further needs of the school under the maintenance program. Buildings on both sites have been assessed and are under regular review. Further to that, on 31 May regional officers attended the school and met with the principal and the school council president. By mutual agreement a double relocatable — a mod 5 — was located on the primary site on Monday this week. It was also agreed to undertake a further assessment of the secondary science block on 5 June, which I am informed by the department has occurred.

The student and staff safety matters are of the utmost importance. The region, in consultation with the college, will implement a site safety plan, which I believe was completed on 5 June following advice from Noel Arnold and Associates. The planned capital works to merge both campuses on the secondary site is a high priority for the region, and it has been resubmitted for funding in the 2002–03 budget. There was a problem with the school unfortunately missing the deadline for submitting its full planning project plans to the region. However, it will go into the pool and compete for the resources, as will all schools. This is an issue that the department will follow up to ensure that the safety of the students is attended to.

I thank the honourable member for Wimmera for his warm best wishes on this anniversary.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The Minister for Community Services, addressing the issues raised by the honourable members for Monbulk, Geelong, Preston, Dromana, Narracan, Knox, Footscray, Bellarine, Frankston East and Bentleigh. I think the honourable member for Sandringham misses out because he had only 7 seconds.

Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Community Services) — I first address the matter raised by the honourable member for Narracan, who spoke about the need in Warragul for support for families who need long-term accommodation for their loved ones.

I had the pleasure of visiting Warragul with the honourable member for Narracan before he was elected

to this place, and he spoke firmly of the need for a supported accommodation site in Warragul. I am pleased to inform the honourable member that in the Gippsland region three community-based supported accommodation services will be built by non-government agencies. In particular Normanby Street in Warragul will have a new facility for five citizens who have been identified as being in need of long-term accommodation. Many of them are currently in interim respite services. The department has allocated of the order of \$200 000 in recurrent funding for the home in Warragul, and I am pleased to inform the honourable member that the E. W. Tipping Foundation has been approved to provide services for that site.

The honourable member for Footscray raised an issue that all of us would be concerned about, which is the need for an improved uptake of foster carers in the Victorian community, particularly foster carers from culturally or linguistically diverse communities. I share his concern about the need for Vietnamese foster caregivers. I am conscious that in the western metropolitan region there is a large Vietnamese population — about 4.4 per cent of the total population — with 13.63 per cent of the population of the honourable member's own area of Maribyrnong having been born in Vietnam. That does not include the children of those people. I share his concern about the need for three regional foster care programs to recruit Vietnamese caregivers. I am happy to allocate \$15 000 to this action research project for the recruitment of Vietnamese foster caregivers.

I stress that this is on the clear understanding that there will be outcomes from the action research project that provide a greater awareness of the home-based system in those communities. I am looking forward to a large number of Vietnamese foster carers being recruited as a result of this project and therefore to an increased quality of placements for children and young people in their own community. Finally, I want to see a report setting out the protocols that should be adopted as part of the project.

The honourable member for Monbulk raised a matter with the Minister for Environment and Conservation, and I will pass on his request to have the Blackmore report released.

The honourable member for Geelong raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing concerning the redevelopment of the Thomson estate and also the advice on the status of progress of that proposal.

A matter was also directed to the attention of the Minister for Housing by the honourable member for Bellarine relating to the Residential Tenancies Act, in particular issues raised by one of his constituents in St Leonards.

Mr Spry — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the Minister for Housing was given advance notice of my raising this matter. I again raise the matter of the obligation of ministers to attend the adjournment debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Bellarine well knows there is no compulsion for ministers to attend the adjournment debate.

Ms CAMPBELL — I will raise the matter relating to the Residential Tenancies Act with the minister.

The honourable member for Frankston East asked for the Minister for Aged Care and her department to undertake work to minimise the incidence of falls among members of the ageing population. We would all share his concern about that, and I will pass on that important matter to the minister.

The honourable member for Bentleigh raised an issue relating to the minister meeting with some of her constituents.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, not so many minutes ago when I was the Acting Chair, the Minister for Housing was in the chamber. It seems that the Premier has told her to get into her slippers and ‘jamies and have an early night while my residents are sleepless from not being able to have their concerns addressed.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh should take her seat. She knows there is no compulsion for ministers to attend the adjournment debate.

Ms CAMPBELL — Nor should she wink at the Acting Chair.

Mr Leigh interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc will refrain from interjecting.

Mr Leigh interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc is now making reflections on the Chair, and I caution him.

Mr Leigh interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc will cease making reflections on the Chair.

Ms CAMPBELL — The honourable member for Preston raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport on the need to scrap a clearway in High Street, Preston, given the very high rate of accidents in Darebin, and I will pass on the matter to the minister.

The honourable member for Dromana raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport concerning the early commencement of the extension of the local freeway, whether it be in the form of a freeway extension or arterial road. I will pass on that matter to the minister.

The honourable member for Knox raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport relating to the traffic needs in the Knox area. The minister would be quite familiar with that matter given our recent visit to Knox, and I am sure he will be able to give that matter his immediate attention.

The honourable member for Sandringham should have a chat to the Minister for Health about Dr Jim McDonald.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The house stands adjourned until next day.

House adjourned 10.43 p.m.

