

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 14 November 2012

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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Privileges Committee — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. Davis, Mr P. Davis, Mr Hall, Ms Lovell, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Scheffer.

Procedure Committee — The President, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Viney

Legislative Council standing committees

Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, #Mr Leane, #Mr Lenders, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

Economy and Infrastructure References Committee — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, #Mr Leane, #Mr Lenders, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

Environment and Planning Legislation Committee — Mr Elsbury, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, #Mr Leane, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, #Mr Tarlamis, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

Environment and Planning References Committee — Mr Elsbury, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, #Mr Leane, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, #Mr Tarlamis, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee — Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmr, #Mr Elsbury, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Petrovich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

Legal and Social Issues References Committee — Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmr, #Mr Elsbury, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Petrovich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

Participating member

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Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): Mr Leane, Mr Ramsay and Mr Scheffer. (*Assembly*): Mr Battin and Mr McCurdy.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Peulich. (*Assembly*): Mr Burgess, Mr Carroll, Mr Foley and Mr Shaw.

Education and Training Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elasmr and Ms Tierney. (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Ms Miller and Mr Southwick.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn, Mr Somyurek and Mr Tarlamis. (*Assembly*): Ms Ryall and Mrs Victoria.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): Mr Koch. (*Assembly*): Mr Bull, Ms Duncan, Mr Pandazopoulos and Ms Wreford.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Coote, Ms Crozier and Mr O'Brien. (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr McGuire and Mr Wakeling.

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*) Mr Drum, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, and Mr P. Davis. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Ms Campbell, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Graley, Mr Wakeling and Mr Weller.

Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Petrovich. (*Assembly*): Mr Carbines, Ms Garrett, Mr Newton-Brown and Mr Northe.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Kronberg and Mr Ondarchie. (*Assembly*): Ms Graley, Ms Hutchins and Ms McLeish.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Mr P. Davis, Mr O'Brien and Mr Pakula. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Hennessey, Mr Morris and Mr Scott.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elsbury. (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Mr Perera, Mr Tilley and Mr Thompson.

Rural and Regional Committee — (*Council*): Mr Drum. (*Assembly*): Mr Howard, Mr Katos, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Mr O'Donohue. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella, Dr Sykes and Mr Watt.

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Council — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. DRUM

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Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP

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Wednesday, 14 November 2012

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Mr Viney) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I inform the house that I have been advised the Economy and Infrastructure References Committee and the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee will be meeting this day following the conclusion of the sitting of the Council.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Schools: Mernda

To the Legislative Council of Victoria,

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the need for the construction of a secondary school in Mernda to service the existing residents and accommodate the growth of the population. The school site has been available for a number of years and the surrounding infrastructure is complete. It is in a central location which provides access to most residents by internal roads, bike and footpaths.

The petitioners therefore request that allowance be made in the budget of 2012–13 to begin construction of the school at the earliest possible date on the existing site at Breadalbane Avenue, Mernda, Victoria 3754.

By Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) (44 signatures).

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan).

Higher education: TAFE funding

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the state government's plans to cut hundreds of millions of dollars from TAFE funding. In particular, we note:

1. the TAFE Association has estimated up to 2000 jobs could be lost as a result of these cuts;
2. many courses will be dropped or scaled back and several TAFE campuses face the possibility of closure; and
3. with 49 000 full-time jobs already lost in this term of government, skills training has never been more important for Victorians.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council urge the Baillieu state government to abandon the planned funding cuts and guarantee no further cuts will be made.

By Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) (688 signatures) and Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (413 signatures).

Laid on table.

Swinburne University of Technology: Lilydale campus

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

This petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the state government's plans to cut hundreds of millions of dollars from TAFE funding. In particular, we note:

1. since these cuts were announced, Swinburne has announced the closure of its TAFE and university campus at Lilydale;
2. 240 local jobs will be cut, and the future of 2500 students is uncertain as a result of this campus closure; and
3. with 49 000 full-time jobs already lost in this term of government, skills training has never been more important for Victorians.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council urge the Baillieu state government to abandon the planned funding cuts, guarantee no further cuts will be made and work to secure the future of Swinburne University Lilydale campus.

By Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (195 signatures).

Laid on table.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**Establishment and effectiveness of registered Aboriginal parties**

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) presented report, including appendices and an extract of proceedings, together with transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

In doing so, I wish to give my report. When this reference was first put forward many saw it as being

quite controversial, both within and outside the Indigenous communities statewide. This certainly was not the case, and in actual fact this gave the committee the unique opportunity to enhance the processes for the protection and administration of Aboriginal heritage in this wonderful state. Aboriginal heritage is an important and distinct component of Victoria's heritage, with all Victorians recognising the significance of understanding the history and cultures of Indigenous people from our earliest times.

The inquiry took into account activities mandated under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and managed by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, with the committee's interest principally being focused on the roles of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council and its responsibility in the appointment of registered Aboriginal parties.

Under its terms of reference the committee examined the policies and practices of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council in its appointment of registered Aboriginal parties, the council's own structure and resourcing and how effective that has been to date. It should be acknowledged that not all Aboriginal communities across the state are of the belief that they have received a fair hearing in the current process, and the committee was cognisant of this and took every effort to explore all avenues open to them.

The committee heard evidence from a wide range of groups including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations, government agencies, heritage consultants, business groups, local government and community organisations. In all over 70 submissions were received, with public hearings taking place in Hamilton, Lakes Entrance, Shepparton and Melbourne, which gave all submitters the opportunity to speak to their submissions and raise further relevant matters.

Importantly site visits also took place at Heywood, Condah, Lancefield and Sunbury to acquaint committee members with earlier historic locations and practices. The committee also took the opportunity of visiting Wellington, New Zealand, and was briefed by Maori heritage officials and Maori community leaders to gain an understanding of their heritage systems and whether some of their benefits may be of assistance in Victoria.

Having thoroughly investigated all avenues in the time frame afforded, the committee is of the belief that the implementation of the 38 recommendations in the report will substantially improve the operations and capacity of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, the process of appointing registered Aboriginal parties

and the effectiveness of registered Aboriginal parties in managing cultural heritage issues.

Those not successful in their applications to become registered Aboriginal parties continue to experience frustration about the lack of feedback as to why they have not been successful and about the extended period involved beyond the 120-day reporting period allowed for applications to be concluded. A lot of work remains to be done to resolve the balance of representation across the state for the 38 Indigenous communities statewide. Individually and collectively only nine registered Aboriginal party appointments have taken place to date, with slightly more than half of Victoria's geographic area — 56 per cent in fact — being accommodated. Many applications remain in abeyance awaiting outcomes. The committee recognised the importance of this and recommended the introduction of an independent mediation process as being pivotal to the success of its proposals for change.

I would like to compliment and acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues on the committee: the deputy chair, Mr John Pandazopoulos, the member for Dandenong in the Assembly; Mr Tim Bull, the member for Gippsland East in the Assembly; Ms Joanne Duncan, the member for Macedon in the Assembly; and Ms Lorraine Wreford, the member for Mordialloc in the Assembly, for their support and their excellent work and input during this inquiry, which, as I mentioned earlier, was not controversial but highlighted the need for greater understanding of the processes at hand.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the committee secretariat. Our executive officer, Dr Greg Gardiner, has done a marvellous job in overseeing the whole reference, particularly in his handling of the regional public hearings and site visits, for which I am most thankful. I would like to thank the inquiry's research officer, Dr Kelly Butler, for her excellent work throughout the inquiry, and I also acknowledge and thank our office manager, Ms Karen Taylor, for her support and expertise in assisting with the production of the final report tabled here today.

I commend the report to the house and recommend that members take the opportunity to read it.

Motion agreed to.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Agricultural education and training in Victoria

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) presented report, including appendices, together with transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

I begin by thanking the committee staff for their work. Kerryn Riseley oversaw the conduct of the inquiry. Anita Madden, the research officer, researched and wrote the extensive and highly readable report that we have before the house this morning. Stephanie Dodds and Natalie Tyler provided administrative assistance and support to the committee. It is a similar team to the one we had for the previous committee report, although Natalie has now moved on to assist another committee. It is a committee staff group that I applaud in every sense. They make the work of the committee members so much easier. The committee members are: the chair, David Southwick, the member for Caulfield in the Assembly; Peter Crisp, the member for Mildura in the Assembly; Nazih Elasmr, a member of this place; and Elizabeth Miller, the member for Bentleigh in the Assembly.

I also draw the house's attention to the statements the chair has made in his report, and I thank him for the generous comments he directed towards me. The committee would also like to thank all the people who participated in the inquiry. We received over 100 submissions, and there were 14 full days of inquiry hearings. Some of those hearings were held here in Melbourne, but many were also in regional Victoria. We had the opportunity to visit the agricultural campuses of Dookie, Longerenong and Glenormiston. We also went to New Zealand, and that visit was jam-packed. It was probably five days of appointments in two and a half days. I think the taxpayer would feel very comfortable that he or she got value as a result of the heavy schedule the staff set for us.

In terms of the content of this report, it has been clear for some time that there are skill shortages in the agricultural sector. That is across a whole range of agricultural occupations and industries within the agricultural workforce. As we found out, there are pockets that are almost withering on the vine, so to

speak. There is an enormous need for more graduates in the agribusiness area. We know that people who are undertaking university degrees are snaffled up before they can even graduate, the need is so high in that area.

The recommendations aim to increase agricultural education and training in all sectors to ensure that available training meets the needs of both the students and the agricultural sector. We are also calling for those in the sector to build an aspirational base, so that agricultural careers are considered to be the cream of the crop, not at the level they are considered to be at the moment. We are seeking the development of a nationally coordinated promotional campaign to lift the image of agriculture in the community.

It would be remiss of me not to mention TAFE. The timing of the committee's hearing of evidence from stakeholders coincided with the budget, which really did not allow us to examine how the government's budget cuts were going to affect agricultural education in this sector. I have always been a strong advocate of the TAFE sector, and clearly there were some failings in what occurred. I have made sure that I have questions on notice in this house in respect of the Gordon Institute of TAFE, the University of Ballarat TAFE and the South West Institute of TAFE concerning agricultural courses and their enrolments in the last calendar year, this year and next year.

I finish by saying I have recently received an email from a teacher in Colac who has relayed to me that he is quite concerned that he has students who are very annoyed that they cannot complete their certificate III in agriculture and dairy production. Their certificate II at Gordon TAFE this year is almost complete, but they have been told that they cannot finish their course next year. They have nothing, because they are based in Colac and they cannot do anything in Geelong or Colac. They do not know how they are going to finish their course. I hope this information feeds into the recommendations that the stakeholders will be looking at over the coming weeks when they review this report. On that basis, I commend the report to the house.

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I would like to thank the deputy chair of the committee, Gayle Tierney, for briefing the Parliament on the details of the report, but at the same time I rise to contribute to the report of the Education and Training Committee on its inquiry into agricultural education and training in Victoria.

I would like to acknowledge my fellow committee members: the committee chair, David Southwick, the member for Caulfield in the Assembly; the deputy

chair, Gayle Tierney; and Elizabeth Miller and Peter Crisp, the members for Bentleigh and Mildura in the Assembly, who, together with me, worked diligently to produce this report. I would also like to thank the committee's secretariat for its hard work and terrific support through the inquiry — namely, Kerry Riseley, Anita Madden, Stephanie Dodds and Natalie Tyler.

Having said that, the agriculture sector is experiencing skills shortages across a number of agricultural occupations and industries, and the agricultural workforce is ageing, so the committee welcomed the opportunity to consult with the agricultural community and learn what needs to be done to re-establish Victoria as a leader in agricultural and horticultural science in Australia. The committee has therefore recommended a range of measures aimed at defining a pathway for students who wish to make agriculture their life's work by establishing a viable career path that will provide a decent standard of living which will sustain not only themselves but all Victorians in the years to come. With these words, I commend the report to the house.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General Reports on —

Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria, 2011–12, November 2012.

Port of Melbourne Channel Deepening Project: Achievement of Objectives, November 2012.

Public Hospitals: Results of the 2011–12 Audits, November 2012.

Water Entities: Results of the 2011–12 Audits, November 2012.

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — Review of the Wagering Tax Rate post 16 August 2012.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Port Management Act 1995 — Nos. 124 and 125.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — No. 126.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 124 and 125.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Western Metropolitan Region: school entrant health questionnaire

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — The conservative newspaper the *Herald Sun* of Tuesday, 30 October, reports:

Up to 20 000 prep students could miss out on vital health checks next year as Baillieu government budget cuts bite deeper.

The school entrant health questionnaire helps identify a range of health issues, including autism, behaviour problems, allergies, obesity, epilepsy, bed-wetting, speech, eye and ear problems.

Yet the Baillieu government has somehow determined that children in Western Metropolitan Region will miss out, as budget cuts must be made — and the west is being targeted. This government would much prefer to give half a million dollars towards a large television screen at Moonee Valley Racecourse than care about the health of primary school children. I call upon the government to man up, admit to a bona fide error here and reverse these cuts, even though I believe these cuts would have been demanded by the Premier and Treasurer and that the Minister for Health would have tried to block them, just as his honest colleague, the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall, tried to stop devastating cuts to TAFE. Children in my electorate — the poorest and most socioeconomically disadvantaged electorate — are being unfairly targeted. This is an outrage that cannot be tolerated.

Kennington Preschool: opening

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — Last Friday I was honoured to officially open the new Kennington Preschool. After years of work the Kennington and Airport preschools have formally joined forces, bringing together two vibrant preschool communities. This has been a long process which has been high on my list of priorities.

When the City of Greater Bendigo told the committee of Airport Preschool that it would not be renewing its lease on an airport terminal building, the local community was shell-shocked. Local Labor members Jacinta Allan and Bob Cameron, the member for Bendigo East and the then member for Bendigo West in the Assembly respectively, refused to assist this preschool committee. The then Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Maxine Morand, showed no interest.

When the former government would not listen, committee members Trevor Fetherstonhaugh and Robyn Jobe came to me as a local upper house member and the then shadow Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. We worked hard to save the Airport Preschool facility, but it soon became clear that the expansion of the Bendigo Airport would make it all but impossible for the kindergarten to operate at the site. The next step involved thinking outside the square, working with council and the Loddon Mallee Preschool Association and applying for a grant to extend Kennington Preschool to join the two communities together.

The long journey ended on Friday, and out of adversity a strong, welcoming, joined community has been formed. Kennington mum Samantha Scanlon as president and Airport kindergarten mum Kylie Evans as vice-president head up the committee for this beautiful preschool, which has one of the best settings in the state. Set in bushland with a fantastic view over the Kennington Reservoir, the children enjoy a view from their playground that simply takes your breath away.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The member's time has expired.

Mildura Base Hospital: future

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — I note local media reports that the Minister for Health, Mr Davis, visited Mildura last week for 1 hour and 45 minutes. During his visit Mr Davis announced funding for oncology services at the Mildura hospital, which is welcome. However, there is a very long list of what Mr Davis did not do during his stopover of 1 hour and 45 minutes, which included travel time to and from the airport and check-in time. He did not inform the local MP, Mr Crisp, the member for Mildura in the Assembly, until 1 hour before his arrival time. He did not inform or meet with public health advocates — notably Reclaim the Base — or the local council. He did not invite the local paper, the *Sunraysia Daily*, to his media conference.

Despite repeated questioning and after two years in government, Mr Davis did not explain when he is going to get around to spending promised Baillieu government funding on the emergency department at the Mildura hospital. He did not explain when he would allow committed federal government funding for maternity services at the Mildura hospital to be spent, and he did not explain when he will get around to deciding whether Mildura will be the only regional city in Victoria to have a publicly funded privately operated hospital. I support the invitation from Reclaim the Base

to the Premier to visit Mildura as a result of the contempt Mr Davis has shown to the district.

Iron Wills — Victorian Polio Survivors' Stories

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — On 26 October, which was National Polio Day, I had the greatest of pleasure of being at the zoo and launching the book, *Iron Wills — Victorian Polio Survivors' Stories*, by Fran Henke. Colleen Hartland was there with me, and she would agree that it was a very inspiring day. This is a very inspiring book, and I encourage members to have a look at it. The introduction by Sir Gustav Nossal says:

I want every anti-vaccine activist to read it and to think about the implications had the vaccine been discovered earlier.

People gave their personal stories. It was very moving. National Polio Day was sponsored by Independence Australia, and Peter Turner, the CEO, was there, as was Tricia Malowney from Polio Victoria. We were also joined by the Governor. Polio Network Victoria's goals include providing information on polio and possible late effects and improving the availability of community services to people who have polio.

I remind people that polio is a serious but preventable infectious disease caused by a virus. Between 2 and 5 per cent of people who develop paralytic polio will die. Half of those who survive will have permanent paralysis. Immunisation can prevent polio from becoming widespread. All children and adults should receive the vaccine. I suggest that the personal and poignant stories recounted in this book prove that polio is just a plane flight away. It is in our vicinity; it is still in Pakistan and parts of Africa. I urge members to make sure that their constituents are vaccinated.

Schools: Doreen and Mernda

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I continue to be concerned about the lack of action by the Baillieu government to secure a government school for the Mernda-Doreen community. Last Wednesday I attempted to meet the Minister for Education, Mr Dixon, together with parents of affected Acacia College students, to discuss possible options. Despite a meeting having been confirmed with the office of Danielle Green, the member for Yan Yean in the Assembly, the minister's chief of staff denied me entry. He made it clear that the government was 'disappointed' with Danielle Green's comments in support of her community, and I can only conclude that this was the reason I was not allowed to join the meeting.

Most disappointingly the parents reported that the minister ruled out taking any action to secure a public school for this community in the short term.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! This is somewhat out of control on both sides. Members statements are an opportunity for members to make short comments, and they should be made with minimal interjection because 90 seconds is a limited time for a member to make a contribution. I seek the assistance of members on this.

Ms MIKAKOS — Minister Dixon has ruled out purchasing Acacia College and running it as a government school as well as keeping the school going for a period until another party can step in. The closure of Acacia College has exposed the fact that the Baillieu government has sat on its hands for two years. Land purchased by the previous Labor government could have been built on or construction could have been under way by now. The government has not even drawn up plans for a school despite the massive population growth. This is the fastest growing community in Australia. The regional communities of Wangaratta, Swan Hill, Horsham, Sale and Echuca each have smaller populations but each have their own secondary colleges, as they rightly should.

It is no surprise that the Baillieu government is on the nose in the polls given that it has nothing to show for two years in office. You do not need a focus group to know it is time the Baillieu government provided essential services to Victorians, including a public secondary school for the Mernda-Doreen community.

Rail: protective services officers

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — Last Monday, 5 November, I was pleased to join the Premier and the member for Ferntree Gully in the other place, Nick Wakeling, to announce the deployment of protective services officers (PSOs) at Boronia railway station from Tuesday, 6 November, as well as at Westall station. Boronia station, at the edge of Eastern Victoria Region, services a broad segment of the outer east. Constituents have expressed to me their concerns about using the station for safety reasons. Those safety concerns will be greatly diminished as a result of PSOs now being deployed seven days a week from 6.00 p.m. to last train at Boronia railway station. The deployment has been well received by the community and is another step forward as the government rolls out PSOs across the railway network.

I am pleased that PSOs are now on duty from 6.00 p.m. to the last train, seven days a week, at most city loop stations as well as at Richmond, North Melbourne, Footscray, Dandenong, Lilydale, Ringwood, Laverton, Yarraville, Werribee, Epping, Noble Park, Box Hill, Frankston, Broadmeadows, Hoppers Crossing, Reservoir, Croydon, Newport and now Boronia and Westall stations. This is a great policy and a great initiative which the community is warmly embracing. The initiative will make the rail network much safer after hours, and it is broadly welcomed by the community.

Dr Subhakanta Behera

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — As the co-chair of the Victorian Indian parliamentary friendship group and as a member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region I place on record our sadness and sympathy on the recent passing of the Consul General of India in Melbourne, Dr Subhakanta Behera, who passed away a few days ago following a massive heart attack. He leaves behind his wife, Rajashree Behera, son Ananya, 21, and daughter, Amruta.

Dr Behera was an accomplished academic and respected diplomat who had stamped his authority on the job only 18 months after his appointment. He was passionate about the passing on of Indian culture and heritage. Everyone he came into contact with respected him. On behalf of the entire community and South Eastern Metropolitan Region I place on record our sadness and regret at his passing, which is shared with the broader Indian community.

Having met Dr Behera at numerous community events, a quote I remember from one of his speeches, given in great admiration of the multicultural policy in Australia and Victoria, was when he said that Victoria was not a multicultural melting pot. He said that:

... this great country is more like a big bouquet where individual communities and groups retain their identities as individual flowers.

He had great admiration for the formula and believed that Indians, both those from Indian descent as well as those born here, had a terrific contribution to make to Australia and Victoria. It was with sadness that we learnt he had passed on.

St Paul's Lutheran Church, Shepparton: choir

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I congratulate the 20 members of the St Paul's Lutheran Church choir in Shepparton who will perform two songs in Swahili at the annual Keith Murdoch Oration

at the State Library of Victoria on Wednesday. The 2012 oration will be delivered by former Prime Minister Paul Keating, and Goulburn Murray Lutheran parish pastor Matt Anker said that choir members feel incredibly honoured to represent their church and the community. It is a wonderful achievement for the small choir, which was formed three years ago with just six people. The choir now boasts 35 members of Congolese and Burundian descent. With the influx of refugees, the St Paul's congregation has grown from 25 people five years ago to about 100 members. The choir will sing two joyful religious songs in Swahili. I personally had the pleasure of hearing the choir perform when I attended the Lutheran Church in Shepparton, and I know how wonderful it is.

The Keith Murdoch Oration was established in 2001 to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Sir Keith Murdoch and his family to the State Library of Victoria. The oration raises funds to support the work of the state library and reflects the library's commitment to promoting debate about knowledge and culture in the community. I congratulate the choir.

Dr Subhakanta Behera

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — I also express my sympathies to the Indian community on the passing of Dr Behera, Consul General of India in Melbourne. Dr Behera brought with him a passion and energy which will be sadly missed. I pass on to his family my condolences and the hope that time will heal.

Western Metropolitan Region: kindergarten funding

Mr ELSBURY — I point out that eight kindergartens in Western Metropolitan Region recently received substantial funding from the state government. The Braybrook community hub received a grant of \$1.5 million, adding to other funding announcements that have been made for this facility. It will make a fantastic community hub for the people of the Braybrook community.

The Saltwater Promenade community centre received \$1.5 million. The education services of the Early Learning Centre at Westbourne Grammar School received \$300 000. The Bradford Avenue Preschool at Greenvale received \$300 000. Malcolm Creek Children's Centre, Craigieburn, received \$300 000. Attwood Child Care Centre and Kindergarten received \$297 000. Remus Way Children's Centre, Taylors Lakes, received \$90 000 and Killeen Street Childcare Centre, Sunshine West, received \$11 500.

Mollongghip: community hall

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — On 30 October I had the pleasure of meeting with community representatives of the small western Victorian town of Mollongghip, near Ballarat, to announce on behalf of the Deputy Premier a grant of \$20 000 through the Putting Locals First program for their community hall. It is one of the last remaining non-residential buildings in that small town. Community halls in regional areas are frequently the centre of community activity and are cherished by local residents as important meeting places, as well as venues for events such as the Off the Beaten Track concert by Mick Thomas and the Roving Commission and Sal Kimbar and the Roving Wheel, organised by Music Victoria and hosted by the Mollongghip hall. I congratulate all those involved, including Gib Wettenhall, Noel Gregory, Josie Gregory and Glenda Dimond, on their work in maintaining and improving that hall as the centre and soul of that very important small community in western Victoria.

Avoca: children's centre

Mr O'BRIEN — On the same day I attended the site of the new Avoca children's and family centre. The coalition has contributed \$650 000 to this facility, which is now taking shape. I am pleased to say this facility will be delivered due to the government's response to local needs. I also acknowledge the contribution of Pyrenees Shire Council and its CEO, Stephen Cornish.

Centre State Asphaltting and Mortlock Hydroponics

Mr O'BRIEN — I also congratulate two businesses in the Shire of Central Goldfields that have received important coalition grants under the Victorian Business Flood Recovery Fund. Firstly, Centre State Asphaltting (CSA) is investing \$1.1 million to establish an asphalt producing facility in Maryborough, creating 12 jobs. Secondly, Mortlock Hydroponics at Carisbrook is investing \$4.1 million to expand production of hydroponic cherry tomatoes, creating 20 jobs and growing tasty tomatoes. I congratulate Barry Tait at CSA, Ian Mortlock at Mortlock Hydroponics and all the important businesses in Western Victoria that have responded to the floods in recent years.

Greens: council elections

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I thank all Greens candidates who ran in the recent local government elections. I received a number of comments from local residents noting how many

candidates there were in these elections and how difficult it was to know who was who, and so they were quite pleased that the Greens endorsed their candidates. Voters knew that if the candidates were from the Greens, they were endorsed by the Greens, and so they knew where they stood.

I pay particular tribute to a number of councillors. Goodbye to Simon Northeast from the Shire of Surf Coast; he will be replaced by Eve Fisher. Lloyd Davies has retired and so we welcome Sue Wasterval at the Borough of Queenscliffe, and Belinda Coates is the first Greens councillor at Ballarat City Council.

I especially pay tribute to two councillors who were not re-elected: Lynette Keleher at the City of Casey and Bronwyn Machin at the Shire of Mount Alexander. All our councillors worked very hard. It is unfortunate that these two were not re-elected, as they were great advocates for their local communities.

Kilmore Show: 150th anniversary

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — The Kilmore Agricultural Society will hold its 150th show on 1 December. This is a milestone event for the Kilmore district. On 21 April 1856 the *Kilmore Examiner* reported:

On Saturday last the first agricultural exhibition for this district was held at the Kilmore public market, and notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather it was numerously attended and the show of grain, hay and vegetables was of superior quality.

The show expanded to include classes for horses, cattle and poultry and continued until 1870, when interest waned for a few years. The society was resurrected in 1874 and, thanks to the hard work and dedication of a succession of committees, it is still going strong. The current committee has reinvigorated the show in recent years and I commend them on their efforts.

A dinner and harness racing meeting will be held on 21 November to celebrate the 150th show. This will be a wonderful opportunity for past and present members, volunteers and supporters to share their stories and memories. I congratulate all involved with the Kilmore Agricultural Show.

Annie Mann

Mrs PETROVICH — I also congratulate Annie Mann, who last weekend won an award across all states for best business in customer service for her business Ann Maurie Salon in Gisborne. Well done, Annie, to you and your team.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Reference

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, this house requires the Environment and Natural Resources Committee to inquire, consider and report, no later than 30 August 2013, on unconventional gas explorations, including coal seam gas in regional and rural Victoria and, in particular, the committee should:

- (1) investigate the extent of unconventional exploration for gas in Victoria;
- (2) consider methodologies for measurement of the effects of unconventional gas exploration, including any potential issues associated with the measurement of those effects;
- (3) consider the impact of unconventional exploration, including the various extraction methods used on the —
 - (a) natural environment;
 - (b) human health; and
 - (c) economy and jobs in Victoria;
- (4) consider the appropriateness of current policies governing decisions about unconventional gas explorations and whether they are adequate to ensure community consultation; and
- (5) draw on and incorporate relevant materials from other Australian parliamentary investigations in the interests of a concise report within the required time line.

This motion relates to coal seam gas, as it is colloquially known, but unconventional gas is probably the better name. I commence this debate by reiterating the comments I made in this house on 2 May. For the record, on 2 May the Labor Party moved a motion requesting a similar inquiry. The terms of reference I am moving today have been slightly tweaked since that time.

The motion of 2 May called for a similar inquiry into unconventional gas exploration in Gippsland, or in Victoria generally with a focus on Gippsland. That motion was moved in this house and, for the record, the Labor Party and the Greens supported it and the Liberal and National parties opposed it. That motion was to send a reference to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee of the Parliament, on which the government has a majority, to inquire into a range of controversial areas. For the record, that was voted down by the government.

In terms of the context of what I have been speaking about, the motion moved on 2 May was in very measured tones, and it sought information for the Victorian community on this controversial issue. The government voted it down. I will not reiterate most of the arguments I outlined for it, because they are on the parliamentary record of 2 May. The reason this matter has come back today is, firstly, that the government completely changed its position on the issues of a moratorium and collecting more information, so hopefully now that the government has changed its mind it will now consider this motion. Secondly, under the standing orders of this place a motion cannot be moved again within six months, so this is the first opportunity I have had to move this since the 2 May motion.

I said earlier this year that there are a couple of relevant issues before government which I think highlight the issue more than anything. Governments are elected to govern — to make difficult decisions — and the Victoria we are in today has a few things needing resolution. Gas supplies in the state of Victoria are declining, and if you listen to the industry, you hear that over the next decades, if not sooner, the price of gas may go up exponentially in this state. That is primarily because the reserves we have offshore, in Bass Strait, are being depleted. It is hardly rocket science. We have been drawing on them for decades. In relation to purchasing gas from other areas, the price of gas is going up. It is a fact, then, that the price of gas is going up in Victoria.

We could have an academic debate over whether that gas is used for firing power stations or whether it is used in pipelines that go to houses for things as basic as cooking and heating, but the reality is the price of gas is going up in Victoria. That is an inescapable fact, and one of the options for addressing it is to harvest gas onshore from other areas. That is fact no. 1. So we will look at that.

We know also that it is a fact we have rising unemployment in regional Victoria. During the 23½ months of this inactive Baillieu government, we have seen — —

Mr Tee — Hopeless.

Mr LENDERS — Hopeless — that is correct, Mr Tee. If we measure this on the basis of fact, we see that the jobless rate has risen in regional Victoria. It is about 1½ times what it was under the previous government. There are proposals for exploration, or potentially mining, which would generate jobs in regional Victoria. This is an option in that space, but

obviously, Deputy President, if you are going to go into that space, you need to balance that with: what will it do to the health and safety of citizens who live in these communities where people are seeking to explore for gas? What will it do to the health of the environment where gas is being sought? What will the effect be on the other uses — beyond the environment — such as farming in these areas where people are seeking to extract gas? These are issues before the community, and they are also issues before the government.

Dare I say it again: to be in government means to govern. We have seen inaction on the part of the Baillieu government in these three areas. These things are never easy — government is not easy — but the impasse here is that understandably communities throughout Victoria are worried about unconventional gas exploration. They are worried about fracking. They are worried about what it is doing to water tables. They are also worried about the cost of gas. They are also worried about the lack of regional jobs. The business community is also worried about the lack of investment that comes from the sense of a do-nothing government.

The non-government side of this house sought on 2 May to give a parliamentary committee controlled by the government a reference to inquire into these areas. I went through the terms of reference in some detail in May, so I do not propose to go through them in that level of detail again. Essentially what I am seeking to get the house to refer to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee is basically to look at the material already on the record, whether it be from the Australian Senate, from industry or from work done in Victoria already; to collate the stuff that is on the record; and to look at the uniquely Victorian things.

In terms of talking about unconventional gas exploration, most of the research we have is on coal seam gas, based on gas coming off black coal in northern jurisdictions. Victoria has very little black coal. We are a different jurisdiction and we need extra information on what is happening below the soil in Victoria, so this reference seeks not to reinvent the wheel but to utilise material from other jurisdictions and look at what is uniquely Victorian.

It also seeks to do this in an open and transparent way through public hearings, through a parliamentary committee that can take evidence under oath — that is, all the things that go with a parliamentary committee.

We need information if we are going to work through the dilemmas of a diminishing gas supply and therefore households paying more, a lack of job opportunities in regional Victoria, a lack of business confidence in the

government's ability to do anything and getting the balance right so that if we do this we are not going to contaminate our aquifers in particular.

The last time this matter came before the Legislative Council the motion was moved in a measured manner. It was on the notice paper for several weeks with the invitation to the government that, 'This is not a way to jam you, to force you to vote on it; we will leave it on the notice paper long enough for you to consider it through all the levels of government — through cabinet committees, through cabinet, and through the party rooms. It is not an ambush; it is a considered motion. And we are prepared to amend the motion, if need be, if the government finds something objectionable about it'.

But what we heard from the government was, 'No. We do these things internally. We are clever; we are pro-mining, we are pro this and pro that; you are a rabble'. In fact the most extraordinary press release came out in the name of the Minister for Energy and Resources, Michael O'Brien. The government press release is dated Thursday, 12 April. I have never before seen a press release headed 'Labor's fracking hypocrisy knows no bounds'. In it we get a diatribe from the minister who goes on and on about how pro-mining he is and how pro-jobs he is, on and on about all these things that will happen only under the dynamic Baillieu government, but I cannot help but cite the penultimate quote in this media release:

Labor's leader and energy spokesperson, both from the Socialist Left faction, are to be condemned for joining with the extreme green groups in opposing any exploration for new forms of gas and engaging in baseless scaremongering around regional Victoria.

That is all a bit exciting, but then I go on to a press release from the same minister dated 24 August 2012 where he imposes a moratorium. Am I to believe that Mr O'Brien has joined the Socialist Left and extreme green groups, to quote himself, by adopting the same policy position that was proposed in this house by the Labor Party, supported by the Greens, which was to get information so an informed decision could be made?

At the time of that debate there was, running parallel, a moratorium being proposed on any exploration. That was not in the motion but Mr O'Brien either thought it was or got confused, so there was a moratorium proposed, which he condemned, and now he has adopted a moratorium. In one sense I say, 'Congratulations, Minister, you have actually listened to the minority in the Legislative Council, you have listened to the majority in the Victorian community, and you have put in place a moratorium to get the answer', so I congratulate him on that. But, as is the

went of this do-nothing, dithering, focus-group driven mob of people who call themselves a government, he has not done anything.

When I go out into the electorate of the Deputy President, Eastern Victoria Region, which is also Mr Scheffer's electorate, the thing I hear from people in areas like Callignee or Leongatha or Wonthaggi or any of these places is anxiety over what is happening under the surface. People are not anti-jobs or anti cheap energy, they are genuinely and correctly concerned about what is happening in the aquifers underneath their farmland, towns and communities. If you look at what Southern Rural Water, which is probably the authority in Victoria on this space, is doing, it is commencing work on mapping the south-west and south-east of Victoria. It is doing work that needs to be done to see what is happening in an aquifer. Mining companies will tell you with great confidence that whatever they are doing is safe for the aquifer, and they may be right, but the Victorian community is looking for some scientific testing of what is happening in our aquifers — not so much with the exploration, although that is an issue, but far more significantly with the actual mining, were that to proceed.

That is probably the single most burning issue that is happening in this debate about unconventional gas in Victoria at the moment. So what does the state government do? Perhaps it went into a focus group and no-one answered it so it was bewildered. Perhaps it does not like governing, or perhaps it is unable to govern. What has it done on this most significant issue? It has referred the matter to the commonwealth. We hear in this place, day after day, Mr Davis, the Leader of the Government, and Ms Lovell, the Deputy Leader of the Government, in particular, and to a lesser extent Mr Hall and Mr Rich-Phillips, endlessly bleating about how terrible it is and saying that in all of these things the commonwealth is hopeless and is not to be trusted.

Just yesterday Mr Davis moved a motion saying you cannot trust the commonwealth government's Australian Bureau of Statistics data. We have heard the government go on about how outrageous it is that Tony Burke, the federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, would have scientific views on cattle grazing in the high country and say, 'What a joke! How could you trust this man?'. We hear that. We hear this endless stuff about the Murray-Darling Basin — 'How can you trust the science of the commonwealth? How can you trust it?'

We hear this whole debate about climate change — how can you trust them? How can you trust their

science? That is the message we get day after day from this government of commentators who see their job as to commentate on what is happening and not govern on anything, yet when we are in a difficult position where Mr O'Brien and his gung-ho Liberal colleagues in Melbourne are going to develop at all costs, and Mr Ryan and his colleagues in The Nationals in regional Victoria are feeling the heat and communities are upset, what do they do? They go into paralysis. Mr O'Brien comes out swinging — 'Labor's fracking hypocrisy'! We hear stuff being said like anyone who opposes must be in the Socialist Left or a dangerous green group. Then within weeks he has exactly the same opinion, but what do they do? They fall into form. They blame someone else or they try to handpass any difficult decision to someone else.

Now the same federal government which was mocked for its science of the Murray-Darling Basin, its science on climate change and its science on cattle in the high country — mocked and ridiculed at every possible juncture — is being asked to apply science to find the answers to what is happening in Victoria. Or to be more blunt, that same federal government is being asked to go beneath the soil in Gippsland, understand the aquifers, understand the consequences of any of these exploration or mining methods on the aquifers and somehow or other report back to the Victorian government.

I may be cynical, but I would imagine there is nothing behind this decision other than, 'Oh, my gosh, this is hard. Who can we blame? We will give it to somebody else'. So here we have an issue that hundreds, in fact thousands, of Victorians have signed petitions on, attended public meetings on and wanted information on, and the best the state government can do is attack the Labor Party and the Greens for daring to seek information through public hearings, through a committee that is dominated by the government. Then we have a complete and utter backflip from Michael O'Brien with the undergraduate ridicule and abuse that he is so good at doing in his press releases. I am sure he was very smug in his office and showed it to all his mates and said, 'Wasn't it a clever heading on a press release?', and then he got rolled in cabinet by the Deputy Premier, presumably, so suddenly we have this happening.

Then we have the second press release. I am not talking about 'Labor's fracking hypocrisy knows no bounds' of 12 April; I am now talking about the press release headed 'Reforms to strengthen Victoria's coal seam gas regulation and protect communities' of 24 August where, among other things, the minister is seeking to strengthen resource policy and legislation through

better consideration of mixed land use issues. This is in a Department of Primary Industries where he has cut 200 staff. Is he relying on the Department of Sustainability and Environment, where he has cut 400 staff?

It is truly something out of the Ministry of Truth, going from 'Labor's fracking hypocrisy knows no bounds' to 'Reforms to strengthen Victoria's coal seam gas regulation and protect communities'. We have gone the complete backflip. But then when we go through the press release we see they say that the 'national harmonised framework for coal seam gas is progressing'. In Victoria we colloquially call it coal seam gas, but it is not actually coal seam gas that we are generally talking about in Victoria. Of course the national scheme and process was well and truly in place before the motion was voted down by the government in this house on 2 May.

They are the issues we have before us. What has changed since May? The shortage of gas has not changed. The regional jobs depletion has not changed. The concern of people in regional communities about the safety with what is happening in the aquifers underneath their feet has not changed. Minister O'Brien has done a complete backflip and changed his position. That has changed. The state government's anxiety about not trusting the commonwealth with anything to do with science has not changed. In fact I am yet to hear the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith, doing a *mea maxima culpa* about getting it wrong over the mountain cattlemen; I have yet to hear the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Peter Walsh, do a *mea maxima culpa* on how I got it right about the Murray-Darling Basin Authority; and, heaven forbid, I am waiting for Mr Finn to come into this place and do a *mea maxima culpa* on how he has got it wrong on climate change!

Mr Scheffer — Not likely.

Mr LENDERS — Yes, Mr Scheffer is right; it is not likely. What I say to the house and to government members is that they simply need to look back in history to 2 May and to the reasoned arguments in this chamber from members of the non-government parties and ask: is gas going up in price? Is gas running out in Victoria? Are households about to pay multiple dollars more for the gas coming out of their stoves and their heaters because there is a shortage?

There is an emerging problem. The government can blame it on whomever it chooses, but it is a cost of living issue that households are facing. Like a Mack truck with its lights flashing and horn blowing, it is

coming. There is the issue that regional jobs are going, not that there are a lot of jobs in the short term. The issue of what communities feel about what is happening under their feet is not going away. It was there in May; it is there now.

The only thing that has changed is that the government has wilted in its opposition. It is now too hard, so it has basically done a total backflip. It will vote against this motion and then refer the science to the commonwealth, which it does not trust. Why is it referring the science to the department headed by Tony Burke, the federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, and to people it does not trust on issues to do with climate change, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and cattle in the high country? Suddenly this government inquiring into, basically, gas coming off black coal — to simplify it — is somehow or other going to address the issues that people in Victoria, particularly in Gippsland but not just Gippsland, are agitated over.

I urge the house to support this motion. I urge government members to overcome their fear and to understand that the three government members on the Environment and Natural Resources Committee are hardly going to be, to use Minister O'Brien's words, members of the Socialist Left or dangerous green groups; they are more likely to be members of the Liberal and National parties. They should have the courage to go out and conduct the hearings. They should go to Gippsland and find out what people are concerned about, find out what is actually happening in the aquifers under their feet and get some scientific response to a tight time line. If the answer to that is that there are ways you can proceed to extract some of this gas, they might start generating some jobs and reducing the cost of living for Victorian households. They are seeing the price of gas going up — and it will go up exponentially in the next few years.

It is in the hands of the government. I urge government members to support the motion or, if they think the motion could be improved, to come up with an amendment to remove the scary bits. Michael O'Brien seems to have joined the Socialist Left and dangerous green groups. If the rest of them are concerned, they should find an amendment that will make this acceptable to them.

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — We saw quite a performance just then, with Mr Lenders flailing his arms around everywhere talking about his motion 405 on the notice paper. I take note that his motion 400 — which talked about the media release from the minister's office he has been quoting from,

headed 'Labor's fracking hypocrisy knows no bounds' — has been pushed to one side in favour of this motion. It has been on the notice paper for the last two sitting weeks.

It is interesting to note that the coalition has made some decisions about how we are going to handle, as Mr Lenders said, alternative gas supplies into the future, whether that is coal seam gas or gas extracted from our coal reserves in Gippsland or other parts of the state. At the moment there is no approved hydraulic fracturing activity in Victoria. There are no applications pending to undertake hydraulic fracturing in Victoria. The Victorian government has announced, as Mr Lenders has said, a hold on approvals to undertake hydraulic fracturing for all onshore gas exploration and on the issuing of new exploration licences for coal seam gas.

The reason the Victorian government has done that is that it is working with the federal government on the upcoming national harmonisation framework for coal seam gas, which needs to be considered. The state government is actually working with the federal government. It is not just handing it over and saying, 'Here, tell us what to do'; it is working with it. And it is a framework. It is a framework which gives the states of Australia a basic method of dealing with a very contentious issue. Once we have the framework we can then work on how it will affect people here in Victoria.

New standards will need to be considered with these reforms and new ways of thinking will have to be developed so that a process is put into place to protect community interests as well as allowing for industry to access the resources that we need into the future. Certainly for many decades now Victoria has benefited from the Bass Strait gas fields. We have an industrial base that is able to access clean, cheap fuel to efficiently power its operations.

Victoria needs to work with the other states on developing how we will move forward. But in the Victorian context the government has already announced that BTEX chemicals — that is, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene; I am not a chemist so I hope I have not mispronounced any of those chemical compounds — will not be permitted as part of hydraulic fracturing in the future. It has just said that they pose too much of a risk to our environment and it does not accept that they should be used.

However, this is a step that the Labor government did not choose to take for 11 years. Its members did not bother to even say, 'This is not acceptable to our community; it is not acceptable to be pumping these

items into the ground to extract gas'; they just stepped back and said, 'Do you know what? We'll just walk around this one. We're not going to even bother trying to tackle this particular issue head-on'.

As I said, the Victorian government has announced a hold on approvals to undertake hydraulic fracturing for all onshore gas exploration and on the issuing of new licences for coal seam gas. This hold will be in place until the national harmonisation framework has been considered. In June 2012 the Victorian government signed the National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development with the commonwealth government. We did this because it is a national issue. This is something that is impacting upon communities across the country.

We have seen stories on *A Current Affair* and *Today Tonight* about the issues that are going on up in Far North Queensland. We have seen *Sunday Night* and what happens when they get it so badly wrong that you can actually light bubbles coming up out of the ground in ponds. We have seen what has happened in that particular instance.

Mr Lenders — So global warming doesn't cross the Murray? Murray-Darling Basin water doesn't cross the Murray?

Mr ELSBURY — Mr Lenders has had his turn, and I am sure it is not the first time he has taken no notice of the fact that there is a list of speakers and that there is some courtesy to be afforded —

Ms Broad — It didn't stop you interjecting earlier.

Mr ELSBURY — I did not interject once during Mr Lenders's speech.

Ms Broad — You did so.

Mr ELSBURY — I did not. I would love to see the record as to whether I did or not.

The government's actions open the way for Victoria to be more closely involved in the process of establishing a national harmonised framework for coal seam gas regulation — something that the Labor Party wants us just to ignore in this particular instance.

What will the national harmonised framework for coal seam gas consider? It will consider leading practice in hydraulic fracturing, well design, water management, chemical use and community and industry engagement. As I said, the BTEX chemicals have already been ruled out here in Victoria. The Victorian government will wait to see the detail in the proposal before it indicates

what or how many of the recommendations it will adopt as a result of this report. The national framework will be considered in the Victorian context with consideration of our communities and our needs. A report will be provided to energy ministers in December 2012. We have a decision imminent. It is about to be provided to us so we can start the work of determining how we will deal with coal seam gas or alternate gas sources in Victoria.

If this motion goes through, we will further delay any decisions being made about coal seam gas. Mr Lenders goes on about the cost going up, jobs being lost and there not being opportunities in Victoria, but the fact remains that if we today vote for this motion to put this matter before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, we will be waiting until well past 2014 for the committee to provide us with the results of its reference. Today we saw a report tabled here in the Parliament by that very same committee. We saw the Environment and Natural Resources Committee report on the establishment and effectiveness of registered Aboriginal parties. That does not mean the committee's work is over by any means; there are still another two references in the pipeline coming through to that committee. There is an inquiry into rural drainage in Victoria, the terms of reference for which state:

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, an inquiry into matters relating to rural drainage in Victoria (but not including irrigation drainage or regional, urban and metropolitan drainage) be referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee for consideration and report, no later than 30 June 2013, with particular reference to:

1. the historical basis for the establishment and operation of former drainage schemes, including management arrangements;
2. the status of rural drainage across Victoria, including effectiveness, regulation, ownership, responsibility and maintenance on both public and private land;
3. the benefits of rural drainage for both productive land and environment together with community expectations for rural drainage programs;
4. the impacts of rural drainage, including on other land-holders and the environment including waterways, wetlands, flora, fauna and water quality;
5. options for improved rural drainage management across Victoria, including regulation, institutional and funding arrangements, operation, responsibility and maintenance on both public and private land; and
6. the committee's report on the inquiry into flood mitigation infrastructure in Victoria.

Again I say that will not be ready — or it has not been asked for — until 30 June 2013. But that is only the

first reference the committee has to deal with. It will then have to move on to an inquiry into heritage tourism and ecotourism in Victoria. The terms of reference for that inquiry are:

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, an inquiry into matters relating to heritage tourism and ecotourism in Victoria be referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee for consideration and report no later than 31 May 2014, with particular reference to:

1. examining the current scope of ecotourism and heritage tourism in Victoria;
2. examining best practice in ecotourism and heritage tourism;
3. examining the potential for the development of ecotourism and heritage tourism in Victoria;
4. determining the environmental and heritage issues associated with large-scale tourism; and
5. determining whether the local industry is sufficiently advanced to manage increased tourism and any obstacles to this.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr ELSBURY — Mr Lenders interjected and said it is a bit like Nero playing his violin as Rome burns. In any case we have Mr Lenders, who would be encouraging yet more fiddling, and I suggest that is probably what he is doing. What we have here is an opposition member who wants us to wait until 2015 to get the report back. We have the opportunity, owing to the work we are doing with the federal government, to start doing things after the report has been handed down by the federal government — we will be able to start getting things rolling. Instead of sitting around, procrastinating and waiting, we are going to start things rolling. We are going to be able to get the information that we need in December 2012 — which I remind Mr Lenders is next month — rather than having to wait until a committee completes two further references, one of which needs to be reported on by 31 May 2014, unless Mr Lenders wants us to come out with a half-baked effort similar to what those opposite are used to coming out with. They were the ones who came out and said we needed a desalination plant three times the size of anything we actually need — a desalination plant we will not need for seven years.

Even if it stops raining today and not one more raindrop hits this state, we will not need a desalination plant in this state for another seven years. We will not need to access water from it. That it was put in place was a waste of time, effort and money — \$1.8 million per day from the taxpayers of Victoria. In a week you could build a new school. In a month you could build a road

interchange. Imagine what you could do after a year. I cannot believe the hypocrisy of those across the other side of the chamber. They say, ‘We want you to wait until well into 2015, but you must act now. You’ve got to get going. You’ve got to do it right away — but you’ve got to wait until 2015’.

It is a fantastic effort being made by Mr Lenders. I honestly do not know where he gets off on all this, but I congratulate him on being able to talk about the anxiety of people in towns in Gippsland when all he wants to do is extend this process for another three years. Mr Lenders does not want it to be over and done with. He does not want us to be able to get the information that is currently being compiled with the federal government. He wants us to wait around until 2015 before we do anything about regulating alternative gas exploration or fracking and any of the other methods that are needed to exploit the resources that this state has in abundance.

Mr Lenders — It sounds like Michael O’Brien wrote this. It’s eccentric.

Mr ELSBURY — Mr Lenders might be surprised to know I was departing from my notes just then.

Labor has called for a moratorium on exploration while inquiries are taking place. There is no need to stop ordinary works such as sample drilling, surveying or desktop work, because that would cost jobs. It shows Labor’s lack of understanding of the exploration process and the need to go out there and do some preparatory work.

Victoria’s environmental and resources legislation differs from that operating in other states, and that is why we will take the recommendations of the federal government and put them into the Victorian context. We will have strong protections and opportunities for the community to have input into the licensing application process. All mineral exploration in Victoria is covered by the state’s stringent regulations under the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990, the Environment Protection Act 1970 and the Water Act 1989.

Under the Environment Protection Act 1970 the state environment protection policy covering groundwaters of Victoria does not allow discharge that will pollute groundwater. The policy establishes that beneficial uses of groundwater must be protected. That is where we differ on this issue. We already have protections in place which we will continue to use when we have the national framework. We will not throw out the baby with the bathwater. We will keep those pieces of

legislation in place for the people of Victoria. In addition, if a project is deemed to have the potential to significantly impact on the environment, it is required to provide an environment effects statement, which is a transparent process that offers extensive opportunity for public comment and involvement.

A former Labor energy minister, Theo Theophanous, in response to a question without notice on 27 October 2005, and another former Labor energy minister, Peter Batchelor, in his contribution to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech on 1 March 2007, spoke of the potential for coal seam gas to contribute to Victoria's economic development. That is certainly what we want: to utilise this resource and at the same time protect the needs and wants of other land users, as well as address the concerns of communities.

A communiqué from the Standing Council on Energy and Resources, which comprises all federal, state and territory energy and resources ministers, dated 9 December 2011 says:

Coal seam gas is strategically important as it supplies 32 per cent of the eastern states' domestic gas production, it assists in containing power prices in a carbon-constrained economy and is a substantial source of export income and employment.

We agree with that statement and that we need to be able to use our — —

Mr Barber — You used the word 'carbon'.

Mr Elsbury — I believe it was 'carbon-constrained'. It is a carbon-constrained economy because of the carbon tax that was imposed on the people of Victoria and the people of Australia after we were told that no such thing was coming. It was so the Prime Minister could cower to her Greens masters and tell them, 'I have done something for you: you have to do something for me, and that thing is to secure my government'. That is what happened with the carbon tax, and we are all paying for it now. With every milk bar purchase we make and every time we decide to take the family on a holiday, we are suffering because of the carbon tax that was brought in under the guise of, 'No carbon tax under a government I lead', to quote Julia Gillard before the last federal election.

In any case we will continue to work towards a sustainable approach and an ability to take on the challenges of our energy needs into the future. We will continue to work with the other states in Australia to develop a framework which is workable for the community, for the industry that needs to access those resources and for the people of Victoria.

Mr Barber (Northern Metropolitan) —

Mr Elsbury just spent 21 minutes talking about fossil fuels and never once mentioned climate change. He almost said something about agreeing with something to do with a carbon constraint, but then he threw it into reverse and got the hell out of there. Mr Elsbury does not believe in climate change.

Mr Elsbury — Oh, yes, it happens.

Mr Barber — Yes, he does believe in it but not that it is humans that are causing it, or he does believe that humans are causing it but not very much. Maybe he is from the Nick Minchin school of thought that says humans are causing it but we do not really care because the money we get from causing it will be good compensation for the damage we are going to do to the planet. In any case, Mr Elsbury has a dispute with his government's minister for climate change that he needs to work out. One of them is going to end up looking like a goose in the eyes of history, but that is for them to resolve.

Meanwhile what we had from Mr Lenders was a very energetic and exciting dance routine. It was a desperate plea for bipartisanship from the Liberal Party along the lines of the one we saw just last week from the federal Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson. We do not need to wait with bated breath for the energy and climate change policy of the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, as we already know what it is. We just need to read Martin Ferguson's *Energy White Paper*.

In the words of University of Queensland senior lecturer Chris McGrath in a posting on 'The Conversation' titled 'Energy white paper plans to burn, burn, burn it all':

Burn it all. That is the plan in Australia's new energy white paper.

We as much as heard this from Mr Lenders. Apparently he wants to achieve the simultaneous objectives of getting gas prices down while creating jobs and at the same time protecting the environment by opening up vast amounts of gas extraction. Mr Lenders now understands that people in rural areas are quite rightly concerned about gas exploration and exploitation happening under their very feet, but they are scared as a result of exploration permits that Mr Lenders's government issued. It is also clear that at the time the permits were issued Mr Lenders's government did not ask itself the questions it is now seeking to explore through this inquiry. None of these things concerned members of the then government at the time it issued the permits, but now perhaps in the luxury of

opposition they have had some time to think about it and are wishing they had thought twice before they issued those permits. If the only time you get any serious consideration for the future of the planet is when Labor is in opposition, then we have got ourselves a bit of a problem.

The Ferguson-Andrews plan is to exploit to the max all coal and gas in Victoria and Australia until we become the Saudi Arabia of the south, and even if we cannot use it here, we will export it. This of course will link the price of both those commodities to the world price. Mr Lenders's prediction of spiralling — 'exponentially', he said — gas prices is an outcome of his own party's white paper. You do not just need a moratorium while you do a study; you need a pathway out of fossil fuels and you need a goal you are trying to reach. Mr Lenders was dodging the issue of where our energy comes from even as he moved this motion.

The lack of a plan to reduce emissions in the energy white paper does not even fall into line with the framework of the International Energy Agency. The IEA is not a bunch of raving greenies, I am here to tell you, but even it could get its arms around some of the fundamentals of the relationship between our energy system and the necessity of stabilising and then reducing greenhouse gas emissions growth, and for that matter of securing a desirable and safe climate through controlling the concentration of CO₂ (carbon dioxide) and equivalent gases in the atmosphere. Let us start with that framework, because it is impossible to have a discussion like this without some overall global — let alone national — framework.

The International Energy Agency looks at a number of scenarios, and we will compare those to see which one we think Mr Lenders's and Mr Ferguson's Labor Party is steering us towards. There is the IEA's current policy scenario — that is, that things roll along with business as usual and energy use continues to grow quite rapidly and emissions with it. That scenario leads to an average global warming of 6 degrees, which is an almost unthinkable result when you think about its impact in different regions of the world. There are differential impacts on different regions of the world, including Australia, and of course differential impacts on the ecosystems and human systems that are directly affected by weather.

There is then what the IEA calls the new policies scenario, which is something akin to the types of policies that have been put on the table for discussion, and in many cases implementation, by some of the world's major emitters, and I include in that Australia. That leads in the IEA's estimate to 3.6 degrees average

global warming. Then the IEA lays out what it calls the 450 parts per million scenario, which is a set of policies and outcomes that limit the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere to 450 parts per million. We need to understand that this outcome does not guarantee to limit global warming to 2 degrees, although the two things are often conflated. In discussions at the international level and just generally, policy-makers tend to talk about 450 parts per million as limiting us to 2 degrees and to say that 2 degrees represents a safe level of climate change — that is, a level of climate change that has impacts but not impacts that are so severe that they cause widespread ecosystem and human and economic damage — but in fact that is not right.

Even the 450 parts per million scenario only gives us a 50-50 chance of avoiding warming of 2 degrees. Since the original 2 degrees warming target, if we can call it that, was first discussed, we have become much more aware of the likely impacts of 2 degrees of warming. Many people now understand that the impact of 1 degree of warming is likely to be as damaging as what they originally thought would be created by 2 degrees of warming, and we are already well on the way to 1 degree of warming worldwide.

If Mr Lenders is suggesting he wants to work within the IEA 450 parts per million scenario, he needs to be well aware that it no longer guarantees a limit of 2 degrees of warming and that 2 degrees of warming itself cannot be called a safe level of climate change. We need to look at scenarios for even faster action and faster reductions in emissions because of the already looming impacts of climate change. This is not a crisis we are heading towards; this is a crisis we are in. The IEA itself points out that the window, if you like, to prevent that 2 degrees of warming is closing very fast.

That is part of one issue that gets mentioned in Mr Ferguson's *Energy White Paper 2012*. He notes in that document:

The IEA has estimated that around 80 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions allowable under a scenario that keeps atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations under 450 parts per million and global warming under 2 degrees —

note the linkage there, which is an incorrect linkage —

is already locked in through existing capital stocks (such as power plants, factories and buildings).

That is what I mean when I say the window to limit our warming to 2 degrees is closing. If members look at the built-in pollution in the existing power plants, factories and buildings, they will see we do not have room for any more fossil fuel burning, and yet a massive increase in fossil fuel burning is exactly what the white paper

promotes. Mr Lenders is not going to contradict me when he says in this chamber that his plan is directly in line with that and that the inquiry he is promoting today in no way is meant to interfere with that.

A recent parliamentary inquiry into greenfields mining was another example of bipartisanship between the Labor and Liberal parties. On the back of that inquiry dozens of recommendations were made, most of them calling for more studies, more considerations and more inquiries. One recommendation stood out from the lot as being absolutely crystal clear in what it intended, and that was to set fixed, legal time lines for the approval of new mines — in other words, a fast track. The Labor and Liberal parties could agree on lots of things in that report with regard to more inquiries and more reviews, but the thing they absolutely wanted to agree on was the one thing the Minerals Council of Australia was absolutely calling for, and that was fast-track approval for mines. Those are the international agency scenarios, and we only need to go to Mr Ferguson's white paper to understand what it is that we will be getting whether there are Labor or Liberal governments at a state or federal level.

In relation to the specific question around the environmental controls to be built around CSG (coal seam gas) and other types of unconventional gas exploration, Mr Ferguson tells us that:

... The Australian government is working with the states and territories through the Standing Council on Energy and Resources to develop a nationally harmonised regulatory framework for the CSG industry based on key community concerns and encompassing:

- water management and monitoring;
- well integrity and aquifer protection;
- monitoring of hydraulic fracturing and chemical use.

This is another bit of bipartisanship. The last thing the federal government wants is to be considering one of these projects through federal environmental laws. On some occasions it has been. There is no climate change trigger under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC). There is no trigger associated with emissions of greenhouse gases. Only by the backdoor is there a trigger associated with water resources, and the federal government would like to keep it that way.

Even if the federal government was not working hand in glove to facilitate this type of fossil fuel extraction, the federal government is about to hand its EPBC approval powers back to the state governments, as Mr Lenders well knows. It has already been decided; the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, announced it at a

press conference, standing beside major mining executives. All this tossing around of the Murray-Darling Basin, alpine grazing and all the rest of it is just for show because of the federal government's imminent handing back of not just assessment powers under each EPBC act but also approval powers. In doing so it will be turning the clock back to 1983 when Bob Hawke made the call Malcolm Fraser could not make, which was to intervene in the Franklin River dam proposal.

Malcolm Fraser had a philosophical view about the federation that said that the federal government should not interfere in the business of the states. You would be laughed out of school if you put that principle to Tony Abbott. We know what he thinks about it, and clearly Labor is now in line and willing to roll back not only 30 or more years of environmental law making, which is what got us to the point of the modern EPBC act and its framework, but also the very principle of federal government intervention on behalf of the Australian environment over a state Premier who inevitably — we just know it from history — is on the side of exploitation.

We can dispense with any of that palaver about who is going to be the guardian of the environment here. If you vote for the federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, it will be Ted Baillieu. If you vote for Julia Gillard, it will be Ted Baillieu. It has been written, and it is only going to be the actions of the Greens and Greens voters that will stop that juggernaut.

You will not find in the energy white paper, which sets out the blueprint for the energy and climate change policy of Mr Lenders and ultimately Daniel Andrews, the sorts of statements you see in the International Energy Agency's most recent publication from just a few days ago, *World Energy Outlook 2012*. That report is worth downloading, even just the executive summary. It is free. Download it, read it and see what it is the IEA is sending out by way of a message. As I say, the IEA is not known for being a radical environmental organisation. There are some interesting observations there. The report says:

Unconventional gas accounts for nearly half of the increase in global gas production to 2035, with most of the increase coming from China, the United States and Australia. But the unconventional gas business is still in its formative years, with uncertainty in many countries about the extent and quality of the resource base. As analysed in a *World Energy Outlook Special Report* released in May 2012, there are also concerns about the environmental impact of producing unconventional gas that, if not properly addressed, could halt the unconventional gas revolution in its tracks.

I would argue that if they were properly addressed, that would halt the unconventional gas industry in its tracks.

The IEA also talks a little bit about renewables, where it predicts the rapid expansion of renewables as what it calls 'an indispensable part of the global energy mix'. In the IEA scenario, by 2035 renewables will account for almost one-third of total electricity output. The report continues:

Solar grows more rapidly than any other renewable technology. Renewables become the world's second-largest source of power generation by 2015 (roughly half that of coal) and, by 2035, they approach coal as the primary source of global electricity.

Mr Ferguson's white paper, I notice, puts wind and unconventional gas in the same basket and says that they create local community concerns over their local environmental impacts and that they need to earn what he calls a social licence. He sees them as similar. They could not be more different, and I would say that you go a long way towards earning a social licence when the government gives you an actual licence or a planning permit or a mining permit that has some rigour around it. With wind farms we know that there is an extraordinary amount of rigour and that there are tough guidelines attached to every wind development in Victoria, which when complied with ensure that it is a safe type of development. By contrast, with CSG, which Mr Lenders's government issued multiple permits for the commencement of through the exploration process, there are virtually no guidelines in place.

There could not be a greater contradiction between the provisions of the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990, where the minimum requirement is whatever the minister says it is, and the existing guidelines for wind farms, yet Mr Ferguson wants to put them in the same basket and say that they have to go out and somehow earn a social licence when the government itself is not willing to treat fossil fuel exploration and development in the same way as wind farms.

With the Baillieu government we have an even more extreme version of that. The Baillieu government simply allows any neighbour within 2 kilometres of a proposed wind farm to veto it, whereas you could have coalmining, including open-cut coalmining, and gas exploration going on under your very feet, right in your paddock, and ultimately there is not a thing you can do to prevent that.

The IEA also notes, and it is relevant here in Victoria, that water needs for energy production are set to grow at twice the rate of energy demand worldwide. Water is essential to energy production and power generation in the extraction, transport and processing of oil, gas and

coal and, increasingly, in irrigation of crops used to produce biofuels. Solar and wind of course are water free in their production, and that is a further advantage those two options have. The IEA goes on to note, if members would care to read the summary, the billions of dollars of subsidies given to fossil fuels around the world, often directly by national governments. As the price of coal and gas grows, even as the price of electricity generated by renewable sources falls, we expect those subsidies to grow quite rapidly.

The Ferguson energy white paper goes on to predict energy demand, flying completely in the face of what the International Energy Agency says in relation to energy efficiency, which is our key issue. The IEA finds possibilities to reduce energy use, making deep cuts to our energy use while saving money using existing technologies. If the IEA is saying it, it is good enough for me, but it raises the question: what is the demand scenario Mr Lenders and Mr Ferguson are working on when it comes to energy use here in Victoria? We know the prices of coal and gas are going to rocket as they become increasingly linked in with export industries, which is in fact the Lib-Lab plan, but what energy demand is that based on?

It is based on business as usual. For five years in a row the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, the Australian Energy Market Operator, Mr Ferguson and the energy industry all predicted a scenario of continuing growth in energy demand. For five years in a row they got it wrong. However, they then turned around and predicted that energy demand will go back to its normal level of growth here in Victoria and Australia, despite the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the IEA predicting that OECD countries will experience no growth in energy consumption for the foreseeable future. It is as much a hope by the Labor and Liberal parties as it is a prediction, and their prediction is now turning into a plan for implementation where they want to go ahead and open up for exploitation all these resources to meet their self-fulfilling projection for demand. There is no need for it. We can meet all our energy needs here in Victoria and in fact continue to reduce them by the planned and considered deployment of renewables and, most importantly, through energy efficiency even as we retire some of our existing fossil fuel generators.

There is one more bit of Liberal-Labor bipartisanship — that is, they will eventually get around to cleaning up all this fossil fuel burning through carbon capture and storage (CCS), but not yet. The one thing they agree on is that it is not going to happen yet. Mr Ferguson puts a date of 2035 on the start of its

deployment. That is a seemingly precise but ultimately imprecise date.

The main value of CCS is to provide a cover story. It is that technology that is always just over the horizon — just about to be commercially deployed — despite the fact that all the elements of the technology, from the capture to the transport to the sticking it underground, have all been done in various guises for years. It is simply a matter of assembling those different techniques into an economically viable project, but somehow that economic viability is always just over the horizon. Year after year as it does not appear and we continue to throw billions more at it — Mr Ferguson boasts about how many billions he is throwing at it — it keeps receding, like one of those shimmering heat hazes on the horizon. However, it buys the parties time to continue their bipartisan ‘burn, burn, burn it all’ policy.

It is in that context that we should consider the motion of Mr Lenders. He would like to take things off into a little side alley for a while and have a quick inquiry into matters that he should have turned his mind to long ago and that he ultimately has to address now — right now — as his party lays out its energy vision and seeks to implement it.

It is interesting that in its energy white paper the federal Labor government only sets itself a four-year horizon in terms of measures to be taken, but it is quite happy to make a seemingly precise 20-year prediction about when carbon capture and storage will come online and is even willing to make a 100-year prediction that we will still be burning, and in particular exporting for burning, our gas and coal reserves out to 2100. Clearly that is the wrong way around. You have to consider where you want to be in 30 or 100 years before you design policies for right now or for the next few years. It is a neat trick of avoidance by the federal Labor government. The motion is a complete act of avoidance by the state Labor opposition, which would rather move this to have something to talk about than talk about what is real.

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — As we have heard, Mr Lenders moved this motion in May. Despite the motion giving the government a way forward out of the jam in which it finds itself on the issue of coal seam gas exploration and mining, the government seems incapable of making a decision. The motion comes forward for consideration now at the two-year mark in the life of the Baillieu government, and the indecision it has shown over a straightforward motion that can only do good is a case in point that illustrates what is amiss with this administration.

The *Saturday Age* of last week featured an opinion piece by Shane Green entitled ‘The trouble with big Ted? Not enough biff, for a start’. While it is an unremarkable piece, because we have heard it all before, there is one telling sentence. Green says, because he has to appear to be even handed, that the government ‘does have achievements to spruik’, and he instances its planning reforms and protective services officers on the train network — and that is it. One would have thought that a new government, a real government with ideas, would have been bristling with initiatives, but here we have a journalist writing for one of the nation’s pre-eminent papers scratching around to find something positive to say, and he can only identify one initiative and a planning discussion paper. This is wincing stuff, but no more and no less than each of us is hearing all over town and in regional Victoria.

Like everyone else, I talk to public servants, and they tell me the government is directionless and distrustful of its own public service and that just about everything that is put up disappears into the Premier’s office, nevermore to see the light of day. We see ample evidence of this in this house — and I have pointed it out often enough — in that bills have only a very slender link to advancing any government policy. They are clearly the product of the public service tidying up and making incremental improvements to existing legislation, and so it is with coal seam gas policy. The government has, through its inaction, allowed community concern to grow unaddressed. But before I go to the detail of Mr Lenders’s motion to refer the issue to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee for investigation, it is important to put on the record once again the reasons for the government’s inaction.

It is a fact that the Liberals in this increasingly strained and stressed coalition are city focused and just do not get the concerns that landowners in West Gippsland, for instance, have with the way the Department of Primary Industries and the mining companies have conducted the exploration process. On the other hand The Nationals absolutely do get it. While they manage to pressure their so-called Liberal partners to agree to a moratorium lite, they are unable to get any further to deliver some sort of resolution to their constituency and to Victorians as a whole.

Last week we received an email from Regional Development Australia inviting the community to a series of forums, the first of which will be held in Morwell later this month. Entitled ‘Community Conversations’, the aim of the forums is to allow for the sharing of views on the future of coal, coal seam gas, renewable energy and bio-energy. This is all well and

good, and I commend RDA on the initiative because people in Gippsland have been crying out for the opportunity to hear informed opinion and have their views taken seriously into account.

While people across Gippsland know their economic prosperity has to a great extent been reliant on big coal and energy companies, they also know climate change is real, the world is consequently changing and coal will play a much reduced role in future electricity production. That is why they have been supportive of the work of the six Gippsland local governments, who understand the impacts of climate change, in the development of the Gippsland regional plan and the efforts under way to step up the long-term objectives of diversifying the economy so that it is less reliant on coal, even though Gippsland will continue to play a strong role in the future energy industry. People living in Gippsland are very familiar with mining and its relationship to farming and other sectors of the economy, and the concern over coal seam gas exploration and mining is not just a knee-jerk reaction to something new.

In my contribution during the last sitting week to the debate on the Resources Legislation Amendment (General) Bill 2012 I said that the government's inaction in effect has left the public debate to the Greens party, Environment Victoria, Doctors for the Environment Australia and the opposition. The government has been completely absent, and the mining companies do not seem to understand the depth of community feeling and concern because they think it is the role of government to manage the community rather than to consult and lead. Mining companies need to realise that they — like every organisation whose commercial activities impact on the lives and wellbeing of the community — need to actively engage the community, not as an exercise in snowing them, but to partner with the community through listening and seriously taking into account the views of the community and of their workers.

Mr Lenders's motion simply asks us to direct the Environment and Natural Resources Committee to identify how much coal seam gas there is, to give us a picture of the effects of exploration and mining, to have a look at the adequacy of the current policy framework and to check out other work being done on these issues. Those are all fairly straightforward but, admittedly, complex questions, and they go to the heart of what most of us do not know about coal seam gas exploration and mining. Mr Lenders talked in some detail about some of the underlying issues concerning those general headings.

The commonwealth government's *Energy White Paper 2012*, released last week and referred to in the discussion this morning, acknowledges at page 76 what it calls the 'highly visible and passionate debate' over coal seam gas. It notes that the concern has especially been over:

the use of chemical agents in underground seam fracturing, and on water extraction and the potential for contamination. Concerns have also been expressed about the loss of productive farmland and reduced local amenity (from noise, dust and traffic), greenhouse gas emissions, land subsidence, and induced seismicity (earth tremors).

The white paper states at page 77:

While energy and mineral resource developments affect less than 1 per cent of Australia's landmass ... the expansion of mining, agricultural and residential activity in some regions is causing tension between overlapping ... activities and communities.

I had a good deal to say about this in my contribution to the Resources Legislation Amendment (General) Bill 2012 during the last sitting week. I pointed to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee's final report on its inquiry into greenfields mineral exploration and project development in Victoria which provides evidence of concern in Victoria. The white paper sets out the structural arrangements that have been established to bring some national coherence to the discussion and decision making on the issues surrounding coal seam gas mining.

The Australian government entered into the national partnership on coal seam gas and large coalmining development with the governments of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia to assist state governments to address knowledge gaps and to provide scientific advice on coal seam gas and large mining proposals. The white paper says these arrangements will substantially improve the scientific evidence that informs regulatory decisions, making decisions more transparent and open and available to communities.

Having said all that, the Baillieu government has the option of sitting back and letting the commonwealth do the heavy lifting or following the first recommendation contained in the final report into greenfields mineral exploration and project development in Victoria — to conduct an inquiry into coal seam gas in Victoria. As Mr Lenders indicates in his motion, an inquiry of this type would complement the work that the commonwealth government is doing, as described in the white paper I have referred to. It would enable Victorians who are affected by coal seam gas exploration, as well as experts in the field, to have their

views placed on the record, and it would enable the Environment and Natural Resources Committee to review the research and travel to New South Wales and other affected areas to see the differences between Victoria and other regions.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the Baillieu government is so incapable of picking up a good idea and running with it to the benefit of the state. As I indicated at the outset, this government's reputation is rapidly sliding to that of a government in a state of deep torpor. Every initiative is either viewed with irrational, almost paranoid suspicion or rejected because someone else is already doing the work, and in this case that is the commonwealth. Mr Lenders's motion can only benefit the community and the industry. If Parliament were to agree to it, it would generate greater confidence in the government, which will be seen to have initiated something positive and proactive. I urge the house to support this motion.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I have pleasure in rising this morning to oppose the motion moved by Mr Lenders, which in effect asks us to refer this issue to a parliamentary committee for inquiry. This is an issue that is well and truly under way and being worked on as we speak by a federal body. It is an issue that we are aware has caused a whole lot of angst in other states. We understand all that; we understand the extreme differences between the coal seams of Queensland and New South Wales and the coal seams here in Victoria. We understand the differences due to the extreme difference in the age of the seams. We understand there is a huge difference between the measures in other states and the measures put in place by this state which will protect it from any overresourcing or lack of process. This state will be protected because of the hold put on the fracking process on these exploration sites. We understand this. Thankfully this is on the record.

I note that Mr Scheffer forgot to mention that it was the Labor Party that released 70 per cent of the current exploration licences in this state — 'Whoops! We forgot about that one'. It must have slipped his mind. I do not think Mr Lenders mentioned it either. It must have slipped his mind as he framed this very notice of motion; it must have slipped his mind that it was his government that released so many of these exploration licences.

Ultimately this motion continues the Labor Party's trend of doing a flip-flop, a 180-degree change in policy, since the day after it lost the last election. I would be happy to read into the record some of the statements of previous Labor energy and resources ministers, which show them to have been at total odds

with the motion that has been put in front of us this morning. We had a similar situation last Wednesday when Ms Broad brought a motion into the house in relation to the Mildura hospital. Labor had one view and one policy direction when it was in government and it has the exact opposite policy direction now that it finds itself in opposition. Mr Lenders's example here today demonstrates that he has a totally different view now to the one he held when in government.

Mr Barber — What happened to bipartisanship?

Mr DRUM — Bipartisanship works fine if you are at least fractionally consistent in what you say in opposition and what you say in government. If you can just demonstrate a fraction of consistency, then people might afford a fraction of respect for the views you now hold.

To Mr Barber's credit, he has been consistent. I have often stood up here and talked about the benefits to this state if we were to pursue a solution to the problem of the dewatering of our brown coal reserves. If we were able to get to that point within the next two or three years, that would have a positive impact not only in Australia but across the world. What it would do in Asia, what it would do in the United States — —

Mr Barber — What would it do?

Mr DRUM — It would dramatically clean up our emissions.

Mr Barber — How?

Mr DRUM — We are currently burning hundreds of millions of tonnes of Australian coal in India, China and Indonesia. They are burning their own dirty coal. We do not yet have the ability to dewater Victoria's stocks of brown coal, but we are getting closer. However, nobody seems to be interested in this immediate benefit to cutting world emissions. This is an area on which we should be focusing.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr DRUM — This might be a backhanded compliment to Mr Barber, but at least he has been consistent in his inability to embrace this type of technology, whereas when Labor was in government its view then was to push it along. For much of Labor's last term in government its Minister for Energy and Resources was Mr Theophanous, who said on 27 October 2005:

Western Victoria is seeing massive resurgence in exploration and investment. You would already know, President, about the massive \$260 million Iluka Douglas project —

in relation to —

... mineral sands.

...

I am pleased to advise the house today that there are new proposals and more exploration in mineral sands, in gold, and in a new one in this area for coal seam gas.

Mr Theophanous was very keen to push this through.

On 1 March 2007 Peter Batchelor, then Minister for Energy and Resources, said:

The opening of the Otway Basin gas fields, the proposals for new large wind farms and gas-powered stations, combined with the potential for coal seam gas and the emerging mineral sands industry of western Victoria, means that the south-west has the potential to develop significant energy-dependent industries.

Then on 10 June 2008 a former member for Southern Metropolitan Region, Evan Thornley, said:

We here in Victoria have a special opportunity, firstly, because we have very high electricity emissions that could be reduced substantially by a transition to gas-fired power, and secondly, because we have massive deposits of brown coal which could be liberated to generate a large amount of that gas, or it may come from the coal seam methane.

Three Labor members in the last Parliament said these things in 2005, 2007 and 2008, yet we now have the Labor Party taking the exact opposite view.

Labor knows this inquiry would delay the process currently in place. This motion pushes for the Environment and Natural Resources Committee to pursue an inquiry knowing that that committee has to complete another report by 30 June 2013. That will be the report of an inquiry into rural drainage throughout Victoria. Following that will be an inquiry into heritage tourism and ecotourism in Victoria, the report of which is to be handed in by 31 May 2014. You have a committee that has already fully allocated its time and that has all of its projects and programs fully costed and fully allocated for the next 18 months, and Labor thinks it would be a good idea for that committee, in amongst all of that, to do work the federal government apparently cannot do.

To have these policies harmonised across the nation is something I think we should all be in support of, because it is an issue that goes right up and down the east coast of Australia. We also like to push the fact that the Victorian Farmers Federation has been very vocal in this space.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr DRUM — It has, and it has been very clear in its statements that Victorian land-holders have the strongest rights in relation to exploration sites across Australia. Victoria's environmental and resources legislation differs from legislation operating in many other states, and we have strong protections and opportunities for community input built into the licensing application process. In each of these key areas you find that we are well and truly catered for in terms of ensuring that we go forward carefully with this technology.

We also have a communiqué from the Standing Council on Energy and Resources, comprising the federal, state and territory energy ministers, dated December 2011. This communiqué states that:

Coal seam gas is strategically important as it supplies 32 per cent of the eastern states' domestic gas production, it assists in containing power prices in a carbon-constrained economy and is a substantial source of export income and employment.

...

Approaches to coal seam gas development will continue to be informed by sound science and high-quality data, and utilise appropriate risk management frameworks ... in transparently protecting natural, social and economic environments while enabling the environmentally sustainable use of land for multiple compatible purposes.

That is from a communiqué put out by the energy ministers from all of the states, the territories and the federal government in December 2011.

All of a sudden, however, the Victorian opposition thinks that amidst all of this, whilst the national harmonisation framework is being put into place, it would be a good idea to stop this entire process, to stop all of this work being done and to push it off to a committee that is already fully maxed out when it comes to available time.

This is the same issue we went through in the last sitting week in relation to the Mildura hospital. Those opposite have taken a view in opposition which is totally different to the view they had in government. Here we are again with coal seam gas: the view held in government is totally different to that held in opposition.

This is a stunt, and that is something we are getting more and more used to now, as this is the Labor way. Labor members have no shame. They think Victorians have no memory and that Victorians are going to forget that for 11 years Labor did not put in place any of the safeguards and consultation processes that are now in place. They think Victorians are simply going to forget about this. Well, we are here now as the government.

Mr O'Brien, the Minister for Energy and Resources, has put in place a process he believes is going to give Victorians the safeguards they need while not in an irresponsible manner putting a knife through this industry, because it is critical to this state. The potential jobs and the potential productivity are critical to this state. We owe it to the people of Victoria to continue to explore the possibilities that exist in relation to coal seam gas and in relation to a whole range of processes through which the gas can be sourced.

With those few words, I am very happy to again state that we will be opposing this motion. We would like to encourage opposition members to have some consistency in the motions they bring before the house and to bring motions that are at least consistent with the views they had in government. We encourage them not to come up with a series of issues in relation to which they did 180-degree flips the day after they lost power so that they find themselves having totally different views in opposition.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — The contribution we have just heard from Mr Drum verged on being ridiculous. The positions taken by ministers on the possibility of exploration of alternative ways of meeting our energy demands in this state should not prevent the opposition today saying that we want to further explore the issue of coal seam gas and establish whether some very significant concerns held by people, certainly many people in the Gippsland area, in my electorate, have some credence; whether they could be ameliorated if there were to be recovery of gas for energy purposes in this unconventional manner; what safeguards would be needed if we were to proceed down that path; what the lessons are from other jurisdictions; what the lessons are internationally; and whether those lessons are applicable to the Victorian scenario of coal seam gas being obtained from areas with brown rather than black coal deposits.

It is ridiculous to suggest that to undertake some kind of investigation is wrong because the position taken by members of the former government six years ago should now hold this opposition to a position that was not even the position taken by the former government at that time. To suggest that the fact that ministers and parliamentary secretaries some six years ago said that there were opportunities to look at alternative gas sources such as coal seam gas somehow means that we were determined and committed to that exploitation is simply ludicrous.

The opposition is being absolutely consistent with the position it has taken since the coal seam gas issue became more relevant — in part because of the changes

in the financial markets, which potentially make such undertakings more valuable and likely to be exploited. The changed financial position has led the opposition to look at what is in the best long-term interests of this state. We need to reassure the community that, as public legislators, we are taking their interests into account. To suggest that we should not be undertaking these kinds of inquiries is simply ridiculous. It is this government that has changed its position on this. The government previously voted down this inquiry. It then subsequently announced that it was undertaking a moratorium — something we welcomed because it caught up with the Labor Party's position.

Mr Lenders — Hypocrisy.

Mr VINEY — It is hypocrisy, Mr Lenders. But now that there is an agreed position for a moratorium, surely this is the time to undertake an inquiry — whilst both sides of politics have agreed that there should be a moratorium. What is the purpose of a moratorium if we are not going to investigate the pros and cons?

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Victorian Manufacturing Council: meetings

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, Richard Dalla-Riva. It has been almost a year since the minister reconfirmed his election commitment by announcing the establishment of the Victorian Manufacturing Council. It is now two and a half months since the minister updated the house to advise that the manufacturing council was about to be re-elected and that there were some probity checks being undertaken. Can the minister inform the house whether the manufacturing council has convened?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — I thank the member for his question. I am always pleased when he mentions the manufacturing strategy, because we are very pleased, as a government, to have announced an election commitment and then delivered on that commitment. Are we seeing the results of that commitment? Absolutely we are. We have seen a turnaround in the last 12 months, with an increase of 13 100 jobs in manufacturing and a resurgence in manufacturing. I can say, as I have said previously, that there has been a process for the manufacturing council. That process has now concluded and those members

have been appointed and will be meeting very, very soon.

Supplementary question

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I ask the minister how the failure of the manufacturing council to convene is affecting the government’s manufacturing policy implementation process, given that the aim of the council was to oversee and give strategic advice on the implementation of the government’s manufacturing policy?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — I must say that this is the first question Mr Somyurek has asked me since 30 August. That was a while back. I am very pleased that the manufacturing strategy has been implemented and that we are already seeing results being relayed out. I am pleased that we have seen companies working through the process and receiving grants through Investing in Manufacturing Technology funding and through the Manufacturing Productivity Networks program.

Mr Somyurek interjected.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — It is interesting to note that Mr Somyurek, who has not asked me a question since 30 August — I welcome him back to the fold — sits there and harps across the chamber when the federal government has set up the manufacturing task force, which has delivered a draft report and done nothing. We have listened to the manufacturing industry, we have delivered on the manufacturing strategy.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! We are in the first question. The football season finished in September. This is Parliament. The minister does not need assistance.

Box Hill Hospital: redevelopment

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Health, my colleague in Southern Metropolitan Region. Will the minister inform the house of recent developments in the project to rebuild Box Hill Hospital?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I know this is a question that you, President, will be interested in as well as Mrs Coote, as both you and she were long-term advocates for the rebuilding of Box Hill Hospital. I can inform the house with great pleasure that the

\$447 million project is on time and on budget. The project is going forward very strongly. Let me be quite clear that I can announce to the house that the — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am a little thin today — and that does not refer to my weight, it refers to the fact that my patience is shorter at this moment. The minister, without assistance.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The project will have an additional floor added. It is going so well that we can actually add a ninth floor to the hospital, and this stands in stark contrast to the project that was announced by the previous government. That was a \$407.5 million project, but the new government upscaled it by \$40 million and 100 beds, with extra space, extra scope and now an additional floor within the \$447 million envelope.

It is a remarkable achievement, and I want to pay tribute to the construction group, to Eastern Health, to my department and to the builders who are working very firmly to get the very best outcome. The project is on time, it is on budget and it will be bigger by one floor than what we had originally intended. That will enable the acute wards to be brought up into the hospital, into the tower, and will provide additional space in the old hospital for further consulting rooms and further capacity.

This will be a remarkable achievement for a project that is ahead of time, and when it is finished I believe it will deliver more scope.

Mr Jennings — When?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — December 2015 is the date. Let me be quite clear here about the facts. I want to pick up a question asked by the President in this chamber in 2009, when he was a member of the opposition. In response to Mr Atkinson’s question as to why the previous government had scaled down the project from \$800 million to \$407 million, Mr Jennings, then the minister representing the Minister for Health in the other place, answered by saying that ‘this is as good as it gets’. I can tell members it is getting a lot better — another \$40 million, another 100 beds and another floor. What the Labor government did to the people of the eastern suburbs was to short-change them, and some of the coverage at the time is worth reading. Some of it made that point very clear:

But today’s ... announcement was a dramatically scaled-back version of the original \$800 million-plus plans drawn up in 2003.

That is a quote from a *Manningham Leader* article of 9 December 2009. It went further:

Originally, all the buildings were to be demolished and rebuilt ...

... the project was scaled back.

It was scaled back. Mr Lenders knows it was scaled back. He went out to visit the site and he was responsible for scaling it back. He was the Treasurer at the time; he wound it back. We have built it up, and it is going to get another floor now. We know Mr Jennings, the health minister at the time and now the shadow health minister, said the people of the eastern suburbs could live with 407 and that that was as good as it gets. Shame on you. I can tell you that it gets much better than that. It gets \$40 million better. It gets more beds. It gets an additional floor. This government is delivering — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — I am announcing it; I have announced it already.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Yes, I have, and it is going to get bigger. Let me go a little bit further and say there is one bad cloud on the horizon, and that is the — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Time, Minister. Can I remind members to put their questions and answers through the Chair, which means that we do not provoke — hopefully — quite as much choral activity from either side.

Manufacturing: industry participation policy

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, Richard Dalla-Riva. In his manufacturing strategy the minister promises to introduce a ‘contestability assessment’ to limit the requirement for a Victorian industry participation policy (VIPP) plan to only those procurements for which there are both competitive local and international suppliers. Has the minister’s government implemented this plan? It has been a year.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — I thank the member for his question, because I am very pleased to talk about the Victorian industry participation policy and to mention that it was tabled recently. I am pleased that Mr Somyurek has been able to finally get a question up. We were very pleased to see that the VIPP

had been applied in the last financial year to 356 new contracts worth more than \$5.6 billion. We have also seen that in the last financial year the successful bidders for those projects committed to an average local content of 87 per cent, which is a fantastic result for local manufacturers and local communities, representing over \$4.8 billion in orders. We have seen that the number of new jobs generated by the successful bidders is 2781.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — This is about the good news, Mr Pakula. You may wish to interject and not listen to the good news. We have been very focused as a government on working with the manufacturing sector and ensuring that it has a viable application to local content. I can say we are reviewing the VIPP; we have always said we were reviewing the VIPP. We have made that a very clear policy commitment. We know the industry capability network is now playing a more crucial role in the implementation of the VIPP, unlike when Mr Pakula was the industry minister, and as transport minister the best he had to do for local content was import trains from overseas.

Supplementary question

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I take that as a no, President. Why has the minister failed to implement this promise, as it has been a year since he announced it?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — If Mr Somyurek had used the time he has been sitting there listening to question time to review the report that was tabled, he would see a headline ‘VIPP reforms’. I suggest he read it.

Biotechnology sector: government initiatives

Mr O’BRIEN (Western Victoria) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Technology, Gordon Rich-Phillips. I ask: can the minister provide an update on Victorian participation at AusBiotech 2012?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mr O’Brien for his question and for his continuing interest in the life sciences sector in Victoria. In the first week of November, Victoria hosted the AusBiotech 2012 conference, which is the largest biotechnology industry event in the Asia-Pacific region. This year marks the return of this event to Victoria after the last event being held in Adelaide in 2011. The Victorian event attracted more than 900 individual delegates, including more than

180 overseas delegates. It really highlights the strength of the Victorian biotechnology sector that we are able to attract such a large number of international delegates to the event.

The Victorian government was pleased to be the lead sponsor of AusBiotech 2012 and also the lead sponsor of the Australasian Life Science Investment Summit, which took place on the last day of AusBiotech. The investment summit is very much focused on creating opportunities for Victorian and Australian life sciences companies to pitch their opportunities to international and interstate investors. We were pleased that 157 delegates attended the investment summit, including more than 50 international delegates. Their attendance at the conference recognises the strength of the Victorian and indeed the Australian life sciences sector. Among those international delegates were a number from Boston, Massachusetts, which at the time was experiencing significant difficulties with the storms moving through the United States. We were pleased to be able to host a number of the delegates from Boston during that period.

During the course of the summit and conference in the first week of November the Victorian government was very pleased to release a number of new initiatives in support of the biotechnology sector, including the Victorian e-research agenda, setting out Victoria's capabilities in research and development in life sciences, and the release and launch of the Australian Research Infrastructure Network program to bring together life sciences infrastructure through a single portal to make it more accessible and more useable for the life sciences sector.

I was also pleased to launch the first round of technology implementation vouchers under the technology voucher program, which was announced by the government earlier this year and which will assist the uptake of biotechnology and ICT among Victorian companies.

Thirdly, I was pleased to release the enabling technologies biotech skills plan for the biotechnology industry, which is very much focused on developing business skills and corporate governance skills among life sciences companies in Victoria in order to make them more ready to work with venture capitalists and international financiers in terms of developing their products.

The size and scale of this year's AusBiotech event and the investment summit in Melbourne highlights the strength of the Victorian life sciences sector and

underpins why Victoria remains the leading state for life sciences in Australia.

Manufacturing: jobs

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, Richard Dalla-Riva. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data for the May to August quarter of 2012 — the most recent quarter for which the ABS data has been released for manufacturing — shows that 8600 manufacturing jobs were created in New South Wales. Can the minister inform the house how many full-time manufacturing jobs were created in Victoria during this quarter?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — When we came to government the manufacturing sector was on its knees. The previous government had no interest in manufacturing. It had 32 separate programs that were all over the shop. We had the industry being run by a former trade union secretary, whose primary role, in my view, was supporting the trade union movement. If you want an example of where things are in manufacturing today, you should go down to Geelong right now, where the Little Creatures site is again being picketed by the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. That is where the union's focus is right now in manufacturing. What we have done —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Listen to them! Yesterday I raised the involvement of the union movement and the way it treats the manufacturing sector here in Victoria — with total disdain and disrespect. What we see is —

An honourable member — They talk it down.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — They talk it down.

Mr Viney — Why don't you just say you don't know?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Who was that, Mr Guy? Who was that in the background? It is the auditioning —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — I can say seriously that we have been very focused. We in —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is far too much noise; it is just a barrage of noise. The members who are interested in the answer to this question are not going to be able to hear that answer, and the members of the opposition will have no idea whether the minister has actually answered it. The minister, without assistance.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Thank you, President. I am getting to the matter. What I can say is that when we came into government we found that the manufacturing sector had been let go by the former government. We made a clear commitment that we would review manufacturing and develop a very strong and coherent manufacturing strategy. We were very clear that we were not going to wait 700 days for the release of a manufacturing statement that said nothing and went nowhere. We have delivered a very clear, coherent strategy, backed up by \$58 million over four years, providing real, tangible outcomes for Victoria. The result has been that over the last 12 months we have seen the manufacturing sector increase the number of people it employs by 13 100. There are more Victorians in manufacturing than there were a year ago.

More importantly, and for Mr Somyurek's information, what is of interest is that the Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force survey for August showed that there were 10 000 more people in full-time manufacturing jobs compared to a year ago. We have seen a turnaround in manufacturing in Victoria. We have seen the strategy that has been applied having real results. The way that the Department of Business and Innovation operates its business development managers and the fact that it is working closely with manufacturers for the first time means we are seeing real, tangible results.

I advise Mr Somyurek that that is where we are at. I would suggest that, rather than talking down the sector, he recognise that there has been significant growth in the industry.

Supplementary question

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Actually 10 300 full-time manufacturing jobs were lost in Victoria during the period that 8600 full-time manufacturing jobs were created in New South Wales. That indicates that full-time manufacturing jobs are haemorrhaging away to New South Wales. What was the reason for this? Why has New South Wales gone up by 8600 positions while Victoria has lost 10 300 full-time manufacturing positions in the same time?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — As I said, you can almost hear the salivations of the member opposite as he is talking down the industry, talking down manufacturing and saying how great it is that we are seeing a loss in job numbers. In fact the figures that we have seen over the last 12 months indicate that there has been an increase. I draw the house's attention to an article by Ian Porter that was published in the *Age* of 2 October reporting on the growth in the number of jobs. It states:

... how can the latest manufacturing employment figures be explained? They showed Victoria gaining 13 000 full-time manufacturing jobs in the 12 months to June, a 4.4 per cent rise.

The simple explanation for the dour perception of manufacturing is that large job cuts get the headlines while incremental job gains do not.

What we are seeing are incremental gains. We are seeing manufacturing increase. We are not seeing the wind-down that those opposite would like to see; it has not happened. Victoria has been resilient under very tough economic conditions, and I will always stand up for the manufacturing industry, unlike those opposite.

Planning: urban renewal

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the outstanding Minister for Planning, and I ask: can the minister advise the house what action the Baillieu government is taking to bring forward a new metropolitan planning vision for Melbourne?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank Mr Finn for his important question in relation to metropolitan planning and this government's vision for a new metropolitan planning strategy for the metropolitan area. Members may be aware that this government is engaging in nine regional growth plans for this city. Importantly — —

Mr Viney interjected.

Hon. M. J. GUY — Is Mr Viney conducting an audition for a different job? I am sorry for the distraction, President, but Mr Viney's relevance deprivation is getting to extreme levels in this chamber today. This government is going through nine regional growth plans, eight for regional Victoria and one for the metropolitan area. Importantly, we view metropolitan planning and the metropolitan planning strategy initiative as an addendum to the regional growth plans — something that will complement the growth of

our state as one entity, not in silos as was done in the past.

I am pleased to inform this chamber that recently the government launched a draft document for discussion entitled *Melbourne, Let's Talk About the Future*. It is vitally important because some of us are talking about the future and some on the other side of the chamber are still talking about the past. Melbourne 2030 is dead; it is gone, it is finished. You may not believe that if you read the comments of the shadow Minister for Planning, Mr Tee, who wants to just reinstate it, but it is finished.

This document, *Melbourne, Let's Talk About the Future*, talks about strategic principles that build upon Melbourne and its competitive strengths that will make sure our city is not just the most livable today but, as Mr Finn knows, will be the most livable in the future. We are making sure that the city we have today and that we will bequeath to future generations will be more sustainable and have better transport access. It will be a 20-minute city with a 24-hour hub, a city that has neighbourhood character kept intact, a city that respects its growth corridors — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! As we all know, interjections are unruly at the best of times. They are tolerated, but they are not welcomed. They are particularly not welcomed by me when they are not even apposite to what is being discussed. This persistent talk about photos has got absolutely nothing to do with the minister's answer or the question proposed by Mr Finn. I ask members to desist, because it is not relevant or helpful to this chamber's understanding of the answer to this question. The minister, to continue.

Hon. M. J. GUY — As members know, and as I have said before, the government is certainly committed to key points in a new metropolitan planning vision for this city. It is committed to growing our capital city — the centre of our city — as a 24-hour hub, a 24-hour jobs precinct, an employment precinct and a precinct where people can live, operate, work and have a great lifestyle without needing to own a car. We also need to respect our existing suburbs. That is why zone reform is so important to the question Mr Finn has asked about implementing a strategy. Importantly we need to factor in respect and sustainable growth in growth corridors. On top of that, this government, unlike previous governments, is actually ensuring that metropolitan growth occurs in conjunction with the development of regional growth plans.

Victoria is not a city state. It is not just about focusing growth in Melbourne. This state and this government are about focusing growth on all of Victoria. That is why we are, importantly, focusing on regional growth plans at the same time as we are focusing on our metropolitan growth strategy. I would encourage all Victorians to be a part of the discussion of what is outlined in *Melbourne, Let's Talk About the Future*. Our city is changing, but the character and the livability of it do not need to change along with population growth. We have a chance to get it right. The government is putting the building blocks in place, and we believe that with the right work, which is being done, we can grow Melbourne sustainably and along with it make sure that our state grows sustainably as well.

Manufacturing: resources boom

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is yet again directed to the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, the one and only Richard Dalla-Riva. The Treasurer, Kim Wells, made the comment at a post-budget Public Accounts and Estimates Committee meeting this year that the resources boom was good for Victoria. Given the strong upward pressure the resources boom puts on our currency, is a resources boom good for the Victorian manufacturing industry?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will allow the question, but I must say it concerns me a little in that it is more seeking an opinion rather than necessarily going to the minister's jurisdiction. I will allow the minister to answer the question on this occasion, but, as I said, we need to be careful with those sorts of questions.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — I thank the member for his question, because in terms of the resources industry we are seeing the boon for manufacturing here in Victoria. A couple of examples come to mind. If you look at Hella, you will see it has been diversifying its automotive supply chain to develop — —

Mr Lenders — Have you looked at the strength of the dollar?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — This is a good news story, Mr Sourpuss; listen. This is good news. This is about Hella — and about workers. Hella has recognised the challenges facing the automotive industry, has diversified into the mining sector and is now supplying the lights into the mining sector in Western Australia

and Queensland. Not only that, the company has now diversified into other parts of the world where there are mining areas. That is a good news story for manufacturing.

We have seen Hofmann Engineering in Bendigo, which is next to Thales Australia. The company came over here, again, relying on the resources boom — —

Mr Lenders — How are Thales's exports going?

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — Again the sourpuss, Mr Lenders — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister!

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — The interjections are quite offensive to all the companies that are — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! I ask the minister to withdraw the term 'sourpuss'. It is just not acceptable.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — I withdraw.

Of course there are manufacturing companies that develop and work around that. We have 25 000 manufacturers based here in Victoria, and we have argued for them to get involved. So much so, that I have had the Industry Capability Network make what it calls its trade mission — it was quite interesting to read the document — to Western Australia to try to rely on the resources boom in Western Australia and connect Victorian-based companies into Western Australia. We are trialling that into Queensland as well.

We are very focused on the resources boom. We recognise the challenges. We recognise, as I have always said, that the high Australian dollar is as a result of what is happening with the resources boom, and we have been working with industry to try to assist with that. For example, with the Automotive New Markets program we have worked with the federal Minister for Industry and Innovation, Mr Combet, to try to get some of those automotive suppliers to diversify into other markets. We recognise that the high Australian dollar is putting undue pressure on manufacturers.

Is it working? In relation to one of Mr Somyurek's previous questions, in terms of the job numbers, we have seen a resurgence in the job numbers in manufacturing, but more importantly we have seen a resurgence in companies that are diversifying. That has been a clear focus for me as a minister and a clear focus of the manufacturing strategy — to ensure that we have manufacturers that are not just reliant on one sector but that work across a variety of sectors.

We have also rejigged or restructured the Department of Business and Innovation to move away from the siloed approach in its work with companies. Rather than only automotive, rail or defence, the department now works across a variety of sectors so that it walks in with a suite of opportunities for companies to look at elsewhere, including of course our international engagement strategy. If you look at the number of companies that went over on the recent trip to China, you see something like 40 per cent had never been exposed to international markets.

I am acutely aware of the challenges that the resources industry is creating for manufacturers, but equally with those challenges there are some benefits for companies if they are prepared to diversify, to take up the opportunities that we are providing and to look at expanding.

Supplementary question

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Has the minister engaged with the federal government's resources envoy?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am at a loss to understand how that could be a supplementary question to the first question.

Mr SOMYUREK — Part of the brief of the envoy and the advocate is to harness the potential for Australian industry stemming from the resources boom, and I think Mr Dalla-Riva knows that.

The PRESIDENT — Order! But Mr Somyurek's primary question was about the value of the Australian dollar.

Mr SOMYUREK — The primary question was about the resources boom.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Putting pressure on manufacturers because it was affecting the value of the Australian dollar, so I have trouble understanding the link with the supplementary question in terms of the way Mr Somyurek has put it to the chamber today. Could Mr Somyurek reword the supplementary question? If not, I will call the next question.

**Vocational education and training:
technology-enabled learning centres**

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. I ask: can the minister advise the house of any recent investments made by the coalition

government to expand the capacity of tertiary education providers in the Gippsland region?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mr O'Donohue for his very good question and his interest in this particular matter. Members will know that one of the issues I have pursued throughout my parliamentary career is the participation level of country students in higher education. If you look at the various statistics, you can see that the best of those to illustrate the point I want to make is the destination of year 12 school leavers from year to year. It is a fact that of students who satisfactorily completed their Victorian certification of education at a metropolitan-based school last year, 54 per cent have gone on to be currently enrolled at university. If you look at students who completed their year 12 at a regional secondary college, you will see that 37 per cent of those are now enrolled in a university course. There is a fair disparity between the destination of country students as opposed to metropolitan students.

There are many ways in which we can address that. One of those is through the Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund program which I have spoken about in this house today. That program is realising some excellent outcomes already. Another one is the use of technology to deliver programs in regional areas.

The announcement I made last Thursday week, when I was joined in Pakenham by Mr O'Donohue, was for the first of potentially 22 technology-enabled learning centres across the Gippsland region. The first of those announced was at Pakenham, and Pakenham Secondary College, working with Chisholm Institute of TAFE, will be the first host of a technology-enabled learning centre in the Pakenham area.

In the first tranche of the rollout of this program, we will see eight towns in the Gippsland region host technology-enabled learning centres. Advance TAFE will manage facilities at Lakes Entrance, Bairnsdale and Sale in East Gippsland. Central Gippsland TAFE — or GippsTAFE, its operating name — will manage facilities in both Morwell and Leongatha, while Chisholm TAFE will manage facilities at Pakenham, Wonthaggi and at its Dandenong campus.

The government investment in this particular project is \$5 million, and we expect to have 22 such centres funded from that appropriation. More particularly, it is important that part of that appropriation is used to educate TAFE teachers to roll out these programs and make best use of this technology, because it is different — —

Mr Viney — On a point of order, President, I am intrigued as to how it could be appropriate in question time for a member to ask a minister a question about a matter and for the minister to respond by saying that the member who asked the question was present at the announcement of the matter about which he is asking the question. I know we have had rulings in the past where questions were deemed out of order if you asked a minister about something that was publicly available through a media release. I know that ruling was changed, but we seem now to have gone to an entirely different level where apparently a government member can ask a minister a question about something that they attended a public event about when they must have heard what the minister had to say about the matter at that event. I think the chamber is moving to an entirely different level of Dorothy Dixier, and I would seek your guidance on it.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank Mr Viney for that interesting proposition. At the outset can I say that while he has raised this as a concern today, it is certainly not without precedent. I can remember in the last Parliament and indeed in previous Parliaments over my 20 years in this place there have been many occasions when members have put a question to a minister seeking information on a matter where they may well have been in attendance, whether that be at an opening, an announcement or whatever; so I certainly think precedent is against me suggesting that Mr O'Donohue's question is something that ought not be raised with the minister on this occasion.

From my personal perspective, I have a view that the more information that can be brought to the chamber and the more explanations by the government and ministers of the government that are presented in the Parliament rather than by press release on matters that are subject to public announcement is in fact a positive thing. That is particularly so when a member asks a question that might well be seeking additional information to what was available to them on the day of the announcement — for example, there might be an opening of a facility and the member's question might be responded to by a minister in terms of how that facility has been travelling since the actual launch — or it could be that there is other information that was not made available on the day or via press release which a minister would want to bring to the chamber or which a member, in posing a question, might want to have further information on.

As I have said, from my point of view the more information the government and its ministers present to the Parliament — as distinct from making government announcements only by way of press release — is a

good thing and is something that is worthwhile. Going back to my initial point, as I said, it is certainly something that has happened for many years. If the Deputy President or other members have concerns about this practice, they might wish to seek to have it taken up by the Procedure Committee or somewhere else. However, as I said, I see that there is some value in these questions and the responses.

Hon. P. R. HALL — The application of this particular program has enormous potential not only for the Gippsland region but for all of regional Victoria and indeed all of Victoria. It will enable the delivery of more programs — whether they be higher education programs or vocational training programs — by use of video interactive technology across the state of Victoria and beyond. In that case it puts in reach many programs which students would otherwise find difficult to access.

Therefore I think this is a great initiative. I am pleased that members generally have not indicated their opposition to it, because it is a great government initiative. The \$5 million that my department is putting into this program is \$5 million that will be well invested in the future of Victorians.

Planning: zoning reform

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Planning. The deadline for submissions to the minister's proposed planning zone reforms closed about six weeks ago. Can the minister inform the house how many submissions have been received and why these submissions have not yet been made public?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — Very simply, because they are being peer reviewed by members of the planning profession: Liz Johnstone from the Planning Institute of Australia; Chris Canavan, who is a planning lawyer, and a Queen's Counsel, I might add; Geoff Underwood, who headed the government's ministerial advisory committee; and Joan Stanley from Planning Backlash. Those four people will peer review the submissions that have been made. It would not be appropriate that they would be peer reviewing a public document, because obviously there would be influence on them to do that. The documents will be made public when the process is concluded. That is the appropriate way to do business, and that is how it will be done.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — In the terms of reference to the committee that the minister

just detailed for us, under the heading 'Submissions are public documents', which is capitalised and in large font, paragraph 16 states:

Any documents provided to the committee must be made available for public inspection until the submission of its report, unless the committee specifically directs that the material is to remain confidential.

Can the minister inform the house when the submissions will be made public? He has called for an informed debate on planning, and I am sure he will agree debate is more informed when everybody gets to read everybody's submissions and it is not just him getting to read them. Will it be imminent? Will it be after the committee has finished and provided its report or will it be that these submissions are released after he has made his decision on the zoning changes?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I have just said that when the process of a peer review of those submissions by the committee actually begins I will take the advice of the ministerial advisory committee as to what then becomes the process beyond that. If Mr Barber thinks I am somehow going to usurp an independent process of four eminent people who are well qualified to review a public submission process, that might be the approach of the Greens, but it is not the approach of the government.

Housing: Norlane

Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Housing, the Honourable Wendy Lovell. Can the minister update the house on any recent developments in relation to the important and well-received New Norlane initiative announced last year?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for his question. The New Norlane initiative is on the edge of his electorate and in the electorate of Mr Koch, Mr Ramsay and Mr O'Brien, but it is great that members from the west of Melbourne are taking an interest in this project. I was delighted on 1 November to break the ground for the display village at the New Norlane initiative. I was joined by the new, popularly elected Geelong mayor, Keith Fagg. It was a delight to meet Keith and to be able to congratulate him on attaining his new position. I was also joined by Mr Koch, Andrew Katos, the member for South Barwon in the Assembly, and the local ward councillor, Kylie Fisher.

The event marked the beginning of the new display village that will support the sale of the private homes being constructed as part of this \$80 million investment

in the New Norlane initiative. The old Yooringa Avenue flats in Norlane at the entrance to Geelong were an eyesore that stood there for many years. Those outdated and tired flats have now gone, making way for the space that will be the site of the display village. The village will be completed in March 2013, when it will be open to the public. This initiative will deliver 160 new public homes and 160 new affordable homes by 2015. Construction of the public housing is well under way, with 14 properties completed and tenanted and another 11 under construction.

Hamlan Homes, Porter Davis Homes and Burbank will deliver the private properties and also half of the public housing properties, with smaller builders also being engaged to complete the social housing side of the initiative. All the builders recognise the opportunity to put back into the community as part of this project and to partner with government to make the Corio-Norlane area an attractive place for young families to live, making it once again a vibrant community.

While I was there I also took the opportunity to catch up with the community advisory committee, which is chaired very well by my colleague David Koch. It was clear from the community representatives who sat around that table, including local residents, councillors, employer groups and key community stakeholders, that there is a passion about this initiative and what it can achieve in Norlane. I would like to thank the respective organisations — Hamlan Homes, Porter Davis and Burbank — for their support of this project, and I look forward to working with them over the life of the project.

Answers

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — On 11 October I asked the Minister for Planning whether he would be attending a \$2000-per-head fundraiser and whether or not there would be developers present amongst the guests. The minister said he would check his diary and get back to me. I was wondering if he has had an opportunity to do so.

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thought question time was over, but if there is a question on notice that is outstanding from Mr Tee, I will address it.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It was a question without notice, and the minister gave an undertaking that he would get back to Mr Tee.

Hon. M. J. GUY — I did not say I would take it on notice; I said I would get back to him. I am not sure what he is asking me.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I certainly do not have any power that allows me to direct the minister to provide an answer based on his undertaking to the house. If the member is aggrieved that that answer has not been forthcoming, as stated in the minister's undertaking to the house or to himself, then he obviously has the opportunity of placing a notice of motion on the paper or indeed, as the minister has invited him, putting the question on notice. There are other avenues available. I regret that I am not able to direct the minister to do anything further than providing the previous answer he gave to the house.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I desire to move, by leave:

That this house notes the minister's failure to meet his obligation to this house when he undertook to provide Mr Tee with information that he did not have available in answer to a particular question, and, further, that the house calls on the minister to honour that commitment and that this be debated forthwith.

Leave refused.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Reference

Debate resumed.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — Before the interruption for question time I was saying it is quite ridiculous for the government to suggest that the opposition has changed its position from one that was expressed several years ago — I think about eight — when the minister of the day said there were opportunities for different forms of gas exploitation in Victoria, particularly based on exploitation of gas associated with brown coal reserves. To suggest that saying Victoria had that opportunity and it needed to be explored rules out any prospect for us, now in opposition, to propose that there be a proper and full inquiry into all the issues associated with unconventional gas exploitation and that that would be an inconsistent position just makes no sense at all.

Some time ago the opposition announced it would be calling for a moratorium on coal seam gas exploration. We made that announcement a considerable time ago. What we are asking for is that the government reconsider its position, given that it has also now come on board in relation to a moratorium on coal seam gas.

It did so in a media release put out some months ago by Mr O'Brien, the Minister for Energy and Resources. What is in that media release contrasts with what Mr O'Brien said a few months before that, when he accused Labor of hypocrisy on this matter. We are saying there is now a new environment where the exploitation of coal seam gas is more viable because of a change in financial positions and pricing. We are with the community, particularly in Eastern Victoria Region, the electorate I represent, and in parts of Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley, in saying that before we hurtle down this road, let us have a look at the detail, the risks and, if you like, the advantages.

I see no problem with having an investigation into this matter and referring it to a joint parliamentary committee in an environment where both the government and the opposition are now at one in terms of having a moratorium. What a perfect time to have a joint parliamentary committee undertake an inquiry — when there is a moratorium — looking at this matter in detail and giving the community the opportunity to have some input into this process. It is all very well for the government to say its position is that it will undertake the inquiry and come to the conclusion, but we say let us have a proper inquiry where the public — the people who are concerned about this matter and who are potentially affected by this kind of gas exploitation — can have an opportunity to have some input.

Mr Drum said the parliamentary Environment and Natural Resources Committee is already booked up with references and that we cannot send this reference to it. I remind the house that we initially proposed this moratorium some six months ago, on 2 May. At that time the Environment and Natural Resources Committee was not fully booked, apparently, because it got a reference from the government on 10 October this year. When this action was initially proposed by the opposition, that committee must have had the capacity to undertake a new reference because the government itself gave that committee a reference just last month. The defence there is a little thin.

We are saying that while there is a moratorium there is nothing to be lost by having a proper parliamentary inquiry, where members of all parties can be represented and heard, where the industry and those affected can make submissions and where, with goodwill, I am sure, a joint position on the future of this industry can be obtained. Even if that were not the case, an inquiry would allow all of the issues associated with this industry to be drawn together and worked through, and those affected and concerned in the community would have the opportunity to hear evidence from

others, to provide their own information and evidence and to express their views and concerns.

During question time Mr Guy started making comments about whatever job he thinks I might be doing, not doing or wanting to do in this place. Let me assure the house that I have one primary job in this place, and that is to represent the people of Eastern Victoria Region. I intend to do that to the best of my ability. What the people of Eastern Victoria Region are seeking is an opportunity to have input into this matter and to be able to express their concerns. I call on all members of the house to recognise that the people in our community in Victoria want an inquiry and want us to use the opportunity of this moratorium to undertake a proper inquiry.

I call on all members of the house to join with me in doing my job of representing that community. Mr O'Donohue, Mr Hall and Mr Philip Davis might want to join with me and Mr Scheffer, who has already spoken on this matter, and recognise that the people in our electorate want an inquiry and want this matter fully investigated. Those members should join with us in doing our job, which Mr Guy questions I am doing, in representing those people and having an inquiry. I call on the house to support Mr Lenders's motion.

Sitting suspended 12.58 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — My reply to this debate will be quite brief given that both you, Deputy President, speaking as a member for Eastern Victoria Region, and Mr Scheffer rebutted most of the points that were raised by speakers from the other parties during the debate. In summing up, it is worth reflecting on what is being proposed. It is hardly radical to have the Victorian Parliament use the resources of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee to investigate the effects of a form of mining and mining exploration in Victoria.

The multiple arguments used by government members have been strange. The first is that the committee is too busy doing important government business. I would have thought that if this house wanted to send a reference to a committee, it would be the prerogative of the house to do so on the reference's merits. The house should not kowtow to the executive government because, in its wisdom, it thinks there are more important references to give to a committee. That is rebuttal point no. 1.

The second argument is that this work is already being done by the Department of Primary Industries, which has had 200 people cut out of it, and the Department of

Sustainability and Environment, which has had 400 people cut out of it. These departments have had to do things like hunt for big cats. If you look at the latest Liberal Party state council motion about possums found in the metropolitan area being implanted with contraceptives, and I might say that it is a motion that every Liberal member of Parliament voted for — I hope The Nationals stand up to them in cabinet —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I can say to Mr Ramsay that the Labor Party has not had a policy moved by its Albert Park and South Melbourne branches to mandate contraception for possums. That has not been our priority, but it has been one for the parliamentary Liberal Party, including every Liberal member of the Victorian Parliament, who let it go through unanimously. If Mr Ramsay thinks it is more important to give contraceptives to possums than to deal with fracking and coal seam gas, I will take my hat off to him, but I will suspect that aliens have taken over his body!

Going back to rebutting the arguments we have heard, I turn to the argument that the Victorian Parliament conducting an inquiry into the effects of these forms of exploration will somehow or other slow down a process of mining, which is I think what Mr Elsbury and Mr Drum were saying. It is a long time since Lyndon Johnson reportedly said that Gerald Ford could not walk and chew gum at the same time. The Victorian government is capable of doing whatever it needs to do with the depleted Department of Primary Industries and the depleted Department of Sustainability and Environment and a parliamentary committee inquiring into what is happening below the soil in Gippsland and other parts of Victoria. Conducting a bit of an inquiry into what happens to the aquifers with certain types of exploration or mining will not in any way, shape or form affect jobs or gas prices when, as Mr Elsbury said, the minister has put a moratorium on exploration.

We need to move away from the defeatist position of the current government — that is, that if an idea is not its, it is bad, and that if anyone comes to the conclusion that more information is a good thing to have, you ridicule them. The Minister for Energy and Resources has done a total backflip between opposition to a motion on 2 May when it was ‘fracking hypocrisy’, to quote from his press release, and August when suddenly he embraced it all. Then we had Mr Elsbury and Mr Drum quoting from speaking notes from the 2 May debate and quoting Labor ministers from the last Parliament rather than referring to the actual changed circumstances.

The proposition before the house is to send a reference to a parliamentary committee to inquire into a number of things but fundamentally to inquire into what happens below the surface in the aquifers if these forms of exploration and mining take place. It will not stop anything that is happening now. It will add to the information base available for decision-makers to form an opinion. The government’s feeble defence is that somehow or other the commonwealth is examining the scientific evidence, but it is the same commonwealth about which government members say they cannot trust to examine the scientific evidence in relation to climate change, the Murray-Darling Basin and cows.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr LENDERS — That is right, Mr Leane, cows, or whatever the new euphemism the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Mr Smith, uses for them — those mobile fuel reduction units. On that basis, I urge the house to support the motion.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 18

Barber, Mr	Pakula, Mr
Broad, Ms	Pennicuik, Ms
Darveniza, Ms	Pulford, Ms
Eideh, Mr	Scheffer, Mr
Elasmar, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Somyurek, Mr
Hartland, Ms	Tarlamis, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Tee, Mr
Leane, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Tierney, Ms
Lenders, Mr	Viney, Mr

Noes, 20

Atkinson, Mr	Hall, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Coote, Mrs	Koch, Mr
Crozier, Ms	Lovell, Ms
Dalla-Riva, Mr	O’Brien, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Davis, Mr D.	O’Donohue, Mr
Davis, Mr P.	Ondarchie, Mr
Drum, Mr	Petrovich, Mrs
Elsbury, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Finn, Mr	Ramsay, Mr
Guy, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr

Pairs

Mikakos, Ms	Kronberg, Mrs
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Motion negatived.

ALCOA (PORTLAND ALUMINIUM SMELTER) (AMENDMENT) ACT AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Introduction and first reading

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Alcoa (Portland

Aluminium Smelter) (Amendment) Act 1984 and for other purposes.

Read first time; by leave, ordered to be read second time forthwith.

Statement of compatibility

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (charter act), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Alcoa (Portland Aluminium Smelter) Bill 2012.

In my opinion, the Alcoa (Portland Aluminium Smelter) Bill 2012 as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The purpose of the bill is to repeal section 14 of the Alcoa (Portland Aluminium Smelter) Amendment Act 1984, which would have the effect removing special exemptions to freedom of information law for matters affecting or relating to the Alcoa smelters at Portland and Port Henry.

Human rights issues

Human rights protected by the charter that are relevant to the bill.

Freedom of expression

Section 15(2) of the charter act provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds. The right to receive and impart information and ideas under section 15(2) of the charter act has been held to create a positive obligation on government to give access to government-held documents (freedom of information) (*XYZ v. Victoria Police (General)* [2010] VCAT 255).

The freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas is enhanced by the bill, as it removes barriers to accessing information.

Conclusion

I consider that the bill is compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Greg Barber, MP

Second reading

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

This is a very straightforward bill. It removes from our freedom of information laws an exemption which, to

the extent that it was ever necessary, no longer has any legitimate purpose.

Section 14 of the Alcoa (Portland Aluminium Smelter) (Amendment) Act 1984 exempts from the operation of the Freedom of Information Act 1982 any document relating to the ‘operation or carrying-on of the smelter site or anything done or to be done on or in relation to the smelter site’.

The exemption arose out of the agreements between the Victorian government and Alcoa to continue construction of the Portland aluminium smelter in 1984.

The Premier of Victoria at the time, Mr Cain, was concerned about trade secrets of Alcoa and other parties, which, he said during the debate:

‘could not be made public without commercial disadvantages to the bodies involved.’¹

The exemption was aimed squarely at commercially sensitive documents. It was created, he said, so that:

‘companies that signed heads of agreement and other prospective participants in the joint venture will accordingly be reassured that information about trade secrets and documents of a sensitive commercial nature will be declared to have clear exempt status for freedom of information purposes.’

Mr Cain went on to describe the amount of information that had already been made public by the government with the support of Alcoa, pursuant to:

‘commitment to open and frank disclosure within sensible commercial limits.’

Earlier this year, the Environment Protection Authority used section 14 to refuse access to an air emissions study and human health risk assessment related to the Alcoa coalmine and power station at Anglesea. Alcoa had been required to undertake the assessment in the lead-up to a review of the EPA licence for the site.

In the contemporary interpretation, this exemption acts in a manner so broad as to exempt all information, not just the trade secrets and other commercial information for which the exemption was made.

Removal of section 14 will not harm Alcoa’s commercial interests.

Any of the documents under the original 1984 agreements, or any new documents containing commercially sensitive information, would be covered by the exemption under section 34 of the Freedom of Information Act 1982, which states:

¹ Hansard, Legislative Assembly, 6 September 1984 (p. 172)

34 Documents relating to trade secrets etc.

- (1) A document is an exempt document if its disclosure under this act would disclose information acquired by an agency or a minister from a business, commercial or financial undertaking and the information relates to —
- (a) trade secrets; or
- (b) other matters of a business, commercial or financial nature and the disclosure of the information would be likely to expose the undertaking unreasonably to disadvantage.

S. 34(1)
substituted by
No. 57/1999
s. 7(1)

Currently, section 14 is being used to prevent access to public health information of interest to the residents of Anglesea.

This provision is unnecessary today and should be removed, to bring Alcoa's operations and interactions with government under the same freedom of information regime as every other commercial enterprise in Victoria.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr ELSBURY (Western Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 28 November.

TOBACCO AMENDMENT (SMOKING IN OUTDOOR AREAS) BILL 2012

Introduction and first reading

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Tobacco Act 1987 to prohibit smoking in certain outdoor areas and for other purposes.

Read first time.

HEALTH SERVICES: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes that two years after being elected the Baillieu-Ryan government has failed Victoria in health service development and further notes its actions in shutting down scrutiny of health services in Victoria.

I express my disappointment on behalf of Victorian citizens and patients that it is incumbent upon me in this

Parliament to continue to draw attention to the failings of the Baillieu government in health delivery in Victoria and to continue to remind the government of promises it made to the electorate.

At the last election the coalition made a number of commitments that gave the Victorian community the impression that it intended to improve the health-care system to ensure that elective surgery waiting lists were reduced, that response times in emergency departments and for ambulances improved, that the amount of time patients spent being transferred from ambulances into emergency departments would improve and that the transition of patients from emergency departments into hospital beds would improve. Two years later I am very sorry to report that those indicators of hospital performance have instead deteriorated during the life of the Baillieu government.

Of recent times we have seen the extraordinary behaviour of the health minister in Victoria, who has been crying poor over the contribution of the commonwealth in terms of its commitment to the national health agreement and crying poor over the amount of funds that have been provided by the commonwealth to support the health-care system in Victoria. This has been at a time when the commonwealth investment in health in Victoria has been at a record high and at a time when the commonwealth government, during the course of this current financial year, will contribute in excess of \$3.6 billion of revenue to Victoria specifically for health.

On a number of occasions in the past few sitting weeks I have drawn the attention of the house to the fact that when this matter is raised with the Victorian health minister — when he is asked whether he can guarantee that every cent provided by the commonwealth for health purposes in Victoria is spent by the Victorian government within the hospital system — he refuses to confirm it, a clear indication that there is not a passing through of the full dollar amount of the commonwealth's contribution to Victoria for health. Clearly within the Victorian budget there is some degree of siphoning occurring in relation to that \$3.612 billion worth of commonwealth investment.

This has not prevented the Victorian government from complaining about an adjustment to commonwealth payments. In fact the Victorian Minister for Health and a number of his government colleagues have taken to the airwaves and gone to the local papers, bemoaning the erosion of commonwealth money — at a time when commonwealth investment is higher than ever before — and identifying financial adjustments made

by the commonwealth in its forward estimates and complaining about their impact.

The hypocrisy of this is quite extraordinary, because those savings that have been identified in the commonwealth forward estimates will not prevent the commonwealth from significantly increasing its investment in health over the next four budget cycles. As recently as yesterday I outlined to the house that the current estimates are that the commonwealth contribution to health in Victoria will grow incrementally over the next four-year period from \$3.612 billion in 2012–13 to \$4.541 billion in 2015–16. In case I have confused anybody, that equates to an increase of about 25 per cent that will be occurring from 2012–13 to 2015–16, culminating in more than \$4.5 billion that will be coming to Victoria for health purposes in 2015–16 — a very significant contribution.

The Victorian government has taken that money for granted. Not only has it taken that money for granted but it has also cried poor as the commonwealth has adjusted its forward estimates figure to maintain that level of support at the very same time that the first two budgets submitted by the Baillieu government have identified a total of \$616 million coming out of the health portfolio.

For those members on the government benches opposite who may be confused about this issue, I would be very happy to outline that the government's own budget papers in the first two budget cycles clearly indicate that degree of saving anticipated within the Baillieu government's budgets over the next four years. If anybody doubts that figure, they should look at the cumulative total of what appears on page 112 of budget paper 3 for the 2011–12 Victorian state budget, which identifies a saving figure in the table that is provided, and add that figure to the figure on page 23 of budget paper 3 for the 2012–13 Victorian state budget. The cumulative effect of the budget savings identified on those two pages in the health budgets allocated by the Baillieu government — in the 2011–12 and 2012–13 budgets, in the forward estimates — is \$616 million out of the health system at a time when it continues to flounder.

This is also at a time when we see — time and again — articles, media commentary and community concern about poor outcomes in the health system. Just recently we have seen reports in various news outlets, originating from Australian Associated Press Newswire, relating concerns about maternity wards that are overflowing in Victorian growth areas. One such article appeared on 23 October. On 3 October, just a

few weeks earlier, there was an article in the *Herald Sun* which said that one in four patients was missing out and that the sick must wait in Victorian hospitals.

There have been articles about specific concerns that have appeared all over the state. As far back as May this year we have seen recurring stories about concerns at the Kyneton hospital. There was an ABC news report on Friday, 18 May, asking whether the Kyneton hospital was sick or fighting fit. As I said, we have seen articles that appeared as far back as May, at the time of the budget, about relationships in the Kyneton hospital and saying the atmosphere at the hospital was poisonous.

We have had a number of calls on the Victorian health minister to intervene in such areas. We hear from individual patients who have had adverse outcomes. We hear, from time to time, from doctors and nurses working within our hospital systems, and we certainly hear from patients across Victoria that they are very distressed about the deterioration in hospital performance.

Health performance data released recently by the Baillieu government shows a number of distressing trends. I would like to highlight, in particular, some of the adverse outcomes that have been occurring in regional hospitals across Victoria. For instance, on the important measure of the number of patients treated in emergency departments within the time designated for their various categories of acuity and condition, we have seen a deterioration during the course of the last 12 months of the reporting cycle, which was the financial year 2011–12.

This has occurred at the Ballarat hospital, the Central Gippsland Health Service, the Latrobe Regional Hospital, the Shepparton hospital and South West Healthcare. All have shown a deterioration in being able to deal with those patients in a timely fashion. In fact looking at the important measure of the number of patients who are transferred from the emergency department into a hospital bed within 8 hours, it can be seen that the number has similarly decreased during the course of the reporting period at the Ballarat hospital, the Latrobe Regional Hospital and South West Healthcare in Warrnambool. Very distressingly for the residents in and around the Bass Coast Regional Health Service we have seen a remarkable deterioration in its performance by that measure. In fact in only 49 per cent of cases were patients transferred from emergency departments into hospital beds in under 8 hours.

I am certain that that situation is very stressful not only for patients of the Bass Coast Regional Health Service

but also for the doctors, nurses and other support staff who are obviously working under great pressure. Those measures are quite indicative of outcomes for patients in emergency departments across regional Victoria, but equally as alarming are the lengthening elective surgery waiting lists in those hospitals.

This is a government that came to office complaining about the length of the waiting lists under the Labor administration. There were somewhere in the order of 38 000 patients waiting for elective surgery in Victoria when the change of government occurred in 2010. Two years later the number is in excess of 46 000. There has been an increase of 8000 in the number of patients who are on waiting lists, so unsurprisingly, given that unfortunate trajectory of the elective surgery waiting lists, we see a very alarming situation for general surgery patients who are waiting for surgery at the Ballarat hospital, for instance. Its waiting list now is in excess of 1200 patients. The Bendigo hospital has almost 1000 patients on its waiting list, which is an increase from 665 in the previous year. There are more than 2100 patients on the waiting list at the Geelong hospital, and we see an alarming 778 patients on the waiting list at the West Gippsland hospital in Warragul.

This means that patients are waiting longer. A concrete measure of what those increases mean to patients on that list is they are clearly waiting longer for their surgery. At Geelong, for instance, the median time for patients to be admitted for elective surgery has increased during the last year, from 29 days at the beginning of the reporting period to 52 days — almost double. It is quite alarming that this health minister has spent his time overseeing hospital contracts that have allowed those outcomes to occur. He has been an inadequate advocate around the cabinet table in Victoria for the resourcing requirements of the health system, and he has allowed a situation where he and his colleagues have imposed \$616 million worth of savings in the forward estimates period at a time when the performance of the health system continues to deteriorate.

The extraordinary response of this health minister in Victoria is not to assume responsibility for better outcomes, not to be seen as an advocate for more resources from the state to remedy this problem, not to intervene in any of these hospital situations and certainly not to roll his sleeves up and become involved with the staff and administration of these hospitals to try to remedy the situation. A glaring example is at Kyneton hospital where there has been a crisis in administration and confidence in the doctors and nursing staff for the entirety of this year. The minister has run away from his responsibilities and instead

concentrated on castigating the federal government in a variety of ways.

The remarkable way this health minister has been an oppositional minister rather than being a minister who assumes responsibility for delivering better outcomes can be seen in the extraordinary publication that he generated and distributed far and wide across the Victorian electorate earlier this year. It is an extraordinary DL piece of correspondence — a postcard that criticises the federal government for the introduction of the carbon tax. The citizens of Victoria paid for this disgraceful publication, which is quite disingenuous in suggesting that the imposition of the carbon tax is leading to adverse outcomes within Victorian hospitals to the tune of \$13 million, according to a piece of research that the minister commissioned. In actual fact the commonwealth is contributing \$3.612 billion to health care in Victoria. In fact the net outcome of the commonwealth's contribution to health care in Victoria is \$3.6 billion in excess of the amount that the minister complains is affecting the running costs of hospitals.

The minister was so proud of this document that he distributed thousands of copies of it across the Victorian electorate, but his name authorising this document appears in what according to my estimate would be 2 point font at the bottom of the document. He does not identify himself as the health minister in Victoria, and at no stage does he draw attention either to his authority as a member of the Victorian Parliament or his ministerial responsibility, yet this did not prevent him from distributing this material. Such is the priority of this minister, such is his sense of the order of magnitude of the challenges he is confronted with in his portfolio that he dedicates his effort, his political life, to distributing this mischievous document rather than assuming responsibility for getting his hands dirty by getting in there, getting more resources from the Victorian budget for the hospital system and assisting managers, the boards of hospitals and the doctors and nurses who are at the coalface every day in trying to provide better quality health care for Victorians. The minister is nowhere to be seen in that regard.

Time and again the minister is missing in action and refuses to take responsibility for those outcomes. But he does have a responsibility. It is incumbent upon me and other members of the Parliament, members of the community and the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Nurses Federation and other relevant stakeholders across the health-care system in Victoria to, in an organised fashion, continue to remind him of his obligations and that he needs to get more resources

into the system and to actually deliver the outcomes that he promised.

It is a tragedy for Victorian patients. It is difficult to understand the time frame involved in the redevelopment of a number of different infrastructure projects, which the incoming Baillieu government committed to and the community had every expectation would be delivered within this term of office. The Baillieu government inherited a capital investment program which had been undertaken by the Labor administration and which saw a large number of redevelopments occur each and every year of the 11 years of the Bracks and Brumby governments. The infrastructure investment of those governments averaged out to be \$581 million for each and every year of the life of those governments — quite an extraordinary achievement.

Unsurprisingly, during the period of that investment we saw the redevelopment of the Royal Women's Hospital, the completion of the Austin Hospital, the new Royal Children's Hospital and major redevelopments in the health-care system right across Victoria. Further future commitments were made in relation to the redevelopment of the Bendigo hospital, the Box Hill Hospital and the Monash Children's hospital. The level of investment for those major projects was squared away in the forward estimates of the outgoing Labor government, so the money had been identified to make them happen during the life of this government.

But what have we seen during the two years of the life of this government? I use the word 'life' in a very generous fashion because it has been more of a period of inertia rather than life. How much activity have we seen at the Bendigo hospital? At the Bendigo hospital we have not seen any development occur during the first two years of this government.

Mrs Petrovich interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — I cannot quite take up the interjection; I probably will not. But what I can say, and what I am quite happy to respond to at any point in time, is that it was the intention of the outgoing Labor government to complete the Bendigo hospital during the course of this term. It was our commitment and the funds were available to complete the project during the life of this Parliament. But the extraordinary thing is that under the current government here we are, two years later, and not one brick has been laid and not one pillar is in place.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mrs Petrovich interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — I guarantee that I will be listening wholeheartedly to the contribution from Mrs Petrovich, without interruption, because I do not need to be ashamed of the commitment that we made. Our commitment was substantial. The project would have been completed during the course of this term, and the sorry situation for the residents of Bendigo and the patients and staff is that nothing has occurred. In fact the latest estimates on the progress of that work are that nothing will occur until the end of the first quarter of 2013. We are probably still six months away from any work happening to rebuild the Bendigo hospital. By that stage that will have comprised nearly two-thirds of the term of the Baillieu government — two-thirds of a four-year term, the only term in which the people of Victoria have invested in it. On the current estimation it will be two-thirds of the way through that term before any work will have commenced on the Bendigo hospital. What an unfortunate situation, if not a sick joke, being perpetrated on the people of Bendigo.

Unfortunately they are not alone. We only need to look at the Monash Children's hospital redevelopment, which was promised by the outgoing Labor government. The incoming Baillieu government promised to build it, but what have we seen during the course of these last two years? Effectively nothing. The completion of the Monash Children's hospital is not shown in the investments in the forward estimates, after two budgets, of the Baillieu government. That is another project the Baillieu government, before it got into office, promised it would deliver during the course of this term. It is going to go out of office — potentially — or confront the people of Victoria at the next election. That project will not be completed; in fact, it may have barely started. This government will be relying on two terms, at best, to deliver that important project for all the children and their families of the south-east who are relying on that improved quality of care.

I refer to the Box Hill Hospital redevelopment. Today in question time the Minister for Health got up and talked about the Box Hill Hospital. Yes, it may well be a good thing that he has reconfigured the hospital and it may be a great hospital, but when asked, 'When will it be completed?', first of all he told us 2014, but he immediately corrected himself and said, 'Oh no, 2015' — at the end of 2015. Out of the mouth of the health minister we heard that the best outcome for the people of Box Hill and surrounds is that they are not going to get a hospital in 2012, they are not going to get it in 2013, they are not going to get it in 2014 — they may get it at Christmastime in 2015, if things go to

plan. But the way the world works it will probably have kicked into 2016, which will still be four years from now, before they get the Box Hill Hospital redevelopment, of which the minister was so proud to talk about in question time today. It is still four years away.

That is disappointing for the people of Victoria who had high hopes that this government would deliver on what it promised. It was going to deliver better outcomes and it was going to get on with those projects. It was going to make things better in elective surgery, in emergency departments and with ambulances, but we see time and again that it just cannot make it happen. An extraordinary measure of not being able to make it happen is the fact that the commonwealth government entered into an agreement with Victoria in the last 18 months to redevelop 11 services across regional Victoria as a priority. They include projects in Albury, Geelong, Ballarat, Kilmore, Echuca, Kerang, Ararat, Colac, Kyneton, Timboon and Mildura, which are all fantastic projects. That is \$260 million worth of projects, of which the commonwealth is going to provide \$159 million.

Mr Leane — That's good.

Mr JENNINGS — That is \$159 million of it. They are all supposedly ready to make those services happen — whether it be cancer services, dental services or upgrades to dialysis units or to emergency departments. It is quite amazing and it is difficult for the people of Victoria to understand that the Baillieu government has not seen that as a priority. In the last two weeks, we have heard out of the mouth of the Victorian health minister that these projects have not happened because they are not a priority. They are not a priority. What sorts of priorities do you have if they are not to deliver better outcomes for the residents of those communities? What is a better priority than to provide those services, no. 1? Or, at a time of economic downturn, when the money is available from the commonwealth to underpin those investments, what is wrong with kick-starting the regional economy by making those building projects happen? What is wrong with getting local tradies and local contractors busy and making these facilities happen?

You have the double effect if you have an economic driver of activity within those regional towns and cities, and you have better health services delivered at the end of the project. The money is available from the commonwealth and is waiting to be spent, but the Victorian government cannot get its act together to make it happen. That is almost unbelievable, and it is extremely distressing for all the residents of those

communities, who have every right to expect better health-care outcomes and that their federal and state governments will get their act together and provide the money and the wherewithal to make those projects happen. Under the agreement it is the Victorian government's responsibility to project manage those commonwealth funds, allocate its own matching funds — not even 50-50 matching funds — and make it happen.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — Is that not a recurring theme that you, Mr Ramsay, are concerned about, along with the lethargy that you see around you within the government and the blasé attitude of ministers who, one by one, cannot be bothered? Mr Hall is a glaring exception to the rule. He is in the chamber with us. He is a shining-light example of ministerial commitment and concern. Every rule has its exception. In this instance I have embarrassed Mr Hall by identifying him as that exception.

We have inertia across the state of Victoria. We have adverse health impacts. We have projects waiting to happen that are not happening, and unfortunately the Victorian population is waiting longer for government action and better health-care outcomes than it has ever waited before. It is a challenge for this minister and this government to step up and respond to those challenges. We need to see an increase in the Victorian budget allocation. We need to stop penny pinching and taking out that \$616 million. Let us have a growth factor that actually deals with the demands of the health system into the future. That would mean not only that the Victorian government would steer better outcomes for patients, better support for doctors and nurses and quicker throughput times for all the care that is provided but also, if Victoria were to provide money up-front and show a bit of dash, that the Victorian government would capture matching funds from the commonwealth and ensure that performance payments would come from the national health agreement to increase the amounts I identified earlier.

The major risk at this moment to commonwealth funds coming to Victoria is not the decision the commonwealth makes about population growth into the future — that is in the margin. The real risk is that the Victorian government has not got the wherewithal and the get-up-and-go to capture the commonwealth matching funding that comes to Victoria and make that investment happen. There is the potential for great outcomes for patients and for staff who work within the system to deliver better health outcomes, but at the

moment the Baillieu government sits on its hands or runs away from people.

I am going to conclude my contribution with a running-away story. On the list of projects I have just referred to is a project in Mildura, the cancer service, which was jointly funded by the state and commonwealth governments. The Mildura hospital is currently under scrutiny because, as a hospital that was privatised under the Kennett administration, its contractual arrangements are up for renegotiation, and the current minister gives every impression by his actions, as distinct from his words, that he is very keen for that private operation to continue. So whilst that has not been formally concluded, all indications are that that private arrangement of the contracting out of the service at the Mildura hospital will continue. That has led to a degree of concern in the Mildura community. A campaign has been mobilised and reported on through the *Sunraysia Daily*, which covers issues of community interest. When the Victorian Minister for Health, Mr Davis, went up to Mildura in the last week he skipped into town and hoped to skip out without engaging with many members of the community. Indeed he wanted to make a pre-emptive strike to take credit for the funding arrangements for the new services there, even though significant money was allocated from the commonwealth.

The project at Mildura Base Hospital, the Ramsay Health Care redevelopment, is one of the 11 projects that I referred to. It is a \$14.37 million project of which the commonwealth government is providing \$9.37 million. Clearly the majority of the funding is coming from the commonwealth. That did not stop the Victorian Minister for Health going up and taking credit for the project. There was no shame involved in that process; significantly, there was no show either. When the community sought to engage with the Minister for Health and have a conversation about this matter he went missing. He went missing so completely that when he called the press conference he guaranteed that the *Sunraysia Daily* was not invited and did not know where that media event was to be held.

Such is the confidence and commitment of the Victorian health minister to local community engagement and to fronting up and communicating with people in an effective and respectful way. I am sure that he is doing very important things this afternoon — at least, I hope he is. I hope he is administering his responsibilities and delivering better health outcomes for Victorians, because he is certainly not here in the chamber eyeballing anybody in terms of his degree of accountability and responsibility. If he stands up and eyeballs the chamber, the community or

the citizens of Mildura, then that will be a good start compared to his current effort, which is to hurl some abuse and then run away. It is almost like a scene from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*: ‘Run away! Run away!’ It is unfortunate that running away from his responsibility is the hallmark of this minister.

Mr Ramsay — Didn’t you say, ‘In closing’, Mr Jennings? This is a long closure.

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, that is right. It is just about closed. I think Mr Ramsay intervenes, wanting to wind me up, because he is very mindful, as most members of the government and community would be, that it is excruciating to bear witness to the administration, or lack thereof, of this Minister for Health. That is what we are debating today, and that is what I am drawing attention to. The sooner this government takes action and fixes the situation the better.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! In calling the next speaker I wish to clarify the order of debate that ought to occur in general business. It is a practice I have known has occurred in the chamber over three parliaments, but there is sometimes some confusion about the order of business for general business. It is not dissimilar to the order of speakers for bills. I will be calling Ms Hartland from the Greens, and I give the explanation that the general principle is that the third party will be asked to speak after the mover of the motion, who in general business would be a non-government member. That would then establish the position — in this case of the Greens — and then I would call a member of the government. Debate would then be in the normal order of speakers for and against the motion. I am just trying to make clear why I am calling in that order and to provide some guidance for the house. It is similar to the way debate occurs on legislation.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I will make my contribution quite brief. Today I am going to pose a number of questions for the government. My experience of what I am seeing, or not seeing, in health is of great concern to me. There is a lack of maternity services in the growth areas. I requested that Mr Davis attend a public meeting in the growth areas, but unfortunately at this stage we have not had a response. I would have thought that if he was very confident about this government’s record on maternity services, he would have absolutely jumped at the opportunity to come out to Werribee and explain what the problem is and how it is going to be fixed.

There is a general lack of services in the growth areas, and it would be good if the government could talk

about how these things are going to be addressed. There appears to still be no progress on the dental clinic at the Western Region Health Centre. Are we going to be in a situation where it simply closes because of inaction?

During the election campaign 100 beds were promised within the first year of this government. We have not seen where those beds have been located or how they are being operated. With regard to ambulance services, there is still an ongoing problem with ramping at hospitals and an ongoing problem with ambulance officers having to work extraordinary hours, especially in rural areas.

This government has already had an unfortunate spate of industrial disputes with hospital staff. At the moment, as I understand it, the dispute with the medical physicists has still not been resolved. It would cost the government roughly \$2 million a year for a workforce which at the highest would be 56 people. It is not a big workforce, and the government should have been able to resolve the dispute. The nurses dispute went on for much longer than it should have, and it showed the utter disrespect that this government has for nurses.

Health should not be about point-scoring. It should be about how things are going to happen and how people are going to be able to access health services. I call on the government to answer some of those questions this afternoon and talk about what is going to happen, how the funding will occur and how the small services that are incredibly important to local communities are going to be dealt with.

At various times during these debates the government will make accusations against the opposition such as, 'You had 11 years'. It used to drive me quite batty in the last government when the Labor Party would do that to the opposition, saying it was all Mr Kennett's fault. The coalition parties are now in government, and it is their second year in government. In the first six months there can be a bit of leverage, but in the second year of government those involved should be able to say what it is they are going to do and how and when they are going to do it.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to speak on Mr Jennings's motion which states:

That this house notes that two years after being elected the Baillieu-Ryan government has failed Victoria in health service development and further notes its actions in shutting down scrutiny of health services in Victoria.

At the outset I have to refer to Ms Hartland's comments about the previous government's track record of criticising the then opposition over the 11 years Labor

was in power and the blame game that went on. It also used to drive me, to use her phrase, batty that Labor members blamed the Kennett government. Sometimes the issues Labor members were talking about happened 15 or 16 years earlier. Many of the health reforms made by the Kennett government in the early 1990s have stood the health system in this state in good stead. That casemix model is now being looked at from a commonwealth perspective across the nation. There were some very good initiatives.

I do not want to go too far on the blame game train, and obviously I was not a member of the opposition at the time, but I want to point out some aspects of what this government found on coming into government and particularly the projects referred to by Mr Jennings in his contribution to the debate. I cannot let this opportunity pass without referring to the Auditor-General's report in October on the miserable failings of the previous government's administration of a whole range of projects. It was really a debacle.

We know what those projects were. There is myki and the desalination plant, which will cost Victorians \$1.8 million a day for the next 27-plus years. These are legacies that we are dealing with. There is the Melbourne wholesale market project in my area of Southern Metropolitan Region and the Princes Pier project, which has a four-year overrun. These projects are costing huge amounts of money, millions of dollars in overruns, and they were under the administration of the previous government. It had 11 years of enormous income and did very little in terms of planning.

There has been a significant population increase in this state over the period of the Labor government and now into this government's term. It is encouraging for all Victorians to know that we live in a fantastic state. We live in the most livable city in the world, and that is something of which all Victorians can be very proud. However, the planning challenges are significant in relation to the numbers of people who are needing hospital services in our cities — as well as in our regional areas — and putting an extra burden on those health services. Very little planning was done to take into consideration the enormous numbers of people that have come to the state over the past decade or so.

I know Ms Hartland is passionate about health service delivery. She brings up a lot of issues about health-care delivery, and in many respects they are also issues of concern for me because I worked in the public health sector, especially on the front line in service delivery, for 14-plus years. Those issues are significant. Our doctors and nurses in the public health sector do a tremendous job. There is no question about that. It is

challenging, difficult and often unpredictable. The nature of health is that it is complex and unpredictable. There are certain things that we can do, should do and can do much better. However, it takes a lot of planning and a lot of support for our health services. As we have an ageing population and the complex health needs will be ever-increasing for that particular cohort of people, the demands on our health services are only going to increase.

I think it is imperative that governments support health-care services, and I want to get to the recent midyear economic outlook in relation to what the federal government has done to our Victorian health services, which will have a major impact for the end consumer — that is, the patient. In Victoria we have lost \$50 million in commonwealth funding for elective surgery and \$6.1 billion in GST revenue, and we know there are going to be changes to the private health insurance scheme at a federal level. I think that is absolutely damning.

Mr Ramsay — Shame!

Ms CROZIER — There are so many people on low to middle incomes who rely on private health insurance, and they will be severely affected by the changes being made by the federal government. As Mr Ramsay has just interjected, I think it is an absolute shame. People have the right to choose their health-care services. I am very much of the view that public health services are there for those who are in most need and most vulnerable, and we need to support that. One way to put extra pressure and burden on those health services is to rip out private health insurance funding. As I said and I want to reiterate, it will have an enormous impact on our public hospitals and public health services right across the state.

Mention has been made of the carbon tax, and I also want to make mention of that. The simple fact is that our hospitals and health services are not getting any compensation from the federal government. It is not giving health services any compensation in relation to the carbon tax impost that will be applied across our public hospitals and health services, and of course our private hospitals also will be hit. We know that hospitals are very energy intensive. I have spoken about this issue in the past. Whether it be in our intensive care units, our emergency departments, the linen aspects, our operating theatres or just in the general running, a hospital does not shut down. It is a very energy intensive institution and facility, and the carbon tax will have an impact. There is not a shadow of a doubt about that.

The Alfred hospital and Monash Medical Centre are both in my area of Southern Metropolitan Region, and my constituents access those two very large public health institutions. The carbon tax will have a \$660 000 direct hit on the Monash Medical Centre, and the Alfred hospital will have a \$700 000 carbon tax impost. That has to impact on service delivery to those patients. I have said in the past that it is the consumer who will be affected, and in this instance the consumer is the patient. The money has got to come from somewhere, and it will be ripped out of those services. I think it is absolutely shameful that the federal government is putting those extra burdens on Victorian health services and ultimately Victorian patients.

As I mentioned at the outset, the commonwealth's midyear economic update will also have a major impact on health service delivery in Victoria, with \$435 million having been cut from the national health reform agreement over the next four years, including \$67.1 million cut in 2012–13 and \$230 million cut from Victorian dental funding — dental funding has been mentioned and these are real examples of where federal funding cuts will have an impact on service delivery to so many people who require those services.

In addition, the commonwealth has made further changes to the private health insurance scheme, which I have talked about. As I said at the outset, that is going to place an additional burden on our public health services, and more and more people are going to end up waiting for surgery, outpatient services or even the ability to access appropriate health services across Victoria.

The Minister for Health has said — and he has argued this very strongly — that those commonwealth cuts have been justified by a revision of population growth forecasts, and I think that is an extraordinary excuse. We know that the federal government is desperate to deliver a surplus. There has been no revenue from the so-called mining tax, and the federal Treasurer, Wayne Swan, is absolutely desperate, so they are looking for savings and are ripping money out of state budgets across the nation. In terms of the best interests of Victorian patients, I think what they are doing is absolutely deplorable. In contrast, Minister Davis has been arguing very strongly about those points, and I think he has made the case at a local level here in Victoria but also at a national level. He has argued very aptly for Victorian patients and Victorian health services.

In relation to those cuts that have been attributed to us, this year's Victorian budget showed a significant spend on health to maintain our services. In the 2012–13

financial year there will be \$13.7 billion for total health expenditure. That represents a \$618 million increase in health expenditure over and above last year's spending, so this government has put significant additional money into Victorian health services. This also represents a \$376 million increase in acute health expenditure over and above last year, so I think that to say the minister is missing in action and not doing anything for Victorian health services, and to apply that across the board, is, to say the least, quite inaccurate.

As we all know, it is a complex area. I am pleased to say that the minister has taken it very seriously and has put a lot of additional money into the areas which need it. I am pleased there has been an increase of \$883 million over four years in acute health expenditure, with \$603.5 million to increase the capacity of our hospitals and support demand growth. There is an extra \$44 million to maintain elective surgery capacity, and that is to partly fulfil a lapse in commonwealth funding. Ongoing elective surgery has been allocated an additional \$149.68 million. The organ retrieval and transplantation program is a very complex area that needs ongoing funding, not just acute and immediate attention when a situation arises, because there is an ongoing cost to recipients. I am pleased that an additional \$21 million has been allocated to that health area.

In addition to all of those aspects, Mr Jennings talked about regional areas not receiving enough attention — I cannot quite recall the words he used. However, I am pleased to say that there has been \$46 million allocated to provide extra beds at Ballarat base hospital, which honours an election commitment — —

Mr Ramsay — And a helipad.

Ms CROZIER — And a helipad, and Mr Ramsay will speak on that in more detail; I am sure his constituents in the Western Victoria Region are very happy with that outcome. It gives them access to metropolitan services in a far more timely manner. Anyone who has lived in the outer areas of Victoria knows how difficult it is to access an ambulance and get to major centres. As somebody who has worked in a country hospital in regional Victoria and seen some severe emergencies, I know only too well how much that helipad will benefit people living around Ballarat and in Western Victoria Region.

Ms Hartland spoke about maternity services, and she was referring specifically to the western metropolitan area. As somebody who has worked in that area, I am very aware of the ongoing demands. I think it is a good sign that with all the new babies we have a bit of a

population explosion, but maternity services are an area of concern. I know \$15 million has been put into the Sunshine Hospital intensive care unit to expand maternity services in the area. If Mr Elsbury were in the chamber, he might correct me, but I think the hospital was used as a film studio under the previous regime. So we can be proud of what we are doing: delivering services rather than filming a program that is not going to deliver one extra health service to Victorian patients, particularly in Ms Hartland's electorate of Western Metropolitan Region.

There are many other ongoing projects, and the coalition government should be very pleased with what it is doing. The floods in northern Victoria had a major impact on services there. They were an untoward circumstance that occurred at that time. The Charlton hospital needed to be rebuilt, and \$23 million has been put aside to co-fund that rebuild with the commonwealth. That demonstrates a huge commitment on the part of this government to honour areas that are in need. There are many other examples of specific projects that are under way.

Over and above all of those areas, there is \$100 million over four years to establish the Victorian Innovation, e-Health and Communications Technology Fund to support IT services across the health system. Again this has been a long running issue. We know that under the previous government the IT project HealthSMART was a complete debacle. This area is evolving all the time. It is necessary to get it right because IT is going to play a critical role in the delivery of health services not only immediately but into the future. I am pleased that a significant amount of money is being allocated towards it and that there is acknowledgement of this important area for the delivery of health services.

Returning to the Minister for Health's advocacy, Mr Jennings made reference to the minister being an inadequate advocate. That is very far from the truth.

Mr Jennings — How hard it was to say that!

Ms CROZIER — I have to say, Mr Jennings, that only a few days ago — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik) — Order! This is about the fourth time Ms Crozier has addressed a member, such as Ms Hartland and Mr Jennings, across the chamber. This is a very gentle reminder for her to speak through the Chair.

Ms CROZIER — Thank you for the reminder, Acting President; I will direct my comments through you in future. I was getting carried away by Mr Jennings's use of language when he called the

Minister for Health an 'inadequate advocate' for Victorian health services and Victorian patients. We saw the minister's advocacy demonstrated only a few days ago on 9 November at the Standing Council of Health meeting where all six state health ministers collectively expressed concern about the reduction in commonwealth hospital funding, its impact, the basis for the decision and the lack of any consultation prior to that decision being made. It is an absolute indictment of the federal government and the federal health minister to have no consultation at all in relation to these very crucial issues, especially when you are dealing with the area of health-care delivery and services and what those cuts are going to mean to Victorian patients.

As I have mentioned before in this house, those cuts are significant. They total \$107 million, made up of \$39.7 million from 2011–12 and \$67 million from 2012–13. The reduced commonwealth contribution paid directly to hospitals is scheduled to start on 7 December of this year, which is only a few weeks away. That is significant because we are halfway through this financial year, and if those cuts are applied, they are going to have a huge impact on services in Victoria.

What does that mean, and what does that look like? It means less beds, less nurses, less doctors, less outpatient services, less operations and less health service delivery right across every hospital and every health service in the state. That cannot be understated. These cuts would have an impact that would reflect poorly on health service delivery here in Victoria if they were to go ahead. The only people to blame are those in the federal government and the federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, who has been absolutely silent on this issue and has not listened to the six state health ministers.

The position of the six state health ministers is outlined in a communiqué of the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, which reads:

The state health ministers noted that the determination relating to the downward revision of the national specific purpose payments for health care was not made by the federal Minister for Health.

State health ministers expressed concern about the reduction in commonwealth health funding changes, which has resulted in:

retrospective and future reductions to state funding, which will seriously impact on state budgets that have already been set;

the factual basis of the decision relies on disputed population figures.

Concerns were raised about the lack of any consultation with states and territories prior to the decision.

State health ministers urged that the heads of Treasury convene urgently to discuss the commonwealth Treasurer's determination and report on the basis of this decision.

That is not one minister; that is not the Victorian Minister for Health; that is six state health ministers all coming to that conclusion. If they are coming to that conclusion, the federal government and the federal Minister for Health have an absolute obligation to justify that position. They should not go ahead with the cuts, because they are going to have significant impacts. From Southern Metropolitan Region I will use the example of Southern Health again, where there would be a reduction of \$13.7 million. That is in addition to the carbon tax impost and the other costs it is constantly facing. It is an indictment of the federal government. Alfred Health would have a reduction of \$7.9 million. They are enormous figures, and they go to the bottom line of how those two bodies can deliver health services to not only their local patients but also Victorian patients in general who come under their broader responsibility. The commonwealth should be condemned for that.

In conclusion, we will not be supporting Mr Jennings's motion. I say again that the federal government should be reviewing all those cuts and listening to the six state health ministers, who have put their argument very succinctly.

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — I rise to support the motion noting that, two years after being elected, the Baillieu-Ryan government has failed Victoria in health service development. I note that Ms Crozier in her contribution to the debate had a lot to say about the level of federal health funding to Victoria, which is in historical terms more health funding than Victoria has ever received before. She was conspicuously silent on the matter of the \$616 million in cuts by the Baillieu-Ryan government to health funding in Victoria, but I suppose we should not be surprised by that contribution.

Judging from the material being tested in focus groups by the government, the government appreciates that it has a problem and is busy testing excuses for non-delivery, including non-delivery of health service development. The excuses are wide ranging, but they certainly go to who the government might blame for failing to deliver over the two years it has been in government. That is fine. If members of the Baillieu-Ryan government want to spend their time testing spin and testing arguments in focus groups about who they can blame for their non-delivery, that is their choice.

The point is that prior to the last election two years ago, Mr Baillieu, who is now the Premier, said this was something he would never do in government. Now that he has been caught red-handed doing exactly what he said he would never do, all he has to say about it is, 'So what?'. We will see what the Victorian people think about a leader who promises never to focus on spin at the expense of delivery and then, when he is caught out, contemptuously says, 'So what?'.

The spin material being tested in focus groups by the government does not mention Mildura hospital, but I certainly intend to do so in my contribution because I believe it strongly demonstrates the case for the motion before the house. Mr Jennings has referred in his contribution to Mildura hospital's complex history, going back to the period of the Kennett government when the decision was made to replace the public hospital in Mildura with a privately owned, privately operated and publicly funded hospital, something which exists nowhere else in Victoria. I will not go over that in detail. Perhaps I can summarise that history by saying I acknowledge that it presents a lot of complexity in terms of how the current government deals with that situation.

I next refer to a visit in August 2011 by the Minister for Health in the Baillieu-Ryan government, David Davis, during which he referred to an election promise by the Baillieu-Ryan coalition to commit \$5 million for improved infrastructure at Mildura Base Hospital. In the release he issued at the time he acknowledged that the funding was in addition to \$2 million already committed jointly by the state and commonwealth to expand the emergency department and a further \$9.4 million committed under the 2011–12 national Health and Hospitals Fund. In total he referred to a \$16.4 million redevelopment of Mildura Base Hospital to improve emergency department services, the maternity unit and mental health services in particular. I might say that that visit by the health minister, Mr Davis, went rather better than his most recent visit, but I will come back to that.

Since Mr Davis issued this release on 25 August 2011 there have been many calls for him to provide information to the Mildura district about progress — any progress, really — on the expenditure of those funds committed to the redevelopment of Mildura Base Hospital. That could be progress in terms of plans, progress in terms of tenders or any progress at all. Mr Davis has been completely silent on any progress in relation to this commitment by the Baillieu-Ryan government in terms of either state or federal funds, which are much needed in the areas I have referred to at

the Mildura Base Hospital, and everyone in the Mildura district knows it.

I have acknowledged the difficulties and complexities around the arrangements put in place by the former Kennett government, and of course Mr Davis says he is yet to make a decision about whether he is going to continue those arrangements or is going to make a change. Notwithstanding where Mr Davis is up to in making that particular decision — a very important decision to the people of Mildura and surrounding districts in terms of the future of their hospital — the important fact remains that, notwithstanding election commitments made two years ago and announcements made on a number of occasions by the Minister for Health since then, the people of Mildura are yet to see any progress on or even any reports from the Minister for Health about any progress towards that redevelopment.

That is exactly what Mr Jennings's motion before the house is setting out — that is, that two years after being elected the Baillieu-Ryan government has failed Victoria in health service development. The people of Mildura strongly feel they have been failed in terms of progress on these much-needed investments in their local hospital.

Mr Davis finally decided to visit Mildura last week. What followed is best summed up by the headline in the *Sunraysia Daily* of 12 November 'Visit a "disaster" — Davis botches opportunity to explain position'. It was followed on 13 November by the headline 'Local MP avoids questions over Davis' visit', referring to Peter Crisp, the member for Mildura in the Assembly, who struggled to explain why he was given all of 1 hour's notice of the minister's arrival in Mildura for his 1 hour 45 minute whistlestop stopover, of which he failed to notify a great many other people as well.

Mildura locals are becoming used to the member for Mildura, Mr Crisp, being kept in the dark and treated like a mushroom, but they take offence when public advocates who have spoken up in support of their hospital and have been outspoken in local government elections are not given the courtesy of any notice that the minister is visiting or any invitation to meet with him. Admittedly the minister did not have a lot of time. When you subtract from the 1 hour 45 minutes stopover the time required for checking in and travelling to and from the airport, you realise he did not have much time to talk to anybody.

It is absolutely extraordinary that the minister has now extended an invitation to Mildura public health advocates to travel to Melbourne to meet with him.

These advocates, including representatives of the Reclaim Mildura Base Hospital group, have welcomed that invitation to meet with the minister in Melbourne. However, it is extraordinary that the minister did not feel that he had the time or that it was important to meet with these people in Mildura but he expects them to travel to Melbourne to meet with him. Clearly this involves time and significant expense, as anyone who lives in Mildura or the surrounding districts or visits on a regular basis — which Mr Davis obviously does not — understands very well. It is a major imposition on people, including members of the community with significant health issues, to have to travel to Melbourne to visit the minister. It really is rubbing salt into the wound that the minister had the opportunity to meet people when he was in Mildura but he did not even give them the courtesy of letting them know he would be there.

Not surprisingly, as a result of the contempt that the minister showed for the local community, members of the community have responded by issuing an invitation to the Premier to visit Mildura. The Premier has visited Mildura on more occasions than the Minister for Health.

Mr Ramsay — On a point of order, Acting President, I wonder if you could ask Ms Broad when she is going to get back to speaking on the motion rather than continuing the dummy spit we have had to endure for 12 minutes now about whether the minister was in Mildura for 45 minutes or 1 hour 45 minutes. I have not heard much about the motion before the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Crozier) — Order! There is no point of order. The member cannot debate the motion. I ask Ms Broad to continue.

Ms BROAD — I remind Mr Ramsay, through you, Acting President, that the reason all these people want to talk to Mr Davis — preferably in Mildura, but if they have to travel to Melbourne, those who can will — is to discuss when the minister will get around to letting them know when he might get around to ensuring that the promised investment in Mildura Base Hospital to address shortages in the emergency department and maternity and mental health areas will eventuate.

We have heard a lot of talk about these things from Mr Davis, but we have seen absolutely no action or willingness to indicate when something might happen, if ever. That is exactly the point of the motion before the house. It is about the lack of progress, two years into the life of the government, towards the delivery of promises around investment in health services. There

are many other examples I could refer to, but I am referring to this one because I believe it succinctly demonstrates the case that the motion before the house sets out.

Members of the Mildura community have invited the Premier to visit Mildura to hear their case since the health minister, despite being in Mildura last week, was not willing to do so. I also point out that the mayor and members of Mildura Rural City Council are not impressed that they were not given the opportunity to put their views about the future of Mildura Base Hospital to the Minister for Health.

I refer to a written adjournment response from Mr David Davis which was delivered to me at the end of the adjournment debate last night. It is dated 31 October and is in response to an adjournment matter relating to the future of Mildura Base Hospital which I put to the minister on 28 August. The minister signed this response on 31 October and it was delivered to me in the house last night. In the minister's reply he indicates:

I can advise that I have met with a number of representatives of the Sunraysia community in Melbourne and have visited the Mildura hospital.

Presumably he was referring to a visit in August last year. He goes on to say:

I am committed to continuing to engage with a broad range of representatives in Mildura when my parliamentary and other commitments allow.

After Mr Davis signed this response to me he did indeed visit Mildura, but he did not honour his commitment to engage with a broad range of representatives in Mildura when he had the opportunity. I join with local community members in Mildura and surrounding districts in expressing dismay — disgust even — at the treatment and the contempt that Mr Davis has meted out to them. I certainly endorse their call for the Premier to meet with passionate advocates for the Mildura Base Hospital in Mildura so that people who are not able to take up the minister's invitation to come to Melbourne to visit him have the opportunity to express their passionately held views about the future of the hospital and whether it should continue to be a privately owned, privately operated and publicly funded hospital or whether there should be some changes to those arrangements.

They should also have the opportunity to hear a report, preferably from the Minister for Health, but in the absence of such a report then a report from the Premier, about when the Baillieu-Ryan government expects to be able to honour the election promise it made to make

a \$5 million contribution towards the \$16.4 million redevelopment of the Mildura Base Hospital so that much-needed improvements in the emergency department, the maternity unit and mental health services can get under way. It is now two years since the government was elected. I absolutely sympathise with the people of Mildura, who feel that it is well and truly time the Baillieu-Ryan government at least indicated when it might do something about spending the funds and improving the services as promised.

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — As my Gran used to say, ‘A little bit of help is worth a lot of sympathy’, and after 11 years of neglect of many of the health services across Victoria, what we have heard in the chamber today in relation to this motion is nothing short of disgraceful. To compare what was done in the previous 11 years with what has been delivered by this government in two short years and the positive aspects of what has occurred in that time is nothing short of hypocritical.

If we look at the comparison between what occurred previously and the outcomes for Victorian families, we know we are dealing with increased and more complex health requirements for people in an ageing community. Obviously we need to be very responsible in the way we address these issues to ensure the provision of high-quality health services to the people of Victoria, and that is a challenge. But when we look at the \$364 million in health capital expenditure in the 2012–13 budget, it includes \$46 million for Ballarat. That was a commitment made and endorsed by members like Mr Koch and Mr Ramsay and includes a helipad for that hospital. There is \$15 million to expand maternity services at Sunshine Hospital. This hospital is in Labor’s heartland and it faces great need and great demand, and that has been met. There is \$23 million for the Charlton hospital, co-funded with the commonwealth. Many people were advocating for a new hospital at Charlton. There were some issues after the floods in making sure that we found a suitable site, but that has been delivered.

For Geelong Hospital there is \$93 million. There is \$40 million to expand the Frankston Hospital emergency department and \$10 million to upgrade Castlemaine hospital, including a second operating theatre. Castlemaine hospital is a good little hospital that delivers for that part of central Victoria. There is \$20 million to redevelop and expand Kilmore hospital, including 30 extra beds, and \$2 million to introduce chemotherapy services at Seymour hospital.

I question the motion before us today when we look at the statistics and the stage we have reached. When we

look at what we have had to do in spite of federal cuts to our overall budget and health services in recent times, we have achieved, and will continue to achieve for the people of Victoria.

If we want to talk about the Bendigo hospital, it was talked about for 11 years, and there was plenty of opportunity to deliver on a hospital that was way past its use-by date; it is the hospital that I was born in. Let us talk about the \$102 million larger capital contribution that was promised by the two local members, Bob Cameron, the member for Bendigo West in the Assembly at the time, and Jacinta Allan, the member for Bendigo East in the Assembly. Maree Edwards, who is now the member for Bendigo West in the Assembly, seems to have an awful lot to say about that now, but as a staffer for Bob Cameron she would have been privy to all those conversations about the needs of the people of Bendigo, which were largely ignored. They were strongly advocated for by my colleagues Wendy Lovell and Nationals member Damian Drum, with \$630 million being allocated to that hospital. It is progressing nicely; the planning is being worked through. Yet Ms Allan still wants a smaller hospital.

If I were a resident of Bendigo, I would be considering my options at the next state election after seeing what has been delivered in that community from a health services perspective and in spite of the \$630 million commitment and plan for a state-of-the-art facility which will service not only Bendigo but the whole of central Victoria. I just do not know about those Labor members. They just cannot get with the program; they cannot seem to support the people of that community.

Let us look at some of the sad things that have happened in recent times with regard to federal funding. At the Standing Council on Health meeting of 9 November all six state health ministers expressed concern about the commonwealth’s reduction of hospital health funding and the impact that will have on their states. The basis for that decision and the lack of any consultation prior to it being made is pretty typical of Labor. How the federal government can cut such a significant amount of money out of the health budget and expect things to be the same is nothing short of irresponsible.

The \$107 million reduction in funding to Victorian health services this financial year is made up of \$39.7 million in 2011–12 and \$67 million in 2012–13. This contribution was paid directly to the health services schedule to start on 7 December, almost halfway through the financial year. The commonwealth has claimed that the indexing arrangements set out in

the intergovernmental agreement by all states and territories are everybody else's fault, but those claims do not address the misappropriation of the Australian Bureau of Statistics population data. Once again Labor has fudged the figures. When it was last in government we saw waiting list after waiting list and a culture of fudging figures and misleading the community.

All state health ministers expressed concern about the reduction in commonwealth health funding. Cutting both retrospectively and into the future will have a serious impact on the bottom line of all state budgets. If Labor says it cares about the communities it purports to represent, it is a pretty low blow to attack people's health services. To pull money out of those health services when people are at their most vulnerable is nothing short of disgraceful.

I will give some examples. Mr Jennings cited a number of figures and I note that Ms Broad spoke about a number of things in Northern Victoria Region, which I also represent, though she seems to be pretty focused on Mildura hospital at the moment. That is interesting because when she was in government she avoided it. The Bracks government was more interested in putting a toxic waste facility there than anything else.

Let us look at what has been pulled out of Northern Victoria Region by the federal colleagues of this Labor opposition. There has been \$1.1 million taken out of health in Albury-Wodonga. At the little hospital at Alexandra, the opening of which I recently attended with Cindy McLeish, the member for Seymour in the Assembly, \$74 000 has been taken out. Then there is Alpine Health with \$140 000 being taken out; Beechworth Health Service, \$93 000; and Benalla Health, \$200 000. For the people of Bendigo, another blow — not only is Labor in denial about what sort of hospital should be built, it is still insisting on pulling \$2.9 million out of that health service.

Boort District Health Service, which has a great little hospital, has lost \$30 000. Then there is Castlemaine Health with \$240 000; Cobram, with \$78 300; and Cohuna, with \$64 000. Very few health services remain untouched by this insidious federal government. There has been \$14 000 taken out of Dunmunkle Health and \$400 000 taken out of Echuca regional health. I hear Mr Lenders speak about hospitals in Swan Hill and Echuca and the work that we are doing towards rectifying 11 years of neglect. He stood by when he was Treasurer and did not foresee any available funds and he stands by now and allows his federal colleagues to pull this money straight out of these services.

Heathcote Hospital, which services a great many people, has lost \$25 000. Inglewood and District Hospital has also lost \$25 000. Kilmore and District Hospital has lost \$140 000; Kyneton District Health Service, the operations of which others have waxed lyrical, has lost \$115 000. Sure, there are some problems there, but you only have to look at who has been on the board of that hospital to see some of its deeply entrenched Labor connections. Mansfield District Hospital has lost \$80 000. Maryborough District Health Service has lost \$175 000. The list goes on and on.

Then there is Mildura hospital, for which Ms Broad has been beseeching the government for help after 11 years of neglect under Labor. Her federal counterparts have ripped \$1.1 million out of that system.

Some \$1.1 million has come out of Northeast Health at Wangaratta, \$22 000 out of Omeo District Health and \$1.3 million out of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, which services not only patients in metropolitan Melbourne but all of those dealing with difficulties and health concerns around cancer. Portland District Health has been affected. Robinvale District Health Service has lost \$72 000, and the Rochester and Elmore District Health Service has lost \$65 000. The Royal Women's Hospital services all women, many of whom come to Melbourne to deliver their babies if they have complications in their hour of greatest need, and \$2 million has been pulled out from it. Seymour Health has lost \$155 000; St Vincent's Health, \$5.1 million; Yarrawonga District Health Service, \$100 000; and Yea and District Memorial Hospital, \$30 000.

It is very sad to go through that list, I have to say, because what that money means to those operating businesses and hospitals is fewer health services for Victorians. Those opposite have nevertheless moved this motion today. They say we have been irresponsible when we have a desalination plant that is burning dollars and is still yet to turn over a drop of water. It is wasting the sort of money you could turn into real positives for health in Victoria. We have a great list of achievements, but I will leave that for others to speak about. I obviously will not be supporting this motion. Members opposite should think a little more carefully before crafting these motions, because moving them highlights the shortcomings of their time in government, their years of neglect of Victoria and its health system, their poor fiscal management and their continued support for a federal Labor government that has duded Victoria in the worst possible way.

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am very pleased to rise to speak in support of this motion.

Ms Hartland in her contribution expressed some concerns about governments criticising former governments, and I think we saw an excellent example of that in Mrs Petrovich's contribution. I would also say, however — and Ms Hartland may be a little disappointed in these comments — that we should not be surprised at the attitude the Baillieu-Ryan government has taken to health, the severe cuts it has made in health and the lack of priority it has given to health when we look at what the former coalition of the Liberals and what was then called the National Party did to the health system here in Victoria. Ms Hartland does not like people to hark back to what was, but that Liberal-National Party coalition government bankrupted some hospitals. I think Ms Hartland would find that what is now the Western Health network was basically bankrupt by the time Labor came to government in 1999.

I am therefore not at all surprised by this government's attitude and approach to health and the way it prioritises health when it comes to the budget, because it has never been a priority for the coalition. You just have to look at the way the health system is being treated now in budgetary terms by this state government to see that nothing has changed. I am certainly not at all surprised by that. I am disappointed by it; being a former health worker myself, I am certainly disappointed by it. Having lived through the kinds of savage cuts the former Liberal-National Party coalition government made, I know that we are seeing some of this surfacing again in the public sector.

Those opposite talk about no front-line jobs being affected by the sorts of cuts they are making in the public sector, but when you are out there on the ground — and it does not matter in what area — you see the cuts that are being made to front-line jobs. They are simply no longer being recognised or categorised as front-line jobs by the Baillieu-Ryan government as it savages the public sector in the same way previous conservative governments here in Victoria have savaged the public sector.

Ms Crozier and Mrs Petrovich spent most of their contributions talking about the federal government and what the federal government funding means. They spent no time talking about the funding the government which they are part of is providing for health. More importantly, they failed to even mention the savage cuts that have been made to our health system here in Victoria under the Baillieu-Ryan government. Neither of them once mentioned that this state government has cut \$616 million from the health budget, which has had a devastating effect on our health system and on the ability of our hospitals and health-care services to

deliver a high-quality and good standard of health care to Victorians.

The motion before us today goes to the lack of progress that has been made. This government came in making all sorts of promises, and its members have failed to deliver them and failed to deliver to health services in Victoria. On 11 November 2010 Premier Baillieu said:

The Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition will, in its first term, deliver 800 new beds to Victoria's hospitals to slash waiting lists ...

There is no news on when they will be delivered, and there is certainly no news on where they will be delivered. Where will these beds go? Which hospitals will receive them? We are two years in, and we have no information at all about these beds. We know the cuts made to our hospitals and health-care services have had a very dramatic impact out there in the community. The greatest impacts are not always felt by the biggest and shiniest health-care services; some services are much smaller, particularly in the rural and regional communities that I represent, but the cuts are having a very big impact. I would like to talk about a few of those services.

Parents and carers of newborns no longer have access to free whooping cough immunisation. That does not sound particularly dramatic, and it is not at the sexy end of the health-care system with the bells and whistles, but it is something that affects families, and many families relied on access to that free service. There is no longer access to free immunisations, and as at 6 May this year 1655 families had reported cases of whooping cough to the Department of Health.

The rural midwife consultant program has also been scrapped. That is a very important program and one that our smaller hospitals in rural and regional areas depended upon. I have spoken a number of times in this Parliament about the effects that the cuts to this important service have for pregnant women delivering their babies in rural and regional Victoria. There have been huge cuts to the Department of Health program and other initiatives. For example, the \$150 million cancer action plan has been abandoned. Initiatives in relation to HIV and sexually transmitted infections have also experienced cuts.

The mental health helpline was shut down prior to the budget this year. It was a very important service and one quite close to my heart, because I spent much of my nursing career working in mental health services. That is where I specialised, and I know how important these services are to people who are experiencing

mental health problems and their families, friends and loved ones, who need to get advice and support.

Victorians deserve and have every right to expect access to high-quality health care when they need it, whether they live in metropolitan Melbourne or in rural and regional areas of the state. The Victorian public health system — the doctors, nurses and health professionals — are the people who make it work. They are the backbone of the system, and they cannot do their job if the Baillieu-Ryan government is going to cut funding to these services and not deliver on the promises it has made.

Elective surgery is another area of grave concern. The waiting lists have blown out to record levels. How members of the government can stand up in this place and not support the motion is beyond me. We have to look no further than the lack of progress in reducing the elective surgery lists. If the Liberal-Nationals coalition fails to address this critical issue, we may see as many as 50 000 people waiting for elective surgery this year. There are 46 131 waiting at this point; before the 2010 election there were 38 406. This shows a failure to deliver on the part of the government. One of the things I remember quite clearly from the time I was in government is that when the current Minister for Health, Mr Davis, was in opposition, one of the drums he banged on the loudest was the elective surgery waiting list. Two years on, we have a failure to deliver. The numbers are growing, and if we are really unfortunate, they will continue to grow to as many as 50 000 before the end of the year.

Thousands more regional Victorians are waiting for elective surgery since the Baillieu government was elected, and data from the Victorian health services performance record shows that in the last 12 months the number of patients waiting for elective surgery has blown out in the following major hospitals in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region: Bendigo hospital has more than 135 patients waiting; Goulburn Valley Health has 616 more patients; Latrobe Regional Hospital has 29 more patients; and Northeast Health Wangaratta has 37 more patients. Regional hospitals have also failed to meet key performance targets, and we know 67 patients have waited longer than 24 hours for emergency department treatment at Mildura Base Hospital. I will not go on about Mildura hospital because I know Ms Broad covered it in her contribution.

Eighty one health service reports were tabled last week, and 56 of those health services ran up a deficit. I want to talk about some of the biggest blow-outs in my area.

Statistics on operating losses in northern Victoria taken from the 2011–12 — —

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Ms DARVENIZA — I notice the health minister is getting very upset. He does not like us to talk about operating losses. The 2011–12 annual reports show that the biggest losses occurred in: Benalla, with an operating deficit of \$1.9 million; Bendigo, with a deficit of \$4.6 million; Cobram, with a deficit of \$1.2 million; Cohuna, with a \$9 million deficit; Goulburn Valley Health, with a deficit of \$8.9 million — and I could spend a long time talking about Goulburn Valley Health and this government's failure to provide it with the funding it needs to service the vast area covered by its facilities; Mansfield had a \$1.2 million deficit; Wangaratta hospital, \$3.8 million; Numurkah, \$2 million; Swan Hill, \$2.1 million; and Yarrawonga hospital, \$1.6 million.

So two years on, there has certainly been a lack of progress, and there is disappointment about this government not delivering on what it promised. It has failed to deliver health services to Victoria, not just in the metropolitan area but in the area I am specifically more concerned about, which is rural and regional Victoria and particularly my electorate of Northern Victoria Region.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — It does not really give me a lot of pleasure to rise to speak to this motion 466 by Mr Jennings. I wonder why Mr Jennings would present a motion to this chamber, on the only day of the week for opposition business, that notes the failure of the government in health service development, when in the same month the Gillard government has cut \$107 million from Victorian health services over the budget years 2011–12 and 2012–13. The hypocrisy of Mr Jennings's motion continues as we see the Gillard government proposing to cut \$435 million from the national health reform agreement over the next four years and to cut \$230 million from dental funding, and then to top it off, fiddling with the private health insurance means test, which will move more people away from taking responsibility for their health care and put more pressure on the public health system.

All the posturing in the world from Mr Jennings cannot change the fact that the Gillard government is desperate to find cash to deliver the much-hyped budget surplus for 2013. But Victorians are not fools, and no amount of smoke and mirrors, spin or rhetoric will convince Australians that the Gillard government can deliver a surplus, or is ever likely to do so as its fiscal

assumptions bear no sense of reality. Sadly, Victoria will be the victim of this nonsense. It is not enough to rip the guts out of Victoria by cutting \$6.1 billion in GST revenue; the federal government has imposed a carbon tax that will place a cost on hospitals of \$13 million, which will blow out to \$19 million by 2020.

This madness is compounded by the fact that the Gillard government's methodology is based on population growth forecasts and growth in health costs, which seems an oxymoron to even the most simplistic mathematician. The outcome is that the federal Labor government's share of health expenditure has dropped from 44 per cent in 2008–09 to 39 per cent in 2011–12. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures show not a decrease but an increase of 1.5 per cent, or 75 000 people.

Hon. D. M. Davis — The population.

Mr RAMSAY — So who is telling the truth? Or, to put it another way, who is lying? The Baillieu government has been left with a legacy from a Gillard government so desperate to find cash to provide fiscal propriety before the next election that it has cut funding to two of the most important services we can deliver to our communities — health and education — and it has had to increase the health budget to increase spending to maintain our health services.

Here we have a health budget of \$13.7 billion for 2012–13, \$618 million more than last year, and Mr Jennings calls that a failure? The four-year increase in funding in this year's budget includes \$1.5 billion over four years, which is an increase, into the health and hospital system, and includes \$883 million over four years for acute health expenditure. In addition there is \$603.5 million to increase the capacity of our hospitals and support demand growth, \$44 million to maintain elective surgery and \$149 million to support ongoing demand for hospital services. This is all despite a loss of commonwealth funding of \$50 million for elective surgery.

In my own region we have seen a significant investment in health services, with \$46 million to provide 60 extra beds at the Ballarat Base Hospital; a new helipad, thanks to the good work of my parliamentary colleagues from Western Victoria Region David Koch and David O'Brien; and a new \$23 million hospital in Charlton — unfortunately the old hospital was badly affected by floods. It was great to see the Minister for Health, David Davis, respond quickly to that poor unfortunate regional town in

Charlton and provide funding for a new hospital. Also in my region there has been \$93 million for a major upgrade at the Geelong Hospital, which includes 64 extra beds, as well as \$5 million for radiotherapy services in Warrnambool. Mr Jennings calls that a failure.

What Mr Jennings conveniently forgets is that the rundown in ambulance services under state Labor is now being addressed with \$151 million for the employment of 340 new ambulance officers, \$16 million to upgrade and build rural ambulance stations, and \$242 million to offset the cost of ambulance subscription. This is in stark contrast to what has occurred with the Gillard government, which has withdrawn support to help offset the cost of private health insurance. It is also pleasing to see that under the Baillieu government in just two years the financial position of health services has improved by approximately \$3 million.

Here we are with this motion that has no substance, no fact and no reality. What is fact is the impact of the proposed funding reductions by the Gillard government, particularly to little hospitals in my region. I see Heywood Rural Health impacted by \$30 000, I see Heathcote Health impacted by \$25 000, I see Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital impacted by \$45 000 and I see Colac Area Health impacted by \$250 000, thanks to Gillard government funding cuts. I see the Beaufort and Skipton Health Service impacted by \$55 000, I see Barwon Health impacted by \$4.9 million and I see Ballarat Health Services impacted by \$2.8 million.

Hon. D. M. Davis — That is if the cuts are put in pro rata.

Mr RAMSAY — Thank you, Minister Davis; that is if the cuts are put in pro rata, that is true. I see that the Lorne Community Hospital is impacted by \$30 000. These are all significant cuts which have been foreshadowed if the cuts are introduced pro rata.

Mr Jennings has moved a motion in this chamber today in opposition business criticising the Baillieu government's investment in health services. Yet here we see that many large and small hospitals are potentially being impacted by the Gillard government's funding cuts. I cannot think of anything smelling more of hypocrisy than this motion moved by Mr Jennings this afternoon. I, like my parliamentary colleagues, will not support this nonsensical motion.

Debate adjourned for Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) on motion of Mr Leane.

Debate adjourned until later this day.**SOLARIUMS: BAN**

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house —

- (a) notes the statement released by Cancer Council Victoria and signed by 161 cancer specialists and clinicians of the Victorian Cooperative Oncology Group calling for the ban of solariums; and
- (b) calls on the Baillieu government to introduce legislation to ban solariums and the private sale of sunbeds.

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, with two in three Australians developing skin cancer by the time they are 70 years old. This unenviable status is made worse by the fact that until recently state governments across Australia have continued to permit the use of sunbeds.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer has now classified tanning beds that emit ultraviolet radiation (UVR) as a grade 1 carcinogen — the highest risk category. One in six melanomas in Australians aged 18 to 29 could be prevented if solariums were shut down. In 2008, following the campaign by Clare Oliver, 'No Tan is Worth Dying For', the Victorian government, along with other state governments, regulated the safer use of tanning units.

These regulations prohibit under-18s and people with sensitive skin from using commercial sunbeds. This is a step forward, but it does not go far enough. A Cancer Council Victoria study in 2009 found that, despite the ban on people under the age of 18 using solariums, 80 per cent of solarium operators surveyed allowed access to teenagers who concealed their age or claimed to be 18. This research indicates that these age restrictions are largely ineffective. Further, according to a recent expert review of the evidence, solarium use by people under the age of 35 increased an individual's risk of melanoma by 87 per cent. The risk of cancer to all sunbed users, not just those under 18 years of age, is too high. Current regulations are inadequate. We need to take the next step and introduce a total ban on solariums.

Earlier this year the New South Wales government announced plans to ban commercial solariums, and in October South Australia banned the commercial use of sunbeds. These bans will commence from 31 December, 2014, in both states and will save lives. The need for such a ban is even greater in Victoria, where 458 sunbeds still operate — more than twice as

many as in NSW which just regulated to ban them altogether. These bans are the only responsible way to manage the significant risk the use of sunbeds poses to public health.

Unfortunately banning solariums is not enough. Many sunbeds are making their way onto the internet and are being sold on websites like eBay and Gumtree to private users. The unregulated use of sunbeds in homes poses a significant health threat. As well as banning commercial solariums we must ban the sale of sunbeds as part of a comprehensive solution to this clear cancer threat.

I urge the government to take action to prevent cancer and save lives by banning solariums and sunbeds. I give the government six months to introduce a bill prohibiting commercial solariums and the private sale of sunbeds. If it fails to do so, I will introduce a bill in 2013. The risk posed by tanning in sunbeds is too great. There are safer alternatives. Victoria urgently needs to act to save lives.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak to Ms Hartland's motion. I think this motion is worthy and its sentiment good. As I said in my previous contribution, Ms Hartland is very concerned about health-related issues, and this is one that she has raised and has spoken on with passion. I think her sentiment in relation to this motion should be commended.

I would like to make just a few comments in relation to the use of solariums and tanning units. Ms Hartland outlined some statistics and figures in relation to those devices. There are a number of states — New South Wales and South Australia — which, I understand, have announced a ban on solariums. New South Wales intends to have a ban in place by the end of 2014. Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory have regulations that require solariums to be licensed and to comply with certain requirements. The *Draft Skin Cancer Prevention Framework* outlines what those requirements include. This framework, which I want to speak to in more detail, states that operators of a commercial tanning unit must ensure that:

any person under the age of 18 years is not allowed to use a solarium;

any person with skin type 1 is not allowed to use a solarium;

every client has a skin type assessment conducted prior to using a solarium;

every client signs the prescribed consent form prior to using a solarium;

proof of age documents are sighted prior to a client signing a consent form;

and:

mandatory health warnings are displayed.

Ms Hartland made mention of how Victoria took a leading role — which I think was in 2008 — in adopting Australia's first regulation and licensing of tanning beds. I commend the former government on taking that leading role in this important area; it was a very important move. Ms Hartland highlighted the campaign by Clare Oliver based on her sad story of melanoma and experience with tanning beds. I certainly recall that story on *60 Minutes*, which documented her sad situation. It was very moving at the time, and it does not seem that five years have passed since she died. Clare championed the cause and highlighted the dramatic effects of melanoma and sunbeds. I think all Victorians and Australians felt for her at the time.

I make note of an adjournment matter that Mrs Coote raised with the Minister for Health a few months ago in this place in which she talked about Clare Oliver's campaign and suntanning devices and facilities across the region that she and I and the Minister for Health, Mr Davis, represent. She spoke about the framework that has been put together and about the response to the framework. In her adjournment matter she said:

I am pleased that Minister Davis has put out a draft skin cancer prevention framework, which is in the public domain until 30 September for people to comment upon. I hope many people comment on the draft.

The minister's response was:

The Victorian government has sought comment with respect to the recently released *Draft Skin Cancer Prevention Framework 2012–16* to help shape skin cancer prevention in Victoria over the next five years and beyond.

I can confirm that one of the priorities in the draft framework is to examine Victoria's future options for the regulation of solarium, with the options ranging from the strengthening of the regulatory approach through to a total ban on solariums.

The consultation period on the framework closed on 30 September 2012 and the government will now be examining the submissions that have been put to it before finalising our position on this important issue.

I think the minister does understand this issue. I am not sure whether Labor or the Greens made a submission to the draft framework. It is a very comprehensive document. It outlines a plan and the concerns of Cancer Council Victoria. Obviously we have a lot of awareness about the health impacts of vitamin D deficiency and the balance required between appropriate levels of vitamin D and overexposure to ultraviolet radiation

(UVR). As we are all well aware, Australia has the world's highest rate of skin cancer. This framework states:

Australia has the highest age-standardised incidence of melanoma in the world ...

It is the most common form of cancer, with two in three Australians being diagnosed with the disease before the age of 70 ...

It goes on to say:

Victoria is a leader in skin cancer prevention, achieved through world-class research, the innovation of the internationally recognised SunSmart program, and policy and legislation such as the solarium regulations introduced in 2007.

We can, as a state, be very proud of the lead we have taken in areas of public health interest. This framework that has been put together under the minister outlines those concerns. It talks of this issue. It is very comprehensive, as I said. I understand that over 200 submissions were provided to the framework. I think that is a significant endorsement of the many interested persons who wanted to have a say on this issue. I think the framework goes a long way to looking at all these issues relating to skin cancer and solarium use.

I want to go back to the framework in relation to the particular area of solarium regulation and its contribution to UVR protection. Page 20 of the draft framework says:

In 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified UVR-emitting tanning devices as 'carcinogenic to humans'. IARC advises that combined analysis of more than 20 epidemiological studies shows that the risk of cutaneous melanoma is increased by 75 per cent when the use of tanning devices starts before age 30 ...

Those are significant effects — there is no doubt about that — and this framework highlights that. As I said, the role that the previous government played in looking at this issue and adopting Australia's first regulations should be commended. Those regulations and reforms have led to a reduction of approximately 53 per cent in the number of commercial tanning units in the state and have had a significant impact on reducing hazardous UVR exposure to the most at-risk groups.

A significant amount of work is being done. As the minister has said, he takes this issue very seriously. It is a serious public health concern, particularly in terms of young people who might be attracted to using a solarium to get an instant tan — or a tan that comes more quickly than one that results from being exposed to normal sunlight — but who may not be fully aware

of the major health risks and the high incidence of melanomas that such solarium devices cause.

With those words, I put on the record that I agree with the sentiment expressed in Ms Hartland's motion. She has raised a very important issue. I am pleased that the framework is out there and that so many Victorians put in submissions on it. I look forward to the response in due course.

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I join the previous speakers in rising to support the motion to try to increase the degree of regulatory control, if not introduce a ban, of solariums in Victoria. We note the initiative taken by Ms Hartland, which the government has indicated it backs up. Our intention is to seek to amend the draft motion to assist in finding a pathway forward that leads to consideration of all the relevant issues to assist the government in being well-armed to deliver the outcome that is being sought today. The amendment to the motion is to give a specific reference to the Legal and Social Issues References Committee to conduct an inquiry and report back to the Parliament next year. I move:

After paragraph (b) insert —

“; and

- (c) requires the Legal and Social Issues References Committee to inquire into, consider and report no later than 1 August 2013 on the health risks associated with solarium/sunbed use in Victoria.”.

The reason I have formally moved this amendment — and I make it clear that the Labor Party understands the importance and significance of this issue — is that we want to ensure not only that there is an adequate and appropriate regulatory response but also that there is a consideration of the economic and other impacts that regulation might have on jobs and business viability in Victoria. As a general principle, when action is taken which will have those consequences the Parliament should be well apprised of the dimensions of those issues. We move the amendment in the spirit of the Parliament doing its work, acquitting the breadth of its responsibilities and being well informed when making decisions.

We remind the chamber of the recognition of this issue by the Labor government of Victoria during 2007. After the tragic death of Clare Oliver a campaign was mounted by caring members of our community, backed up by professionals, the Cancer Council of Victoria and others about the need to address solarium activity, which had previously been under-regulated. There was the example of Clare Oliver's tragic passing at an early age, with her exposure to radiation through solarium

services in her early 20s leading to her untimely demise. The tragedy of Clare's death led to a public and professional outcry for some regulation of this activity under the Radiation Act 2005.

The then health minister, Daniel Andrews, took leading responsibility across the nation to provide for a greater degree of regulation, for greater sanctions to apply to operators who may have provided services to under-age people or provided an inappropriate level of services, and this was Australia's leading regulatory base for the industry. Subsequently other jurisdictions have moved to regulate this activity, and New South Wales has recently enacted a ban which will take effect in the near future.

The former Victorian Labor government recognised that not only was regulation required but enforcement was also required, so we understood that inspection activity was an important part of the role associated with governing this industry and other industries in terms of trying to generate safe practice. Sanctions were increased significantly. Public education was funded through the auspices of the Cancer Council to ensure there was a greater degree of awareness and a greater degree of knowledge permeated our community in relation to the risks that solariums may lead to skin cancers and their shocking consequences. In fact we have been reminded of this recently as a community by the actions of the Cancer Council and 161 professionals who came out on the anniversary of Clare Oliver's death in September and drew attention to the effect of that regulation as far back as 2007, but then taking full effect from 2009. This has seen the number of tanning beds being reduced significantly in Victoria. There has been a reduction of the number of tanning beds by at least half, and there are now estimated to be 450 remaining from what was originally over 1000 operating previously in Victoria.

The most startling statistic to which these health professionals and the Cancer Council have drawn attention is the evidence that links the risk that people have statistically if they are exposed to solarium services while under the age of 35 — their risk of melanomas increases by 87 per cent. That is a horrendous statistic and these are horrendous health prospects for those individuals who have had that exposure, and this warrants further examination by government and restrictions being placed upon this activity. We take the opportunity today to remind the government of the importance of enforcing not only the state-based regulation, the emerging national standards and the enforcement capability but also the ongoing community education campaign that is required to make sure that our community is better informed to

make wise decisions about the services that it uses, including in this case radiation services through solariums across Victoria.

We think that a wise government would use the auspices of the Parliament to be well informed not only about the health advice but also about the economic impact of a decision to ban solariums — that is, when taking any action to ban economic activity that previously had provided opportunities for commercial activity and job creation in the state, you need to be mindful of those consequences, to take them into account and to consider them. We think a reference to the Legal and Social Issues References Committee would assist us in getting that, and it would assist Ms Hartland and others in the ultimate objective of reaching the legislative pathway forward. We are encouraged by what appears to be the attitude of the government and we will see whether that is supported in a few moments time, so on behalf of the Labor Party I am very happy to place those matters on the public record and wish the consideration of this matter to be fulsomely undertaken by the appropriate committee.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I support the referral to the committee. I think it is logical, and it gives us an opportunity to investigate all of these matters. However, I would like to remind people of one particular set of figures — that is, that in Victoria 51 new melanomas, 7 melanoma-related deaths and 294 new cases of squamous cell carcinoma are attributed to solarium use every year. Considering that this is information from Cancer Council Victoria, it would be a very good thing to have a committee to which all of those organisations could present submissions. I would also like to remind people that the cost of these cancers to the Australian community is roughly \$3 million a year.

House divided on amendment:

Ayes, 18

Barber, Mr	Mikakos, Ms
Broad, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Darveniza, Ms	Pennicuik, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Eideh, Mr	Scheffer, Mr
Elasmar, Mr	Somyurek, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Hartland, Ms	Tarlamis, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Tee, Mr
Leane, Mr	Tierney, Ms
Lenders, Mr	Viney, Mr

Noes, 20

Atkinson, Mr	Hall, Mr
Coote, Mrs	Koch, Mr
Crozier, Ms	Lovell, Ms
Dalla-Riva, Mr	O'Brien, Mr
Davis, Mr D.	O'Donohue, Mr
Davis, Mr P.	Ondarchie, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)

Drum, Mr (*Teller*)
Elsbury, Mr
Finn, Mr
Guy, Mr

Petrovich, Mrs
Peulich, Mrs
Ramsay, Mr
Rich-Phillips, Mr

Pairs

Pulford, Ms

Kronberg, Mrs

Amendment negated.

The PRESIDENT — Order! As I understand it, there are no further speakers to the motion.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to have my right of reply. I would like to start off by saying that I am absolutely shocked — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The Clerk tells me Ms Hartland has already done that.

Ms HARTLAND — No, I spoke to the amendment. As I understood it, I am now using my right of reply.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Ms Hartland believes that her previous comments were directed at the amendment and therefore by leave she seeks to make some closing remarks to sum up the debate. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) (*By leave*) — My comments will be very brief. I am quite shocked by the outcome of that last vote. The government will not allow referral of this matter to a committee so we can look at the issue of solariums. The government does not even want to engage with organisations that have quite clearly spelt out in a statement that they believe solariums are extremely dangerous. This position is not coming from the Greens; it is from organisations such as Cancer Council Victoria. We are talking about organisations which work in these areas all the time.

I will repeat the figures I quoted in my earlier contribution:

In Victoria, 51 new melanomas, 7 melanoma-related deaths and 294 new cases of ... cell carcinoma are attributed to solarium use.

Yet the government does not want to refer this matter to a committee to see what the problem is and how we can ban solariums, despite it being quite clear that people who are under-age or who have sensitive skin are using these facilities. Also, sunbeds are now being sold on eBay. People are buying them for a few hundred dollars and putting them in their garages. Does the government

want to do anything about that? Does the government want to prevent deaths?

Over the last two days we have had debates around the economics of health. Treatment of people affected by solarium use costs \$3 million a year, and this government does not want to do anything about that.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Ms HARTLAND — Mr David Davis stopped a referral to a committee which could have allowed this issue to be looked at. He stopped a referral to a committee that could have talked about 161 specialists having signed off on a statement saying this is a problem. Mr Davis clearly does not think this is a problem, because if he thought it was a problem, he would have allowed the referral to occur.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — Can I just say — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! No, the minister cannot. That closes the debate. There can be no further speakers after Ms Hartland.

Motion agreed to.

HEALTH SERVICES: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan):

That this house notes that two years after being elected the Baillieu-Ryan government has failed Victoria in health service development and further notes its actions in shutting down scrutiny of health services in Victoria.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak in support of this motion, and I thank Mr Jennings for bringing the motion to the house. I join other members of the Labor opposition in condemning this Baillieu government for the disastrous impact its decisions have had on the Victorian health system since it has come to government. In the two years it has been in office the Baillieu government has failed Victorians in health services. Perhaps government members can use their focus groups to advise them on what they need to do, but I can spare them the expense and tell them that the Victorian people expect a health system that is efficient and timely. They want a public health system they can rely on.

We have just seen an American presidential election where one of the biggest issues being debated was the issue of Obamacare — that is, the issue of what assistance the American people could rely on in terms

of health care. When you look at the results in the US it is pretty clear that the people in the United States recognised that a public health system is important. That is why President Obama was re-elected. If this government has any sense, it will look at rectifying the failures in the health system and giving it the importance it deserves.

The government can have as many focus groups as it likes, but it is very clear that what the Victorian people are saying, and what my constituents quite regularly say to me when they call my office about problems with the local hospitals, is that they are not impressed with the performance of this government in terms of health care to date and that this government needs to lift its game. This government is continually looking at blaming everyone but itself. It can blame the previous government, it can blame the federal government and it can even blame the carbon tax. It seeks to blame everyone and everything, but all it needs to do is look at the mirror and accept responsibility. It has been in office now for two years. It promised a great deal during the election, and it has failed to deliver. That is why people are saying that this is in fact a failed government — a fail-you government.

This year's state budget showed that growth funding for hospitals has been slashed by almost half of what was delivered in last year's budget. It is the worst possible news for our health system and hospitals and even worse news for families waiting for health care in Victoria. Up to \$134.1 million has been cut from the Department of Health this year in addition to the \$482 million cut in last year's budget, so we have seen \$600 million cut from the health budget in the two years since this government took office. We have a growing population in Victoria that is putting on increasing demand for health services, yet the Baillieu government is choosing to ignore that additional demand and is looking at cutting funding instead.

In 2010 under Labor 80 per cent of people who needed an elective surgery received that surgery. Under this government it has dropped by 5 percentage points, meaning that one in four people are now missing out on their elective surgeries. Elective surgery waiting lists show us how Victoria's hospitals are performing, and these massive funding cuts have caused elective surgery performance to fall to levels not seen for nearly a decade. Hospital data shows that there are currently 46 131 people on the elective surgery waiting list across Victoria. In the last 12 months alone there has also been a jump of 789 in the number of children waiting for surgery. It took Jeff Kennett 10 years to add 10 000 people to the waiting list, but in just two years since taking office the Baillieu government has

managed to add more than 7000. These are not just numbers; these are real people, including children and those with life-threatening conditions, who are being forced to wait longer for the vital surgery they need, and this government is doing nothing to stop these numbers ballooning even further.

I remember that before the election the Baillieu government promised to provide 800 new beds to Victoria's public hospitals, 100 of those by June this year, to cut surgery waiting lists. This was promised to be the Baillieu government's solution to cut surgery waiting lists, yet the hospital annual reports we have seen tabled in the last few weeks do not indicate that any new beds have been created — not a single one. Whilst the Baillieu government promised Victorians more beds and a better performing health system, all Victoria's health system has received to date is over \$600 million in lost funding. More and more people are being forced to wait for surgery, and more and more will be forced to wait for surgery in the future. It is time that Premier Baillieu and the Minister for Health acknowledged that Victoria's health system is chronically underfunded.

If that is not proof enough, 56 of the 81 health services that tabled annual reports in recent weeks ran up a deficit. Many health services' reports detail the need for urgent future planning to cater for increasing demand for health services. I particularly want to draw to the minister's attention the plight of Northern Hospital, in the northern corridor of my electorate. According to its recent annual report, Northern Health is covering close to 728 000 people in its catchment, and this population is expected to grow by 64 per cent — an additional 128 569 people — in the next 20 years. The report noted that 42 per cent of patients who presented to the emergency department needing to be admitted to hospital and needing a bed had to wait longer than 8 hours, with 34 patients having waited for more than 24 hours in the emergency department.

I can tell you that I receive calls regularly from people who use Northern Hospital. They tell me about the difficulties they have been experiencing in recent times. I particularly think that the Liberal members for Northern Metropolitan Region need to be aware of exactly what problems our constituents are facing at the moment as a result of their government's inaction. One constituent came in to see me recently. They had received a letter from Northern Hospital telling them that due to significant staffing issues with the eye service, their scheduled appointment had been cancelled and that the service would be shut until further notice. The constituent had been given no time frame as to when it would be reopened and was told to

return to their GP to discuss so-called other options. I wonder what those other options were that the hospital was referring to. Essentially the hospital was saying, 'Go private'. It does not matter if you are a pensioner. It does not matter if you are a struggling family unable to pay a private specialist.

It is interesting how the Minister for Health has turned his back to the chamber, and all of a sudden he is not interested. I might be raising these matters in adjournment debates and in other ways in the future. I am going to make sure that the minister is very much aware of the problems the Northern Hospital, the Austin Hospital and other local hospitals are experiencing at the moment. The fact is that a number of patients turning up to the Northern Hospital are getting letters from the outpatient department encouraging them to go back to their family doctors to discuss their issues and explore other options.

I want to know how the minister feels about hospitals sending out letters to patients encouraging them to explore other options. I have a letter here from the Northern Hospital dated 13 August and addressed to one of my constituents. I quote from the relevant part of the letter:

We are currently experiencing an extremely large demand on this service —

that is, the ear, nose and throat clinic at Northern Hospital —

which can result in long delays of over a year. We endeavour to prioritise patients to ensure those most in need of attention are seen first, however this can mean long delays for others.

It may be worthwhile visiting your family doctor (GP) to discuss this issue, as they might be able to refer you to another service with shorter waiting times.

The letter tells my constituent to go back to their GP, explore other options, go private, because they are going to be waiting who knows how long for an appointment with the clinic.

I refer to another letter from Northern Hospital to my constituent about the cancellation of an eye appointment. It says:

Northern Health is currently experiencing significant staffing issues within the eye service. Unfortunately this means that we must cancel your previously scheduled appointment. Please find the cancellation notice attached.

...

Unfortunately, at this time, Northern Health is unable to provide a time frame for when the service will be fully staffed. We therefore suggest that you return to your GP to discuss options for care.

That is not good enough. Many of my constituents have been receiving such letters. I can assure the minister that this is just the tip of the iceberg. I will be raising many of those issues here.

This seems to be a recent phenomenon. Many of my constituents have been getting letters from Northern Hospital in recent months saying they should go back to their GP and explore other options. I wonder why the hospital is doing that all of a sudden. My constituents are being encouraged to explore other options — meaning ‘go private’ — because the hospital is underfunded as the minister has cut its funding. The hospital is unable to cope with demand and is trying to reduce its waiting lists by encouraging people to drop off the lists. That is what is happening. We will see more and more of this until the minister looks in the mirror and accepts his responsibility for the situation that Northern Hospital and many other hospitals in the state are experiencing.

It is unfair that patients are missing out on appropriate, timely health care because the government is slashing funding from hospitals — for example, of patients presenting to an emergency department who needed to be admitted to hospital and were in need of a bed, 22 per cent of patients at the Royal Children’s Hospital, 26 per cent at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, 28 per cent at the Austin Hospital and 31 per cent at St Vincent’s Hospital waited longer than 8 hours — in fact some patients had to wait for more than 24 hours.

The Victorian health services performance report details that more than 7000 additional Victorians are waiting for elective surgery than when the Baillieu government took office. They now have to languish on these waiting lists. The emergency waiting times are also very concerning, particularly in growth corridors like that in the outer northern suburbs. The previous government had a proposal to develop an academic and research precinct at Northern Hospital because of the difficulties that hospital faced in retaining doctors. The Baillieu government failed to commit to that proposal.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — We had a clear commitment, minister. We had put in the initial stages of the funding and we had a commitment from the federal government. All it required was a tiny amount of money. Minister Davis failed to deliver to the people of the northern suburbs, who are getting used to being ignored by the government.

As the minister is in the house, I remind him that I have not received a response to my adjournment matter

about the cuts to interpreting services at Northern Hospital, which are impacting — —

Mr Ondarchie — My dad once told me that empty vessels make the most noise. My point of order, Acting President, is that Ms Mikakos is referring to an adjournment matter and seeking a response to it, which is not the core of what she is talking about here. I ask you to bring her back to the motion.

Ms MIKAKOS — On the point of order, Acting President, I am talking about cuts to interpreting services at Northern Hospital. The motion is about our health system. The fact that the minister has not responded is an indictment of him.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! There is no point of order. Before Ms Mikakos continues, I advise Mr David Davis that if he wants to interject, he should do so from his seat.

Ms MIKAKOS — It is interesting that there has been deafening silence from the two government members for Northern Metropolitan Region in terms of advocacy for the northern suburbs, more funding for Northern Hospital, Austin Hospital and all other hospitals that have been experiencing these problems. Mr Ondarchie sought to interrupt my contribution on cuts to interpreting services at Northern Hospital. Mr Ondarchie needs to reflect on that before he takes silly points of order about matters in his electorate.

I come back to the issue of cuts to interpreting services because I feel very strongly about that issue. I have spoken to many members of local ethnic communities in the catchment area for Northern Hospital who are very concerned about these cuts. This cut will impact on a staggering 7000 appointments over the next year, equating to 16 per cent of total requests for interpreting appointments in 2011. It is mainly elderly migrants and refugees who will be affected by this cut because they are the ones who rely on these interpreters.

This cost-saving measure is going to — I was about use an unparliamentary expression but I caught myself in time — prove to be extremely short sighted, because when these constituents do not fully understand the instructions and advice given to them by their doctors, mistakes will be made and the health care of people will be impacted upon. That will cost the health system more money in the long term. It is short sighted of this government to be forcing cuts to hospital funding that necessitate that level of measures by Northern Hospital, and it will have a real impact on my constituents.

I am also very concerned about recent reports that the new \$1 billion Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre

will have a floor dedicated to private patients under this government's secret plan. I am concerned that, again, people are being told that unless they have private health cover their needs are secondary. It is inconceivable that this government would want to privatise cancer treatment for those who can afford it.

I understand that my time is limited today, but in the future I will have a lot more to say about the problems in our local hospitals. In conclusion, our health system is buckling under the pressure of the cuts imposed by the Baillieu government. Waiting lists are set to grow to in excess of 50 000 under this government's funding arrangements and its cuts to funding. It is now or never for the Baillieu government to try to stem the damage caused by its cuts over the past two years. It does not need to conduct a focus group; it is pretty clear from the calls that I am getting, and I am sure members of the government are also getting, that there are problems in our health system, and it is time the government acted to fix them.

Mr O'BRIEN (Western Victoria) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on behalf of the government in closing its contribution on this motion and to express not only its strong opposition to the terms of the motion but also its bemusement and complete astonishment at the methods of the Labor Party in again seeking to move such an ill-conceived and misinformed motion in relation to these issues.

I take up particularly, by way of example, the contribution we have just heard from Ms Mikakos. I pick up her last phrase where she said that we need to talk to focus groups. Focus groups are an institution of the Labor Party. The Labor Party made a meal of them all over the country in relation to how it formulated its policies. The Victorian government will consult with its focus group, being the Victorian people, in relation to its policies, but it is a classic Labor trait to seek to foist the blame on someone else, just as it did with its former federal leader, Mark Latham. I ask the Labor Party and particularly Ms Mikakos to, to pick up her words, look in the mirror and take responsibility.

Ms Mikakos — Why don't you look in the mirror?

Mr O'BRIEN — Why don't you look in the mirror and take responsibility? That is exactly what I will do, because I will address some further words by Ms Mikakos. She said that many of her constituents are getting letters about these cuts, but she did not talk about which cuts they are. There are some cuts occurring in the Victorian health system; in fact the federal government has cut, in its recent announcement post its budget review, approximately \$107 million

from Victorian hospitals for this year, with \$474 million to be cut over the four-year period.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Mr O'BRIEN — Ms Mikakos's constituents are very concerned about those cuts — to use her words — and I agree with them that it is unfair that patients are missing out on patient care because the federal government, not the state government, is slashing funding. In response to Ms Mikakos, by way of evidence I have had a letter provided to me by a very hardworking government member for Northern Metropolitan Region Mr Ondarchie — —

An honourable member — He is a very good man.

Mr O'BRIEN — He is a very good man. He is very diligent and was rather astounded by the contribution made by Ms Mikakos because he has evidence in the form of a letter from Professor Glenn Bowes, chair of Northern Health, dated 1 November 2012, to none other than the Honourable Tanya Plibersek, the federal Minister for Health. A copy of this letter was also sent to some other members of the federal Labor Party: Martin Ferguson, the federal Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism; Harry Jenkins, the federal member for Scullin; and Rob Mitchell, the federal member for McEwen. Those federal members ought to be very much aware of this letter. Either Ms Mikakos has not brought it to the Parliament's attention — which I would not accuse her of — or more likely she has not been made aware of what the hospital really thinks. But I will bring it to the attention of the Parliament by reading into *Hansard* a quote from that letter, which is headed 'Re: Reduction in health funding for Victoria', and it says:

I have been advised that one adverse outcome of the recent MYEFO is that Victoria will receive \$475 million less in health funding over the next five years, including a \$68 million reduction this year and a retrospective deduction of \$39.7 million for 2011–12. Apparently the basis of this recalculation is the belief that the Victorian population has grown at a lesser rate than previously thought.

It was recently announced that the City of Whittlesea was the second fastest growing municipality in Australia. Nearly 8000 people, equivalent to a new suburb, were added to the population during 2010–11 according to the ABS figures. It will therefore come as a surprise to the citizens of the north ...

If I can just pause there: these are the very people that Ms Mikakos was seeking to engage. They include the elderly and migrant communities that Mr Ondarchie represents in this place very well. Having read this letter into *Hansard* we call on Ms Mikakos to take this issue up with Tanya Plibersek and get her to immediately reverse these cuts for the very reasons she

has advocated and on the incorrect information that they relate to state government decisions rather than federal government decisions. I return to the letter.

It will therefore come as a surprise to the citizens of the north to learn that an inferred population growth rate of 0.03 per cent has been used in the recent federal mini-budget to justify a huge reduction —

I will pause there again —

in Victoria's health budget, particularly when the ABS figures indicate the statistical local area of Whittlesea has grown at an annual rate of 15.6 per cent over the past 10 years.

This is the nub of it.

I appreciate the need for the government ...

I pause there to say that the chair of Northern Health is referring to the commonwealth government, not the Victorian government; he is writing to the federal health minister.

I appreciate the need for the government to balance its budget, but how can this be at the expense of one of its most socially disadvantaged communities and just because the ABS decides to adopt a new population projection methodology?

We agree, and that is why Ms Mikakos and other members of the Labor Party in this house, including the shadow Minister for Health, Mr Jennings, who is listening in this chamber, can do nothing other than seek to take this decision to Ms Plibersek and ask her to reverse her decision. That is a matter of record.

I ask that any press releases on this issue refer to this speech as well, and we will monitor that. I know the very hardworking Mr Ondarchie and Mr Guy, both of whom represent Northern Metropolitan region, will make sure that is the case and that the record is corrected so that communities are not misled by the spin that is the Labor party's — with no disrespect to you, Acting President — *modus operandi*.

Returning once more to the letter, it concludes:

Whilst most Victorians find it difficult to believe that the Treasury's calculations have the state population actually falling by 11 000 during 2011, it will be an impossible task to convince anyone living in the north of Melbourne that they should suffer further funding disadvantage while at the same time they see the evidence of the most exponential growth all around them.

I urge you to reconsider this decision.

I take up that urge. I note there is silence on the other side. I also note that the shadow health minister is engaged in a discussion with the health minister, but we call on Ms Mikakos to take this up on behalf of those

constituents who are very concerned about these federal government cuts.

Turning to other hospitals that may be affected, I will first go to one in my region of western Victoria — namely, Colac. I know Mr Finn knows Colac very well because he is from there.

Mr Finn — Born in Colac Hospital, I was!

Mr O'BRIEN — He was born in Colac Hospital. Colac is presently represented in the federal arena by none other than Mr Cheeseman. Mr Cheeseman is a fan of Mr Rudd more than he is of Ms Gillard. An article in the *Colac Herald* of Friday, 9 November 2012 states:

Corangamite MP Darren Cheeseman says a cut to health funding will not affect services.

He said the Gillard government reduced the amount of money it would give to state governments over the next four years in line with falling costs.

Mr Cheeseman said the high Australian dollar — —

He did not mention the carbon tax —

made it cheaper to import medical products and he said inflation had been lower than previously forecast.

He not only refused to take up the fight to reverse this ridiculous decision, he actually tried to blame the high Australian dollar and inflation as justifying the cuts. The article continues:

He said this meant state governments needed less money to do the same work.

That is not what we heard from Ms Mikakos.

Hon. D. M. Davis — From Ms Mikakos or from Northern Health!

Mr O'BRIEN — Or from Northern Health. We would prefer that the state government had more money to do its work, and we will take up that issue with Mr Cheeseman. I am sure the constituents of Corangamite may well do so at the next election. The article goes on to say:

The federal government cut about 1 per cent, or \$426 million, from Victoria's health budget in the midyear budget update.

The last paragraph of the article quotes Colac Area Health chief Geoff Iles as saying:

... a 1 per cent cut to the CAH budget will be about \$300 000 a year.

That is what the chief of Colac Area Health is saying.

I would like to pick up on some of that analysis and apply it across the state so we can get an idea of the bigger picture. This is based on the assumption that \$107 million was proportionately cut across the state. We note that it is a net reduction of about 42 per cent of funding to 39 per cent and is similar to what the federal government has done in relation to the TAFE situation. The federal government tries to hit us up about our decisions, but it cuts its own. Let us see how this applies across some of the hospitals in Western Victoria and the state generally.

In alphabetical order the cuts include: approximately \$1.1 million to the Albury-Wodonga Health Service, \$6.8 million to Austin Health, \$2.8 million to Ballarat Health Services, \$4.9 million to Barwon Health, and \$55 000 to Beaufort and Skipton Health Service. This is a proportional adjustment across the state of \$107 million. It does not sound like much when you say it quickly, or if you say it is a decrease from 42 per cent to 39 per cent — and it is certainly not a lot if you are Mr Cheeseman and can blame it on the high Australian dollar — but to each of these health services, which know the value of each and every dollar in the running of very efficient health services, it means a lot.

I will continue through the list. There is Bendigo Health, with \$2.9 million taken out, and Casterton Memorial Hospital — where Ms Crozier worked and Mr Koch spent many years as a patient, ensuring he is in the good health we see before us today — losing approximately \$46 000. Then there is Mr Finn's Colac Area Health, \$250 000, which is more conservative than Geoff Iles's estimate of \$300 000 and shows that this methodology, although it is proportional, is at least conservative to the tune of \$50 000 —

Mr Finn — Does it include the carbon tax?

Mr O'BRIEN — No, Mr Finn, it does not include the carbon tax. I wish Mr Cheeseman, when he talked about the high Australian dollar and the inflation, had also mentioned the carbon tax, because we know from Mr Finn and others the impact of the target carbon tax on these services as well.

We turn again to the list. We have \$180 000 coming from East Grampians Health Service, \$130 000 from East Wimmera Health Service and \$45 000 from Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital. Mr Koch and I have been to the annual dinner run by that hospital, and we know how much that means in general terms to that very hardworking and poorly resourced community at the far west of our state, which needs every dollar it can get and which should get that \$45 000, or whatever the proportion would be.

We have also, on a proportional approximation at this stage, \$1.8 million coming out of Goulburn Valley Health, \$105 000 from Hepburn Health Service, \$30 000 from Heywood Rural Health, \$2.2 million from Latrobe Regional Hospital, \$115 000 from Kyneton District Health Service, \$30 000 from Lorne Community Hospital, \$15 000 from Maldon Hospital, \$50 000 from Mallee Track Health and Community Service and \$175 000 from Maryborough District Health Service, another very important health district service — and I note the great, hardworking board member there, Wendy McIvor, has recently been elected to council, on which I congratulate her.

There is also \$45 000 coming out of Moyne Health Services; \$34 000 from Otway Health and Community Services; \$255 000 from Portland District Health; \$3.8 million from the Royal Children's Hospital, which we commend for its work as we commend all other hospitals and their work; \$1 million from the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital; \$2 million from the Royal Women's Hospital; \$1.4 million from South West Healthcare; \$5.1 million from St Vincent's Health Australia; \$170 000 from Stawell Regional Health; \$70 000 from the Terang and Mortlake Health Service; \$50 000 from Timboon and District Healthcare Service; \$615 000 from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health; and from Western District Health Service, \$430 000, equivalent almost to the dollar to the donation made by Leo O'Brien from his private funds this year. He made a donation of about \$418 000, and the feds are going to take out \$430 000. There will be \$6.6 million coming out of Western Health and \$600 000 from the Wimmera Health Care Group.

These cuts are a disgrace, and Ms Mikakos and all other members of the Labor Party, especially the state shadow minister, ought to take the cause up with Tanya Plibersek, the federal Minister for Health, and get her to instantly reverse this decision. The federal Treasurer, Wayne Swan, in chasing his false surplus, should not cut the health needs of Victorians, and the federal government should stop its spin and misleading information about the cuts effected by federal government decisions.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre: report 2011–12

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre's 2011–12 annual report, a report that I believe brings much light

and hope to a disease often considered dark and unknown. The Peter Mac hospital refers to itself as a place of progress. From reading its annual report, I know that statement is most definitely true. I extend my congratulations to Wendy Harris, chair of the board of directors, and Craig Bennett, chief executive officer, and the other members of the executive board.

Also, I would like to send a warm thankyou to all the dedicated staff and volunteers who ensure that this centre provides the highest quality of care to its patients on a day-to-day basis. The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre is the only public hospital in Australia solely dedicated to cancer. It is a centre and a hospital, might I add, dedicated to a multidisciplinary approach to cancer and one of an elite group in the world that has its own integrated cancer research centre.

If I may, I would like to read out some very positive statistics about this wonderful centre. In 2011–12 the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre treated 29 314 patients, saw 218 962 patients as outpatients, had 20 293 inpatient admissions, provided 9499 episodes of chemotherapy and 116 469 episodes of radiation therapy and conducted more than 200 active clinical trials. More than 53 000 individuals generously gave \$20 501 918 to cancer research. The centre also awarded 14 new scholarships to postgraduate students and 19 senior research fellowships. These are just a few of the great things happening in this hospital. It is important to remember — and I have said this many times — that cancer really does affect us all, whether we are a patient, carer, family member or friend watching someone fighting this disease.

It is staggering but true that one in two people will suffer from cancer, which is why this centre is so important. In Brimbank, one of the communities that lies in my electorate, 726 people will be diagnosed with cancer this year, and the most common forms affecting this area are bowel, lung and breast cancer — which is why I should also thank all those who work tirelessly at Sunshine Hospital's radiation centre. This has been developed in partnership with Peter Mac to make treatment more accessible than ever before for these frighteningly common cancers and many other forms that affect the community.

This radiation therapy centre, however, is not unique in offering patients more accessible treatment. March marked the 10th anniversary since the opening of the Bendigo Radiotherapy Centre. Since its beginning this facility has treated over 6000 patients and has ultimately relieved patients from remote areas from the stress of travelling to Melbourne or a private facility at Albury-Wodonga for their treatment.

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre is so much more than a hospital and research centre. Not only does it provide specialist health care to its patients, not only are its researchers in its 31 laboratories every day searching for a cure, but it is also a refuge to help patients with the mental battles they face.

I know how important research and fundraising is to fighting cancer and in helping to find a cure, which is why on 27 October I took part in the annual Relay for Life. It was actually the first staging of that event in Brimbank, but after its success I am sure it will be back next year, bigger and better. The day raised around \$30 000, which is wonderful. I must also note that parliamentary colleagues, including Ms Natalie Hutchins, the member for Keilor in the Assembly, and Mr Andrew Elsbury, also participated in the relay. It was great to see the survivors, carers and members of the community come together to participate in the relay for a cancer-free future.

After reading this annual report and seeing the community band together to raise money for vital research, I believe there will be a cancer-free future. I commend the report to the house.

Auditor-General: *Managing Major Projects*

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a statement on the Victorian Auditor-General's report of October 2012 entitled *Managing Major Projects*, and if one looks at the duration of the period covered by the report, it really is a report card on the Bracks and Brumby-Lenders governments. Some people will find this a little surprising, but I commend the words of Ms Mikakos in her presentation to the house this afternoon when she said that people should look in the mirror and take responsibility. I could not agree more that members of the Bracks and Brumby-Lenders governments should look in the mirror and take responsibility for Major Projects Victoria's delivery over the period of their time in government.

The purpose of Major Projects Victoria is to invest in and deliver infrastructure that is a core function of the government. Investments are made to achieve economic, social and environmental outcomes, including increased productivity, access to services and improvements to the natural environment. Major Projects Victoria's role is to provide expert project delivery services to Victorian government departments and other agencies engaged in the delivery of complex, technically challenging and unique projects of state significance, but the Auditor-General found that Major Projects Victoria is not performing its leadership role or its research role.

This is about appropriate levels of governance, about managing the risk profile and optimising outputs, about the proper utilisation of state-owned assets, about making sure that we meet the triple bottom line that is often referred to in corporate Australia — I think they call it things like dashboard and a balanced scorecard. But fundamentally it is about using taxpayers money wisely for economic, social and environmental outcomes for Victoria, and the Bracks and Brumby-Lenders governments failed in this.

To pick up Ms Mikakos's point, the opposition should now look in the mirror and take responsibility for the mismanagement of Victorian taxpayers money over 11 years. Interestingly enough, as this government has had the benefit of opening new facilities in its short time in government, there has been feedback from opposition members who have said, 'You are opening another Labor-funded project'. Maybe I have this wrong, but I did not know the state ALP funded these projects; I thought they were funded by the taxpayers. Yet time and again Ms Mikakos and the member for Yan Yean in the other place, Danielle Green, say, 'This was a Labor-funded project'.

I could be wrong; maybe the state ALP in West Melbourne funded all these projects, but I doubt it. This report is a damning one that says the Bracks-Brumby-Lenders governments failed in expert delivery, in transparency of approach, in governance, in project controls and in management. They failed in information flows, in accountability, and importantly it says they failed in leadership and innovation.

The Liberal-Nationals coalition, now in government, has to clean up the pigsty mess that was left for us by the Bracks and Brumby-Lenders governments. They should look in the mirror and take responsibility, and the best thing they could do in response to my contribution is to stand up and say to all Victorians, 'We are sorry, because we made a mess of it'.

Regional Development Victoria: report 2011–12

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I rise to make a contribution in respect of regional development in this state. On the eve of the Baillieu government's second anniversary it is appropriate to examine what is the lifeblood of Victoria, and that is the health of its rural and regional cities and its townships.

In 1999 rural and regional Victoria was on its knees after the Kennett government systematically tore it apart. Over the next 11 years the Brumby and Bracks governments assisted in building strong rural and

regional communities, investing in infrastructure and creating jobs. The Baillieu government was left with a strong and effective Regional Development Victoria (RDV) organisation which was responsible for enormous numbers of job creation schemes and infrastructure projects.

In reading the 2011–12 annual report of Regional Development Victoria, coupled with many statistics indicating that the health of regional Victoria is very poor, I am saddened to say that I believe rural and regional Victoria is going backwards under the Baillieu government. The detrimental decisions and the funding cuts that this government has made to myriad areas have cut to the heart of many rural and regional townships. These decisions and funding cuts are making it increasingly difficult for regional cities and townships to remain healthy and vibrant communities.

Page 6 of the report states that RDV's responsibility is to facilitate economic, infrastructure and community development, and the effectiveness of RDV has been severely diminished under this government because essentially that has not been occurring. That comment is backed up by the Surf Coast Shire Council, which in a recent submission to the parliamentary inquiry into local economic development initiatives in Victoria made a number of comments that are quite concerning, and some of them were reflected by other local government instrumentalities in my region. I will quote directly from the Surf Coast Shire Council's submission. It states:

Rural Development Victoria was an outstanding department that had direct links with local government working closely with local government in generating economic development initiatives. The functions now with another department has severely stifled economic development initiatives as the new department is not equipped with experience or knowledge of local economic development initiatives.

...

Its lack of capacity has been a major blow to effective generation of local economic development initiatives.

... Rural Development Victoria played a vital role in coordinating various government departments and agencies to be brought to the table in any economic development initiative. This proved to be outstandingly successful and reduced the times for approvals considerably.

It is clear from the Surf Coast Shire Council's submission that the Baillieu government's changes to the structure of RDV have been severely detrimental to the economy of rural and regional Victoria.

Page 38 of the report focuses on the Baillieu government's push to attract people and skills to rural and regional Victoria through the Good Move

campaign. The previous Labor government had much success in this area, relocating the Transport Accident Commission to Geelong and creating further employment in Ballarat with the State Revenue Office relocation, to name just two initiatives. The report focuses on advertising campaigns designed to attract people to rural and regional Victoria as unemployment in rural and regional Victoria goes through the roof.

A big part of attracting people to our regions is providing first-class essential services, building infrastructure, creating employment opportunities and investing in education and training, and this government has been a spectacular failure on all those fronts. In the month of August alone 12 000 jobs were lost in rural and regional Victoria. TAFE funding has been slashed, with huge impacts for regional TAFEs and their communities. Regional departments have been gutted, most notably Department of Primary Industries staff and services. The impacts of these decisions are being felt right across regional Victoria.

Returning to the Surf Coast Shire Council's submission to the parliamentary inquiry, it says:

The reduction in training through TAFE is considered a major blow to small business growth and reduces the opportunity for business to train employees ...

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Queen Elizabeth Centre: report 2011–12

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I have an enormous amount of pleasure in speaking to the 94th annual report of the Queen Elizabeth Centre and its Learning Parenting Together program.

The Queen Elizabeth Centre (QEC) is in Thomas Street, Noble Park, and as I have told this chamber before, I was on the board when we made the decision to move the organisation from Carlton to Noble Park because it was a growth area. That was some time ago now — over 15 years — and it has proven to be exactly that. It is a highly successful centre. In fact it is working towards the needs of people in that entire corridor, and I place on the record my praise for the excellent CEO, Ms Athina Georgiou, and the president, Ms Susan Harper.

This is an organisation that is seriously going from strength to strength and understanding the challenges that are faced by young parents in particular. The parents who participate in the program have perhaps not had the advantages that a lot of people in our community take for granted. They are facing complex

issues and want to understand how to become better parents — that includes the young fathers, I might add — into the future. The QEC really is a wonderful organisation.

The executive report is interesting in itself because the foreword is a message from both the president and the CEO. This is indicative of the way this organisation runs. It works in unison and closely with the board and management. This is one of the hallmarks of its success. In part the foreword says:

For the majority of children, their safety and their overall health and wellbeing happens within a loving and nurturing family unit. However, there are certain risk factors that may disrupt parental capacity to safely look after their child. A host of factors may influence the likelihood of a child being vulnerable to abuse and neglect. These ... factors are commonly categorised into three main domains: parent/family factors; child factors; and economic, community and society factors. QEC is an early parenting centre focusing on providing specialised support, education and therapy to parents and families to facilitate their young child's physical and psychological health and wellbeing.

One of the first things the Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge, did as minister was to invite the eminent former judge Justice Philip Cummins to conduct the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry, which came up with a list of recommendations. When those recommendations were announced, the response of the minister and the government was to immediately allocate \$60 million to look into supporting vulnerable families.

A number of packages were put in place. One of them is the current inquiry into child sexual abuse. We have seen the ramifications of this with the current discussion and debate about a royal commission into child abuse across the country. I suggest it was the success of the Baillieu government, which came out and put these issues on the record, that has enabled this debate to happen. I know under the chairmanship of Georgie Crozier the committee will do an excellent job.

In relation to those issues Andrew Bolt, in an article in the *Herald Sun* of 12 November, talked about the three children who were tragically killed in a stolen car at Coolaroo. When you dig into what these children's lives had been and had become, you see a litany of tragedy. The driver, who was only 16, had been living with her grandparents. Her father had been murdered, and her mother had died of a heroin overdose. Andrew Bolt went on to talk about the tragic circumstances of the other children as well. In his comments he said:

... how do we make parents better?

I suggest that the programs at the Queen Elizabeth Centre go a long way towards helping people to be better parents. The report says on page 5:

QEC expresses appreciation to the Victorian government for the funds, interest and support of the work undertaken by QEC.

On page 4 the report says:

In April 2012, Minister Wooldridge's Cradle to Kinder program was launched, providing support to longer term intensive family and early parenting support for mothers under 25 ...

On page 6 a client is quoted as having said:

... We came to QEC feeling depleted of energy, anxious, overwhelmed and scattered. During my journey I was supported in a way that filled me to the brim. Without ever having to ask and in a way that I had not experienced before. I left QEC feeling energetic, focused and confident about the future and my parenting skills.

Congratulations to everyone concerned.

Kyabram and District Health Services: report 2011–12

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to make some remarks on the Kyabram and District Health Services 2011–12 annual report and at the outset take the opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of the president of the board of directors, Michael Sweeney, and the CEO, Neil Cowen. Kyabram and District Health Services comprises 35 acute hospital beds, 2 transitional care beds and 42 beds for aged-care residents. It provides a broad range of services, including diagnostic, urgent care, primary health, district nursing and community and allied health services. Kyabram has a small community and is not far from Shepparton. The service does an excellent job and provides a wide range of services to not only Kyabram itself but a much broader rural community.

Last year Kyabram and District Health Services received the Premier's award for the best rural public health service in Victoria. That was quite an achievement, and it goes a long way to show what a good standard and quality of care the health service offers to the people of Kyabram and district. This year it has consolidated those gains, achieving a balance between access to services, quality improvements and financial sustainability. That is always a challenge, and many of our hospitals are facing that challenge particularly with the cuts that have been made to health services by the Baillieu-Ryan government.

In May 2012 Kyabram and District Health Services received federal funding from the Department of Health

and Ageing of \$3.4 million for its health and wellbeing centre. This is an example of the federal government looking after smaller rural and regional hospitals.

Some of the highlights that are outlined in the annual report include that the health service was awarded two extensive achievement ratings within the four-year cycle of the Australian Council of Healthcare standards; Ray Tuhan was awarded the Life Governorship, recognising his tireless work, particularly for the Stanhope community; the Kyabram and District Health Services reported a modest surplus, which allowed new services to be offered, such as the development of a new wing as well as money to assist with training staff; it has continued piloting the community nursing project in Stanhope; and the health service met the Department of Health's weighted inlier equivalent separations targets for private and public inpatients and home and community care. The annual report also acknowledges the exceptional volunteers who donate an extensive number of hours. I think that reflects the sense of ownership the community feels towards the health service.

A new hospital midwifery program started in January, and the first full year of the transitional care program has been completed. This important program assesses whether older patients recovering from an acute illness are able to return home safely. It is a very important program, particularly with our ageing community. We want our elderly patients to be able to return home if they can. They may need additional support in order to be able to do that, or they may not be capable of living independently, even with additional support at home. This important transitional program assesses that. There has been an improvement in residential aged-care performance, which grew by 24 per cent with a commonwealth grant of \$453 940. The renal dialysis program also had a successful start-up, opening in July. That now means that patients who need to access renal dialysis can do so at the Kyabram district hospital.

Regional Development Victoria: report 2011–12

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I would like to make some comments this afternoon on the Regional Development Victoria annual report. This is a report that reflects the first full financial year since the government began its destruction of the very successful work of Regional Development Victoria and the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. We are starting to see the consequences of the government's inaction and passive approach to regional development in the employment statistics in regional communities across the state — some quite acutely. This is an

opportunity to place on the record that the government has reduced funding to programs in the regional development portfolio. Indeed in the 2011–12 financial year the budget papers indicate a total expenditure of \$182.3 million. The target for 2012–13 is \$175.2 million. This is a government that aspires to fail in delivering for regional communities. It is absolutely true.

The targets for tourism expenditure and visitor numbers are lower. Regarding aspirations for delivery of the Energy for the Regions program the budget papers reveal a target of four, a revised target of three and that progress is being made on two. They reveal similarly pessimistic targets around facilitation of new investment in regional communities. This is in addition to the government's decision to take funds that are publicly described as being for regional communities and to spend those funds in interface communities.

I do not deny that interface communities need government assistance and spending on infrastructure, but the Deputy Premier certainly made rather a big deal about a billion-dollar growth fund for regional Victoria. The act defines the borders of regional Victoria, and spending goes beyond those boundaries. We suggested at the time of the transition from the old arrangements to the new that that was a very great risk, and we now have confirmation from the government that programs that were not to be cut have been cut and that funds that were to be spent in regional communities addressing their very specific economic and social needs are now being spent beyond the legislatively defined area that makes up regional Victoria.

This adds insult to the many injuries that the government has already inflicted on regional communities. Members are very familiar with the devastating cuts that are occurring across TAFE institutes. That this will disproportionately affect people in regional communities is, I think, well understood, certainly by the communities in my electorate of Western Victoria Region. The TAFE cuts are cruel right across the state, but in regional communities where people's one opportunity to further their education was at TAFE, course and campus closures are a particularly devastating bit of news from the government. In question time in this place today Mr Hall was talking about his lifelong commitment to educational access for people living in regional Victoria. I think that was a little cute, given the cuts over which he has presided in that portfolio.

This government has been distracted by strange things like the search for the big cat. At the Liberal Party state council meeting that took place recently in my home

town of Ballarat government members could have been talking about issues that matter to regional Victorian communities, but they were talking about contraceptives for possums. I do not think I need to say any more. I certainly welcome all of the efforts of the people working in regional development agencies across the state and wish them the best in spite of the efforts of the government to undermine the good work that they do.

Auditor-General: *Investment Attraction*

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I read with interest the Auditor-General's report on the Department of Business and Innovation (DBI) and in particular its findings regarding the current status of the Victorian economy insofar as they relate to attracting and securing foreign and local investments and innovative projects and schemes designed to boost our business sector. It is an interesting fact that Victoria has led the rest of Australia, with the exception of Western Australia and its mining boom, in providing beneficial advice and securing sound economic management of business investments.

Given the severity of the global financial crisis in 2008, it is nothing short of a miracle that Victoria has managed to continue to drive the state's economy towards a sustainable future. Attracting investment to Victoria is a key function of the Department of Business and Innovation, and in this it has been largely successful for the best part of 15 years. Productivity growth has fallen over the past 10 years, no doubt due to factors beyond the control of the DBI, but irrespective of which government has been in office the state has outperformed the rest of Australia. For this and for its ongoing efforts it deserves to be commended.

The Auditor-General makes mention of a few negatives. Most of these relate to communication and clarity of purpose. There are several recommendations contained in the report, not least of which are those pertaining to the lack of process regarding the access of facilitation services. These recommendations are important and should be implemented. The government's priorities and policies appear to be totally disregarded or ignored, with the emphasis being on the potential for success of any given project. If the DBI were a private cartel, this would not be a problem. But it is not; it is an arm of government and needs to address this identified shortcoming.

Clear documentation of the rationale behind all decisions needs to be part of the department's culture so as to ensure transparency in all its dealings for the

people of Victoria. Accountability is still paramount and is the responsibility of the government in power. I support the recommendations contained in this report and I look forward to their implementation. The corporate plan of the department also needs attention, as it seems, according to the Auditor-General, to be lacking clarity of purpose.

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre: report 2011–12

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Along with my good friend and colleague Mr Eideh, I would like to make a brief statement on the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre annual report 2011–12. I want to briefly touch on what we would all agree is great work by the staff at Peter Mac; they are world renowned. We understand how challenging, exhilarating and sad working in this area can be.

I want to touch on the chair's report where she mentions a few of the staff. A number of long-serving staff have left in recent times, and she talks about Jeremy Kenner, John Martyn, Julie Miller, Jemimah Pentland, Anne Rahilly, Associate Professor David Ritchie, Dr Gian Sberna, Dr Colin Styles and Stephen Thomas, who all did some great work in the centre and have moved on.

The chair also touches on a number of Peter Mac staff who were honoured with awards during the year, including: Professor David Ball, Alan Balloch, Professor Gill Duchesne, Dr Michael Findlay, Associate Professor Mei Krishnasamy and Professor John Zalcborg, OAM. Dr Megan Bywater was awarded the 2012 Peter Mac Postgraduate Research Medal. Doctors Kieran Harvey and Carole Poon jointly won the inaugural Joseph F. Sambrook Prize for Research Excellence. Sue Breen was honoured at the Minister for Health's 2012 volunteer awards. As we know, volunteers in this area are selfless, and the work they do is fantastic. It is good to see the well-deserved recognition of a great volunteer at Peter Mac.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Wallace Street, Morwell: drainage

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — The matter I raise tonight is for the attention of the Premier, Mr Baillieu. It concerns the drainage issues behind houses in Wallace Street in Morwell and the government's response to the concerns of residents. I previously

raised this as an adjournment matter in the house on 14 August. I appreciated the response I received from the Premier on 23 October — perhaps a little late, but I definitely appreciated his response to my adjournment matter.

However, his response has raised some further issues on which I wish to get clarification and further action from the Premier. In relation to the matter I originally raised, which was about a possible demarcation dispute between VicRoads and the Department of Primary Industries over the issue and which agency was responsible, the Premier has clarified that VicRoads is the responsible government agency. He indicated to me that VicRoads will undertake a review of the effectiveness of works that have already been undertaken at the site.

In addition the Premier has committed to organising an independent assessment of the site to determine whether further works are required. This is a matter that residents have raised, and they have been unable to get detailed information from VicRoads on the work and geotechnical investigations that have been done so far. Local residents have been unable to get access to the detail of that information. While I appreciate the Premier's undertakings and advice, this is an ongoing matter of great concern to the residents of Wallace Street, particularly those on the side of Wallace Street that are nearest the Princes Freeway.

I ask the Premier to keep me informed of the progress of what is undertaken, particularly in relation to the independent assessment of the site. I ask that the Premier provide me with the independent site assessment once that has been completed.

Roads: Kilmore-Wallan bypass

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads, Terry Mulder, and relates to the Kilmore-Wallan bypass. Since entering Parliament in 2007 I have been working to deliver a satisfactory outcome for traffic management in the Wallan and Kilmore communities. It has been a long struggle for those communities.

It began back in December 2005 when VicRoads informed residents along the Northern Highway between Wallan and Kilmore of a proposed duplication. Due to community pressure the Labor government suspended the duplication in September 2006, just before the state election. In August 2007 VicRoads announced plans to spend \$250 000 on painting new white lines in Sydney Street, Kilmore, that would significantly narrow the lanes and cause

confusion and peril for drivers and pedestrians. This plan was shelved a few months later and replaced by a new plan to create a safe haven crossing point for pedestrians in the middle of the road, leaving them unprotected and mere millimetres from heavy vehicles driving past. In 2008 a series of new white lines and turning arrows were painted on the road, only to disappear a few months later.

The Labor government continued to ignore calls from the community for traffic lights at the corner of Sydney and Union streets. Time and again the approach was to patch up Kilmore's traffic problems rather than to create a proper long-term solution. Also in 2007 the community of Kilmore was stalled, deluded and delayed when a limited public consultation process resulted in VicRoads unveiling maps and costing estimates for no less than 11 bypass options for the community to vote on. In January 2009 Labor then shelved plans for a bypass and proceeded with a duplication study.

In December 2009 the then transport minister, Tim Pallas, the member for Tarnait in the Assembly, travelled to Kilmore to announce Labor's plans for a major link road running past three of Kilmore's schools. There was no public consultation; the community was just told that that was what it was getting. The community was rightly outraged. Since the opening of the new St Patrick's Primary School campus and the resultant increase in school traffic in the area, it beggars belief that any government could come have up with such a ludicrous plan. Community pressure resulted in the plan being shelved.

In government the coalition has delivered traffic lights at the corner of Sydney and Union streets which have significantly improved traffic flow and safety in Kilmore. We have remained steadfastly committed to delivering a bypass to solve Kilmore's remaining traffic problems. Our objective has never changed. I understand that the process has been upsetting for some residents, but the coalition has ensured that the public consultation process conducted by VicRoads has been fair and thorough and has explored all realistic bypass options. We have ensured that these options are being given the appropriate engineering investigations and costings. Most importantly, the coalition has provided funding for a bypass, something Labor failed to do over 11 years in government.

I congratulate the minister on providing funding for this project and on remaining committed to delivering a bypass for the Wallan and Kilmore communities. I ask that the minister update the house on the status of

public consultation and planning for this important infrastructure project.

Police: stop and search receipts

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Under section 456AA of the Crimes Act 1958 Victoria Police officers have the power to stop a member of the public and require him or her to give their name and address if the police officer believes on reasonable grounds that the person has committed or is about to commit an offence or may be able to assist in the investigation of an indictable offence. However, under section 10 of the Control of Weapons Act 1990, sections 60E and 82 of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981, section 13 of the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007 and section 21P of the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, the police have wider powers to search a person without a warrant.

In recent media reports, including on 27 August on the *World Today* with Emily Bourke, lawyers in Sydney and Melbourne raised concerns that African and Muslim communities are being targeted by police and called for the introduction of stop and search receipts. The practice of stop and search receipting is already taking place in the United Kingdom in response to an inquiry which found that institutional racism was apparent in the disparity in stop and search figures.

On 1 January 2009 it became mandatory under the United Kingdom Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Code A that police in the UK provide people they stop and search with a receipt containing the following data: the officer's details; the date, time and place of the stop and search; the reason for the stop and search; the outcome of the stop and search; the person's self-identified ethnicity; the vehicle registration number, if relevant; what the officers were looking for and anything they found; and the person's name, or a description if the person refuses to give their name. The Metropolitan Police Service maintains a publicly available database of stop and search statistics.

At present Victoria Police is required to report in some areas of the law. However, stop and search receipts are not mandated for all situations where Victoria Police officers stop and search people. In order to ensure that there is transparency and accountability in relation to all stop and searches made by Victoria Police and fair and equitable treatment of all citizens, I request that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services urgently consider legislating for a mandatory requirement for receipts for all stop and searches or, alternatively, liaise

with the Chief Commissioner of Police to have the requirement placed in Victoria Police standing orders.

Students: education conveyance allowance

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, and the matter I wish to raise concerns cuts to the transport conveyance allowance. Parents and schools in northern Victoria are very concerned about the recent changes to the travel assistance program, which will be means tested from 2013. The conveyance transport allowance has always been about getting students to school when their school is not close by and public transport is not readily available.

I recently received a letter from the principal of Goulburn Valley Grammar School in Shepparton, Mr Mark Torriero, outlining his concerns. He advises that Goulburn Valley Grammar School has a socioeconomic status of 97, placing it lower than the state average. The parents of its students are not wealthy but are hardworking parents from a diverse range of backgrounds that place a premium on the value of education. The principal is concerned that the school received no warning and that there was no consultation. He indicates that 95 per cent of the students at Goulburn Valley Grammar School travel by bus and that 100 per cent of those students have been eligible for some level of conveyance allowance. This has been supported by successive state governments over many years.

I have also had information from the director of the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst. She thinks this government decision has not been well thought through and that it is going to impact a lot more on students and families than it is going to deliver in terms of budgetary savings. She also indicates that it may result in families no longer being able to afford to enrol their children in their school of choice.

These changes will have major financial implications for families not just at schools in the Goulburn Valley but right across Northern Victoria Region. My specific request to the minister is that he remove the means test for the conveyance transport allowance so that it is available to all students and families who need it. In rural and regional areas it is not unusual for students to have to travel to the nearest pick-up point for a school bus, so quite a bit of travelling is done apart from the bus. In these areas public transport is not an option, and that is why the conveyance allowance is so important. I urge the minister to remove the means test from the conveyance allowance.

Craigieburn–Hanson roads, Craigieburn: traffic lights

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads, Mr Mulder, and it concerns a letter that I received recently from the secretary of the Craigieburn Residents Association, Ms Debra Phippen. It revolves around urgently needed traffic lights at the intersection of Craigieburn Road and Hanson Road in Craigieburn. Among other things, on behalf of the Craigieburn Residents Association, Ms Phippen writes with respect to the intersection of Craigieburn Road and Hanson Road, Craigieburn:

This is an issue of priority for many local residents.

Hanson Road and Craigieburn Road are the major roads connecting Craigieburn's business and service precinct to the northern and western residential growth areas. The intersection of these two roads is dangerous and congested and needs to be upgraded as soon as possible.

She points out that in the years to 2011 Craigieburn's population has more than doubled to almost 33 000 residents, a doubling of its previous population of 15 000 in 2001. In the next 10 years it is forecast to grow to 54 000 residents and for a period of time will become the largest suburb in the city of Hume.

The intersection is a key thoroughfare to all locations throughout the suburb, and the problem that exists now will only worsen over the next few years. With a higher than average rate of car ownership and 258 bus services travelling through the intersection every weekday — that is one service every 4 minutes — Craigieburn has clearly outgrown an intersection that was designed when it was a semirural satellite town, and that is the problem.

We have a situation in Craigieburn, as has happened in a number of former small towns on the outskirts of Melbourne, where the population has exploded in recent years, the number of dwellings has exploded and as a result the traffic has exploded as well. We have a real problem in many of the townships in the outlying areas of Western Metropolitan Region. Craigieburn is most certainly one of them. I ask the minister to give this intersection at Craigieburn and Hanson roads some urgent consideration. I ask him to give this matter the priority it deserves and give the people of Craigieburn the traffic lights and safety they need at this intersection.

Mental health: emergency beds

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Mental

Health, Mary Wooldridge. I was extremely disappointed to read the woeful report released by the Victorian health services and its figure for the admission waiting time for mentally ill Victorians seeking emergency treatment. How is it that 748 mentally ill patients waited more than 8 hours for emergency medical treatment? The figure of 748 is a truly staggering number; however, what is more confronting is that this number is made up only from admissions between April and June. I, along with many other members in this house, would be shocked to learn the total figure for the year, or even more so, the figure since Mr Baillieu took government.

The worst affected hospitals, which make up the top three in the report, are hospitals located in the west. If these hospitals received the funding they deserved, I seriously doubt that the welfare of mentally ill patients would be at risk. Once again these results support what we have known since day one when the Liberal Party and its cohort gained power — that the west is not a priority for them. This is ludicrous, especially when members consider that it houses the top two fastest growing municipalities in the commonwealth.

When we consider this situation I cannot believe the government pulled half a billion dollars out of Victorian's health-care system. How can these seriously ill Victorians access the essential health care they need and so rightfully deserve when this government will not acknowledge the problem and address it? Instead it allows problems in Victoria's health system to continue to escalate until they become unmanageable. The neglect of mental health care is a prime example; the figure of 748 disregarded mentally ill patients reflects an increase of 30 per cent.

The PRESIDENT — Order! An adjournment matter is not a set speech; it addresses an issue and asks for a minister's response. In listening to the member's remarks tonight, it occurs to me that he is partly commenting on a report and taking information from that report and talking about the entire system, rather than addressing a specific matter for the minister. I have no doubt that the member is probably going to home in on a particular request that presumably relates to the western suburbs, given that he has mentioned three hospitals in that area. I ask the member to steer towards that because, as I said, the adjournment debate is not for a set speech, and at the moment that is what he is delivering to the chamber.

Mr EIDEH — Thank you, President. I ask the minister to quickly realise how important specialist treatment beds are and ensure that this problem is

addressed promptly and adequately so that seriously ill Victorians no longer suffer.

Elwood Secondary College: learning hub

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon. Recently I was pleased to attend the launch of the Elwood learning hub at Elwood Secondary College. Also in attendance at the launch to support this innovative initiative were the members for Brighton and Albert Park in the Assembly, Louise Asher and Martin Foley. I note that Mr Foley has a close affinity and personal connection with Elwood Primary School, one of the education facilities that is part of the Elwood hub.

The Elwood hub was set up in May 2011 to promote links between Poets Grove Children's Centre, Elwood Primary School and Elwood Secondary College. The vision of the Elwood learning hub is to provide children with the very best educational opportunities and build a sense of belonging and connectedness with the local community. Some key goals of the hub include enhancing a sense of community for families, enhancing student learning outcomes, enhancing student engagement and pride, and streamlining and improving pathways and transitions.

The hub certainly demonstrates a great collaboration between the three education facilities and the many teachers, parents, students and supporters of the concept. At the launch we heard students from all three facilities give insights into their mentoring roles with younger students and the various enhanced learning programs they are undertaking. There is no doubt the hub has a unique ability, due to the proximity of the three education facilities, that allows this to be achieved. I therefore ask the minister to visit Elwood Secondary College to further understand the concept and program of the Elwood hub.

Water: authority dividends

Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs and it relates to water pricing. Today the Auditor-General put out a report that shows that the dividends of the water authorities went up by 278 per cent. The report shows that water authorities are now borrowing money to pay their dividends to the state government, and the amount that comes in charges to the state government is now \$1.16 million a day, almost as much as is paid for in infrastructure like the desalination plant and other important bits of infrastructure.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Yes, Mr Viney, according to the Auditor-General's report released today, money is being borrowed by the water authorities to pay the dividends to the state government. I am raising this matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs because we have seen water price rises flagged by City West Water, Yarra Valley Water and South East Water, which the Minister for Water has said will come to \$300 a year. These rises in all three water authority prices are coming up-front in the first year. The action I seek from the Minister for Consumer Affairs is that he appear at the Essential Services Commission to try to phase these increases in over five years, as Western Water and most regional water authorities are doing.

I do not shirk from discussing the fact that the desalination plant is an infrastructure project that is being paid for, and the bills of every water authority in metropolitan Melbourne show a \$1.81 million cost by direction of the minister. That is fact. What is not known is that \$1.61 million a day is being extracted out of the water authorities in dividends, income tax equivalents and other payments to the point where, according to page 30 of the Auditor-General's report tabled today, the water authorities need to borrow money to pay their dividends.

The action I seek from the Minister for Consumer Affairs is that he intervene at the Essential Services Commission so that the payments that need to be made get phased in over a five-year period, as occurs in most of the regional authorities and with Western Water, rather than all the payments being made in the first year, as is being required by this Minister for Water. I ask the Minister for Consumer Affairs to seek to address —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I remind Mr Finn that it was the Auditor-General in his report tabled today who said the water authorities need to borrow money to pay for the record 278 per cent increase in dividends that this government took from them this year. I ask the Minister for Consumer Affairs to appear at the Essential Services Commission to help smooth these water price increases.

Boronia K–12 College: stage 2 development

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I will resist the temptation to comment on the \$3 billion that slipped through Mr Lenders's hands with the pokies licence auction. That was a disgrace, but I will resist

that temptation and raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, Mr Dixon.

I was very pleased with the commitment the minister made to the Boronia community in this year's state budget, presented in May. As some members may be aware, Boronia K–12 College is the result of the merger between Boronia Heights College and Boronia Primary School. Stage 1 of that project was completed earlier this year. The government secured the balance of funding for that project. The conclusion of stage 2 will see the master plan for Boronia K–12 College completed with a \$15 million investment from the coalition government. Again I congratulate Minister Dixon on making those funds available through the state budgetary process.

Of course there is work required to be undertaken, such as further design documentation, preparation to tender and the like, before stage 2 can commence. Now that we are several months on from the May announcement and the commencement of the new financial year on 1 July, the action I seek from the minister is that he provide an update on when stage 2 will commence on the very important Boronia K–12 College.

Greek community: migrant services

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — My matter this evening is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, Mr Kotsiras. As the minister would be aware, there are an increasing number of Greek nationals arriving in Victoria, some of whom are Australian citizens who have been absent for many years, some of whom are previous Australian residents and some of whom are Greek students arriving on student visas. According to Department of Immigration and Citizenship figures published in *Neos Kosmos* on 5 July 2012, 102 Greek nationals were granted Australian student visas in 2011, up by more than 52 per cent on the previous year, and I expect that this figure will rapidly increase.

Many of these arrivals are well-educated, well-motivated and well-intentioned young people who I believe will be able to make an excellent contribution to Australia in the long term. I am anecdotally aware of many Greek-Australian families who report that a relative has recently arrived in Victoria or is expressing an interest in coming to Victoria. The concern I have is that these arrivals are putting a great deal of financial strain on the longstanding and ageing members of the Greek community in Victoria, many of whom are now pensioners and unfamiliar with how to advise on settlement issues, which they themselves faced 40 or 50 years earlier.

These arrivals are also putting a great deal of strain on the financial resources of our Greek community organisations. For example, the Australian Greek Welfare Society, which is a highly regarded organisation, plays an important role in supporting Victoria's ageing Greek community in education, health, welfare and child-care and language services, but it has recently been using its own internal resources and fundraising efforts to fund social workers to assist these recent arrivals on settlement issues such as housing, employment and legal matters. I commend the welfare society on establishing a volunteer migration agent service in April this year to specifically provide information about immigration to these arrivals and members of the broader Greek community seeking information about migration issues.

I point out that I have also written to the federal Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Chris Bowen, seeking support from the federal government in these matters. I am asking the state Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship to provide financial support to the Australian Greek Welfare Society to help fund settlement services for recently arrived Greek nationals and to work with similar organisations that might also be well placed to provide similar support around these issues.

Responses

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Tonight I have written responses to adjournment matters raised by Mr Philip Davis on 6 September, Mr Tarlamis on 13 September and Mrs Coote on 9 October.

Tonight we have had 10 requests on adjournment items, the first raised by Mr Viney to the Premier concerning the drainage issues for residents in Wallace Street, Morwell. In particular Mr Viney has requested that the site assessment for that area be provided to him. I will pass on that request.

Mrs Petrovich raised a matter for the Minister for Roads seeking an update on the progress of the Wallan-Kilmore bypass. By the sounds of the commentary given in respect of that, we have certainly been through a lot of twists and turns in relation to that bypass. I will seek that update on progress as requested.

Ms Pennicuik raised a matter for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services requesting that he consider legislation for stop and search receipts. I will certainly pass that request on to the Deputy Premier in his capacity as Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Ms Darveniza raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding the conveyance allowance and in particular the means-testing for that allowance. Ms Darveniza seeks reconsideration of that. I will pass that on to the Minister for Education.

Mr Finn raised a matter for the Minister for Roads, who is also the Minister for Public Transport. On behalf of his constituents Mr Finn requested the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Craigieburn Road and Hanson Road. That is a request I will convey to the Minister for Roads.

Mr Eideh raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health. He went to great lengths to suggest that the west was not a priority for the current government and made a point about that. I want to dispute that in my response by saying that is far from the case. Indeed the western part of the city of Melbourne is of great importance to this great city. Just this week I spoke about new training programs being funded by this government and trialled by Victoria University for people in the west. I raise that as but one example of the many fine things this government is doing for the people in the western part of the metropolitan area. Notwithstanding that, Mr Eideh pointed out a need for greater resources to tackle mental health problems in that area, and I will pass that request on to the Minister for Mental Health.

Ms Crozier raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding the Elwood hub and the involvement, therefore, of Elwood Primary School, Elwood College and potentially other schools. It sounds like a very fine idea, and Ms Crozier has asked that the Minister for Education visit and acquaint himself with that proposal. I will pass that request on to him.

Mr Lenders is usually first on the list; tonight he is eighth. That was a surprise in itself, but you have to admire Mr Lenders for finding unique ways in which to raise matters. Tonight his was a matter on water pricing, and it was directed to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. I suggest that the issue of water pricing is one which may well be debated at future times in this house, given the interest shown by members when Mr Lenders raised this matter. In essence, Mr Lenders asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs to submit to the Essential Services Commission that an increase in water prices should be phased in over a period of time. I will pass the request that Mr Lenders enunciated on to the Minister for Consumer Affairs.

Mr O'Donohue raised a matter for the Minister for Education seeking an update on progress in regard to

Boronia K-12 College, an important project. I will pass that request for a progress report on to the Minister for Education.

Ms Mikakos raised a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship. It concerned funding for settlement services provided by Greek community groups, since many Greek nationals are settling or resettling in Australia — particularly some on student visas. That is welcome. We welcome those students to our country. I will pass that request on. If the minister can find some assistance in regard to that, I am sure he will be more than happy to work with his federal colleague — Ms Mikakos indicated that she has also written to the federal Minister for Immigration and Citizenship — to see if the state and federal governments can support each other in terms of providing funding for those services to be delivered.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.39 p.m.