

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Book 14**

**6 September 2012**

**Internet: [www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard)**

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## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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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.

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## Joint committees

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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 Foley, Mr Noonan 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 and Ms Crozier. (*Assembly*): Mrs Bauer, 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'Brien and Mr O'Donohue. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella and Mr Watt.

## Heads of parliamentary departments

*Assembly* — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

*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 President:** Mr M. VINEY

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**Deputy Leader of the Government:**

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

**Leader of the Opposition:**

Mr J. LENDERS

**Deputy Leader of the Opposition:**

Mr G. JENNINGS

**Leader of The Nationals:**

The Hon. P. R. HALL

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals:**

Mr D. DRUM

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Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Lenders, Mr John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Broad, Ms Candy Celeste	Northern Victoria	ALP	Lovell, Hon. Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP
Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr David Roland Joseph	Western Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Darveniza, Ms Kaye Mary	Northern Victoria	ALP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
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Davis, Mr Philip Rivers	Eastern Victoria	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee	Northern Victoria	LP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Elsbury, Mr Andrew Warren	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Hon. Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Guy, Hon. Matthew Jason	Northern Metropolitan	LP	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hall, Hon. Peter Ronald	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Tarlamis, Mr Lee Reginald	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
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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**BENDIGO****Thursday, 6 September 2012**

**The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.33 a.m.**

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Televising and photographing of proceedings**

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I indicate to members that WIN Television Victoria will be filming some of the proceedings, and no doubt some of the local press may also take some photographs throughout the day. I welcome their attendance.

I ask members and guests of the Parliament on this occasion to stand for the national anthem.

**National anthem sung.**

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I indicate that the national anthem was sung by the Bendigo Youth Choir. It is quite a celebrated choir which has enjoyed success recently overseas, being well placed in a world competition. Listening to them today we can understand why. I thank the choir for joining us today and congratulate its members on their success as a choir. We appreciate the fact that they have kicked off our parliamentary sitting today.

**Very Reverend John Roundhill, Anglican Dean of Bendigo, read the prayer.****PROCLAMATION**

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The Clerk will read the proclamation of the Governor.

**The Clerk** — The proclamation reads:

I, Hon. Alex Chernov, Governor of Victoria, acting pursuant to section 8 of the Constitution Act 1975, hereby:

- a. fix the Bendigo Town Hall, 189–193 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo, as the place for the dispatch of business of the Legislative Council on 6 September 2012 until the completion of its business on that day or, if necessary, the following day; and
- b. confirm that the place for the dispatch of business of the Legislative Council shall thereafter revert to Parliament House, Melbourne.

Given under my hand and the seal of Victoria, at Melbourne, this 7 August 2012.

Hon. Alex Chernov, AC, QC  
Governor  
By His Excellency's Command

**ADDRESS BY MAYOR OF CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO**

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Ladies and gentlemen, I am Bruce Atkinson, President of the Legislative Council, and it is my great privilege to preside over this regional sitting in Bendigo. Bendigo is one of Victoria's most important cities, the third biggest city in Victoria and a city that is rich with history and a very significant foundation stone of the Victoria that we have today. This is in part due to the rich gold rush history of this district, but Bendigo has been a contributor in so many other respects. Indeed a number of significant businesses have started here. Myer got its start here in Bendigo — as have many other businesses — and it has become one of Australia's iconic businesses.

Bendigo has contributed greatly to Australian politics as well. Last night I saw at the Bendigo Art Gallery a painting by Theodore King called *The First Parliamentary Election, Bendigo 1855*, which depicts an election in Bendigo in 1855. That was one of the first, and this is where we have come to today with the Parliament visiting Bendigo for a regional sitting — the fifth time that the Legislative Council has sat outside Melbourne.

But as I said at the reception last night, Parliament is not just bricks and mortar. Whilst the bricks and mortar of our buildings are located in Melbourne, the Parliament is a creature of the entire state of Victoria. Representatives come from across Victoria, and they are very focused on local communities and on regional towns. I am pleased that we have been able to visit an area that is well represented by a number of members of the Legislative Council, including the Honourable Wendy Lovell, the Minister for Housing — she has several other portfolios too, but I will mention just the one on this occasion — Damian Drum, one of the parliamentary secretaries; Donna Petrovich, also a parliamentary secretary; Candy Broad and Kaye Darveniza — where is Kaye? There she is. It is a little bit hard for me to orient myself with the tables, and members are blending into the community, but that is a good thing.

I also take this opportunity to again acknowledge the Greater Bendigo City Council for its support of this significant and I daresay historic event. Mayor Alec Sandner and the councillors and staff of the City of Greater Bendigo have done all they can to accommodate this regional sitting. We appreciate the work that has been put in by the council, and we hope you see this as an important event for Bendigo, as we see it as an important event.

It is a great pleasure for me to acknowledge in the audience today two former members of the Legislative Council, both of whom occupied the President's chair at various points as deputy presidents, I believe. Barry Bishop was a Deputy President whose time serving the Parliament overlapped with my time. We welcome Barry. Also Ken Wright is here today, and we certainly welcome Ken as well. He was telling me that he occupied the chair in the absences of Fred Grimwade, another distinguished former member of Parliament.

I am also very pleased to welcome Senator McKenzie, who has an office here in Bendigo. The federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, was in town yesterday. We think he got the day wrong and that he actually meant to be here visiting us today, but he has sent a consort in Senator McKenzie today. It is a great pleasure to have her join us.

I hope members of the public, and in particular schoolchildren, enjoy this visit. This is a particularly interesting exercise for the Parliament as we do not get out of town very often. As I said, the Legislative Council has done so five times — we have previously been to Lakes Entrance, Colac, Benalla and Ballarat. We are delighted to be in your town, Bendigo, and not just Bendigo itself but indeed the region surrounding Bendigo, particularly in northern Victoria. We hope you enjoy your stay here. We welcome all members of the public today.

The one thing I will mention to members of the public is that we do not allow interaction with the sitting, so if members of the public have something they would like to take up with a member, perhaps they could grab them in a corridor or something at another time but not engage in discussions across the chamber.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — President, party leaders, mayor, councillors, former members and most importantly members of the Bendigo community, this is a historic sitting, the first time the Legislative Council has sat in Bendigo, and I think it is something that all parties and all members of this chamber are proud of. It brings the Parliament, and in this case the Legislative Council, closer to the people and closer to our incredibly important regional communities, in this case Bendigo. I am very pleased to see here a number of former members of the Council, in particular Ken Wright and Barry Bishop, whom I also served with, as well as Senator McKenzie.

Bendigo has a fine, strong, cultural history that draws back to the gold rush and before, through the indigenous history, but particularly through that gold rush period it has made such a strong contribution to Victoria. Today we will debate a motion to make gold

the state's mineral emblem, and I can think of no finer place to move that motion than in Bendigo today.

There is also a strong acknowledgement of the need to support country Victoria and regional Victoria, and the government is determined to do that. The Parliament's commitment today is that we will debate many of those issues that are important to regional Victoria. In my own portfolio there is a strong commitment through health projects, and I look forward to the day's debate and the opportunity to talk to more people from the Bendigo community.

As far as possible today will be a normal sitting day, so people will have the opportunity to see the Legislative Council at work. Thank you.

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — It gives me great pleasure to respond on behalf of the 16 Labor Party members. All of us were privileged last night when Mr Graham Atkinson, an elder of the Dja Dja Wurrung people, and the mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, Cr Alec Sandner, welcomed us to Bendigo on their behalf. On behalf of the Labor Party members, I would like to reciprocate that welcome.

Last night at the welcome and here today is also an opportunity to acknowledge the Legislative Council coming to Bendigo. Of course this was part of the vision of former Premier Steve Bracks which brought the Legislative Assembly to this same hall in 2001. I am privileged to be one of three members of the Council who was then in the Assembly, so for some of us this is our second visit to this town hall for the deliberations of the Parliament of Victoria. It is great to be part of that.

It is also good for the community to be able to see more intimately the operations of this house of the Parliament. While we do meet 51 days a year at Spring Street and that is open to the public, it is clearly more accessible when the Parliament comes to a regional centre. That vision continues, and I think it is very appropriate for us to do that.

Mr Davis said we will be debating various motions this day, and we will debate those motions vigorously as the day goes on. The government will rightfully mention gold, and we will rightfully mention the contribution of our government in bringing Rural Finance, State Trustees Victoria and VicSuper to Bendigo. There will be a contest of ideas today. I look forward to it, and hopefully it is something that can be replicated again in four years time.

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Parliamentary colleagues, distinguished

guests, boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, The Nationals are delighted to be part of the regional sitting here in this great city of Bendigo. Parliament and the processes of Parliament are littered with history and tradition, and we have seen some of those in the opening of the parliamentary session here this morning.

It is an opportunity to share with the people of regional Victoria — in particular in the Loddon Mallee region — some of those traditions, processes and history. However, equally the beneficiaries of a regional visit are the members of Parliament, because already we have seen some of the history and traditions of this great city of Bendigo and its surrounds. The benefits of such a regional sitting are twofold, in that it brings the people to the Parliament but it also takes the Parliament to the people. I think that experience is equally important.

It is a great pleasure to be in Bendigo today, along with my colleagues in The Nationals, to participate in this regional sitting. With former members present, I note that, as already mentioned, the Honourable Ken Wright has his 87th birthday today. We extend happy birthday wishes to Ken.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — I quite simply thank everybody who has made our visit possible and welcomed us here.

I start by acknowledging that we are meeting on Jaara country, of which the members and elders of the Jaara people of the Dja Dja Wurrung community and their forebears are the traditional owners and have been custodians for many centuries and on which they have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. Last night they welcomed us here, and it was a great pleasure to be welcomed by Mr Graham Atkinson in his welcome to country ceremony.

Secondly, turning to the more recent custodians, we thank the City of Greater Bendigo for all the work its members have done to make this visit possible.

We also thank parliamentary staff for the extraordinary effort they have put in to make this regional sitting possible. I am sure there are also many other people who have helped of whom I am not aware. When things are going well you never know how many people have done their jobs well to make it all possible.

It is a great pleasure to be here. What most people see of Parliament is question time, which in many ways is the least enlightening part of what we do in Parliament. Today, if people are willing to stick with us, they will get to see a whole range of different parliamentary business. After hearing briefly from the mayor we will

get down to business, and I will save my further remarks for when we get to that stage.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I invite Cr Sandner, the mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, onto the floor of the chamber to address the house.

**Mayor escorted into chamber by Usher of the Black Rod.**

**Cr SANDNER** — I acknowledge that we are meeting on Jaara country, of which the members and elders of the Jaara people of the Dja Dja Wurrung community and their forebears are the traditional owners and have been custodians for many centuries and on which they have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

President, it is an honour and a privilege to be standing before you today on the floor of the Legislative Council in Bendigo and representing the people of this region. Our city has a long and proud history of championing democracy. Elected councillors were representing our community views and aspirations long before Federation.

In recent weeks we celebrated the 150th anniversary of local government in the Borough of Eaglehawk. It was a terrific occasion and a reminder of the historical and significant role local government has played in our region and in our state's history.

A few decades after the borough was created, a great Bendigonian, Sir John Quick, played a leading role in establishing the Federation of Australia. He served in the Legislative Assembly of the Victorian Parliament as a member for our region, and he also sat in the other place. It is fitting that we pay tribute to him today.

Greater Bendigo is the best place in Victoria to live, work and visit, and in partnership with the Victorian government we plan to make this region even better. Like much of the state, we are experiencing significant growth. Our population is forecast to grow from its present level of 105 000 to 143 000 by 2030 — a mere 18 years from now. We do not want ours to be a city that requires its workers to travel to Melbourne. Our future lies in having a strong and diverse economy here in this region, a place where skilled employees are able to live and work. This is already being reflected in our employment data, with our unemployment rate consistently lower than that of Melbourne.

The challenge for us is to keep the momentum going. That is why we will continue working in partnership with other levels of government. Such partnerships

have already delivered big dividends to this community. We are in the midst of the City of Greater Bendigo's largest ever major works program. We are undertaking an \$8.4 million expansion of our art gallery, making the best regional art gallery in Australia even better. What a fantastic community asset this will be. In the past financial year alone some 300 000 people visited the Bendigo Art Gallery. That is more than three times Bendigo's population, and the economic benefits were huge.

We are about to redevelop the Bendigo library at an estimated cost of \$7.55 million. These projects have received significant funding support from the state government, and we thank the state government for that. Shortly we will commence building a new \$25.8 million 1000-seat community theatre with support from the state and federal governments. I acknowledge the state government's commitment to invest \$630 million in redeveloping our major hospital. You can see why the City of Greater Bendigo is known as a 'can do' city.

But more needs to be done. Our airport is in need of a major upgrade, which, when completed, will bring new investment and job opportunities to our region. Many of our swimming pools are ageing, so we are developing plans to build a new aquatic centre at Kangaroo Flat. Our universities need support to ensure that they provide the skilled workers needed to staff our new hospital. The dangerous intersection of the Calder Highway and Calder Alternative Highway at Ravenswood requires an upgrade. These are just some of the projects which will make greater Bendigo even greater. We look forward to delivering this plan with the support of the Victorian government.

Earlier I spoke about the enormous contribution that Sir John Quick made to our nation. Famously he once said in relation to the issue of Federation, 'It is only by consistent agitation and discussion that a national question such as this can ever be brought to maturity'. There is an issue in Victoria today that warrants consistent agitation and discussion. It is with the greatest respect that I ask every member here today to consider the impact that the local authorities' defined benefit scheme is having on local government in Victoria.

In late July councils were formally told that the fund required topping up to the tune of \$453 million. The City of Greater Bendigo is being asked to find \$10.3 million. This means it will have \$10.3 million less to provide the services and infrastructure that our community deserves. The amount being sought will significantly reduce our ability to deliver the services the community expects from local government. I respectfully ask all politicians to regard this as a matter

of urgency and work with local government to resolve this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I trust members will enjoy their time in Bendigo. We look forward to welcoming them here again sometime in the future.

## ROYAL ASSENT

**Message read advising royal assent on 4 September to:**

**Criminal Procedure Amendment Act 2012  
Criminal Procedure and Sentencing Acts  
Amendment (Victims of Crime) Act 2012  
Road Safety Amendment Act 2012.**

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I also take this opportunity to advise members that as well as its being Mr Wright's 87th birthday, which we congratulate him on, there is a need for further congratulations, and that is to the Deputy President, Matt Viney, who became a grandfather overnight. He has a grandson named Atticus. Congratulations, Mr Viney.

## PETITIONS

**Following petitions presented to house:**

### **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 that 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 Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan)  
(1057 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

**Ordered that petition be considered next day on motion of Mr LEANE (Eastern 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 that 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;
- (3) with 44 000 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.

**Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan)**  
(690 signatures)

**Laid on table.**

### Housing: government policy

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 public consultation discussion paper put out by the Minister for Housing outlining the pathways to a fair and sustainable social housing system.

The petitioners therefore request that as a result of the consultation with public housing tenants, the minister resolve:

- not to raise rents above the current cap of 25 per cent of tenant income;
- not to privatise public housing by transferring public housing units from government ownership and management; and
- to maintain public housing tenants' security of tenure so that tenants do not have to keep reapplying for housing.

**By Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan)**  
(126 signatures).

**Laid on table.**

**Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Mr LENDERS (Southern Metropolitan).**

### 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 tens of thousands of jobs lost in the last year, 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 SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria)**  
(1339 signatures).

**Laid on table.**

**Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria).**

### PAPERS

**Laid on table by Clerk:**

Crimes Act 1958 — Chief Commissioner of Police's authority to conduct forensic procedures, pursuant to section 464Z(1) of the Act.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 — Minister's Order of 27 August 2012 giving approval to the granting of a lease and licence at Barwon Heads Park.

Freedom of Information Act 1982 — Statement of reasons for seeking leave to appeal, pursuant to section 65AB(2)(b) of the Act.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes:

Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme — Amendment C136 Part 2.

Mildura Planning Scheme — Amendment C60.

Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — Amendments C137 and C150.

Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria — Report, 2011–12.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012 — No. 89.

Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 — No. 90.

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — No. 93.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 — No. 92.

Forests Act 1958 — No. 91.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — No. 94.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 86, 88, 89, 90 and 94.

Young Farmers' Finance Council — Report, 2011–12.

Proclamations of the Governor in Council fixing operative dates in respect of the following acts:

Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012 — Remaining provisions (except section 240 and Schedule 7) — 1 September 2012 (*Gazette No. S291, 28 August 2012*).

Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act 2012 — 1 September 2012 (*Gazette No. S291, 28 August 2012*).

## NOTICES OF MOTION

### Notice of motion given.

**Ms BROAD** (Northern Victoria) — I desire to move, by leave:

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Education and Training Committee is required to inquire into, consider and report no later than 28 February 2013 on the impact in the Bendigo region of the Baillieu-Ryan government reforms to refocus TAFE to support a strong, sustainable, efficient and market-driven vocational education and training system.

**Leave refused.**

**Ms BROAD gave notice of motion.**

**Further notices of motion given.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Adjournment

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 11 September 2012.

**Motion agreed to.**

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Government: performance

**Hon. M. P. PAKULA** (Western Metropolitan) — I say at the outset how good it is to be in this magnificent chamber in this great regional city. However, yesterday I stood on the steps of Parliament whilst 40 000 people expressed their displeasure at being misled — public school teachers, independent school teachers, principals and support staff — all of whom had been led to believe they would be the highest paid, at every grade, in Australia. This is not something they think they heard but something they did hear from the mouth of the Premier and the mouth of Minister Hall, the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession.

They are not alone in having been sold a pup. There were the public servants who were told there would be no job losses — deceived; the voters who were told the Baillieu government would bring down the crime rate — deceived; the commuters who were told every station would have two protective services officers — deceived; the Country Fire Authority volunteers, who are now told their service has to find \$66 million of cuts — deceived; Victorians, who were told this government would be open, transparent and accountable — deceived; and all those TAFE students who will now not have a course to study — also deceived.

It is a lot of deception in a little less than two years, and in a little more than two years all those chickens of deception will be coming home to roost.

### Bendigo Youth Choir: achievements

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — It is wonderful to be back in Bendigo, the home of some inspiring young people. Just a couple of weeks ago I joined the Premier to recognise the achievements of the Bendigo Youth Choir. The 30-member choir received three silver medals at the World Choir Games in Cincinnati, Ohio, this year. The group was one of only six Australian choirs invited to what is essentially the choral Olympics. It also achieved the best result of the Australian teams, which I am sure everyone here can understand after hearing the choir perform today.

The dedication and versatility of the Bendigo Youth Choir is a credit to the young singers and to their artistic director, Valerie Broad, who founded the choir in 1984. Those three silver medals came in varied categories, including youth, sacred and folklore, and were for songs in Russian, Serbian, Latin and indigenous languages. These young people have shown that the

amazing is achievable with hard work and a good attitude. Not only that but the choir is a family, with many of the singers following in the footsteps of older relatives.

I congratulate the Bendigo Youth Choir on its success in Cincinnati and thank the group for today's performance. I hope that on hearing the choir perform and learning of its achievements, many more young Bendigonians will be inspired to achieve great things and perhaps even become part of this wonderful group.

**Statements interrupted.**

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Before I call on the next member, I acknowledge and welcome Bruce Reid, a former member of both the Legislative Council and the federal Parliament, who is in the gallery today.

### MEMBERS STATEMENTS

**Statements resumed.**

#### Higher education: TAFE funding

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — The Liberal-Nationals coalition government's \$290 million TAFE cuts continue to have a devastating effect in northern Victoria, and the worst is yet to come. A record number of TAFE staff and students across northern Victoria have attended rallies, signed petitions and written letters to members of Parliament to demonstrate their anger at the savage funding cuts.

Around northern Victoria the funding cuts have had a devastating effect on the sector. Ninety-seven jobs have been lost at the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, with 30 courses slashed and \$9 million in funding cut. At Sunraysia Institute of TAFE in Mildura there has been a \$3 million cut, with 26 jobs lost, including 2 at the Swan Hill campus. Wodonga Institute of TAFE has lost \$7 million, which equates to one-third of its annual budget. The Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE in Shepparton has lost \$6 million.

The cuts will make it even harder to access TAFE courses close to home, particularly in rural and regional areas. Access to regionally based training is vital for apprentices, trainees and employees in regional communities. This is having a devastating effect. It is going to affect the ability of students not only to get their training and qualifications close to home but also to be equipped to do the jobs that need to be done in rural and regional Victoria. Everybody is affected by these huge cuts to our TAFE sector.

### Legislative Council: Bendigo sitting

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — I would like to say how pleased I am to be in Bendigo today, and I note that the government has taken this initiative to hold regional sittings of the Legislative Council here in Bendigo and the Legislative Assembly in Ballarat. It is important to acknowledge the historical significance of these two places, the importance that the Baillieu government places on these regions and the future of Victoria, and the role the regions will play in this future.

Many thanks to the dedicated staff of the Victorian Parliament and to the City of Greater Bendigo and Mayor Alec Sandner for their welcome at the magnificent Bendigo Art Gallery last night, and to the Bendigo Chinese Association and Bendigo choir for their wonderful performances today. Congratulations to them and to Valerie Broad for their recent international success. We are very proud of you.

### Joann Formosa

**Mrs PETROVICH** — I would also like to congratulate Paralympian Joann Formosa on winning gold in a dressage event at the London Paralympic games on her horse Worldwide PB. Joann is a former member of the Kilmore and District Pony Club, and she beat the world's most successful paraequestrian, Leah Pearson from Great Britain, to claim her medal. Joann was injured in a riding accident 25 years ago. She is an inspiration as she requires daily medical treatment and lives with almost constant pain. When she is on a horse she is a picture of balance and harmony. Her talent, determination and hard work are truly inspirational. She has devoted years of training to this goal, and I, along with a loyal band of supporters, am very proud of her achievements.

### Native title: claims

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — We are meeting on Jaara country, and we were welcomed last night by Graham Atkinson, a traditional owner of the Dja Dja Wurrung and someone who has done a lot to pursue his traditional owner group's native title land claim. He has also done a lot for traditional owners all over Victoria. I call on the government to make sure that all outstanding native title claims in Victoria are settled within the life of this government.

These are living cultures who have been here as a civilisation over an unimaginably long time compared to the short century or so that the modern Australian commonwealth and its predecessors have operated. They enrich our culture. They assist us to learn about

the land. They leave behind much of their culture from many hundreds of thousands of people living here for hundreds and thousands of years.

There is no logical reason we would continue to make native title claims a dispute, when in fact it is very much more than a zero-sum game. As we have seen with indigenous communities around the world, there will be a great benefit to both cultures when return of land, control and connection to traditional lands are provided. I think we will all benefit.

### **Racing: Bendigo**

**Mr KOCH** (Western Victoria) — Racing plays a major role in the Bendigo region. Combined the three racing codes of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound create \$108 million annually in economic benefit and employ more than 1600 people. Thoroughbred racing is well represented, with 55 trainers operating out of Bendigo, entering up to 300 racehorses, both locally and statewide. As Victoria's nursery of champions, Bendigo is a leading racing region, with many horses winning their first races here. Held on the Wednesday before Melbourne Cup Day, the Bendigo Cup plays an important role in the lead-up to the race that stops a nation. After the Baillieu government delivered on its promise to extend the Bendigo Cup from 2200 metres to 2400 metres, the race now meets the qualifying conditions for the Melbourne Cup. In 2011 this resulted in international thoroughbreds competing in the Bendigo Cup for the first time ever.

With the support of the state government and the racing industry, the Bendigo Jockey Club will host the Victorian owners and breeders incentive scheme, or VOBIS, gold rush race in March 2013. Run exclusively for nominated two-year-olds, this prestigious \$280 000 race will be a feature of the Golden Mile race day, making it one of the richest country race meetings in Australia with a total of over \$1 million in prize money on offer. My congratulations go to the Bendigo Jockey Club president, Brendan Drechsler, CEO Ian Hart, their team and the many volunteers who work hard to showcase country racing at its highest level here in Bendigo.

### **Planning: permit process**

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — It is great to be in Bendigo, but it is ironic that we meet here at a time when the Baillieu government's VicSmart legislation looks to threaten the unique historic built environment of Bendigo. VicSmart threatens Bendigo's historic legacy, which is the cornerstone of its charm, success

and character. Unfortunately VicSmart threatens all that —

**Hon. M. J. Guy** interjected.

**Mr TEE** — Because it overrides the view of the local council, Mr Guy. It overrides the local community, and even the strategic plans, like the Loddon Valley regional strategic plan which is about ensuring Bendigo's growth — expected to increase by 40 per cent by 2036 — and making sure that growth is matched with jobs, infrastructure and appropriate development. Unfortunately these strategic plans, which are about ensuring development meets the aspirations of the community and that the unique character of Bendigo is not overrun by development, are all at risk.

VicSmart permit applications, which can cover all classes of permit application for developments, override regional plans, the views of the local community and the views of the local council. This is a real threat to Bendigo's rich historic character. I urge the government and those opposite to stop and think and to restore some balance and fairness to planning in Bendigo.

### **Mount Alexander Shire Accommodation and Respite Group**

**Mrs COOTE** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am delighted to be here in Bendigo today. I am a metropolitan member so it is good to be here to see the great benefits of Bendigo and its surrounds. One of those is the Mount Alexander Shire Accommodation and Respite Group (MASARG). It is an excellent group which I have visited. It is a locally founded group established in the Mount Alexander shire to build and operate a respite and accommodation facility within the municipality.

In April 2001 the Honourable Damian Drum, MLC, a member for Northern Victorian Region, announced at a community meeting that the Baillieu government would honour its pre-election commitments to provide MASARG with \$300 000. That allocation has been made, and I think Mr Drum is to be congratulated.

The project has additional funding from other sources within the shire, including \$240 000 from the Lions Club, \$50 000 from the Bendigo Bank, a local family land donation to the approximate value of \$250 000 and \$100 000 from fundraising by the community. This is an excellent community group, whose members I have met with. Robyn Spicer heads the group in Castlemaine. She has great enthusiasm, as do all those involved with this respite centre and organisation.

### **Fire services levy: reform**

**Ms BROAD** (Northern Victoria) — I draw to the attention of the government the circumstances of Reg Nicholson, a pensioner who lives in Maldon. Mr Nicholson is required to renew his insurance on his modest home this month. The fire services levy payable on Mr Nicholson's insurance has increased from \$125 last year to \$511 this year — an increase of more than 400 per cent. This is an increase in the cost of living that Mr Nicholson and pensioners like him can ill afford.

On 21 August the *Australian Financial Review* reported that insurance companies were not able to begin phasing out the fire services levy from 1 July 2012 because the government had delayed the necessary legislation and, as a result, in some cases both the insurance levy and the property-based levy would need to be paid in the same period. There is absolutely no doubt that this will be a catastrophe for Victorians on low incomes if the government does not act to stop this happening.

Now that the government has announced the introduction of a new property-based tax to replace the fire services levy it is vital that the government guarantee that Mr Nicholson and pensioners like him will not be worse off. All Victorians need to know just how much they will have to pay as a result of the government's new property tax.

### **Eaglehawk: sports facilities**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I share Mrs Coote's delight in being here in Bendigo. This is the site of the first political conference I attended many years ago. I am sure members of the Labor Party will be delighted to hear that. It is also the place where I met my wife.

The city of Bendigo brings back many happy memories for me. As someone who was born and bred in country Victoria I understand the importance of football to country people. The local footy club is truly the heart and soul of country communities. I feel sorry for those who refer to football as 'only a game'. The football and netball games are the highlight of the week for many country people, and I well remember that many years ago I played full-forward in the Warrion under-14s, which, I have to say, had to be seen to be believed!

It is with some excitement that I report today that the coalition promise of \$400 000 for sporting infrastructure in Eaglehawk is in the process of being delivered. I am sure that will bring great joy to the

people of Eaglehawk, as it will to every country Victorian who knows and loves their sport. That is what makes country Victoria such a great place to be.

### **Bushfires: royal commission recommendations**

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — On 7 February 2009 Victoria experienced its worst natural disaster, a day that has become known as Black Saturday. Tragically 173 people lost their lives and 2029 homes were destroyed. Many parts of the state were impacted, including Bendigo.

A royal commission inquiry was undertaken, and 67 recommendations were made. Even before the commissioners presented their final report, the Premier, Ted Baillieu, and the Deputy Premier, Peter Ryan, said they would implement every recommendation, lock, stock and barrel. The recommendations included things like the undergrounding of powerlines and the adoption of prescribed burn targets. These are just two examples of where the government is falling short.

Now we learn that the government will cut \$66 million from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the Country Fire Authority, further undermining the work of the bushfires royal commission. Ironically this is occurring at the same time that the government is introducing a new regime to fund our fire services. The government says there will be no impact on front-line services; however, it said that about schools, health, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries, and it has proven to be not the case at all.

This government cannot be trusted to fully implement the royal commission's recommendations, and it cannot be trusted to protect front-line services. These cuts to our firefighting services are dangerous, and this government's ideological obsession with reducing funds for essential services is now moving into dangerous new territory.

### **City of Greater Bendigo: international sporting events**

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to congratulate the City of Greater Bendigo on its fantastic achievements in bringing international events to Victoria. In April this year the Junior Davis Cup and Junior Fed Cup Asia/Oceania qualifier was held at the Bendigo Bank Tennis Complex, which hosted the best junior tennis talent from Asia, Oceania and Australia at that competition. Each player proudly represented their respective country.

The township of Maldon hosted the 2012 SPEA FIM Trial World Championships in May, this being the first time observed motorcycle trials had been brought to Australia. Situated on the large granite outcrops of Mount Tarrengower, the course posed a challenge for the riders and was a great event.

The Central Goldfields also hosted Australia's World Snooker Tour tournament. The first event took place in July last year and Bendigo Stadium will remain the venue for the tournament until at least 2013. Thirty-two of the world's best players come together for what has been called the Australian Goldfields Open.

I would also like to bring to the house's attention the upgrades at the Queen Elizabeth Oval, just up the road. The \$2.6 million project is designed to support and encourage sports participation in Bendigo and secure major sports events to the region. Upgrades include a new netball court, lighting improvements for both netball courts and the replacement of the oval's scoreboard with a light-emitting diode, or LED, system. The Victorian government has contributed \$300 000 to this project from the Regional Growth Fund. I commend the city of Bendigo for hosting world-class events, putting great talent on show right here in this beautiful part of Victoria.

### **Social housing advocacy and support program: funding**

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Northern Metropolitan) — Last night at the Bendigo Art Gallery I saw a very powerful painting of a mother holding her child. It is entitled 'Homeless'. The Baillieu government's decision to cut funding to housing initiatives, including Victoria's most successful homelessness prevention initiative, the social housing advocacy and support program (SHASP), will lead to an increase in vulnerable public and social housing residents being evicted and an increase in homelessness.

Since 2006 SHASP has more than halved the public housing eviction rate in Victoria from 13 per cent to 6 per cent. SHASP services, delivered through the Advocacy and Rights Centre in the Loddon Mallee region, assisted over 600 at-risk local social and public housing tenants to remain housed in 2010–11. The 30 per cent cut to ARC's funding over the next two years will adversely impact the outreach and Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal advocacy services provided to vulnerable tenants and will likely lead to an increase in eviction rates.

This government's policies have led to social housing investment being reduced by 2.2 per cent and housing

support and homelessness assistance being cut by 1.5 per cent from last year. There has been no investment in new public housing since the Baillieu government came to office. The *Bendigo Advertiser* of 24 July reported an increase in the number of public housing applications, and this tight situation in the rental market is continuing. This comes on top of the Baillieu government's discussion paper, which talks up the British Cameron government's Big Society policy to force the homeless onto charities rather than social welfare. This government has carelessly refused to rule out increased public housing rents, fixed-term tenures and the wholesale privatisation of public housing. That is a disgrace.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis)** — Time!

### **Bendigo Art Gallery: redevelopment**

**Mrs KRONBERG** (Eastern Metropolitan) — What a delight to be in Bendigo. Last night we were welcomed so warmly to Bendigo by the mayor, Cr Alec Sandner, outside the Bendigo Art Gallery. We experienced the welcome to country ceremony and were welcomed by Aboriginal elder Graham Atkinson of the Jaara people, representing the Dja Dja Wurrung community. Formalities were continued inside the Bendigo Art Gallery itself. The redevelopment and expansion of the gallery has already commenced. The total project cost amounts to \$8.4 million. The Greater Bendigo City Council has contributed \$3.625 million and a further \$1 million will be provided through philanthropic sources.

However, the largest contribution comes from the Victorian government, with a contribution of \$3.775 million funded through the Baillieu government's Regional Development Victoria. This will see the major expansion of Bendigo's View Street arts precinct. There will be a new park gallery exhibition space, featuring open, flexible spaces to cater for more major exhibitions; a multipurpose exhibition space; a back of house area; a loading dock and exhibition management zone; and refinement of the front of house. Major exhibitions at the gallery have certainly put Bendigo on the map, with *The White Wedding Dress — 200 Years of Wedding Fashions*, and *Grace Kelly — Style Icon*, which was sold out.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis)** — Order! The member's time has expired.

**Rail: Castlemaine bridge upgrade**

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — Yesterday I was pleased to join my colleagues, two members for Northern Victoria Region Mr Damian Drum and Mrs Donna Petrovich, in Castlemaine to announce a \$100 000 safety upgrade for the Midland Highway railway bridge, also known as the skew bridge. The safety upgrades will include the installation of electronic warning signals and additional signage for a 1.35-kilometre detour route for high vehicles. This is a welcome improvement for local motorists and truck drivers, as there have been some instances of trucks getting stuck at the bridge. The upgrade will improve the safety of truck drivers and other motorists, help to prevent future incidents, improve the reliability of freight movements and reduce traffic disruptions in the area.

The bridge plays a vital role in the local transport network through Castlemaine, carrying an increasing number of freight vehicles to and from Bendigo. The coalition is committed to enhancing the efficiency of freight movements on the transport network and recognises the important role that Victorian regional cities and communities play in the freight supply chain. The works will commence shortly and are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

This project is an example of the government listening to the local community and responding to its concerns, and in that sense I would like to congratulate Wendy Lovell, Donna Petrovich and Damian Drum on their advocacy for this and many other projects throughout the region. I would also like to acknowledge the announcement made by Minister Lovell on 31 July 2012 regarding funding of \$648 000 for road safety improvements for Bendigo and Ravenswood as part of a broader \$55 million package the Premier announced when he was in Bendigo recently with Minister Lovell.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Notices of motion**

**Mr KOCH** (Western Victoria) — I move:

That the consideration of notices of motion, government business, nos 22, 205, 342, 366, 380, 387 to 389, 391, 393 to 395, 397 and 398 be postponed until later this day.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Tarlamis)** — Order! I call on Mr David Davis to move motion 413.

**GOLD: STATE MINERAL EMBLEM**

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — Acting President, and indeed Bendigonians, this is a great opportunity to move:

That, noting its significance to the history and development of the state, this house recommends that 'gold' be declared the mineral emblem of the state of Victoria.

This historic sitting of the Legislative Council in the Bendigo chamber is a great opportunity, an opportunity that — —

**Mr Lenders** — On a point of order, Acting President, the motion before us is that we debate motion 413 — the motion on northern Victoria. That is what the house has just voted for, but that is not what Mr Davis is speaking to.

**Debate interrupted.****BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Notices of motion**

**Mr KOCH** (Western Victoria) — I move, by leave:

That the consideration of notice of motion, government business, no. 413 be postponed until later this day.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — While the opposition has no great concern about granting leave, our understanding was that notice of motion 413 would be the first item of business, and that is the way we have prepared for today. I cannot speak for the Greens, but I had understood that motion 413 would be first. However, once again we will be flexible if this is the way the government wants to go ahead.

**Leave granted.****Motion agreed to.****GOLD: STATE MINERAL EMBLEM****Debate resumed.**

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I thank the opposition for its consideration. I move:

That, noting its significance to the history and development of the state, this house recommends that 'gold' be declared the mineral emblem of the state of Victoria.

I do not think this motion could be moved in a more appropriate place than Bendigo, with its great history. We have a great opportunity here today to look to history but also to recognise the future. The state has a number of emblems, including flora and fauna

emblems. Those emblems are important. They signify something important about the state. In this case, making gold the state mineral emblem will signify both the history of the state and the great contributions made by the regional centres of Ballarat, Bendigo and others to the growth and development of our state.

Since gold was discovered in 1851 the state has yielded about 80 million ounces, or 2500 tonnes, making up 2 per cent of the gold mined throughout the world. Gold provided a foundation for the prosperity of the state and for the growth of Melbourne as the commercial and trading hub of Australia. The richest producers were Bendigo, Ballarat and Castlemaine-Chewton; this important golden triangle has played a critical role in the foundation of our state. Even last night at the council's welcome to Bendigo at the art gallery we heard the story of gold.

The gold rush was important in terms of Victoria's political development. Much has been written about the Eureka Stockade, but we should not forget that the massive influx of people prospecting for gold saw the introduction of the male franchise and secret ballots. The gold rush also laid the foundation of Victoria's multicultural heritage. These important themes in Victoria's history came through the gold rush, and that great contribution can be signified by gold.

I know there will be broad support across our Victorian community for a decision to make gold the mineral emblem of the state, and there will be a recognition that Ballarat and Bendigo — with the Legislative Council sitting in Bendigo and the Legislative Assembly sitting in Ballarat — are appropriate places to move this motion. With those brief comments, and recognising that a number of other members wish to make contributions, I commend this motion to the house.

**Ms PULFORD** (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to speak on this motion of the government. Two-thirds of my life has been spent in close proximity to the central Victorian goldfields. Growing up, the greatest hazard was the disused goldmines in the 10 acres of state forest at Muckleford, near Castlemaine, that was the backyard of my childhood.

The discovery of gold in the 1850s and 1860s is one of the most significant events in the history of the state of Victoria. It is said that James Esmond, a young Irish prospector, was the first person to find gold in Victoria, with a discovery at Clunes in June 1851. Fuelled by extravagant stories of wealth gained in the 1849 Californian gold rush, and following the early gold discoveries in and around Clunes, Warrandyte and Ballarat, gold fever hit Victoria. But the major rush

began with the discovery of the Mount Alexander goldfield. Taking in the goldfields of Castlemaine and Bendigo, Mount Alexander became one of the world's richest shallow alluvial goldfields, yielding around 4 million ounces of gold, most of which was found in the first two years of the rush. By the end of 1852, 90 000 newcomers had flocked to Victoria in search of gold. The cities of Bendigo and Ballarat began to grow, attracting new railways, roads, libraries, theatres, art galleries and stock exchanges. Spectacular buildings, like the one we are in today, were created.

In the recent drought the former Labor government sought to drought-proof the state, and it was remarked on occasion during the construction of the goldfields super-pipe, which connects Bendigo and Ballarat to the Goulburn system, that perhaps — —

**Mr Lenders** — Great project!

**Ms PULFORD** — A great project, Mr Lenders. It was remarked that perhaps if it were not for the gold, some of our more significant regional cities would be located in places with more robust natural sources of water. But people came for the gold, and they have stayed for the lifestyle.

However, the debate today is about emblems, and I think in some respects it is emblematic of the government's priorities. It is of course not a requirement that the Victorian Parliament spend its time debating this motion. We have other emblems. We have the common heath, the helmeted honeyeater, the Leadbeater's possum and the weedy sea dragon. Some other states in Australia have mineral emblems. Tasmania, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia have all identified mineral emblems. In preparing my comments for this occasion, I happened to learn that Western Australia has a fossil emblem, the gogo fish, so I suppose we might soon need a fossil emblem too.

Thinking about the history of the gold rush and about what has become the great mythology of those times provides us with an opportunity to reflect on our values. In Parliament we debate issues and legislation, and our competing views are often a reflection of the different values we bring to Parliament.

The Eureka rebellion of 1854 is often referred to as the birth of Australian democracy. The chartists decreed that taxation without representation is tyranny and that the people are the only legitimate source of all political power. The miners at Eureka acted collectively to overcome unjust and undemocratic rule. We in the Labor Party see some of our values reflected in the

actions of the miners and some of the things they achieved, like the need for the government to reflect the wishes of all people, not just the wealthy. One lesson we can take from the Eureka rebellion is that great achievements can be made through collective action. Just yesterday we saw 40 000 educators — teachers, teaching staff and school support staff — taking collective action to take a stand on what they believe is needed from this government for a more just and fair response to their dilemma.

Gold plays a critical role in Victoria's history, in particular the history of Bendigo and the Central Goldfields region. There are still many gold prospectors. Just last week my local paper in Ballarat reported the recent discovery of a \$500 000 gold nugget named Destiny which weighed 3.66 kilograms. There are plenty of people still looking for and mining gold. There are 11 500 people employed in the Victorian mining industry, and they are employed in many different areas of mining, not just gold.

The Murray Basin contains more than 60 million tonnes of coarse-grained mineral sand deposits and more than 200 million tonnes of fine-grained deposits. These deposits have the potential to support several long-term mining operations. According to the Department of Primary Industries, Victoria's mineral sand mines currently produce an estimated 14 million tonnes of the minerals rutile and zircon. There are significant mining projects under way in Victoria. The Gippsland and Otway basins are also emerging mineral sands provinces after recent discoveries.

Gold played a critical part in Victoria's past and will play a role in Victoria's future. The opposition suggests that the government should spend a little less time on symbols and emblems and a little more time on developing a regional jobs plan that includes the many people in Victoria who are employed in mining, including in Stawell in my region where there has been a contraction in the amount of work available in gold mining.

We welcome the opportunity to talk in Bendigo about the significant contribution that gold has made in Victoria's history, but in supporting this motion we also urge the government to remain cognisant of future opportunities for employment in mining — not only in gold but also in other mining endeavours — and also, as we heard earlier from the mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, to consider the importance to regional Victoria of having a diverse range of economic activities to ensure the prosperity of Victoria in the future, not just the past.

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — It is my great pleasure this morning to stand here and support this motion, which seeks to have gold recognised as the mineral emblem of Victoria. As the Leader of the Government has said, there is no more appropriate place in which we should be debating this motion.

The Tourism Victoria website for the goldfields region starts with the comment:

The discovery of gold in the 1850s and 1860s is the most significant event in the evolution of the state of Victoria.

I do not think any of us in this chamber, nor indeed those in the gallery, would disagree with that comment. We all share and benefit today from the legacy of the economic prosperity and changes in culture that the discovery of gold brought to Victoria. While the richest diggings for gold were in the Bendigo, Castlemaine and Ballarat regions, gold discoveries happened throughout Victoria. In the eastern region, places like Omeo, Foster and Walhalla were also significant gold-producing regions. That legacy is something from which, as I said, we all continue to benefit.

The architecture both in Melbourne and in the gold towns — indeed the very building we stand in today — is an example of that legacy. In relation to culture, we have also seen a bit of that today with the Chinese dragon. As an example of landscape, the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is a classic landscape legacy from which we all benefit today. In relation to history, the Central Deborah Gold Mine is a really good example. Place names are also part of the legacy, and some of the important place names around this region, such as Pennyweight Flat, Mopoke Gully, Doctors Hill and New Chum Gully, have origins that date back to the gold rush era.

I also make the very relevant comment that gold is not just something of the past; it is also something of the present and something with a future. I note the comments by the previous speaker, who spoke about prospecting and current activity within the gold sector. The thrill of the search goes on. I know that each weekend in Victoria literally thousands of people go out prospecting, and the riches are still to be found.

One of my good friends here, a member of the Prospectors and Miners Association (PMAV) of Victoria, has lent me for a short time this morning not a replica, like we saw last week, but a real gold nugget. The particular item in my hand this morning is for members to have a look at and appraise. It is a 28-ounce gold nugget — a very significant find in this region — that was found something like 18 inches

under the ground's surface. Each weekend the recreation enjoyed by many gold seekers and the associated economic activity continues, and, as the previous speaker said, that is recognised as an important economic benefit to Victoria.

I close by congratulating the Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria on its advocacy for prospecting and fossicking in Victoria and for the way it has responsibly promoted that recreational activity. It has helped all of us in terms of ensuring that prospecting and gold seeking in Victoria can continue to be conducted in an environmentally friendly way. Full credit goes to PMAV and its 1100 or so members.

This gold nugget I hold is but a short-term loan. It is one that I am gratefully keeping a close eye on. I know that things have gone missing from parliaments in past years. There will be nothing missing today, but while I have it for this short time I am happy for members to view this real nugget, collected in this region by one of the members of PMAV in recent times. The exact location is something that will not be disclosed, for all good treasure hunters keep their areas and locations secret for good reasons!

I support this motion wholeheartedly. It is more than appropriate that Victoria adopt gold as its official mineral emblem.

**Mr Koch** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien)** — Order! Thank you, Mr Hall, and I note that I will resist Mr Koch's urging for a motion to have the prop confiscated. I am sure it will be returned to its rightful owner.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — If we are to adopt a new state symbol, as this motion encourages us to do, we should be clear about what it symbolises. Queensland has the sapphire — nice; South Australia has the opal — beautiful; Tasmania has some mineral that I cannot even pronounce; and Western Australia has the gogo fish, an extinct and fossilised creature. If we were setting an emblem that simply memorialised the Baillieu government, almost any ancient dinosaur would do.

We do have other state emblems, and the mover of the motion skipped over those rather quickly. We have the Leadbeater's possum, an emblem of the state of Victoria that this government is working as hard as it can to make extinct. Very soon, under the program of this government, the Leadbeater's possum will be as extinct as the gogo fish. We understand why that state symbol is endangered, as it is one of the most studied

species in the world. It is being endangered both by the wildfires that have been experienced across the Central Highlands and also by the ongoing woodchipping that has been allowed to continue under both Labor and Liberal governments for decades, even as the scientific evidence on Leadbeater's possum has mounted. It would be good if the government could take care of our existing symbol before moving on to create new ones.

In relation to gold, the mover of the motion did not argue too hard for it but simply referred to it as having something to do with our history and our growth and development. In that case it would have been fitting for the Baillieu government to put forward coal as our new emblem. The government seems to think our future is based on us becoming the Pilbara of the south, with never-ending coalmining and increasing coal exports. However, as we all know, the sun, the wind and the tides are free to all and never ending — in fact inexhaustible — and they represent the basis of our future, even as we consider our history.

If we are going to support this motion and make gold our emblem on the basis of our history, let us get that history right. The impact of gold here in Victoria was ultimately to create a democratic foment that washed away an original order and set up a new one in startlingly short time. Before Eureka, right here in Bendigo we had the Red Ribbon Rebellion or, as some people call it, the Red Ribbon Agitation, set up by the Anti-Gold Licence Association. That group put together a petition of 5000 signatures and presented it to Governor Latrobe. The group went through all the right democratic steps, asking that the unfair miners licence be altered.

Why did we have that miners licence? Because at that stage we had a colonial administration that was as incompetent as it was tyrannical in managing public finances. This is where the history lesson comes in for all governments, past, present and future. It was so poor at maintaining public revenues that were bleeding away and so poor at managing public finances, requiring a seemingly never-ending demand for more revenue, that instead it took the easy option and set up a flat and unfair tax that every gold miner had to pay in order to keep mining, regardless of whether they found gold or not.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr BARBER** — It is estimated that 10 000 to 12 000 diggers turned up wearing red ribbons around their hats. They wore red like those schoolteachers did yesterday, I remind Mr Finn, and they engaged in legal protest as their next move. When that fell on deaf ears

civil disobedience was their subsequent move — and the Greens at all times support the right of citizens to engage in peaceful civil disobedience against unjust laws.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BARBER** — I know the Liberal Party and The Nationals backed civil disobedience when the issue was the north–south pipeline. They backed civil disobedience to the hilt and supported it in every way they could when it was against the north–south pipeline, but when other causes less dear to their hearts arise, that principle breaks down and suddenly they start picking sides according to their particular ideological bent.

In the end only 400 of the 14 000 miners renewed their licences. On 30 August of that year, 1853, Governor La Trobe announced the abolition of the licence system and that it was to be substituted by export duty and a small registration fee. However, the Victorian Legislative Council rejected his proposal. His promise was not enacted, the licence system continued, at which point things got out of control, and a bloody confrontation arose down the road in Ballarat at Eureka.

If recognising gold as our state symbol keeps that historical story alive — ideally in front of mind for Legislative Council members when they go about their law-making business — it will be worthwhile for the Greens to support this motion, and we will do so.

**Mr SOMYUREK** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a short contribution in support of the motion before the house. As we have already heard from previous speakers, the Victorian gold rush occurred from 1851 to the late 1860s. During this period Victoria became the second biggest producer of gold behind California. At its peak 2 tonnes of gold per week was sent to the then Treasury building in Melbourne. In the 1850s £500 million worth of gold was exported to Britain in the 1850s, paying all of Britain's foreign debt.

The Victorian gold rush took place in numerous towns across the state, including Beechworth, Bright, Warrandyte, Ararat, Castlemaine, Omeo, Walhalla, Maldon and also Bendigo. The gold rush led to a boom in Melbourne which resulted in significant architectural projects and a significant increase in the population. In 1851 Victoria's the population was about 75 000, but by 1861 it had increased to about 500 000.

Gold underpinned much of what was happening in the Victorian economy, cultural transformation and infrastructure development. Many of the significant

buildings that exist today in Victoria, including Parliament House, are a direct result of the wealth generated during the gold rush period.

In 1851 the Gold Discovery Committee was established. This adds weight to the notion that gold was central to Victoria at the time. There were also social impacts resulting from what happened on the goldfields, and administrative decisions were made about how to manage the rush. A gold licensing system was introduced requiring all miners to have a licence, and penalties were introduced for mining without a licence or for not having a licence on you while mining, which is pretty much how a drivers licence operates these days. As the population of the goldfields grew, there was increasing enforcement of licence requirements. Mining fees and licences began to rise to exorbitant levels and police members were used in a crackdown to collect fees from miners struggling to make a quid. As the atmosphere became more heated, especially in Ballarat, a number of incidents led to arrests and the culprits were sentenced to prison.

Thus arose the Eureka Stockade to defend the rights and liberties of goldminers, including the release of prisoners and the cessation of licence hunting. This whole Eureka Stockade episode was basically a miners union defending the rights of miners to earn a living under a fair system. In 1854 the Eureka Stockade uprising resulted in the deaths of 10 Irishmen, 2 Scots, 2 Canadians, 2 Englishmen, 2 Germans and 1 Australian. The gold rush also led to demands for land reform. This was reflected in the 1857 Victorian Land Convention. As the gold rush dwindled, there was increasing pressure for land reform, protectionism and political reform.

In conclusion, the gold rush period generated a series of social and other struggles which had an enormous impact on the direction of our state. The period of the gold rush overlapped many significant events in Victorian history. This was no coincidence as the gold rush ignited and propelled many of these events. I commend the motion to the house.

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — It was a nice acknowledgement from my colleagues that I am a Bendigo girl, and I am very proud to be a fourth generation Bendigo girl. This is a motion that acknowledges the history of the golden triangle, the history of Bendigo and the wealth and contribution that Bendigo, Ballarat and central Victoria have made to the state of Victoria. The creation of wealth in Victoria now relies on industry, business and the building of the state through investment and infrastructure projects.

I must admit that Mr Hall's prop nearly set me off into a bit of gold fever. It was very nice to see tangible evidence of the product here in the room, and it was a substantial lump of gold I might say. My family have lived in Golden Square here in Bendigo, just a short walk from where gold was first discovered on the Bendigo Creek.

It is my very great pleasure to be here in Bendigo today. Meeting in this place is significant as historically Bendigo has been the centre of commerce, mining, agriculture and manufacturing. Making gold Victoria's mineral emblem is an acknowledgement not only of its history but its future.

The Bendigo business community has some great achievements of its own, with 4000 enterprising employers and in excess of 30 000 people employed. Like many, my family came here chasing gold in the 1800s and did not leave. My family's business operated here until recently and has survived the ups and downs of two world wars, depression and drought, and enjoyed the benefits of good seasons and economic booms. Some of that gold is still out there here in Bendigo. It is the second-highest gold-producing goldfield in Australia and remains the seventh largest in the world.

Buildings such as Parliament House in Spring Street were built on the wealth created through Bendigo gold. It is important to acknowledge today the magnificent architecture in this building and others. Many of the architectural themes are based on the wealth of gold, which is evidenced in this building here today. We also see other icons in our streetscapes, such as the Alexandra Fountain; the Capitol Theatre in View Street; the magnificent Bendigo Art Gallery, where we were last night, with I think possibly the best collection of Heidelberg School art in Australia; the original post office building and the magnificent Hotel Shamrock.

In fact until recently there were 54 pubs in and around Bendigo — testament to a hard-drinking gold rush past that gives insight into its perhaps sometimes rough-and-tumble heritage and goldfields history, which I think has influenced the character of Bendigo and Bendigonians and the culture and characteristics of this great community.

I also acknowledge some of the great icons of Bendigo — and they are gold — the people of Bendigo, such as Jack Jefferies and Peter Pianto, great footballers; Geoff Southby, Greg Williams, John Williams, Rod Ashman and of course our own Ron Best, whose football prowess includes being the Bendigo league's all-time goal-kicking icon, amassing

1624 goals in 16 seasons. I would also like to pay tribute to Liberal politicians who have served Bendigo, including Bruce Reid; Daryl McClure; Michael John; Max Turner; Jock Granter, who recently passed; and John Bouchier. I would also like to acknowledge John Quick, a tireless worker for Australia's Federation and a key draftsman of the Australian constitution who spent most of his life here in Bendigo and is buried in the Bendigo Cemetery.

I could talk about Bendigo for a long time, but we are on time constraints today because there is much to get through. However, I would like to highlight that the infrastructure and work that this government is putting into Bendigo will play an important part in its development and continues to create the wealth that Bendigo and the region need to move forward. I will support the motion today and congratulate our leader for moving it. I commend the motion to the house.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — After reading the motion Mr David Davis moved last week, I pondered and thought I must be a bit of a weirdo.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr LEANE** — Members opposite are always consistent on some things, and I was relying on that. I considered myself a bit of a weirdo because I thought that in my whole period on this earth — which is quite a long time — I have never sat down and pondered what my favourite mineral was. What would be my favourite mineral? I congratulate Mr Davis and the Premier, who I understand is moving the same motion in the Assembly, on finding the time to sit down and say, 'We're going to take Parliament to Bendigo and Ballarat'. Mr Davis then probably said, 'You know, when I was in grade 5 I did a project on those two towns and I cut and pasted out of magazines big nuggets of gold'. Here we are, years later, and this motion is all about gold. I am sure that the cities of Bendigo and Ballarat have moved on as far as where their economy lies.

I notice the offence amongst those on the other side. I have to tell them that gold is an inanimate object. It cannot be offended and they cannot be offended on behalf of gold, because it has no feelings. What does have feelings are the kids who want to go to TAFE. Let us talk about Lilydale. Kids want to go to TAFE at Lilydale, but because of the funding cuts to TAFE that this government — these gold worshippers — has enacted, the reality is that in the next couple of years there will not be a TAFE institute in the outer east available for kids, young people, to access.

Let me talk about parents who might want to access beds for their children in the new children's hospital. The funding cuts to health by this government have caused the closure of beds in a brand-new hospital. There are beds there, but they are not being used. This might be a small thing for the people who say, 'Gold, gold — yeah, gold!', but let me talk about parents who in their busy schedules might have dropped their kids off at the Take a Break program, which no longer exists — —

**Mr Ramsay** interjected.

**Mr LEANE** — Because of your government's funding cuts, Mr Ramsay! I know that they cannot drop their kids off. Do not be offended on behalf of gold — it has no feelings! It cannot be offended; it is an inanimate object.

Let us talk about the people who work in the solar industry, this renewable energy sector which we are trying to build up. We are trying to create this new green industry in our state. When we were in government a couple of years ago the people on the other side of the chamber were saying, 'The feed-in tariff is not good enough; it should be gross. The Brumby government has let everyone down. There should be a gross feed-in tariff'. Then they got into government, and last week the feed-in tariff was reduced to 8 cents.

I do not know where this ends. In the end there is nothing to oppose in this motion. Yay for — —

**Hon. W. A. Lovell** — On a point of order, Acting President, I draw your attention to the subject matter of the member's speech and ask you to rule on the matter of relevance.

**Mr Tee** — On the point of order, Acting President, the member is very much in order. We have been asked to debate a particular matter, and the member is considering the merits of that matter relative to a number of other issues.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien)** — Order! This is a wide-ranging debate, and I note Mr Leane's style. I was concerned that most of Mr Leane's commentary seemed to be directed towards the gallery rather than through the Chair. I ask him to direct his remarks on the motion to the Chair. Rather than debating the motion before the chamber, he has taken an approach of effectively arguing that the government should have put up motions on everything else. In a sense he is making an argument about the motion itself rather than an argument on the subject of the motion. However, in the context of the time, at this

stage I would simply ask that Mr Leane direct his comments through the Chair, return to the motion on the notice paper and be careful of straying too far from it. I think he has made his point in relation to the nature of gold as an inanimate object.

**Mr LEANE** — I appreciate your ruling, Acting President, and I will get back to the crux of the motion. Before Ms Lovell raised her point of order I was going to conclude. As I was about to say, given the nature of this debate, I am hopeful that at the end there will be a 21-metal detector beep salute as a way of marking this motion. It amazes me that we have come all the way out here and the best Mr Davis can do is move a motion that basically says, 'Yay for gold'.

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — I was pondering how best to respond to Mr Leane's contribution, but I might just let it sit for the moment and refer back to it as I get into my contribution because I am not really sure where to start.

I say from the outset what a pleasure it is to be here in Bendigo today, speaking in this magnificent hall that typifies the rich historical legacy Bendigo has to offer. Over many years I have come to Bendigo in many different roles, and I have always immersed myself in the wonderful culture Bendigo has to offer, whether by running around the lake on a frosty morning, taking in the delights of the home-grown vineyards at the wine bank or, like last night, enjoying the art and architecture that is the essence of Bendigo. But I actually want to talk about gold — apologies to Mr Leane — and I want to talk about history.

We cannot stand in this place without thinking about the history of Bendigo. The history of Bendigo and the legacy of this beautiful town hall are about gold, regardless of how dismissive the opposition wants to be. I also want to talk about Ballarat, where I have my office and which is one of the cities that I represent. No doubt, given some conversations I had with some of the leaders of Bendigo last night, there are some bragging rights attached to the cities of Bendigo and Ballarat in relation to which had the biggest nugget, which produced the most gold and how many pubs each city had. My understanding is that Ballarat has 54 pubs and Bendigo has considerably more. I am hoping those in the public gallery cannot tell me how many pubs Bendigo has at this particular point in time.

**Mr Tee** — No, they won't have a TAFE.

**Mr RAMSAY** — I can tell Mr Tee that both cities have a lot in common in terms of history, art and architecture, and that can be attributed to the gold rush.

For the benefit of Mr Lenders, who I see is not in the chamber, it was actually the squatters from Geelong who had to exit because of the drought.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr RAMSAY** — Yes, the squatters — that term that always seems to bring the best out in Mr Lenders — had to move away from Geelong because of the significant drought in the area at that time, and I am talking about 1837. They came to Bendigo and Ballarat, and they were responsible for the increase in activity, particularly pastoral activity, in those regions and people moving out from the major cities.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — In August 1851, Mr Pakula, gold was first discovered in Clunes, not Bendigo but just outside Ballarat. Over 1000 miners converged on the Victorian goldfields around Ballarat and the gold rush was on. By 1853, 20 000 miners were digging for gold, and in that year 10 million grams of gold were transported to the Melbourne Treasury. Over the next four years 78 million grams were transported. It went from 10 million to 78 million in just four years.

From an immigration point of view, 370 000 immigrants arrived in Australia in 1852, and the population tripled between 1851 and 1871 going from 430 000 to at one point 1.7 million. Although this is not a history lesson, it does demonstrate the emerging immigration growth in this country. Of those immigrants, 40 000 were Chinese, which represented just over 3 per cent of the total Australian population, so they were a significant contributor to population growth in this area.

The period between 1851 and 1854, which has been mentioned, saw tensions develop between the miners and the authorities and the inauguration of the Ballarat Reform League, which was set up under the leadership of Peter Lalor. Many members will know the fascinating history of the Eureka Stockade. Over 1000 men gathered, unfurled the Eureka flag and the infamous stockade was built. Unfortunately, 22 men died when troops from Melbourne overran the stockade. Many of you will remember their oath, and it is worth repeating in this chamber. It states:

We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties.

However, I am sure those miners would never have thought that their actions in history would ever be compared to what we saw in Lonsdale Street last week

from the CFMEU (Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union). I am quite sure those miners would be utterly ashamed of the actions that have taken place over the last week.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — I am sorry Mr Pakula does not like to hear what the CFMEU is doing — with its thuggery, violence and intimidation — to business and construction in Victoria. We can argue that point any time. Mr Pakula wants to be dismissive of what is happening with those illegal activities in Lonsdale Street, but I can tell him what happened in 1854 and that those miners would be utterly ashamed of what is happening there.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! I ask members on both sides of the house to show a little restraint. We will continue with the proceedings as anticipated.

**Mr RAMSAY** — I conclude by saying it is important to note that at that particular time Victoria produced over one-third of the world's supply of gold, and that is why it is important that we move this motion in this hall today.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! I am tempted to call 'Grandpa', but I will go with 'Mr Viney'.

**Mr VINEY** (Eastern Victoria) — Thank you very much, I think, Acting President. I am happy to support the motion before the house, although I must say that I am disappointed that the government has moved this motion in what I think is a token gesture worthy of a high school debate. At a time when the state, and in particular regional Victoria, is facing massive increases in unemployment, we are debating the history of gold. We have been lectured by the squatter on the squatting history of Australia — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! Mr Viney knows only too well — in fact he would know better than most members of this house — that he should not refer to another member by a term that is not their proper title. I ask Mr Viney to restrain himself from doing so.

**Mr VINEY** — We have been lectured by Mr Ramsay on the squatting history of Victoria, and he tried to suggest that somehow the squatters have a relationship with the Eureka Stockade. This is a revisionist version of history. The Labor Party is particularly proud of its association with miners — with the diggers — and the history of mining and the union

movement that grew out of mining and shearing. Mr Ramsay might not be so keen on that aspect of the history of the agricultural industry and how the Labor Party came out of the great shearers strike. He might not want to remember those things.

At the same time Victoria, and in particular regional Victoria, is undergoing an employment crunch, with increasing levels of unemployment, the government is cutting into TAFE funding. It has cut \$500 million from the education system. It cut funding for Victorian certificate of applied learning coordinators — —

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — On a point of order, Acting President, this is a very narrow motion about the state's mineral emblem; it is not a motion about general policy calling for broad discussion. There will be an opportunity to have that sort of debate later. I ask you, Acting President, to bring the member back to the motion.

**Mr VINEY** — On the point of order, Acting President, Mrs Petrovich talked widely on the topic and Mr Ramsay talked about running around Bendigo's lake. We have had a wide-ranging discussion. My point is that there are a range of issues that this house should not be debating, and the issue that I want to get to — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! I think Mr Viney is now debating the point of order. I uphold the point of order. I understand that before I took the chair there may have been a wide-ranging discussion on this motion, but Mr Viney would be aware that once a new Acting President or indeed Deputy President takes the chair the rules can sometimes change as to what members can speak about. I ask Mr Viney to return to the motion before the house.

**Mr VINEY** — I was talking about the Labor Party's association with the diggers in the goldfields and with the mining sector in general, of which we are very proud. After all, it was Mr Ramsay who decided to bring industrial relations into this debate. I think I am entitled to respond to Mr Ramsay's outrageous contribution.

If we are going to have a debate in this place, in front of school students, we could have a genuine debate about any of a range of topics. The government seems to be suggesting that the people of Bendigo are not able to listen to such a debate but want a debate about gold. There is a range of topics we could have been debating instead of this issue. The only two motions the government will move today is this one and a self-congratulatory motion that is to come. There is a

range of issues that should and could have been debated that I think the people of Bendigo would have been pleased to listen to and pleased to get an understanding of in order for them to frame their view of the operations of the Parliament and in order to frame their view as to how they might cast their vote when it comes to that time in 2014.

There are issues like the funding cuts to education or the \$66 million worth of cuts to the Country Fire Authority and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade — that is, \$41 million worth of cuts to the CFA. Is the government suggesting that these are not important issues that the people of Bendigo might have been interested in? Are they not interested in the current increase to the crime rate that we are seeing here in Victoria — and the government's response is to build more prisons! That is the government's response to this instead of dealing with the issues at hand. They want to have a high school debate in which we are all agreed on the same topic. We should have put up a proposition and asked each side to be for and against.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** — Motherhood.

**Mr VINEY** — We could have debated whether motherhood is a good thing, because that is essentially what we are being asked to do. Of course we are going to support a motion about a gold emblem and the importance of gold in Victoria's history. We sit in a chamber covered in gold both in Melbourne and here today, so of course we are going to support that. There are many more important things that this house should have been debating during our visit to Bendigo, and the people of Bendigo are mature enough to listen to a genuine debate about those issues that are of concern to them and to all Victorians.

**Mr DRUM** (Northern Victoria) — It is unfortunate that Labor simply wants to play politics with even the most basic of motions that have been put forward by the government; however, I just want to quickly go through some of the history of what we currently have in this great city. It goes back to 1851, when the gold rush started here in Bendigo. It had started in Castlemaine only a few months earlier, but the discoveries of gold in this area were to change this region forever. The landscape would change to the extent that now, as you drive around this region, you will see poppet heads right across the city as reminders of an industry that created both wealth and poverty at the same time.

To get an accurate understanding of what life on the goldfields was like you only have to visit the Central Deborah Gold Mine to experience it all. You can

experience the cramped conditions the miners had to put up with, and you can witness the primitive way in which gold was mined, with one miner holding the steel spike and the other miner — the coworker — slamming it with a sledgehammer. You would hope that they did not miss too often. You can see that as they eventually made a hole that was large enough to take an explosive they would blow the rock, and hopefully there would be some gold mixed in with the quartz that they were chasing.

Eventually this method was replaced by the mechanised version — what we would probably refer to as a primitive style of jackhammer — which was able to punch a hole in the rock in a much shorter time. However, the dust from these machines caused many of the miners to contract illnesses; so much dust got into their lungs that the machines were known as widow-makers, and many of the miners died at a very young age. As technology developed, this killer dust was able to be stopped by using water with the jackhammers, which was incredibly successful. However, it was not long before the operators started to go deaf, as the noise was so loud in such a confined space. It was also deemed a sign of weakness if miners used earmuffs or earplugs.

Therefore whilst gold played a significant role in the development of this entire region that we call the goldfields — from here across to Ballarat and everywhere beyond and in between — it also played a significant role in the development of Melbourne and the entire state. Melbourne was, I think, the fourth wealthiest city in the world at the height of the gold rush. Gold was a great generator of wealth; however, the vast majority of people living on the goldfields endured a very tough existence, with high mortality rates and lower life expectancy than anywhere else in the state, and the vast majority of the miners were extremely poor.

It is also worth noting that the Eureka Stockade rose at a time when the cost of licences was high and there was no representation, and that is synonymous with this movement. However, Bendigo has its own version, which predated the Eureka Stockade, in its Red Ribbon Rebellion. A little further to our south, Chewton witnessed the first uprising from the miners with its Monster Meeting. That was the very first time the miners got themselves organised to rebel against the authorities who were charging extreme rates for their licences without listening to any — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr DRUM** — Exactly, without any representation. I finish with the concept that when you read the motion, it makes sense. What better place could you think of for moving this motion than when both houses of Parliament are sitting in the goldfields region. It is the perfect time to do this. The government should be congratulated for giving gold as a mineral official acknowledgement. If it is to be declared an official emblem of this state, then there is no better time to do it.

I finish on this note: I am very proud to be a member of the Baillieu-Ryan government because, unbeknown to many people, here in Bendigo the Central Deborah Gold Mine catalogues the history of gold in the city. It was under extreme threat from rising water when mining operations ceased some six months ago, threatening the history and tourism attraction at Central Deborah, but the government acted swiftly in conjunction with the City of Greater Bendigo to ensure that the rising water was pumped away. The problem was dealt with swiftly to ensure that we can continue to acknowledge the role gold has played in our development in both Bendigo and Ballarat but also in Melbourne and across the state and to ensure that the history will not be lost for the youth of tomorrow.

**Ms BROAD** (Northern Victoria) — As everyone here today is aware, gold is an exceedingly valuable mineral which can be used for many fabulous purposes ranging from this wonderfully decorated town hall in which we are privileged to be meeting through to much more mundane commercial applications in which it is equally valuable.

Bendigo was the highest producing goldfield in Australia in the 19th century and the largest gold mining economy in eastern Australia. That economy produced many fine legacies. In addition to this wonderful town hall, it also produced the Mechanics Institute and Free Library and the Bendigo School of Mines, now the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, where the Legislative Council will be hosting a community lunch today. I trust that legacy will continue for many years to come, notwithstanding the current government's assault on the TAFE sector.

The more contemporary legacy of gold history and the goldfields in Bendigo is something I also draw attention to, and that is the Bendigo Women's Memorial. The Bendigo Women's Memorial recognises the role of women in the development of Bendigo from the discovery of gold in Victoria to the present day. It was unveiled to celebrate 150 years of gold in Bendigo in 2001, and a great many people contributed to those celebrations. I still have some bottles of wine that I was

presented with as the Minister for Energy and Resources at that time in the former Labor government — hopefully one day I will be able to relax and enjoy them — and vigneron right around the Bendigo region contributed to that wine.

The point of mentioning that memorial is to acknowledge that in 1851 it was two women from the Ravenswood Run, Margaret Kennedy and Julia Farrell, who struck gold and started the gold rush when their discovery was noticed by others. That took place in an area which is now known as Golden Square. Mark that one down to women. Another contemporary legacy is the former Labor government's nomination of Victoria's Central Goldfields for world heritage status, something it was very pleased to do.

Home to the Bendigo Bank and the Bendigo Stock Exchange, Bendigo today is the largest finance centre in Victoria outside Melbourne. That has all been built on the legacy of gold. The former government was pleased to also build on that legacy by, amongst other things, securing water for Bendigo with a \$30 million super-pipe, investing in V/Locity trains and the Calder Freeway and investing \$90 million in improving schools in Bendigo. All of these things are vital to Bendigo's ongoing prosperity, and it is important that the Baillieu-Ryan government step up to ensure that investment continues in Bendigo and regional Victoria. It is also important that the government get around to producing a jobs plan, because these things do not just happen; they require governments to be partners and to step up and make the important investments to ensure prosperity continues and that opportunities are there for all Victorians.

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — In rising to contribute to debate on this motion, I congratulate the Premier of Victoria, Ted Baillieu, on putting forward the motion to have gold as our state emblem for minerals. I also congratulate the Leader of the Government on moving this motion this morning.

Bendigo was first settled in 1851. It was originally known as Castleton and later as Sandhurst, not becoming known as Bendigo until 1891. As Ms Broad pointed out, it is generally agreed that gold in Bendigo was first discovered in 1851 by Mrs Margaret Kennedy and Mrs Julia Farrell at The Rocks in the area of the suburb now known as Golden Square. News of this discovery spread and brought prospectors from around the world. Bendigo's strong connection with the Chinese community began at that time, when thousands of Chinese flocked to the Bendigo goldfields. Also established were strong Cornish, Scottish and Irish communities, and many Americans arrived straight

from the Californian goldfields. The names of the mines showed the origins of the miners: there were the All England, the Alabama, the Cornwall, the Dublin and the Colorado mines. They also showed the optimism of the miners, with names including the Enterprise, the Golden Find, the Surprise and the Perseverance. By 1854 there were 15 000 people here in Bendigo.

One of Bendigo's best-known citizens is George Lansell, the Quartz King. In 1854 this Englishman and his brother walked from Adelaide to Bendigo, where he set up business as a soap and candle maker. He became one of our most outstanding citizens and is still well remembered in Bendigo. George Lansell's arrival by foot from Adelaide reminds me very much of the story of one of my mother's ancestors, John Hargreaves. He travelled by boat from Scotland and disembarked in Sydney in 1851. He then walked to the Bendigo goldfields, arriving there in 1852. He found there was no fresh milk available on the goldfields, so he turned around, walked back to Sydney, bought a herd of cows, walked them back to the Mandurang valley and started a dairy farm. In 1854 he brought the first milk from Mandurang to Bendigo. Northern Victoria now produces more than 30 per cent of our nation's milk, so my mother's family probably contributed to northern Victoria having the great dairy industry it has today.

My mother's family stayed here, and some of them are still here today. They moved from dairying to another sort of gold — pubs. They had the Sandhurst Hotel, which was on the corner of Lyttleton Terrace and St Andrews Avenue, just across the road from here where the city offices stand today. They also had the View Point Hotel at View Point, the White Hills General Store and a general store in St Andrews Avenue across the way. Their names changed along the way as the family married into other families. Our relatives here have included the Hargreaves, the Sanemans, the Andrews, the Butlers, the Shields, the Chandlers and the McRae family. I am very proud of my strong connection to this region.

Before gold was discovered in 1850 Melbourne was a town of about 20 000 people. Gold was discovered in 1851, and in the 10 years to 1861 the population of Victoria exploded to 540 000 people. It was about half the total population of Australia at the time. In those 10 years exports rose from £1 million in 1850 to about £13 million. Gold certainly played a great part in establishing Victoria as the leading state in our nation.

It also gave us a great heritage when we look at what has been built in Melbourne from the wealth of the goldfields. The construction of Parliament House, the

Treasury Building, now the Old Treasury Building, and the Princess Theatre, which were opened in that decade, were all built on the wealth of the goldfields, both here in Bendigo and in Ballarat. By the 1880s Melbourne was known as ‘Marvellous Melbourne’ because it was the capital of Victoria and its wealth of gold had made it the leading colony of our nation. Gold has been the foundation of the greatness of this state, and it is only appropriate that we acknowledge it as the mineral emblem of Victoria.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I rise to conclude the debate on this motion, and I thank honourable members for their contributions. It was an opportunity to indicate that we believe gold should be the mineral emblem of our great state, and the fitting location for this motion is clear. Themes that have come through in the debate include the importance of gold in our history; the symbolism of democracy; most importantly, the state’s development; multiculturalism; the state’s leadership as a democracy; and the secret ballot. Through Eureka, we have the symbol of Victorians as independent in nature. Small businesses were represented strongly through that theme, with freedom and a focus on fair taxation and full representation. Gold is an important symbol for the state and our development. It draws on the goldfields areas of Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and beyond and is a great symbol.

**Motion agreed to.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: consultants

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, Mr Hall. I refer to the slashing of 950 public servants from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and I ask: how many KPMG consultants have been engaged to advise on EBA (enterprise bargaining agreement) negotiations, transition plan analysis, management reviews and departmental restructures?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — It is a requirement of reporting procedures that the use of consultants by departments be published in the annual reports of departments. That information was published in last year’s annual report, and that will be done again in this year’s annual report.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer. My question about the KPMG consultants referred partly to the work they are doing on EBA negotiations, but the opening of my question referred to the fact that 950 public servants are being shed from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, of which Mr Hall is the leading minister. Given the minister’s need to engage KPMG consultants to do core departmental work, is it a fact that he has no faith in his departmental advisers?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! That question is borderline.

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — Let me say that I have absolute, full confidence in all the people within my department. They serve me and my fellow ministers extremely well. Therefore the answer to Mr Lenders’s question is absolutely, I have full confidence in them. However, as they did under his government — and to a greater degree than under the present government — departments make use of consultants to bring in expertise above and beyond that which is in the department. We have reduced the number of consultants engaged compared to the previous government.

### **Vocational education and training: reforms**

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. Can the minister provide the house with an update on how the coalition government’s reforms to vocational education and training (VET) will benefit students and businesses in Bendigo and northern Victoria?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mrs Petrovich for her question. This morning I listened the opposition putting forward a lot of negative comments and notices of motion that were having a crack at the government for some of the refocusing of the vocational training measures we have here in Victoria. As always, the opposition is prepared to run down local providers, criticising them and the measures they have taken. Let me say —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I was warned last night by one of the local broadcasters that whilst this is a splendid hall, the acoustics are not always terrific in terms of people being able to hear. The answer to the question asked is important to many visitors to the

Legislative Council sitting today, and therefore I would ask members to restrain from interjecting so that people can hear the minister's answer on a question that is directly relevant to Bendigo.

**Hon. P. R. HALL** — On a very positive note, members of the chamber and the audience would be interested to know that training activity in the Loddon Mallee region has increased significantly in the last 12 months. In fact the TAFE training effort in the Loddon Mallee region has increased by 40 per cent — that is, TAFE enrolments over the 12 months from July 2011 to July 2012 have increased by 40 per cent. There has also been a growth of 35 per cent at private registered training organisations in this region.

The Loddon Mallee region is the only region in Victoria where actual growth in training enrolments in the TAFE sector has outstripped that growth in the private sector, and that is a great commendation to the TAFE providers in this region, those being the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE and the Sunraysia Institute of TAFE. I also point out that in 2012 BRIT, the local TAFE institute here in Bendigo, is delivering 207 VET programs, 49 per cent of which are in the top two training subsidies provided by this government. That means the focus of its efforts is on providing job opportunities in areas of this region that have skills shortages. They are responding to that and meeting the needs of this community.

I also put on the record that some of the other measures the government is taking to assist training and educational opportunities in this region are through the Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund, which I have spoken about before. Some of the first-round programs of this fund have now been in operation for 12 months, and we have had a chance to evaluate those programs. Seven of those programs have been successful, and they are now delivering a higher education opportunity for around 1700 young students in regional Victoria who now have the opportunity to be either directly enrolled in a higher education program or a pathways program into higher education, predominantly through their local TAFE. That is an outstanding effort.

When Ms Darveniza talks about, as she did this morning, how important it is for students to be able to live in their local region and be educated in their local region, the Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund is achieving exactly the aim that Ms Darveniza wants, as I am sure do others.

The Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE and Sunraysia TAFE, both fine TAFE providers in this region, have a strong and viable future, and this government will be

working with them to ensure that their full potential is realised. Unlike the opposition, we are not seeking to criticise, complain and put them down at every opportunity.

### **Firefighters: vocational training**

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — My question today is for Mr Hall, the Minister for Higher Education and Skills. The minister will be aware that the TAFE course conducted at Ballarat University that teaches career firefighter skills, including how to manage injuries at emergency scenes, suppress urban fires, deal with hazardous materials and respond to maritime and aviation emergencies, has been cut, leaving 140 people relying on distance education run by a TAFE in western Sydney. My question is: will the government review this dangerous decision to cut TAFE and restore this funding, so that current and future firefighters receive the training that they require?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I have to say I am not sure whether the facts of Ms Hartland's question are correct, because Ballarat University has clearly said that it is not the prime provider of services to the Country Fire Authority. The Country Fire Authority contracts providers to deliver some of its training programs but delivers some itself. This whole notion of the refocusing of vocational training being the cause of a change in delivery arrangements undertaken by the CFA is not, as I understand it, directly related to any refocusing of vocational training measures that the Victorian government has undertaken.

### *Supplementary question*

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — I thank Mr Hall. It is starting to sound like the Auslan decision again. Ballarat University spokesperson Matthew Freeman said 140 people were studying the certificate III public — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms HARTLAND** — Are you worried about the Auslan? Ballarat University spokesperson Matthew Freeman said 140 people were studying certificate III public safety, firefighting and emergency operations, and certificate IV in fire technology. Because of the TAFE cuts, these courses will be lost and will now be run out of Sydney. I am sorry, but I am not sure that the minister has his facts right, and I ask that the funding be restored to this vital service.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I ask Ms Hartland to clarify whether the supplementary question refers to Auslan funding.

**Ms HARTLAND** — No. I apologise for that; that was commentary.

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — In the preamble to her supplementary question Ms Hartland mentioned Auslan. She knows that I committed myself to finding a solution for Auslan, and indeed a solution has been found and we will pursue that. I say that by way of introducing my answer, because in exactly the same way as I dealt with Auslan, if there is an issue in regard to the CFA and the delivery of training programs for its members, I am happy to work through that with the CFA. I say categorically and without any equivocation: the CFA has not approached me in respect of this matter, but I am more than happy to receive representations from it.

### **Manufacturing: government support**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, Mr Dalla-Riva, and I ask: can the minister outline to the house what the coalition government is doing to increase collaboration among manufacturers in regional Victoria in order to boost productivity and competitiveness?

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** (Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade) — I thank the member for his question, because, compared with those opposite, the government has taken its commitment to revitalising manufacturing very seriously. We recognise the challenges facing the manufacturing sector. We have recognised the impact of the high Australian dollar, of Labor's carbon tax, of the industrial relations framework that the federal government is putting in place and, interestingly, of the increased sophistication of the supply chain.

It is important that we provide an environment that enables the manufacturing sector to keep thriving and growing. We have always said that for manufacturers to be competitive and to be able to focus their efforts overseas, they need to lift their productivity and their competitiveness. Victoria is the only state in Australia to develop a comprehensive manufacturing strategy. While the federal Labor government still talks about manufacturing strategies, we have put one in place. This was announced last year with a commitment of \$58 million towards the strategy.

I was pleased yesterday to officially launch a \$7.5 million grant program that will help Victorian manufacturing networks to improve their productivity and competitiveness. Unlike the Labor Party, we are about trying to work with manufacturers to work together. It is a bit like the Labor Party and the CFMEU (Construction, Forestry, Manufacturing and Energy Union) working together, as we know they do. But what we are about is ensuring that the manufacturing industry has the capacity to collaborate with and support networks to undertake activities and projects that will assist Victorian manufacturers to identify and implement productivity improvements, to generate new ideas and products and to boost exports and increase collaboration.

It is disappointing that the only collaboration we see from those opposite seems to be between Daniel Andrews, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, and the CFMEU. We know Daniel Andrews is the only one who stands up for the CFMEU —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! There is a question of relevance, a question of debating the answer and a question of overtly criticising the opposition, which is not allowed under the standing orders. I ask the minister to return to the substance of the question.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I say with great pride that we were at Hofmann Engineering yesterday, where I made the formal announcement, in conjunction with members of the Bendigo Manufacturing Group, which is an excellent example of the role that networks can play in enhancing business outcomes.

We as a government are very serious about supporting manufacturing. Following on from the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission inquiry, from the most rigorous examination of manufacturing —

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister has taken note of the comment that I made and has returned to the subject matter. When members interject like that, it makes it very difficult for me to stop the minister from taking up the interjection and journeying into other areas. The minister is trying to help me, and the member interjecting is not.

**Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA** — I must say that the Victorian government has indicated its intentions for the manufacturing sector under this initiative. We have already provided further initiatives with the Geelong Manufacturing Council, where we have delivered an \$800 000 election commitment in conjunction with

Deakin University. What we are about is supporting manufacturing. We are about supporting industries that develop economic growth and generate jobs in this state. Unfortunately, what we find is an opposition that carps and whinges and moans about manufacturing, it talks down manufacturing, and it has no policy solution on manufacturing.

Members opposite whinge and carry on about it, but we have a very clear, coherent manufacturing strategy which delivers for manufacturers in this state. As we know, manufacturing feeds into the construction industry, for example. The construction industry is an important industry, and I must say that its importance to the manufacturing sector is well supported by government, as opposed to those opposite.

### **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: consultants**

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. The minister's department has cut 950 jobs and as a consequence of his policies 2000 TAFE teacher jobs have gone, including 100 here in Bendigo. Can the minister confirm that at this time of job cuts, when he has cut 950 staff from his department and got rid of 2000 TAFE teachers, his department's market monitoring unit for TAFE — the hallmark of his monitoring — is advertising through Hudson consulting in Melbourne for outsourcing monitors of government policy?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is, as are all government departments, subject to and part of the sustainable government initiative. In that respect there is an intent that is in line with a proportionate reduction in jobs. That does not mean there is a complete curtailment of recruitment, because the expertise is still needed to run a department and to run those programs.

The market monitoring unit is a unit which is going to be critical to the success of vocational training in the state of Victoria. The market monitoring unit is in one of those areas which the Labor government refused to address — that is, to properly put in place quality control measures that have oversight of a market-driven training system. It was Jacinta Allan, the member for Bendigo East in the Assembly, who put that system in place without proper market oversight.

I make no apology for putting forward the market monitoring unit as a quality control oversight, nor do I make any apology for ensuring that the people who

operate the market monitoring unit have the skills and expertise needed to do the job in the way that it needs to be done.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank Mr Hall for his answer and his confirmation that these jobs have been outsourced, and I ask the minister: in winding down the TAFE system, what other functions of the department will be outsourced to non-public servants?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I have already answered this question — that is, I said there is not a freeze on recruitment where there is a need for expertise. From time to time there will be an assessment of the skills within the department, and if there is a requirement to import skills, that will be a process that will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **Health: infrastructure projects**

**Mr DRUM** (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Health, David Davis, and I ask: will the minister update the house on the progress of major hospital capital projects?

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question and for his strong advocacy for northern Victoria, in particular his very strong advocacy for the largest project that will be built in this city, the Bendigo hospital. I put on record the support we have received from Bendigo Health, the broader Bendigo community and the community of northern Victoria for the government's \$630 million commitment to build the new Bendigo hospital. It will be a magnificent hospital.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — It is a public-private partnership built under the same model that your government built some projects, Mr Jennings, except it is bigger than your government's project by \$102 million. You have still not apologised, and you have still not agreed with the bigger project.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I advise the minister to address his comments through the Chair.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — President, I was provoked. Let me be clear. This will be a magnificent project for Bendigo. The expression-of-interest phase has been completed, a request for tender is out and two tenderers are hard at work, due to come back to the steering

committee on 1 November with their proposals, which will be assessed by the steering committee. We will then proceed to build the biggest project of its type in country Victoria's history — in Bendigo. It will be \$102 million bigger than that which was going to be built by the previous government.

I make the point that this is a project for the north of the state, and there will also be people from New South Wales who will come to the new Bendigo hospital. It will be a hospital that will provide for the next 50 years. It will have more space than the hospital that was going to be built by the previous government, and it will be a hospital that is a modern hospital, a future-proofed hospital and a hospital that will provide the services that are needed for the people of the Bendigo region and northern Victoria.

There is one other major project on the go at the moment, and that is the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC), a \$1.042 billion project.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I fear that several members are actually provoking the minister. I refer particularly to Mr Jennings and Mr Pakula, and I am not sure whether it was Mr Leane or Mr Viney.

**Mr Leane** — It was Grandpa; I cannot tell a lie!

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Nor may you speak when I am on my feet. As I have indicated, the acoustics in this hall are not necessarily as consistent with its splendour as we would like, and therefore I ask that the minister be able to complete his answer with less provocation.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — As I said, the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre will be an outstanding project — a \$1.042 billion project that will bring together the Peter McCallum Cancer Institute and the research base that is so important for the future and which will provide a comprehensive approach to the treatment of cancer that will stand out around the world. It is a model that will provide treatment to people when they need it and the support that will be so important. It will be Victoria's premier cancer hospital. For those who want to see the construction, they can look at the webcam now and see the digging down that is occurring as the base of the new comprehensive cancer centre is being built.

I inform the house that yesterday the CFMEU (Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union) blockaded the site of the Victorian Comprehensive

Cancer Centre — an outrageous blockade preventing the building of a cancer centre — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I tell you what: we know where you are — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I advise Mr Dalla-Riva that Mr O'Donohue suggests I should be consistent. I am on my feet. The minister, to continue.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I was shocked to hear that muscle men bullyboys were outside the site yesterday — —

**Mr Jennings** — On a point of order, President, was the minister indicating that there has not been any work done on the Bendigo hospital for two years because of CFMEU action? There has been no work undertaken at the Bendigo hospital for two years.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Jennings has held high office in this chamber, and he knows as well as I do that that was not a point of order. It was a nice debate, but it was not a point of order, and it is overruled.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — To respond, through you, President, to Mr Jennings: I laid out the process at the Bendigo hospital very clearly, but I was talking about a separate project — the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. Yesterday bullyboys and muscle men blockaded the front of that site, preventing work from occurring. I know there are apologists on the other side, and Mr Andrews, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Mulgrave in the Assembly, is one of them.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Pakula is really testing me. This is a historic sitting. He might have his place in history if he continues.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — As I said, there were bullyboys and muscle men there yesterday blockading the VCCC site. I know that there are some people from the left of the Labor Party, including its leader, who want to see those things and will not criticise the CFMEU. Mr Pakula is in a different category; he thinks they are nuts, and I agree with him. But let me be clear here: Bendigo hospital will receive — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Time!

**TAFE sector: community service obligations**

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. I note that the Essential Services Commission called for the TAFE community service obligations to be separately funded before the savage budget cuts in May and that the minister's department commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to commence work on the costings for such a disaggregation of the community service function. Will the minister make the PricewaterhouseCoopers findings available to the house?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — The work undertaken by the Essential Services Commission was well-advertised work which went on to make a number of recommendations. That report was made publicly available, and Mr Lenders has quite rightly indicated that the recommendations went in part to identification of community service obligation. Cabinet then needed to consider that report, and I have responded in terms of how cabinet followed up on some of the recommendations within the report. However, the work Mr Lenders has described that was undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers in respect of providing government advice was advice for cabinet and was considered by cabinet. Therefore that report is subject to, by way of tradition of this Parliament, cabinet confidence.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I note that 950 jobs have been cut out of the department and a report has been commissioned to carry out the Essential Services Commission's recommendations, which essentially say that the community service obligations of the TAFEs — which are things as fundamental as providing libraries and paying for teacher wages — are not being met. My supplementary question is: does the minister believe that community service obligations, as identified by the ESC, of providing libraries and paying teacher wages are things that ought to be paid for?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — It is a question of personal belief and opinion, but let me say, in response to the supplementary question, that of course TAFE salaries have got to be paid for. Indeed there is provision within the training subsidies that have been provided for that to occur. It has occurred forever in terms of the system that the Labor government introduced and will continue to be so funded from the training subsidies.

Let me make this point in terms of the questions that have been posed to me today by the opposition in respect of the TAFE and training system we have in Victoria. Let it not be forgotten by anybody in this room or outside that we are working within the system provided for and introduced by the previous Labor government. While those opposite raise these issues with me time and again, the previous government put this system in place, and we are dealing with that mess and sorting through it.

**Housing: homelessness action plan**

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Housing, Ms Lovell, and I ask: can the minister update the house on the Victorian homelessness action plan and how it is delivering for Victorians at risk of homelessness in Bendigo and the wider region?

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for his question and his ongoing interest in those in our communities who are more vulnerable than ourselves. Last October I was proud to launch the government's \$76.7 million Victorian homelessness action plan to address homelessness in this state. As part of that action plan we have funded 11 innovation action projects that concentrate on early intervention to prevent and solve homelessness. One of those projects, the Back on Track project, operates right here in Bendigo and also in Kyneton and Echuca. It brings together a number of partners, including Haven, the Advocacy and Rights Centre, the Centre for Non-Violence, Cobaw Community Health Service and St Luke's Anglicare. These partners have received \$1.57 million to deliver the innovation action projects.

The innovation action projects work with private real estate agents to identify tenancies in the private rental market that are at risk, and to link those tenancies with family violence services, advocacy and family service organisations and also financial counsellors to help them to maintain their existing housing. This project only started in July, and so far 15 at-risk tenancies have been identified which have now been sustained — and there will be more to come. The referrals are made by the local real estate agents to these service partners, and there is a Back on Track website which the real estate agents are able to make those referrals through.

Also here in Bendigo we have provided a further \$1 million for the Home at Last project, which is a whole-of-Victoria project focusing on the needs of elderly Victorians. This is delivered by the Housing for the Aged Action Group and is operating here in Bendigo in the Loddon Mallee region. The partners in

this one include the Council on the Ageing and Seniors Rights Victoria, and they provide a wide range of housing information, advice and support to those at risk of homelessness. This project focuses on the prevention of homelessness before it occurs, with the development of a one-stop older persons information centre.

This government is committed to helping those who are vulnerable and who are at risk of homelessness. Our \$76.7 million action plan is achieving results, and we are very proud of it.

### Higher education: TAFE funding

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. Noting the dire circumstances of Bendigo TAFE, with its 25 per cent budget cut, can the minister advise if any additional funding or prepayments have been sought or made this financial year to any regional TAFE institute?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Mr Lenders has asked me a similar question in the past, and that was in respect of whether any additional payments had been made particularly to Bendigo TAFE to support it with its operations. I have clearly said that payments were brought forward to assist it with cash flow problems. That has occurred in the past, and it has occurred this financial year as well since 1 July. There is no secret about that, because we know that under the system the Labor government introduced — the market-driven training system in Victoria — that then put Bendigo under some pressure. We have been prepared to help it get through that by bringing forward some of those cash payments. That is no secret, and I reiterate what I have said before in respect of that matter today.

#### *Supplementary question*

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer and note that at budget time in 2011 the Baillieu government fully embraced and endorsed the model before it decided that it needed to cut it. My supplementary question to the minister is: is this repeated call for funds under his model and the model that he endorsed at budget time in May 2011 not a sign that the system he presides over, and which he endorsed in May last year, is no longer sustainable?

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank the member for the supplementary question because it gives me the opportunity to commend the administration of both the institute council and those in management for the fine

job that they are doing in arresting the financial position the institute found itself in under Labor. They have made significant progress. People like Marg O'Rourke, who chairs the institute council, and her membership, and Maria Simpson, the CEO — we should be congratulating them on the fine work they are doing in terms of making sure that this institution is financially stable and viable into the future. The Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE has got a great future. It is an institute, as I have said in previous answers today, that we are keen to work very closely with, as we are, to allow it to build a strong business so it can continue to serve this region magnificently.

### Bendigo Airport: upgrade

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips. Will the minister explain how the Baillieu government's Regional Aviation Fund is benefiting Greater Bendigo?

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry) — I thank Mr Ramsay for his question and for his interest in this project. Yesterday I was very pleased to visit the Bendigo Airport with representatives of the City of Greater Bendigo, because the Victorian government was pleased in the budget last year to make a \$5 million commitment from the Regional Aviation Fund towards the upgrade of the Bendigo regional airport. This is the most significant contribution the state has made out of the fund towards a regional airport in Victoria. We see the fund as an important opportunity to assist regional communities to upgrade their aviation infrastructure. Of course the City of Greater Bendigo has been leading this process, having prepared a master plan for the redevelopment of its airport in 2009–10. With the support of the Victorian government and \$5 million towards that master plan, it is now proceeding with the works.

Yesterday I was pleased to see the progress the City of Greater Bendigo is making on that master plan. The master plan calls for the upgrade of the north–south runway, the development of a new runway and lengthening of the runway, taxiway upgrades, apron upgrades and a substantial increase in business activity at that airport in Bendigo. I was pleased to see yesterday the way the City of Greater Bendigo is getting on with the job of delivering that project.

Pleasingly, the City of Greater Bendigo is already seeing benefits from that proposed upgrade. Yesterday I was pleased to visit a new company, MyJet, which is just completing the development of a \$1.5 million

facility to operate corporate jets out of Bendigo to service not only Victoria but also interstate destinations. This highlights the confidence that aviation businesses have in Bendigo in undertaking major capital investment on that site in anticipation of the completion of the upgrade of the Bendigo Airport.

We heard this morning in the contribution from the mayor, Cr Sandner, that the City of Greater Bendigo sees the upgrade of its airport as a significant capital expenditure priority for the council. The City of Greater Bendigo is on board with the project. The Victorian government is on board with the project. The third party we are waiting to come on board with this project is the federal government. We have a substantial contribution from the City of Greater Bendigo towards the project, we have a substantial contribution from the Victorian government; what we do not have is any contribution from the federal government through Regional Development Australia. If those on the other side of the house really care about these issues in regional Victoria, we call on them to get in contact with their federal colleagues and ensure that the federal government gets on board in providing much-needed funding for the completion of the Bendigo regional airport.

**Ordered that answer be considered next day on motion of Mrs Petrovich (Northern Victoria Region).**

### NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION: GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I move:

That this house notes the strong support provided to Bendigo and the Northern Victoria Region by the Baillieu government.

I will make my contribution brief but clear to enable as many members as possible from both sides of the house to speak on this motion. This is an important motion because it points to the centrality of Bendigo to northern Victoria and the need to look at northern Victoria as an area of the state that contributes very strongly. My contribution will mainly be in regard to health and the provision of health services and prevention services across the state.

I make the point very strongly that, as we heard in question time, this government has the largest project of its type proceeding in country Victoria — the \$630 million new Bendigo hospital. It will be a magnificent hospital. It will be the largest regional hospital in Victoria's history and one of the biggest hospital projects in Australia. It will include a

state-of-the-art regional cancer centre and will include mental health facilities. As I said earlier, Mr Drum's strong advocacy and the advocacy of other members of Northern Victoria Region, including Ms Lovell and Mrs Petrovich, have been very much behind the push for this \$630 million project.

The project will be delivered as a public-private partnership. Expressions of interest are due on 1 November 2012. The tenders will come in, and the government will assess them and move forward from there. We have every reason to believe that we can get a very good deal — an extraordinary deal — for the people of Bendigo and northern Victoria.

As I say, the government is fully committed to an integrated regional cancer centre. Bendigo Health will be set up to provide services across regional Victoria. The project has proceeded. The moving of ambulance services to a number of locations around the city has proceeded, and four new ambulance stations are functional. These will help to improve response times in Bendigo and the surrounding area.

Importantly, the Bendigo hospital will provide a massive push of new jobs as well, not only into the future but also in the construction phase. There will be 735 construction jobs at the peak of the project, and a massive push of additional money and resources into the Bendigo city and region will provide opportunities and support for people from right across the region, including tradespeople and others connected with the project. These large health projects are not only critical to health itself; they also provide major economic activity and important support.

The coalition has committed to a series of major hospital investments and upgrades across the north of the state, and it is important to contrast this with what Labor did when it was in opposition. This is a very important set of facts. I say to the people of northern Victoria and country Victoria — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Let me just explain — —

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — I meant when we were in opposition and the current opposition was in government. Let me explain. I am going to quote from some documents which will make this very clear to Mr Pakula. The 2010 Victorian Healthcare Association document entitled *Optimising Health Outcomes for All Victorians* was published prior to the election, and it reflected on Labor's period in office. It states that the

VHA's analysis of state infrastructure funding over the past decade found that rural Victoria had received just 17 per cent of capital investment in health despite 27 per cent of the population of Victoria living there. Get that: 17 per cent was Labor's record over its period in office, despite 27 per cent of the population living in country Victoria. That points very directly to the weakness of Labor's history and its failure to provide the resources that were required in country Victoria.

By contrast, the coalition is getting on with the job of putting money into country Victorian hospitals and health services. There is \$40 million going towards the Echuca hospital redevelopment and expansion. That huge expansion at Echuca had been left languishing by the previous government, which failed to build that important new piece of infrastructure. There is the \$17.9 million being put into the Kerang and District Hospital. That redevelopment is also critical, and it was not done by the previous government. There is \$5 million being provided for the Mildura Base Hospital expansion. I note that there is also some additional commonwealth funding, and I thank the commonwealth government for that money, which will add to the Victorian funding.

There is \$22.7 million to reconstruct the Charlton hospital, which suffered so tremendously in the floods. There is \$10 million to upgrade the Castlemaine hospital. People in this region will know the importance of the Castlemaine hospital, which was neglected by the previous government. This \$10 million is an important start. There is \$20 million for the Kilmore and District Hospital, again in partnership with the commonwealth — \$10 million is state funding and \$10 million is commonwealth money, an arrangement that could not be struck by the previous government. The previous government would not build up the Kilmore hospital and would not provide it with support. There is \$2 million to develop chemotherapy services at the Seymour District Memorial Hospital. Cindy McLeish, the member for Seymour in the Assembly, strongly advocated for that \$2 million funding; she made a very strong push for it. It is important to make the point that the last government did not put the money into country Victoria that it should have. It refused to do so.

Yesterday I had the honour of launching the Prevention Community Model in Bendigo. I am pleased to be working with local government and the commonwealth government to put prevention money into the Bendigo community. Over four years we will look at how we can provide prevention in a better way that is shown to work. We will be providing support to the community and working with community groups to create a

whole-of-community response. Money is being provided to support kindergartens, schools and businesses — a whole range of sections of the community — in an overall push for better prevention. I pay tribute to the work done by Bendigo Community Health Services and the council in providing that support.

I note that the town of Numurkah also suffered in the recent floods. I pay tribute to the paramedics of Ambulance Victoria who were able to quickly deploy the field team to provide services to Numurkah, despite the damage done to the acute hospital there. The swift response of Ambulance Victoria and the provision of support in that area has been critical to northern Victoria and Numurkah. Further, I can indicate that there will shortly be affordable — —

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — Of course he knows where Numurkah is. I have to say that Mr Jennings should know better than that. He might not get out of the city very often, but Mr Drum is one of the strongest advocates for country Victoria. He is a huge advocate for northern Victoria and very prepared to go in to bat for his community. I can tell Mr Jennings as a matter of fact that Mr Drum goes in to bat very often and that he bends my ear to ensure that more money is put into country Victoria. He is there for the Bendigo hospital. Mr Jennings has still never apologised for advocating for a smaller hospital, which would have short-changed the community of Bendigo and district by \$102 million. Mr Jennings and the previous government would not put the full money in.

Let me be very clear: the town of Numurkah faced those floods, the field hospital has been deployed, there will be additional temporary support in a very short period and I can indicate that work is proceeding on the restoration of acute services to the town. This is an important set of steps. Towns that have been hit by disasters of this type deserve the support of all of us.

The key point I want to make here is that it is about time the opposition stepped forward and admitted its failures in government and in particular its failure to advocate for country Victoria. The Labor members for Northern Victoria Region, Ms Darveniza and Ms Broad, stand in stark contrast to the coalition members for the region. They were not prepared to upscale the Bendigo hospital. They were not prepared to do what Mrs Petrovich, Ms Lovell and Mr Drum were prepared to do — that is, to advocate for a better outcome for their community, a better hospital, a new hospital, a hospital that is fully upscaled.

The government will not step back from its commitment to northern Victoria, unlike the previous, failed government, which is now the opposition.

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — The motion before the house was moved by Mr David Davis. In opening I reflect on my old-fashioned education by the Josephite nuns in Trafalgar in Gippsland. One of the things the Josephites told me was that you should not boast. I imagine that if my Josephite teachers were here now, they would be gobsmailed that Mr Davis has moved a motion congratulating himself and that in the notices of motion this morning every government member felt the need to congratulate themselves. If my teacher Sister Luke were still alive, I know what she would think about people who need to move motions congratulating themselves.

In moving the motion Mr Davis noted good things about regional Victoria and congratulated the government on them. I flag now that I will be moving an amendment. It is not that we do not note the few good things the government has done, but after that acknowledgement our amendment adds the words ‘in limited areas’ and refers to the budget cuts that have damaged the TAFE system, the housing sector and regional jobs and services.

I will move an amendment to Mr Davis’s motion, and I will speak now to both the original motion and to the amendment. I move:

That after “Baillieu government” the following be inserted —

“in limited areas, and the budget cuts that have damaged —

- (a) the TAFE system;
- (b) the housing sector by the abandonment of financial support for first home buyers building new homes; and
- (c) regional jobs and services by jobs cuts in the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries.”.

What we have from Mr Davis is a big statement. The hallmark of his statement seems to be that he has built a really big hospital. There was a hospital proposal from Labor and there is a hospital proposal from the current government, and Mr Davis says the government’s proposed hospital is really big. I will leave it for others to talk about the size of the hospital, but if you look at the great Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne, you see that it is not the size of the hospital that matters but the will of the government to staff the hospital with doctors, nurses and other clinical staff needed to deliver the services. I think my colleague Mr Jennings will adequately dispatch that in the debate, but I say to Mr Davis: size is not everything, what matters is the

services that are delivered. We should judge the government on the services it delivers, rather than on its boasts about the size of hospitals.

If we are talking about northern Victoria — and we could talk about eastern Victoria or western Victoria in a similar fashion — the central question is: what is the government’s vision? It strips down to a single vision for regional Victoria —

**Ms Pulford** — Gold!

**Mr LENDERS** — I take up Ms Pulford’s interjection. A single vision for regional Victoria should probably start with what the government can do to keep young people in regional cities and small towns and on farms. That should be the government’s starting point in developing a vision of what it will do. I would argue that this government’s statements and programs lack vision.

Again I go to my amendment to the motion. I will deal with the TAFE cuts second, but the first point I will deal with is the vision going forward. Under the previous government’s policy of a \$26 000 cash grant to a young person who was prepared to build a new home in regional Victoria, we saw 3000 people a year take that offer up. To a Melbourne-centric government, that might not sound like a lot, but to many regional communities anything that will get a young person to stay in their regional area is a huge plus.

What did we see in the budget this year? While the O’Farrell Liberal-Nationals coalition government in New South Wales brought in exactly such a scheme, the Baillieu-Ryan government in Victoria got rid of exactly such a scheme. If you are in a town like Albury-Wodonga or Echuca-Moama — whichever cross-border town you pick — on one side of the border there is an incentive for young people to stay, and on the other side it is gone. It is not just about keeping young people in a town. In the north or anywhere in regional Victoria, if a young person stays in the town and takes out a first home owner grant, there are jobs for electricians, for carpenters and for other building trades. Pressure is also taken off the rental market in those towns.

If we are talking about a vision and if the starting point of that vision is, ‘What can you do to keep a young person in regional Victoria?’, then this government has lost it. It got rid of a program, and in the same budget cycle that it got rid of it, Barry O’Farrell, the New South Wales Premier, brought it into that state because it had worked in Victoria.

The second area I will speak about is the savage cuts to TAFE funding. I have addressed this already, and Mr Hall may valiantly try to blame the Labor Party for these cuts. It is quite fascinating. On one hand it is the Labor Party's fault because it is unsustainable, so the government has cut \$290 million out of it; on the other hand it is putting in a record amount of money. It has to get the message straight: is it in favour of TAFE or is it not? It cannot be both the Labor Party's problem and the government putting in massive amounts of money. At the same time we are getting rid of 2000 TAFE teachers and an indeterminate number of students.

We want to keep young people in regional Victoria. If members think of anywhere in the north of the state that Mr Davis is talking about in his self-congratulatory motion, what is going to keep a young person there? The opportunity to undertake training is a plus. That training also provides teaching jobs in the area, but the main point is that if you have training opportunities in your home town, you are more likely to stay. It is not just that. When employers decide where they will invest and create jobs the one thing they say is that they want a skilled workforce, so we are really making it difficult in regional Victoria by hacking into the TAFE system. Other speakers will talk at greater length on the TAFE system, but I think it is worth noting that in Bendigo 100 jobs are gone, in regional Victoria 600 jobs are gone and across the state as a whole 2000 jobs are gone — just in TAFE teachers. That is before you even begin considering the lost opportunities for TAFE students who will no longer have those training opportunities that enrich both themselves and the communities they live in.

The third point I make relates to the regional jobs and services that are being affected by the public sector job cuts. We are seeing 400 jobs cut from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and 200 jobs cut from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). I will not mention the other departments. I did make a note earlier of the 950 jobs cut from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, but I will stick to DSE and DPI for a good reason, which relates to the government's priorities. We are cutting a program that protects northern Victoria from fruit fly, yet on the same day the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security announced a diversion of resources from DSE and DPI to hunt for the legendary black cat.

I listened to Mr Walsh, the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, on Gippsland local radio trying to defend this quest for the legendary black cat, and on the same day he was saying that the government is taking \$9 million of funding away from fruit fly protection — that is, putting up the white flag and saying that in vast

regions of Victoria the Queensland fruit fly is endemic. On that same day the minister found the resources to meet this urge the Deputy Premier has had all his life — since he did that assignment at school — to go out there and say, 'We need to find out about the black cat'.

I will not go on much longer about the black cat as I am respectful of others who wish to speak on this motion, but I point out that it is a sad reflection of priorities. We just need to go to the city of Ararat, where we find 11 jobs from the Department of Primary Industries have been cut and some of those people have been cruelly told, 'You can keep your job if you drive to Hamilton or Horsham' — more than 100 kilometres away. Similarly a Department of Primary Industries staff member in Ouyen was told, 'You can keep your job if you drive to Mildura'.

This government congratulates regional Victoria because it is allegedly building a hospital on a slower process, and presumably as the year goes on we will be having some interesting discussions on costings and on whether it is net present value or however we measure it. It is announcing projects that it has not delivered, but even if it does, it is still the services provider and those services have been cut.

In relation to the core issue of keeping young people in regional Victoria, the product is zero. In fact we are taking away one of the great incentives to bring young people to regional Victoria, the first home owner grant scheme. The strategy of bringing in young people and keeping them there, creating construction jobs and taking pressure off the rental market is all going. At a time when Mr O'Farrell thought it was appropriate for New South Wales, Mr Baillieu and Mr Ryan thought it was not appropriate for Victoria.

#### **Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.33 p.m.**

**Mr LENDERS** — Before the lunch break I was speaking on a motion of self-congratulation moved by the Leader of the Government in relation to what the government has done in northern Victoria. I have moved an amendment to that motion to acknowledge that some things have been done but also to note that the consequences of the budget mean that the incentives for young people to stay in regional centres have gone, to acknowledge the TAFE cuts and the savage cuts to government departments, particularly the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries. I also note that a hunt for the big cat has been given priority.

In the final few moments I have, I comment that the other thing the government is forgetting in its extraordinary self-congratulatory motion is that 29 500 Victorians outside Melbourne have lost their full-time jobs since the election of the Baillieu government. We have seen regional employment drop by 29 000. For these reasons the Labor Party seeks to amend the motion to temper the self-congratulatory phrase and make it more realistic. We support the amendment to the motion, and we wish the government would put as much effort into creating jobs in regional Victoria as it does into its own self-promotion.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — It probably is a little early in the government's life for it to be using the Parliament's time to debate a motion to congratulate itself, but until it develops a vision for Victoria, for this region and for Bendigo, for that matter, there will never be a time when the government should be thinking it can rest on its laurels. I am not here to talk down Bendigo. I am from the Turnbull school of positive politics rather than the Abbott school of relentless negativity.

**Hon. D. M. Davis** interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr David Davis knows it is not appropriate to use a prop in this place. I ask him to take it down.

**Mr BARBER** — Based on what I very briefly saw there I am gratified to see that those opposite have taken up the Greens suggestion made in the Legislative Council that we get credit where credit is due. The Liberals and the Greens have found something to agree on: those on the other side of the house have picked up on my original suggestion that we put a road safety message on our numberplates.

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr BARBER** — For the benefit of Mr Ondarchie, I did not think it up. I actually read it in a letter that was published in the *Latrobe Valley Express*. I simply brought it to Parliament and said, 'This is a good idea; we should do it'. I am gratified to see that it seems it is going to be done.

I am here to talk about what is good about Bendigo and what should be protected and maintained. I am also here to talk about what I think could be improved. The government has responsibility in some of the most fundamental areas of state provision. Do not get fancy about these other ideas. Let us just talk about the basics — the bread and butter of local government.

Firstly, there is transport. Anyone who goes out to have a look at the timetables on the local bus stops here will see that the level of public transport provision in the city of Greater Bendigo is nothing like what you would expect in metropolitan Melbourne. Buses stop at 6.30 or 7.30 at night, and sometimes they do not run at all on Sundays. Apparently people in Bendigo all go to bed early on Saturday nights, because in most cases buses stop running around 6.30 p.m. If you want to give people the opportunity to live in places like Bendigo and not have to own a car, also taking into account those who are too young, too old, too poor or too disabled to drive, or those who do not have drivers licences but need to get around, we need better public transport systems in this town and in all of our major regional centres.

**Hon. D. M. Davis** — On a point of order, Deputy President, consistent with your rulings on props and badges, I note that Ms Mikakos is wearing a slogan.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! I advise Ms Mikakos that it is not appropriate to be wearing badges in the chamber.

**Mr BARBER** — As members would expect, TAFE is on the list, and I am getting to it. Unfortunately in the first two budgets we have seen from the Baillieu government there has been minimal to no increase in the services associated with buses, be they city, country or V/Line services. Transport is fundamental; it is people's access to every opportunity, including work, study and visiting friends. Therefore it is an important thing to get right. This government is not only providing very little in the way of extra public transport services but it appears to have no vision for where it is going.

Naturally the Minister for Health is very proud of his new hospital for Bendigo, and so he should be. I was going to say he is doing it with taxpayers funds, but in fact he is not doing it with taxpayers funds, he is doing it with funny money — it is another one of those public-private partnerships that former Premier John Brumby was so proud of. But what is the minister doing about the factors that cause people to end up in hospital in the first place? We know what those factors are. First of all there is smoking. When will the government get serious and pick up on the proposal from the Greens which seeks to eliminate smoking in certain public places, including around the doors of major buildings, on playgrounds and in public dining areas?

Two weeks ago there was a story in the *Saturday Age*. It was a profile of Bendigo describing what a cool

destination it had become. The photo that was used in the online version of the article was of a model sitting in a street-front cafe, smoking a cigar, but in the print version the cigar was photoshopped out. I do not know what people at the *Saturday Age* were thinking, but we should not glamorise smoking or encourage people to smoke in dining areas or in places where members of the public congregate. Passive smoking is annoying and bad for our health, and it is certainly not something we should be encouraging. If we are to get our stubborn rate of smoking down from 20 per cent of the population, we need to take some serious action, and so far we are not seeing that from the government.

Another factor that affects people's health quite dramatically is nutrition. I notice that yesterday the Minister for Health announced a quite sizeable healthy eating promotion program for the city of Bendigo, and that is very good. According to the latest statistics, only around 10 per cent of Victorians eat the recommended amount of vegetables. We have a long way to go there, so it is good that the government is promoting healthy eating.

It would be better if the minister's colleague the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security ensured that access to healthy foods would be secure in the long term by protecting our important agricultural lands. We know that they are being carved up and concreted over by urban development, not just in the area at the edge of Melbourne, which is our second-biggest agricultural area, but also in areas around the edges of some major towns. As well as that, they are being threatened by coal mines and the unsustainable removal of water.

On the subject of alcohol, which is a major health factor, speakers earlier today romanticised the hard-drinking history of the Bendigo goldminers, and even made allusions to the number of pubs in Bendigo. Alcohol is a real problem in our society and we need to take some serious action on that problem.

Turning to physical activity, we all need to get more of it. There are numerous ways to promote physical activity. Coming back to my earlier point, one way to do so is to develop the public transport system, because every public transport journey begins and ends with a walking trip. In fact people who use public transport get quite a good bit of daily walking exercise. The Heart Foundation says that half an hour or so of walking every day is the recommended amount just to get you into shape.

The last point, which is not normally seen as a health factor in the so-called SNAP — smoking, nutrition, alcohol and physical activity — risk factor is about

poker machines. They are having a devastating impact on our community and not just on the people who hit the newspapers as problem gamblers who have gambled away their life savings. Many people are gambling more than they can afford to, at the expense of spending the money on health, education and other things, and the vast majority of them will never see one of those government-sponsored ads with people digging for treasure and seeking help. That sort of approach is not working. Poker machines need to be addressed because they are an inherently addictive product, designed to suck money out of people's pockets. What we need to do is limit the damage by introducing a \$1 maximum bet, and I am sure most people in Bendigo would support that proposal.

TAFE and higher education are about setting up ourselves and our community for a better economic future, and the shakier the economy gets the more important that becomes. The last time I checked with Bendigo TAFE it was facing a \$9 million budget cut, with the 100 staff lost, 39 courses cut and the Kyneton campus in fact completely closed. That is regrettable. We think TAFEs need to be at the centre of our vocational education system, with dedicated funding.

The government is turning its back on the problem of climate change. Just a couple of days ago we saw further cuts to the payments you will get for putting solar panels on your roof. People have been suffering high electricity bills for a long time — —

**Mr Finn** — And they are going to get a lot higher.

**Mr BARBER** — And they are going to get a lot higher, as Mr Finn says. People are mad as hell, and the way they are approaching this is by cutting energy use in their homes. They are putting solar panels on their roofs in huge numbers, and the government is making it as hard as possible for them to do that.

The government appears to have no energy plan. Despite being responsible for the electricity industry, despite being responsible for pollution from coal-fired power stations through the Environment Protection Act 1970, the government is just sitting back and saying, 'Don't ask us; we're not interested in this problem'. This is despite it being a major problem not only in terms of adapting to and surviving the coming climate changes but also in terms of being able to flourish by changing our energy system over to zero-emission sources. The government has no plan. In fact its plan is to boost the coal industry with as many subsidies as possible.

Out here in the city in the forest we are unfortunately seeing further damage being inflicted on our ecosystems, which are on the edge. Victoria is the most ecologically damaged state in Australia. The box ironbark forests of this area are now extremely limited compared to their former extent. We are seeing an unregulated firewood free-for-all, with the Department of Sustainability and Environment attempting to keep up and enforce laws that keep changing all time — —

**Mr Ramsay** interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! That is enough of the interjections, thank you.

**Mr BARBER** — That is putting pressure on areas close to Bendigo. Never mind the raids by city-based firewood collectors, which are now out of control in this area. On top of that, there is the illogical hectare-based burning target. I have spoken about this on many occasions. When I pointed out that simply setting yourself a big number of hectares as a burning target is illogical and does not guarantee risk reduction, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change accused me of dishonouring the dead of Black Saturday, which I found extraordinarily offensive. He was implying that his fuel reduction policy is undebatable, that it is simply a thought crime to discuss, on a scientific basis, the necessary burning target.

Not long after that Neil Comrie, the bushfires royal commission implementation monitor, came out and said the same thing — that we need a risk-based fuel reduction plan, not a crude statewide hectare target to be achieved at any cost and by any means. When Mr Comrie came out and said that, the minister responsible, Peter Ryan, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, said, ‘Well, we will have a look at that’. It was a slightly different response when Mr Comrie said it to when I said it.

But that is all right, because we are moving on to the CFA (Country Fire Authority) and MFB (Metropolitan Fire Brigade) cuts now. In opposition and in its early years in government this team, the Liberal-Nationals coalition, wore its heart on its sleeve when it came to emergency services. But now we are hearing that significant cuts are being made to CFA and MFB budgets, and the government is not putting forward an explanation, an excuse or anything else as to what those cuts are for and how they are to be justified.

Members should ask anybody in the CFA or MFB if they think so-called back office functions, the not front-line functions that the government says it will cut, assist and benefit their front-line work. Does someone

have to be holding a hose to be considered to be a front-line employee of or volunteer in the CFA? What about training, logistics and communications? What about command and control, which was the subject of the most important recommendation of the interim bushfires royal commission report? There is no explanation from the government on that.

Then there is local government, which is the level of government that most citizens turn to first to help them meet their daily needs. The City of Greater Bendigo is no exception. The government has its sustainable government initiative at a state level, but where is the attention to the sustainability of local government? This morning, for a change, we heard the voice of local government on the floor of the Legislative Council with an address from the mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo. I am a former local government councillor, and there are others in this chamber and in the other place who have been councillors, but it is not often that local government’s voice is truly heard when we are making laws.

I believe it is time — and this has been argued for a long time — that we had statements on the impact on local government of proposed legislation that comes before this Parliament. It should not simply be a matter of the Greens getting up and quizzing the minister of the day as to the likely impact of any particular measure on that other level of government. Members of this government were squealing like pigs when the federal government did it to them in the run-up to the budget, but when the state government turns around and provides a new unfunded mandate to the local governments — like, for example, the collection of the fire services levy as a branch of the State Revenue Office — government members, even the former councillors amongst their number, are dead silent.

The defined benefit superannuation scheme certainly has been a big problem for a long time. It was a problem for me when I was a local councillor, which was 10 years ago. We kept getting hit, usually around about the time that we had advertised our council budget, with a large demand for funds. It has happened to local government again this year. Many small country councils are facing bills equal to 20 per cent or 25 per cent of their annual rate revenue — for example, Buloke Shire Council, which is just up the road and covers Charlton and Birchip, has a bill of almost \$2 million, which is about 22 per cent of its annual rate revenue; Gannawarra Shire Council has a \$1.82 million bill. The mayor of Bendigo, Alec Sandner, who addressed us this morning, is quoted in an article in the *Age* today as saying:

This issue is not going to go away. There will be another call to fully fund this scheme in two years' time, then there will be another one after that, and another and another. This has the potential to burden ratepayers for the next 30 years and beyond.

What local government is asking for — and I hope a government speaker will jump up and say that they are willing to join this call, because so far we have heard nuthin, N-U-T-H-I-N, from this government on the subject — is to get the same deal that state and federal governments have, which is that they provide for the superannuation needs of that year's retirees, rather than having to fund them under the very tough federal regime. Local councils are not going anywhere; it is not as if they can pack up and run away. They will meet their bills as and when they fall due. This current method of funding the scheme is causing a range of difficulties.

Those are some of the more fundamental issues that we expect the state government to take care of. The government is not only falling short on them but not even articulating to its own community that these are problems it is addressing or has a plan to address. In many respects the government appears to be looking the other way.

I know that for this government no spin is the new spin, and I was not enamoured of the previous government's approach of announcing what it was going to do when usually by the time it arrived it was an election or two later and very much less than what it originally sounded like. Government members seem to agree with me. That is why the problems to which I refer have existed for a long time, and the government needs to address them. We are not talking about the past; we are talking about the future. That is what this motion invited me to do, and that is what I have done.

I have talked about what is great about Bendigo, and we need to preserve those things. The Minister for Planning has made some proposals that the City of Greater Bendigo will be concerned about and will have something to say about, and we will deal with those in the Parliament in good time. However, there are also some crises upon us, not least of which is the environmental and climate change crisis, and the government simply has its ears covered while moving motions like this to congratulate itself. It is quite an odd political proposition.

The Greens will support the opposition amendment, with some reservations. I am not 100 per cent sure what the first home owner schemes achieve. Certainly economists would suggest that there is more populism than policy in such schemes. As for the motion itself,

the government could not expect us to offer full support to such an inappropriately self-congratulatory motion when the people of Bendigo, who have been paying close attention to our proceedings, are very much aware of the challenges that are ahead of them.

**Mr DRUM** (Northern Victoria) — It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to speak on the motion, which reads:

That this house notes the strong support provided to Bendigo and the Northern Victoria Region by the Baillieu government.

I take off from where the minister left his contribution in relation to the range of hospitals that are being provided for in this region, because it is not just the additional \$102 million for the Bendigo hospital. Mr Lenders is correct: it is not just about size, it is about an integrated cancer centre, a Headspace facility for youth with mental health issues, a mother-and-baby centre, an extra 300 beds and a range of other services that will all be delivered with this new world-class hospital.

Labor tried to dump on this community a hospital with a fraction of the services, whereby the sickest people would be forced to stay across the road. As it always did, it made sure that everybody associated with the project was committed to secrecy, and it forced them to come out and support the hospital that was proposed by Labor, whether they liked it or not. That is a fact; that is how it happened.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Mr DRUM** — Mr Jennings, we still have local members calling for a much smaller hospital to be built, one with a separate cancer centre. We still have local members from the Assembly, in Jacinta Allan and Maree Edwards, the members for Bendigo East and Bendigo West, who are so enamoured with the Labor way that they still want the Labor Party hospital built. They would be the only local members in the entire history of the Victorian Parliament who would argue publicly that \$102 million should not be spent in their electorate.

**Mr Jennings** — They want it done.

**Mr DRUM** — They do not want it done. I bring that forward because on top of the Bendigo hospital we also have \$40 million for Echuca as well as hospital upgrades for Mildura, Kerang and Swan Hill and a new hospital for Charlton. We have \$10 million for Castlemaine and \$10 million for Kilmore, and there is restoration work at Numurkah. That is the picture for Northern Victoria Region. In the 11-year history of the

last Labor government, 27 per cent of the region had to make do with 17 per cent of the budget for capital works in health. That is something we are going to put right with what we are currently spending.

This motion is not congratulatory. It is letting the people of Bendigo and the region understand how much commitment has been put forward by the Baillieu-Ryan government. In the lead-up to the last election the coalition was prepared to cost and commit to many projects around this region, and then the beneficiaries of those projects did what they would always do: they went to the government of the day, the then Labor government, and all they received was a series of stonewalling statements. The people of Bendigo, along with the people of Victoria, now have a stark contrast.

Do you want to have a Labor government which will simply walk away from a range of projects in this great city, or are you going to be with a coalition government which will get on board and partner up with the city, partner up with the beneficiaries of these projects and make sure this city continues to grow in the way we all want it to? The art gallery is one of these projects. The previous government did support this project, and it actually made the announcements. As the Greens have said, the previous government was very good at making announcements, but it was left for us to put it into our budget — that is, \$3 million to continue on the good work.

We understand the exhibitions that have been coming through: the Age of Couture exhibition, the White Wedding Dress exhibition and the Grace Kelly — Style Icon exhibition. We understand how good all of these exhibitions have been for our economy. We understand how good they have been for our image. We understand the level of sophistication that these exhibitions have given our city, and we will welcome more exhibitions in the future once we have redeveloped, remodelled and expanded on the world-class gallery we have.

The theatre and ail project is a very interesting project because this is now a combination project, whereas the previous government had given Bendigo Senior Secondary College \$8 million to build its own theatre. Following some lateral thinking on its part, the school thought, 'If we could partner up with the government, partner up with the federal government and partner up with the City of Greater Bendigo, we may be able to get a better outcome'. John Brumby, the then Premier, and Jacinta Allan swore the city council and Bendigo Senior Secondary College to secrecy so that this project could not be costed and could not be considered by the

coalition in the run-up to the last election. The very first we heard about this project, about the world-class theatre and jail project, was 10 days before the election. Labor made sure there was no chance for the coalition to include this project in its series of costed projects.

However, once the election result was clear, when we checked through the merits of it and ensured that the people of Bendigo had in fact been consulted and that this was a project they wanted, it was a project that Minister Ryan was very quick to get on board with and support through the Regional Growth Fund. We also understand that the Bendigo hospital — —

**Mr Viney** interjected.

**Mr DRUM** — We also understand, Mr Viney, that in the lead-up to the last election there was another project in this region called the Bendigo Airport upgrade. It had \$5 million from the city on the table and \$5 million from the coalition in the run-up to the last election, but Labor did not want to know about it. Labor did not care about this one either — neither federal Labor nor state Labor. Two years on and the Bendigo Airport upgrade will be done without a cent of Labor's money.

The Prince of Wales Showgrounds had a \$2 million contribution from the coalition, and the sheep breeders associations and the Bendigo Agricultural Show Society were all putting in their own money. The City of Greater Bendigo put in its own money. Those groups went to Labor in this city asking for some contribution, but Labor walked away. It will be 70 per cent to 80 per cent built. Members should go for a drive and have a look at the showgrounds, because Labor did not want to know about this project but it will get built. We will bring more and more exhibitions to this great city, and Labor will be very keen to understand that the truth of all this is that it was not prepared to co-invest, it was not prepared to fund it.

Labor did not want to know about the Castlemaine hospital upgrade of \$10 million, and again the coalition commitment came out six weeks before the election. The hospital and Castlemaine Health went to the government of the day to ask if it was serious about helping out, but there was no answer. However, our \$10 million is in this year's budget and we are away.

The Eaglehawk Football Netball Club needed \$400 000. It went to the government of the day but got no response. The Queen Elizabeth Oval upgrade was promised \$700 000 by the previous government but got \$1 million from this government, and the difference will enable netball courts to be built, lighting to be

upgraded, and on it goes. Then there is the Our Place Community Assistance Centre and Our Shed Community Resource Centre and the matter of \$100 000 that Minister Lovell has been talking about and how the director, Tracey Wolsley, made representation after representation to the previous government but was unable to receive a cent. There was no recognition whatsoever.

Golden Square Primary School was the result of the merger of Laurel Street and Maple Street primary schools but no money was allowed for it in the budget. When the schools were merged there was not one zack in the 2010 budget of the previous government and not one zack in the forward estimates for Golden Square Primary School. There was nothing at all. In the same way Castlemaine Secondary College got another \$7.5 million from the coalition. The school was trying to get some money out of the previous government but simply faced another brick wall.

The projects in this region that Labor walked away from, refused to co-invest in and refused to fund include the Castlemaine 24-hour ambulance service. We now have an opposition which is very keen to criticise every time there is a crisis in the ambulance system, but when Labor had an opportunity in government to fund this 24-hour service, it did not want to know about it.

The government has also committed to the building of a new train station at Epsom and upgrading the Eaglehawk train station to take more services to these two outlying regions. This is a further investment in the public transport system.

One of the great projects in this region prior to the election was Eaglehawk Primary School, but against its wishes the member for Bendigo East in the other place, Jacinta Allen, who is a former Minister for Education Services, and the previous government were desperate to close it down. It took a commitment from the opposition of the day, now in government, to inject \$2 million into that school to save it.

The extent to which Labor abandoned Bendigo is breathtaking. We have already heard Mrs Coote talk about the Mount Alexander Shire Accommodation and Respite Group — —

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr DRUM** — Ms Mikakos, do you think we are making this up? Would you like me to address the facts?

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Pennicuik)** — Order! Mr Drum should address his remarks through the Chair, not to the opposition.

**Mr DRUM** — I think even a tough Acting President such as yourself would realise I have been provoked.

In the lead-up to the last election Labor had an opportunity to co-invest in and support a range of projects in this city. Labor walked away, whether it was from schools, sports facilities, helping vulnerable people at Our Place and Our Shed in the aftermath of Black Saturday, additional ambulance support or the call for additional police throughout Victoria.

We in government are investing not just here; we are also investing in the Mildura riverfront development and the Wodonga performing arts centre that the Premier opened only last week. If anyone in the opposition wants to stop carping and turn around and look out the window, they will see a run-down library. The redevelopment of that library is another project, announced by the council only three days ago, on which we are going to partner up. It will be an \$8 billion project and money will come out of the Regional Growth Fund as our stake in this. It is a great opportunity.

At the cornerstone of so many of these investments is the Regional Growth Fund. It is \$1 billion which has been legislated for. In this term of Parliament, \$500 million will be spent and \$500 million will be spent in the next term. We have legislated to ensure that should we lose the next election the Labor Party will have to fund regional development to \$500 million. This is twice as much as Labor was prepared to spend in regional Victoria had it been re-elected. We have doubled the amount that Labor was going to spend on regional development. We have listed all the projects that Labor had an opportunity to fund and walked away from. Labor had deserted this city in the most stunning fashion.

Our vision for regional Victoria is that when we want to build a hospital that hospital will be built. We have a vision in which there will be no bullying from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and there will be no blockades. That is our vision, that major projects will be built under this government and that we will not have an opposition that turns a blind eye to the thuggery and bullying tactics that are employed on major construction sites around this great city.

**Ms BROAD** (Northern Victoria) — I wish to address my remarks to motion 413 moved by the

Leader of the Government and the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Opposition in this house, Mr Lenders. At the outset I wish to make some remarks on the Leader of the Government's contribution, which was littered with references to government promises, to commitments, to what the government is going to do, to plans that the government has and the like. To use just two examples, the Leader of the Government, who is also the Minister for Health, referred multiple times in his contribution to what will happen in relation to the government's plans for Bendigo Health. All of this was in relation to a project which has not yet been tendered and which is a public-private partnership, and yet the minister is confident about what will be.

Another example is the Mildura hospital. The minister referred to state and federal funds which have been committed, not spent, to make improvements to the emergency department and maternity services at Mildura hospital. The reason those funds have not been spent is because the building is privately owned and has a private operator, as a legacy of the last Liberal-Nationals government, the Kennett government. The issues around how you spend public funds on a privately owned building operated by a private operator are proving difficult for the minister to resolve, so those funds which were committed have not been spent.

I think Victorians are generous people. I think they understand that governments take longer than two years to deliver major projects, but it is extraordinary that the government wants to take time at this regional sitting of the Parliament to congratulate itself on promises it has made, plans it is developing and tenders it has not yet selected, rather than concentrating on delivering on its promises. Wiser heads in government, business and the community are more inclined to wait until something of substance is delivered before looking for plaudits from others, let alone congratulating themselves — substance like the \$90 million invested by the former Labor government in making improvements to schools in Bendigo through the Bendigo education plan.

In the time available I would like to make some remarks in relation to the TAFE system, which has been addressed through the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lenders. Labor recognises the value of vocational education and training and of our TAFE institutes, and that is the reason Labor in government funded TAFE to operate effectively and provide community service obligations. It is notable that the Baillieu-Ryan government has ignored the recommendations of the Essential Services Commission to acknowledge TAFEs as having

community service obligations in the provision of formal funding.

Not only has the Baillieu-Ryan government ignored that recommendation from the Essential Services Commission but it has also completely torn up any willingness to fund even \$1 of the community service obligations delivered by TAFE. We now see the complete removal of the funding differential — almost \$300 million — paid to TAFE. This is particularly essential in small rural communities, as well as large regional cities like Bendigo, where TAFE has demonstrated its capacity to address training for thin markets in circumstances where private providers are simply not willing or do not have the capacity to address it.

I refer specifically to Bendigo not only with regard to the reduction in education opportunities as a result of these cuts to TAFE but also with regard to the cuts to jobs. The current estimate from the Victorian TAFE Association is that some 2000 staff redundancies will occur as a result of these funding cuts; approximately 600 in regional Victoria and 1400 in metropolitan Melbourne. In Bendigo that number will be around 100 and counting. Further north in the electorate I represent, Northern Victoria Region, at Sunraysia Institute of TAFE staff redundancies already number 26 and counting. Those numbers do not give a true account of the number of people affected, because those are full-time equivalent positions. In many instances more people are losing their jobs, and of course the friends, families and community members who are affected beyond the people whose positions are being removed. However, the TAFEs have absolutely no alternative given the budgets they are now left with.

I would like to add to that the estimates in the August *Campus Review* that were provided for the private sector, because there has not been much acknowledgement from the government of the impact of these budget cuts on the private sector. The Australian Council for Private Education and Training has estimated that these budget cuts are going to result in cuts of up to 4800 staff, or 2000 equivalent full-time staff. That is a result of the choices the Baillieu-Ryan government has made in terms of its ideological removal of funding for vocational education and training in favour of other areas that it considers to be of higher priority. When we add the job losses in the private sector to the TAFE job cuts, we are looking at 4000 equivalent full-time staff, many of them in regional Victoria.

It is not just the Labor Party making statements about job losses; it is the TAFE associations and the

association representing private providers. If the Liberal Party and The Nationals think that is not worth taking seriously, perhaps they might take more seriously the concerns of the Victorian Farmers Federation, which has been reported as saying:

Agriculture is facing a skills shortage yet the state government is gutting the TAFE sector ...

That is a statement from the VFF president, Peter Tuohey. Perhaps the coalition, if it does not value statements from representatives of the TAFE sector and private training providers, might take that statement more seriously.

I conclude with this statement from *Campus Review*:

Whatever way you look at it, the ultimate loser is the student who will have to undertake other ways of studying or entering into the workforce in a position that they don't desire or aren't really qualified for.

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** (Minister for Housing) — I rise today to join in the debate on this motion and to congratulate the government on its investment in northern and regional Victoria, particularly in my area of Northern Victoria Region.

This year I have represented Northern Victoria Region in the Victorian Parliament for 10 years, and I am proud to represent some of the most historic, picturesque and productive areas of Victoria. When I was first elected it was to North Eastern Province, and then with the changes to the upper house's electorates North Eastern Province was consumed by the new Northern Victoria Region. That was when areas like Bendigo became part of my responsibilities. Before the 2006 election I started working on issues here in Bendigo. Leading up to that election the sole issue in Bendigo was water. Bendigo was just weeks away from running out of water because the Labor Party had done nothing to plan for its water needs.

At that time I recognised that there was another looming issue in this town — the complete neglect of the Bendigo hospital by the Bracks and Brumby governments. In the lead-up to the 2006 election I said to now Premier Ted Baillieu, 'While Bendigo's issues may be all about water at this election, if something is not done about that hospital, the next election will be all about that'. For five years I fought for a new hospital for Bendigo.

I am pleased to say that we did drag the former government kicking and screaming to at least say it was going to invest something into a hospital for Bendigo. However, that was for a small hospital; it was not the hospital Bendigo wanted, and it certainly was not the

hospital Bendigo needed. There was no integrated cancer centre in its plan. I can tell the house that one of the proudest moments of my life was to stand beside the then Leader of the Opposition and current Premier, Ted Baillieu, and the then shadow Minister for Health, David Davis, to commit \$630 million to build the hospital Bendigo wanted and deserved, a hospital with an integrated cancer centre.

But while I was busy fighting for that new hospital to be built — and I have to say I had strong support from my colleagues Donna Petrovich and Damian Drum in fighting for that hospital — what were the two local members here in Bendigo doing? They were busy closing schools. In fact between 2000 and 2009 the former government either closed or merged 21 schools in the Loddon Mallee region. In the Hume region, which is also part of northern Victoria, 16 schools were closed or merged. Right here in Bendigo Labor had a plan to close seven schools, and it actually did close six.

The coalition has saved Eaglehawk Primary School, but under the former government we saw the last of Flora Hill Primary School and Golden Square Secondary College. Of course the Maple Street and Golden Square primary schools merged to become one school, so we have lost a school there. The former government had a plan to merge the Eaglehawk North, Eaglehawk, Comet Hill and Bendigo North primary schools into one primary school, which would have meant the loss of three primary schools. We as a government committed to save Eaglehawk, but the other three schools had committed to merge under the former government. Weroona College used to be a P-10 college, but what did the Brumby government do to that school? It phased out the primary school. There are now 6 less schools in Bendigo, at least 21 less schools in the Loddon Mallee region and 16 less in the Hume region. That is an appalling record by the former government.

Getting back to health, the Baillieu government has invested strongly in health in Northern Victoria Region. As I have already said, we have invested \$630 million in a state-of-the-art hospital here in Bendigo, a hospital with an integrated cancer centre. There is also \$10 million for the Castlemaine hospital and of course \$2 million to upgrade the ambulance station in Castlemaine. The Echuca hospital has received \$40 million. That hospital was ignored for too long by Labor. It was one of the oldest and most neglected hospitals in this state, and it has now had \$40 million invested in it, thanks to the Baillieu government.

We have committed \$22.7 million to rebuild the Charlton hospital, which was destroyed by the floods in early 2011. Kerang hospital has received \$17.9 million

for the redevelopment of its aged-care facilities; Swan Hill hospital has \$18 million; Mildura has \$5 million; Kilmore hospital has \$20 million; and Seymour has \$2 million to develop a chemotherapy service. These are big investments in health in northern Victoria, investments I am very proud of. I am proud to stand here as a member of the Baillieu government which is investing in these areas.

Of course we also have additional ambulance staff, only recently announced by the Minister for Health, coming up this way. In Wodonga we will have three new patient transport officers. We will have three more patient transport officers in Seymour, six paramedics in Shepparton, six paramedics in Alexandra, six paramedics in Wangaratta, six paramedics in Wodonga, six transport officers in Bendigo, six paramedics in Mildura, six paramedics in Woodend, six paramedics in Maryborough and six paramedics in Kyabram. These are desperately needed resources for this area, which was ignored for too long by Labor.

We are also very proud to be investing \$3 million into the art gallery redevelopment and \$3 million into the theatre and jail here in Bendigo. We successfully acquired \$12.3 million from the Rural Development Australia Fund for the theatre and jail project.

In schools we are investing where Labor failed to invest. Where Labor closed schools we are investing. We have saved Eaglehawk Primary School and committed \$2 million to it. We have funded the new Golden Square Primary School, which Labor left in the lurch after forcing a merger.

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**Hon. W. A. LOVELL** — I note that Mr Lenders was the Minister for Education who closed most of those schools here in Bendigo. In fact I remember asking him a question in Parliament about that, and he did not even know the number of schools closed. He could not even get that right.

The Baillieu government has invested \$7.5 million in the Castlemaine Secondary College, and we are committed to the redevelopment of the Bendigo Senior Secondary College as well.

In my portfolio of children and early childhood development we are working closely with the City of Greater Bendigo and other local governments in northern Victoria to ensure that we have quality programs in the area of early childhood development and quality infrastructure in the region.

We have additional police in northern Victoria, thanks to the Baillieu government. There are 16 additional police in Benalla, Mitchell and Greater Shepparton; 10 in Wangaratta and Wodonga; 15 here in greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Central Goldfields and the Macedon Ranges; and 15 in Mildura and Swan Hill. I could go on all day, but I have been tapped on the shoulder because we are trying to allow as many people as possible to speak on this motion.

I am proud to stand here as a member of the Baillieu government, which is committed to northern Victoria and regional Victoria — and committed to metropolitan Victoria, I might add. We are a government that will govern for all Victorians, unlike the former Labor government which governed for its Labor mates. Labor members would rather stand beside the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union than regional Victoria.

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — I am very pleased to rise to make some comments on this motion and to speak in support of the amendment that has been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lenders. It does not mean a lot to anybody for government members to come into the Parliament — particularly when government members are here in Bendigo, in regional Victoria — and give themselves a big pat on the back and congratulate themselves on the work they are doing. It does not mean much when one congratulates oneself. One should wait for other people to recognise one's work and its value and give other people an opportunity to offer congratulations. It does not have the same value or impact to tell everybody how terrific you think you are, what a brilliant job you have done, how quickly you are doing it, how well you are doing it and how much better you are doing it than anybody else.

Not only are government members saying they are doing a great job but they do not have any balance. They are not talking about the things that are not working well or acknowledging or recognising any criticisms, whether it be statewide issues or criticisms arising here in Bendigo. I noticed that almost all, if not all, of the government speakers, have very much concentrated on Bendigo and the areas that Bendigo as a big regional city services. A lot of people have concerns about and criticisms of what the government is doing, should be doing, has not bothered to put its mind to yet or has decided it will never do. There is none of this balance; it is just government member after government member getting up here and saying, 'Aren't we great? I want to congratulate the government on the great job it is doing'. It does not mean much when one congratulates oneself.

The constituents of Northern Victoria Region and people here in Bendigo are very unhappy with the government on a lot of issues. I am not saying they are unhappy with everything that the government is doing, but there are certainly a lot of areas where people are very unhappy. I will be supporting the amendment to the motion because it makes the motion a bit more balanced and realistic. The Leader of the Opposition has raised some of the things that people are particularly concerned about.

Before I go on to those, I will take up an issue that was raised by the previous government speaker, Ms Lovell. I cannot help myself; I have to do this. She said that when Bendigo was running out of water the then Labor government did nothing. I want to remind the minister that when Bendigo was running out of water the Labor government did something very important. I see the minister running out of the chamber now. I want to ask her: who was responsible for delivering the super-pipe? The previous Labor government did that. It was responsible for making sure that Bendigo did not run out of water. While the previous Labor government was building the super-pipe, ensuring that Bendigo did not run out of water, what was the then opposition doing?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay)** — Order! I ask Ms Darveniza to face the Chair rather than the opposition benches.

**Ms DARVENIZA** — I will. I am just trying to shield myself from the barrage and battering of babble that I am getting from the other side. If you could silence that, Acting President, that might make it easier for me to concentrate, but I take on board what you are saying.

We built the super-pipe. The Labor government ensured that Bendigo did not run out of water, that it had a secure water supply, but the then opposition was less than enthusiastic about it.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** interjected.

**Ms DARVENIZA** — In response to the interjection, I was not going to go so far as to say it opposed it, Mr Pakula; I was going to say it was less than enthusiastic about it. In fact members of the then opposition moved around Victoria, in particular northern Victoria — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay)** — Order! I draw Ms Darveniza's attention to the comment

made by the President that the acoustics in this hall are less than desirable. The more loudly a member speaks, and the more interjections there are, the more I simply hear a huge amount of noise. I ask that Ms Darveniza be allowed to continue her contribution without assistance.

**Ms DARVENIZA** — Thank you, Acting President; I appreciate that.

At a time when the then Labor government was ensuring that the super-pipe was put in place — —

**Hon. W. A. Lovell** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay)** — Order! I ask Ms Lovell to allow Ms Darveniza to finish her contribution so that we can go home at some stage tonight.

**Ms DARVENIZA** — Whilst the Labor government was ensuring water supply to Bendigo through the super-pipe — —

**Ms Broad** — And Ballarat.

**Ms DARVENIZA** — I take up that interjection by Ms Broad — and Ballarat. It was the then opposition that was not being supportive of it. In fact opposition members were going around northern Victoria in particular and other parts of the state scaremongering about what the super-pipe would mean for the rest of the state's water supply.

It has to be remembered that this was at a time when we were experiencing the worst drought in living memory, and people were very worried about water security and their ongoing water supply. We were doing the right thing by ensuring water supply. I do not remember Ms Lovell ever commending the Labor government or saying what a good job it did to ensure that water supply so that Bendigo did not run dry.

I will raise a couple of other points. There are issues that people are very concerned about and I think the government should look at them very carefully before its members come in here with a motion like this that just pats them on the back — things like the \$290 million cut to TAFE, the \$12 million a year cut to the Victorian certificate of applied learning and the loss of jobs associated with those cuts. Then there is the difficulty that presents for young people and for people who have lost their jobs and who need retraining in being able to get training and get the skills they need to take up the skilled jobs that are here in the region. There is the \$3.3 million for additional kindergarten and inclusion support service placements, the

\$9.4 million for free financial and counselling services, the School Start bonus and funding for home and community care services. All of these issues — —

**Hon. W. A. Lovell** — On a point of order, Acting President, I cannot let it be said that there was any cut in funding to kindergarten inclusion support places, because we actually funded an additional 246 places at a cost of \$10 million.

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay)** — Order! That is not a point of order. I remind Mr Lenders that I can make that judgement without his support.

**Ms DARVENIZA** — There is also the axing of jobs in the public sector and the removal of the first home owner bonus and the school component of the education maintenance allowance. There are all of these issues and more that people are not congratulating the government on. These are issues about which people are being very critical of the government. They are aware of the impact this is having not only on the services they are able to deliver but also what it means to their ability to run their households and manage their work and training prospects.

A range of promises that were made have been broken, such as making our teachers the best paid in Australia. I wanted to bring up another issue. I will only bring this up briefly, but I do want to bring it up because I noticed that in question time today Minister Lovell was asked a Dorothy Dixier about homelessness. I note that she did not mention in her answer the fact that there are going to be cuts to the social housing advocacy and support program. This is a very important program and that is going to impact greatly on homelessness. A 30 per cent funding cut this year and a further 10 per cent cut next year is going to reduce the availability of much-needed support resources. It will in fact increase the rate of homelessness in this state.

I will leave my contribution there. I certainly think the amendment to this motion should be supported. This is a motion that is simply about the government coming in and congratulating itself. It has no balance at all, and I think the amendment injects a bit of realism into the motion.

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — I am very pleased to be here today in Bendigo, in northern Victoria, and to talk about this motion. I think it is very important and that we need to look at the positive things that are happening in this region and the work that has been done by the Baillieu government to support these

great communities. Given some of the diatribe just spoken I would have to say members opposite are almost amnesiac. They talked about building a super-pipe and said they should be proud of that action when a community of this size — 100 000 people — was nearly out of water. When you are the government it is your responsibility to provide water for a community, but Labor did not even understand that there was a drought. It was a disgrace. I would not be too proud of that.

I can tell the house that I am very proud to be part of this government, and I would have to say that we are delivering. We are delivering for northern Victoria. We have made a range of commitments to hospitals, secondary colleges and schools. In two years we have done a lot, as opposed to Labor's 11 years of neglect and mismanagement when nothing was on time and nothing was on budget.

Look at the \$10 million contribution to upgrade the Castlemaine hospital, \$7 million to Castlemaine Secondary College, \$5 million to construct a new administration and learning centre at Golden Square Primary School — a school that I attended, and I am very pleased to see that work being done because not much has been done since I was there — and \$7.1 million to build rural overtaking lanes on a number of roads including Melbourne-Lancefield Road. After 11 miserable years of Labor when there were multiple deaths and multiple accidents on that road we are constructing those lanes at the moment.

There is \$3.5 million to provide an indoor stadium and performing arts centre for the joint use of the community and the school at Gisborne Secondary College and \$250 000 for a feasibility study into the need for additional secondary education provision in the Romsey area. It is about planning for the future, it is about working with those communities and having a vision.

Residents in northern Victoria will also benefit from statewide investments around agriculture and the capacity of this government to assist the grain industry with \$10.58 million to accelerate innovation and boost productivity and profitability. There is \$14.3 million to boost the productivity and profitability of the Victorian dairy industry; \$8.94 million to boost productivity and profitability in Victoria's red meat industry; \$8.11 million to secure a long-term future for Victorian horticulture; and \$19.5 million for biosecurity programs.

I come now to major projects and the Bendigo hospital. It is a project that has been talked down by two local

Labor members, but it is one that we have committed to. It is a \$630 million project, and Bendigo has been short-changed by its two local Labor members, who have done nothing but talk this project down. This is the largest health project in country Victoria. It includes a pre-election commitment of an additional \$102 million above that promised by the previous government, and we are still arguing about it — get over it. The project is being delivered as a public-private partnership. Expressions of interest are due by 1 November 2012. I am very proud of that —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mrs PETROVICH** — You are still rolling around in the minutiae while we are building the largest country hospital development here in Bendigo. You are here in Bendigo and you are still talking it down.

This project is going to be a great benefit not only for Bendigo but also for the whole rural Northern Victoria Region. The catchment area will benefit from that, and it will be a great support to all those other hospitals in the region. Talking about hospitals, there is Echuca hospital which was neglected by the previous government. It was one of the worst hospitals I have ever been into. The rebuild is happening there, Kerang is happening and Swan Hill is happening; those are some really good things.

I do not want to talk Victoria down because I think it is very important to be positive. When you look at what is going on at the moment in Melbourne, it is disappointing to see what is happening with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union conducting an illegal activity, an illegal boycott of a Myer development in Melbourne. It is something that is very difficult when we look at the sort of economic climate we are working in. We do not need to talk down the state of Victoria. We need to build business confidence. We need to support businesses. That illegal action and blockade of the Grocon site has been a disgraceful display of not only thuggery but also animal cruelty when we saw those involved punching horses last week. It is not a great recommendation to stop law-abiding citizens in the state of Victoria from attending their workplace.

Let us stop talking down the state of Victoria. We need to support our community, we need to support the economy, we need to support the infrastructure developments that are happening in northern Victoria and Bendigo. Stop talking it down.

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Many people when they have joined this debate have said they are very pleased to do so. I am not so pleased. It has been a very long day. This is the sort of motion that may be appropriate for the Bendigo backslappers convention, but it is not appropriate, in my view, for the Parliament of Victoria. Parliament has come to the regional splendour that is Bendigo and has spent all its time seeing government members get up, one after another, to congratulate each other on projects in the state of Victoria that have not yet been completed — projects that have barely started during this government's term. Those opposite are congratulating themselves on delivering for this community.

This morning I started the day by having a look at the *Bendigo Advertiser*. What did it talk about today? It talked about the TAFE cuts that this community is concerned about. It talked about the cuts that have occurred to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) budget. It talked about the fact that mental health services are falling behind and not delivering the responsiveness that this community deserves and demands. It talked about the superannuation problems that are being confronted by the council and that the mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, on the floor of the Parliament this morning, referred to as a primary concern for his community and illustrative of how difficult it is to satisfy the infrastructure and service delivery needs of this community.

All those issues are contemporary and are what the people of this community are mindful of today. They are not concerned about issues from prior to the last election, nor are they anticipating a big hospital that may be built by the end of the second term of the Baillieu government. That is not the time frame they are thinking about. They are thinking about the service delivery needs of the community today.

Government members, one by one, and particularly Mr Drum, took credit for a lot of projects that have barely been started during their period of responsibility. Mr Drum talked about them as if they have been completed and are delivering better outcomes for the community today. However, that is not the experience of this community. Today this community is experiencing the devastation of service delivery reductions that have occurred during the life of the Baillieu government.

In question time today the Minister for Higher Education and Skills referred to the growth in the number of placements within the TAFE system. The reason he did it today is that in the months and years to come he will not be talking about an increase, because a

decrease will occur from this budget forward. The reduction in the number of placements will be profound. The changes to cost structures, the imposition on TAFE students and the limitations on their opportunities as a result of the reduction in funding provided by the Baillieu government will be profound.

This community will be confronted with risk because of the cuts that have been imposed on the CFA. These cuts, in addition to the cuts that have been imposed on the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries, will mean that the decrease in support that regional communities receive across this fantastic, vital part of Victoria will increase the pressures of community life and dampen economic activity. What has this government done in light of those pressures in terms of mental health services? It has removed the advisory support line for mental health services across this region. It has failed to deliver for communities that rely on Bendigo Health to provide services to this region. Swan Hill, for instance, has major issues with young people experiencing mental health problems and engaging in self-harm. This government has not responded by providing support.

This health minister relies on the sum of \$630 million for his hospital, the new Bendigo hospital. In two years this minister has not delivered one brick. Not one brick has been laid in relation to this hospital. The reason this is a contested issue between Labor and the coalition is that two years have been lost talking up \$630 million instead of delivering a hospital. The minister knows this hospital will not be delivered within his shelf life as the Minister for Health. He is relying on the Baillieu government having two terms to deliver this hospital instead of providing the opportunity for this community to have a hospital built during the life of this Parliament. That opportunity is going to be denied to the people of Bendigo, thanks to the absolute inertia of the Baillieu government.

Today this government released new numberplates, and what is the slogan on the numberplates? 'Stay alert stay alive'. It has taken this government two years to recognise that. Why has the Premier responded to this imperative today? Because every time there is a coalition party room meeting the Premier hears his backbenchers saying, 'Premier, please stay alert; let us stay alive!'.

This is the thing the Minister for Health is most proud of today. He has delivered to the Parliament today a great motion that recognises the significance of gold to this community and this state. What a revelation that has been! What a breakthrough in thinking! Anybody who has respect for and knowledge of the history of the

state of Victoria recognises the significance of gold. If members of this government have taken two years to get around to recognising that as a first-order issue for the Parliament of Victoria, they have been deluding themselves for two years, and they have every reason to stay alert, because they will not stay alive as a government. The longer they spend congratulating themselves on things that have not been achieved rather than delivering to the people of Victoria, the greater the possibility that they will stay alive as a government for only one term. Their challenge and responsibility is to deliver better outcomes to this region and the people of Victoria, and at the moment this government is failing this community badly.

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — It is with great pleasure that I contribute to the debate on this motion. Members of the opposition seem to have forgotten what the words of the motion are, so I remind the house that the motion is that this house 'notes the strong support provided to Bendigo and Northern Victoria Region by the Baillieu government'. The motion is about Bendigo and Northern Victoria Region, and in the time available to me that is what I would like to make my contribution on.

We need to remember that our forefathers and mothers left us a significant legacy in relation to the regional city of Bendigo — this building being a fine example, as are other parts of the city. The courthouse and the art gallery will be upgraded by this government, and they are a defining legacy. The thing about buildings is that they are also legacies for the future. In relation to future town planning in Bendigo, this government's primary directive is not to practise the top-down decision-making process of the previous government but to listen to the people of Bendigo and other regional cities, including those I represent in Western Victoria Region.

I commend the speeches made by my colleagues Mr Drum, Mrs Petrovich and Ms Lovell, along with those made by other speakers who talked about all the significant financial and project commitments that have been made. In addition, commitments have been made in relation to the relocation of the True Foods factory to Maryborough at a cost of about \$1.5 million, delivering jobs for 83 people, so there are now 144 people on site in that important town just around the corner from here.

I would like to talk about other changes that the government has delivered by way of zoning reform proposals, which are up for consideration until 12 September, and we will continue to listen to the people of Bendigo in relation to those changes. In response to Mr Lenders's contribution, some of the

important things we need to do are cut red tape, restore the respect of our agricultural communities so that they can get on with what they know best and restore decision making to local communities. The zoning reforms announced by the Minister for Planning, who is a former employee of the Victorian Farmers Federation — and the coalition government is blessed with three former presidents of the VFF, including you, Acting President — have been considered by the VFF, and indeed — —

**Mr Lenders** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — Mr Lenders might want to listen to the response of the VFF to these very important reforms. In a media release the VFF reports its president, Peter Tuohey, as having said:

One of the most consistent messages from our farmers is that it's been getting harder and harder to just farm, because of all the red tape from local councils and government ...

...

We applaud the government's proposed planning reforms, which strengthen the right to farm and remove many unnecessary and time-consuming permit requirements for agricultural businesses.

These are his final words:

The proposed reforms demonstrate what can be achieved when the government listens to the voice of farmers.

The Nationals are proud to have held this year's state conference in this hall. We listened, as we have time and again, to the voices of farmers in order to take their views to the Parliament in Melbourne, where it sits most often. On this splendid occasion we are able to take the ears of Parliament to the people of Bendigo, who have provided great support for this session.

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I hear Mr Barber's interjection in relation to wind farms, and I cannot resist the temptation to take it up, because that is an example of how the Greens, in their urban-based electorates, will not listen to the voices of farmers and accuse them of not considering the issues very carefully. What we have done under this planning minister is restore local decision making to communities so that the divisions imposed on them by the previous government could be resolved.

Our vision for Bendigo is clear. It is a vision of the citizens, as our vision is across all our regional cities. Last week we announced \$300 000 for the regional cities of Victoria to better articulate their visions as part of a long-term strategy for the next 100 years.

We have talked about the glory of this city in the past, and its glory as a city is going to continue in relation to its achievements and ambitions. The people of Bendigo have been listened to by this government time and again. We will not always get things right, but we will respect local wishes, we will respect our agricultural communities and we will support mining and balanced decision making.

**Mr SCHEFFER** (Eastern Victoria) — I guess the first thing to note about this motion, as has been said a number of times before by those on this side of the house and also by Mr Barber in his contribution, is how breathlessly self-serving and self-congratulatory it is. Mr Davis, as Leader of the House, has moved a motion that is nothing more than a vehicle to enable him and those opposite to reel off many lists of numbers and run through many funding allocations. Very few, if any, members opposite have referred to completed projects, which for the most part are what any government is expected to deliver.

The test of a government is not whether it can manage day-to-day affairs; a good public service can do that. The test of a good government is whether it has a vision for the next generation. So when we think about what the Baillieu government has done for regional Victoria, for major regional cities such as Bendigo and for Northern Victoria Region, we ask what the government aims to do that will make life better socially, economically and environmentally. We need to test this government's vision, to ask ourselves whether any of us even know what it is that this government wants to achieve and what it believes its legacy will be when its time has passed. What are its aspirations for the environment, for health, education, transport, community safety and employment, and for justice and fairness?

We also need to ask ourselves what this government is doing to realise its vision. Is it investing in education or winding it down? Is it investing in health or winding it down? Is it investing in transport services, does it have a long-term jobs plan and is it making sure that our productive land is nourished and our forests and biodiversity are protected? It is the answers to these questions that tell us whether or not this government measures up to its grand estimation of itself.

Mr Lenders's amendment, which of course I support, asks the house to note that the government's budget cuts have impacted negatively on the TAFE system; the housing sector, due to the scrapped first home buyers scheme; and regional jobs and services, with the sacking of 4200 public servants and the cutting of 400 jobs from the Department of Sustainability and

Environment and 200 jobs from the Department of Primary Industries. These are just three Baillieu government actions that have severely and negatively impacted on the whole state and on regional Victoria in particular.

The Baillieu government's 2012 state budget cut nearly \$300 million from the TAFE sector, on top of the \$100 million cut in the 2011 budget. As we all know, the results are having a devastating impact on staff and students and on the viability of many courses. Of the 2000 staff expected to lose their jobs, approximately 600 will be lost from regional Victoria and I think around 100 in Bendigo, where some 39 courses will be axed in business management, finance, graphic design, visual arts, hospitality and retail. We cannot afford it. The hundreds of millions of dollars taken out of the TAFE sector will affect the heart of the Bendigo community and that of communities right across northern Victoria. It is very clear that the government has made a major blunder in relation to the TAFE sector, and its obsession with contracting the budget has put investing in our future at risk.

Mr Lenders's amendment also refers to the Baillieu government's abandonment of the first home buyer bonus, which the former Labor government introduced. Let us remember that this bonus gave all first home buyers up to \$13 000 in rebates and an additional \$6500 to those living in regional Victoria, provided that the house was in a regional area and the property was valued at less than \$600 000. The scrapping of this bonus means that first home buyers in regional Victoria now need to find \$19 500 that they did not need to find before the May state budget. The purpose of the bonus was not simply to provide a benefit to first home buyers; it was also an economic stimulus to the housing construction industry and hence to the wider economy. The first home buyer bonus was a job creator, and the Baillieu government, in its relentless and disproportionate ideological drive to save money in the short term, axed the program at the very time that it should have put in place expansionary measures.

If there was one thing that the previous Labor government was focused on, it was job creation. We maintained that focus right through the global financial crisis, which was the worst economic downturn this country had seen since the Great Depression in the 1930s. Year after year Labor in government saw to it that Victoria led all states in job creation. At times under Labor this state created more new jobs than the rest of the Australian states put together, and we returned surpluses every year we were in government. The contrast with the Baillieu government could not be greater.

Liberal-Nationals governments are all of a kind. We saw it in the slash and burn of the Kennett years that laid waste to regional Victoria, and we now see it in the Baillieu government and hear it in the appalling utterances of federal opposition leader, Tony Abbott. If the slashing of 4200 public sector jobs were not bad enough, we now have confirmation that this is just the beginning. The leaked Vertigan report is a shocker, foreshadowing massive budget cuts and a wholesale sell-off of public services that will send shock waves right through this community.

All the lists and figures we have heard about this afternoon do not amount to the strong support for programs across Bendigo and northern Victoria that the government so proudly trumpets. The reality is that this government is presiding over a massive local downturn in terms of services and investment for the future of this city and this region.

**Mr P. DAVIS** (Eastern Victoria) — I rise to make some comments in relation to the motion before the house, which reads:

That this house notes the strong support provided to Bendigo and the Northern Victoria Region by the Baillieu government.

In so doing I need to remark on the amendment moved by Mr Lenders. It appears to me that the proposed amendment is so inconsistent with the principal motion that, with great respect to the Chair, it should not have been allowed. I am quite happy for the house to debate matters around government policy at any time; indeed it is important that the administrative, policy and financial stewardship of the state be tested in the Parliament by the opposition. However, to do so in debate on a motion of this nature, which is about northern Victoria and in particular Bendigo, seems entirely inconsistent. The opposition is trying to intersperse general debate on a number of policy areas that are inconsistent, in my view, with the principal purpose of the motion. Therefore I reject the amendment absolutely. I will allow the presiding officers — the President and his various assistants — to ponder that remark and perhaps take some further advice on it.

In any event, I will make some introductory remarks in a general sense about Bendigo, because I am delighted to be back here. I have been a regular visitor to Bendigo over the last couple of decades because of my various responsibilities, in particular in the resources portfolio. I have to say that this is a reflection of the fact that the resources sector, in particular gold, has been critical to the history and evolution of the community of Bendigo.

I will not recap the debate we heard earlier today about the minerals emblem for Victoria and how significant

gold is in that respect, in particular to Bendigo. However, we note that Bendigo's goldfields remain the second-highest-producing goldfields in Australia and the seventh-largest in the history of world gold production. It is remarkable, given the limited duration and non-contemporary production of gold, that that should remain the case, and it just goes to show what an amazing contribution gold has made to the economic wellbeing of this region.

We have to some extent covered this ground — and I will lead into more substantive or particular comments in a moment — but it is useful to remind ourselves that the initial Bendigo gold rush in 1851 was followed in May 1852 by an even bigger gold rush which attracted more than 6000 diggers each week to the district. The Bendigo goldfields had their most productive year in 1853. By the 1880s Bendigo was by some accounts the richest city in the world due to its gold production, which is reflected in the magnificent architecture in this city. It is a pleasure to visit Bendigo if for no other reason than to see the legacy of that time. We often pride ourselves, when reflecting on the Parliament of Victoria and its associated buildings constructed in Melbourne during the same era, on the contribution of gold to the prosperity of the emerging colony, but it is in Bendigo where we can still substantially see that history.

We attended a wonderful reception last night hosted by the City of Greater Bendigo at the Bendigo Art Gallery, which was constructed in the 1880s, as was this magnificent building — this town hall and this chamber — which is inspiring on one level and awesome on another. It is beyond comprehension that today's builders, architects, public financiers and those who sit on the front bench of government would allocate resources to support the magnificence and splendour of the style of buildings that we see as a remnant of that history.

That leads me to my substantive point, which is to talk about preserving some of the heritage. It is important that we attempt to do so, because it is not just for the aesthetic pleasure but also to remind ourselves and future generations of the significance of where we have come from. For more than 40 years the Bendigo Trust has been one of the most important heritage and tourism preservation organisations. It operates and manages Bendigo Tramways, the tramways depot, which has been recently expanded; Central Deborah Gold Mine; the Bendigo Discovery Science and Technology Centre; the Chinese Joss House temple; the old Bendigo Gasworks; and the Victoria Hill diggings.

It is clear that the coalition state government has been strongly supporting the trust in its work by honouring its 2010 election commitment of providing \$50 000 a year to Bendigo's Discovery Science and Technology Centre to enable schoolchildren to access a similar experience as some schoolchildren from the bush have experienced by going to Melbourne to visit Scienceworks. That is a great initiative, and it is important to note that the investment of some \$300 000 by the state government in association with \$140 000 from the local community through the council to install deep-well pumps to enable the de-watering of the mine as a result of the closure of the gold production operations of Unity Mining in Bendigo has been critical to preserving access to that great tourism initiative.

The other aspect of the trust's work that I wish to refer to is the \$8 million which has been set aside by the coalition government in this term to support the trust to carry out work in relation to restoring W-class trams. These trams will be incorporated into the city circle and other tourism tram routes in Melbourne, but there may also be opportunities for them to be utilised in Bendigo. However, it is great to see a regional workshop being supported by an initiative which inevitably depends on the skill and expertise of people who have a keen interest and professional understanding of the heritage values and traditions relating to those aspects of our community life which we so greatly honour.

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — I will start by saying that we have here today a motion that has been moved by the government, seconded by the government, supported by the government and is essentially a pat on the back for the government. It has tied up this house for some hours today. One would have thought, particularly given that this is a regional sitting, there would have been an attempt by the government to act in a more bipartisan way. It is an opportunity to put its best foot forward and shine in the community.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms TIERNEY** — Judging by that level of interjection, you clearly are not shining in this community. No, you have chosen not to shine, and you have decided to move this motion which is so bereft that Labor had to move an amendment to it to provide a reality check on the issues that confront regional communities.

In turning to the amendment, many previous speakers on the Labor side have gone into detail about issues specific to Bendigo, particularly health provision issues in the area. It is evident that there are two realities, and I

know which reality I identify with — that is, the reality that does not wear a blindfold. I did not wear a blindfold at 1 o'clock today when we walked down to the luncheon that was provided and found a TAFE rally had been organised by TAFE4All. There were teachers and students who live in this community and are very angry about the funding cuts to the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE and the associated job cuts. Again, clearly the government just does not want to listen.

I want to talk about the aspect of Labor's amendment that goes to the issue of regional jobs and services. One does not have to go very far; one need only pick up a copy of yesterday's *Weekly Times* editorial, which went through a range of problems that this government is facing. The heading of the editorial is 'Frontline jobs will face cuts'. The editorial says:

Employees who thought their jobs were safe are now faced with the prospect that they might be on the chopping block as the government seeks to reach its target of 200 redundancies at DPI and 400 at the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The cuts come on top of office closures and staff relocations in some of the most remote parts of Victoria and rumours of another 120 jobs to go from Parks Victoria.

The decision devalues the vital role DPI and DSE staff play in rural and regional Victoria.

I have seen further media headings that say 'Axe fear for "front-line" staff' and 'Hundreds face the axe — safe jobs a front', which was a front-page heading. Then we have the situation where the government has announced a further 4200 public sector job cuts that are obviously going to affect this region as well as other regions. This government has also completely changed the role of Regional Development Victoria, and instead of having a dedicated job creation component, it has abolished that section of the department, which worked so well in attracting investment and jobs into Victoria under the Bracks and Brumby governments.

Not only that; we have also seen cuts to services in regional Victoria. Regional bus services have been cut. The \$10 000 first farm grant program has been cut by this government. We have seen cuts to rural midwife consultants. We have seen cuts to the Transport Connections program that many people in our regional communities are reliant upon, such as those who are elderly and young people who want to access education and medical services; they just cannot do that anymore — all because they do not have a car or a drivers licence. In rural communities people are particularly reliant on being able to get to their regional centres, such as Bendigo, and that is just not happening anymore.

There has also been a significant reduction in funds for the food bank, and all members know that there are many people in regional Victoria who regularly use the food bank program for backup. We have also seen the shutdown of the 24-hour mental health advice line. Because it was a telephone service, rural and regional Victorians relied heavily on it. It was absolutely critical. We have seen the scrapping of the road safety experience centre, and let us not forget the increase in V/Line fares of 8.6 per cent with no service improvements. We have seen a school bus subsidy stripped, and we have also seen the scrapping of the Take a Break program, which has really been hurting rural and regional Victorians. We have had the cutting of 200 teaching and learning coaches, 45 literacy experts and 15 specialists helping Koori students. We are seeing the scrapping of the first home buyer's program and cuts to the home and community care funding as well.

I mention all this because the fact is that this government has gone out of its way to cut services to rural and regional Victoria, and what I have just listed is the reality of what is missing from the government's motion before the chamber this afternoon.

I also suggest that this government start listening to what people are saying, not just at TAFE or teachers rallies but also in conversation and in articles in publications like the *Weekly Times*. It should listen to what people in councils are saying, including the Bendigo mayor, who made comments today about the outrageous cost-shifting that this government has been imposing on rural communities. This cost-shifting means essentially that councils cannot provide the services they would normally provide to their local communities.

My contribution this afternoon aims to more fully illustrate the story of what is happening here in rural and regional Victoria so that the community is not hoodwinked into believing everything is hunky-dory in regional Victoria — it simply is not. The last thing we need is for rural and regional Victoria to go back to being described and treated as the toenails of Victoria, which is the status it got when it had under the previous Kennett government. I implore members of this chamber to support Labor's amendment, get a reality check and vote against this motion.

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — I am amazed every time I sit in this chamber to hear those union members from the city telling us what we should hear or have not heard in rural and regional Victoria. It makes a mockery of the representation they are supposed to provide. Much has been said about the

investment in Bendigo and northern Victoria, and I do not wish to reiterate what my parliamentary colleagues, particularly the Minister for Housing, Donna Petrovich and Damian Drum, have said. Local members have gone through in detail the significant local investments made by the Baillieu government. I will leave the house with 2 minutes worth of my thoughts.

The real issue in regional Victoria is the legacy the Labor government left us — the \$52 billion liability, the \$16 billion debt and the \$4.72 million interest per day. That was the legacy Labor left us. This government needs to respond to that in a whole lot of ways to increase productivity and reduce costs. Today we have heard a lot from the other side about cuts, but unfortunately Labor has been guilty of creating a false and unsustainable environment for the Victorian community. It unfairly raised expectations, shovelled out money that was not there, made promises that were not unaffordable and led Victorians down the financial garden path.

**Ms Tierney** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — The cruellest thing the former government did, Ms Tierney, was to put us in a position where we are having to culturally adjust to being a more productive and self-reliant community. That is Labor's legacy.

In closing, the Baillieu government is fully committed through the Regional Growth Fund, the regional rail link, the natural gas extension and a whole lot of other issues that have been raised to supporting investment in Victoria.

**Mr VINEY** (Eastern Victoria) — Very quickly, I am happy to talk on a motion that proposes self-congratulations to the government, but it is important that I respond to the history revision taking place and Mr Ramsay's reference to Labor's financial management. Let me put it in these terms: the Labor government had 11 years of AAA credit ratings, budget surpluses and — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr VINEY** — Was Mr Stockdale responsible for the 11 years of budget surpluses and AAA credit ratings and the 11 years of economic and employment growth? That record contrasts with what the Baillieu government has managed to do in just two years. In its first two budgets it has maintained the credit rating but has doubled state debt. We have seen employment crash in this state, particularly in regional Victoria. Using a congratulatory motion, as the government is doing on this occasion, to try to trash the record of the

previous government is a joke. It is a joke to use Labor's record in an attempt to rewrite history and then to say, 'That is the reason we have to do all the terrible things we are now doing to Victoria, like the TAFE cuts and slashing the Country Fire Authority budget'. Where was that promised by the Baillieu opposition at the last election? It is like breaking its promise to make our teachers the best paid in the country.

The Baillieu government's record is on test, not the former Labor government's record. The people of Victoria made a decision about the previous government at the last election, and the opposition has accepted that result. It seems to be the government that is obsessed with trying to re prosecute that case. What we say is, 'After two years start talking about what you are delivering and start talking about what you have done', because so far all we have heard is a range of promises about what the government will do or plans it intends to undertake. We have not yet seen any significant projects.

Mr David Davis used question time today to talk about how his Bendigo hospital will be bigger than ours, but the fact is the hospital is not yet built and has not even gone to tender. Talking about \$630 million before the tender has even been put out is a little rich; it is merely an estimate of what he thinks his project might cost. The proof will be seen when it happens. The cost will almost inevitably blow out, and the reason we can be confident of that is that Mr Davis and the government are demonstrating they cannot be trusted with the finances of this state. They have doubled the debt. It is all very well for the government to be attacking the opposition again today on the record of the previous government, but we have accepted the election result. Government members are the ones who do not accept it. The government members, extraordinarily, are the ones who are still wanting to prosecute that case.

Mr Davis's behaviour in question time today, when he lost his cool about his own hospital project, was a demonstration that he has not made the transition from opposition to government. He has failed to make that transition. He does not show the proper dignity of office that a minister of the Crown should have. He has failed to demonstrate that he understands that being in government is about delivering for the people of Victoria and about actually delivering on projects, and it is not about making promises to undertake a plan to determine what you might do, because that is exactly where this government is at.

When looking at the things the government has done that it wants to congratulate itself on we on this side would be happy to talk about things the government has

done. I refer to things like the jobs crisis in Victoria, which is hitting regional Victoria particularly, and the fact that Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that unemployment has gone up from 4.7 per cent to 5.1 per cent.

I know that in Gippsland in my own region more than 15 800 jobs have been lost since the Baillieu government was elected — that is, 20 jobs per day have been lost in my region. That has been replicated across every region in this state, including this region. It is being replicated across the state by things like the TAFE cuts and it is being replicated in this region by losses in public sector jobs. The estimated job losses at TAFE institutes across the state will be in excess of 1500 and probably closer to 2000, and we know that the people of Bendigo will pay part of that price. We know that the proposals to merge all the education regions in Victoria will cost jobs, estimated to be in the order of 900. They will hit every region, including this region.

The only concrete proposal that we know this government is undertaking is an investigation into the mythical big cat. That is where this government's priorities are. We say that instead of making promises and using the time of this Parliament in Bendigo to run a self-congratulatory motion about what a fantastic job it is doing, it might be time for the government to actually start to deliver on the things it has undertaken to do in this state. One of the most important things it can do for the people of Victoria is to give people jobs. What we are seeing in this state are cuts across the public sector, including the education sector, and job losses across industry, particularly in areas such as manufacturing in Victoria. This is a government that is stuck, a government of inertia and a government that can only make promises to undertake a plan. We say that this is not a time for self-congratulations, it is a time for action.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** (Minister for Planning) — Mr Viney is a good debater, but I do not reckon that shirt does him justice! I do not want to get into a long debate on this motion apart from saying that I am very supportive of it, quite obviously — —

**Mr Viney** interjected.

**Hon. M. J. GUY** — Mine is just a plain white shirt, Mr Viney! I just want to make a number of points in response to a number of comments I have picked up through the debate. A number of people on the opposition side have commented that we should listen to what councils are saying and we should be asking the Labor Party how it can in many ways be a part of

assisting regional Victoria's growth. In my contribution I will mention a couple of ways that I believe Labor, as well as the Greens, can help to see areas like Bendigo, Northern Victorian Region and indeed country Victoria thrive into the future.

Very clearly, as Mr O'Brien said, one of those key ways is the government's planning zone policy changes. Some of our policy changes in planning zones are a result of direct consultation with local governments in this region, in particular the Loddon Shire Council, which I met with some months ago. It asked for direct changes, such as the abolition of ministerial direction no. 6 to encourage population retention and growth in and around Wedderburn, which this government has done. It is not about patting the government on the back; it is about inviting the Labor Party and the Greens to come on board for major policy changes through planning zone reviews such as this one, which gave that council, at its request, the ability to retain population in areas that had not been farmed for some decades. I actually say to the opposition, 'Come on board and be a part of those changes. Stop opposing them. Be a part of those changes that Loddon Shire Council has requested of us directly so that we can see population retention in regional Victoria'.

Turning to areas outside Northern Victoria Region, as you might have realised, Acting President, I have raised in the house a number of times my visit to the shire of West Wimmera. The West Wimmera Shire Council had overlooked requirements in its planning scheme that would have thrown one family in particular off its farm because it was conducting what is, even today, a prohibited use in the planning system — that is, running a farm machinery repair business on its property, which was its only source of income through 14 tough climatic years. That is a prohibited use under the current farming zone provisions. At the request of that shire this government is seeking to make those changes, and we are being opposed by the Labor Party — and by the Greens, I might add. We are being opposed. Rather than coming in here and patting ourselves on the back, what we are doing is asking the opposition not to oppose those changes. As Ms Tierney came in here and said, 'Listen to what councils are saying'.

I say to the opposition and to members of this chamber that we are listening to what councils are saying. We have listened to Loddon Shire Council, and we are making changes and suggesting more. We have listened to the West Wimmera Shire Council, and we are trying to make the changes it requested. We have listened to the Hindmarsh Shire Council, in your electorate, Acting President O'Brien. Hindmarsh Shire Council is asking

for greater land supply around the town of Nhill. Luv-a-Duck is a great employer, as Mr Dalla-Riva knows, in the township of Nhill. Housing supply is being constrained in that township due to restrictive planning laws put in place by the previous government that the Hindmarsh Shire Council cannot get around. It has asked this government to change those laws, and we have put forward a package to do that.

I ask the opposition to come on board with that suggested change, to come on board with the changes that have been put forward by councils, by Rural Councils Victoria, by the Victorian Farmers Federation and, in these instances, by the Loddon, the West Wimmera and the Hindmarsh shire councils.

It is not about patting anyone on the back. It is about, as Ms Tierney said, listening to what councils are saying — and we are. That is the genesis of the rural zones planning changes put forward by this government and viciously opposed by the Labor opposition. I simply say that opposition members need to come to their senses and listen to councils themselves — councils that do not have tram tracks in their municipalities, actual councils that exist beyond regional centres in country Victoria, councils that are seeking changes which are common sense and councils that the Baillieu government has listened to and is listening to. We are putting forward sensible changes to retain business and population growth into the future.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** (Minister for Health) — I will be brief in reply. I want to thank all members for their contributions. This has been a wide-ranging debate. It is not a self-congratulatory motion, as the opposition sought to indicate. It is a general motion pointing to the strengths of what the government is doing but at the same time pointing very directly to the deficiencies of what the now opposition did when it was in government.

I make the point very clearly that Victoria is in a strong financial position. We are cleaning up the mess left by the last government, the failed Bracks and Brumby governments. Money and resources are now going into country Victoria, including northern Victoria and Bendigo. Former government members, now in opposition, are very sensitive on a number of these points because they know they failed. The emblematic example in Bendigo is the hospital. I know the opposition hates it when I mention the \$630 million Bendigo hospital.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** — We actually couldn't give a rat's, mate.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — You actually could. You hate it. Opposition members hate the fact that they advocated for the smaller hospital, not the bigger one, and that the bigger one is being delivered. Today I opened four ambulance stations in Bendigo — four ambulance stations that have been built, are operating and are part of the \$630 million project.

**Mr Leane** interjected.

**Hon. D. M. DAVIS** — These are built, Mr Leane, and they were opened today. The people of Bendigo are benefiting from them. This is part of the delivery by this government. I urge members to vote for the motion and against the amendment.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr David Davis, the Leader of the Government, moved notice of motion 413 standing in his name; Mr Lenders subsequently moved an amendment to insert certain words at the end of the motion. Mr Philip Davis, by way of debate, invited my consideration as to whether the amendment was outside the scope of the motion. It is my view that it is not. It was open to other members to move a further amendment to the motion to include other matters if they wished to do so. My view is that whilst the amendment changes the substantive motion, which of course is its purpose, it is not outside the scope of the motion.

#### House divided on amendment:

##### *Ayes, 19*

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 ( <i>Teller</i> )	Tarlamis, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Tee, Mr
Leane, Mr	Tierney, Ms
Lenders, Mr	Viney, Mr
Mikakos, Ms	

##### *Noes, 21*

Atkinson, Mr	Koch, Mr
Coote, Mrs	Kronberg, Mrs
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	Petrovich, Mrs
Elsbury, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Finn, Mr	Ramsay, Mr ( <i>Teller</i> )
Guy, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Hall, Mr	

**Amendment negatived.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
BILL 2012***Second reading***Debate resumed from 30 August; motion of  
Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Assistant Treasurer).****Opposition amendment circulated by  
Hon. M. P. PAKULA pursuant to standing orders.**

**Hon. M. P. PAKULA** (Western Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 — to finally get onto some legislation — and to indicate that the opposition will not oppose the bill but will seek to amend it. The key provision in the bill is about progress, about how things that were once considered not to be appropriate can, with the effluxion of time, become more supportable.

The matter of which I speak is the question of whether bookmakers are entitled to have premises at locations other than racecourses. It was the view of the previous government, and also the view of the coalition opposition at the time, that bookmakers' offices should be within racecourse premises. That was for some very good reasons to do with the integrity of the product in terms of the ability of race stewards to continue to have oversight of bookmakers. However, the presence of bookmakers on racecourses on race day was also an important part of the reasoning behind bookmakers being required to have their premises oncourse.

In the years since that legislation was brought in there has been a sea change in the betting landscape. Probably one of the matters that antigambling crusaders might miss, particularly those who have their focus on electronic gaming machines, is the massive rise in sports betting, corporate bookmaking, online gambling and the like. It is the fastest growing area of gambling — that is, wagering with corporate bookmakers. There are now a number of corporate bookmakers competing with the traditional oncourse bookmakers, whether they be Sportsbet, Centrebet, Unibet or any other corporate bookmaker. Those bookmakers tend to have their premises not out in some back office at Moonee Valley or up in the grandstand at Caulfield but in fairly swanky office towers in Collins Street or other parts of the CBD.

In terms of the ability of traditional oncourse bookmakers to attract and retain staff and to compete with corporate bookmakers, it is difficult. They are expected to have their offices at the racetrack, which is for most purposes deserted during the week except for the few bookmaking staff and other track staff who are

there, while their main corporate competitors are in offices in Collins Street, Bourke Street and the like. We think it is appropriate for the restriction on bookmakers that currently exists — that is, that they have their offices only at a racetrack — to be lifted. That is the key element of the bill, and it is the reason we are not opposing it. However, there are some issues related to that which I will come back to when I deal with our critique of the bill.

The bill makes some other changes which are somewhat more problematic and about which we have a bit more to say. The change in terms of licensing with regard to the fee regime allows Racing Victoria Ltd (RVL) to impose a uniform turnover tax on bookmakers, whether they be oncourse or offcourse, by lifting the 1 per cent cap that currently applies to the annual betting turnover of a bookmaker. That would be of concern were it not for the fact that Racing Victoria has indicated that it will continue to charge the 1 per cent fee for those bookmakers with a turnover of less than \$5 million, and that is appropriate as this is not about raising the turnover tax rate on those smaller bookmakers. Racing Victoria will also have a turnover product fee for the larger bookmakers with more than \$5 million of turnover. That equates them to the corporate bookmakers and the fee they are being charged.

Whether the product fee ought to be charged as a turnover tax — that is, whether it should be based on turnover or gross profit — has been a vexed area for some time. Certainly for a long time Racing Victoria Ltd had the view that it ought to be based on gross product, and there were good reasons for that view. However, the fact is that in the Sportsbet case the High Court upheld the approach of Racing NSW, and Racing Victoria has a desire to have a uniform regime with Racing NSW for reasons that go beyond simply the question of product fee. I think it is also fair to say that there are a number of participants in the industry who continue to believe that gross profit is the better way of levying a product fee, and we should never overlook the fact that whilst genuine concerns are put forward by Tabcorp, particularly by some of the owners groups, about the role that corporate bookmakers play in the racing industry, they are paying their way.

Bookmakers have been paying their product fee for a number of years now, and the reason they are popular, as those of us who like the occasional flutter would attest, is that they offer punters value. We should to some extent be wary before we impose models on those bookmakers that would remove from punters the ability to gain some value through there being some competition in the wagering market.

I know it would be in the interests of some to go back to an almost monopolistic parimutuel wagering regime. I do not think that would ultimately be in the interests of punters or in fact in the interests of the racing industry because the one thing that the racing industry has to contend with now that it did not have to contend with in years gone by is that there are a multitude of other things that people can bet on. People do not have to bet on racing; they can bet on football, politics, overseas sports and any manner of things. The racing industry's wagering product must remain competitive in terms of the value that is offered to punters.

The other element of the bill that we certainly do not support and in regard to which we will be moving an amendment is the matter of the annual report of the racing integrity commissioner and the time line for the tabling of that report. At the moment the racing integrity commissioner's report has to be handed to the minister by the end of August and tabled within seven sitting days. Under the changes being proposed in this bill 30 September is the new date by which the minister will receive the report. I understand from the briefing we received from the Office of Gaming and Racing that that was at the request of the racing integrity commissioner to ensure that he has a little more time to provide the minister with the annual report. Given some of the other matters that the racing integrity commissioner is dealing with at the moment, it is probably not unreasonable for him to be given a little more time.

What is not reasonable is that the report, once received by the minister, will be tabled after 14 sitting days rather than after 7. I know that this year 14 sitting days from 30 September will mean that the report will still be tabled in this calendar year. But there have been years in the past and there may be years in the future where there are not 14 sitting days between the end of September and the end of the year. I do not see any justification for a 30 September report not being tabled in Parliament until the following February. Certainly in the briefing we received from the government there was no justification provided for the minister sitting on the report for an additional seven sitting days.

We accept the racing integrity commissioner's additional month to hand the report to the minister, but there is absolutely no need for the minister to have the report for 14 sitting days rather than 7 before it is tabled in the house, and the amendment we will be moving goes to that point and that point alone by seeking to remove the provision which extends the period of time that the minister can sit on the report from 7 to 14 sitting days.

I will simply make a few other comments in the interests of time and to allow the debate to move on to other members. In the matter of bookmakers being located offcourse, there are two issues of concern that the opposition raised and discussed with the government. One was whether stewards would continue to have access to bookmakers' premises. The stewards currently have access to bookmakers' premises because they are at a racetrack. Under the bill the proposition is that the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation will have access to premises but not race stewards.

We suggested to the government during the briefing that that may be of concern. It has been suggested to the opposition that stewards will still have electronic access to betting records and that Racing Victoria Ltd could impose access by stewards as a condition of allowing a bookmaker to set up premises offcourse. It is a little difficult for us to understand why that should be left as a matter for RVL to deal with. I am sure RVL would prefer to have some legislative backing to insist that stewards continue to have access to the offices of bookmakers whether they are oncourse or not.

The other matter about bookmakers being located offcourse is the question of whether there will now be sufficient incentive for those bookmakers to attend race days, particularly some of the less illustrious meetings such as some of the mid-week meetings, and be oncourse taking bets rather than taking bets from their offices. The government has indicated that bookmakers will still need to be oncourse to take cash bets, and we understand that, but there will no doubt be a temptation for some bookmakers to stop attending certain race meetings and simply take credit card bets over the phone. I think the character and colour of the racetrack will be severely diminished if we see a diminution of the presence of bookmakers at racetracks.

Earlier this year, as the President knows, I was at a race meeting in New York State.

**Mrs Coote** — That's a long way to go to the races.

**Hon. M. P. PAKULA** — I advise Mrs Coote it was half a day of a very involved program. As I indicated in my report, there are no bookmakers there at all. The only betting is parimutuel, and the atmosphere of the racetrack is severely compromised by the absence of bookmakers. I repeat that the government has said that RVL can make that a condition. Just the other day I spoke to a senior figure in the racing industry who indicated without any prompting from me that the only concern they have with this aspect of the bill is that bookmakers would stop attending race days. Why

government members would choose to leave it to RVL to make regulations or establish requirements and resolve this matter, rather than dealing with it themselves and making it a requirement of the bill that if you have your office anywhere other than at the racetrack, you must continue to attend the racetrack to take the bets, is something that we find a little difficult to understand.

I have already made my comments about the change from 7 to 14 days and why the opposition will be moving an amendment about that.

It is interesting to note that the legislation names a number of organisations with which the racing integrity commissioner can share information. The organisations noted are the state and federal police, the Australian Tax Office, the Australian Crime Commission, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, Centrelink and the Victorian Ombudsman.

What is missing from this list is the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. There is no reference to IBAC as being an organisation with which the racing integrity commissioner can share information. When we asked the department during the briefing why that was the case, the response was, 'When we drafted this bill the IBAC legislation wasn't through the Parliament yet, so we weren't sure if it was safe to put it in there or not'. That is what happens when the sort of tardiness and delays that we have seen in regard to the IBAC legislation occur. We see the knock-on effect of that on other bills. Undoubtedly we will be back here in the near future with an amendment to the Racing Act 1958 to include IBAC, but it could not be included at the time the bill was drafted because at that stage the legislation still had not been through the Parliament.

The last point I want to make while talking about racing integrity is in relation to a matter that has reared its head in recent days, and that is racing integrity more generally. If we need any more evidence of the damage that is being caused to the image of racing by these ongoing concerns about the integrity of the product, we need only look at the front page of today's *Herald Sun*. Racing Victoria Ltd has, for almost two years now, been begging the government to give it the powers that it needs to rid the industry of the bad eggs. It has been asking the government to give it the power to deal with unlicensed persons and to allow Victoria Police to share with it information about racing that Victoria Police comes across during the course of other investigations.

We know that apparently in the investigation currently being conducted by Victoria Police into the Les Samba

matter some information has been uncovered. We saw this on the front page of the *Age* a couple of weeks ago in an article about a race at Cranbourne, which has now been described as the 'Smoking Aces affair'. Even with regard to that issue racing officials are frustrated by the fact that Victoria Police cannot share with them all they know.

The government's attitude to a VCAT (Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal) decision made in August 2010, which casts into doubt what Racing Victoria Ltd has long believed to be its power to warn off persons who will not cooperate with it, has meant that it has said, 'RVL should appeal the matter to the Supreme Court'. As I indicated on a racing program earlier this week, it is fine to tell Racing Victoria that it should appeal a matter to the Supreme Court if it has advice that such an appeal would likely be successful. But in a situation where the advice is that it would not be successful, to expect RVL to have a hit and hope and throw good money after bad on a Supreme Court appeal which may not resolve anything, I think frankly shows that the Minister for Racing has taken a bit of a liberty when the power is in his hands. He can legislate to give Racing Victoria the same powers that Greyhound Racing Victoria, Harness Racing Victoria, Racing NSW and Racing Queensland already have to regulate unlicensed persons and warn them off racetracks if they will not cooperate.

I am going to anticipate that government members might say, 'You could have done it'. Let us deal with that before anyone decides that that is some sort of magical rebuttal. The fact is that the VCAT decision that involved RVL being told by VCAT that it does not have this power, which RVL always believed it had and has always exercised, was made on either 31 July 2010 or 1 August 2010. As members, particularly ministers, know, when new information emerges, as it did on 1 August 2010, to presume to seek advice, to draft legislation, to take legislation through cabinet and through two houses of Parliament in three months — between 1 August 2010 and when the then government went into caretaker mode at the end of October 2010, when there was probably a handful of sitting weeks in total in that period — would be very courageous. If I were here in this house three months into the term of the Baillieu government suggesting that the Baillieu government should have done it in that time, it would be equally courageous.

But it has now been two years since the decision was handed down. This government has been in power for 21 of those 24 months. Whilst it might not have been doable in two and a half months or three months, which is the time we had after the decision was handed down,

there is no excuse for it not being done by now. The fact is that no-one from the government is saying that timing is the reason for this. The minister is quite openly saying, 'I am not going to do it. Racing Victoria should appeal the matter to the Supreme Court'. I have to say I disagree with the minister. The matter can be resolved by introducing legislation, by giving RVL the power it needs and by putting its powers beyond question.

Let us not forget that the minister is not even saying that RVL should not have the power; the minister is saying that the way RVL ought to get the power is by appealing the VCAT decision at the Supreme Court. No-one is arguing whether RVL should have the power. The minister is just saying, 'I am not going to legislate to give it to you'. I have indicated that a future Labor government will give RVL those powers if this minister will not. I sincerely hope — and I mean this — that it will not get to that. I hope the minister sees the error of the position he has adopted, because no-one in the racing industry wants to see a continuation of the sorts of headlines we have seen today and over recent weeks.

The people involved in the racing industry — whether they be punters, trainers, jockeys or people who go along to watch racing — have to have confidence in the integrity of the sport. They have got to believe that they are viewing and betting on a clean product. There is no excuse for not giving RVL all the powers it needs in order to give it the very best chance to ensure that is what we have.

I have gone on long enough about that, so I simply say that we will vote in support of the bill. We will support the objective of making life that little bit easier for our traditional oncourse bookmakers. We think more safeguards should have been put into the bill in regard to the role of stewards to ensure that we have an oncourse presence for bookmakers. We think IBAC should have been mentioned in there. We certainly do not believe that the minister should be allowed to sit on the annual report of the racing integrity commissioner for an extra seven sitting days, and we will be moving an amendment in that regard. In other respects I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — My contribution will be very brief because Mr Pakula has gone through the technicalities of the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 in a great deal of detail. Before I begin I indicate that it is my intention to refer this bill to the Legislative Council's Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee for many of the reasons that Mr Pakula has already outlined. We

believe there is a need for this piece of legislation to undergo some investigation and for some amendments to be brought back to the Parliament.

As Mr Pakula has outlined, this bill will allow bookmakers to accept telephone and electronic bets off site from a racecourse at approved premises. I am quite concerned about this because we know online betting is becoming a major problem. We also know that people can bet on just about anything nowadays; whether it is sport, politics or two flies running up a wall, I am sure a bookmaker somewhere is prepared to take a bet on it. The Greens also have real concerns about the amount of time the government has to present the report of the racing integrity commissioner, as Mr Pakula outlined.

Considering the amount of investigation that is going on as we speak — and it has been in the newspapers in the last few days — in terms of major concerns about possible corruption within the industry, we thought it would have been appropriate for this bill to come to the Parliament after that inquiry so we could see whether other matters coming out of that inquiry should be dealt with. I will leave my remarks at that, but I will be moving that this bill be referred to the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee. We will be supporting the opposition's amendments for the obvious reasons that Mr Pakula has already outlined.

**Mrs PETROVICH** (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, and it is with some pleasure that I do so. Racing is a huge economic driver in the state of Victoria and something I am very passionate about. The bill enables Victorian registered bookmakers to accept phone and electronic bets at approved offcourse premises, removes the current cap of 1 per cent on wagering turnover relating to the bookmakers licence levy, specifies additional bodies to which the racing integrity commissioner may disclose integrity-related information and makes a number of minor amendments to correct typographical errors and other minor discrepancies in the act.

The Minister for Racing, Denis Napthine, is making many positive changes to Victoria's racing industry, including thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing. I hear regularly from people in the industry — from all three codes — that the minister is very competent and well liked. He gets racing. Our racing minister is particularly supportive of racing in country Victoria. It is estimated that the racing industry contributes well over \$2 billion to Victoria's economy. More than 50 per cent of the economic benefits are generated in country Victoria, and more than one-third of Victoria's 121 race clubs are in my electorate of Northern Victoria

Region, which is also home to many fine horse studs and training establishments.

In the Loddon region, which includes Bendigo, the racing industry is estimated to contribute \$108 million and more than 1600 jobs to the Victorian economy. Bendigo's Lords Raceway is one of country Victoria's premier tracks, hosting both harness and greyhound racing. The Bendigo Jockey Club, the nursery of champions, is increasingly popular and has been a favourite of mine for many years. It goes back to 1868. I have been a proud supporter of that club and there are not too many Bendigo Cups that I have missed over the years.

I will quickly go through some issues, because I know we are short of time. Prior to 2008 Victorian-registered bookmakers were required under section 4 of the act to be physically present on the licensed racecourse during a race meeting in order to legally accept a bet or bets. The act was amended in 2008 to enable Victorian-registered bookmakers to conduct internet and telephone betting — so things have moved on and times have changed — at any time from approved racecourse locations provided the bets were made using a method of communication approved by the minister.

In response, a number of bookmakers established offices located at licensed racecourses to take phone or electronic bets. That arrangement provided Victorian bookmakers with the opportunity to compete in an off-the-course wagering market while ensuring racing stewards had ready access to bookmakers and their betting records. It was an important step.

However, Victorian racetracks are not designed to accommodate the demands of modern bookmaking businesses, which may require the housing of IT infrastructure, traders, marketing, customer service analysts and administration. The requirements for bookmakers to operate in offcourse offices could limit the opportunity for them to grow their businesses and compete with major corporate bookmaking companies located in jurisdictions with less restrictive registrations. Currently, electronic betting via telephone and the internet can be legally conducted only according to methods approved by the minister, and it is tightly monitored and regulated.

The proposed amendments remove the requirement for bookmakers to be physically present on licensed racecourses in order to take bets, and allow them to use a method of communication approved by the minister. We are aware that a number of concerns have been raised about the ongoing operation of oncourse bookmaking if bookmakers can open offices offcourse.

Bookmakers will still be required to accept all in-person or cash bets oncourse and any cash bets taken at an approved offcourse premises will be deemed to be illegal betting, with both the persons taking and making the bet subject to new offences and penalties consistent with those set out in the Gambling Regulation Act 2003.

RVL (Racing Victoria Ltd) advises that it does not anticipate that the new provisions enabling bookmakers to operate their business from approved offcourse premises will have an adverse impact on the number of bookmakers attending race meetings. Mr Pakula talked about the colour and movement at racecourses and about the bookies stand being an integral part of that. That will not change, I can tell members — and I will tell them why. There is encouragement for bookmakers to participate in some of the non-major events and that participation will then secure them a prime position on those major race days, which is what it is all about. We certainly do not want to lose that colour and movement.

RVL advises that its stand location policies reward those bookmakers who attend race meetings with the allocation of positions at the more popular meetings during the Spring Racing Carnival. Bookmakers are therefore incentivised to attend meetings throughout the year if they wish to obtain positions at major meetings with high turnover. As I said, that is what it is all about: it is all part of the colour and movement.

Before a bookmaker can operate an offcourse premises, an approval is required from the relevant racing control board. A racing controlling body may approve, refuse, cancel or vary approval. Should a controlling body vary or revoke an approval for an oncourse premises, the bookmaker has the right of appeal. This bill is all about fairness, equity and transparency.

One of the things I would like to highlight in the short time I have available to me — there are many things that I could talk about but as I said we are short of time today — is that the Office of the Racing Integrity Commissioner has confirmed that the decision not to include the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission in the Racing Act 1958 at this time will not limit the capacity of the racing integrity commissioner to exchange information with IBAC. That was a genuine concern that Mr Pakula raised.

I have to say that I agree with many of the things Mr Pakula talked about. We all support racing in Victoria, and so we need to ensure that these issues are worked through, but I think there was a level of disingenuousness around the issue of the previous legislation providing that reports must be tabled within

14 days. That was actually legislated for by the previous government.

What we are talking about in relation to the reporting system is really an annual report. I do not think that is a huge issue, and I think we can overcome any problem with it. I think that amendment has a level of disingenuousness in terms of what was actually done by the previous government. Section 37F currently requires the racing integrity commissioner to submit an annual report to the minister's office before 31 August each year. The bill amends this provision to require the RIC to submit the annual report to the minister by 30 September each year. I think any issue with that can be overcome.

I will not talk too much longer. As I said, I could go through all the points in great detail. I think there are many things that could be addressed without moving amendments to this bill. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — My colleague Mr Pakula has already indicated to the house that Labor will not oppose the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, but we do have an amendment to it.

Victorians love to punt. It is a part of our culture and lifestyle. We even have a racing event, the Melbourne Cup, for which it is said the whole world stops, and people who do not normally bet on the races usually have a flutter on that great international race.

As background information to my contribution, I understand that the racing industry has three codes: thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing. The Victorian racing industry contributes more than \$2 billion to the local economy and employs more than 64 000 people in more than 30 000 equivalent full-time jobs. Victorian racing is thought to be the strongest in the whole country, and why not — we have multiple venues across the state with beautiful locations and facilities. Most of those racing venues are located in rural Victoria, and in Bendigo we have the harness, greyhound and gallop racecourse. The role of those venues within their own country towns is important, as they provide jobs for their young people.

However, through recent media reports the integrity of this industry has come under a cloud. There are rumours of race fixing and corruption. If the punters and the owners lose confidence in the racing industry, it has the potential to ruin a vital, thriving industry. So why do the bill's amendments provide an extension of time for the Minister for Racing to report to this

Parliament and to the people and racegoers of Victoria? In fact, it is beyond me. It does not make sense to double the amount of time for reporting when the racing industry, now more than ever, needs to be seen to be open and transparent.

On the one hand, integrity systems are strengthened by the bill, which incorporates regulations for starting price (SP) bookmakers. This is a definite improvement on what has been the practice in the past. The bill provides for changes to legislation to improve the sustainability of licensed bookmakers, instead of encouraging a plethora of offcourse SP bookies, who have been caught, convicted and imprisoned in our jail system since Adam was a boy. On the other hand, we see a proposal which surely begs the question, 'Why?'. I must come back to the changes to the reporting mechanisms. The racing integrity commissioner must provide timely reports to the racing minister and to this Parliament, as all other agencies do. As I said, we do not oppose the bill.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise and support the bill before the house, the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I note that in his contribution Mr Pakula went through the salient points of the bill. I am very pleased to support a bill moved in the other place by Dr Napthine, because he is a fantastic Minister for Racing. When I move around country racing clubs in my electorate or visit the Melbourne Racing Club with its track at Mornington, I am struck by just how many people know the minister personally and respect the way he has engaged with the industry. They respect the way he supports all facets of the industry, whether that be the Spring Racing Carnival or the reopening of tracks that the previous Labor government closed. The previous government shut those tracks and Dr Napthine, through his interest in and the government's investment in the industry through the Victorian Racing Industry Fund is facilitating jobs, investment and growth in the industry, which is fantastic.

As Mrs Petrovich said, in this region the racing industry is responsible for over \$100 million of economic activity and more than 1500 jobs, so it is a very important industry. I am particularly excited about the developments in my electorate, including the plans that the Pakenham Racing Club has to relocate from its current site in the Pakenham CBD to a new course in Tynong, which has been the subject of debate separately as a result of previous planning amendments in this place.

As I said, I am very pleased to support a bill sponsored by Dr Napthine and very pleased to be in Bendigo,

given that Dr Naphthine is the Minister for Racing and the Minister for Regional Cities. The role of Minister for Regional Cities is a fantastic initiative of this government. The previous government failed to have a Minister for Regional Cities. This ministry brings a focus to regional cities and Dr Naphthine is a fantastic — —

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** interjected.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — Mr Pakula may scoff and criticise and smirk at the concept of a Minister for Regional Cities, but the government very much supports the aim of that portfolio, which is to support growth and economic development in great cities such as Bendigo. Mr Pakula may scoff at that notion but the government supports it. Perhaps that says something about the city-centric Labor opposition.

The government opposes the amendment moved by Mr Pakula. Fourteen days was the period that was legislated by the previous government for annual reports to be lodged by the fire services commissioner. The 14-day period for lodgement applies to the Adult Parole Board and to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and it is a reasonable period. The government will oppose Mr Pakula's motion. It welcomes the support for the bill by the other parties and I wish it a speedy passage.

**Mr TARLAMIS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I also rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 and indicate that the opposition does not oppose this bill. However we will be moving an amendment to remove the provision that allows the Minister for Racing an additional seven days to table in Parliament the annual report of the Office of the Racing Integrity Commissioner.

Before I go to the details of the bill, I would like to say that I understand and appreciate the contribution the racing industry makes to local economies and jobs. There are a number of racetracks in the electorate which I represent, including the Cranbourne Turf Club which is just around the corner from my electorate office, and I am well aware of the significant role it plays in the local community. The Cranbourne Turf Club is a major employer in the south-eastern region, which also has the largest thoroughbred training complex in the southern hemisphere. It goes without saying that Victorian racing is world renowned.

The Spring Racing Carnival is universally recognised as a highlight of the Victorian major events program. It attracts international and interstate tourists who join

with Victorians to attend the carnival each year and experience Victoria's premium racing events. Country and regional turf clubs also celebrate their country and regional race carnivals and picnic days.

According to the Department of Justice, the Victorian racing industry contributes over \$2 billion to the local economy and employs 64 000 people in more than 30 000 equivalent full-time jobs. Most of these jobs are filled by young people and the majority are based in rural and regional Victoria. Racing is a very important industry and one we all want to see run well. There are numerous people involved with horses and in the racing industry who take a great interest in how the industry is regulated and whose livelihoods depend on the integrity of our racing industry.

One of the provisions of the bill is to delay by one month the deadline for the tabling of the racing integrity commissioner's annual report from 31 August to 30 September and to increase the number of days the minister has to table this report. I think we are all aware that the racing industry has been subject to a fair bit of scrutiny recently, and there are issues that are now being heavily scrutinised and investigated. In this regard we appreciate the need for more time to prepare the report; however, we are moving an amendment to ensure scrutiny by and accountability to the Parliament. Labor does not support the provision allowing the minister an extra seven sitting days to table the racing integrity commissioner's report. This change means that the government could potentially sit on the contents of that report for a significantly longer time than the bill infers, when you consider the Parliament's sitting day schedules.

I will not go through all the changes made by the bill as my colleagues have already done that in some detail, but I will highlight some provisions. The changes include removing the cap on bookmakers licence fees to allow Racing Victoria Ltd to apply its newly announced turnover licence fee model in a uniform way. The bill recognises the impact that technology is having on bookmakers, who are both integral to the racing industry and a colourful oncourse presence that is synonymous with Victorian racing. It seeks to remove some of the current restrictions for oncourse bookmakers, including bookmakers only being able to take bets over the telephone or the internet or by email while they are located at racetracks. The opposition believes stewards should be able to continue to inspect bookmakers' premises even after they move offcourse.

Clause 8 of the bill relates to integrity and expands the list of agencies to which the racing integrity commissioner can pass on information to include the

Australian Crime Commission, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, Centrelink and the Ombudsman. The glaring omission in this list of agencies is any reference to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. The commission should be listed, and the fact that it is not underscores the government's confusion in relation to its introduction of the long-awaited IBAC and the delays thereof. It also signals that further amendments to the racing act may be required in the not-too-distant future.

In summing up, the opposition does not oppose the major parts of the bill, although we still have concerns about some elements of it. I urge the government to reconsider its position on the opposition's amendment.

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on this important piece of legislation and to indicate that the government will not be supporting Mr Pakula's amendment for the reasons that have been outlined by Mr O'Donohue. There is an additional reason which I will get to shortly.

This is an important bill that operates in relation to an industry that is very important to the Victorian economy. It is an industry that is maligned in some quarters, but it is one to which this government, including the Minister for Racing, has given wholehearted support. That support has been genuinely appreciated by the racing industry, which includes thoroughbred breeders and owners, racing clubs, volunteers and the communities that reap the benefits of this \$2 billion industry.

I should disclose that I am a member of a racing club — the Penshurst and District Racing Club. It was established in 1865 and now holds one race meeting a year, which it battles to keep. With a bit of luck and good management, the club will continue to survive.

The racing industry supports a number of jobs. There are 64 000 people in paid jobs but also 48 900 people in volunteer positions. In my electorate the racing industry's economic input into the Barwon region of Geelong accounts for \$105 million and more than 1400 jobs. In the Loddon region, where we are today in Bendigo, it is \$108 million and more than 1600 jobs. In the western district, which I mentioned earlier, it is \$68 million and close to 1000 jobs. I suspect the minister attends virtually every race meeting in that area. I have seen him at several of those meetings, including at Terang and Warrnambool.

What is important is that this bill is responsive to the needs of this important industry. It is an industry that

requires a level of regulation as a result of the importance of gambling and the difficulties that are involved in wagering. Through this bill the government will give Racing Victoria Ltd the support it needs to make the rules with which to operate the racing industry.

We note that under the watch of the former government a number of racing and harness tracks were closed, including those at Boort, Hamilton, Ouyen, Gunbower, St Arnaud, Wedderburn and Wangaratta. Under Labor the greyhound track at Wangaratta was also closed, country race clubs were demoted and race meetings were taken away.

Under this government we have seen the return of race meetings, including a late December meeting at Towong, a Caulfield Cup day meeting at Hamilton, a Melbourne Cup eve meeting at Traralgon and the Christmas meeting at Avoca. What is important about the amendment proposed by Mr Pakula is that regard should be given to what has been a bit of a theme to my contributions, which is: listening to the industry. The 14-day period for tabling which seems to be the crux of his amendment is in fact the period that was requested by the independent racing integrity commissioner, when he said:

I am seeking this provision of the legislation be amended to require my annual report to be submitted by 30 September each year, with the minister being required to cause this report to be laid before Parliament within 14 days of receipt.

This recommended amendment aligns more closely with the requirement that most other entities not be bound by the Financial Management Act 1994.

If we look at Labor's record, we see that under its watch, as Mr O'Donohue has pointed out, the Confiscation (Amendment) Act 2003 also inserted a 14-day period for the minister to respond, and the Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010 provided for four months.

It is important that government responses be considered in an appropriate time. We are not a government that announces programs without business cases and makes decisions for the sake of a press release; we are a government that puts substance over spin, that listens to the racing industry, that listens to horse owners and that listens to Victorian constituents, wherever they be. It is most important when we are in the city of Bendigo in the wonderful Northern Metropolitan Region that we respond with appropriate legislation.

**Hon. M. P. Pakula** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I listened to Mr Pakula talk about integrity powers. After the lack of integrity powers because opposition members failed to implement an Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Committee in the 11 years of their failed administration, they suggest we should be referring things to IBAC. Mr Leane is wondering what IBAC is. Our government will stand on its integrity commitments, it will stand on its record, and it will support the racing industry. With that, my race is run on this bill. I commend the bill to the house.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Referral to committee*

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 be referred to the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee for inquiry, consideration and report by 29 November 2012.

I will speak only briefly to this bill, which needs more work and needs the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee to look at it. A number of points have been brought up today. One of my main concerns about this is that at the moment an inquiry into the racing industry is ongoing, and this would be a perfect opportunity to have the racing integrity commissioner give evidence to the committee. We could use the current inquiry to make sure we are putting forward the absolutely best legislation that services both the people who want to bet on races and those who work on the courses so that we have a system that is safe and secure and has relevance. This is the kind of legislation that should be referred. I would be willing to make the reporting date shorter. I have moved that it be 29 November. I take on the concern that the Spring Racing Carnival is coming up and so I would be more than happy to make the reporting date much sooner.

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Assistant Treasurer) — The government will not be supporting Ms Hartland's motion to refer the bill to the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee. Through the course of the second-reading debate we have heard members of the opposition, in particular Mr Pakula, highlighting their view that this legislation needs to come forward as quickly as possible. Indeed the Spring Racing Carnival is looming very soon.

In her contribution on her motion Ms Hartland referred to a number of matters which are beyond the scope of this bill and her view that they should be considered as part of the legislation committee's proposed

consideration of this bill. We believe that would not be an appropriate use of the committee's time or an appropriate consideration of this bill. Given the imperative to have this legislation in place prior to the Spring Racing Carnival, the government will not be supporting the motion to refer the bill to the Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee.

**Hon. M. P. PAKULA** (Western Metropolitan) — I have sympathy with a number of the matters raised by Ms Hartland. In fact I made reference to some of them during my contribution to the second-reading debate. What is required in the racing integrity arena is a whole separate bill to provide Racing Victoria Ltd (RVL) and the racing integrity commissioner with the ability to regulate unlicensed persons, exchange information with Victoria Police and a general warning-off power, which until two years ago they believed they had.

This particular bill is a fairly narrow one. The bill primarily relates to the matter of where bookmakers' premises are located. As Minister Rich-Phillips indicated, that is a matter on which there is some necessity for speed. As I indicated during my contribution to the second-reading debate, the corporate bookmaking fraternity all have premises other than at racetracks and the on-track bookmakers have been seeking equal treatment with the corporate bookmakers in that regard for some time, and that is primarily what the bill is designed to do.

There are some unanswered questions. There is the matter the opposition has raised about the tabling of the annual report, which we can pursue in the committee stage and through our amendment. There are a couple of questions, which I have already talked about and which I believe are equally minor, about the access of stewards to bookmakers' premises when they are offcourse and about the ability of RVL to put in place regulations to ensure that bookmakers remain oncourse for race meetings. Again the opposition believes we can pursue those matters during the committee of the whole and that that will be an appropriate way of dealing with that matter.

The date for the committee to report back in Ms Hartland's motion is 29 November. I heard what she said about an earlier date, but we can only vote on the motion that is before the house. I do not want to characterise that as being the determining issue from our point of view; it is not. Even if the date were earlier in November, it is unlikely our position would be any different. As I have indicated, we think this bill is fairly straightforward. We have no major concerns with it, save for the matter that we will be dealing with through our amendment. We believe we can deal with our other

queries in the committee of the whole. We will not be supporting Ms Hartland's motion.

**House divided on motion:**

*Ayes, 3*

Barber, Mr (*Teller*) Pennicuk, Ms (*Teller*)  
Hartland, Ms

*Noes, 35*

Atkinson, Mr	Senders, Mr
Broad, Ms ( <i>Teller</i> )	Lovell, Ms
Coote, Mrs	Mikakos, Ms
Crozier, Ms	O'Brien, Mr
Dalla-Riva, Mr	O'Donohue, Mr
Darveniza, Ms	Ondarchie, Mr
Davis, Mr D.	Pakula, Mr
Davis, Mr P.	Petrovich, Mrs
Drum, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Eideh, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Elasmar, Mr	Ramsay, Mr ( <i>Teller</i> )
Elsbury, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Finn, Mr	Scheffer, Mr
Guy, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Tarlamis, Mr
Koch, Mr	Tee, Mr
Kronberg, Mrs	Tierney, Ms
Leane, Mr	

**Motion negated.**

**Ordered to be committed next day.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Assistant Treasurer) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

**Firefighters: compensation access**

**Mr LENDERS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Assistant Treasurer, Mr Rich-Phillips, who I am delighted to see is in the chamber. The issue of presumptive rights in relation to the fire brigades is one with which Country Fire Authority salaried officers and volunteers, as well as Metropolitan Fire Brigade staff, have had quite an issue over a period of time.

Presumptive rights relate to where a firefighter suffers from cancer and is then obliged to find a causal connection before, in the case of a salaried firefighter, they can go to the Victorian WorkCover Authority for treatment or financial compensation to enable them to have treatment — or the equivalent if they are a volunteer. This is a sensitive issue among our volunteer firefighters and our salaried firefighters, and I understand it is also not a simple one for the Victorian WorkCover Authority or its agents because when you

start on this process it often becomes quite difficult to draw a line between which occupations are there and which are not there.

The action I am seeking from the minister this evening is a commitment to sit down and work with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, the Victorian branch of the United Firefighters Union and other stakeholders to try to find a way through what in one sense is a difficult policy conundrum but in another sense is also a very personal issue for those firefighters who have put their bodies out there to protect their fellow citizens and feel they should be treated differently. The action I seek from the Assistant Treasurer is his agreement that he will have that consultation. I am not pre-empting any more than that, but I am seeking that he do that.

These people deserve that level of respect from government. I ask that the minister meet with them and talk through with them and other stakeholders what the issues are, what the pros and cons are and what a desirable outcome would be to replicate what the federal Parliament did when it gave presumptive rights to federal firefighters by enacting legislation on this matter earlier this year.

**Bendigo: regional exhibition centre**

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, the Honourable Peter Ryan, and I am asking the minister to provide an update on the government's \$2 million commitment to the Bendigo Agricultural Show Society to create a regional exhibition centre at the showgrounds.

Bendigo is known for being rich in agriculture and fine wool, and the Bendigo show society has hosted the Australian Sheep and Wool Show for many years. It is a great achievement given that the show's beginnings were at the showgrounds in Melbourne. The Bendigo show society has played an important role in showcasing the important contribution of agriculture, and it has not only given to the economy of the Bendigo region but also provided a window to the world for rich agricultural produce.

That is why the coalition government was pleased to work with the Bendigo Agricultural Show Society to develop a master plan and to commit, when no federal or state Labor Party would, \$2 million from the Regional Growth Fund to a regional exhibition centre. With a pavilion being constructed as the first stage of the project, the show society has indicated that the development will attract over 20 000 visitors from outside the region and generate \$31.4 million for the

local economy, or \$2.1 million in visitor revenue annually.

It is a great partnership between the Baillieu government, the Bendigo Agricultural Show Society and the City of Greater Bendigo, which are all working together and investing in infrastructure to showcase the rich tapestry of agricultural industries that the Bendigo region is renowned for. Given that it is the Australian Year of the Farmer, it is fitting that we acknowledge investments in the industry.

### **Vocational education and training: rapid response team**

**Ms DARVENIZA** (Northern Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, who is also the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession. The matter I wish to raise concerns the minister's rapid response team. There has been rapid acceleration in the number of training providers ripping off the public purse under this minister's watch. The minister has spruiked the much-heralded rapid response team as a key tool in the government's kitbag for tackling training rorts. However, given the government's slashing of 950 jobs within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, it is hard to see where the rapid response team will sit within the higher education and skills group and how it will be properly resourced.

I believe the minister needs to publicly release information about where the rapid response team will be positioned within the restructured department and how much funding and what resources the government is providing for the team to carry out its quality control tasks. I also believe the government should provide information about what extra resources have been allocated to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority so that it is also able to do its job. We need to know exactly what additional resources, including funding and additional personnel, have been allocated to stem the accelerating tide of cheap and dodgy training paid for by Victorian taxpayers under the watch of this minister and this government.

The specific action I am seeking from the minister is that he publicly release details of extra resources provided for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to tackle quality assurance issues in the vocational training sector.

### **Fire services: funding**

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The Climate Commission has warned of a greater risk of bushfires in Victoria as climate change takes hold. In Melbourne the population is expanding, so there are more people, homes and businesses for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade to protect. There are also more cars and trucks on our roads, which means more accidents that the fire brigade needs to attend. There is a clear and demonstrated need to increase the capacity of our metropolitan and country fire services to match these growing demands if our community is to be protected. So what does the Baillieu government do? It takes a multipronged approach to cutting the heart out of our fire services and our firefighters.

As was revealed yesterday by the United Firefighters Union of Australia and confirmed by the government, the government intends to cut \$66 million from firefighting services this year, with more cuts in years to come. The government is investigating cutting the number of firefighters on duty who protect our community. Due to the Baillieu government's cuts to the Country Fire Authority, TAFE courses in Ballarat are being axed. If firefighters want to learn professional firefighting skills, including how to manage injuries at emergency scenes, suppress urban fires, deal with hazardous materials and respond to marine and aviation emergencies, they will now have to do courses at interstate educational institutions.

The Greens are drafting a bill to ensure that firefighters can access WorkCover compensation and insurance if they get cancer as a result of exposure to toxic chemicals and smoke on the job. These firefighters put their health at risk to protect us, and I think we should be doing more to protect them. However, the government has shown very little interest in even meeting with us to discuss this issue, unlike the ALP which has been more than willing to meet with us and at least discuss the issue. Similar Greens legislation passed the federal Parliament with support from all sides of politics, and we are hoping for the same outcome in Victoria.

The government seems determined to rip the heart out of Victoria's fire services. I ask the minister to ensure that the government does not rip the heart out of Victoria's firefighting services and that it reverses the funding cuts and increases the number of firefighters, not cut them.

### **Bendigo: court precinct upgrade**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Attorney-General. I ask that he visit not this particular building but the building across the road, which is the court precinct building. It is a heritage-listed building and was, in early June, the subject of an announcement by the Attorney-General of \$8.4 million in funding as part of the juvenile justice centre project. I ask that the Attorney-General hear the views of both the users and the concerned community about the heritage significance of the building.

Given the motion debated today on gold, it is important to consider the perspective in relation to the Bendigo law courts building. It was designed by Victorian Public Works architect George W. Watson in the Victorian Second Empire style. That Victorian style was named after the same person this state is named after — Queen Victoria. It was built between 1892 and 1896 by contractors, McCulloch and McAlpine. The heritage statement of significance says, in part:

The Bendigo law courts building is ... historically important for the physical exuberance and magnificence of the building which illustrates Bendigo's transition from mining town to prosperous, permanent metropolis built on the wealth of gold. The building is also historically important for housing an extensive collection of 19th and 20th century furniture and fittings, much of which has been identified as part of the original building.

There are challenges because, importantly, it is a court building still used as a court by the Supreme, Magistrates and County courts. I have had the privilege of appearing in that courthouse. It is an important and well-functioning courthouse. Nevertheless, the justice system requires upgrades to it, and as part of the announcement by the Attorney-General I understand that there will be provision of new interview rooms, full security screening, refitted prisoner-holding cells in the Bull Street building and a refurbishment of the police station behind it to effectively create a new courthouse.

It is important that there be consultation with the stakeholders, being the Bendigo community, as well as the court users. The views of both users and the community should never be taken for granted. Therefore, whilst I commend the Attorney-General for his commitment to the judicial system in regional areas, in particular with this funding announcement, I ask him to visit and consult with stakeholders and keep the Bendigo community informed of the progress of these important works.

### **Regional and rural Victoria: subdivision approvals**

**Mr TEE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Planning, and it relates to a decision by Goulburn-Murray Water which is effectively preventing the subdivision of land of less than 40 hectares that is not connected to sewerage. That is preventing construction or building on land that was previously being subdivided. The deadlock has been in place since February this year and it affects some 27 councils and shires around Mount Alexander and Eppalock. It is an issue on which the minister has been sent letters by seven affected councils, but there has been no action thus far by the minister. The issue has also been raised by the member for Bendigo West in the other place, Ms Edwards, who raised the issue in an adjournment debate and has also written to the minister.

I add my voice, asking the minister to intervene in this matter that is holding up the dreams of many. It is causing emotional and financial angst. I urge the minister to respond to the request by intervening, setting up a process — perhaps an independent panel — to get all the parties together to hear from the experts, from the council, from the water authority and from those affected, to try to find a common-sense solution and a way forward to end this deadlock.

### **Health: infrastructure projects**

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health. Bendigo has a strong and diverse local community, and as the mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, Cr Alec Sandner, noted in his address this morning, its population is forecast to increase from 105 000 to 143 000 by 2030 — just 18 years from now. The growth in the population of Bendigo and surrounds needs to be taken into account in planning for the future and providing appropriate infrastructure, including health service infrastructure. This point was made by the Victorian Healthcare Association in 2010. Its analysis of state infrastructure funding over the previous decade found that rural Victoria received just 17 per cent of capital investment in health despite having 27 per cent of the state's population.

In recognition of that need I am pleased to say that important infrastructure commitments have been made by the coalition government. As we are in Bendigo I will mention the health services infrastructure commitments for this area and northern Victoria. They include \$22.7 million to reconstruct the Charlton hospital, \$10 million to upgrade Castlemaine Hospital,

\$18 million to redevelop Swan Hill hospital's aged-care facility and \$15 million towards new ambulance stations across the region in Epsom, Eaglehawk, Strathdale and Bendigo CBD. These are substantial investments in this important area, the Bendigo hospital redevelopment in particular being the largest health project in country Victoria.

Due to the significant spend in relation to these important infrastructure projects, I ask the minister to monitor and report regularly to the community on their progress, unlike the former Labor government which failed to consult with and inform the community on projects such as the north-south pipeline.

### **Fire services: funding**

**Mr EIDEH** (Western Metropolitan) — It is wonderful to be in Bendigo, an outstanding regional town in our state. I commend the City of Greater Bendigo and its dedicated staff; its mayor, Alec Sandner; councillors; and the CEO for hosting this sitting. I also acknowledge the colourful traditional Chinese welcome we received.

This dynamic town is commonly referred to as a city that was built on gold. When you look at its growing population and development, it is obvious that the gold continues to shine brightly here. But this vibrant regional area has so much more to offer than just its rich history; it is now acclaimed as a wonderful place for great food and wine, and it is host to a leading farmers market. The city has been recognised for the success of the Bendigo Art Gallery, which houses a wonderful and admirable collection of works by European and Australian masters. Bendigo also hosts events such as the Bendigo Festival of Lamb and the Bendigo Writers Festival in August. It is truly wonderful that communities come together and offer their skills for all Victorian residents to enjoy. Bendigo also houses a wonderful learning and TAFE precinct.

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Ryan, who is also the Deputy Premier. Perhaps the minister can give some thought to returning the Country Fire Authority's specialised training facilities to Victoria so that the people of the city of Greater Bendigo can feel safe and can rest assured that they will be properly protected by well-prepared personnel in the coming bushfire season. Can the minister explain how our great CFA will keep this region safe when we know its funds will have been slashed? I cannot understand the logic of cutting the legs out from under the CFA as we head into summer. The people of Bendigo deserve better. I ask the minister to guarantee to the people of Bendigo that the

government's slashing of funds to the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade will not place even one life at risk.

### **Asbestos: non-occupational exposure**

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mr O'Brien. As the minister is aware, the exposure of people to asbestos during home maintenance and renovation is a very serious and growing problem in Australia and Victoria.

In the adjournment debate of 15 September last year I requested that the minister explain any plans he had to address the danger of asbestos exposure for home renovators. I had raised such concerns previously, coincidentally at the Council's regional sitting at Lakes Entrance, after then Premier John Brumby apologised to the former State Electricity Commission workers who had contracted asbestos-related diseases. Mr O'Brien responded to my adjournment matter last year by saying he was waiting on the final report and recommendations of the federal Asbestos Management Review.

The review report was released last month, and it confirmed that Australia has one of the highest levels of asbestos-related disease and death in the world, with the problem growing and involving broader segments of the population. New cases of asbestos-related disease average approximately 600 per year, and compared with other cancers the mortality rate for mesothelioma is one of the highest, with life expectancy after diagnosis very short. A Western Australian study on mesothelioma attributed to asbestos exposure during home maintenance and renovation showed that from 2005 to 2008 home renovators accounted for 8.4 per cent of all men and 35 per cent of all women diagnosed with malignant mesothelioma. Research suggests that mesothelioma cases from non-employment-related asbestos exposure will continue to rise.

The report of the Asbestos Management Review made 12 recommendations. Two of these are especially relevant when it comes to preventing non-occupational asbestos-related exposure. Firstly, the report recommended comprehensive, persistent, targeted and evidence-based campaigns to improve asbestos awareness. The president of the Asbestos Disease Foundation of Australia, Barry Robson, said on ABC *News* this week that there is still very little education for do-it-yourself renovators about the dangers of asbestos in their homes. This must be changed urgently to prevent more home renovators unknowingly risking exposing themselves and their families to asbestos.

Secondly, a labelling system to alert builders and potential buyers and tenants to the presence of asbestos on a property should to be introduced. It is in the minister's power to implement this in Victoria without delay.

My request to the minister is that he urgently implement the recommendations of the Asbestos Management Review which can be done at the state level. For home renovators in particular this means establishing an asbestos identification risk-labelling system, initially for homes built prior to 1987, and ensuring better public awareness of asbestos risks. The government must act to prevent the further suffering, illness and deaths which will continue to rise unless asbestos exposure in the home is urgently addressed.

### **Apprentices: mutual consent arrangements**

**Mr JENNINGS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall. The action I seek from the minister is that he publicly release details regarding the legal status of market facilitation officers involved in apprenticeship contractual disputes. The minister would be aware that under the previous system, which was inherited by his administration, the Victorian Skills Commission was responsible for apprenticeship contracts and apprenticeship field officers were responsible for solving disputes relating to the status of apprenticeship contracts. They were empowered to make recommendations leading to a dispute resolution.

Recently the minister was asked a question in Parliament relating to 75 apprentices in Gippsland who were suspended without pay. In his answer the minister indicated that it was the market facilitation officers, not the apprenticeship field officers, who were seeking alternative employment for the displaced apprentices. This apparent change in responsibility raises questions about the legal status of the market facilitation officers. The Victorian public is none the wiser on their legal status given that there is no legislative provision for them and the ongoing legislated role of apprenticeship field officers remains unaltered.

In the past any suspension or termination of an apprenticeship had to be done with the permission of the Victorian Skills Commission. However, the government has now abolished the Victorian Skills Commission and moved its functions to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority. I am sure the minister accepts that the management of apprenticeships is incredibly important to the state and to apprentices, and I believe the government has an

obligation to the thousands of apprentices, industry and the public to specify who has responsibility for these matters.

This situation is further complicated by the fact that in the *Building Trade Pathways* discussion paper the government flagged that it may reduce apprenticeship protection by scrapping the mutual consent provision in the apprenticeship contracts — a provision that apprenticeship field officers have been responsible for overseeing in accordance with their legislative requirements. Given the scale of job losses and given that industry turndown is impacting on apprenticeships, the Victorian public has a right to be informed about this by the minister who is in charge on a daily basis of protecting apprentices through enforcement of apprenticeship contracts. Can the minister clarify what the government is doing to either abolish the current mutual consent arrangements or maintain their status into the future?

### **Bendigo Art Gallery: exhibitions**

**Mr P. DAVIS** (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. I refer to the Bendigo Art Gallery's recent blockbuster exhibition *Grace Kelly — Style Icon*, which, as we heard last night, attracted double the usual annual patronage of the art gallery. The city's restaurants, accommodation and shops were packed as a result. This record-breaking exhibition was sold out leading up to the final day of the exhibition on Sunday, 17 June, and members of my extended family came to Bendigo to visit. The exhibition, from London's famed Victoria and Albert Museum and Monaco's Grimaldi Forum, attracted national attention. It was opened on 10 March this year by Her Serene Highness Princess Charlene of Monaco.

Preliminary estimates done by the City of Greater Bendigo show that the exhibition had an economic impact of approximately \$17 million, which is an extraordinary and outstanding result. Hosting blockbuster exhibits and events in regional Victoria is part of the government's major events strategy. This exhibition was the third in the Bendigo international collections series, following on from *The White Wedding Dress — 200 Years of Wedding Fashions*.

Another measure of success can be seen in the results of the national visitor survey for the year ending March 2012, with the goldfields region recording more growth than other Victorian regions in terms of domestic visitor nights; the region was up 35 per cent on the previous year. Therefore I ask the minister to work with the Bendigo Art Gallery to attract future

blockbuster exhibitions to take advantage of the gallery's magnificent ambience, which we experienced last night, and to provide a further boost to regional Victoria's economy.

### **Chisholm Institute of TAFE: funding**

**Mr TARLAMIS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, and the action I seek is that he rule out major fee hikes for courses at Chisholm Institute as a result of the funding cuts to TAFE.

Whilst Chisholm Institute in Frankston expected to receive \$1.5 million to look at its infrastructure needs, the government has slashed a massive \$25 million from Chisholm's budget. This devastating cut will result in countless courses and programs being cut, jobs being lost and the enrolment of far fewer students, not to mention the deferral, delay or discontinuation of the construction of much-needed infrastructure on site. It seems that if Chisholm is to keep operating, the only avenue open to it is to raise student fees. Despite the possibility of improvements in infrastructure at Chisholm Institute, if the government does not rule out major fee hikes for apprenticeships and other courses, students simply will not be able to afford to attend courses.

I have received many hundreds of signatures on petitions from Frankston residents opposing the funding cuts at Chisholm, highlighting the level of community outrage. Frankston is an area where a high proportion of secondary students attend TAFE as a means of furthering their education. Recently the school council president of Fountain Gate Secondary College stated in a letter to me that one-third of students in the outer south-eastern region who had completed year 12 in 2011 had gone on to vocational training. I expect this is similar to the numbers in Frankston schools, and I am concerned that current school students will now miss out on the opportunity to do the same.

Many young people at risk of dropping out of education choose to attend TAFE to complete their VCE (Victorian certificate of education). High schools do not cater for all students, and some students learn better in a TAFE environment. A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to talk with a young student at Chisholm Institute in Frankston who is in the process of undertaking her VCE. She had found that high school was not an appropriate fit for her, so she went on to do her VCE studies at Chisholm. The confidence she gained during that course led to her making the decision that next year she will return to a secondary college, which shows that the system is working.

These students should not fall through the gaps because of this government's decisions and poor judgement. Students in Frankston do not need roadblocks put in their way by fee rises and cuts to funding at their local TAFE. It is critical that the minister listen to Frankston residents and rule out major fee hikes for courses at Chisholm. The minister is not just playing with numbers on a spreadsheet when he cuts TAFE funding; he is playing with people's lives and people's futures.

### **Rail: Berwick station car park**

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, Minister Mulder. I am pleased that Mr Rich-Phillips is the minister on duty because he will share my interest in the issue I am about to raise given his advocacy for these kinds of issues under his former province.

I have previously advised members of the house that this year the government has a significant program in relation to car park expansions at railway stations in the south-east. There are additional car parks currently under construction at Narre Warren station, Beaconsfield station, Pakenham station and Merinda Park station. Earlier this year 450 car spaces were added to the network at the Cardinia Road station, and the new Lynbrook station opened earlier this year with a car park that adds 250 spaces to the network, which is fantastic.

We also understand that car parks are not the only infrastructure needed to allow commuters to get to railway stations and to improve their commuting experience. That is why the government is funding \$1 million worth of Parkiteer cages so commuters can leave their bicycles at railway stations. The Pakenham station, which is in my electorate, has received a new Parkiteer cage.

The issue that I raise and that I wish to have addressed is in relation to Berwick station. Additional car spaces have been added progressively to the car park at Berwick station as Berwick has been growing significantly. The current state government works being undertaken in relation to the duplication of Clyde Road between Kangan Drive and High Street in Berwick will facilitate better access to the Berwick station, which will be great for commuters and those wishing to access the beautiful High Street in Berwick. The action I seek from the minister is for him to explore options to improve car parking at Berwick station given that access to that station is being improved with the works currently under way to duplicate Clyde Road.

### Higher education: TAFE funding

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills. The action I seek is for the minister to provide funding to TAFE institutes to cover the 2.5 per cent salary escalation that TAFE institutes are obliged to pay their staff as part of the current enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) process. The minister has previously answered a question in relation to provision 6 of the notes in the 2009 Victorian TAFE teachers enterprise bargaining agreement, which states:

If a successor agreement(s) is/are not agreed by 30 September 2012, there will be a further salary increase for all teachers equal to the escalation rate under the then operative departmental funding model from 1 October 2012.

Despite not giving any advice to staff at TAFE institutes on this important matter, the minister has previously confirmed in this place that the escalation rate is 2.5 per cent and stated that this is an issue the government will address if and when it arises. Apparently this is an issue that will be dealt with as part of the transition plans TAFE institutes were required to submit to the government by yesterday. Unfortunately the government has refused to clarify if it will be providing TAFE institutes with a 2.5 per cent rise in funding, which would enable more accurate assessments within the TAFE transition plans of the impact of the government's \$290 million in funding cuts. If there were no new EBA, the rate that will be passed on to TAFE teachers on 1 October 2012 will be 2.5 per cent.

The minister needs to recognise that time is marching on. The minister cannot just sit on his hands on this issue. TAFE institutes need an answer now on this issue. The minister needs to commit to passing on that money as funding for individual TAFEs so that they can pass it on to their staff.

### Vocational education and training: providers

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Peter Hall. It concerns his department's investigation into the scandal involving cash rewards for training.

I refer the minister to the department's investigation and deregistration of registered training organisations, which last year were offering cash rewards for suspect government-funded training. We have seen numerous examples of publically funded training providers offering cash rewards to sports clubs to sign up their

members for dubious training programs. They are being used as fundraisers for sports clubs but at great cost to club members who sign up for quick tick-and-flick training programs only to use up their one chance at a government-funded training place at the same or lower level.

Impact Football Solutions had been working with the Northern Football League to provide training programs for clubs with cash rewards offered on the proviso that clubs spent 50 per cent of their cash reward on future training programs provided by Impact Football Solutions. Legitimate training providers are now struggling with the consequences of the government's inept handling of the move to a national regulator of the vocational education and training sector. The action I seek is for the minister to publically release the results of any investigation by his department into the cash-rewards-for-training scandal, and any involvement of Impact Football Solutions and the Northern Football League.

### Skills training: TAFE funding

**Mr SOMYUREK** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Mr Hall, concerning the government's TAFE funding cuts and the consequent impact on the Victorian manufacturing sector. Skills and training are important drivers of our manufacturing sector and of most advanced economies' manufacturing sectors. The Baillieu government likes to wax lyrical about the importance of productivity improvements to the sustainability of our manufacturing sector, but it needs to understand that skills and training are key drivers of productivity. It defies logic that this government can cling to productivity improvements as the panacea for the problems of the manufacturing sector while it simultaneously culls TAFE funding.

The government, and in particular the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, Mr Dalla-Riva, likes to enthuse about how the future viability of the Victorian manufacturing sector will be reliant on Victorian manufacturers producing high-end, high-tech advanced manufacturing products for niche markets. These funding cuts go completely against the Baillieu government's pronouncements on the future viability of our manufacturing sector. I am not the only one who thinks that way. A recent article dated 26 August in *Manufacture Link* titled 'Fighting the good fight for TAFE funding' delineates the current difficulties faced by advanced manufacturers. It states:

Already hurting from the downturn in local automotive component manufacturing, the \$300 million being ripped from TAFE funding is just going to make it more difficult for

advanced manufacturers to survive, as many of our advanced manufacturers are struggling to expand their businesses and open up new markets, because they can't find skilled labour.

The TAFE network is the primary source of skilled labour for the advanced manufacturing sector, so TAFE funding cutbacks are only going to harm the future growth prospects of businesses that are looking to diversify away from automotive, which at face value does not represent growth opportunity, particularly if government fleet-purchasing practices do not alter to definitively require the acquisition of Australian-made vehicles.

The action I seek is for the minister to support manufacturing jobs and skills development in Victoria by working with TAFE institutes on their transition plans and to provide additional funding support to TAFEs in areas of identified skill shortages and intensive high-cost manufacturing courses.

### Responses

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Assistant Treasurer) — Mr Lenders raised a matter for my attention with respect to what he described as presumptive rights for firefighters. This was a matter that was canvassed at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing in May of this year, where I indicated that the government had asked the Victorian WorkCover Authority to prepare some advice with respect to this issue and presumptive legislation. The government will consider that advice from VWA.

On the specific issue that Mr Lenders raised regarding consultations, I can advise Mr Lenders that consultations are already taking place. This is an issue that spans more than just the WorkCover area, which is my area of responsibility, because volunteer firefighters are covered separately under the Country Fire Authority legislation. There are in effect two parallel schemes in place at the moment: one is operated by the Victorian WorkCover Authority and the other by the CFA.

Importantly, anybody who believes that they have contracted a disease — in this case cancer, with respect to certain firefighting activities — is entitled to lodge a WorkCover claim now. That is not dependent upon presumptive rights legislation; they have that entitlement now. The legislation that Mr Lenders talked about would in effect reverse the onus to prove the cause between the occupational activity and the disease. The current accident compensation legislation already provides a mechanism for certain diseases to be deemed as linked to certain occupations. I think there are around 25 diseases currently in that category. The type of legislation that Mr Lenders talked about is one response to the issue, but there is already a different mechanism in the legislation to address the issue of diseases and

occupational outcomes. The government has, however, sought further advice from the VWA on that, and it will consider that advice.

On other matters, Mr Ramsay raised a matter for the Minister for Regional and Rural Development.

Ms Darveniza, Mr Jennings, Mr Tarlamis, Ms Mikakos, Mr Elasmarr and Mr Somyurek raised matters for the Minister for Higher Education and Skills.

Ms Hartland and Mr Eideh raised matters for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Mr O'Brien raised a matter for the Attorney-General.

Mr Tee raised a matter for the Minister for Planning.

Ms Crozier raised a matter for the Minister for Health.

Ms Pennicuik raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs.

Mr Philip Davis raised a matter for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events.

Mr O'Donohue raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport.

I will pass those matters on.

I have two responses to previous matters raised on the adjournment.

### Bendigo: regional sitting

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! If members could remain for just one moment, I will take this opportunity to express on the *Hansard* record the appreciation of the Parliament to those people who have been involved in this regional sitting.

As I have done at the other events associated with this regional sitting, I extend our appreciation to the mayor, councillors and staff of the City of Greater Bendigo. I am also pleased to put on record my appreciation to the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE for its assistance with today's luncheon event hosted by the Parliament of Victoria.

I would like to record my appreciation to the police and protective services officers in Bendigo for their assistance in ensuring that this event went off without any hitches. There were people who chose to democratically express their opinion today, and I extend my appreciation to them as well for the manner in which they conveyed their messages and for their

cooperation with the police, who had had discussions with them about the form that that demonstration might take in representing their views but not disrupting the proceedings on this historic occasion. My thanks go to all those people involved in that matter.

It would be remiss of me not to also recognise the many people from the Parliament who have played such an important role in ensuring that these proceedings could go ahead in a way which replicated many aspects of our chamber at Parliament House.

The set-up in this room was sensational. As I have remarked on a number of occasions, this is a splendid venue to be sitting in in terms of its ambience, sense of history, architecture and so forth. As with the Bendigo Art Gallery last night, it is a real credit to the city of Greater Bendigo, the citizens who no doubt support it and, particularly with regard to the art gallery, the people who are responsible for the management, policy and administration of these prized possessions of the city of Greater Bendigo.

As I said, this sitting has proceeded because so many people have contributed. I note the work of Andrea Agosta, the coordinator of the sitting. She has done a splendid job and fielded many queries, and the issues have been resolved quietly and quickly. I know Andrea is very professional; she approaches these things with a good deal of humour and generally works well with people. This sitting is a credit to her.

I also extend thanks to the buildings team from the Parliament for its work in the set-up. It has done a terrific job of replicating, in many respects, the chamber that we have in Melbourne.

I also thank the IT staff. We have been watching some of the broadcast, which is a facility we obviously have in Melbourne, and it has run seamlessly here. They are to be commended for the work they have done in the broadcasting and in ensuring that members have had access to their email facilities and so forth. We appreciate that work.

We appreciate the work of the Hansard staff, who are also in a different environment. There are some challenges in terms of the work they undertake when they are away from the facilities we have at Parliament House, and I thank them.

I extend appreciation as well to the clerks, the members of the papers office and also the attendants for their work in ensuring that this regional sitting of the Legislative Council has gone successfully and, again, seamlessly.

I also extend thanks to members of the Parliament for their forbearance in relation to some little things that have perhaps arisen along the way.

I am sure all would agree that this is an important occasion, a historic occasion and certainly one that underlines the fact that all members of this house are keen to demonstrate that our Parliament is accessible to all the people of Victoria and that engagement with the people of Victoria is a very high priority of all members of this chamber.

I thank members and advise that the house stands adjourned until next week.

**House adjourned 6.43 p.m. until Tuesday,  
11 September.**

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

*Responses have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.*

**Thursday, 6 September 2012**

**Costerfield mine: ministerial visit**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr Lenders

**Raised on:** 14 March 2012

**REPLY:**

The Department of Primary Industry (DPI) is the lead regulator of this site and as such all limits on emissions are set according to the site's work plan overseen by DPI.

In this particular case, DPI has requested EPA's assistance to better understand the noise issues and verify the data received from the mine's consultants. This work has been undertaken by EPA.

EPA's latest noise report shows some exceedences. However, with trucks, crusher and drill rigs contributing to noise levels, DPI and EPA will need to continue to work with the community and mine to identify the primary source of the exceedences.

DPI and EPA will continue to attend the quarterly Environment Review Committee meetings to get a better understanding of the key community concerns about the mine and work with the mine to ensure compliance.

**Carbon farming: land valuation**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr Barber

**Raised on:** 5 June 2012

**REPLY:**

Use of land for carbon farming, or the sequestration of carbon from native vegetation, does not qualify that land as 'farm land' for the purpose of the definition included in the Valuation of Land Act 1960. When the definition of 'farm land' was drafted for inclusion in the Valuation of Land Act 1960 this type of activity was not contemplated, or carried out on rural land.

The classification of a property as 'farm land' under the Valuation of Land Act 1960 is relevant to property owners as it results in a lower council rate (a farm or agricultural rate) being levied upon the property. As long as the majority of the business is used for primary production the property should retain its primary production status. The farm or agricultural rate is a matter for each council to determine and it will vary across the state based upon each individual council's policy.



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