

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

28 March 2002

(extract from Book 3)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Temporary Chairmen of Committees: Ms Barker, Ms Davies, Mr Jasper, Mr Kilgour, Mr Loney, Mr Lupton, Mr Nardella,
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The Hon. S. P. BRACKS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. W. THWAITES

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

The Hon. D. V. NAPHTHINE

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Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary National Party:

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Holding, Mr Timothy James	Springvale	ALP	Shardey, Mrs Helen Jean	Caulfield	LP
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Kennett, Mr Jeffrey Gibb ¹	Burwood	LP	Thwaites, Mr Johnstone William	Albert Park	ALP
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Kosky, Ms Lynne Janice	Altona	ALP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Frankston East	ALP
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Langdon, Mr Craig Anthony Cuffe	Ivanhoe	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Wantima	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo	Sunshine	ALP	Wilson, Mr Ronald Charles	Bennettswood	LP
Leigh, Mr Geoffrey Graeme	Mordialloc	LP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

¹ Resigned 3 November 1999

² Elected 11 December 1999

³ Resigned 12 April 2000

⁴ Elected 13 May 2000

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Thursday, 28 March 2002

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

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Documents: authenticity

The **SPEAKER** — Order! During the adjournment debate on Tuesday, 19 March, a point of order was taken by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The minister sought an investigation in relation to the authenticity of documents which had been made available to the house by the honourable member for Mordialloc. The Deputy Speaker, who was in the chair at the time, agreed to refer the issue to me for consideration.

I have considered the matters raised. It is not the role of the Chair to investigate the authenticity of any documents that are made available. Guidance in this matter can be obtained from *May* and the *House of Representatives Practice* in relation to the authenticity of questions.

May, 22nd edition, page 297, states that a member asking a question is responsible for the accuracy of any facts on which the question is based. The *House of Representatives Practice* extends the principle, the guidance on page 529 of the fourth edition being:

The requirement that information contained in a question be authenticated by the questioner is rarely applied unless the accuracy of the information is challenged. In such cases the Speaker simply calls on the questioner to vouch for the accuracy of the statement and, if the member cannot do so, the question is disallowed. If the member vouches for the statement's accuracy, the Speaker accepts the authentication.

I intend to apply those principles in relation to any issues arising in the future relating to the authenticity of either questions or documents referred to by honourable members. Accordingly I do not intend to take any further action in relation to the point of order raised by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Members: privilege

On Thursday, 21 March, the honourable member for Mitcham sought my advice on the issue of protection of privilege. Specifically he queried the status of such protection where an honourable member restates matters which have already been the subject of a right of reply pursuant to sessional order 7.

I reiterate the guidance I provided to the house at the time the point of order was raised. Anything said by

honourable members in the house attracts absolute privilege. When a citizen is granted a right of reply, that response forms part of the report tabled by the Privileges Committee. The report is then ordered to be printed by the house, so it is also given absolute privilege. The fact that such a report has been tabled in no way affects the status of any comments honourable members might subsequently make. Provided those remarks are made in the house, the protection of privilege still attaches to them.

PAPER

Laid on table by Clerk:

Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre — Report for the year 2000–01 (two papers).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Mr **CAMERON** (Minister for Local Government) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 16 April.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Insurance: public liability

Mr **McINTOSH** (Kew) — One of the raft of solutions that has recently been proposed by the Minister for Finance on the escalating public liability insurance premiums has been the demand that the commonwealth government amend the Trade Practices Act. I can understand that the magnitude of this crisis may be beyond the newly appointed minister and that he may have some difficulty grappling with the implications, but he should have taken better advice.

The minister ought to know that amendments to the Trade Practices Act, many of which are mirrored in Victorian provisions, to have any effect would require the government to amend Victorian legislation such as the Goods Act and the Fair Trading Act.

This has obviously been pointed out by the commonwealth assistant treasurer, Senator Helen Coonan, in the recent joint communiqué. I am glad to see that the minister may be grappling with the problem; however, I would have expected better from the Minister for Finance. Rather than playing politics,

providing simplistic solutions and going off half cocked, he perhaps should have received better advice if not spoken to the ministers responsible for the Goods Act and the Fair Trading Act.

Here comes the rub — oh joy! People of Victoria, take heart that we now have public liability insurance being dealt with by the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Consumer Affairs, the Honourable Christine Campbell!

Vicroads: licence renewal

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I rise to warn all Victorian drivers that they may be among hundreds of people driving without a current Victorian drivers licence because of major problems at Vicroads. I urge all drivers to check their drivers licence to ensure that it has not expired without their knowing it.

This week I checked my drivers licence and found that it will expire on 5 April 2002. I telephoned Vicroads to ask why I had not received the normal notification that my licence was coming up for expiry, and Vicroads confirmed that because of staffing and computer problems it had not for many months sent out notices to people that their licences had expired.

There are literally, as Vicroads reported to me, hundreds, and possibly thousands, of Victorians driving around without a current Victorian drivers licence. This is an absolute disgrace, and I call on the government to ensure that it does not only look into and review the problem, but fixes the problem. We need Victorians who are driving with current Victorian drivers licence. It is disgraceful that hundreds of Victorians have expired drivers licences simply because Vicroads has not notified them.

When you have a 10-year licence you cannot be expected to know when your licence expires. I take this opportunity to urge people to drive safely during the Easter period, and also urge them to check their licence.

Urban and Regional Land Corporation: Sunbury playground

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — I had the great pleasure of opening Galaxyland in Sunbury, a family park and playground donated to the children of Sunbury and indeed Victoria by the Urban and Regional Land Corporation.

However, Galaxyland is definitely not the type of playground honourable members would recall from their distant childhood. The Urban and Regional Land Corporation has placed this park in one of the prime

sites on Jacksons Hill with a 360-degree view of Sunbury. Children with physical disabilities can enjoy the full range of play equipment with ramps for wheelchairs, and swings and other play equipment with special aids for children with special needs. All ages are catered for. There are rest areas for parents, barbecues and plenty of trees and imaginative plantings with different colours and textures.

Congratulations to all at the Urban and Regional Land Corporation, particularly Bryce Moore, Steve Copeland, John Thompson and Emma Mulholland. Finally, thanks to the 'vision man', Tony Hewson.

The Urban and Regional Land Corporation, like the Bracks government, is getting on with the job despite the Star Chamber obstructionist investigation by the upper house.

Landcare: funding

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — One of the great success stories of Victoria has been the development of Landcare groups since their establishment in the late 1980s and expansion across country Victoria through the 1990s. Their success has been attributed to funding from federal and state governments, and also, importantly, the cooperation of landowners in establishing the local Landcare groups and making them work. Through the 1990s a range of programs have been implemented to address major farming and land care problems such as salinity, soil erosion, pest control and noxious weed eradication.

The funding provided by governments has been multiplied many times over because of landowner involvement. My concern is that governments may not maintain the level of funding to support the strong evidence that higher funding should be provided. Most Landcare groups in north-eastern Victoria have put forward programs under the second generation Landcare scheme to continue and expand the works being undertaken. A vital link in the success of the Landcare groups has been the use of facilitators to coordinate the programs and, of course, the great farmer involvement.

I call on the Minister for Environment and Conservation to ensure continued strong funding support to be provided to Landcare groups so these successful programs can be effectively continued and supported by facilitators and coordinators.

Bell Post Hill Sports Club

Mr LONEY (Geelong North) — I wish to congratulate the Bell Post Hill Sports Club cricket

section, which last weekend won its first ever Geelong Cricket Association division 1 premiership. This was a tremendously hard-fought game between two northern clubs, Bell Post Hill and North Geelong, with Bell Post Hill getting up in the second-last over of the match.

Bell Post Hill captain, James Ingleton, was the star of the match, batting throughout the team's innings to make 85 not out and lead his team to a great victory. He was well supported by a number of other good innings by Ross Aylmer, Rory Priddle and Brad Stacey, with Brad Stacey hitting the winning run. On the bowling side Bell Post Hill's Darren Walsh was superb, taking 6 for 74 and keeping North Geelong to a manageable score.

It was a great grand final win by the club, which is a terrifically valuable club in our local community and again shows how powerful the northern suburbs clubs are. There is a great tradition of sport in Geelong's northern suburbs.

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

Natural Resources and Environment: Warrnambool staff

Mr VOGELS (Warrnambool) — Injured and displaced wildlife risk being left to die because the south-west remains without a wildlife officer to respond to after-hours calls. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Warrnambool City Council and the veterinarians of the south-west are all affected by who should respond to calls about injured wildlife.

The DNRE desperately needs more funding. People are sick of calling an anonymous 1300 number where you keep getting prompt numbers and having to push buttons but you never get to speak to anyone. The situation has got worse since I raised the issue in Parliament last year and the minister assured me that there was no problem.

The responsibility of looking after our native wildlife lies with the whole community, and therefore governments should be not only actively involved in caring for our wildlife but also providing adequate funds to manage the same. We are about to go down the track of the marine parks issue again, but there is no point in declaring marine parks if we do not have adequate staff out there to protect them — they will just become a poachers' haven.

I call on the minister to make sure that we get a wildlife officer in Warrnambool to look after our injured animals.

Alice Austin

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — I rise to congratulate and recognise Alice Austin, who received a Moonee Valley Council Centenary of Federation medal for her work as a volunteer.

Alice Austin is a St Albans person who later on in life shifted to Strathmore. She still is a St Albans person in that she has worked actively and hard in St Albans and still goes back there to work with the community because she is very proud of being a person from St Albans. She served in the St Albans senior citizens club and helped me establish the Keilor Over 50s Club. She looked at Strathmore, but there were no senior citizens facilities, so once again she came to my office for assistance to establish a senior citizens club in Strathmore.

A few years ago I had the pleasure of being invited by Alice's family to her 80th birthday party. Alice is now 87 years of age and is still working as a volunteer. However, she points out that she cannot drive very much now so she does tapestry at home and works on other items for donation to fundraising activities for various charities.

I place on the record my thanks to her because she acted as a babysitter for former mayors in the City of Brimbank and other public figures who needed emergency help. Alice was always there to volunteer in whatever capacity.

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

Rural and regional Victoria: farm rates

Ms BURKE (Pahran) — Rural Victorians are being disadvantaged under the Bracks government and neither of the ministers involved is willing to take responsibility.

Across Victoria farmers are in the minority and are paying the majority of taxes for services they do not have ready access to. They are being charged for what is called 'improved values' on their land, over which they have no control and which a full court has stated contributes only to the unimproved value of the land. Ratepayers are being disadvantaged by a hasty and grossly inaccurate revaluation process. Property values are the responsibility of the Minister for Environment and Conservation because they are dealt with under the

Land Act, and rates are the responsibility of the Minister for Local Government; yet both insist they are powerless to fix the situation.

You would have to query what the Bracks government is really doing for rural Victoria.

Burwood History Group

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — I rise to congratulate the Burwood History Group, which next Wednesday will hold its monthly meeting for the first time in the newly restored historic Burwood Primary School.

It is a marvellous group led by Valma and Frank Fell, and the secretary, John Goff. I should also mention Del Adams, who was president for eight years, and 92-year-old Nell Saunders —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The house will quieten down! The Chair cannot hear what the honourable member for Burwood is saying.

Mr STENSHOLT — I was talking about Nell Saunders, who makes the world's best sponge cakes.

The Burwood History Group lobbied very strongly and successfully to have the Burwood Primary School restored. I was delighted to support them and we were all pleased when the ministers for education and planning provided funds last year for the internal refurbishment.

At next Wednesday's meeting we hope to have a big crowd, including the last Burwood Primary School council president and the last principal. There will be a display of school memorabilia, including the old school bell, trophies and many documents from the past.

This is a marvellous history group. Valma and Frank Fell, for example, have organised an interesting tour of the Burwood cemetery, where some marvellous pioneers have been laid to rest. I commend the work of this local community group. I am happy to strongly support community groups in Burwood, and I commend their work to the house.

Police: Rowville station

Mr WELLS (Wantirna) — I condemn the Bracks government and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for their continuing procrastination and failure to honour their election promise to build the Rowville police station.

The minister just last week in this house said, 'The government will build it'. What the people of Rowville deserve to know is when. When will it be built? Rowville is just another in the long list of suburbs still waiting for election promises to be fulfilled. The people of Croydon, Endeavour Hills and Belgrave equally have every right to be frustrated and angry at the long delays in seeing their promised police stations built.

It is now more than two and a half years since the government's election and the site for the Rowville police station has still not been acquired. Rowville residents and businesses are sick and tired of hearing the minister's rhetoric and glib promises — they simply want the election promise honoured and the police station built.

I understand that although a preferred site has been chosen by Victoria Police, it boils down to the fact that the site is too small for a workable 24-hour police station. The minister must stop messing around on this very important issue for the people of Rowville and ensure that the site for the police station is secured immediately. Is this just another broken promise by a Labor government to the people of the outer east, just as they suffered for 10 long, miserable years under the previous Cain and Kirner Labor governments?

Buses: Werribee service

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) — I share with my colleagues today a thing of great beauty, the Westrans Werribee bus timetable. It has taken nine years, thanks to a fantastic Minister for Transport and Labor government, to provide an increase in the number of services in our community, especially an increase in the number of buses. It is a fantastic outcome for the people of Werribee. We look forward to continued growth over the next decade of Labor government.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for this debate has expired.

JEWISH CARE (VICTORIA) BILL

Second reading

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — It is totally appropriate that this bill be read a second time at the start of Passover, and therefore I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Jewish Community Services Inc. and Montefiore Homes for the Aged Inc. amalgamated on 1 February 2001 to form Jewish Care (Victoria) Inc.

These organisations have a long history of responding to the needs of the Jewish community including: Holocaust survivors, Australian-born Jews and migrants from around the world including the former Soviet Union, Israel and South Africa.

The predecessor organisations of Jewish Care can be traced back to 1848 when the collection of donations, particularly to assist the poor, was undertaken by the Melbourne Jewish Philanthropic Society, the predecessor of Montefiore Homes.

As the needs of the community changed over the years, so did the scope of the activities of these organisations. These activities grew significantly during the pre and post World War II migration resulting from the Nazi persecution of Jews which saw the Victorian Jewish population triple between 1933 and 1961. During this period, resettlement assistance was provided by way of financial support, assistance with accommodation as well as the provision of counselling and familiarisation services. Jewish Care continues to provide Holocaust survivor assistance even now, some of which is now directed to the children of these survivors.

At the time of the amalgamation, Montefiore Homes primarily provided services to the aged, including the operation of a number of aged care accommodation facilities and the provision of a variety of other services for older persons including day and respite care.

Jewish Community Services provided a range of community-based services, including aged care services, employment services, disability services, child and family services and drug referral services.

Jewish Care continues to provide all of the services previously provided by Jewish Community Services and Montefiore Homes for the Aged. Its purposes and activities reflect a continuation of the services and activities of each association.

Beyond migration support and resettlement, Jewish Care's services include:

- employment assistance and placement;
- in-home care, personal care and respite care for older people;
- counselling, case management, brokerage and housing assistance for older people;
- hostel and nursing home accommodation for older people;
- counselling and family services;

financial aid and low-cost loans;

disability services, including supported accommodation, and a school integration program; and

advocacy on behalf of the members of the Jewish community most in need.

Jewish Care's constitution sets out its intent to provide these services in its statement of purposes, underlining the commitment of the organisation to these social and community welfare goals.

Jewish Care is heavily reliant on bequests from the community for the provision of its services.

The Jewish Care (Victoria) Bill is necessary due to the amalgamation of the two original organisations, as following amalgamation and the creation of Jewish Care each predecessor organisation ceased to exist. This creates a difficult situation where some members of the community have made out bequests in favour of Jewish Community Services or Montefiore Homes as those organisations do not formally exist to accept them. Often these bequests will be set out in a will which may not have been changed for some time.

In the absence of this legislation, bequests would be likely to require individual applications to the Supreme Court in order to ensure that they are applied for the purposes of the prior association which are now fulfilled by Jewish Care.

This legislation is aimed at assisting the organisation and its charitable purposes, as repeated applications to the Supreme Court would involve significant expense and erode the value of bequests to Jewish Care.

Jewish Care has therefore requested this bill in order to ensure that bequests made in favour of Jewish Community Services or Montefiore Homes for the Aged are used for the purposes of these two organisations, which are now fulfilled by Jewish Care.

As previously mentioned, Jewish Care continues to provide all of the services previously provided by Jewish Community Services and Montefiore Homes for the Aged. In order to ensure that the wishes of donors and testators are fulfilled, the bill provides that Jewish Care use a bequest for corresponding or similar purposes to those undertaken by the organisation to which the bequest was originally made.

For example, where a bequest was originally made for the benefit of Montefiore Homes for the Aged, the bill would provide, in these circumstances, that this bequest

be used specifically for the aged care services provided by Jewish Care. Similarly, if a bequest had been made for the benefit of the disability services formerly provided by Jewish Community Services, this bequest would now be used for the benefit of the disability services provided by Jewish Care.

The government has introduced this bill to ensure Jewish Care is able to gain access to bequests made in favour of Jewish Community Services and Montefiore Homes. This will assist Jewish Care in providing for some of the welfare and other needs of the Jewish community.

I commend the bill to the house.

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — The Liberal Party opposition supports this bill and wishes it a speedy passage. This bill follows a number of other bills of similar ilk relating to Anglicare, Scotch College and other charitable trusts and organisations that provide care and services across a wide range of community sector areas.

As a former Minister for Community Services I can say that Jewish Community Services has been an outstanding organisation in providing care and support to Jewish families and the Jewish community, particularly young people in that community, who need some assistance. Montefiore Homes is legendary for its support for older people from the Jewish and other communities. I have visited Montefiore Homes and have been very impressed with its standard of care and service and dedication, particularly to people of the Jewish faith and from Jewish backgrounds who came from the former Soviet Union and other parts of the world immediately post the Second World War and in another significant bout of immigration in the 1990s. As many of those people are now getting older, their needs are increasing and they sometimes need particular care, given their ethnicity and Jewish background. Montefiore Homes provides an outstanding level of care and service.

Montefiore Homes and Jewish Community Care have found, as have other organisations such as Anglicare, that by combining they can manage their resources more efficiently and provide a more integrated range of services and better care for the total Jewish community. I believe that also solves some problems concerning bequests and trusts, and I think that is something all honourable members on both sides of the house would support.

In light of the bipartisan support the house has given for other similar pieces of legislation, the opposition

supports the establishment of Jewish Care. We wish the bill well and will assist with its speedy passage to ensure that it can be implemented as soon as possible in support of the work done by Jewish Care (Victoria). I congratulate all those involved in the development of the bill and those who work in Jewish Care. I wish them well with their ongoing work for people in need in the Jewish community.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — From the National Party perspective this legislation is a question of facilitation. As the Leader of the Opposition has already remarked, similar legislation has already been passed to look after the interests of the Anglican Church, and arrangements of similar ilk have been made with the Catholic Church. Therefore the National Party would support the passage of this legislation.

The bill represents a regularisation of mechanisms to bring arrangements into line with today's requirements and practical needs and to enable the new organisation to accommodate what may be required tomorrow. Having had the opportunity to consider the second-reading speech made by the Attorney-General, the National Party thinks this is sensible legislation.

I have also had the opportunity to scan the content of the bill, and from our perspective the National Party would support it. Indeed, again we wish it a speedy passage and hope it will pass through the process of the Parliament as soon as that can possibly be achieved.

Mr Batchelor — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the debate on this bill is immediately following the second reading without debate or consultation with the government by the opposition. While we understand that there is bipartisan support for this initiative, the opposition has actually put its foot in it by not seeking advice as to how this should be properly proceeded with in the chamber.

This is a private bill, and by proceeding down this path the opposition has placed in jeopardy the normal courtesy that this government provides to charitable organisations in declaring this a public bill.

I put to you, Mr Speaker that in light of that the best and most appropriate course of action would be to have debate on this bill adjourned so Parliament and the government could extend to Jewish Care (Victoria) and the other associated organisations the normal courtesy of providing the opportunity to have this declared a public bill and therefore not incur the administrative costs that would flow to the organisation had this not occurred. I seek your advice on that.

Dr Napthine — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, we on this side of the house wish to facilitate the passage of this bill. We would have felt it perhaps appropriate in the second-reading speech to make some reference to the fact that this is a private bill, but to facilitate the matter we would accept — indeed, I would be prepared to move if the appropriate words were given to me — a by-leave motion that the costs be considered public costs rather than private costs. My understanding is that a by-leave motion can be moved here and now, and I would urge that that procedure be adopted so we can get on with this and move the bill through as soon as possible.

The SPEAKER — Order! On the point of order raised by the Minister for Transport, the Clerk alerted me to the fact that this bill needed examination by the Chair as to whether it would be deemed a private bill. That opportunity, unfortunately — again because of the time constraint on debating the bill — has not been given to the Chair.

If the Leader of the Opposition has concluded his remarks, it is my intention to call the next speaker on the matter that is currently before the Chair and to continue to hear that speaker until conclusion unless that speaker moves an adjournment of the debate, which might then resolve the issue, and I will make a deliberation at the conclusion of that contribution.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 11 April.

MELBOURNE CITY LINK (FURTHER MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL

Second reading

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill makes a range of improvements to the City Link arrangements. This bill has six purposes.

The first purpose is to temporarily reserve certain Crown land under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 for the purposes of the City Link project so that licences can be issued to Transurban over that land for the installation and operation of reticulation pipes.

Transurban is required to implement a ground water management system that will prevent or minimise ground settlement. This requirement is being met in

part by recharging the aquifers in the vicinity of the City Link tunnels at various recharge sites. The ground water management system will ensure that the appropriate ground water equilibrium level is reached and maintained for the duration of the concession period. Such a system is necessary to protect private and public property in the vicinity of the City Link tunnels from ground settlement.

This amendment will enable Transurban to honour the agreement it reached with the Bracks government to use recycled water for recharge purposes. This will significantly reduce the amount of fresh water required for recharge.

As part of this commitment, Transurban is installing a reticulation system from a treatment plant near Swan Street to the recharge wells. Virtually all the reticulation pipes will run through land to be leased to Transurban. However, Transurban has identified the need for two additional narrow strips of land. These strips are situated on Crown land. One strip consists of unreserved and permanently reserved Crown land, situated on the south side of the Yarra River, between the Yarra River and Alexandra Avenue. The other strip consists of unreserved and temporarily reserved Crown land, between the Yarra River and Batman Avenue. There will be continued public access to the land to be reserved by this bill.

The second purpose of the bill is to restrict the acquisition of unit holdings in the Transurban Holding Trust. The act currently imposes a 20 per cent unit holder restriction on unit holdings in the Transurban City Link Unit Trust. The amendment, which is consequential on the Transurban restructure, imposes that ownership cap on unit holdings in the Transurban Holding Trust as that Trust now holds all the units in the Transurban City Link Unit Trust.

The third purpose of the bill is to make provision for further backdating of temporary registration to support the new extended weekend pass. The new pass was introduced by Transurban after negotiation with this government and provides an improved product for the casual user. It enables motorists to use City Link from Friday midday to Sunday midnight at the same price as a 24-hour pass.

Legislation passed last session provided a legislative basis for this product by extending the period for temporary registration. This bill extends the backdating provisions for this product. Currently customers may purchase a pass until midnight of the day following the day of first use. Thus the current backdating provision only allows backdating for up to two calendar days,

whereas the extended weekend pass is valid over a three-day calendar period. The amendment will enable backdating for the full period of an extended pass.

The fourth purpose of the bill is to provide greater flexibility in leasing land to Transurban. Currently the act only enables Crown land to be leased to Transurban for the purposes of managing the roadway and ancillary works, or related purposes. The bill enables the state to lease Crown land to Transurban for any purpose so long as it is not inconsistent with the road management and ancillary works purposes. Approval of a lease of land for a purpose that is not wholly or partly for the purpose of managing a roadway and ancillary works will require the approval of the minister administering part IX of the Land Act 1958.

This amendment will be supported by amendments to the concession deed (referred to in the act as the agreement), enabling Transurban to sublease or licence small parcels of land included in its leases, subject to the approval by the minister of the terms and conditions of the sublease or licence. These subleasing or licensing arrangements could be used to facilitate better use of small parcels of land that do not have a community use and may otherwise stay vacant. An example is car-parking facilities under elevated parts of the link.

The fifth purpose of the bill is to provide a legislative regime for the construction of a Transurban office building on land to be leased to Transurban in Burnley. Certain aspects of the City Link project are exempt from compliance with the Building Act 1994 and planning schemes under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, and exempt from the requirement to pay council rates.

The bill provides that the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Building Act 1994 will apply to the Burnley office site, and council rates will be payable by Transurban in respect of the site. This approach is consistent with the approach taken in relation to the link control site and the customer service site, two buildings that are part of the City Link project.

A special planning regime will apply to the Burnley office site. This is necessary because in 1999 the previous government entered into an agreement with Transurban which provided that Transurban would not be required to obtain a planning permit for the development on the Burnley office site, but would be required to go through an informal process with the City of Yarra, which is the responsible authority under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

Though this government does not support Transurban being subject to a special planning regime, it is bound to honour the agreement entered into by the previous government. This government will therefore provide, by a special planning scheme amendment, that Transurban will not be required to obtain a planning permit for this development, but plans for the development will be subject to approval by the Minister for Planning.

The sixth purpose of the bill is to amend the provisions of the act dealing with infringement notices, so as to establish a lower penalty the first time a person commits a tolling offence.

The current penalty is \$100. Tolling on the western link has been in operation for over two years, and for more than one year on southern link. Users have now had time to become accustomed to the requirements of tolling and the infringement regime. However, the government recognises that a \$100 fine may be a heavy fine for first-time offenders. The bill provides that the penalty for the first offence will be \$40. The bill makes provision for the penalty for the first offence to be varied by regulations. The government will continue to monitor the effectiveness and appropriateness of this penalty level.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc).

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That the debate be adjourned until Thursday, 11 April.

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — On the question of time, Mr Acting Speaker, given that this bill is somewhat varied and the opposition has no knowledge of it, and given that this government says consistently that it is going to be — —

Mr Batchelor interjected.

Mr LEIGH — Well, you've never discussed it with us. So given the fact that the government says it is entering into new arrangements in our democracy, and that almost a week will have gone by before we can get access to staff and otherwise of both the minister and Transurban and any other interested parties — because it will not be until next Tuesday that, I presume, many people will be back at work, or Monday perhaps — I seek, firstly, that the minister's staff cooperate in a manner that will make sure that the opposition gets the opportunity to talk to whoever is necessary, and secondly, in respect of the time, I suggest it should be

three weeks, as in reality because of Easter that in effect would equate to the normal two weeks for this bill if it had not been brought up before Easter.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until Thursday, 11 April.

ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 27 March; motion of Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation).

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — When I was interrupted last evening I was discussing the entry to the debate on the AES power station of the honourable member for Geelong and his very brave action in lodging a petition against his own minister and government against the building of that power station. I understand that the honourable member for Geelong is in the perilous position of trying to retain 16 workers in order to hold his position down there as the local member. He has become the greatest fence-sitter on these types of issues.

The problem is that if he allows something like this to proceed he is going to offend more than 16 people, and if he runs with the project he is going to lose more than 16 people. So what we have now is the honourable member for Geelong being prepared to sit on the fence on this and any other issue that may upset his chances of retaining that seat. As a result of this whole proposal we now have a situation where 100 construction jobs have been lost.

Mr Trezise — Mr Acting Speaker, my point of order is in relation to relevance. The Stonehaven power station and my future in this Parliament have absolutely nothing to do with the bill at hand. I ask you to bring the honourable member back to the topic at hand.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! Order! I will make a ruling on the point of order. The honourable member for Polwarth should address himself more closely to the bill. I will allow him to continue. This time I will not uphold the point of order, but should he stray further I will pull him up.

Mr MULDER — The Stonehaven plant, or Geelong's power plant as it is known now, would add significantly to the area's greenhouse gas emissions. I think the honourable member for Geelong would recognise that, because it is his government that

allowed that plant to proceed without an environmental effects study, which is the point of the entire issue.

Mr Trezise — I again raise a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, on the point of relevance. What the honourable member for Polwarth is saying about the Stonehaven power station has absolutely nothing to do with this bill. I ask that you bring him back to the bill at hand.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the bill itself and to the proposed section 23A (1) to be inserted in the Electricity Industry Act 2000, which refers to the provision to customers of information concerning greenhouse gas emissions connected with the generation of electricity so supplied to the customer. Clearly greenhouse gases are emitted by generating plants. The honourable member for Polwarth was referring to a particular generating plant, and as I understand it was about to canvass the potential impact of that plant's greenhouse gas emissions. I would submit that while the honourable member is speaking to that issue he is perfectly in order.

Mr Hamilton — On the point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, it would seem to me that the point raised by the honourable member for Geelong has indeed a great deal of relevance, because given that the proposed Stonehaven power plant has not even been built it is very hard to justify the fact that it can be emitting greenhouse gases. Logically it is nonsense, and therefore the honourable member for Polwarth ought to return to speaking on the bill and not try to score political points.

Mr Paterson — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, this issue was dealt with yesterday by another Acting Speaker. This issue of greenhouse gases is central to the Stonehaven issue and yesterday the Acting Speaker in the Chair at the time ruled that discussion of the Stonehaven power station was entirely in order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! I have heard sufficient on this matter. As I have made the ruling before, I will maintain my ruling that I do not uphold the point of order and I will pull up the honourable member for Polwarth if he continues to debate matters not relevant to the bill. I ask him to come back to the bill. I also advise honourable members that in a robust debate we cannot have very thin skins, because this is a wide-ranging debate on greenhouse effects and the legislation.

Mr MULDER — As I was stating in relation to the greenhouse gas emissions from the AES power station, there is now a scenario whereby it would be very embarrassing for the government to allow it to continue and very embarrassing to try to halt it. So when you get a stalemate like that what do you do? The honourable member for Geelong called on his mate Dean Mighell, and the union put a ban on the building of the site. We now have a scenario where AES has walked away from the Stonehaven electricity-generating plant, which it appears will not be built. One hundred construction — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! On the bill! The honourable member should be talking about the amount of gas to be emitted under this electricity bill. I call the honourable member back to the bill and he should make his speech accordingly.

Mr MULDER — Both sides of the house recognise that there is a strong need for generating plants across the state. It is a really damaging point for the government of the day if this particular generating site does not proceed, because other forms of power generators around the state would have a greater level of impact in relation to greenhouse gas emissions. I can only imagine that in a couple of years, when the lights start to flicker in Geelong, you will have someone like the Honourable Elaine Carbines from another place, a member for Geelong — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! I ask the honourable member to talk on the bill!

Mr MULDER — I conclude on that point!

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I am pleased to be rising in the house today to speak on the Electricity Industry (Amendment) Bill. Rest assured, Mr Acting Speaker, that I will stick to the bill, unlike the honourable member for Polwarth who did not.

I am happy to support this bill because it takes positive steps in providing a healthier environment not only for Victorians today but obviously for future generations. As the parent of two school-age children it is important to me, as it would be to other honourable members, to ensure that we provide a clean environment not only for ourselves but for our children and our children's children.

As I said, this bill is about providing a better environment and does so by requiring companies that provide electricity to consumers to report to those consumers the links between the use of their electricity and the resultant greenhouse emissions. It is an important bill because, in a practical way, it is about

raising the awareness of greenhouse emissions, raising the awareness of pollution and raising the awareness of current and future generations to the issues. It is widely accepted that an important step in reducing pollution is informing and educating the wider community about the issues that this bill addresses — for example, greenhouse emissions.

As I mentioned, I am the parent of two school-age children and earlier in my contribution I talked about my generation probably not having the same information about greenhouse emissions as our children do. At the present time we are fortunate that our education system and the information base within that system ensure that our children are learning about pollution and greenhouse emissions. Unfortunately previous generations such as mine went to school and were not educated on these issues, so it is necessary for initiatives such as this bill to set out the importance of educating all generations. As I said, it is future generations that we need to be addressing and this bill does that.

I would think it fair to say that, compared to today's children, adults do not really appreciate the importance of a bill like the one we are addressing today. It ensures, or attempts to ensure, that we begin to reduce greenhouse emissions for the betterment and health of our environment.

Importantly this bill once again delivers on the Bracks Labor government's election commitment, which was part of what I would describe as a very good and comprehensive environmental policy that was taken to the people of Victoria in September 1999. I believe this very comprehensive and practical environmental policy struck a chord with the people of Victoria and ensured that it put us on this side of the house and people like the honourable member for Polwarth on that side.

As I said, this bill fulfils an election commitment of the Bracks Labor government; therefore it is another reason why I will wholeheartedly support this bill in the house today.

Mr Mulder — All or half of it? You are a fence-sitter.

Mr TREZISE — You are a goose, fair dinkum! You know all about — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! The honourable member for Polwarth is being disorderly, and the honourable member for Geelong will disregard interjections knowing that they are disorderly and address himself through the Chair on the bill!

Mr TREZISE — Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. It is just too hard to ignore him sometimes.

An important aspect of this bill is the education of the general public on greenhouse emissions and the direct links they have with the use of electricity not only for householders but also for companies, both small and large. It is important to note that this bill is about educating all of the community and not only individuals, householders and families. It is also about educating large and small companies on greenhouse emissions and their link to electricity. As far as I am concerned, this is about educating the entire community; education is paramount because I feel there is a significant lack of knowledge on these issues. There is a significant lack of appreciation of greenhouse emissions and their link to electricity production and use.

I believe many people are aware of the problems with greenhouse emissions but see it as a worldwide issue and too big for them to address, and therefore push it aside. However, this is far from the case. This bill is about ensuring that people realise that their actions, even in a small way, will help contribute to reducing greenhouse emissions and lead to a better environment for not only this generation but future generations.

This bill can make a difference, and can make a difference to householders. Householders need to appreciate that they can make a difference by the efficient use of the power in their homes, as well as in factories and companies.

Every user of electricity will have delivered to their home a bill, and on that bill, as this legislation sets out, they will be provided with comprehensive and very pertinent information on the direct link between their use of electricity and greenhouse emissions. That information will focus directly on the link between the use of electricity and the level of pollution coming from the sources of power generation.

In dealing with this issue it is important to note that electricity production accounts for something like 55 per cent of greenhouse emissions in Victoria, compared to something like 30 per cent of emissions across our nation, the difference being that in Victoria we rely heavily on burning brown coal to produce our electricity. So when one considers the fact that more than half of Victoria's greenhouse emissions are caused by electricity production, one can see the importance of this legislation.

It is important for people to realise that if you bring down electricity usage, and thus electricity production,

you reduce significantly the levels of greenhouse emissions within our community. I believe that is a very important message that needs to be put out into the community. In getting this information out to consumers it is important that the information is provided in a very pertinent and effective manner. Therefore I am pleased to see that the information will be provided on people's electricity bills in the form of a very basic bar graph. A brief glance at those bar graphs will ensure that consumers comprehend very quickly and effectively the information being provided to them by their electricity retailers.

In relation to that, where people seek to gain further information, that information can be gleaned from a web site. Also, materials will be made available to those people who are seeking further information. The web site which will be developed by the Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria will provide further detailed information on how greenhouse gas emissions and electricity information are calculated and the purchasing of green power, as well as very practical ideas on how householders or companies can reduce their electricity use and therefore in turn reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

An important pillar of the Bracks Labor government — it has been a hallmark of this government — is wide and open consultation. I am pleased to note that this extensive and wide consultation has also taken place in the formulation of this bill and the initiatives that we see coming out of this bill. Consultation within the industry and with customers was undertaken by the Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria throughout 2001. Through the authority options for implementation were explored and discussed extensively not only within the electricity industry but also through initiatives such as focus groups, to ensure that consumer groups and individual consumers were consulted in developing the initiatives we are discussing today.

This is an important piece of legislation. It takes positive steps to ensure we are providing a better future environment. It delivers on another Bracks Labor government commitment, and therefore I will be supporting the bill. I wish it a speedy passage through the house.

Mr VOGELS (Warrnambool) — I welcome the opportunity to make some comments on the Electricity Industry (Amendment) Bill, which will require retailers of electricity to disclose information about greenhouse emissions on each bill issued to a customer.

I believe it is important that this happens because the public needs to understand what effect greenhouse emissions are having on our climate. We also need to understand that the alternatives in Victoria to brown coal generating capacity will be very, very expensive. We are trying wind power, solar power, and in Portland at present wave generation is about to be tried. Hopefully wave generation will prove to be more efficient than the others, for at present they certainly are not economical.

The only way wind power can be marketed is by its receiving huge subsidies. That is not to say we should not keep trying these new renewable resources, because through trial and error we may find cheaper and more reliable methods down the track.

I experimented with solar power myself a few years ago, and it was a dismal failure. In our family home we had no TV reception at all, and although there was very good reception up in an old wool shed on top of the hill there was no power up there. The idea was to put a receiver up there and beam the TV signal down to the house. It all seemed very feasible except that at the end of the day it did not work. A solar panel cost \$900, and all it had to do was keep a 12-volt battery charged, which would then be enough to send down this signal. It needed a constant 1 watt of power, but the solar panel could not keep it up.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr VOGELS — We had a \$900 one already, which was a huge one, but we finished up running a powerline up to get the constant power. I am not saying that in the long run these things cannot be improved, but the photocells or whatever is in there at the moment is just not viable.

Importantly a scheme is about to be tried with wave generation. I believe that is probably one of the things that will happen in the future. I heard Professor David Bellamy the other day in Warrnambool saying that an area of about 100 kilometres by 100 kilometres of wave-generated power would provide enough energy to supply the whole of Europe, which would be clean, green and would probably have no effect on anybody.

I would like to conclude by saying I was pleased to receive a letter from the Minister for State and Regional Development recently — on 25 February, to be exact — congratulating me and sending his best wishes for the future on my foresight in upgrading our farm's power supplies from single wire earth return (SWER) line to three phase.

I thank him for his congratulations and for conceding that farmers do make a considerable contribution. In fact, approximately \$8 million will be coming out of farmers' pockets to upgrade the SWER lines to three phase. It is a good initiative, and I will encourage the government to have a look at extending this to where there are two lines instead of single-wire earth returns, and also getting those lines upgraded.

In conclusion, the opposition supports the idea that we need to reduce greenhouse emissions, and educating the users of power supplies is an important step. I support the bill before the house.

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — This is another bill that is light on words but represents a sea change in people's thinking. The opposition thinks these bills are of no importance whatsoever because they are not great big bills of 50 or 60 pages. This is a very important bill, and it should be fully debated by both the government and the opposition. If the opposition thinks that only things which have a lot of words in them are important, I look forward to the coming election — whenever that is — and to seeing some of its policies. We certainly have not seen any policies yet, either short or long; all we have heard is carping and whingeing about various things, although I believe it is very verbose in the upper house.

This bill is very important because it seeks to provide consumers with information about their electricity bills. I say hooray to that! What we will see in the future is people getting their electricity bills and querying their own electricity consumption. There is a home show at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre this weekend. I hope lots of people will go along to that and look at the various items on display — perhaps solar energy hot water services, or refrigerators and other whitegoods showing their energy star rating. I can really see this making a difference to people's lives. As their children become more conscious of greenhouse gases and global warming, they will start to query their parents' use of electricity and become interested in the family's use of electricity.

This bill is entirely consistent with the Bracks government's Greener Cities policy commitment to require all electricity companies to disclose as part of their billing information the amount of greenhouse gas produced in supplying electricity. When we talk about consumers it is important that we think not only of householders but of industry, too. As I said, at the home show we should be looking not only at electrical products and their star ratings but also at ways of reducing the use of electricity such as insulation for homes and window designs — all of those sorts of

things that have an effect on the amount of electricity used in households — and when industry builds commercial premises it should also be looking at that sort of thing.

The objective of this initiative is to ensure that all electricity customers are made aware of the direct link between their electricity consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, which lead to global warming. Customers will then be able to make informed choices to purchase green power or invest in energy efficiency. This disclosure requirement will apply to all customers and to each bill. I think that is terrific, because if you only had it on an annual basis you would forget to look at it. Families and industry will now constantly monitor their electricity bills.

The cost of implementing the measure will be a one-off cost of \$1 million to \$2 million for the retail sector as a whole. The costs of implementation were not raised as issues by the retailers during consultation on the bill, so there is acceptance by the retailers that this is a good thing.

A guideline will be developed by the Essential Services Commission in conjunction with the Sustainable Energy Authority. It will specify minimum disclosure requirements and the method of calculating each customer's greenhouse emissions. The timing of the introduction of the disclosure requirement will be determined in consultation with interested parties during the guideline development process. Again there is that word 'consultation', which this government is so good at. I know the opposition will constantly jump up and say, 'Too much consultation'. Members of the public like consultation. They have participated fully in various government programs involving community consultation — for example, the community cabinet. Of course, it is only the opposition that does not like consultation because it means it will have to develop some policies. That is pretty hard because for seven years somebody told opposition members what to do; they did not have to do anything for themselves.

I digress a moment: it has to do with energy emission because I read in the paper this morning that the former Premier's ratings are up to 3.9. I think the Leader of the Opposition is trying to meet him in the middle somewhere!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! The honourable member, on the bill.

Ms BEATTIE — I refer back to the bill. The Sustainable Energy Authority will establish a dedicated web site, which again will appeal to young people. We

naturally open a book, but young people click on to a web site. People who are interested in additional information will be able to click on to a web site and obtain further information on a range of energy and greenhouse gas issues.

I refer back to the point of consultation. The energy and minerals division and the Sustainable Energy Authority have jointly consulted on the proposal with the Essential Services Commission, the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, electricity retailers, and customer and environmental group representatives. Honourable members can see that everybody is in the cart on this bill.

The Leader of the National Party said that it should have been an omnibus bill. I do not think so. The bill is important and should stand alone. The Bracks government has initiated a range of energy industry amendments and this is another one. We will continue to introduce these bills for the good of the community.

Frankly, it is no secret that the privatisation of energy was opposed by this side of the house. We did not like it. However, we are stuck with it and are making the best of it so that consumers can benefit from our long-term plans. The government will assist them with various things. For people in need there are still various concessions available.

Again I refer to the consultation process which the public likes so much. As I said, everybody is in the cart for further consultation. The timing, calculation and implementation of those measures will be the subject of consultation with interested parties as part of the development of a guideline.

As I said in my opening remarks, it is not a large bill in terms of words but it is certainly a sea change so far as the consumption of electricity is concerned. We must review the way we handle our energy and our consumption of electricity for the sake of our children and their children. Mr Acting Speaker, I know you are concerned about the environment that you will leave for your grandchildren, and that is to be much praised. We have heard scientific evidence on the effect of global warming and have read various studies showing that the sea could rise to such a level that it could flood various cities around the world and cause mass destruction. However, with the far-reaching vision of the Bracks government in introducing such bills as this I hope all those things will be prevented.

Both the United States and Australia — which was a great disappointment — have backed away from the Kyoto principles, which is a great shame. However, the Bracks Labor government will keep going. It will keep pressing ahead with reforms to the electricity industry and the energy consumption of Victorians, and will do its best. Despite the opposition's opposition to consultation the government will continue to consult with communities and with all stakeholders in the various government departments. We will continue to govern for all Victorians and turn this state around from the mess in which it was left by the Kennett government. In conclusion, I support the bill and commend it to the house.

Mr PATERSON (South Barwon) — The real issue before the house is not the inclusion of greenhouse emission bar charts on electricity bills. The Liberal Party has indicated it has no problem with putting these bar charts on the bills and watching the children race to the letterboxes so they can have a look at them — which we know is going to happen, of course! As has been pointed out by government members, what children will be doing in the future is trying to beat their parents down to the mailbox so they can look at the greenhouse emission bar charts every time an electricity bill comes in.

The real issue here is the hypocrisy of this government in pretending that it is concerned about the community and greenhouse emissions when it comes to power stations. It has been amusing in a sick sort of way to listen to the hypocrisy of government members talking about the way they favour consultation with the community. The Geelong residents knew all about the consultation this government has with their community when they saw it bulldoze the planning system and approve the Stonehaven power station without the requirement for an environment effects statement. That is what happened in Geelong.

The Bracks Labor government had no concern for the residents of Geelong and did not consult with them for one second before bulldozing the Stonehaven power station proposal through with complete disregard for the environment and without any requirement for an environment effects statement. It put that community through months and months of pain, anguish and expense with Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal appeals only to announce recently that it has now decided Victoria does not need the power station at all! Having put the community through months and months of turmoil and cost, it now says 'Oh, we don't really need this power station any more'.

It is little wonder that the residents of Geelong do not trust this government, and that is why the picket line at the proposed site will stay. They do not trust this government and are fearful that the planning permit that now exists for the Stonehaven power station will simply be sold on to another generating company which may, in fact, continue with plans to build the station. It is little wonder that in Geelong the government's credibility on emissions from power stations is subzero — and deservedly so.

There is reference in the bill to disclosure of information and to consultation — again a sick joke on the part of the Bracks Labor government. There was no consultation with the people of Geelong and no disclosure of information because it buried the requirement for the environment effects statement, and that is why the people of Geelong will never forget the shabby treatment meted out to them by the Bracks Labor government.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — It just amazes me to hear the hypocrisy and the double standards of the Liberal Party, and certainly of the honourable member for South Barwon, who is now leaving the chamber, when they get up here and talk about Stonehaven and consultation and the electricity system that we inherited from the Kennett government.

The reason we have to put in place the Stonehaven power station and other kerosene or gas-fired stations that will have an effect on greenhouse emissions and on our natural resources is that the Kennett government, with both the Liberals and the National Party involved, stuffed up the electricity system! That is the reason we had to go out there and consult, which the honourable member for South Barwon referred to in his contribution. We have to fix up the mess the Kennett government left in place through its privatisation policy.

It gives the government absolutely no pleasure at all to go out there and waste Victoria's natural gas resources at Stonehaven and Somerton and in the Latrobe Valley. It has to put in place peak generators that produce a lot of greenhouse gases and waste our gas supplies and resources from Bass Strait because there was no planning either in a greenhouse emissions sense or in a coordinated sense after the privatisation of the former State Electricity Commission of Victoria and the splitting off and disaggregation of all the generators. The false position of having retailers, wholesalers and transmission lines under another authority and the disaggregation have forced the government into a position where it has to look at those short-term peak power stations.

The greenhouse effects of those power stations are immense. I remember back in the early to mid-1970s I opposed and protested against a massive 500-megawatt gas-fired power station at Newport. We were out there protesting against it because it was wasting our natural resources — our gas — and it was an inefficient way of producing electricity in Victoria given the amount of brown coal we have in the Latrobe Valley, which on some estimates will last another 100 to 200 years.

Liberal Party members, including the honourable member for South Barwon, come in here and say that the Geelong community is outraged — of course it is outraged! It is outraged that the previous Kennett Liberal–National government has placed our community and our society in this position where the government has to find alternative ways of providing power to industry and to households. The previous Kennett government had no idea. The only thing it saw was the bottom line. It did not care about the greenhouse gases it was going to spew out into the atmosphere. All it wanted to do was to sell off the power generation, get the money and pay off some debt, but in the process it has sold off the crown jewels here in Victoria.

It is like the National party selling off the family farm. In essence that is what the Kennett government did, with the acquiescence of honourable members on the other side of the house, and it is a disgrace. Part of the reason this government is putting this bill in place is to inform consumers, not only at a household level but also at an industry level, what their electricity usage is and its effect on greenhouse gases. They can then see that and change their usage or their method of getting their electricity. This is part of the Bracks Labor government strategy of ensuring a sustainable future, a green future, a future where we consider the long-term effects of electricity usage on our society.

It is absolutely imperative that we introduce this legislation so that we can easily demonstrate the usage of greenhouse gases by ordinary households made up of families and individuals within our society and also businesses, because they, too, have a role to play in reducing greenhouse gases and working out how to co-generate and put power back into the system. It is important to understand that businesses have a role to play. They have a social responsibility. It should not be just about profit. Economists would say it is about maximising profit and the return to shareholders. I say that is very simplistic. Companies, corporations and shareholders in medium, small and microbusinesses have to consider what they are going to do for a sustainable future and what measures they can put in place to ensure that our electricity supply is sustainable

in the future, while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Consumers have a choice at both household and industry level, and there has been some discussion on how electricity is produced and how it then shows up on the account that is received every couple of months. In the past couple of days honourable members, including the honourable member for Bendigo East, have drawn attention to the difference now between the amount paid by electricity consumers in the country compared to those in the metropolitan area, although the amount of greenhouse gas that is produced from electricity is the same.

Unfortunately, under the regime introduced by the Kennett government, country consumers will inevitably have to pay more. We put a cap on that of \$100 million in a transitional period over the next 12 months to try to deal with this mess, but the fact remains that country consumers produce the same amount of greenhouse gas as metropolitan consumers. It is disgraceful that the Kennett government introduced this regime without giving any consideration to greenhouse gases.

Industries have a number of options available to them to reduce their greenhouse emissions. For example, when a new building is constructed I would like the draftspersons and the architects to think about how that building can be insulated, utilised and designed to use less electricity for heating and cooling.

Not only should that aspect be considered but also how those buildings can then be used to generate electricity and become co-generators. It can be through innovative programs — we have not seen them yet, such as how wind power or wind generation can be put in place on new buildings — but certainly photovoltaic cells and co-generation using excess heat, excess steam and excess production of heat energy within workplaces is another way of putting back into the grid some clean power without it being wasted.

It is important that industry look at these types of matters to reduce its costs and the long-term effect on Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions, which are extremely high — they are about 55 per cent compared to about 33 to 35 per cent Australia wide — because of our brown coal generation. In the long term the cheap power that we have through coal will become expensive power when compared to the green alternatives that are out there and being developed, and through the effluxion of time, the development of technology and the thinking that goes into them will actually reduce the costs of electricity production.

Industry and businesses have that responsibility and need to put those matters in place.

The bill places on an electricity account the amount of greenhouse gases that have been produced for that billing period. It is essentially carbon dioxide but it can also be nitrous oxide or methane that is produced, and in a global sense — Australia being part of the globe — those greenhouse gases are produced and envelop the earth and act like a greenhouse, trapping the heat in the global environment.

I have come by a number of interesting statistics. These matters have been considered over a long period of time. When I was at Sunshine technical school we got a new library, fully decked out, in 1973–74 with the compliments of the Whitlam Labor government. It was a fantastic program. There was a concern about disadvantaged areas, of which Sunshine was one, so the government provided not only the library but also the books to go with it. The Whitlam government was very innovative.

One of the books was a report from the Club of Rome, a group of international scientists and concerned people, which looked at the greenhouse effect. This was in 1970–71. It reported the state of the global environment and the greenhouse effect that was occurring and was starting to be understood at that point in time. That concern has continued over the past 32 years — it is 30-odd years since I was at Sunny tech! Thirty-two years ago we were starting to think and be concerned about these issues, and that has continued.

There is an intergovernmental body on climate change which in its third report looked at these issues in a global sense. It is a continuation of that Club of Rome report back in the early 1970s. The report says that globally, from 1990 to 2100 — that is, 98 years into the future — the average surface temperature will increase from roughly 1.4 degrees Celsius to 5.8 degrees Celsius. The effect of that is multifaceted, but it is very important to understand especially for the generations of the future. There has been some discussion by the honourable member for Geelong and others about the fact that warming over this period of time will have an effect on the oceans, on our climate, on our food production and on how we live as human beings in this society.

I will go through some more statistics. Over the past 50 years the warming has been basically attributable to human activity, so we have been the cause of that greenhouse effect on our globe. There have been instances, as you will see if you read some of the

material in the newspapers, over the past 12 000 years and over the eons, where global warming, climate change and climate effects have occurred. One of the times was during the medieval ages when a number of volcanoes exploded and the ash blanketed the earth and cooled it for some years. Those events are natural phenomena. However, in the past 50 years we have been creating the greenhouse effect in the world, and that is very disturbing.

The 1990s has been the warmest decade ever, and 1998 was the warmest year since 1861. The effect of this in a very small but important and serious way, especially for a number of Pacific islands and elsewhere, is that sea levels are estimated to increase by 0.09 of a metre to 0.88 of a metre.

That does not sound like much. A metre is about 3 feet in the old terminology — you can see that I went to Sunshine technical school in the 1970s! — so sea levels are expected to rise 3 feet around the world from 1990 to 2100. The effect of that on the tides and the polar icecaps will be quite marked. If we think we had problems with the *Tampa* — and I do not think we did — or with refugees from areas that have been devastated by civil war, religious hatred and intolerance, we have not seen anything yet. A lot of those Pacific islands will just not be there in the future, so their people will have no option but to move to higher ground, and Australia will be one of the places they come to.

Therefore it is important that we deal with these issues in our own small way. The slogan has been ‘Think globally, act locally’, and that is what this legislation is about. It is about how we can have an influence on these matters in our community.

Green power will have a gas coefficient of zero. If the power is produced by wind energy, by photovoltaic cells or by other means the coefficient in the account will be zero. That is really important. People are making a conscious decision to promote green power and the generation of clean energy — and this can involve old tip sites.

I wrote a letter to the Minister for Energy and Resources in the other place because methane can be farmed from old tip sites and used to generate electricity. I know this is done at the old Sunshine tip site in Hullett Street, just off Ballarat Road in Albion. If you travel on the Western Ring Road, just past Ballarat Road you will see the big pink generator. It farms the methane from the old tip site. Many years ago — not 30 years ago, but near enough to it — I used to ride my motorcycle down there.

Those factors can be taken into account with different forms of generation such as wind and hydro-electricity. The opposition parties have been whingeing, bleating and carrying on about Basslink, but Basslink is about providing clean, green electricity for Victorians and securing our electricity supply. Members opposite have no alternatives; they have no ideas about options other than promoting privatisation, which is a failed position.

We must make our cities and communities green. We must take into consideration how we affect the future and the generations to come after us. This bill is an important part of doing that, and I support it.

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — I rise to speak on this small but important piece of legislation. It has been an interesting debate. I have listened to the comments from members on the other side of the house as they have been railing against actions of the former government. There have also been some good contributions about our joint commitment to reducing the amount of greenhouse gases produced and making our country and planet sustainable into the future. I will talk a little bit more about that shortly.

This is an important piece of legislation, but it could have been included in an omnibus bill. This is yet another example of the government trying to find something to fill up the time of this house. This could easily have been included with legislation the house has already dealt with. We really did not need a separate piece of legislation to do this, but here we are. The house is having an interesting debate, and from that point of view I welcome the debate.

The bill will require electricity retailers to report greenhouse gas emissions on their customers' electricity bills. There has been a bit of mirth about children going out to have a look at that bar graph on the bills. I think that is important.

Mr Hulls — And grandchildren.

Mr MAUGHAN — Exactly, as the Attorney-General suggests. I think we should be monitoring the amount of greenhouse gas we emit in our various activities. The question is how serious are we about doing it.

There is a whole range of different things that we can and should be doing to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases. I acknowledge that there is debate about the validity of global warming and greenhouse gas. From my point of view I accept the scientific evidence, even though I acknowledge that there is some debate on it and we that need to constantly re-examine

the scientific evidence and ensure that it is based on the best possible advice at the time.

However, as I say, this is a very small bill. Essentially the legislation has three functions: it sets out the purpose clause, it has a commencement date, and it has five provisions. It is not a difficult or lengthy bill. It is padding out the government's legislative program. I notice the honourable member for Werribee shaking her head, but right now we have five bills on the notice paper and second-reading motions were moved on another two this morning. When we resume after Easter we will have seven pieces of legislation on the notice paper. The government has been scratching to find sufficient legislation to keep the house properly occupied.

I want to pick up on a couple of points made in the debate by government members. I heard the honourable member for Tullamarine railing about lack of consultation from this side when we were in government and praising the virtues of the other side. I remind the honourable member for Tullamarine that there was a rally of about 3000 people in Bendigo on Saturday. Those people were certainly not praising this government for consultation; on the contrary, they were very angry and annoyed about the recommendations on box-ironbark forests.

Rightly or wrongly — and I am going on what the rally said — they believe there had been no consultation with those particular interest groups and no consultation about what the implementation of those recommendations meant. That group certainly feels aggrieved with this government's lack of consultation. We have to be a bit careful when we are blaming one side or the other about consultation or the lack of it. We can both claim to have consulted, and there are times when either side of the house — and particularly the government at the moment — does not adequately consult on a whole range of issues.

Honourable members railed against privatisation and what the former government had done with its reform of the electricity industry. Let me make my position quite clear. I was a member of the coalition government and I fully supported the privatisation process because I believed it was in the interests of Victoria to introduce competition — in this case, in the electricity industry. We are now seeing the results of that. The problem we have at the moment with the massive increases in the off-peak price of power is due not to the privatisation process but to the fact that this government took its eye off the ball and the whole privatisation process slowed down. There was not the continuation of the privatisation policies in the first couple of years of this

government and investment in the industry dried up because investors did not know what the government was going to do. The Labor Party had railed against privatisation and yet after two years it is interesting to note that both the Treasurer and the Minister for Energy and Resources are now talking up the benefits of competition and the fact that competition will introduce lower prices into the electricity industry. The Treasurer and the Minister for Energy and Resources are talking positively about the benefits of competition and so we have to be a bit careful about those issues.

The honourable member for Melton vigorously rejected the assertion that it was the former Kirner Labor government that started the process by selling off 49 per cent of Loy Yang B and its management rights. Whatever the honourable member for Melton chooses to say, those are the facts. The former Labor government started the process and I give it credit for that. The Kennett government picked up the ball and really started running with it. What is happening in the electricity industry here is being followed by other states because they have looked at what needs to happen and what has happened in Victoria and are saying, 'We need to get into that as well'.

I remind the house that \$23 billion in revenue came into the state to pay off the massive debt of well over \$30 billion that was left to the coalition by the former Labor government. It helped to pay off that debt although the main reason for doing it was to introduce competition and efficiencies in the electricity industry. But it paid off that significant debt, which has meant that there is a net \$800 million each and every year available to this government to spend on services or capital resources that would not otherwise have been available. Let us be fair when we are talking about privatisation and look at the benefits, firstly, of the increased competition, and secondly, of the benefits of the \$800 million to Victoria.

I want to offer a couple of figures about the privatisation of the electricity industry. As I recall when Loy Yang B was partly privatised — the management rights were certainly privatised — the number of people operating Loy Yang B as opposed to the identical station Loy Yang A dropped from about 220 to about 170 and, interestingly, the efficiency of production increased from 75 per cent to 95 per cent. That was one example of the benefits of privatisation and I could give many others. It is an outstanding example of some of the benefits of privatisation.

The honourable member for Melton talked about selling off the family farm. It is a line that he often uses. If you sell an asset, it is selling off the family farm and

isn't that terrible? I do not believe selling off part of the family farm is something terrible, particularly if your net balance sheet improves. It happens all the time with farms, to use that analogy, or businesses where, if you need to concentrate your resources, you sell off some assets and still have a stronger balance sheet. That is what happened in the case of the state of Victoria. Yes, assets were sold — assets that had belonged to the people of Victoria. But the people of Victoria are better off today than they were when the process was started. The balance sheet is stronger and better and Victoria is more competitive. So I strongly support that privatisation process.

As members of the government have pointed out and as is stated in the second-reading speech:

This bill fulfils a government election commitment to require all energy companies to disclose, as part of their billing information, the amount of greenhouse gas (in particular, carbon dioxide) produced in supplying electricity.

The honourable member for Tullamarine talked about honouring election commitments, and how great that was. I remind the house that another very clear election commitment stated that the Labor government, if elected, would reinstate a maximum uniform domestic electricity tariff right across Victoria. What has happened to that election commitment? What has happened to that promise? How come some of those election commitments can be claimed as being a great victory and others just seem to have disappeared off the face of the earth? That question really needs addressing. The fact that electricity prices have gone up — particularly the off-peak price — is one that is concerning people in country Victoria. People in dairying areas are greatly affected by the increases in some cases of 600 per cent in the cost of off-peak electricity. I am interested in the government honouring its commitment to have a uniform tariff across the state.

I also query the government's commitment to the \$118 million that has been announced as a special power payment. It abolished the winter energy concession that the former government had run for a number of years. That was costing about \$120 million a year. It would appear that it has been replaced by a once-only payment of \$118 million. There is no commitment for it to go on any more than 12 months and at this time we are still waiting for the specific details of that policy to be announced.

There is a need for the community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce the consumption of non-renewable resources. The agricultural and forestry industries are two industries that must be encouraged — far more than the

government is doing — to produce renewable resources. The timber industry produces renewable resources and reduces greenhouse gases because forests reduces the amount of CO₂.

Because electricity is by far the largest contributor to greenhouse gases we must look for other ways of generating electricity, such as wind generation, which is currently being used, as well as co-generation. For example, the Kyabram hospital has a gas plant that generates electricity for the hospital, and any surplus goes back into the grid. There are other commendable co-generation facilities around the state using clean and green energy rather than the brown coal deposits in the Latrobe Valley.

Methane gas is another energy source, such as from waste at municipal rubbish tips and so on, but the one I am interested in is from animal waste, in particular the pig industry. I commend Melville Charles from the Berrybank piggery just outside Ballarat for perfecting the method of turning animal waste into electricity, firstly, to power his piggery and, secondly, any surplus electricity is put back into the grid. We will see more and more of that over time by turning animal waste into electricity and reducing our reliance on coal-fired power stations.

Wave power is another method which is not one that has much application in Victoria, but certainly has in the northern part of Australia's coast, which has significant wave action. One that is of great interest to the Acting Speaker and me, coming from northern Victoria, is solar power, which is already making a contribution in reducing the amount of energy we use. As a nation we should put our minds to how we can better harness that solar power and lessen our reliance on electricity generated from coal or from energy sources that produce excessive amounts of greenhouse gas.

The legislation enjoys the support of both sides of the house, and I wish it a speedy passage.

Ms DUNCAN (Gisborne) — It gives me pleasure to speak on the Electricity Industry (Amendment) Bill. Legislation of such stature reminds me of the wonderful Paul Kelly song 'From little things big things grow'. That is exactly what the bill does. As has been mentioned by the honourable member for Melton — I have been planning to use this line in my contribution — we should think globally and act locally, which the bill does by inserting proposed section 23A in the principal act. That will require disclosure of greenhouse gas produced in supplying electricity for consumers, domestic and commercial; in

particular looking at the level of carbon dioxide that has been generated in the production of electricity. You can act locally by looking at your electricity bill every few months to see the direct relationship between the amount of electricity you have used in that quarter and as a result the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that you have contributed to.

This is about raising consciousness and ensuring that people understand the direct correlation between their personal energy consumption and the effect that that has globally. We do not have to remind people of the enormous concern being created by climate change, by greenhouse gas emissions, by holes in the ozone layer, by changes in climate, and as the honourable member for Melton mentioned, by generating thousands of environmental refugees because their land will be covered by water. We must accept, acknowledge and put some effort into turning things around.

The bill is one of those small pieces of legislation that collectively create incremental improvements that are consistent with the government's commitment to the environment, which has taken place on many fronts during the term of the government. The government has taken steps to reduce greenhouse gases and to raise consciousness about the effects of environmental change and the impact it can have on us and the world.

The government's document *Turning Victoria Around* describes the mid-term snapshot of the government's achievements. When you go through it, just in terms of the promotion of sustainable development and sustainable energy, it is very impressive. We have created the Essential Services Commission, which will have a substantial role in this bill — —

Dr Dean — Mr Acting Speaker, it is a pity that the honourable member is not being heard by too many people. I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Ms DUNCAN — I thank the honourable member for increasing my audience substantially. As I was saying, this bill is part of a package of reforms that this government has been very active in pursuing. We have created the Essential Services Commission which, as I said, will have a significant role in issuing the guidelines for retailers, in consultation with another part of our agenda, the Sustainable Energy Authority, as outlined in proposed section 23A(4).

We have also provided Victorians with access to energy efficiency choices, programs and rebates through the establishment of the Sustainable Energy Authority, as I said earlier. This is a further step towards providing

Victorians with access to energy-efficient choices by giving them the information they need to make those choices. We have seen that result for some time now with the provision of energy ratings on electrical appliances. I know that myself, because I purchased a fridge only two years ago, and those ratings were incredibly important to me in making that choice. We all want to make right choices and that sort of information gives us the ability to make informed choices, as will this bill, which amends the Electricity Industry Act. It will give us the ability to make more informed choices about how we use our energy.

In addition to this broader agenda we have established five regional Energy Smart advisory centres to provide information on energy efficiency to rural Victoria. The bill provides as a broader information service a new web site with links to a whole lot of other information — again, helping people make choices about energy efficiency.

We have promoted energy-efficient houses on new building projects with incentives to developers who commit to a minimum of a 4-star energy rating — again, another initiative that will go towards developing a greenhouse strategy. We have also provided a solar hot water rebate for all Victorians purchasing solar hot water systems, again increasing options and giving people real choices. We have established the Victorian Environment Assessment Council to increase community participation in environmental decision making and to provide independent environmental advice. That is another plank of this government: to provide information and make information accessible and available.

More specifically, we have increased the area of private plantations to 280 000 hectares to provide extra income for farmers, to complement the timber resources of native forests, as well as to provide the greenhouse benefits that accrue from growing any vegetation.

The bill is quite consistent with the Bracks government's commitment to the environment. It builds on and is part of the government's Greener Cities policy to make sure that all electricity companies disclose as part of their billing information the amount of greenhouse gases produced. It is envisaged that this information will be put in a succinct graphic form with limited text so that people can see the impact very easily and so there is consistency in presentation. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) — It is my pleasure to make a contribution on the Electricity Industry (Amendment) Bill. As other honourable members have

said before me, the principal purpose of the bill is to amend the Electricity Industry Act 2000 to require electricity retailers to report greenhouse gas emission information on their customers' electricity bills.

Electricity generation accounts for around 55 per cent of Victoria's total greenhouse emissions — the vast majority. This compares with the contribution of electricity generation to Australia's total emissions nationally of around one-third. That difference is primarily due to the relatively high greenhouse gas intensity of electricity generation in Victoria, given the predominant reliance on brown coal for electricity generation and also the relative contribution of land clearing to emissions in Victoria compared with other states.

Accordingly, it is important to raise the level of awareness of Victorians of the direct link between electricity consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, which is commonly referred to as global warming.

The government's Greener Cities policy contains a commitment to require all energy companies, now privatised, to disclose as part of their billing information the amount of greenhouse gas that is produced in supplying their particular energy. The objective of the policy commitment is to highlight to electricity customers the direct link between greenhouse gas emissions and their own individual or family or business electricity consumption as a way of indicating to each of us, whether we are domestic or commercial consumers, that we all have a role to play in the reduction of greenhouse gas.

The policy is being implemented by amending the Electricity Industry Act 2000 to require, as I said, electricity retailers to disclose this information on their accounts to customers, and there are guidelines which are going to be introduced by the Essential Services Commission to assist them to display the information in a consistent way. It is proposed that the commission, in consultation with the Sustainable Energy Authority, retailers and other stakeholders, will develop these guidelines. It is expected that the guidelines will specify minimum disclosure requirements and enable retailers to have some flexibility in the presentation of that information. The development of the guidelines will be the subject of standard guideline development processes which are followed by the commission in other similar and related matters.

A draft state-based greenhouse gas coefficient, derived from the national greenhouse gas inventory, will be developed for the purposes of determining the level of

greenhouse gas emissions associated with a given level of electricity consumption.

Great care has been taken by the commission to make sure that companies and consumers are able to compare apples with apples, so that in looking at the relativity between the amount of electricity consumed and the greenhouse gas produced one company is not displaying the capacity for statistics to tell fibs about what is really going on. There has and will continue to be a great deal of effort with all stakeholders in developing an understood, reasonable and standard balance from which everybody can talk about the same basis for the statistics.

The disclosure of greenhouse gas emissions on customers' bills will be supported by a dedicated web site to be established by the Sustainable Energy Authority. There is no point indicating to people that they have a part to play in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions if you do not give them ideas and information about how they can help to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas that they produce, and that is what this web site established by the authority will do. It will provide additional greenhouse gas emissions information, including how greenhouse gas and energy information is calculated. Most importantly it will also provide information on the option of purchasing green power and the details of practical energy efficient measures.

Honourable members on the other side have expressed mild caution — 'criticism' may be too harsh a word — and asked in what way the government expects by providing information about greenhouse gas emissions to consumers, both domestic and commercial, to change consumer behaviour. If there is one thing I know to be true and proven much over the years it is that the only way you can help people change their behaviour is by giving them information that tells them the effect of their behaviour, and then giving them options for changing their behaviour and reducing its ill effects.

As I said before, we are talking about electricity generation in Victoria accounting for over half of Victoria's total greenhouse gas emissions — this is no small issue that we are talking about. It compares nationally to Australia's total emissions of only about one-third.

Consumers generally have a limited understanding of the link between their own consumption of electricity and greenhouse gas emissions, and as a consequence, global warming. Improving the community's understanding of the link through reporting greenhouse

gas emissions on the consumer's electricity bill is expected to promote a more effective community-based greenhouse response. In particular, greenhouse gas emission disclosure and the provision of complementary information from the Sustainable Energy Authority is expected to promote the purchase of green power, or at least the consideration of other energy efficiency measures, and thus deliver commensurate benefits to the environment.

The issue also has been raised of whether consumers will understand the information provided to them. The information is going to be provided in graphic form with very limited text. It will provide a relatively simple, user-friendly and straightforward means of conveying to customers the link between consumers' electricity consumption and emissions. Customers who want to act as a result of realising what their own consumption is having on the world's ecology will be able to go to the web site, seek further information and to take active steps to make a real difference. This is a case where the government is providing consumers with the opportunity to think locally and act globally.

Ms Allan — You stole my line!

Ms GILLETT — It is a great line and can be used again.

The other important issue is that although it is important for consumers to understand the impact they have, it is critical for large users of electricity to understand how their consumption impacts on this issue.

Information on greenhouse gas emissions associated with electricity consumption is required to be reported on every customer bill — small and large consumers. It is particularly important that large users have access to relevant greenhouse gas emission information to raise their awareness about the implications on the environment and to prompt greater consideration of energy efficient alternatives.

This is not a process of us all becoming aware, enlightened and changing our practices overnight. It is a slow, concerted process of reform, of education and of sharing information and engaging all concerned who directly contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. We must offer them alternatives so they can change their consumption habits to the betterment, not just of the Victorian environment, but of the Australian environment.

Members of all parties have been engaged in discussions on these issues. It is my firm belief that in 2002 consumers are now mature enough to take the

next step. It is my privilege to represent the constituents of Werribee, an electorate which has the potential to make an enormous impact on alternative electricity generation because it has an important — what may seem unrelated — infrastructure site with the Werribee sewage treatment plant.

My colleague the honourable member for Melton said it is well known municipal tips and sewage treatment facilities generate methane gases, but there is tremendous capacity to harness that alternative energy source. I know that Melbourne Water and other stakeholders in the community have been talking with one another to examine options for 21st century technology to be applied to the harnessing of methane gas for the long-term generation of alternative sources of energy into the future. I am proud that my community is actively involved in providing one piece of important infrastructure — the Werribee sewage treatment facility — and in developing important 21st century technology — to harness the generation of energy from an energy source that is being wasted.

It has been said many times in this chamber and elsewhere that our community is often regarded as incredibly wasteful and short-sighted in the use of its resources. We are more or less a throwaway society.

I note the opposition said, as a small criticism, that it is a small bill. Being 5 feet 2 inches in height I have grown up with the saying that good things come in small packages. That is what I say about this legislation. It is critical in changing what is most difficult to change in our community — people's minds. When we change their minds we change their practices and real and sustainable reform of the way we live as communities result from that.

With those few remarks I add my good wishes to the minister for her fantastic work in this area. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Wimmera) — I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Wimmera electorate to speak on the Electricity Industry (Amendment) Bill. The purpose of the bill is to impose licence obligations on electricity retailers to disclose information about greenhouse gas emissions to consumers on electricity bills. It is important to also remember that information about the use of power is already on electricity bills. I know when my family receives its bill we compare our current usage with usage over the past few years, which allows us to check whether we are using our energy appropriately. Importantly, it allows us to cut back on the unwanted use of power, which puts pressure on greenhouse gas emissions.

My colleague the Honourable Peter Hall in another place has done a lot of work in developing a report for the National Party. I also compliment the honourable member for Werribee and the honourable member for Gisborne on their contributions. The honourable member for Gisborne, like me, is a member of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Last year the committee visited Canberra to meet with experts who could inform us about greenhouse gas emissions and related issues.

The message is clear in the minister's second-reading speech about the government's commitment to this issue. It states:

This bill fulfils a government election commitment to require all energy companies to disclose, as part of their billing information, the amount of greenhouse gas (in particular, carbon dioxide) produced in supplying electricity.

It is said by many people that this is a small bill, but it is important in educating and moving forward the use of power in Victoria.

I also highlight for the government and its members who are in the chamber that another of its election commitments was about uniform tariffs, and I have heard nothing about that since it has come in, except — —

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I would be interested to hear the honourable member for Bendigo East when she makes her contribution.

Mr Nardella — I talked about uniform tariffs in my contribution.

Mr DELAHUNTY — The honourable member did, but he has been there for two and a bit years now and has done nothing about it.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I have heard the Treasurer and the Minister for Energy and Resources talk about the benefits of contestability; I will come back to my point about that at another stage.

I again refer to the minister's second-reading speech, which refers to an enhanced greenhouse effect. Last year with the Environment and Natural Resources Committee I went to Canberra, where we talked about the impact of greenhouse gases and a lot of the things that are having an environmental impact on our community. One of those is rainfall. People from Greening Australia indicated that across Australia,

particularly in dry land areas, a decreasing amount of rain is falling. Although it is a very gradual decrease, that highlights the importance of using our water in a managed and sustained way. That shows the importance of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline, which has been discussed in this chamber on many occasions, even in the population debate last week. I compliment the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party and the honourable member for Swan Hill on again pushing the importance of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline.

The second-reading speech also states that the bill, if enacted:

will enable consumers to better understand and monitor the environmental consequences of their own electricity use over time.

I hope this is not a way of pushing up the price of power. As we all know, you can now nominate to purchase green power, but it will cost you more. We have to be careful that the government does not use this as a way of pushing up the cost of power. I want to highlight that part of the second-reading speech, because the government has dropped a few promises about that. The second-reading speech also states in part:

including electricity generated in Victoria and purchased from interstate.

As honourable members know, we purchase power from other states when the need arises. Because of the work of former Prime Minister and Treasurer, Paul Keating, there is now an agreement whereby we can purchase electricity from interstate. Because of the contestability under which we operate it is important that that occur in an efficient and cost-effective manner. We have hydro-electricity, wave electricity, solar electricity, wind electricity, methane electricity, and electricity generated by brown coal. In her contribution the honourable member for Werribee said that half of Victoria's greenhouse gas comes from the generation of electricity, and that comes from brown coal.

I highlight the changes that are proposed by taking water from the Snowy Mountains hydro-electricity system and pushing it down the Snowy River. My understanding is that that will push up the generation of brown coal by 9 per cent to compensate for the lack of the — —

Mr Nardella — Are you saying you disagree with it?

Mr DELAHUNTY — I am not saying I disagree with it; I am just saying that the way we will use it is

hypocritical. We all support more environmental water. My view is that — —

Mr Nardella — What is your view?

Mr DELAHUNTY — I will come back — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member for Melton had his chance. The honourable member for Wimmera, without assistance.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I want to highlight this, because I have not heard government members mention that fact in their contributions. That will cause more brown coal to be burnt to compensate for the lack of water.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — You are the government; you have to make this decision. I wanted to highlight that for you people over there. I will come back to that a little later.

Mr Holding interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — The honourable member for Springvale is very loud and vocal, but I have not heard his contribution.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member for Springvale should cease interjecting and the honourable member for Wimmera should ignore interjections.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I enjoy the interjections — they are great. In relation to power I will say that in my part of Victoria there were a lot of concerns about the reliability of Powercor in Victoria.

When it came down to consulting with the community the people said they were more concerned about reliability than costs, but importantly Powercor has lifted its game, particularly — —

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — We have to use diesel generation sometimes because we cannot get power. The reality is that reliability is the key component, and I am pleased to see that Powercor has lifted its game.

Some of the key services in our area are obviously power — electricity — water and waste water facilities, natural gas and communications, particularly mobile phone coverage and broadband access to users of Internet and the like. I highlight the concerns of the

universities — RMIT and Ballarat University — in my electorate that have concerns about broadband access.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr DELAHUNTY — As we know, the electricity industry is one of those key services that we must get right. I will come back to the interjections coming from the other side of the house. We know that the privatisation — —

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — It was not started by the previous coalition government.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — Some younger people over on the other side of the chamber do not realise that I know it was a Labor government that was selling off the power generators before the privatisation thrust. Who sold off the Commonwealth Bank? Who sold off the State Bank? Who sold these things off? I do not hear members from across the chamber having too much to say about that process.

Mr Wilson — Who sold off Qantas?

Mr DELAHUNTY — Who sold off Qantas? The Labor government!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member for Bennettswood is out of his place and out of order.

Mr DELAHUNTY — He is helping me immensely; it is good to have a team approach. The further privatisation of the electricity industry was started by the Labor government, very importantly, because the \$23 billion that was gathered through the selling off of the industry was to pay off Labor debt. We know that Labor was selling off the power construction industry, but that was to pay recurrent costs.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — It was! That is why the Labor government was selling off some of the power generation. We also know there is an \$800-million benefit to Victorians every year because of privatisation because we do not have to pay off all the debt that was being paid.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I am concerned about some of those things that happened also, and I raised my concern before I came into this place. But I think the benefits outweigh — —

Mr Holding — Who with?

Mr DELAHUNTY — I raised it with my local member; I raised it in public forums. I was concerned that if we had taken this approach back in those days we would not have powerlines to places like Maryborough. But at the end of the day the benefits of privatisation outweigh the disbenefits that have been highlighted here.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr DELAHUNTY — This is fantastic! I know the Labor government is also looking at privatisation of education, but we will not get on to that; this is a very narrow bill. Contestability is good. We will see it on Saturday night between Geelong and Essendon, and we know the better team will win. We also know that contestability has brought benefits. It is, however, important to have the regulatory framework to make sure we protect some consumers.

Again, I highlight the fact that the Treasurer and the Minister for Energy and Resources in another place — even the Labor government — are supporting contestability. How do you get contestability? You cannot get it with a monopoly, so I think we have seen the benefits of that.

I also want to highlight the benefits of hydro-electricity. Not only is the Snowy River system important to provide Australia's electricity services, but it also gives us the use of water, which is a generator of wealth and jobs in country Victoria, particularly up in the northern areas.

Mr Nardella — What is your view?

Mr DELAHUNTY — My view is that we have done very well, but some adjustments can be made.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — My view is that I think that causes some concern. I am not sure of the actual outcome of that, but again I do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater in relation to this, because hydro-electricity is an important energy source and is environmentally friendly. I look at the support that this government must give to the Basslink project. We know that across Victoria councils are trying to get underground powerlines in their towns because

powerlines are unsightly. It is important for environmental benefits that this government support the undergrounding of the Basslink as it comes across Victoria.

Mr Nardella — And how are you going to pay for it?

Mr DELAHUNTY — You paid for some of the environmental benefits on Monash Freeway and on some of those other freeways. It is important that you do that sort of work in country Victoria also.

The Leader of the National Party has highlighted that very well in his presentation. It is important that if we are going to do what we did with the Snowy River we open up the opportunity to bring in power from Tasmania and other places. We all support the Basslink process, but it is important that we do it in an environmentally sensitive way.

Going back to my original point, we support this legislation. It is commonsense stuff. It is important to educate our community. The cost is high; it will cost from \$1 million to \$2 million to regear the computer equipment to make sure that this comes through.

Mr Nardella — About \$5 billion!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member for Wimmera without assistance.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I am interested to see whether the members over there are going to ask who will pay for this, but I know that at the end of the day the consumers will pay for it one way or another.

Mr Nardella — The taxpayers!

Mr DELAHUNTY — The taxpayers or the consumers. As we get information on the use of natural gas and on the use of water it is important that we get that information on the bill to again highlight what we are using.

As I said, I pray we do not see an increase in the cost of power. I hope we are not seeing this as a way of increasing the cost of power, because as we know we can elect to pay for higher priced electricity if we want to use green power, and that is a choice that everyone wants. Again, it goes back to the contestability thing.

On behalf of the people of the Wimmera electorate, the largest electorate in the state, I have no hesitation in supporting this legislation.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — I am pleased to contribute, and I will make only brief comments on the Electricity Industry (Amendment) Bill. May I say how delighted I am to follow the honourable member for Wimmera and to hear him say that in his view privatisation of the electricity industry has been good for country Victoria. I am sure the voters in his current and future electorate will be very pleased to hear him say that because they know how much of a disaster privatisation of the electricity industry has been throughout country Victoria, and they know of the huge increase in costs we are now being inflicted with because of the way the former Liberal–National Party privatised the electricity industry.

However, this bill is important because it will clearly highlight the link between the use of electricity by households and businesses and the greenhouse gas emissions. The bill will place an obligation on electricity retailers to report greenhouse gas emissions information on all customers' bills, which will be a very practical way of identifying the relationship between electricity generation and electricity usage by both businesses and households and the ultimate impact that that has on the environment.

This piece of legislation is part of an election commitment made by the Bracks government during the 1999 state election campaign to disclose to customers the amounts of greenhouse gas produced in supplying electricity. This disclosure on customers' power bills is one of a number of changes that have been made to electricity bills in recent times, and consumers also know very well the change that the GST has brought to their power bill: we all have on our power bill a GST charge that is clearly spelt out for small consumers and households. We have the federal government to thank for that increased charge on our electricity bills. I am sure people also know very well that the Liberal Party has increased the charges for electricity, and that has made it particularly difficult for households on low incomes.

The disclosure of information on greenhouse gas emissions on the electricity accounts of consumers and businesses will be very useful to customers and households in raising their awareness of the environment. More and more people are becoming aware of the importance of the environment and of reducing greenhouse gas emissions for our environmental future. The bill is a very practical way of assisting consumers to raise awareness of their power usage locally, which will impact on things globally.

In order to produce this information on people's bills, guidelines will be developed by the Essential Services

Commission along with the Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria (SEAV). These guidelines will provide and specify to consumers the minimal disclosure requirements needed.

The SEAV is a wonderful initiative. It has an office in central Bendigo and a number of offices throughout country Victoria. It provides a fantastic amount of information to local people in country areas. It is an excellent initiative in broadening the opportunities to get information in this area. As I said, more and more people are becoming interested in using energy in a more sustainable way and in looking at alternative uses of energy. Through its office network the authority is providing this information in a very practical way.

Another practical way in which it will provide information on changes to people's power bills is the establishment of a dedicated web site that will contain further information on a range of energy and greenhouse gas issues. I commend the work of the SEAV in this area. They are practical measures by which customers may gain this information and will help raise general awareness of the impact of electricity usage on the environment.

As earlier speakers have said, electricity generation in Victoria accounts for around 55 per cent of the state's total greenhouse gas emissions. Every opportunity we have to raise awareness of the impact of electricity generation on the environment and to help households and small businesses take that impact into account should be taken.

In concluding I congratulate the SEAV on its work in this area, and I also congratulate the Essential Services Commission and the minister's department. It is an excellent and practical initiative to get this type of information into the general arena, and the ultimate aim is to reduce the environmental impact. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — It is a pleasure to speak on the Electricity Industry (Amendment) Bill, the purpose of which is to impose licence obligations on electricity retailers to disclose information to consumers about greenhouse gas emissions. The bill is the result of another election commitment by the Bracks government, and I must admit that in my own electorate I have been very keen to tick off and make sure people know that the Bracks government does what it says it is going to do. That is great to see, and this bill is a further example.

Greenhouse gas emissions are very damaging to our environment and to our future, and the issue needs to be

tackled seriously. It is great that people are taking up the issue of the sustainability of the way our power is produced. That is apparent from such things as the rebate of \$1500 on the installation of solar hot water units. Sustainability issues can be very involved, and actions taken by the government will be highlighted and improved by this legislation. People will be able to see how they are harming the environment by the amount of electricity they use. They can then turn around and say, 'I know that I can install solar hot water and reduce the harm I am doing to the environment by a certain percentage. I can act locally and do something about this rather than feeling helpless'.

Education campaigns are better ways of involving people and informing them about harm caused by different issues. That is why we have campaigns to educate us about drugs, cigarettes, alcohol abuse, safe driving and those sorts of things. Educating people is a great way to go, and this is a good commitment by the government. It is pleasing that the opposition is supporting the government in getting Victorians to act responsibly.

Governments play a big role in leading by example. I was pleased about announcements made by the Minister for Education and Training in her previous portfolio as Minister for Finance about getting government departments to think about ways of reducing their use of electricity. It will be interesting to see if that comes about.

Any further assistance the government can provide for research into different forms of energy generation, whether it is wind energy or solar energy, and getting those kinds of projects happening around the state will be fantastic for the future. I commend the bill to the house. I am proud to be speaking on this important bill on behalf of the Bracks government, and I wish the bill a speedy passage.

Mr HAMILTON (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank all honourable members who contributed to the debate on this very important bill. I learnt a little more about the bill and its import from some of the contributions!

Mr Doyle interjected.

Mr HAMILTON — As Einstein said, 'All things are relative'. The bill is important, because what it does is enable the community, at the lead of the government, to understand the importance of recognising that greenhouse gas emissions are a very important issue that will affect not only our lives but the lives of our

children and grandchildren. We need to ensure that the community is well educated on and well aware of the impact of greenhouse emissions on our environment and that it learns how to reduce that impact.

This is, as one of the other speakers said, an area where we can think globally and act locally, and that is something we are all going to be more conscious of in the ensuing years. I want to thank honourable members and make sure that this bill has a speedy passage to the other place, and I know it will have a successful passage there too.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

CORPORATIONS (FINANCIAL SERVICES REFORM AMENDMENTS) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 27 March; motion of Mr HULLS (Attorney-General).

Mr HOLDING (Springvale) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to make a contribution to debate on the Corporations (Financial Services Reform Amendments) Bill. It is worth putting this piece of legislation in its proper context. The bill currently before the house amends various pieces of state legislation as a consequence of the passage through the federal Parliament of the Financial Services Reform Act 2001, which was proclaimed to take effect from 11 March 2002.

The system of Corporations Law in Australia has undergone significant change in recent years, principally as a consequence of two important High Court decisions — in *re Wakim: ex parte McNally* and *The Queen v Hughes*, decided in May 2000. These two very significant High Court decisions brought into question areas of current commonwealth capacity to make laws for the regulation of and other arrangements for corporations. As a consequence of these two decisions negotiations occurred between the states and territories and the commonwealth government to re-establish and ensure the continuation of an effective system of Corporations Law in Australia, and there was a referral of a range of state powers to the commonwealth to achieve this.

I am pleased to inform the house that the Bracks government was a cooperative and constructive participant in those negotiations. I think all honourable members of this chamber would support an arrangement which ensures that Australia continues to have an effective system of Corporations Law. Because of the vagaries of the Australian constitutional system and the very specific heads of power the commonwealth has responsibility for and the way Australian society has changed over the 100 years since Federation, it is true that anomalies often arise in our legal system and that frequently negotiations are needed between state and territory governments and the commonwealth to ensure that our constitutional system is kept up to date.

As I said earlier, the bill before the house makes amendments to various pieces of state legislation as a consequence of the passage through the federal Parliament of the Financial Services Reform Act. While the bill makes relatively minor changes to state legislation, the reasons for its introduction are very significant. The Financial Services Reform Act of the Commonwealth is an extremely significant piece of legislation and is the product of an extensive period of inquiry and consultation by the commonwealth government and the commonwealth Parliament. Its genesis was in the Wallis inquiry, established in 1996, which was the financial systems inquiry that looked into the structure and regulation of Australia's financial system. That inquiry made significant findings and recommendations, particularly insofar as how the interests of consumers could be protected.

The result of those recommendations was a relatively tortuous process that included consultation with the states and territories prior to the enactment of the recommendations in the Financial Services Reform Act.

One of the significant findings of the Wallis inquiry was that the current system of regulation was piecemeal, ad hoc and created confusion. Regulation existed on a product-by-product basis or for particular industries, but there was no proper regulation of the entire financial services industry. There was no guarantee that consumers in analogous situations would be treated similarly nor any comprehensive system of financial services regulation or licensing of those providing financial services products. The consequence was that the interests of consumers were not adequately represented.

The inquiry also made a number of other significant findings in respect of the current disclosure regime and levels of accountability and transparency. For those

reasons the commonwealth government felt the most appropriate way to proceed was through the introduction of the Financial Services Reform Bill.

The Corporations (Financial Services Reform Amendments) Bill removes the old chapters 7 and 8 from the Corporations Act and replaces them with a new chapter 7. It is worth considering in some detail what sort of a regulatory regime the new chapter 7 will provide. Essentially, this new chapter will ensure that there is a single licensing system for advice, for financial sales and for all dealings in relation to financial products. That is a very significant change, because a single licensing system will improve the level of transparency. It will also improve information flows to consumers to ensure that they can interact with their financial advisers knowing that he or she is the holder of a financial services licence, which is comparable to the licensing arrangements for other players in the industry.

As well as the new licensing arrangements, the new commonwealth Financial Services Reform Act seeks to ensure that there is a consistent and comprehensive disclosure regime for the entire financial system, and that such a disclosure regime is based on product profile statements that better balance effectiveness and cost. This is very important. One of the aims of the reform process that has occurred was to ensure that the new arrangements introduced were cost effective. Many of the proposals or suggestions would have been potentially so costly that they would add burdensome costs onto the financial services industry, so I am pleased to see that the reforms that have been introduced are cost effective and ensure they are introduced in such a way that there will not be additional and unnecessary costs to consumers. After all, the Financial Services Reform Act has at its heart the protection of consumers.

Of course there are many other reforms contained in the Financial Services Reform Act. It seeks to clarify a range of regulatory goals and to ensure that there are appropriate levels of contestability and efficiency in financial markets. As I intimated earlier, it seeks to ensure that these goals are achieved in a manner which reduces costs to consumers. It seeks also to provide a more effective regulatory regime for financial conglomerates and to ensure that that regulatory regime is facilitated in a manner which supports the principles of competition and efficiency.

A very important goal of the commonwealth Financial Services Reform Act is to ensure that Australia's financial system retains its international competitiveness in a globalised community. Obviously

the conditions in one financial system cannot be viewed and judged in isolation from the regulatory arrangements and the processes in other parts of the world and the commonwealth act reflects that.

One of the most important things that has arisen both from the commonwealth financial services inquiry and also from the Financial Services Reform Act has been the importance of disclosure on market conduct. The inquiry found that financial markets could not operate successfully or appropriately unless all participants acted with integrity and that a fundamental component of ensuring that market participants acted with integrity was ensuring that there was adequate disclosure to facilitate informed decision making by consumers on financial products.

At this point I want to digress from talking about disclosure. A particular example is the effect these reforms contained in the commonwealth Financial Services Reform Act will have on the market that exists for financial products in call centres. I know that prior to the passage of the legislation there was considerable concern about operators of call centres who provide financial product advice or, more particularly, financial product sales. There was concern that this sector of the financial services industry was inadequately prepared for the disclosure regimes of the new system.

I take as my source for these comments an article that appeared on 17 October in *Australian Banking and Finance*. The essential point made in the article was that the commonwealth Financial Services Reform Act would apply to call centres and that call centres had to give serious attention to what their new obligations would be following the passage of this legislation. The article quotes Mr McCutcheon, a presenter to a conference of call centres, as saying:

Under the new regulations only licensed advisers will be permitted to pass on personal financial advice to customers. This will have a major impact on how calls are routed through a call centre in terms of who will be able to handle each call and what information customer services representatives will be able to pass on to the caller.

Mr McCutcheon went on to say:

... it will be the responsibility of all call centres to monitor their agents to ensure they do not offer personal financial 'advice' or even implied recommendations to customers about any financial products which they are not licensed to advise on. This not only applies to complex investments, but everyday products like general insurance, short term deposits and even travellers cheques.

I think it is worth making the point that while the bill before the house today is a relatively narrow one, the reasons for its presentation in this chamber are

extremely significant for consumers. The situation in relation to call centres amplifies the significance of this legislation — the Corporations (Financial Services Reform Amendments) Bill — on ordinary consumers. It means they are now entitled to adequate disclosure from those providing them with financial advice. It means that in most instances those providing them with that advice will be required to be the holder of a financial services licence. It means that there will be a general system of financial services licensing, which will mean they will be able to in a sense compare more appropriately and adequately the products being offered by different financial advisers. It will mean there will be a better system of oversight of the holders of those licences to ensure that the interests of consumers are protected.

I believe these are arrangements that all honourable members would support. They reflect the enormous changes that have occurred in our financial services system, not only over the last 10 years but even in the last couple of years. They reflect the massive impact that new information technologies and new communications technologies have had on the financial services industry in the last few years. They reflect the growing level of complexity that consumers face as they interact with the financial services industry.

I think they also reflect — and this is an important point — the fact that an increasing array of Australians now have direct and frequent contact with the Australian financial services industry. It used to be that a relatively small number of Australians were direct participants in the stock exchange, as it was previously called. Relatively few Australians were direct holders of stocks and equities; there was a relatively narrow range of financial products available. Now the range of products available to consumers has been expanded almost beyond belief, and the number and range of Australians who participate in the financial services industry as consumers has grown considerably.

It is also true that as the number of Australians that have contact with the financial services industry has grown the number of people who have in the past had very limited contact with the financial services industry, and therefore very little experience and knowledge of it, has also increased. Those consumers who have had infrequent contact with the system are particularly in need of protection, particularly in need of proper disclosure regimes, particularly in need of appropriate transparency arrangements, particularly in need of appropriate accountability arrangements and particularly in need of the assurance that an appropriate system of licensing provides.

So whether it is in relation to the activity of call centres providing financial products or in the areas of general insurance, travellers cheques or brokers providing advice to their clients on the sale or purchase of stock or other equities — in whatever way it is — the financial services reform bill will be a watershed in Australian financial services industry regulation in Australia.

The legislation passed by the commonwealth with the support of the Australian Labor Party will ensure that the interests of consumers are protected. As a consequence of the passage of that legislation it was necessary to make a range of consequential amendments to various pieces of state legislation. Those amendments are contained in the bill before the house. They cover a whole range of diverse pieces of legislation including the Associations Incorporation Act 1981, the Cooperatives Act 1996, the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, the Duties Act 2000, the Environment Protection Act 1970, the Estate Agents Act 1980, the Gas Industry Act 2001, the House Contracts Guarantee Act, the Instruments Act, the Legal Practice Act, the Melbourne Fire Brigades Act and the Municipal Association Act. The list is endless, and I will not subject honourable members to it, but I am very pleased to see Victoria doing its bit in terms of direct negotiations with the commonwealth to ensure the protection of consumers but also doing its bit to make sure that our legislation here in Victoria reflects the new regulatory regime that exists in Canberra.

I am very pleased to commend this bill to the house. I wish it a speedy passage, and I know it will receive the support of all honourable members.

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for Planning) — This has been a very elucidating debate. I think the subtleties of the Corporations (Financial Services Reform Amendments) Bill have been adequately explored by speakers on both sides of the house. This is described as template legislation, which is suitably supported by both sides of the house. It is template legislation because it comes from commonwealth–state cooperation to smooth out the financial system in Australia to ensure that the system will retain and enhance its international competitiveness in an increasingly globalised world, particularly for financial services. As the honourable member for Springvale said, it is watershed legislation. He is absolutely right. It is watershed legislation.

I thank all speakers for their contributions to this debate. We look forward to the effects of this legislation and the complementary commonwealth legislation smoothing out the operations of the financial

system so that we have plain sailing. I wish this bill a speedy passage.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGE

Message read recommending appropriation for Electoral Bill.

STATUTE LAW (FURTHER REVISION) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 27 March; motion of Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport).

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — I welcome the opportunity to take a little longer than the lead speakers for the Liberal Party and the National Party, who I think spoke for a total of 4 minutes during the opening debate on this important legislation.

The maintenance of the statute book is an important role of this Parliament; it is important to keep the statute book in a healthy condition. The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee also plays an important role, as I think honourable members will acknowledge, in its subcommittee dealing with these matters.

The legislation before us essentially performs three functions. One is that it repeals over 70 redundant acts. As part of the careful analysis the committee performs, it also corrects a number of ambiguities, minor omissions and typographical errors that are found throughout the statute book. Finally, it codifies administrative arrangement orders to ensure consistency in the statute book, and ensures that outdated or confusing references are rectified or reinterpreted.

Both the committee and this legislation play useful roles. It is ironic that one of the acts this bill amends is the Parliamentary Committees Act, which affects the powers of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, so it is not without self-analysis that the committee has come forward with this legislation. In fact one of the functions of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — that is, to consider any act

passed at any time between 3 November 1999 and 31 December 1999 and to report to Parliament with respect to the Parliamentary Committees Act on any matter referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) of section 4D — is being deleted.

We need to note that because the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee is a high profile organ of Parliament and its committees. In fact, at one stage I remember former Premier Jeff Kennett was so irritated by the role that the committee played that he labelled it then chairman, the honourable member for Doncaster, the real Leader of the Opposition! This label did not do that honourable member's aspirations to ministerial office any good at all during the remainder of the former Premier's term.

That probably led to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee bulletin being known around that time by the affectionate title of the Yellow Peril. The bulletin was a distinctive golden colour and was a much-anticipated publication because it allowed honourable members to see whether the members of the then governing party would squeak when the big boot came down on the rights of ordinary Victorians by way of the heavy-handed legislation that frequently appeared in this place.

Mr Doyle — I will give you the seven years of darkness; it is the only phrase you have left out. That gives you the full sense.

Mr MILDENHALL — In fact, the black hand of the legislative program of the then government was in evidence. As the black hand spread its influence, it created the seven dark years.

I have just been informed that Kerry Chikarovski lost the New South Wales Liberal Party leadership ballot by one vote. That does not relate to the legislation, but I am sure honourable members in the house, which is not particularly well populated at the moment, would be interested in that piece of political current affairs.

I think it was the honourable member for Cranbourne who noted in his opening remarks that interesting observation of the famous Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee that 'The amendment in item 15 of schedule 1 in the bill, which substitutes the word 'dollar' for 'pound' in section 4(4) of the Cultural and Recreational Lands Act 1963, thereby completes Victoria's transition to decimal currency'. While we can say that the wheels of government turn slowly and the machinery of government grinds on slowly, it is interesting that that process, assuming that it started around 1960, has now taken some 42 years. That is

probably only exceeded in duration by the progress of the completion of Parliament House.

Some other noteworthy components of this legislation include item 51 in schedule 1, which amends the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971 by replacing a reference in the act to 'employés' with 'employees'. The analytical minutiae to which the legislation has been subjected is fascinating. Item 4 of schedule 1 amends the Accident Compensation Act 1985 by deleting the word 'and' in section 119L(1). Some careful work has been undertaken to prepare the legislation and to analyse matters that might be regarded as either superfluous or redundant. I admire that level of application and eye for detail.

I also note that item 55 in schedule 1 clarifies a reference to the minister responsible for scrutinising expenditure under the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Act 1999. Rather than grants of \$2 million or more being approved by the relevant minister and requiring the approval of the Treasurer, they will now require the approval of the minister administering part 7 of the Financial Management Act.

That is a particularly interesting provision because the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Act has been one of the government's landmark pieces of legislation and that level of delegation of funding approval and scrutiny is an important part of the administration of the act. We have seen something like 216 applications for regional infrastructure development funding seeking in excess of \$307 million, so the financial scrutiny of not only the applications but also the expenditure is an extremely important control feature of the administration of the act.

I note that applications for the fifth round of funding under that scheme closed at the end of February this year. To date some 42 projects have been announced, with the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund contributing \$74.5 million.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Parliament of Victoria today a very distinguished delegation of parliamentarians from the State Legislative Assembly of Sarawak in Malaysia. The delegation is led by the Honourable Sir Mohamad Asfia Awang Nassar, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in Sarawak.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Coode Island: chemical storage

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — I ask the Premier why the government has supported an extension to the Coode Island chemical storage facility when the Labor Party promised its heartland that it would close it.

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the honourable member for Doncaster for his question, and I will answer the two-part question in two parts. The first part was: why have we maintained chemical storage at Coode Island?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — There were two parts. I will answer the first one and then the second one. The answer to the first part — why is the chemical storage facility staying at Coode Island? — is because the previous Treasurer, Mr Alan Stockdale, signed letters to the key manufacturing companies that were storing chemicals on Coode Island, saying that the facility would stay. Those companies invested on that basis. It was an obligation in the contracts and we were not going to rip up those contracts. That deals with the first part of the question.

The second part of the honourable member's question is wrong because Coode Island is not being extended. What is happening is that — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster has posed his question.

Mr BRACKS — I will say it again — Coode Island is not being extended. What is happening is that the Environment Protection Authority has provided a licence to replace that which is on the eastern side with a state-of-the-art facility on the western side. The net result will be less storage under this arrangement than there was previously. So there is no extension; there is a reduction of storage facility on Coode Island. There is an upgrading from a substandard site on the eastern side to a state-of-the-art facility on the western side.

Building industry: standards

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I ask the Minister for Planning to explain how improved building standards and other measures under this government will protect Victorians building or renovating their homes, and will she advise whether there are any alternative policies on this issue?

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for Planning) — I thank the honourable member for Essendon for her question and her interest in building standards in Victoria.

Following changes in the builders warranty insurance market, insurers have moved from providing first resort cover to last resort cover for domestic building work. In this environment the Bracks government had to move quickly to protect home owners and builders in the building industry. We needed a low-cost, timely and effective assistance package to resolve building disputes.

What we have agreed between the building commission and the consumer affairs department is a one-stop shop for both builders and home owners. I am pleased to say that the building sector is supportive of this concept. In fact we have the support of the Housing Industry Association, which said today that it welcomed the Bracks government's new domestic building resolution process. 'It will eliminate shonks', says the HIA, so we welcome that support.

The emphasis, firstly, is on prevention — we want to improve building standards, but where there are defects and there is a dispute between a home owner and a builder we want quick, timely and effective conciliation and we want enforcement.

So the process will be streamlined. Rather than the confusing series of pathways that we inherited there will be one process. In the first place a complaint will be made to the department of consumer affairs. If there is a case to answer it will be referred to the building commission. The building commission will have access to and send out independent building experts — and that is the key, they will be independent building inspectors. There will be a quick turnaround. We anticipate resolution of a complaint in around seven days. If a ruling is made the builder will be instructed to rectify the works or face deregistration if that does not happen.

The changes are supported by the building sector. They will be funded not by the taxpayer but by the sector, with a modest increase in the builders permit levy of around \$60. In the light of the changes to the builders warranty insurance the government had to move quickly to assemble this package.

The honourable member asked whether there were any alternative policies in this area around builders warranty insurance, building disputes and protection for home owners. I have looked to see if the shadow planning minister had any views on this but he was silent. He

was mute; not a word on this issue — no policy, no comments on the fact that the insurers have moved from first resort to last resort, and nothing to protect home owners. We looked more broadly at the Liberal Party to see whether there are any policies on this area — —

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is now debating the question. I ask you to bring her back to order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to come back to relating her comments to the question posed.

Ms DELAHUNTY — The honourable member clearly asked me for alternative policies on this issue, and we certainly have been looking for alternative policies, and we have been discussing this particularly with the industry. We looked at the Liberal Party's web site and we keyed in the words 'policy'. What did we find? We found 'Error, error — path not found'. No policy — —

Dr Napthine — On a further point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is continuing to debate the question. I ask you to bring her back. If she wants a debate on policy I am happy to talk about the Pakenham bypass, the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline, payroll tax or the Scoresby freeway. There are plenty of policies.

The SPEAKER — Order! The latter part of the point of order is out of order. I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Ms DELAHUNTY — It was very disappointing. We key in 'policy', we get 'Error — no pathway'. To be fair to the Leader of the Opposition, if his shadow spokesperson is silent on this matter, he certainly has not been. He has made some utterances about moving the — —

Mr Wilson — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is obviously flouting your ruling. You have already brought her back to the question once. Would you please do so again?

The SPEAKER — Order! On two occasions the Chair has asked the minister to return to the question. I do so once again, and ask the minister to answer the question that was posed by the honourable member for Essendon.

Ms DELAHUNTY — I am pleased to inform the house that, yes, this is a government that has a policy. There was a problem; we found a solution. We

certainly do not see any policies from the other side of the house. They do not care, but we are turning Victoria around.

Agriculture: farmers rights

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. I refer to the government's announcement in March of last year of its support for legislation to protect farmers rights to operate unhindered by nuisance complaints. Given that the Minister for Agriculture said at the time he would 'act immediately', why has he failed to introduce such right-to-farm legislation?

Mr HAMILTON (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the honourable member for his question and his interest in this very important matter. However, there is an error of fact in the question. As the Deputy Leader of the National Party, and I expect all other members interested in the encroachment of urban areas into rural and farming areas would recall, the recommendation from the working party was that right-to-farm legislation as such was not an appropriate way to go. Indeed it has been proven overseas that it creates insurmountable problems, not only for government but also for the people dealing with this important issue.

The report from the right-to-farm working party contained six recommendations to government. Five of those recommendations have been instituted, culminating in the announcement the Attorney-General and I made a few weeks ago that we had finalised the appointment and training of the rural disputes mediation counsellors. Those people are now in place and are doing a brilliant job.

The agriculture division of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment has carried out the introduction of all but one of the recommendations of the working party. The remaining recommendation is of concern, and with the support of the house it will be introduced in legislation in the very near future. I would expect the unanimous support of this house for that.

The recommendation is to alter the section 32 declaration under the planning act to ensure that within the act there is a requirement for vendors of property to recognise that the property is near farm operations and that those farm operations could include such things as tractors working late at night. In some of the horticultural areas there could be scare guns, spray machinery and pumps working at different times. The idyllic lifestyle expected by some people who move from the city into rural areas cannot always be expected to be free of noise, free of smell and, as the case in the

Western District showed, free of roads muddied by the excrement of cattle as they pass from one place to another. That is the final recommendation of this right-to-farm working party.

Mr Wilson — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, there is so much noise in the chamber that it is very difficult to hear what the Minister for Agriculture is saying. Would the minister please repeat his answer?

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask all members in the house to quieten down so we can all hear the proceedings. The latter part of that point of order is out of order.

Mr HAMILTON — Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I shall resist the temptation to start again. I am sure that most honourable members have been able to hear what I have been saying.

To conclude the answer, the government wants to make sure that not only is there responsibility on local government in terms of the issuing of a land sale or an intention to have responsible operations within that council, it wants to make sure — and there is agreement and support on this from the farming community and in particular the Victorian Farmers Federation — that there are best-practice farming operations so that the farming community recognises that there is a responsibility not to unnecessarily or improperly impact on those who are living in their neighbourhood or who are their neighbours.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to conclude his answer.

Mr HAMILTON — In conclusion, this is good legislation. It is an indication that this government has good policies and is prepared to implement them and will continue to work well with both rural residential people and the farming community.

Gaming: problem gambling

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — Will the Minister for Gaming inform the house what action the government is taking to address the important issue of problem gambling and advise whether there are any alternative approaches to this issue?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I thank the honourable member for Ivanhoe for his dedication to getting responsible gambling. He has been fighting for it for a long time, and this government is the one that is implementing it.

I am pleased to advise that today I released draft regulations that will finally require the industry to provide information to gamblers about how poker machines work and how much money they have won or lost. Under the draft regulations each electronic gaming machine must display and generate, in electronic format, information about the odds of winning, returns to players, the average number of games played per win and maximum and minimum bets, and generate and display a running tally of time and money spent on the machines. From 1 January 2003 any new machines introduced will have to have those features which tell the gambler how long they have played, the odds of winning and how much they have won or lost.

The draft regulations also allow that from December, for the first time ever, every gaming venue will have consumer information for gamblers. Unlike other consumers, gamblers have not had access to information about how the gambling product works. It is a right they deserve and a right that the government will preserve.

Every venue will be required to have posters such as this for every 15 gaming machines — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister should not display such posters in the house.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — They will also be required to have a mini-poster on every gaming machine that gives information about how the gaming machines work to dispel misconceptions that gamblers have about gaming machines. Every venue will be required to have factual information about how gambling products work, the odds of winning, where to get help, where to make complaints and where to access information in different languages. It will provide informed consent for gamblers so that they go into a gaming venue with their eyes wide open. They will have information they have not had before to help them make decisions about how much they gamble and when to stop.

Those are world-first reforms. We came to government promising a range of reforms, focusing on responsible gambling and helping to reduce the harm of problem gambling — in stark contrast to the opposition! Where has the opposition spokesperson on gambling been on policy and meaningful reform? Nowhere! The opposition has nothing constructive to say — —

Mrs Fyffe — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is debating the issue and I would ask you to bring him back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — The opposition has nothing constructive to say. Up until recent times its spokesperson on gambling was a beneficiary of the gambling industry with Tabcorp shares and Fosters shares — no wonder the Liberal Party lost credibility a long time ago on gaming.

Mr McIntosh — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is clearly debating the point. He obviously did not hear your ruling before. Perhaps you can bring him back to the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The minister had hardly commenced speaking.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — The members of the ambition faction are getting very impatient, aren't they, as they do the numbers.

Why do we need these reforms? The previous government was warned by the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority on three separate occasions about introducing responsible gambling measures that have been introduced by us. These reforms are about informed consent for gamblers. It is not only the Productivity Commission that was asking for these, but — wait for it! — the Auditor-General's special report on gambling regulation in 1998 told the previous government, and he highlighted it in his report, that it:

... raises several issues concerning player fairness and argues that players of gaming machines have a 'right to know' a range of basic information and that this right is of such significance that it warrants urgent assessment ...

That was in 1998. Did they do anything about it? No! They have lost all credibility on gambling reform.

Dr Dean — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the question was clearly about what this government was going to do, not about past governments. The minister is now debating the question. You have asked him to come back, but he is clearly defying your earlier ruling.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Berwick — part of the ambition faction — in his point of order highlighted that I should be explaining why we are doing it. We are doing it because the Auditor-General in 1998 said that the government should.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am not prepared to uphold the point of order raised by the honourable member for Berwick. I ask the minister to conclude his answer.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — In conclusion, we are committed to responsible gambling. We have put a comprehensive range of reforms in place, and will continue doing so. We never said we would turn the world around overnight, but we have tighter and more comprehensive regulations than anywhere else in Australia. With these world firsts the world is actually looking at Victoria and its gambling reform about striking the right balance. We are striking the right balance on gambling reform. We are striking a balance on supporting problem gamblers.

Central City Studios: government loan

Dr NAPTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I refer the Minister for Finance to the \$31.5 million government taxpayer-funded loan at 2.75 per cent interest offered to the Central City Studios development, and I ask: are these low-interest government loans now generally available to all private businesses in Victoria, and are they the same types of loans that sent the Victorian Economic Development Corporation, the State Bank and Tricontinental broke?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. On the issue of financial management that he raises, the Bracks government has reduced Victoria's unfunded superannuation liabilities by over half a billion dollars. What is more — —

Mr Mulder — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is clearly reading his answer. He clearly has a document he is reading from. I ask that he table that document.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the honourable member for Polwarth.

Mr LENDERS — On the issue of financial management, this government is committed to a surplus of at least \$100 million every year in the budget. We are committed to sound financial management and sound financial practices.

Under this government the state's AAA rating has remained in place and continues to be in place because of strong financial management. We have expanded the power and scope of the Auditor-General — —

Mr Rowe — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is obviously debating the question. The question was clearly about the return to the Victorian Economic Development Corporation by this Labor government.

The SPEAKER — Order! The latter part of the point of order is merely repeating the question. I do not uphold the point of order and am not of the opinion that the minister was debating the question.

Mr LENDERS — This government, on the issue of financial management, has offered stable management in this state, has met all the key drivers of stable financial management and, on the particular issue of Central City Studios raised by the Leader of the Opposition, is determined to bring jobs to this state. If that requires us to intervene to do that, we will do it. We are concerned about jobs and about sound financial management, and these are issues of importance to this government.

The opposition is far more concerned with jobs internally. In New South Wales today they got rid of the job of Mrs Chikarovski! They are more concerned about internal jobs and not about jobs in Victoria.

We will continue with sound financial management supervised by an Auditor-General, with budget surpluses, and in that context will bring jobs to Victoria.

Tertiary education and training: funding

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — I ask the Minister for Education and Training to inform the house what action the government is taking to increase capital funding for training in Victoria and whether there are new policy directions in this area.

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Education and Training) — I thank the honourable member for Preston for his question and for his interest in the capital state of affairs in TAFE institutes. That is something the previous government was not concerned about. When we came to office quite a number of TAFE institutes were in a very parlous state indeed. There were major financial difficulties for quite a number of the TAFE institutes, and in fact the Auditor-General also raised concerns about the TAFE institutes and their financial situation.

There were no growth funds, either. In the period of office of the previous government no additional funds were allocated for growth in the TAFE system. Regional funds were taken away, regional assistance grants were taken away and there was a policy vacuum.

When we came to office we put in place quite a number of measures to increase the viability of the TAFE institutes and, more importantly, to increase their education and training capacity.

In relation to capital, we have in last year's budget put in place an unprecedented \$103 million over three years for capital for TAFE institutes. We also ensured in the last budget that one in three schools around Victoria received capital funding. So we certainly made sure that the educational institutes around the state matched the quality of the educational teaching.

Today I am happy to announce an additional \$24.3 million in new building works as the commonwealth's contribution to the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) agreement. There are a number — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms KOSKY — It is an agreement that we fought very hard to achieve. The previous government had an agreement about no growth funding — no growth funding! We fought hard for a strong agreement for Victoria.

If honourable members on the opposite side are interested I might be able to inform them of where some of that funding has gone. Over \$6 million will be provided to the Box Hill Institute of TAFE; \$4.8 million to Chisholm Institute of TAFE — in a very important growth corridor; \$5 million to Holmesglen Institute of TAFE; \$500 000 to South West Institute of TAFE; \$1 million to Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE; and \$6.9 million to Victoria University of Technology. We have very much built on the capital investment in this state in conjunction with the budget that came down last year and with this most recent ANTA agreement.

In relation to new policy directions I thought I should be generous and look to the opposition to see whether it had some policy that it would like to contribute to the capital investment. I went to the web site of the honourable member for Warrandyte, which is currently under construction — much like the honourable member himself, I must say, but unlike our TAFE institutes when he was minister! There are no policy directions there. No policy directions could be found on the Liberal Party web site either, so we will not be looking to them any more for policy directions in this state.

We will look to the other educationalists around the state who have far more ideas than the people on the other side of the house. The educationalists around the state have got more ideas in one day than the people on the other side would have in two years!

Business: government loans

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I refer the Minister for Finance again to the fact that the government is lending \$31.5 million of taxpayer funds at 2.75 per cent to Central City Studios, and I refer to the minister's failure to answer the question asked previously by the Leader of the Opposition. Will the minister advise the house whether any other private companies have received similar low interest loans from the Bracks government?

Mr Thwaites — On a point of order, Honourable Speaker, apart from the fact that the minister has already answered that question, it is appropriate — —

Mr Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Glen Waverley will cease interjecting!

Mr Thwaites — It is appropriate for the honourable member for Box Hill to direct his question to the minister responsible — namely, the Treasurer or the Minister for the Arts — and he should be made to do that.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The honourable member's question sought information further than that sought in the previous question and I will allow it.

Mr Brumby — On a further point of order, Honourable Speaker, the Deputy Premier raised with you two matters in his point of order — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Brumby — No, he ruled on the second matter, which was that the question had already been asked. The first matter that was raised by the Deputy Premier went to the requirements of question time that a minister may only be asked questions relating to his or her portfolio.

This is not a matter which is related or at all relevant to the Minister for Finance's portfolio.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Brumby — The opposition is well aware of that. This is a project that is being auspiced under the government's Partnerships Victoria initiative and is the responsibility of the Treasurer. It is a project that is being delivered by the Minister for State and Regional Development. It is not the responsibility of the Minister for Finance.

Mr Ryan — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the Minister for Finance was asked the first question on the topic. This is but a follow-up question. The minister did not plead the fifth the first time around; he answered that question, and he should answer this one.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Batchelor — On the point of order, Honourable Speaker, they are a bit unsettled by the one-vote victory of the ambition faction in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister, on the point of order.

Mr Batchelor — I draw your attention, Sir, to previous rulings by former Speaker Plowman on this particular issue. He ruled succinctly and straightforwardly and said in relation to the direction of questions to ministers that they may only be directed to the minister's current responsibility. As has been clearly indicated to you by the Treasurer, Honourable Speaker, this question should have been directed to the Treasurer. If the opposition misunderstands the allocation of administrative orders and responsibilities, it should take the opportunity over the Easter break to study the current responsibilities and direct its questions appropriately. It has misdirected the question and accordingly missed its opportunity to direct the question.

Mr CLARK — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the Financial Management Act and in particular to sections 13, 14, 24 and 25 of the act, which make clear that the Minister for Finance has responsibility both for the public accounts and for the annual and half-yearly reports of the budget sector and of the state generally. Past experience shows this sort of loan is a high-risk exposure for the state, and therefore, as part of his responsibility for the integrity of the public accounts and the state's finances generally, the minister should be aware of the significant risks to the proper valuation of state assets for which he has responsibility in the state's financial reports. The mere fact that some other ministers may also have some portfolio responsibility for this area does not detract from the responsibility of the Minister for Finance.

The SPEAKER — Order! On the point of order raised by the Treasurer, we are further guided by *May*, 22nd edition, at page 295, which reads:

Questions to Ministers. Questions addressed to ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in Parliament, or to matters of administration for which they are responsible. The central importance of ministerial responsibility to the procedure has been strongly emphasised by the Speaker. A

question should be addressed to the minister who is primarily responsible, and misdirected questions are transferred by the clerks in the table office on the notification of the departments concerned. The Speaker has ruled that it is out of order to ask a minister for his reasons for transferring a question. It is a long established principle that decisions on the transfer of questions rest with ministers and it is not a matter in which the Chair seeks to intervene.

It seems to me that in view of the guidance provided by *May* in that section, the Parliament will resolve this impasse if I ask the honourable member for Box Hill to redirect his question to the Treasurer as a result of advice that has been provided to the Chair and the house by the Treasurer that he has primary responsibility for this.

Mr CLARK — Mr Speaker, in accordance with your ruling I address my question to the Treasurer. I refer again to the fact that the government is lending \$31.5 million at 2.75 per cent interest to Central City Studios, and I refer to the failure of the Minister for Finance to answer the previous question asked by the Leader of the Opposition. I ask: can the Treasurer advise the house whether any other private companies have received similar low-interest loans from the Bracks government?

Mr Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Glen Waverley!

Mr Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the honourable member for Glen Waverley!

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I thank the honourable member for Box Hill for his question, and I intend to give him a full response.

Last year when the Premier visited the United States, he took time in California and Los Angeles to visit key representatives of the film industry. The reason he did was that following the dismal years of the former Kennett government, Victoria's film industry was on its knees. We had seen for year after year investment and jobs move from this state to New South Wales and Queensland and overseas. We made it clear that we had a commitment to the film industry — to regrowing the film industry in this state. So the Premier visited — —

Mr Perton — On a point of order on the question of relevance, Mr Speaker, the question was not about this transaction. The question was: are there any other transactions which are the subject of similar low-interest loans?

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the honourable member for Doncaster. The Chair is not in a position to direct a minister to answer in a particular way. As long as the minister remains relevant in his answer I will continue to hear him.

Mr BRUMBY — The Premier had a number of meetings, and as part of that visit to Hollywood in Los Angeles the Premier announced that the government would be providing up to \$40 million towards the construction of a film and television studio in Docklands — \$40 million.

That of course followed last year's budget announcement and the film industry review headed by Sigrid Thornton, which reported to the Minister for the Arts. In last year's budget we provided initiatives of \$32 million to support and boost the film industry to ensure the renaissance of the film industry in this state. We then had the Premier's announcement of \$40 million.

The \$40 million was announced, and in the midyear budget update which was provided by me to the public and to this house in January the \$40 million was identified. When we came to put this to tender we had announced that we would spend \$40 million. On advice we asked tenderers to bid against that, and the result of that is that we will be spending less than \$40 million — and the money is being repaid! So far from there being an additional cost to the state from this, in fact we are saving money from the \$40 million we had announced previously.

In addition, of course, the final tender documents in contract — —

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question is about whether there are any others. The Treasurer is giving a good impersonation of Rob Jolly's modern financial management!

The SPEAKER — Order! The latter part of that point of order is out of order. I ask the Treasurer to come back to answering the question.

Mr BRUMBY — The final contract on this has not yet been signed, but the preferred tenderer has indicated that in return for that support from the government there will be a total investment of around \$100 million in the film industry. So we have the \$32 million from last year, we have the \$100 million investment that will now occur at Docklands as a result of this government, and we have the temporary facility at St Albans. Can I

say about that that last year the Minister for the Arts and the Premier — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, much as the Treasurer's answer is interesting he is not complying with your previous ruling about directing his remarks to the question that was asked about other loans, and I would ask you to draw him back to that question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Treasurer to come back to answering the question. I remind him also of sessional order 3, which requires succinctness.

Mr BRUMBY — I am concluding. We provided the \$40 million budget provision — we are in fact spending less than the budget provision which was announced — and we are also providing the temporary facility at St Albans where *Queen of the Damned* was filmed last year. The film recently opened — it is an example of what you can do if you support this industry — to box office acclaim and records in the United States!

We support the Victorian film industry. We think it is a great industry. We are rebuilding it. We are investing in this industry and it will generate more jobs and opportunities for Victoria for many years ahead.

Justice system reform

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — Will the Attorney-General inform the house about the progress of reform in the justice system under the Bracks Labor government, and advise whether there are any alternative policy proposals?

Mr McArthur — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, that is an extraordinarily broad question the honourable member for Richmond has asked. I draw your attention to the sessional order requirement for answers to be concise and succinct, and I ask you to advise the Attorney-General of that.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Monbulk undoubtedly refers to sessional order 3, about which I have just reminded the Treasurer. If it becomes necessary, I will do so with the Attorney-General as well.

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — My last question time as a single man!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HULLS — The question is in two parts. The first part relates to recent law reform and the second to

any other policy proposals. I will try to be as succinct as possible. The law reform that has taken place since the Bracks government came to office has been enormous — absolutely huge.

It does not matter whether you are talking about the Law Reform Commission or the landmark Aboriginal Justice Agreement, of which all honourable members in this house ought to be proud. That agreement ensures that Aboriginal people are involved in all aspects of the justice system, which will lead to appropriate representation, opportunities and outcomes. You could be talking about the rebuilding of the courts in this state — not just the new County Court but the new courts in Warrnambool, Mildura and Morwell — or you could be talking about the government ensuring that legislation was introduced to enable plaintiffs' families to continue legal proceedings after their loved ones have died of dust diseases. That was very important.

You could be talking about restoring democracy in this state. Two examples are the restoration of the powers of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the introduction of the whistleblowers legislation, or you could be talking about Victoria leading the country in relation to judicial education by the establishment of the Judicial College of Victoria — again, great reforms!

But there is more to do, including the very important project on strategic directions for courts in this state. For the first time courts will work in partnership with each other to develop a 5 to 10-year strategic plan. No longer will courts come at budget time as individual silos; they will work in a more holistic way.

I refer to the appointments that have been made. Recently expressions of interest were put out to ensure we have a more diverse judiciary, and I am pleased that to date almost 60 applications have been received. Early this week Judge Irene Lawson was appointed to the County Court, which brings to 72 per cent the representation of women in appointments to that court by the Bracks government.

In relation to alternative proposals, unlike other ministers I have seen two proposals that have been put forward in relation to law reform by the opposition, the first of which is a policy to redesign barristers' gowns!

Dr Dean — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, as I think everyone in this house will see, we are about to embark on the Thursday special. Basically the Thursday special is that when the second-last question on a Thursday is asked, the processes of the house are abused. Questions are answered based on debating

points. They are not about informing the public of what the government is doing but about debating, and we are about to embark on that. I would ask you to make the Attorney-General answer the question and cease debating the question by referring to other policies.

The SPEAKER — Order! Essentially the honourable member for Berwick's point of order is whether the Attorney-General was debating the question. I am not of that opinion. I will continue to hear his answer to the question posed by the honourable member for Richmond.

Mr HULLS — The other proposal is mandatory sentencing. We reject both of those. In fact, the shadow Attorney-General has become known as the Gilligan of the Liberal Party. He has lost it. He is lost on a policy-free island and he can't get off. And there's the Professor, and there's Mary Ann!

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Attorney-General to desist from using such terminology and to address all other honourable members by their correct titles.

Mr HULLS — We have introduced policies — an enormous amount over the last two years. The Liberal-National Party coalition has no policies at all. They have gone missing on policy. They are a bit like the Elgin Marbles — they have gone missing. They are out there somewhere but they are very hard to get back. They do not care; they have no policies. It is about time they woke up to themselves. The only time the Victorian public will listen to them is when they have developed policies.

Polly Woodside Melbourne Maritime Museum

Mrs ELLIOTT (Mooroolbark) — I refer the Minister for the Arts to the unique maritime heritage collection at the *Polly Woodside* precinct. What action will the government take to guarantee the long-term future of one of Melbourne's most important tourist attractions?

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for the Arts) — I thank the honourable member for her question and for her interest in developing the cultural infrastructure of this state. I presume that, unlike the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer, she supports the development of the Docklands studio, as she supports, I hope, the other cultural infrastructure we are raising. Clearly there is a bit of confusion about that. The Leader of the Opposition opposes it, but I think the shadow Minister for the Arts supports it.

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister has not been speaking for a long time, but even at this point you should either rule that her answer is irrelevant — the question was about the *Polly Woodside* precinct — or that she is debating, but you should not allow her to abuse question time.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the honourable member for Doncaster.

Ms DELAHUNTY — Honourable Speaker, the *Polly Woodside* is an important old barque that should be protected. It is a tourist attraction; it is potentially part of the cultural precinct. We certainly have spent a lot of time in expanding the cultural precinct right along both sides of the Yarra, whether you are talking about Federation Square or the announcement of the new recital hall that this government in partnership will build for the people of Victoria and Melbourne. If someone is serious about adding to the cultural infrastructure of this state we certainly would welcome discussions, as I said publicly, about what the plan is for the *Polly Woodside* and the wider notion of a maritime museum park.

Those formal plans have not been presented to us in any way. I have certainly said publicly that I would be very interested in the vision, so I suggest that the honourable member perhaps encourage the consortium to put its plans to government. We have an arts policy, unlike the opposition. I think its only policy is from the Leader of the Opposition — to move the Yellow Peril! That was his arts policy — move the Yellow Peril! — but I thought he was talking about the honourable member for Warrandyte, or maybe the honourable member for Mooroolbark!

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to desist from going down that track.

Economy: performance

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — Will the Treasurer update the house on Victoria's current economic position in light of the commitment of the Bracks government to fiscal responsibility?

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I thank the honourable member for Keilor for his question and for his keen interest in this matter. Today I am delighted to inform the house of the release of the March 2002 report by Moody's Investors Service. In today's report, Moody's has reconfirmed Victoria's AAA credit rating. Of course, this is the highest possible rating and I think it is worth stating to the house the opening paragraph of Moody's report and opinion. It says:

Victoria has maintained a trend of sound fiscal performance generating sizeable surpluses after financing both operating and capital expenditures. These surpluses have resulted from the state's prudent fiscal practices, supported in recent years by strong economic growth.

That is a growing — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Treasurer is quoting from a document and I ask that he make a copy of that document available to the house.

The SPEAKER — Order! As the Treasurer appeared to be quoting from a document, I ask him to source the document and to make it available.

Mr BRUMBY — I seek permission from the shadow Treasurer to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer well knows that there is a procedure for seeking incorporation: it needs to be cleared with *Hansard* in regard to whether it is technically possible to incorporate it, and it needs to be cleared by the Speaker's office as to whether it is appropriate for incorporation. That has not occurred. The request has simply been that the document be made available to the house.

Mr BRUMBY — I am happy to make the document available, and it is also on the Moody's web site. The document is entitled 'Moody's Investors Service: global credit research, March 2002', and it was released yesterday.

Moody's report also provides a graph which shows that under the Bracks government the gross debt to gross state product ratio will decrease from 6.6 per cent in 1999 to 5 per cent in 2002.

It is worth noting in the house the extraordinarily strong economic performance of the state. Access Economics is forecasting growth this financial year of 4.8 per cent, which of course is well in excess of Treasury's own forecasts. We have private sector forecasters who, on average, are looking at growth of close to 4 per cent this financial year. You can look at some of the recent statistics quoted in the *Melbourne Age* of 8 March. The first paragraph of an article headed 'Victoria leads the nation's growth' states:

If Australia is the world's miracle economy, then Victoria might well be called Australia's miracle state.

The following day, 9 March, an article appeared in the *Age* on the release of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) investment statistics, stating:

The statistics show the Victorian economy is doing fabulously well: shoppers are out spending money, governments are building roads and bridges, businesses are investing, and the population is growing at one of the fastest rates in the nation.

In that respect it is no wonder that Moody's refers to the strong economic growth which has occurred in recent years.

In conclusion, we see net migration to our state at around 8000 people per year — the highest on record. I think last week's investment data from the ABS were most pleasing. They show that total investment in Victoria is at a record high and, in per capita terms, is above the national average for only the second time since records began on this data series in 1984. For only the second time in 18 years we have been above the national average.

Which government is delivering the AAA credit rating? It is the Bracks government! Which government is delivering the strongest economic growth? It is the Bracks government. And which government is delivering the best investment performance figures in this state since 1984? It is the Bracks government.

**STATUTE LAW (FURTHER REVISION)
BILL**

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — In concluding my remarks on the Statute Law (Further Revision) Bill I point out that statute law revision is essential housekeeping — it is good housekeeping, good maintenance — like the maintenance you need to do with a political party. You need to make sure your leadership is in good shape and the structure is in good shape, and change your leader if you need to. So over Easter maybe you could not only count the Easter eggs, but count the numbers, and while hunting for Easter eggs, the opposition might even turn up a policy here and there. You never know what you might turn up for a return to the parliamentary session after Easter.

It is essential housekeeping. I admire the rigour with which the drafters of the legislation went through the statute books to find these often almost insignificant amendments, repeals and modifications that it is necessary to make. I again note the significance of the milestone that we are now approaching, the 40th anniversary of the introduction of the decimal currency legislation, and that we are finally completing that transition. We will now see a final amendment to

the 1963 bill that coincides with the 40th anniversary of the beginning of that very important transition.

With those few words, I wish the bill a speedy passage through the house, which I have a premonition might occur very shortly, and look forward to the next statute law revision bill.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport).

ADJOURNMENT

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Walwa and District Bush Nursing Hospital

Mr PLOWMAN (Benambra) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health. Last Sunday the community of Walwa and surrounding districts organised a rally in support of its hospital, which is yet again on the point of closure. Over 1000 people attended a rally where they spent the morning picking grapes commercially, as a fundraiser. This small, isolated community of 200 people raised in excess of \$2000 for a morning's work. Following a barbecue lunch for the 1000 people who attended that rally, a range of speakers put the case that for this hospital to survive it is important for the community to accept a change in the delivery of hospital services.

The services that this community requires are, firstly, an aged care service publicly funded by the federal government; secondly, the continuation of state government funding for accident and emergency services and an overnight bed for resuscitation and stabilisation; and thirdly, the opportunity for the doctors to have access to these services, which will lead to the maintenance of their service in that small town.

I am speaking in support of the action already taken by the state government to keep this hospital alive and open. I ask the minister to work very closely with the federal government from this stage on to bring about the changes that are required for the Walwa and District Bush Nursing Hospital. What is required is for the

hospital to lose its private status and become a public deliverer of health services by becoming either a stand-alone, mini multipurpose service (MPS) or an arm of the Corryong multipurpose service, which currently services the Upper Murray. If it is to be an arm of the Upper Murray multipurpose service it needs to be autonomous — a completely separate campus of the Upper Murray MPS with the ability to provide those services I have listed. Those are aged care services, an overnight bed for resuscitation and stabilisation, and the continuation of state funding for accident and emergency services.

The community is grateful to this government for the efforts it has put in, but it is essential that this minister work with the federal government to assist this hospital to remain open. If he does not do that, this hospital will close.

Consumer affairs: toys

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. As we know, the reason we are finishing early today is because it is the beginning of what we refer to as the Easter weekend. Easter is an event of joy, pleasure and fun, particularly for young children. I hope that some of these traditions continue.

I ask the minister to warn the public, especially parents and retailers, about the selling of goods which could be dangerous to little children — cuddly Easter eggs, surprise Easter eggs that open up with little toys and gadgets inside, and soft toys or bunnies with buttons for eyes that come off. It is very important that every family has a joyous Easter without tragedy or having to race their little loved ones to a children's hospital or other clinic, because it all puts extra stress on the people that work in those services.

I raise this issue with the minister because we need to make the public aware of these matters. Every Easter we have these minor issues that seem to be forgotten when the main campaigns seem to be about road accidents and traumas, speeding, and all the things that happen on the waterways when people go fishing and so forth while there is still warm weather. However, this is a very important issue in relation to accidents that happen in the home. Often it is unforeseen. Presents are bought and given because everyone likes to bring joy at Easter, particularly to children because it is orientated towards and has been commercialised in the direction of young children. We would not want to see any young children suffering and the spoiling of the pleasure and fun for families, particularly on Easter Sunday when Easter egg hunts are usually on after

mass, for those people who still practise that sort of tradition.

Furthermore, as Greek Easter is about four weeks away there is still time to make the people in our Greek Orthodox community aware as well before their Easter comes around, because they have a number of traditions — —

Mrs Peulich — And other Orthodox churches, thank you very much!

Mr SEITZ — Well, the Orthodox community includes the Ukrainians, Russians, Macedonians, Egyptians, Coptics and all the other religious communities. So it is important that we make it known.

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

Firearms: registry

Mr KILGOUR (Shepparton) — I refer the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to a problem with the performance of the Victorian firearms registry and ask him to take some action to try to resolve the problem. Victoria developed a very good firearms registry, which handled permits to acquire firearms and the registration of firearms and licences in 8 to 14 days. However, something drastic has happened within the registry and there has been a massive blow-out in processing times. I refer to a letter from Field and Game Australia which advises:

In recent weeks we have received an ever-increasing number of complaints relating to unacceptable delays in processing firearms licences and firearms registration by the licensing services branch.

Typical delays are: new licence applications 8 to 10 weeks; permit to acquire — first firearm 6 to 8 weeks; permit to acquire — second and subsequent firearm 8 to 10 weeks.

These current problems are amplified due to this period being the lead-up to the game seasons with a large majority of licences falling due in February and March.

Our members are deeply concerned that the commitment to public safety ... which resulted in severe restrictions on legitimate firearms owners, is now being eroded ...

Field and Game Australia also advises:

Our New South Wales members advise me that the turnaround time there is rarely more than 10 days.

The problem also affects firearms dealers. I have a letter from a dealer in Mirboo North, which states:

Since November last year I have noticed a dramatic slowdown in the processing time for permits to acquire a firearm and for firearm licence applications. I do not know the

reason for this slowdown but it has a dramatic impact on the cash-flow situation of my business ...

Another gun shop proprietor writes:

This is a severe restriction to our trade because the customer cannot take receipt of his legally purchased firearm without the permit to acquire and I have a list of customers that have made complaints to us re the time it is taking for a permit to acquire to be processed.

This is a terrible situation for the shooters, which has been verified by the district firearms officers. A registry that formerly worked well and provided a good service is letting down the shooters of this state. Not only shooters are affected but retailers are complaining bitterly as well.

We have had letters from shooters, shooting organisations and retailers, and complaints from police district firearms officers. Obviously the staff of this department has been drastically reduced and the minister must act to restore the service to a level where it can provide what is required. The staff must be put back into the firearms registry office so that the shooters can have their licences dealt with properly.

Consumer affairs: advertising scams

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) — I refer the Minister for Consumer Affairs to concerns I have received in my office over a period of some months now from local businesses about a variety of approaches they have had from people offering them advertising in various publications. The first inquiry I got was some years ago when we were in opposition. We were able to track down and track back the inappropriate provider — the person who was operating this scam. These scams now seem to be back and on the rise.

I ask the minister to investigate these sorts of totally inappropriate practices and to advise what action she can take to protect small and busy businesses that are not unlike our own electorate offices, with terrific people working in them doing enormous amounts of work under a great deal of pressure. Those are the sorts of people and businesses who are vulnerable to these totally inappropriate practitioners, who phone up mostly at a busy time of the day and suggest they can offer some fantastic deal for advertising in a publication they are organising. They then send an invoice, and in a busy office where work may be shared between a number of people the invoice is signed off and paid — with no advertising ever eventuating!

It is a nasty little scheme that preys on small businesses and on trusting people who often do not have the time that some of the more cynical amongst us might have to

say, 'That's fine, I'll have a look at your publication, and I would like to see the advert you intend to put in'. It is too late once the money has already been paid.

As I said, I would like the minister to investigate these matters to see just what she can do in her portfolio to educate and inform people and also to prosecute those who treat other human beings as if they are just grist for the mill to line their greedy pockets.

Mallee Research Station

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — The issue I raise for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture relates to the future of the Mallee Research Station at Walpeup, which is one of the campuses run by the Victorian Institute for Dryland Agriculture (VIDA) at Horsham.

A number of rumours have been running around the northern Mallee in recent times about threats to the future of the Mallee Research Station. As a former resident of that area I can tell you, Deputy Speaker, that that station is highly valued indeed by farmers in the northern Mallee.

Discussions have been held between farmers in the area and Chris Korte, who is the acting manager of VIDA at Horsham. During the course of those discussions Chris Korte has, I believe, advised some local farmers of plans to move out the existing manager at the Mallee Research Station, Ivan Mock, who to my knowledge has been there for many years and has done a tremendous job; to have the station managed by an administrative assistant; to lease out part of the farm; to basically run it just as a work station; and to remove the Mallee farmer representatives from the VIDA board.

Those things cause enormous concerns in the northern Mallee. There is a strong commitment to the Mallee Research Station, and the local farmers want it to stay there because it is a valuable service which has provided valuable research for many years. They say there is a need to develop strong 5 to 10-year planning and to establish clear goals for the research station, and they are seeking a strong commitment from the minister for its future. The staffing at Mallee Research Station, as I understand it, has dropped from about 11.7 full-time equivalents about two years ago to 6 full-time equivalents now, so clearly the rumours are based on what farmers see around the area.

I seek an assurance from the minister that he will personally commit to the future of the Mallee Research Station and that he will work with farmers in that area in order to develop strong 5 to 10-year planning and to

establish clear and sound goals for the research station in the interests of all farmers up in that region.

Clayton: festival funding

Mr LIM (Clayton) — I ask the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs to take action to secure funding for the many festivals being celebrated in my electorate of Clayton. Clayton is about the most cosmopolitan electorate in Victoria, given that something like 53 per cent of its constituents come from a non-English-speaking background. Indeed, they come from over 100 countries of the world. The house can imagine the rich tapestry of cultural heritage that these new Australians have brought to enrich Victoria, which is already a vibrant and dynamic cultural setting.

One of the most important contributions that this new community has made to Victoria is its many festivals, and I will cite just two examples. One is the Japan Festival, which has been celebrated in Clayton for the past two years. I will not refer to the Japanese community in my electorate as small, given that the two-way trade between Japan and Victoria is worth close to \$10 billion, but it is a sizeable new and emerging Japanese community.

During the past two years Clayton has hosted the Japan Festival, and amazingly it has become so popular that this year the organisers have no choice but to hold it at a bigger venue.

I would like to take the opportunity of paying a special tribute to Madame Reiko Furukawa, who is the head of the Japan Club of Victoria, which has worked so hard to make sure that Japanese culture, traditions and customs have been shared with the mainstream community during this festival. The Consul-General of Japan presided over the festival, which was a fantastic event, and I hope it continues to go from strength to strength.

I would also like to bring to the minister's attention the Songkran Festival, the location of which I will make special mention of in this house. The Songkran Festival is a combined new year's celebration by six communities: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burma and India. It is large and unique and celebrated in April each year. This festival will be celebrated for the first time in Springvale. The Language and Cultural Centre of Thailand, which is headed by Dr Deja Srivatana —

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

Pakenham bypass

Mr MACLELLAN (Pakenham) — In the absence of the Minister for Transport I raise a matter with the Minister for Gaming and ask that he draw it to the minister's attention for a response at a later date.

Easter is a time when we are all very conscious of the road toll and the difficulties of road traffic. Much of that difficulty arises from the inadequacy of the roads and their failure to keep up with the needs of the traffic. In the Pakenham electorate and in the Pakenham district we have a project which is supported by all municipalities in Gippsland, and that is the Pakenham bypass. It has a commitment of sorts from this government but no starting date. What the Pakenham community at this time of Easter asks for is that it should be given a starting date for the project so that those pieces of land which have not yet been acquired by the government can be acquired so that the community can get ready for the disruption that will occur during the construction of the bypass.

It is an essential road safety matter and it is likely to lead to incredible waste if it does not proceed at an early date. I ask the Minister for Gaming to take up with the Minister for Transport the issue of a commencement date for the Pakenham bypass. I know I can rely on the Minister for Gaming doing this, because the minister himself whilst mayor of the municipality of Berwick was part of a campaign to try and get a commitment from the government to the Hallam bypass. He knows exactly what the difficulties are. To see those difficulties transferred from Casey council into Officer and into the small communities along the Princes Highway in my electorate is an unconscionable move and likely to seriously increase the number of fatalities and serious accidents.

Brunswick: asbestos removal

Mr CARLI (Coburg) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Workcover regarding a very serious health and safety incident in East Brunswick last week. It involved an old factory in Linden Street which was being demolished to make way for some units. There was major contamination as a result of this demolition and the area around the factory was contaminated with a deadly cocktail of blue, brown and white asbestos.

On 20 March residents raised the alarm and Worksafe inspectors came out immediately. I want to commend Worksafe for its immediate response to the concerns of residents. In attendance also were representatives from the union, the Moreland City Council and the

Environment Protection Authority. The inspectors stopped the work immediately. They spoke to the workers and found that most of them would not give their names. They found that there were no permits for the demolition and that no-one had checked about the nature of the site. Certainly no-one had checked the nature and quantity of asbestos, and so we had a major contamination of the area.

The local council and the Environment Protection Authority evacuated residents from the surrounding streets, and the next day Worksafe engaged A-grade asbestos removalists to ensure that the area was safe and the people could feel assured the decontamination was dealt with. Furthermore, on Friday Worksafe placed a prohibition notice on the owner of the site, Marna Pty Ltd, compelling it to use asbestos removalists to complete the job and to ensure that there was no further contamination.

This is a very serious incident. The workers involved in the demolition were completely unaware of the nature of the contamination and the amount of asbestos. There was commentary from the Worksafe inspector and the union about the sheer scale of the contamination, and the dust that resulted affected the surrounding area, which is essentially residential — that is, Linden Street and Arnold Street, East Brunswick. Once the residents realised there was dust affecting the area they regarded it seriously enough to quickly call in Worksafe.

I ask the minister to prosecute the people responsible for this careless and unsafe act in East Brunswick so that we can ensure that this sort of behaviour is stamped on quickly and effectively and that workers and residents can be reassured that the government and the various agencies want to get rid of unsafe work practices.

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

Roads: speed limits

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — Today I wish to seek action from the Bracks administration over its unholy deal with police command to raise revenue to pay for police salaries by booking more motorists.

Mr Maxfield — Which minister?

Mr LEIGH — It is for the Minister for Transport. I want the Minister for Transport to act with his colleague the arrogant Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who last night said that motorists should not only check their brakes but they should now check their speedometers. The fact is that Australian

design rules have always had a 10 per cent speedometer tolerance. Other states allow it but the Bracks Labor government does not. It is breaking the bipartisan arrangements on road safety in this state. The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria is also concerned that motorists will be looking at their speedometers for minor speed infringements of 1 or 2 kilometres per hour instead of looking at the roads as they should be.

This is all a mad grab for cash by the Bracks administration and police commissioner Nixon. The Premier washes his hands of it and says he has nothing to do with it. Who governs this state? Who makes the decisions? It is clearly not the Premier or his transport minister. I call on the Minister for Transport to take action to do what he can on behalf of Victorian motorists. Let's save lives. Let's stop motorists from simply looking at speedometers all day. At the same time the government could introduce a process of checking the speedometers on government cars being sold. The fact is that other states do not have this arrangement. Let's put the government to the test. The majority of the fleet of the more than 2 million vehicles on Victorian roads are over 11 years of age.

Bracks government members are laughing about motorists driving around at Easter looking at whether they are doing 1 or 2 kilometres over the limit. It is an outrage. No wonder the death toll in Victoria has been going up since the election of the Bracks government.

Jindi Cheese

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — I raise with the Minister for Agriculture the question of how we can recognise the wonderful success of Jindi brie. On Friday in the USA it was declared the world champion cheese. Jindi brie is a specialist, white mould cheese hand made in the traditional style of 3-kilogram wheels. The contest awards champion status in 23 classes. Jindi brie won first champion of the brie–camembert class before it was then elevated to the world champion cheese. This is an outstanding success by a cheese factory. To have a cheese factory in my electorate win the world champion cheese is something that as local member I am immensely proud of.

There were thousands of entries in the championship from all over the world including France, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland as well as America and other places. I want to congratulate the Ronalds family who run the factory. I also want to recognise the good work done by all staff who have assisted in making the brie, including those on the farm, because the production of the milk in West Gippsland is very important. One of the reasons West Gippsland

produces fantastic cheese is the great milk produced in the area. Jindi Cheese is selling its brie to Japan and Asia and is assessing its export potential to the United States. It is a very active company which is producing excellence in the dairy industry and one I am very proud to have in my electorate.

There are two other cheese factories in my electorate which also produce wonderful cheeses — Piano Hill and Tarago River Cheese. However, this is a day to celebrate the success of Jindi brie. I believe that this world championship win will be a great incentive for those in the cheese industry, especially those at the Jindi factory, to continue producing such magnificent cheese. West Gippsland is well known for the Gourmet Deli Trail and it can now proudly boast the world's best cheese. I encourage all members of this house and the community to come to West Gippsland and taste our magnificent dairy delicacies and some Jindi cheese, which we are immensely proudly of.

As the local member I will do everything I can to assist with any future expansion and development of this company because we need to support it as a company that is delivering excellence. It is an example of what we in Victoria can achieve.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired. The honourable member for Mooroolbark has 2 minutes.

Disability services: Redlands placement

Mrs ELLIOTT (Mooroolbark) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Community Services through the Minister for Gaming. I ask the Minister for Community Services to investigate the appropriateness of the placement of a young intellectually disabled man named Dean Grundy at a Redlands facility — a service of the Uniting Church — at 66 Country Club Drive, North Ringwood.

Dean's parents have written to me and to the minister saying that Dean has a moderate intellectual disability but he also has autistic tendencies. He is a client of the Department of Human Services and he moved into the facility at 66 Country Club Drive in November 2000. His parents were assured by the case manager in the eastern region that the appropriateness of the placement of residents so they were compatible would be considered and that the parents would be informed of any new resident who was to move into the house.

In December 2001 a new resident moved into Country Club Drive without any previous advice to Mr and Mrs Grundy. On 14 March 2002 there was an incident and the parents were rung and told they should remove

Dean from the house immediately because through no fault of his own the other resident was violent and Dean was very frightened. He has since exhibited signs of trauma. Mr and Mrs Grundy were informed that this client would be relocated but that has not happened. Mr and Mrs Grundy have described graphically their distress at this situation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Bulleen has 30 seconds.

Bulleen Road: traffic noise

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — In December 2000 I wrote to the Minister for Transport seeking approval to speak to Vicroads regarding traffic noise on Bulleen Road. Unfortunately a few years later I have not had a response from the minister. The residents whose homes back onto Bulleen Road have complained on numerous occasions about the noise level. I ask the Minister for Transport to please respond to my letter.

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

Responses

Mr HAERMEYER (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — The honourable member for Shepparton raised the matter of a backlog in processing licensing and registration applications within the firearms registry at Victoria Police. This backlog is quite substantial and it is of some concern. Some 2105 firearms applications were backlogged as at the early part of March this year.

That results from some cutbacks at the firearms registry that were initiated in 1999. Certainly the government is cognisant of them, and it has been raised with Victoria Police. I am advised by the police that some \$260 000 in funding has been allocated to enable them to eliminate the backlog by 30 June. According to their estimates it will involve both the current staff working overtime and 14 additional staff. The backlog is an unacceptable situation. I can assure the honourable member that the resources are there and Victoria Police's target is to eliminate the backlog by 30 June.

The honourable member for Mordialloc raised an issue in his usual manner. The whole road safety issue is a very serious one. Last year 421 people died on the roads in Victoria, yet the honourable member for Mordialloc comes into this place to try to make some sort of political football out of it! I regard that as entirely disgraceful.

He referred to an unholy deal between the government and police command. Under legislation and regulations put into place by the previous government a 3-kilometre per hour tolerance is provided for. The previous government did not seek to vary that. The police themselves have exercised — —

Mr Leigh — Under your orders!

Mr HAERMEYER — Can you prove that? Where's your proof?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I remind the honourable member for Mordialloc that interjections are disorderly, and I ask the minister not to take them up. I ask the honourable member for Mordialloc to be quiet while the minister responds to his question.

Mr HAERMEYER — The Victoria Police exercise their discretion on when and when not to issue infringement notices outside the 3-kilometre per hour limit. They have taken the policy decision that they are no longer going to allow that level of leeway.

The honourable member for Mordialloc went on to say — —

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, South Australia and New South Wales had the same deal that we had here, and it has changed so they can make more — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc has been counselled many times by the Chair about his behaviour in the house, including the incorrect use of the forms of the house and in particular points of order. I advise him that I will not put up with any more of them this afternoon. There is no point of order.

Mr HAERMEYER — The government respects the separation of powers. It is an absolute insult to the officers of the Victoria Police to suggest that they could somehow be influenced by government in terms of how they dispatch their responsibilities to enforce the law. It is an absolute insult to the 10 000 members of the Victoria Police.

The honourable member for Mordialloc went on to talk about what he refers to as a grab for cash by the government and Chief Commissioner Nixon. That is very insulting not only to the government but particularly to the chief commissioner.

Let me just deal with the facts. Firstly, as I have said a 3-kilometres per hour tolerance is provided for in the law that the former government presided over. The

Monash University Accident Research Centre identified that from 1992 all speedometers were digital, extremely accurate and therefore not an issue. Research also shows that the accuracy of speedometers in cars prior to 1992 is an issue in only 2 per cent of cases.

I advise the honourable member for Mordialloc that the speed limit is the speed limit; it is not the limit we tell people to drive at. We are not saying that if the sign indicates 60 kilometres an hour, 'You have to drive at 60'. It is what you drive under — you give yourself some room for tolerance. It is also important for people to ensure that their speedometers are accurate in the same way as they ensure that their brakes work. Unfortunately, for some in the community there is a failure to recognise that there are two pedals in the car, one is an accelerator and the other is the brake.

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, with the greatest respect the minister is misrepresenting me. I have quoted from a parliamentary Road Safety Committee report that said that speedometers could be up to 15 per cent inaccurate. It is an all-party committee of which his party was part, and I quoted from that report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order; it is a point of debate.

Mr HAERMEYER — The Monash University Accident Research Centre indicates that what the honourable member for Mordialloc is referring to is an absolute furphy. What he and his ilk are doing is giving comfort to those people who go out on the road every day and put the lives of other road users at risk — 421 people — —

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I take exception to what the minister is saying — that I am deliberately going out there to encourage people to break the law. I request that he withdraw. As a member of Parliament I have never encouraged anybody to break the law, and never will. I ask the minister to withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to withdraw the words.

Mr HAERMEYER — Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot withdraw what I did not say. What I said was that — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to withdraw the words.

Mr HAERMEYER — I withdraw the words he took offence at, but I stand by the statement that

anybody who argues that somehow you should give 10 per cent tolerance because of the potential inaccuracy of a speedometer is giving comfort to those people who go out there and break the law, who speed and put the lives of others at risk.

He then goes on in a most disgraceful way to try to politicise the matter and says that the death toll has been increasing since the election of the Bracks government. That is absolutely disgraceful! Even where there have been differences of opinion in the debate over the road toll, we have had some sense of decency in that debate and attempted not to score political points, but the honourable member for Mordialloc in his most despicable way has brought it into this house to try to score political points on an issue. It does him no credit whatsoever.

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister has accused me of being despicable. All I simply did was say that the figures have increased. The minister is now leaving the chamber and will not withdraw the comment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Workcover) — The honourable member for Coburg raised an appalling situation relating to asbestos in his community and set out not only matters in relation to the unsafe workplace but the wider ramifications of the distress that it caused others. Because the honourable member represents the views of his community he wants the culprits brought to justice. I shall convey to Worksafe that it go about the collection of evidence for the prosecution to proceed.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HAMILTON (Minister for Agriculture) — I shall resist the temptation to respond to the interjections! The honourable member for Monbulk raised a very important matter concerning the Mallee Research Station at Walpeup and, given that the honourable member spent some time in that part of the region, he should be able to tell me whether Walpeup is a suburb of Ouyen or Ouyen is a suburb of Walpeup.

I reinforce and concur with the statements of the honourable member about the importance of the research station. It has done some outstanding work over the years and is certainly, in terms of the difficulty of farming in the Mallee area, of major importance to our Mallee industries.

I also was aware of the rumours circulating about the downgrading of the Mallee Research Station and followed up the matter with the executive director of agriculture, Dr Bruce Kefford, and the director of Agriculture Victoria, Dr Clive Noble, indicating that certainly the government would not condone, allow or be involved in any way in a downgrading of this very important research station. Indeed, we were at the research station late last year when one of the research scientists won an award for ecologically sustainable agriculture. The station has some very talented staff.

I am aware that there are a couple of vacancies, perhaps more than two, at the station. My information from the two senior officers within the Department of Agriculture is that they are being filled. Further, I have asked my two senior officers to meet with representatives of the Victorian Farmers Federation next week to make sure that they confirm the government's direction. This government is committed to what goes on at Walpeup and, indeed, what goes on in all of our research stations. I thank the honourable member for bringing up that matter and for the manner in which he raised it. I am sure we are of one accord about the outcome.

The honourable member for Narracan raised the matter of a world champion, which is an absolutely — —

Mr Maxfield interjected.

Mr HAMILTON — The honourable member smiles; but Jindi Cheese winning a world championship for its brie is something we should all be celebrating. We are competing against many countries internationally and against 32 winners in other classes. This company has produced a true world-class champion, and that is something we should all celebrate. It does not happen by accident.

The operators of the Jindi Cheese factory include George Ronalds, who was the original operator, and his son Andrew, who now manages the factory and is a director of the company. It is a company that has worked very hard to produce excellence within its factory, and that has not happened without making sure there were excellent inputs all along the line: outstanding pastures, pasture management in the paddock, dairy herd management — indeed, the local company has its own dairy herd and manages its own milk production — milk processing and transport to the factory.

And that is not the end of the story. The end of the story is that you have to be able to market the product. If you cannot market it why would you produce it? They have

put a lot of extra time and energy into marketing their product.

I have raised this matter with the Premier, who is also very proud of this achievement, and the Premier has agreed that he will congratulate the company on its outstanding achievement, one which does great credit to Victorian agriculture and Victorian agribusiness.

The first I heard of all this was when the matter was referred to — and I do not know whether I should be giving free advertising here — on Channel 10's *The Panel* last night. One of the commentators on that show referred to it, so it has had pretty good publicity. I am sure the company will build on success after success. Indeed, the Minister for State and Regional Development informs me that through his Regional Infrastructure Development Fund some \$23 000 was allocated to the company to assist in putting on the three-phase power as the company has expanded; so it has been a joint effort. This government supports the enterprise, and I am sure the Parliament congratulates Jindi Cheese.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I thank the honourable member for Clayton again for his ongoing enthusiasm and support for cultural diversity in his electorate and in Victoria. He highlighted the importance of being able to support multicultural events that help to not only unify ethnic communities themselves but also promote the benefits of cultural diversity.

The Victorian Multicultural Commission has an expanded events program, which we put a lot of dollars into. We increased funding by \$500 000 a year. I am pleased to announce that I am releasing funding for 87 important events totalling close to \$77 000 of sponsorship from the commission, including a number of organisations that either service, are based in or have been holding their events in the honourable member's electorate.

The honourable member mentioned that the Japan Club of Victoria has been holding its functions annually in Clayton. The event has grown so much it is being moved to Box Hill. The club has been successful in being granted funding.

The honourable member for Clayton also mentioned the Language and Cultural Centre of Thailand, which will host the Songkran New Year Festival in Springvale. The centre has also been successful in being granted funding.

The honourable member for Clayton is active in encouraging community groups to apply to the

Victorian Multicultural Commission. The commission certainly appreciates the opportunity to consider sponsorship applications to show that it is there and is supporting those events.

Other events in the honourable member's electorate to receive funding include the Halkideion Association for its organisation of the Sardine Festival. It is a very important and big Greek festival — and it has nice sardines as well!

Mr Kotsiras interjected.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — The honourable member for Bulleen concurs.

The Sikh Society has been funded for its Vaisakhi Festival, as has the Sri Lankan Study Centre for its Sri Lankan Australia Festival. In the neighbouring Springvale part of the honourable member's electorate the celebration of Naoraz Day has been funded for the Afghan Study Centre. Similarly the Hindu Society's Deepan Festival has also received funding.

They are but some of the 87 events that have been funded, details of which will appear on the web site shortly. I encourage honourable members to be involved and to encourage groups from their electorates to apply. I thank the honourable member for Clayton for his support.

The honourable member for Benambra raised an important matter for the Minister for Health in relation to Walwa and District Bush Nursing Hospital. I will raise that issue with the minister.

The honourable member for Keilor raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs about the sale of goods that are dangerous to small children. Obviously as a father of two young children one often thinks about the things that are found in toys, or things that can break and harm children. I will raise that issue with the minister.

The honourable member for Werribee also raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs in relation to complaints from businesses about the placement of advertising. Apparently there is someone out there trying to mislead small businesses by convincing them to pay for advertising that may not actually end up promoting their business. The honourable member wants the minister to consider that matter.

The honourable member for Pakenham raised again in an appropriate way the matter of the Pakenham bypass. He is correct that I have had an association in my public

life in local government and Parliament in that area, and of course with the Hallam bypass due to be completed one year early the issue of the Pakenham bypass is very important.

It was good that in the federal election campaign the federal government offered the bypass as a road of national importance (RONI) and to fund it fifty–fifty. We need to make sure that the federal government signs on the dotted line and that the 50 per cent it has agreed to fund actually is funded in the time frame in which it is prepared to do it. I am sure everyone in the community is keen to see the Pakenham bypass works start, given the Hallam bypass is not too far away. Having come back across Pakenham on the weekend through bumper-to-bumper traffic and given that district's growing population, I acknowledge that the situation is getting pretty bad out there.

Certainly the campaign to get fifty–fifty funding as a RONI has been successful, and we need to see how each government allocates its share of dollars in the appropriate time frame to get the job done.

The honourable member for Mooroolbark raised an important matter for the Minister for Community Services regarding a gentleman, Dean Grundy, who has a moderate intellectual disability and who is at the Redlands facility in North Ringwood. I will discuss that matter with the minister.

The honourable member for Bulleen, in the short period he had, raised the matter of traffic noise on Bulleen Road, which he wants the Minister for Transport to address. There are many demands relating to road issues. I am sure the noise did not suddenly appear in the two years since the Labor Party came into government, but I will refer it to the minister. I thank him for raising the issue.

On behalf of the government I wish everyone a peaceful and enjoyable Easter, and I look forward to seeing everyone come back safely after Easter.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 4.06 p.m. until Tuesday, 16 April.