

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 11 June 2009

(Extract from book 7)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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Professor DAVID de KRETSER, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services and Minister for Senior Victorians	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Industry and Trade, and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MLC
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Minister for Gaming, Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. A. G. Robinson, MP
Minister for Housing, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr A. G. Lupton, MP

Legislative Assembly committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Carli, Mr Clark, Mr Delahunty, Mr Lupton, Mrs Maddigan, Dr Naphthine, Mr Nardella, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson.

Standing Orders Committee — The Speaker, Ms Barker, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Langdon, Mr McIntosh, Mr Nardella and Mrs Powell.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Batchelor, Mr Cameron, Mr Clark, Mr Holding, Mr Lupton, Mr McIntosh and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Jennings, Mr Lenders and Ms Pennicuik.

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Beattie, Mr Delahunty, Mrs Maddigan and Mr Morris. (*Council*): Mrs Coote, Mr Leane and Ms Mikakos.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr Crisp, Mr Lim and Ms Thomson. (*Council*): Mr Atkinson, Mr D. Davis and Mr Tee.

Education and Training Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Dr Harkness, Mr Herbert, Mr Howard and Mr Kotsiras. (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr and Mr Hall.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr O'Brien, Mr Scott and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): Ms Broad, Mr P. Davis and Mr Somyurek.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Duncan, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Ingram, Ms Lobato, Mr Pandazopoulos and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mrs Petrovich and Mr Viney.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Kairouz, Mr Noonan, Mr Perera, Mrs Powell and Ms Wooldridge. (*Council*): Mr Finn and Mr Scheffer.

House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Delahunty, Mr Howard, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Scott and Mr K. Smith. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Atkinson, Ms Darveniza, Mr Drum, Mr Eideh and Ms Hartland.

Law Reform Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Donnellan, Mr Foley and Mrs Victoria. (*Council*): Mrs Kronberg and Mr Scheffer.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Green, Mr Hodgett, Mr Nardella, Mr Seitz and Mr K. Smith. (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr, Mr Guy and Ms Hartland.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Munt, Mr Noonan, Mr Scott, Mr Stensholt, Dr Sykes and Mr Wells. (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva, Ms Huppert, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Rich-Phillips.

Road Safety Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Eren, Mr Langdon, Mr Tilley, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller. (*Council*): Mr Koch and Mr Leane.

Rural and Regional Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Marshall and Mr Northe. (*Council*): Ms Darveniza, Mr Drum, Ms Lovell, Ms Tierney and Mr Vogels.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Carli, Mr Jasper, Mr Languiller and Mr R. Smith. (*Council*): Mr Eideh, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Peulich and Ms Pulford.

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Speaker: The Hon. JENNY LINDELL

Deputy Speaker: Ms A. P. BARKER

Acting Speakers: Ms Beattie, Ms Campbell, Mr Eren, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Green, Dr Harkness, Mr Howard, Mr Ingram, Mr Jasper, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Languiller, Ms Munt, Mr Nardella, Mr Seitz, Mr K. Smith, Dr Sykes, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson

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The Hon. J. M. BRUMBY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. R. J. HULLS

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

Mr E. N. BAILLIEU

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

The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. L. WALSH

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	Lindell, Ms Jennifer Margaret	Carrum	ALP
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Carli, Mr Carlo Domenico	Brunswick	ALP	Noonan, Wade Mathew ⁵	Williamstown	ALP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Crutchfield, Mr Michael Paul	South Barwon	ALP	Overington, Ms Karen Marie	Ballarat West	ALP
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Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
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Haermeyer, Mr André ³	Kororoit	ALP	Shardey, Mrs Helen Jean	Caulfield	LP
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Helper, Mr Jochen	Ripon	ALP	Stensholt, Mr Robert Einar	Burwood	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Eltham	ALP	Sykes, Dr William Everett	Benalla	Nats
Hodgett, Mr David John	Kilsyth	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Holding, Mr Timothy James	Lyndhurst	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
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Hudson, Mr Robert John	Bentleigh	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Hulls, Mr Rob Justin	Niddrie	ALP	Trezise, Mr Ian Douglas	Geelong	ALP
Ingram, Mr Craig	Gippsland East	Ind	Victoria, Mrs Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Jasper, Mr Kenneth Stephen	Murray Valley	Nats	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene ⁴	Kororoit	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Swan Hill	Nats
Kosky, Ms Lynne Janice	Altona	ALP	Weller, Mr Paul	Rodney	Nats
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Scoresby	LP
Langdon, Mr Craig Anthony Cuffe	Ivanhoe	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Doncaster	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clayton	ALP			

¹ Resigned 6 August 2007

² Elected 15 September 2007

³ Resigned 2 June 2008

⁴ Elected 28 June 2008

⁵ Elected 15 September 2007

⁶ Resigned 6 August 2007

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Thursday, 11 June 2009

Police: Red Cliffs

The SPEAKER (Hon. Jenny Lindell) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Red Cliffs and surrounding communities in Victoria draws to the attention of the house the need to increase police presence in our district.

The petitioners register their dismay after a weekend of vandalism with damage estimated to be in excess of \$60 000 to the local bowling club and private and public property.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria take action to increase staff levels at the Red Cliffs police station as a proactive step in ensuring that this criminal activity is not repeated.

By Mr CRISP (Mildura) (20 signatures).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 88 to 93, 164 to 169 and 211 to 222 will be removed from the notice paper on the next sitting day. A member who requires the notice standing in his or her name to be continued must advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

Rail: Mildura line

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of the citizens of the region known as Sunraysia, primarily in the state of Victoria but including cross-border citizens of New South Wales centred on the city of Mildura, brings to the attention of the house the many promises to return the Melbourne–Mildura passenger train, without delivery.

The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to bring forward the reinstatement of the said Melbourne–Mildura passenger train, especially in view of:

1. the many undelivered promises;
2. the urgent need to promote public transport in a global warming context;
3. the pressing need to connect remote Mildura to both Melbourne and the national rail network; and
4. the geographic distance now requiring a rapid service (very fast train) to be competitive.

By Mr CRISP (Mildura) (121 signatures).

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Students: youth allowance

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the proposal to change the independence test for youth allowance by the federal government.

The petitioners register their opposition to the changes on the basis that the youth allowance changes proposed in the federal budget place another barrier to university participation for students in regional areas; unfairly discriminate against students currently undertaking a gap year; and contradict other efforts to increase university participation by students from rural and regional Australia.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria reject the proposal and calls on the state government to vigorously lobby the federal government to ensure that a tertiary education is accessible to regional students.

By Dr SYKES (Benalla) (35 signatures).

Colac: heavy vehicle bypass

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

We, the undersigned citizens of the electorate of Polwarth in the state of Victoria, wish to draw to the attention of the house the need for a heavy vehicle bypass of the town of Colac.

The petitioners request that in addition to bypass routes currently being considered, the construction of a causeway across Lake Colac for heavy vehicles be viewed as a viable option for this bypass.

By Mr MULDER (Polwarth) (108 signatures).

Taxis: Melbourne central business district

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the electorate of Eltham and surrounding districts draws to the attention of the house the proposal by the Lord Mayor of Melbourne that the hailing of taxis in the Melbourne CBD on a Friday or Saturday night be restricted to a small number of purpose-built super-ranks.

The petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria oppose this proposal to ban the hailing of taxis off the street in the Melbourne CBD.

By Mr HERBERT (Eltham) (343 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Benalla be considered next day on motion of Dr SYKES (Benalla).

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Eltham be considered next day on motion of Mr HERBERT (Eltham).

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Mildura be considered next day on motion of Mr CRISP (Mildura).

ROAD LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Clerk's amendment

The SPEAKER — Order! Under joint standing order 6, I have received a report from the Clerk of the Parliaments informing the house that he has made the following correction in the Road Legislation Amendment Bill 2009:

In Clause 50, line 9, I have deleted 'section' (where secondly occurring) so the line now reads "'section 176(3) or 176(4)' substitute'.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Mental Health) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 23 June 2009.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Coalition of Concerned Councillors

Mr K. SMITH (Bass) — Yesterday there was yet another angry rally on the steps of Parliament by yet another angry group of disenchanted Victorians complaining about the myriad different issues relating to the Brumby socialist government taking away their rights on all sorts of issues, including the right to speak out, the right to protest about government inadequacies, planning rights, tax increases, lack of consultation, social manipulation, taking over people's property rights, the government's close relationship with developers, corrupt government and corrupt ministers, no acceptance of responsibility by government or ministers, no accountability, no transparency, lack of infrastructure, poor health services, poor public

transport and wasted taxpayers money with no accountability.

This government is a disgrace. The people of Victoria thought the Cain and Kirner governments had lost touch, but it was made up of angels compared to this corrupt bunch of incompetent rabble. Look at the way it is going: Brimbank council is an example of the corruption that is accepted by this appalling government. Then we have the Geelong and Casey councils — and how many others? There is something very wrong with this government and its arrogant Premier and ministers, who are forcing legislation through this Parliament and taking away people's rights. There will be more protests like yesterday's, and they will be more frequent and larger. The people have had enough.

Werribee: hoon driving

Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) — I recently had the enormous pleasure of unveiling Christina Zsori's anti-hooning mural. The local Werribee student won the Werribee police mural competition as part of a proactive, community-based policing initiative. The new mural, on display outside Werribee police station, is part of a local police initiative to raise awareness of the dangers of hoon driving.

Constable Stephen Cook, a local police officer, has been speaking with local secondary college students about hoon driving and its dangers since 2007. In the past year he has spoken with over 3500 local students about real-life experiences where young people just like them have made decisions to drive recklessly and what the consequences were. Constable Cook began this program because he felt kids were not hearing the message and it needed to be delivered to them on their level. Students found the talks confronting, but Werribee police have been invited back by the local schools to ensure that every year level understands the implications of dangerous driving.

Since the introduction of the 2006 amendment to the Road Safety Act 1986 Victorian police have successfully impounded vehicles on over 7650 occasions. The powers which police now hold are a substantial advance in road safety and enable police to deal quickly and effectively with dangerous, antisocial situations. I would like to recognise Constable Cook for beginning this excellent program and teaching young people about the risks of driving dangerously.

Government: performance

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — Yesterday, together with the member for Bass and other members of Parliament from the conservative side of politics, I was on the front steps of Parliament House when yet another rally was conducted by Victorians who came to the Parliament to complain about the excesses of the Brumby government. The organisations involved in yesterday's rally were the Coalition of Concerned Councillors, an organisation called Planning Backlash, and another organisation called Watershed Victoria. I was presented with about 3000 letters in relation to issues to do with the desalination plant. Part of one letter reads as follows:

I am dismayed by Mr Brumby's intention to build the largest, climate-change-accelerating desalination plant in the southern hemisphere on the pristine Bass Coast. There is no mandate. It is a total about-face to ALP re-election Water Policy of 'recycling and conservation, that will secure Melbourne's water supply' ...

Desalination uses enormous energy, and is enormously expensive. The Brumby government has spent millions of taxpayer dollars attempting to deliberately distort and mislead the community into accepting this disastrous project without openly and transparently evaluating sustainable and superior water alternatives ...

I have undertaken to provide these letters to the Premier, and I will. The people of Victoria are sick of the taint of corruption, issues to do with financial management, taxation, matters to do with the destruction of people's rights — all things this government campaigned on and is now ignoring.

Betty Jones

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Gaming) — I want to acknowledge this morning the passing last month of Betty Jones of Nunawading. Betty was a pioneer in the Nunawading area. Many years ago she and her family ran a flower farm in the area, before rural residential subdivision came to pass. Her husband, Lionel, served with the Second AIF in the Middle East. He was captured early in service and spent several years as a prisoner of war.

Betty contributed to and was involved in a number of local causes and organisations. She was especially fond of the Nunawading and Whitehorse historical societies. Beyond all those things, she was a very kind neighbour to the Robinson family, and she will be greatly missed.

Mickey Bourke

Mr ROBINSON — I also want to note the passing in recent weeks of one of the Victorian racing

industry's true identities, Mickey Bourke. He was the long-time proprietor of the Koroit Hotel, and no Warrnambool carnival was complete without a visit to the hotel. Whether it was the cockatoo running up and down the front bar or the howling dog, in good time, accompanying hotel revellers' singalongs late at night around the piano, Mickey Bourke and his hotel were genuine identities in that area. He was the definitive colourful character, and carnivals at Warrnambool will never be the same. He will be greatly missed.

Hospitals: government performance

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — Yesterday the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) brought down its report on hospital statistics, which confirms the worsening performance of the Brumby government in providing health services to Victorians.

Despite the fact that the Minister for Health continues to hide his *Your Hospitals* report on Victorian hospitals' performance and is now trying to blame swine flu for every failure in the health system, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that in 2007–08 Victoria still had the lowest number of beds per capita of any state and that the number of days people waited for elective surgery worsened, with many more patients waiting more than a year for surgery compared with the national average.

The institute also found there were actually 1363 fewer patients admitted for elective surgery in 2007–08 than in the year before and that the number of patients 'not waiting for treatment' in our emergency departments — that is, people who just walk out — increased by a massive 16 per cent in one year. Waiting times in emergency departments continued to increase, with only 71 per cent of patients being seen in time last year compared to 80 per cent in 2003–04. Across all hospitals, emergency departments failed to meet 'time to treatment' for category 2 emergency patients and failed to meet 'time to treatment' for category 3 urgent cases. Victoria has well and truly lost any claim it had to be running the best hospital system.

Finally, one has to question the accuracy of the figures which were submitted to the AIHW by this arrogant and pompous minister — —

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

Point Lonsdale Primary School: opening

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Mental Health) — On Saturday, 30 May I was delighted to officially open the new Point Lonsdale Primary School. It was a great

occasion, with students past and present, staff, families and local residents joining together to celebrate the event.

The new building includes eight new classrooms, an art and craft room, a library and staff facilities. The facilities have been designed and built to be practical and flexible, and with the intention of reducing the school's environmental footprint. The design complements the school's program, not the other way around. Students, parents and the community all had input into how the new school would look and operate. As a result, the atmosphere is warm and welcoming and reflects the school's reputation for being central to the life of the local community.

Point Lonsdale Primary School is well known for providing local children with a unique learning environment that genuinely encourages families and the wider community to engage with the life of the school. The new \$3.4 million school is the product of a genuine, positive partnership between the school, the local community and the government. The result is a state-of-the-art facility for children in Point Lonsdale and the surrounding area. It will enhance and enrich the educational and social experience of students as well as being a valuable community asset.

Best wishes and congratulations to principal Fay Agterhuis, school council president Jacqui Pierce, and the whole school community for their involvement in the development of the new school.

Gaming: community advocate

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — In January 2006 the government announced it was creating and funding the position of community advocate on gambling for a two-year period. The then gaming minister, the member for Dandenong, put out a media release which claimed the project 'clearly demonstrates our commitment to hearing a strong viable community voice' in the development of responsible gambling policy.

Andrew Manning, a respected administrator with relevant policy experience, was appointed to the position in March 2006 but resigned just 12 months later, as did his researcher. Neither the positions of advocate nor researcher have ever been refilled and the project has been allowed to die. So much for hearing the community voice!

In November 2007 the government received a review of the community advocacy on gambling project by Professor Bill Russell. He found that the project suffered from too few resources, a lack of critical mass

and a lack of reach. Professor Russell recommended the project be funded for three years, with double the number of staff.

On 21 May 2008 the Minister for Gaming told the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, with respect to the community advocate:

But that funding continues, that funding is available.

But 12 months on the project remains dead. No replacement community advocate on gambling has been appointed, no funding has been announced, and no government response has been made to the Russell review's recommendations.

It seems the Brumby government can find the time to do a secret deal with the casino for an extra 150 gaming tables, but it just cannot be bothered with a project to give the community a voice in developing responsible gambling policy.

South Barwon electorate: Queen's Birthday honours

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — I have great pleasure in congratulating three community icons who were recognised for their services to the local community and awarded Queen's Birthday honours this year.

Emeritus Professor Lawrie Baker, who helped found Deakin University's school of engineering, became a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia. I have known Professor Baker for some time and previously worked closely with him on the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee of which he was founding chair. Much of Geelong's engineering and technology industry staff can be attributed to the teaching of Professor Baker. In 1982 when engineering courses were no longer being run in Geelong, Professor Baker lobbied hard for a new school to be established at Deakin. That dream came true in 1991. He has also worked on the international stage with Thailand's 20 universities to improve their graduate programs as part of an AusAID scheme and promoted Deakin University to prospective students in Iran and Dubai.

Local environmentalist Trevor Prescott may have been considered a radical in the 1950s for trying to save the environment, but it is this very work that saw him acknowledged last weekend when he received an Order of Australia honour for his service to conservation, environment and the Geelong community. A keen animal observer, Mr Prescott, was a founding member of the Geelong Environment Council. He has worked as a consultant to various levels of government and was

involved in establishing the Great Otway National Park, which is a major tourist icon in my region. He still writes his weekly nature column in the *Geelong Advertiser*.

Ian Barnes of Highton, a retired major in the Royal Australian Artillery corps, has dedicated retirement to helping veterans and their families. The 81-year-old received an Order of Australia medal for his service to country and local community. Mr Barnes served this country for 30 years, attaining the rank of major. He has retained his military links following retirement with the army cadet and reserve units in the region and joined Friends of the Fort Society in the 1980s and helped restore Fort Queenscliff. He even established a military museum on the site and donated many of his own artefacts.

Springvale–Old Warrandyte roads, Donvale: traffic lights

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Doncaster) — I rise to highlight the disdain with which the Brumby Labor government treats Victorians. This government does not consult, does not listen and does not act on the concerns of communities.

A classic example is the proposed installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Springvale Road and Old Warrandyte Road in my electorate. Three years after this project was announced we hear, as a result of my inquiries, that work is about to proceed. Incredibly there has been no consultation with residents or any discussions with local road users.

Doncaster and Donvale residents know this road — we know how the traffic flows and we know what needs to be done — but we have been left out of this process. As the government failed to consult, I held a community meeting and distributed the plans to many residents. There was substantial interest and many good ideas, as I have mentioned in this chamber previously. I have forwarded these to VicRoads and to the Minister for Roads and Ports in a 16-point letter for their positive consideration. Disappointingly, this government has ignored these concerns and ideas.

Residents fear for the safety of their children due to the proposed siting of bus stops, and they have requested enhanced pedestrian access. They believe that keep-clear road markings need to be installed to ease traffic flows. They want better synchronisation with nearby roads to avert traffic snarls. Yet none of these valid suggestions are being taken into account. Instead the government has chosen to push forward with its

original plans regardless of local concern. This Brumby government is not listening. It needs to do better.

John-Michael Howson

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — Some time ago I was doorknocking in my electorate. Unknowingly I knocked on the front door of John-Michael Howson. He later phoned me, and we had a lovely conversation discussing a range of issues. Since then I have seen him at many local functions: raising money for the Kingston Charitable Trust, being master of ceremonies for our Australia Day celebrations and giving his time and effort with a good-natured generosity. I am very pleased to congratulate him on the recent recognition of his life service to the entertainment industry as a writer and performer in the Queen's Birthday honours list as a recipient of the Medal of the Order of Australia. His life has been a life well lived, and we are fortunate indeed to now have him as a treasured member of our local community.

RSL Village, Cheltenham: social club

Ms MUNT — I also congratulate the members of the RSL Village Social Club of Cheltenham on their wonderful efforts at their Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event, during which they raised \$540 for the Cancer Council Australia's appeal this year. These are mainly people who are on pensions, and to raise that money is a wonderful achievement for them. Community spirit is alive and well in my electorate. Once again, I congratulate John-Michael Howson and the RSL Village Social Club.

Australian Labor Party: performance

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — I bring to the attention of this house the contravention of the Local Government Act's new conflict of interest guidelines by the ALP's rules. Municipal caucus rule 12.6 requires all endorsed Labor councillors to form a caucus. This caucus must meet prior to each council meeting. The caucus then determines its position on council matters, and Labor councillors are bound by that decision. Labor councillors cannot oppose in debate a matter determined by caucus irrespective of their personal views or further information brought to the council table.

This is totally inconsistent with *Conflict of Interest in Local Government — A Guide*, which states under the heading 'Bias':

In some circumstances, the principles of natural justice require you not to vote on or otherwise decide a matter even if

you do not have a conflict of interest. The issues of natural justice and bias are discussed in the following publication:

Ensuring Unbiased Democratic Council Decision Making ... 2008 ...

That document states:

Every councillor has a responsibility to bring a genuinely open mind to council administrative decision-making processes.

It states further:

A councillor will fail to bring an open mind to a particular administrative decision-making processes if he or she:

Closes their mind to the consideration of all relevant factors because they have already reached a particular decision before weighing up those factors;

...

Before taking part in the decision-making process has expressed a final opinion on the matter which cannot be dislodged.

The government must abolish Labor's municipal caucus rules in the interests of unbiased councillor decision-making, good governance and the public interest to stop corrupt practices.

City of Monash: World Environment Day awards

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — Last Thursday, on the eve of World Environment Day, along with the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, who is also the state MP for Mount Waverley, I attended the seventh annual Monash World Environment Day awards. These awards were led by the deputy mayor, Charlotte Baines, and Ian Swan was the master of ceremonies. The awards are an initiative of a number of staff at Monash City Council. They do all the organising of the event, including the judging and liaising with sponsors such as Visy, Fasham Johnson, CETEC, the Maroondah Credit Union and Fonterra Australia. These awards have now become a feature and are highly sought after, with a number of fine entries in every category. Entrants from my local area in recent times include Amaroo neighbourhood house and Ashwood Children's Centre.

I congratulate the winners of the school poster competition, which this year was based on the 2009 United Nations themes of International Year of Reconciliation and International Year of Astronomy. I also congratulate the winners in the four main categories. The sustainable new building/renovation award was won by the Harmony 9 house by Mirvac. It is a wonderful design — an inside-out house with a

great focus on meeting the challenges of climate change. The sustainable business award went to the green champions committee from Southern Health. The community award went to Syndal South Primary School, and the greenest household award went to John Harvey of Glen Waverley. I congratulate all those winners on their excellent entries in terms of households, businesses, buildings and community groups in the Monash council area trying to make a difference to the environment.

Government: performance

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — The government criticises the opposition for its position on dams, yet the government is as pro-damn as you can get, and in every portfolio — its damning record on health, its damning record on public transport and its damning record on, wait for it, water! The government's overall record is a damning indictment.

Gaming: poker machines

Mr THOMPSON — Further, the ALP's hypocrisy on gambling knows no bounds. A firm opponent of gambling arrangements in 1995 when in opposition, the Brumby government has committed to a deal with Crown which will see the addition of 150 new gambling tables, a staged increase in tax rates for gaming machines and an increase in the casino's gaming area. It is estimated that these tables will lead to gambling losses of \$1 billion over the next 10 years. Revenue receipts have changed the Brumby government's view on gaming.

I think it is salutary to draw to the attention of the house the remarks made by Judge Roland Williams in 2007, when he condemned the widespread availability of poker machines to 'witless' members of the public. He said:

I feel the phenomenon of poker machines in this state is an undesirable situation.

Panch Health Service: achievements

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — The Kennett Liberal government forced the closure of one of the most important health services in the north — Preston and Northcote Community Hospital, which had successfully provided health services for 38 years. Fortunately for our community Labor recognised the ongoing need for an integrated health service for our community and in June 2003 opened the Panch Health Service opposite the original hospital site on Bell Street, Preston.

Panch Health Service has an excellent record in the provision of quality health care and is strategically located to relieve pressure on the Austin, Mercy and Northern hospitals. It provides a paediatric service, cardiac rehabilitation, ophthalmology, orthopaedics, dialysis, dental services, podiatry, physiotherapy, pharmacotherapy, speech pathology, midwifery and a range of other health services.

PHS will now also be able to provide improved breast screen services as part of a \$10 million statewide program. Digital mammography equipment is being installed in BreastScreen Victoria services, resulting in quicker and more efficient screening to improve the early detection of cancer. This will increase the chances of fighting this disease.

PHS catchment area has been identified as having one of the highest incidence of chronic illnesses in Melbourne. It also sits in the centre of one of the largest indigenous populations in metropolitan Melbourne. PHS is therefore strategically located to help reduce the incidence of chronic illnesses and close the 17-year life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians. Labor's commitment to reduce the incidence of chronic illnesses and to improve indigenous health is unequivocal. PHS will therefore be critically important in achieving Labor's vision to improve the health outcomes in the northern suburbs by reaching these important health goals.

Housing: Roberts Street, Northcote

Ms RICHARDSON — Thanks to the Minister for Housing for turning the sod last week on the \$9 million new housing development in Roberts Street, Northcote.

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

Arthurs Seat chairlift: future

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — The Arthurs Seat chairlift is idle and about to be demolished and scrapped. Parks Victoria has decided the existing structure will not be used as part of any new chairlift business. The Brumby government announced back in March that expressions of interest would be sought for a new chairlift. Here we are, well into June, and nothing has happened. What is so hard about launching an expression-of-interest process? This delay of three months only indicates to interested parties that the Brumby government is not serious about supporting new business ventures. It also sends a message to the people of the Mornington Peninsula that the Brumby government does not care

about the people of the Mornington Peninsula or its visitors and tourists.

I call on the Brumby government and Parks Victoria to get on with it and call for expressions of interest, select a tenderer if they have not all lost interest and do everything to help the successful bidder build and open a new chairlift. It is not rocket science, and you would think that a government that has been around this long would have mastered this sort of basic process by now.

Rosebud: aquatic centre site

Mr DIXON — On another matter, a large crowd of people of all ages has held a protest meeting on Rosebud foreshore, calling on the Brumby government to give coastal consent to the proposed aquatic centre on that site. Compared with other suggested sites, Rosebud foreshore is the best site for the aquatic centre by a long way. It will be accessible by public transport, be very visible and be close to all public amenities. The proponents, the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, can easily prove no net loss of public space and no loss of any natural environment. I call on the environment minister to give the go-ahead now.

St Vincent de Paul Society

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — Today I would like to pay tribute to the great work that the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria does, not only in my electorate but across Victoria.

Mr Delahunty interjected.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am glad to see that the member for Lowan supports the work it does. I would particularly like to congratulate Les Butler, who runs the Essendon regional council, and the great community spirit he has shown not only in working with St Vincent's but also for a number of other community projects.

The Essendon regional council takes in a number of parishes, not only in Essendon but also in the surrounding area, including Niddrie and as far west as St Albans, and the work it does has been of great significance for a large part of the community. I would particularly like to refer to the work it does and the support it gives to the tenants of the Ascot Vale estate. Over the years, through the Vinnie's shop in Maribyrnong Road and also through the direct support it gives to the residents of the Ascot Vale estate, some of whom suffer severe hardship from time to time, the Essendon regional council has been able to make a significant effect on these people's lives and has enabled them to overcome what are sometimes

short-term hurdles in their lives. All the work is done by volunteers through all the churches in my area and surrounding areas. I would like to congratulate all those volunteers who work so hard for St Vinnie's.

Latrobe Valley: major projects

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — I raise concern over an article in the *Age* dated 23 May 2009 under the heading '\$1 billion at risk if state does not release coal'. Local businesses are becoming increasingly concerned at the Brumby government's lack of commitment to attracting industry in the Latrobe Valley. In the article to which I refer, Exergen outlines the virtues of clean coal technologies and is supported by the federal resources minister, who is quoted as saying that the technology has the potential to create 'thousands of jobs' and a 'brand new industry' in Victoria. It appears that the Brumby government is still talking.

The Latrobe Valley community is sick and tired of hearing this government announcing major projects that never come to fruition. Major companies such as Monash Energy, the Australian Energy Company and HRL have proposed major investment in the Latrobe Valley in recent times; however, it appears the Brumby government is incapable of ensuring the commencement of such projects for our region.

For example, the proposed HRL power station project, which would reduce carbon emissions by 30 per cent and water consumption by 50 per cent compared to current practices, should already be under construction and should be complete by 2012. This project continues to linger and apparently remains in the ether. With the prospect of the Rudd government's emission trading scheme, it is imperative major projects of this magnitude are embraced by the Brumby government.

On behalf of the Morwell electorate I call upon the Brumby government to walk the walk and not just talk the talk in securing investment for the future prosperity of the Latrobe Valley.

Youth: Forest Hill

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — I rise to congratulate the 10 young people of Whitehorse who have been elected to serve on the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC) this year. These committee members, who live, work and/or study in the eastern suburbs, share a passion for making a difference, and in taking on this responsibility have dedicated themselves to making the city of Whitehorse, its services and the Forest Hill electorate a better place to live, work and play for young people.

The WYRC is a fantastic initiative of Youth ConneXions, allowing the young people of my electorate and the surrounding suburbs the opportunity to have a voice in the decisions that directly affect them.

Established in 2001, the WYRC meets fortnightly to organise events for young people and discuss issues that occur in the area. It is a conduit for the youth of Whitehorse to have their voices heard by council and other influential groups. As the member for Forest Hill, I am excited to see the leaders of tomorrow becoming so involved and showing such pride in our community, and I wish the committee a successful and productive year.

Whitehorse Gymnastic Club

Ms MARSHALL — On another matter, it is with great pleasure that I bring to the attention of the house the Whitehorse Gymnastic Club's successful open day, held on Sunday, 31 May. There were a number of people in attendance for the official opening of this great community sporting group's new headquarters in Box Hill South.

The open day also acted as an opportunity for the club to raise much-needed funds, with over \$4000 being made. The club has a 140-strong membership, many of whom live in my electorate. Local sporting clubs are the lifeblood of our communities and offer a place where people can meet, get active, forge friendships and develop a sense of belonging. It is so important that these clubs continue to receive our support to ensure the community of Forest Hill continues to grow.

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

Crime: rates

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — Things have become so serious in our state that I feel compelled to try another approach this morning. Every sitting day opposition members stand here and tell the government how there are not enough police and that crime has gone through the roof. The government argues that it has put on extra police and that crime is down. I am not addressing this statement to the minister or even the Premier but to each member of Parliament, frontbench and backbench, upper and lower house alike.

Front-line police numbers are at crisis levels and crime on our streets is out of control. On behalf of the Victorian community, I am asking each government member to forget for one day that they are a member of the government and look again at what is going on.

This statement is not about being provocative or proving I am right and government members are wrong, or that opposition policy is better than government policy. This statement is a plea that we all put the community first and do something to resolve a problem more pressing than global warming or the global economic crisis.

The following statements are true and can be proven, but I am not asking government members to take my word for it, I am asking that they do not simply dismiss what I am saying because I am a member of another political party. This issue is bigger than that. Members should ask themselves whether there is any chance that what I am saying is correct; and if so, then the problem is far too important to ignore.

Since 2000 crimes against the person in Victoria have increased from 31 372 to 42 949 per year, or 36.9 per cent; assaults are up by almost 60 per cent; rapes have increased by 33 per cent; and women and the elderly are now twice as likely to be assaulted as they were 10 years ago. There has also been a sharp increase in violent crime in regional centres like Geelong. There are more assaults happening and those assaults are more violent. In Victoria there are fewer police per head of population and fewer front-line police than anywhere else in Australia. There is less spent on police per head of population than anywhere else in Australia and police patrols overall have decreased by 20 per cent since 2000. Regardless of our political persuasion, there is no doubt that we all care deeply about the welfare of every Victorian; that is why we are here.

Schools: West Heidelberg

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — Yesterday morning, I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Education at the official turning of the first sod on a \$13.25 million schools regeneration project in West Heidelberg. The schools are Banksia Latrobe Secondary College, Northland Secondary College, Bellfield Primary School, Haig Street Primary School and Olympic Village Primary School. This is an initiative of the schools. No-one knows the area better than they do, and they have been working very hard to get this project up. I am pleased that the Brumby government has announced and started construction on a state-of-the-art facility that will be part of providing the best educational opportunities for the people of West Heidelberg. West Heidelberg has always had great schools, but this time we will get an absolutely brand-new building. I commend all those involved and wish them well.

Buna Reserve, West Heidelberg: renewal works

Mr LANGDON — Yesterday morning with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and the local federal member, Jenny Macklin, I attended the launch of the first round of the federal Innovation Fund under which \$20.4 million will be provided for projects throughout Australia. Prime Minister Rudd was at Buna Reserve, which is part of the neighbourhood renewal project and which has had lots of work done to it under previous schemes. The project will also assist young unemployed people to get work. I pay particular tribute to Betty Tydeman, who could not be there yesterday. Betty has been a tireless worker for neighbourhood renewal and getting work done. Betty lives opposite Buna Reserve and lots of the things that have been done there, such as new playground equipment et cetera.

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

Health: organ donation

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I thank the following people who attended my press conference championing live organ donation: Ron Smith, national communications manager, Kidney Health Australia; and journalists from the *Cranbourne Journal*, *Frankston Independent*, *Cranbourne Leader* and the *Cranbourne News*.

Thompson Road, Cranbourne: upgrade

Mr PERERA — I also state for the record that the \$22 million Thompson Road upgrade between — —

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

APPROPRIATION (2009/2010) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 10 June; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Premier).

Ms BARKER (Oakleigh) — I am pleased to rise to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. This 2009–10 budget has been delivered in extremely difficult global economic times and is framed to ensure that the Brumby Labor government can continue to build on its ongoing work to improve and expand services; importantly to respond and recover from the worst bushfires in our history; to stimulate the economy to secure jobs; and again importantly to place Victoria in a positive position as

we move out of the global financial crisis. What is even more pleasing to know is that this state budget is framed in an environment where we have a federal government that is also focused on the importance of steering Australia through the global financial crisis by stimulating the economy to support families and create jobs. It is doing that by providing much-needed investment in important infrastructure projects which will shape our nation for the future.

A particular example of this excellent and important work that the federal government is doing in infrastructure projects was apparent when recently the federal government announced funding for the rebuilding of the GippsTAFE Chadstone campus. I sincerely thank the federal member for Chisholm, Anna Burke, for her great work in achieving the \$16.15 million needed for this project.

I was honoured to be invited to attend the announcement of this funding on 19 May, along with the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and Anna at the Chadstone campus, which is in my electorate of Oakleigh. I know that GippsTAFE is very pleased that this important energy and telecommunications training facility will be redeveloped. I was very pleased to work with GippsTAFE chief executive officer Dr Peter Whitley, the board of GippsTAFE and Chadstone campus manager Maxine De Graaff over recent years to develop the plans for this site, and I thank them for their hard work.

The \$16.15 million funding will be invested in upgrading the existing gas and electricity training yard, building three new state-of-the-art technology training classrooms and constructing a new fibre optic training room. On the day of the announcement the Prime Minister clearly indicated that the new training facilities will be very important part in training workers to build the \$43 billion national training network. I look forward to continuing to work cooperatively with GippsTAFE and Anna Burke over coming months to make sure that this construction gets under way.

We need these new, modern training facilities not only to train apprentices but to provide further training for existing workers. It was interesting that on the day the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister were there, workers from the Northern Territory were on campus completing further training. GippsTAFE's Chadstone campus takes workers and trainees from all over Australia; it is a very important part of our training system.

Training is of particular interest to me and is treated with great importance by the Brumby Labor government. We know training and skills development are vitally important to our productivity as a state and are vitally important to the many young people who wish to enter trades or who wish to continue to improve and upgrade their skills.

The state budget continues the investment in the skills area. In addition to the 172 000 training places announced earlier this year, the budget includes \$50 million over three years for an extra 15 000 training places and \$183 million for the commonwealth's Trade Training Centres in Schools program to help reduce skills shortages and increase the number of students completing a year 12 or equivalent qualification.

The budget provides \$13.8 million for a new Skills to Transition program to support the securing of training places for up to 6400 Victorian workers who want and in some cases need to retrain, and particularly for those in industry transition. An important program that is strongly supported by this government is the VET (Vocational Education and Training) in Schools program. This budget sees a further \$15.2 million provided to meet increased demand for this vital program. The government is absolutely committed to the provision of the best training systems possible for both employers and employees, and it will continue to invest in this area to ensure that current and future workforces can gain the skills they need to access jobs.

We are very proud of the fact that we are working cooperatively with the federal government on education. Again with my federal colleague Anna Burke, I was very pleased to visit Sussex Heights Primary School on the Friday following the delivery of the state budget. Anna and I were very happy to be together at the school assembly to announce that federal BER (Building the Education Revolution) funding of \$2 million was to come to the Sussex Heights school.

I was also very pleased to announce at the school assembly that \$2.5 million is being made available through the state budget to ensure that the school can get on with rebuilding following the devastating arson attack which occurred last year and which saw many of the school's buildings destroyed.

Anna and I then visited Amsleigh Park Primary School in Oakleigh East. There was no state funding for the school, but we were very pleased to be together to announce that Amsleigh Park would receive a new \$2.5 million multipurpose facility, made available through round 1 of the federal BER funding.

I am very pleased to see that in the second round of the BER program, which is announced this week, further government schools and non-government schools in the Oakleigh electorate will receive funding. Of those government schools, Carnegie Primary School will receive \$2.5 million, Hughesdale Primary School will receive \$3 million, Murrumbeena Primary School will receive \$2 million and Oakleigh Primary School will receive \$2 million. The \$2 million funding for a multipurpose facility at Oakleigh Primary School will add to the \$500 000 modernisation funding announced in last year's budget, and I am sure that these combined projects will absolutely transform the school. Along with other work that has been done there over recent years through the state government, these projects will give this fantastic local primary school a total package. We now have on the site the purpose-built kindergarten, which was built by this government and opened in 2003.

I am very pleased about Carnegie Primary School; it is a fantastic school. It only came into my electorate in 2002, following the last redistribution of boundaries, and I have been very pleased to work with the school since that time. We have been able to provide some funding to modernise the junior school area and upgrade the toilets. Importantly we have been considering how the site could be properly planned to cater for the rapidly growing number of children who attend the school, with the number expected to rise to 400 in a very short time.

We must plan this site properly; on it are a number of old buildings that have been added in a bit of an ad hoc manner, and in recent years the school has had to put on-site two portables, which amounts to four extra classrooms to provide for the increased enrolments. One of the main reasons for planning and preparing the site properly is the increase in enrolments, but the provision of preschool services will also be a problem in the Carnegie area in the future.

For over 50 years the Carnegie Uniting Church preschool was located in Carnegie and was a wonderful community-based preschool. It was quite a shock a couple of years ago when the Uniting Church sold it. The local community worked very hard and applied pressure to get some certainty about being able to use that site, and an agreement was reached with the purchaser. A lease of up to five years over the site, which includes an old church, two halls and a residence, will allow some time for the community to find somewhere to locate preschool services.

This has not been easy, as Carnegie is already densely populated and the cost of purchasing property is very

high. It has been extremely disappointing that Glen Eira council absolutely refuses to be involved in finding a solution. It simply says preschools are a state government responsibility and it does not want anything to do with it.

In other local government areas throughout Victoria there are real partnerships with the state government in the development of children's services. As I said, I am very disappointed that there is not the same commitment in the Carnegie area, particularly in light of the fact that there is huge pressure to increase places for four-year-old kindergarten, which consequently is placing great pressure on the provision of three-year-old kindergarten.

As I said, the location of the site is a major problem. Carnegie Primary School has continued its commitment to its local community by working with it to find a solution, but it will not be easy. As I also said, the school site is a little crowded, and the Carnegie community knows there is a real baby boom in the area. Projections for the next three to five years are for very high numbers of children, so something has to be done to deal with that problem. I will continue my work with the school and the local community to find a solution.

The provision of health services is always an important matter for me and the local community. The government has invested an extra \$3.8 billion in our public hospitals, which are now providing more treatments than ever. The major concentration for Oakleigh constituents in terms of hospitals are the Monash Medical Centre's Clayton and Moorabbin campuses, as well as the Alfred.

I am very pleased to have made many visits over recent years to see the massive rebuilding that has been undertaken. We have a new \$10 million redevelopment of emergency services at Clayton; \$19 million has been allocated for new cancer services at Moorabbin; the \$80 million Alfred day treatment centre, which is just a magnificent building, is assisting greatly in managing elective surgery; and the electorate is pleased about the \$4.8 million redevelopment being undertaken at the moment at the Clayton campus of Monash Medical Centre. That work is in the maternity assessment area, which will provide an assessment facility for women who are having complicated pregnancies. It will enable them to have antenatal monitoring and care in a purpose-built setting. It will really be a great bonus.

These are just some examples of the upgrades to health services that my local community uses, and we are extremely pleased to see the beautiful new Royal Children's Hospital also rising from the ground.

Again I refer to the great partnership between the state and federal governments. There is much excitement about the announcement that the new \$1 billion world-class cancer centre will be built in Parkville. I do not think there could be any one person in the state who has not at some stage been touched by cancer — whether it be themselves, their family or their friends. This new centre will draw together the very best in cancer research, education and treatment and will be very important in the way the disease is diagnosed, treated and prevented.

The budget has large increases for health services, including \$780.9 million over five years to further increase the capacity of our hospitals to provide treatment in key areas. Importantly the budget continues to expand preventive health measures. I note there will be a \$23.9 million boost to the hospital admission risk program, which has improved the management and treatment of those with chronic illness and conditions. In many cases this means there is not that constant readmission to hospital because people just do not have enough support to manage at home — and certainly in many cases they do not have enough knowledge about how to manage a chronic illness or condition.

This type of program is run out of the MonashLink Community Health Service, along with many other preventive health programs. We have been working towards the relocation of the infrastructure for MonashLink Community Health Service, but importantly for my electorate, the relocation will be made from the Hughesdale site to the Oakleigh shopping precinct area. That is not an easy task. We lack suitable sites and buildings which could be renovated to accommodate community health, but we will now have further support to pursue this important relocation with the \$2.5 million announced in this year's state budget.

I will mention briefly some other initiatives and examples of increased investment by this government which directly benefits the Oakleigh electorate: an additional \$86.9 million to disability services, on top of last year's record investment; and I was very pleased to have the Minister for Community Services visit the Oakleigh centre in late May to announce funding of \$1.7 million to build two new community-based homes for the residents. I look forward to working with the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs in having the \$5.7 million used for new and upgraded soccer club facilities and pitches. I think that is an extremely important allocation.

In conclusion, the 2009–10 budget builds on the work that the government has undertaken to increase services and importantly to improve and expand our infrastructure. In very difficult and tough global economic times it has delivered a budget with a \$165 million surplus, with the retention of its AAA credit rating and with prudent borrowings to invest in a record level of infrastructure to protect, create and retain as many jobs as possible.

I will quote an excerpt from the *Australian* of 6 May, following the delivery of the state budget in this chamber by the Treasurer, John Lenders, who did such a magnificent job in framing it. The article states:

In the hardest economic conditions since the Great Depression, yesterday's budget, the 10th delivered by Victorian Labor, illustrated the benefits of a steady, disciplined fiscal approach. Other governments would do well to emulate it.

I am extremely pleased to support the budget. I wish it a speedy passage.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — I am pleased to be able to join the debate on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill 2009. I want to talk about the strengths of this budget and the excellent way it has been framed for the times. But before I do that, I want to comment on some of the issues that have been apparent to everyone listening to the debate over the last two sitting weeks, in particular regarding the opposition.

The first is that the Liberals and The Nationals have ignored the fact that this budget has been framed in the face of a global recession; and secondly, they have abandoned any notion of sensible economic debate or policy by calling for lower debt, less spending, a freeze on taxes and charges, and more services — all at the same time. The freeze on taxes, fees and charges alone would punch a \$6 billion hole in Victoria's finances, which I will come back to later.

Budget paper 2 sets out very accurately the context in which this budget has been framed and at pages 22 and 23 gives some indication of the difficulties faced by major trading partners around the world. As an example, the economic powerhouse that is China has its growth slowing due to a decline in exports as well as a weakening in export-related investment and real estate investment. However, it is important to note that the budget paper sets out that the Chinese government's 4 trillion yuan fiscal stimulus is expected to provide significant support to economic growth in the coming months. There are early indications that that package is already having a positive effect. This is an example of

another nation that is taking a stimulus-based approach to dealing with the downturn, which should be welcomed by people in Victoria. It probably would not be welcomed by those lemmings on the opposite side of the house who argue against providing stimulus for growth.

Budget paper 2 says that industrialised Asian economies like Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan will see their gross domestic product decline by an expected 5.6 per cent in 2009. The chart on page 22 shows our major trading partners' growth forecasts for 2009. Aside from China and India, they are all in negative territory. New Zealand, the US and Korea are all going backwards. The UK expects negative 4 per cent growth, Japan expects negative 6 per cent growth and the world economy is forecast to go backwards by about 1 per cent. These are very difficult times.

Victoria is not immune to these economic conditions. We have seen the unemployment rate in Australia increase over the last year, and the Reserve Bank of Australia has reduced the cash rate by 4.25 percentage points since September 2008, bringing the official interest rate to 3 per cent — its lowest level in almost 50 years. As I say, these are very difficult and challenging times. They are probably the most challenging times since the Great Depression.

What have we seen from the Liberals and Nationals? They have run up the policy white flag. They are policy cowards on the run. On 28 April the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer put forward the only firm position they have come up with so far: they have lined up \$6 billion worth of cuts to pay for their freeze on taxes, fees and charges. We have seen them in the past cut into the numbers of police, nurses and teachers, and we know they will go there again. And this does not take into account their strident anti-debt position. If they are talking about aggressive debt reduction, then they are talking asset sales, which would see them again selling schools and hospitals.

In stark contrast, the Brumby Labor government has built on its sound economic policy record by managing the state's finances prudently, investing in the state's productive capacity and pursuing an ambitious reform agenda. Budget paper 2 refers to these as the three building blocks for growth in production and jobs, and the budget shows them as a priority for Victoria.

The key points of this budget are maintaining a budget surplus of \$165 million and maintaining the AAA credit rating. While other economies are going backwards, as I have just mentioned, this budget

forecasts growth, albeit very weak growth, in the Victorian economy. This budget invests \$11.5 million in infrastructure to help create jobs. While it is not funded in this budget, an example of that which illustrates the importance of investing in infrastructure is the development of the rectangular stadium near Olympic Park. It is a fantastic example of infrastructure investment providing jobs for Victorians and at the same time contributing to a world-class sporting precinct — what I would say, with a biased attitude, is the best sporting precinct in the world. This investment will also provide for growth in sports like soccer, Rugby League and Rugby Union in Victoria. And it took a Labor government to make this investment decision.

A speaker from the opposition side of the house recently mentioned the grubby \$90 million bribe offered to the government by the then federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, to try to deunionise the workforce involved with the MCG redevelopment. I am very proud that the Labor government knocked back that bribe and built the northern stand at the MCG. I was at the football the other day watching Collingwood defeat Port Adelaide, and I was very proud to look around the MCG and note that the entire facility — the southern stand under the previous Labor government and the northern stand under this Labor government — has been built by Labor governments. If you throw Rod Laver Arena into that, all of Melbourne's major sporting facilities — the big icons of Melbourne — have been built by Labor governments.

Getting back to this budget, I note the important support provided in it for bushfire-affected areas. It is important that the government continue to look after those people who have been affected by the recent bushfires.

The budget also continues our strong investments in health, education and police. We are investing in transport with projects like the important extension of the Epping rail line to South Morang and the extension of the orbital SmartBus network through Greensborough in my electorate to Melbourne's north-west. Each of these projects will provide significant benefits to people living in my electorate. The extension of the rail line to South Morang will bring benefits to people along the Plenty corridor. From all accounts the orbital SmartBus network has been a massive success across Melbourne. I cannot wait for it to come through my electorate and in fact past my electorate office.

Other features in the budget I would like to mention include the importance of job creation through some of our key projects, in particular our comprehensive water

supply policy. The reconnection of the Tarago Reservoir and the northern Victoria irrigation renewal project will provide significant stimulus to the economy of regional Victoria. There is the desalination plant down at Wonthaggi, which we know is opposed by the Liberal Party but will help supply Melbourne with a non-rainfall-dependent source of water. There is the Sugarloaf interconnector, again opposed by those opposite, which will help to secure and share water around Victoria. There are some fantastic projects that will not only help secure Melbourne's water future but will also provide jobs for Victorians.

I mentioned the investment in transport before. It will also include \$650 million for 20 X'trapolis trains as part of the rolling stock investment program. We will see this government continue to invest in improving Melbourne's public transport system.

Another important project, although not one of the higher funded or big-ticket items, is our continued funding — \$10.8 million — of the work of the family violence division of the Ballarat and Heidelberg magistrates courts. I have had the opportunity to visit this division at the Heidelberg Magistrates Court. I commend the fantastic work that is going on there in supporting victims of family violence and the effort that is put into providing a safe and secure environment for victims of family violence and ensuring that people are linked in with a range of services in that contact with the justice system. I commend the Attorney-General for continuing to support that program and hope that it is rolled out further across the state.

Another important part of this budget is the \$160.8 million investment in the out-of-home care sector, which looks after some of Victoria's most vulnerable children. A large part of that investment will go to recruiting 100 new live-in carers for children with challenging behaviours. I think that is a fantastic investment in our vulnerable young people.

There is \$104.8 million in the budget for homelessness and housing initiatives. That is part of the commonwealth and state governments' allocation of \$1.7 billion to fund social housing, which will provide 5000 new dwellings and new jobs. This is a great social program being pursued by a Labor government. I am very proud to be part of the government that is pursuing this in this budget.

We are also investing \$56 million to help close the gap in Aboriginal health outcomes. Over the next four years more than \$47 million of that will go to focusing on smoking, obesity and physical health. It will be used to

train Aboriginal health workers each year to help close that health gap.

There is support for the home and community care program (HACC) of just under \$50 million to fund people who do the HACC work of helping senior citizens in their homes — they clean for them, shop for them and get them to doctor appointments. Those people do fantastic work and are vital in enabling our senior Victorians to continue to live comfortably in their homes.

It is also important to mention the continuing investment in Victoria's hospital system. The hospitals in the area that I represent are the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre and the Northern Hospital. The Austin, which I have mentioned here many times, was completely rebuilt by this government after the shabby attempt to sell it off by the previous government. The Northern Hospital has been redeveloped and extended by this government through successive budgets. It is great to see the continuing investment in hospitals, particularly in regional Victoria in Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, Alexandra and Warrnambool, to name but a few.

I also want to mention the \$13.2 million in this budget to improve cycling infrastructure. As someone who tries to cycle as much as possible, I think it is an area in which this government has a good track record, and it is good that the government is continuing to support people who want to use a cleaner, greener mode of transport.

The budget also invests in our economic strengths. It is in these tough times that some of the tough decisions we have taken will see us through. We are still punching above our weight in terms of building approvals and building activity. Victoria accounts for 30 per cent of national dwelling approvals. Our population has been growing at around 1.8 per cent over the past year, including 1.3 per cent in regional Victoria, which is a vote of confidence in the performance of this government and the way it manages this state's economy. It is a very livable state.

In the face of very tough economic times, this budget continues to deliver for Victorian families. It is not just members of this government saying that that is the case. On the day after the budget was released, the *Australian* stated:

In the hardest economic conditions since the Great Depression, yesterday's budget, the 10th delivered by Victorian Labor illustrated the benefits of a steady, disciplined fiscal approach. Other governments would do well to emulate it.

With the headline ‘Surplus and rating envy of other states’, Matthew Dunkley from the *Australian Financial Review* wrote on 6 May:

In running a surplus, and keeping its rating, Brumby and the state Treasurer John Lenders have achieved something that appears increasingly unlikely to be emulated by other states.

The clearing house of the Liberal Party, the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stated:

Putting money into infrastructure and training to counter the effects of the economic slowdown in a countercyclical fashion is sensible.

Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) — I rise to speak in support of the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill 2009, and in so doing I wish to draw to the attention of the Assembly this government’s continuing commitment to transport infrastructure in this state. The Victorian transport plan is unprecedented in terms of both its scope and scale, with more than \$38 billion in projects and initiatives. But it is more than just the plan: it is a set of tangible initiatives that will materially lift the physical circumstances of the way that our transport system operates and complements itself. It will set a clear strategic direction and will outline a pipeline of projects to 2020 and beyond. This budget identifies the first and substantive steps around attainment of the transport plan’s objectives.

Let us appreciate exactly how big that plan will be in terms of its context. It is so big that over the next 12 years it will add something like 1 per cent to gross state product and will create upwards of 100 000 jobs. To put it into some sort of context, if you were to translate the Snowy Hydro scheme into current dollar terms, to build that facility today would cost somewhere between \$6 billion and \$8 billion in net present value. The Snowy Hydro scheme was built between 1949 and 1974. It took 25 years to build what was seen as a great nation-building project.

Let us put the Victorian transport plan and the substantive initiatives contained within the budget towards its attainment in that context. This is at least four to five times larger in real dollar terms, and it will be delivered in less than half the time. This is a plan of substantial action, and this budget goes about achieving it in a very practical and efficient way.

We have been working hard to deliver on some massive roadbuilding programs over the past 12 months, and progress has been made on delivering projects such as the Monash-CityLink-West Gate upgrade. The first section of that project was opened to traffic a couple of months ago when eight lanes of the 3.5-kilometre

inbound and outbound carriageways between Forster and Warrigal roads were completed.

Victoria’s transport plan is not just about those big projects, it is also about recognising that communities need effective connections, which is why the government has a strong commitment to the maintenance of metropolitan and regional arterial roads. The Brumby government is in the process of delivering nearly 30 metropolitan and regional road projects worth \$2.6 billion. In the last 12 months the government has delivered major roads projects — some in cooperation with the federal government — such as the complete duplication of the Calder Freeway between Melbourne and Bendigo, the Deer Park bypass and stages 1 and 2 of the Geelong Ring Road; stage 3 will be opening this Sunday.

The M1 Freeway upgrade will be a great achievement for this government. It will also be a great relief for the people of the western, northern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne who depend upon an efficient arterial connection. It will include sophisticated traffic management systems that will not only improve safety but also increase capacity on that vital thoroughfare.

The entire length of the M1 will use freeway ramp signals to monitor and control traffic and also have on-road signage to communicate to drivers. Overall the project will boost the capacity of Melbourne’s busiest road corridor by 50 per cent, and our anticipation is that it will reduce casualty crashes by up to 20 per cent. That is a very tangible benefit in terms of not just the economic value of the road but also its amenity and safety.

Peninsula Link is the largest investment in road projects in this year’s state budget and a key project in the Victorian transport plan. This 25-kilometre four-lane roadway will ease bottlenecks in Frankston and get traffic out of residential areas. The Brumby government is continuing to take action and will build this road toll free. The \$750 million Peninsula Link will create something like 4000 direct jobs, slash travel times to the peninsula, boost tourism and improve road safety.

Delivery of major projects also needs to look at the connectivity of the way our system operates. I was therefore pleased to be involved in the government’s announcement that it will be delivering on another key element of the Victorian transport plan, the grade separation of the Springvale Road rail crossing in Nunawading, which will improve mobility on one of Melbourne’s key arterials. Victoria will contribute \$60 million to this project, and we are pleased that the

federal government will partner with us and make a contribution of \$80 million.

The grade separation will lower the rail line and see the construction of a new station at Nunawading. The project can be carried out in a similar fashion to the Middleborough Road grade separation, which saw minimal disruption to traffic flows and the rail network despite the magnitude of the works needed. It really is a demonstration of how efficient we have become in terms of the delivery of these projects, but it also demonstrates the government's priorities of making sure that our transport networks interact and integrate much better and recognising that we have an obligation to ensure the most efficient means of operation for our public transport system.

Another interesting element that I was pleased to see in the budget is that we have allocated \$5 million to exploring the potential for grade separation of key junctions on Hoddle Street. Our ultimate aim is to improve public transport and traffic flows to the Eastern Freeway.

When talking about the improvement of traffic flows you cannot go beyond the broad recognition that investment in our arterial road network yields very substantial results. Funding of \$103.6 million for the metropolitan road improvements program will be used to build the Dingley arterial, which links the southern end of Westall Road with the recently completed Dandenong bypass; \$74.6 million has been allocated from the program to complete this 3.5-kilometre section.

In Taylors Lakes we will spend \$12 million from the program funding to remove a major bottleneck with the duplication of Kings Road from Melton Highway to Palmerston Crescent. But that is not all; north of Palmerston Crescent we will extend Kings Road and use some commonwealth assistance in a \$25 million project over four years to upgrade access to the Calder Freeway and improve safety.

Late last year the Prime Minister and the Premier turned the first sod on the \$2.25 billion joint commonwealth-state M80 ring-road upgrade, which will see widening and improvements along the Western and Metropolitan ring-roads for 38 kilometres from the Princes Freeway at Laverton North all the way through to the Greensborough Highway at Greensborough. The budget provides \$132 million to fund the upgrade from the Tullamarine Freeway to Sydney Road as well as planning works for future sections of this upgrade.

We will contribute \$8.8 million towards the duplication of the Western Highway from Ballarat to Stawell, beginning with the section between Ballarat and Burrumbeet, and \$9.4 million towards the upgrade of the Western Highway from Stawell to the South Australian border, which will include overtaking lanes, rest area improvements and planning for the Horsham bypass.

We will complete the duplication of the entire length of the Goulburn Valley Highway to Shepparton with the completion of the Nagambie bypass with \$44.4 million of funding over four years from the Victorian state budget for this joint commonwealth-state project.

Let us not forget that as a government we have a continuing commitment to look at all forms of legitimate transport, and that includes cycling. This budget allocates \$13.2 million towards improving the cycling infrastructure. The Victorian cycling strategy aims to improve the bike network within 10 kilometres of the central business district (CBD), install bike cages at 33 train stations by the end of 2009 and reinforce the safe cycling message through initiatives aimed at school-age children and other road users.

We will fund the Federation Trail between Millers Road, Altona, and Hyde Street in Yarraville, and \$5 million has been set aside to establish a public bike hire scheme for inner metropolitan Melbourne as well as provide development funding for four key projects: a bike path along Queensberry Street from Rathdowne Street to Swanston Street; an extension of the Forest Hill bike track; bike facilities in the central business district in William and Latrobe streets; and a commuter bike path in Prahran.

The channel-deepening project is on budget and on schedule. As at 7 June this year 18.87 million cubic metres, which is approximately 82 per cent of the physical works, had been dredged, and we expect those works in the bay will be completed by the end of August. The job is not over once this project is finished, however; the government is now in the process of implementing its plans for a broader freight and logistics network.

Freight Futures was released at the same time as the Victorian transport plan, and along with other strategic plans such as the Green Triangle Freight Action Plan and the soon-to-be-released Port Futures, this government is setting a very firm blueprint for the efficient movement of road, rail, sea and air freight in Victoria. With the establishment of a principal freight network, a metropolitan freight terminal network, a trial introduction of longer B-doubles and a freight access

charge, the benefits to all Victorians of a more streamlined and efficient freight network system will be substantial.

I wish to turn, in the brief period I have left, to my electorate of Tarneit. The 2009–10 state budget continues to deliver better education, transport and community services for my local community in Tarneit. Education remains a top priority, with \$10 million allocated for stage 2 of a select entry school. The 2009 budget also builds on a decade of investment in social services, providing a strong safety net for our community and for all Victorian families. A further \$10 million has been allocated for the next stage of the Manor Lakes P–12 Specialist College to provide continued support for growth areas.

The Werribee employment precinct will be part of a \$19.7 million planning program for employment corridors to help develop business and project cases.

The Werribee branches of the Country Fire Authority and State Emergency Service will also receive upgrades to ensure the local community is prepared to address any future emergencies. This will also provide fleet replacement of a heavy pumper as part of a \$21 million package for the CFA, while the SES will receive a new heavy-rescue Hino as part of a \$10.2 million package. This budget's investment ensures that our local volunteer emergency services have the equipment and resources they need to serve our community.

The 2009 state budget supports the Brumby Labor government's commitment to high-growth areas by improving bus services as part of a \$55 million program that will provide more services, longer hours of service and wider geographical coverage. It will deliver improvements under the Victorian transport plan, including \$650.6 million for 20 new X'trapolis trains to cater for increasing demand for metropolitan services.

The Brumby government will continue to support Victoria Police in my local area, with an allocation of \$300 000 for ongoing works at the police station. The Werribee station funding will provide additional facility upgrades for the traffic management unit. We will also see statewide initiatives to assist local residents, including the investment of more than \$1 billion to keep Victoria responding to and recovering from the worst bushfires in Australia's history, \$1.7 billion for the state's education system, \$2.6 billion for Victoria's hospital system and \$1.9 billion to provide Victoria Police with the resources it needs. The Brumby Labor government is taking action to deliver jobs now and also to support Victorian families into the future.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Energy and Resources) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on another Labor budget — one steeped in Labor values — because the Brumby government is dedicated to making Victoria a fairer place. As the Premier has said on many occasions, Victoria cannot be the best place to live, work and raise a family if it is not also the fairest place. There can be no greater evidence of our commitment to this state than our A Fairer Victoria policy and our fifth straight year of major funding for it. It is clear to everybody that many Victorians are doing it tough at the moment. They are suffering not only from the effects of the tragic bushfires but also the ongoing drought and the global financial crisis. Some groups of people and some places are under more strain than others, and there is a greater call on governments to help in these circumstances. At the same time, there is a negative impact on government finances. Together all of these factors are putting great pressures on the Victorian budget.

It would be easy to deal with this by simply cutting services. In fact that is exactly what the opposition did last time it was in government. It slashed spending on services, hitting hardest those who were already struggling, including many living in regional Victoria. The signs are that that is what it plans to do again if elected to government. The best example of that was at the last election, when the opposition promised to abolish the then Department for Victorian Communities. On 3 May 2007, the then opposition spokesperson for the Victorian communities portfolio, the member for Nepean, pledged to cut \$750 million per annum from state spending by abolishing the department. The opposition's approach then and its approach now is to slash and burn. The opposition punishes those who are already doing it tough. Our approach is to stand by Victorians who are doing it tough. As a government we will make sure that vulnerable groups and places get more help, not less.

Over the last few years, Victoria has led the way on human capital reform and reducing disadvantage. It is very pleasing to see that the Rudd government is now supporting our agenda and extending it nationally. For Victoria this means substantial joint investment through national partnership agreements in areas that have always been crucial for and critical to A Fairer Victoria. These areas include early childhood development; education; preventive health, with a emphasis on indigenous health; and social housing and homelessness. The success of these partnerships has been manifest in the Council of Australian Governments, where agreement has been achieved to provide \$2.8 billion in new funding for Victoria. Much of this investment will allow the Victorian and

commonwealth governments to improve outcomes for disadvantaged Victorians in education, health, housing, jobs and social infrastructure.

In this year's state budget, we have allocated another \$925.6 million through A Fairer Victoria to address critical areas such as mental health programs, disability services, homelessness, indigenous health and protecting vulnerable children. This can be seen in a graph which charts spending on A Fairer Victoria over the last five years. It demonstrates that we have spent over \$5 billion during that five-year period. I seek leave to incorporate into *Hansard* a document which charts the government's investment in the Victorian community.

Leave granted; see graph page 1961.

Mr BATCHELOR — I would now like to turn to some of the most important investments in the *A Fairer Victoria* policy document for 2009. Our priority area 1 is 'Getting the best start'. First and foremost we have a major focus on caring for vulnerable children. We have had considerable success with our child protection reforms, but now, with families under extra pressure due to the downturn, we need to keep investing in this important area. Accordingly, we are investing \$160 million over four years to continue reforms in child protection services. In relation to out-of-home care this includes recruitment of 100 in-home carers. These are people who are specially trained to provide intensive assistance to children with complex needs. Out-of-home care initiatives also include securing more foster and kinship care placements for children who are removed from their families, a new program of family mentors to visit struggling parents at home and better meeting through improved cultural sensitivity the needs of Aboriginal children who are in care.

Priority area 2 is 'Improving education and helping people into work'. In education, there will be a combined Victorian and commonwealth approach to supporting schools in low socioeconomic areas. Through this we will provide incentives to attract high-performing principals and teachers into these areas. We will also focus on partnerships with parents, because we know that this is a proven way of improving outcomes for children.

We will encourage schools to link up with community services and community supports. This is a joint approach with the commonwealth. It aims to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, are engaged in and benefiting from their schooling. We are also supporting a range of programs designed to increase workforce participation and to reduce the

barriers to employment — the barriers to getting a job. We will extend the workforce participation partnership for another two years. This will cost some \$10.2 million. These partnerships will assist disadvantaged job seekers to find substantial jobs — real jobs — that meet the employers' needs. We will provide fee waivers for jobseekers who enrol for qualifications at a certificate I to IV level. This means they will not have to pay a personal fee for their education. We hope this will encourage unemployed people to take up training opportunities to improve their personal skill levels. We are also providing \$13.8 million to fund more than 6400 additional training places for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Priority area 3 is 'Improving health and wellbeing'. The government is building upon significant prior investment in mental health with the release of the 10-year Victorian mental health strategy. Some \$84 million — a lot of money — has been allocated to address reform under this plan over the next four years. The key goals of the strategy are to improve early intervention and treatment of children and young people, court-supported services, mental health of Aboriginal people, psychiatric triage, and coordination and care for people with multiple needs. In addition to this funding, \$8 million will be provided for two purpose-built facilities — one at Bendigo and the other at Frankston. These facilities will provide youth prevention services and recovery care services at these locations. The facilities will provide transitional services between acute inpatient and community-based services for 16 to 25-year-olds who are recovering from acute mental illness.

We will also invest some \$66 million to redevelop and expand mental health facilities provided by the Dandenong Hospital to meet the demands in the south-east of Melbourne. We have also allocated some \$91 million in the state budget to disability support programs. One of our main goals with this investment is to help Victorians who have a disability to live independent and fulfilling lives. We will achieve this by giving individuals a choice of services and a choice of how they live in the community.

We are also investing \$47.4 million to close the gap in health outcomes between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. This funding aims to prevent illness by tackling health-compromising positions and behaviours, to improve access to quality health care and to step up the efforts in reducing smoking and obesity. We are also providing more money for indigenous early childhood development by extending funding for Stolen Generation Victoria and

expanding funding for the Aboriginal land and economic development program.

Priority area 4 is 'Developing livable communities'. The government will redouble its efforts to reduce homelessness and improve housing security for people at risk of homelessness. Together with funding in last year's budget and initiatives in the mental health and justice areas we are investing some \$78 million to tackle homelessness. We are also delighted to see an allocation of new commonwealth funding of \$1.7 billion, which will be used to build around 5000 social housing units in Victoria over the next four years. We have allocated some \$26 million to expand funding for neighbourhood renewal and community renewal programs. The neighbourhood and community renewal programs are driving transformational change in highly disadvantaged communities that are also vulnerable to the economic downturn. This new funding will allow communities to build on the great work we have already done.

Finally, as part of the government's Respect strategy we have allocated \$9.3 million to make it easier to volunteer, particularly for our young people. You might ask: why are we doing this? We are doing this because in an economic downturn young people are at significant risk of long-term unemployment. We know that volunteering helps them to build confidence, build their skills and have a sense of community engagement.

Let me finish by saying that this is a challenging time. It is a time of community stress due to the unrelenting nature of drought; a time of great trauma and hardship caused by bushfires; a time of falling revenues caused by the economic downturn; and for the same reason — for all those reasons — a time of rising need. Through all of this the Victorian government remains committed to making sure that no-one is left behind. We are determined to shape a more inclusive society, because members of a strong and connected society with strong and connected communities are better able to seize opportunities when the times are good. They are also better able to cope with pressures when times are tough.

The Brumby government believes in fairness, and that is why we are standing together with Victorian families and Victorian communities through these tough times. The Victorian budget that has been brought down is a fair budget because it achieves the objectives of A Fairer Victoria — it stands with families and communities in these tough times.

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — It is hard to imagine, having listened to the rain last night or the night before, that on Black Saturday, 7 February, which was not that

long ago, Melbourne recorded its hottest temperature ever. Now we are basically freezing and getting rain. It is much-needed rain, and I am not complaining about that, but it shows us how we are a world apart from 7 February.

The fires on 7 February had a devastating effect on many lives — 173 lives were lost, 2029 homes were destroyed and 57 businesses were lost. The state budget has done much to address this. If I recall correctly, the Treasurer said in one of the briefings that the fire — not the work after the fire but just putting out the fire — cost the state something like \$350 million. I was shocked at that amount, and everyone I tell seems completely surprised at it. That substantial amount has had to come out of this budget in one of the state's worst economic times. Australia and Victoria are leading the way in trying to address the crisis, but the impact of the bushfires on top of that has been substantial.

I would like to take this opportunity to put on record my appreciation for the efforts of all the firefighters — local, state and international — and the Country Fire Authority, the councils and the countless numbers of volunteers who helped. While the bushfires were not in my electorate, a lot of the people from my electorate know people in the neighbouring areas of Whittlesea, Strathewen and Marysville who were devastated. Unfortunately many people lost friends and family members. My nephew, for example, lost a very dear friend at the young age of 18.

The fires affected many people's lives. On a few occasions I went up to the areas to see what I could do to help. I was pleased to see the cities of Nillumbik and Banyule working very closely together to get things done, which is a testimony to what we all did during the time. It was a hard time; we were shocked. We all have to get on with our own lives, but we all had sympathy for the people affected by the fires. The \$330 million that was raised is testimony to the spirit of the Victorian community and indeed, the world community.

Moving specifically to the budget, Ivanhoe has done well out of it. In the time I have been a member my electorate has done quite well in every budget. This budget is about jobs, jobs and jobs. The anticipated 35 000 jobs created from the \$11.5 billion worth of projects under way in the next two years will help my electorate. West Heidelberg, an area dear to my heart and where my office is located, is one of those areas dependent on these sorts of infrastructure works to keep people employed. It is an area with a lot of young people; all of my electorate has a lot of young people in it, and apprenticeships can be created out of that

funding. This sort of work and all the jobs are a bonus for not just the state but my electorate.

I also put on record my acknowledgement of the Rudd Labor government, which has been beneficial to the state after waiting 10 long years under the Howard government but getting very little funding. It is like a breath of fresh air to have the Rudd government come in and to work with all the states to get the country moving again.

As I said earlier today, yesterday I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Education at the new site of the state-of-the-art school in West Heidelberg. I would like to go on the record to express my appreciation for all the work the schools and school communities have done to get all this together. There are some in my electorate who think it is a negative thing, but it is not.

This project has been driven by the schools themselves. They want to get the best possible education for the students of West Heidelberg. The schools in West Heidelberg are like a lot of schools around the state: they have been there for many years and are looking a bit tired. The school's populations come and go.

I was staggered to learn of the number of students who went to West Heidelberg schools at their height. From what I can ascertain, the average family back in the 1950s and 1960s had between 3 and 8 members, which absolutely flooded the West Heidelberg schools. The numbers have certainly decreased now. I take my hat off to those parents who could raise up to eight children in a small housing commission house. Today children like their own rooms, their own space, and they need all those things to get a proper education.

Yesterday the first sod of earth was turned for this state-of-the-art facility. The first stage of construction will cost \$13.5 million. It is the starting process, it is certainly not the entire process. As the member for Ivanhoe, I can assure all my community that I will continue pushing and lobbying the government to make sure the project goes through to its conclusion. We would like the school to be opened in 2011, so I look forward to being the member in 2011 and attending its opening.

The project involves three primary schools: Haig Street, Bellfield and Olympic Village primary schools. Olympic Village Primary School will remain as a P-4 facility in the heart of the old Olympic Village, one of possibly the lowest socioeconomic areas in my electorate, if not Melbourne. It needs a lot of work. It is right next to the Banyule Community Health centre, which I am pleased to advise the house received

funding from the government of \$18 million for its redevelopment, following my urging on its behalf three or four years ago. I was there at its opening. I am very proud of that new facility. The Olympic Village Primary School will also get some major work done on it to bring it up to grade as well.

Banksia and La Trobe secondary colleges merged at the start of this year. A new school will be built on the La Trobe Secondary School site, with students currently being housed at the Banksia school site. The new school will work closely with La Trobe University. I have lived in the area all my life, and this will be the first time I have known La Trobe University to have taken such a strong interest in school education from the primary level to the new secondary school level.

I take this opportunity to thank the principals of the primary schools: Cheryl Bondeson, Mary Ryan and Libby Young from Haig Street, Bellfield and Olympic Village schools respectively; and Glenn White and Gerry Fogarty who are the principals of the combined Banksia and La Trobe secondary colleges. They have been working tirelessly. I know they are exceptionally committed to the students of West Heidelberg — and I pledge my support for them — to make sure we get the school that West Heidelberg not only wants but deserves.

Northland Secondary College, while being part of the process, is not one of the schools that is merging. It is a school just on the other side of Northland from my electorate and is not far away. It is getting funding for major upgrade work — \$11.5 million, I believe — in this budget. So a lot of money is being spent just near my office. There is also \$8 million for the construction of a new facility at the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, and I assume that will be open for business later this year.

Members can add up the figures — \$13.5 million, \$11.5 million and \$8 million — and there is more to come. I do not know of any government that has spent so much money in the West Heidelberg area in the history of this state, and I commend the Brumby government for that.

I turn to the \$38 billion Victorian transport plan, and I am very pleased the roads minister is here. I have worked very closely with him, and he is a brilliant minister in terms of getting things done. Granted — and I am not taking anything away from the minister — having a federal Labor government on board makes it a lot easier. The previous Howard government basically gave us — and I cannot use the expression I would like

to use, because it is not parliamentary — very little funding.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LANGDON — I think members have the general gist of what I would have liked to have said!

The government has committed to a \$6 billion tunnel from Lower Plenty Road to Bulleen Road near the Eastern Freeway. That commitment will ease the burden of the traffic, especially heavy-vehicle traffic, coming from the Metropolitan Ring Road to the Eastern Freeway. This commitment is part of the \$38 billion transport plan. The government listened to me when I pledged to my electorate that I would not allow any above-ground freeway; the government has committed to that tunnel.

My electorate is very keen on the proposed South Morang line extension. Even though it is not close to my electorate, I think many of my constituents have children and friends living out along where the proposed line will run. My electorate has wanted the extension of the railway line from Epping to South Morang for some time, and I am extremely pleased that the government has provided \$562 million for the extension of that line, which will allow construction to start.

Electrification of the Sydenham line is also work we are doing. It again does not affect my electorate directly, but the state government has given the biggest boost to the railway network in 100 years. Twenty new trains are coming on board. The \$4 billion regional rail express, which again does not directly affect my electorate, will separate country Victorian trains from metropolitan train lines and is a brilliant proposal. I look forward to that proceeding as fast as possible.

I turn to SmartBus. I heard the member for Boroondara say the proposed SmartBus in his area would go past his office. The existing 903 service goes past my office and all the way to Altona and Mordialloc. I have witnessed — and I have ridden it to Altona — that the number of people using the service is substantial. I have seen the buses late at night, and while they are not packed they always seems to have some people on them. I have never seen a bus with nobody on it. The service has only just started, but I am sure it will get more and more use.

I cannot talk about a state budget without mentioning the Austin Hospital — I think my electorate would be shocked if I did not mention it! I am extremely pleased to advise the house that while the state government has previously allocated \$53 million to the Florey

Neuroscience Institutes (FNI), the federal government has topped that up this time with an additional \$39.8 million. I am extremely pleased by this. It will create jobs in Parkville and at the Austin. The chairperson, Mr Charles Allen, wrote to me, and stated:

On behalf of the FNI I would like to thank you again for this support which was critical in our overall campaign. I am very pleased to tell you that we are sending out the tenders for the Parkville building today and the Austin contract is expected to be awarded in about three weeks time. It is a most exciting period as we set off into our expanded world, in conjunction with the University of Melbourne and the Mental Health Research Institute.

I am advised that this commitment of funds will establish the fourth largest brain research group in the world, investigating conditions such as epilepsy, stroke, depression, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, dementia and Huntington's disease. I am very pleased that I could help the institute with its campaign to get additional top-up funding from the federal government. Not only will it boost employment within my electorate but, especially as we all get older, the research will be much appreciated.

The proposed mental health facility is not proceeding at the moment at the repatriation hospital; it is still under consultation. Many within my electorate are saying, 'The government is trying to rush it'. We are not. We are working with the community to get concerns addressed. There have been what are virtually fabrications by councillors and scare campaigns, but those in the know about the facility say it will be world class. I am pleased to advise the house that while the facility did not get funded in this year's budget, the Dandenong Hospital did get funded. The government has committed strongly to improving mental health. We cannot improve every area at once, but I am pleased to see that Dandenong got funding.

I commend this government for all the work it has done in my electorate, for the jobs it is trying to create and for the work it is doing in everyone's electorates. I am very proud to be the Labor member for Ivanhoe, and I will continue to be so and to make sure that the projects I wish to see commenced are funded — for example, I would like to see the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Centre funded in the near future as well. I know we have allocated funding and that phase 1 is about to commence shortly, but I would like to see that go through as well. I commend the government and the budget to the house.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — It gives me great pleasure to rise today in support of the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. We are in extraordinary times with the global financial crisis, and we are seeing for the first

time in a very long time collaboration between state and federal governments in the provision of infrastructure and services — not duplication, as per the history of the Howard government, which duplicated services state governments were providing.

We are now seeing taxpayers money being spent to get the greatest spread of benefit across the state. That is a great outcome for Victoria. However, this is a budget that is not just about now but a budget that recognises that if ever there was a time to be putting more into infrastructure for future generations, this is that time. As the economy closes up, as businesses stop investing and as individual families start checking their dollars and cents this is a time for government to spend. This is a time for government to take the opportunity to grow the availability of investment to build the infrastructure that we need for future generations. We need to build road, rail, school and hospital infrastructure — you name it and we are investing in it. In this budget we are building on our already record investment in infrastructure. I am pleased to say that my electorate of Footscray has certainly been the beneficiary of that spending on infrastructure and will receive ongoing benefits.

I mention education and the fact that this government has made education its first priority. It started right from the very beginning with the appointment of a Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development to look at the welfare of children from the day they are born. We recognise the notion of gaining education from the day you are born right up until the day you die and we are providing real services to ensure that every four-year-old child gets kindergarten experience. That is particularly relevant in my electorate, where we are also looking at ensuring that people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities are getting access to kindergarten and understanding what going to kindergarten will mean for their children. They are being supported in taking that step of having their children transition to kindergarten and then on to school.

We have record investment on infrastructure in schools, and in partnership with the federal government we are seeing a revolution in the provision of school infrastructure across this state, including in my electorate of Footscray. But we are doing more than that, and we have been really innovative in relation to the classroom. Not only have we put more teachers into the school system and made up for the deplorable condition our schools were left in at the end of the Kennett era but we are also ensuring that those teachers get the right training and receive the right support in educating children. We are providing the latest in

technology to ensure that students get access to the best education system they can possibly get, and more importantly that they get access to a world they might not otherwise get access to.

Our intention is also to make sure that parents are not left behind in that technology revolution. Our intention is to take parents from wherever they are, whether it be at home or at work, to being able to use technology to involve themselves in the education of their children and the life of their children's school. That is important in developing our schools into community assets so that they are used not just to educate kids but also to provide an environment in which members of the community can better use them as community assets.

I commend this government for that. It is a vision which people in generations to come will look back on and say, 'It was well thought out, well done'. We will then have communities that are integrated with their schools and schools that will be meeting the needs of their students in quality facilities with the most up-to-date technology. It will be fantastic. I welcome that, and I welcome the cooperation of the federal government in helping to provide it.

I turn to examine specifically some of the infrastructure issues. Footscray is a stone's throw from the city of Melbourne. It is 10 minutes away by car and an easy 7 minutes if you catch the train from the city — and if you were good enough you probably could throw a stone across the Maribyrnong River to Docklands. Footscray is an integral part of the transport network with our port, it has easy access to both Avalon and Tullamarine airports, it has right on its doorstep CityLink and the transport networks that provide access to anywhere in the state.

Footscray is a great place for new investments, and the government has recognised this. Footscray has been recognised as a transit city and in *Melbourne @ 5 Million* as the new business activity centre it will become. This is very important, because Victoria has a very diverse community and unless we properly plan for the development of centres like Footscray we are likely to have ad hoc development that will push out the very people for whom being close to the centre and close to services is important. The development of Footscray as a business activity centre recognises the very importance of having jobs, services, affordable housing and development that meets the needs of the community, not just now but as it grows. I thank the Victorian government not only for being prepared to take this step with Footscray but also for the way in which it is working with the City of

Maribyrnong and the way it is involving the community as part of that development process.

I will talk more about consultation and infrastructure, because we are also the beneficiaries of federal government money for work on a tunnel for the rail line between Footscray and the Domain. This will be important new railway infrastructure, and it is very important that that work be undertaken. We welcome the commonwealth's investment, which is allowing us to proceed on that course. However, there needs to be a great deal of consultation with the community as that work proceeds.

The Victorian transport plan overwhelmingly recognises the need for both rail and road infrastructure in the inner west. That is happening with the truck action plan, with the community consultation that will be undertaken with the community in relation to that plan and with the bicycle tracks that are threading their way through the inner west — and the Footscray Road bike path is the most used bike path in metropolitan Melbourne. The communication and consultation that took place with bike users to ensure they were provided with the best possible bike paths is another sign of the consultation undertaken by this government.

I thank the Minister for Roads and Ports and the Minister for Public Transport for being so accessible at community meetings that members of the community could talk to them about the Victorian transport plan and its impact on the inner west. I thank the ministers, particularly the roads minister, for always being available to meet people who have concerns in relation to how the transport plan may develop and the ongoing consultation process. It has been a fantastic exercise for us in the west, and it is one that I welcome.

I also want to talk about the importance of jobs, and not just the 35 000 jobs this budget will initiate and put in place. At a time of global financial crisis we see closures of factories, manufacturing businesses and service providers. For the people who fall out of the workforce, this means that the jobs they may go into in the future are not necessarily the ones they are trained for now. They will need retraining for these jobs. The government has committed to ensuring under its skills package that those people who, through no fault of their own, are victims of this global economic crisis are able to get access to the retraining they need and to take on the job opportunities that will come as we come out of our current financial circumstances.

I also want to spend some time looking at the philosophy behind the current spending. I talked a bit about this at the beginning of my contribution. Every

nation around the world has recognised that this is the time to spend. There are a few naysayers opposite who believe we should not spend, but this is a very important time for us to be spending. In this state we are now in a better financial situation to take that opportunity than just about any other jurisdiction you can mention. We have remained in the most sustainable financial situation of any state in Australia. We still have our AAA rating, we still have a very healthy surplus and we are providing infrastructure for generations to come. Yes, some of those generations will have to take a share of the debt — of course they will. But if you look at the level of debt in the Bolte era and compare it to the level of debt in the Brumby era, you will find that we are still well below the Bolte government's debt levels — and we are providing the infrastructure needed for our future generations to boot.

The member for Bundoora read out a list of endorsements from the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry and editorials from the *Australian* and other newspapers. As I understand it, the Leader of the Opposition in New South Wales also thinks the Victorian budget is outstanding.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms THOMSON — Yes, that is right, the shadow treasury spokesman. He said the Brumby Labor government can be very proud of its efforts in delivering a tough but fair budget and in looking after the best interests of the residents of Victoria. I think that is a wonderful statement about good governance and balancing the books from the New South Wales shadow Treasury spokesman. It is something I think members of the opposition should take heed of. Bagging a government for the sake of bagging it does not make a good opposition. What makes a good opposition is the ability of its members to recognise what has been done right and to give credit for that.

As I said, it is recognised by jurisdictions around the world that this is the time to invest in infrastructure. None other than the President of the United States said:

To begin with, economists on both left and right agree that the last thing a government should do in the middle of a recession is to cut back on spending.

What we need to do is ensure that spending is in the right places — that it will meet our transport needs, that it will meet the needs of our education system and our health system and that it will provide for the growing population of Victoria, ensuring that Victorians continue to have the living standards we have all enjoyed in this state for the last decade or so. I welcome

this spending, which we are putting into Victoria in all the right places.

I have not yet mentioned health. Health is a very important area to invest in, whether it be in mental health; in recognising illnesses and diseases that are becoming endemic in our communities, such as diabetes, which is particularly a problem for us in the western suburbs; or in providing infrastructure to support the research that needs to be undertaken in those areas and to control diseases as they present themselves. Not in this budget but in previous budgets about \$48 million has been given to Western Health for infrastructure development. We are looking forward to seeing ongoing funding in future budgets for further developments at Western Health to ensure that it can provide the services required to meet the demands of a growing community and a younger community in the west. I know other members in the west would agree with that, and we are confident this government will deliver.

This is a great budget for the west, it is a great budget for Footscray and it is great budget for Victorians, and I am proud to be a member of the government that has delivered it. It is a budget which has built on all the budgets that preceded it, and it has delivered not just for now but for the future.

Ms LOBATO (Gembrook) — I am also very pleased to support the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. This budget has been brought down during a very challenging time in the world economy. It reflects the global economic crisis and anticipates possible and likely repercussions for the state of Victoria by focusing heavily on job creation and retention. In this budget we are building jobs to build Victoria.

I want to comment on the devastating fires that occurred on 7 February and to talk about how the fires, as we know, changed many communities, families and individuals throughout the state of Victoria. In the context of our financial budgets, it also changed the scope of both the Victorian and national budgets, as well as the budgets of the local councils that were heavily impacted by the fires. Specifically in my electorate the fires will significantly change the budget of the Shire of Yarra Ranges and also impact on the budget of the Shire of Cardinia, because they need to take into account all the additional spending that occurred in connection with the fires as well as the expense of taking many preventive measures in preparation for the next fire season.

In this contribution I wish to concentrate mainly on local initiatives for the electorate of Gembrook. Yet

again this government's commitment to education is demonstrated in the budget by its allocation of \$1.7 billion to that area. The government and I are very proud of this ongoing commitment towards our children's education, and I am proud of the \$2 million contribution for Warburton Primary School.

Mr Delahunty — It is federal money. Thank the federal government.

Ms LOBATO — No, it is not. I am proud of the government's investment into the Upper Yarra along the Warburton Highway, which over time has been neglected in the provision of infrastructure. I am very pleased that that level of investment will be made in Upper Yarra.

Also, \$4 million has been allocated for stage 2 of the Berwick select entry school. I am pleased that money will be injected into offering alternative education for our gifted students. Two select entry schools already exist in Victoria; soon there will be four, and I am proud that the construction of one of the two new ones has started at the Berwick campus of Monash University. That is wonderful, and the initiative has been widely welcomed throughout the state, particularly around my electorate and in Gippsland.

Additional money is being injected into Chisholm TAFE, which is also very welcome. The TAFE is located opposite Monash University in Berwick, so that area will be turned into an outstanding education hub, with the technical education centre also at that Chisholm TAFE site almost completed. Wonderful educational opportunities are being provided at Berwick.

I am also pleased about the present level of cooperation between the state and federal governments, which was demonstrated recently through many initiatives but particularly through the school funding, which has been widely welcomed and which will provide some fantastic facilities for all our schools. It will ensure that all our schools will have state-of-the-art facilities and offer the very best facilities, which our children deserve.

That cooperation between the state and federal governments has also been demonstrated with regard to a couple of schools in my electorate. Launching Place Primary School, which is another school along the Warburton Highway, has really been thrilled to see some funds through BER (Building the Education Revolution), and Monbulk Primary School has been allocated funding for the first stage of a major upgrade the school needs.

Many schools throughout the Gembrook electorate have been upgraded over the past few years and thankfully, like many of the Upper Yarra schools, many more will now be upgraded and given the facilities they deserve. After the necessary upgrades have been made to many of the schools in my electorate, I look forward hopefully to a couple of new schools being constructed down in the south-east of my electorate, along the Pakenham growth corridor. That area is experiencing an amazing rate of growth and there is an urgent need for a further secondary college to cater for that growth. I look forward to also seeing some investment down at that end and for an additional primary school in the Officer area.

I want to comment on the health initiatives in this budget. I am pleased with the continuation of massive investment in health in this state, with \$2.6 billion being allocated for hospitals, medical staff and dental clinics. Another important component of this year's budget is the breast screening services. I am very pleased that those services are being provided at the St John of God Hospital and Casey Hospital in Berwick. It is very important to have those kinds of services offered locally.

I am also very pleased to see that Dandenong Hospital is to receive some funding, which will allow for important increased mental health services, and also that the Alfred burns unit and the Casey Hospital will receive some funding for the Monash heart program, which will see the local delivery of cardiac services.

Moving on to the Victorian transport plan, an announcement was made last November of a wonderful investment of \$38 billion — a massive amount — \$3 million of which is allocated in this budget for new railway lines, more rail stations, new roads and new jobs to create all of that. Importantly the Cardinia Road station, the site of which was previously known as Lakeside station, will be constructed. This infrastructure project is really important for the Lakeside-Pakenham communities. The population of Lakeside has been increasing at a rapid rate in the Pakenham area, and the transport initiatives that were previously established throughout that community have been very much welcomed, despite a daily newspaper recently reporting to the contrary.

In Lakeside we have bus stops 400 metres from every home, so potentially the bus services need to be increased somewhat in their frequency; but the massive investment to construct Lakeside station will be very much welcomed by the local communities.

In the last budget we made a commitment to upgrading the car park at Berwick station. I look forward to that commencing as soon as possible, because the rate at which people are now using public transport has skyrocketed, as we all know. One of the major complaints made to me is about the lack of car parking at all our stations down in the south-eastern growth corridor, particularly at the Berwick, Beaconsfield, Officer and Pakenham stations. We need to increase the number of car parks and upgrade them, particularly at Officer station, which once there is a little bit of rain quite frankly becomes a dog's breakfast.

I am also very pleased with the roads projects being delivered by this budget, particularly Little Yarra Road and Noojee Road between Yarra Junction and Powelltown. That is a very important local route, and I am pleased that project will receive \$536 000. Yarra Junction Primary School is very grateful to have received \$277 000 for a pedestrian crossing at the school, following some wonderful campaigning by it to achieve that result. I congratulate the school council and the school community for that. It will improve safety along the Warburton Highway when students are crossing from the school to the car park, which is on the other side of the road. That is a wonderful outcome.

Clyde Road has just received \$828 000 to improve some congestion that has been occurring there since we established new traffic lights at a cost of \$2 million a year or two ago. Since establishing those traffic lights at Enterprise Avenue and Clyde Road some unexpected congestion has been experienced. Thankfully the \$828 000 will put in additional turning and slip lanes and alleviate that congestion. We are very grateful for that.

Other community safety measures include the \$60 000 refurbishment of the Warburton police station and a road crash rescue kit for the Upper Yarra State Emergency Service unit. Those two organisations were instrumental in the recent bushfire firefighting effort, and I thank them once again. This investment in community safety follows on from numerous other emergency services investments in my electorate, particularly in the Upper Yarra area with the brand-new Yarra Junction police station and much investment in the Pakenham police and emergency services complex.

I am very proud of the continuing commitment to our bushfire-affected areas, with a \$1 billion allocation. This includes a massive injection into emergency services, communications, replacement vehicles for the Victorian State Emergency Service and fuel reduction activities. Equally important is the boosting of (Country Fire Authority resources. That includes the replacement

of 87 CFA appliances. Thankfully the brigade in Toomuc Valley in my electorate has received a heavy tanker, for which it is very grateful. It was also instrumental in the firefighting effort, particularly in the Bunyip Ridge fire. I am very pleased about the ongoing community safety emergency support program. It is always widely taken up by my emergency service organisations.

I am very proud of the \$500 000 in sport and recreation funding for Cardinia shire's Holm Park Road sporting precinct. Holm Park Road will be an outstanding sporting complex. I congratulate the Cardinia shire for its proactive approach in developing the precinct. Time is against me, but I will state just briefly that I am very proud of the \$20 000 towards the feasibility study for our Cardinia motor recreation and education park, which I have been working on for about five years now. I am pleased that we now have the support of the state government, Cardinia shire and many other organisations. This will develop into a fantastic regional facility which we will all be very proud of.

In closing, I am very pleased to see the continuation of the social justice priorities and the A Fairer Victoria policy. I congratulate the Treasurer. I thank him because just prior to handing down the budget he spent quite a bit of time with me in my fire-affected areas.

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — It is with pleasure that I rise to support this budget. It is a fantastic budget which has five key features: it builds, it builds, it builds, it builds and it builds. It builds because not only do we want infrastructure in this state but we want jobs. We want jobs that will enable people to get job satisfaction and support their families.

A feature of this budget is that it maintains Victoria's strong AAA credit rating. We in the government are really proud of the fact that this budget maintains an operating surplus as well as low net debt. Barely before the Treasurer had finished delivering his outstanding budget speech in this house we had the opposition out there clamouring for the world to know that Victoria had lost its AAA rating. The fact is that is what members opposite wanted; it is what they wished for. However, moments after the Treasurer delivered his budget speech the Moody's Investors Service came out and reaffirmed that this state's AAA rating would continue, and acclaimed the work of this government.

Another feature of the budget is it is a partnership budget. We are working shoulder to shoulder with the commonwealth and with communities. A previous horror commonwealth regime did not want to engage Victoria and did not want to give us just reward for the

fact that we make up 25 per cent of the Australian population. Year after year we were getting 17 per cent or 18 per cent of the nation's roads funding when we should have been getting 25 per cent.

The next feature of this budget is it is a budget for recovery. It focuses on infrastructure, skills, regulations and a competitive tax base. It has made sure that Victoria is out there as a place that the business community knows is a place to do business in.

I think it is self-evident, but it needs to be stated that this is a true Labor budget. I, and I know all members of our caucus, am proud of the fact that it recognises that a government has to be not only a good economic manager but also socially progressive. It has to deliver outcomes that are people focused and outcomes that ensure that accommodation is provided for the homeless and that education is provided for all people, not only students in primary and secondary education but also those involved in tertiary education and lifelong learning. It is a budget that ensures that the dignity of human work is recognised and that its focus is on jobs.

I want to highlight the fact that not only has the Labor government taken action in this budget under Premier Brumby but certainly it did so in previous budgets when the Premier was the Treasurer. It has taken very seriously its responsibility to stand up for working families, to invest in communities and to create jobs across the whole state. One of the reasons Victoria is so well placed at the moment is that as a result of work that has been done by the Bracks and Brumby governments over 4000 jobs have been created in education, health and community safety as well as in other areas of government focus. As Treasurer our Premier established quite clearly that jobs are a focus of a Labor government. Jobs are a focus because we want families to know that this is the best place to live, to work and to raise their children.

I want to run through some of the jobs that will be created in my electorate and pick just one example, and it is one of which I am particularly proud. It is the fully state-funded expansion of the Pascoe Vale Girls College science wing. We in the Pascoe Vale electorate looked at the budget with great hope that there would be a delivery of this science wing, which I promised at the last state election. It was delivered, with \$6.3 million to enable the stage 2 upgrade of Pascoe Vale Girls College. It will deliver a modern science wing, which is absolutely essential to provide the young women with appropriate learning environments for their years 7 to 10 science classes. There will also be a studies of science and environment section.

The upgrade will see the demolition of the existing 50-year-old facility and the provision of four entitled science learning spaces and associated preparatory areas. There will also be five other learning spaces for information and communications technology facilities. When I was growing up in Pascoe Vale and young women attended the then Pascoe Vale Girls High School, the school had a focus on what was seen as traditional female studies and career prospects.

We are very proud locally of this school and the fact that it has 1400 young women enrolled there. Pascoe Vale Girls Secondary College is very focused on ensuring that young women have the best opportunities when it comes to science learning. I want to place on the record my recognition of the work of the principal Helen Jackson and assistant principal Julie Atkinson, who I think have shown incredible persistence to advance the case for this science wing. This is part of the Brumby Labor government's \$402 million boost to building new schools and new school buildings.

I mentioned in my introductory comments that this is a budget that works in partnership, and we certainly witness that when it comes to education, because this budget and its associated media releases was able to state that not only was there money from the Victorian government but that there was also money from the federal government — a Labor government that is interested in delivering jobs through infrastructure projects.

I want to acknowledge the great work that is being done by Pascoe Vale Primary School; they were allocated \$2 million for a 21st century library and learning neighbourhood facility. Pascoe Vale South Primary School also received \$2 million. Westbreen Primary School — a school that desperately needed some upgrades — has been told that \$2 million is forthcoming from the federal government, and that was announced in partnership with the Premier and the Deputy Prime Minister.

Post budget — because of the great preparatory work of the Victorian education system and the Victorian government — the Pascoe Vale electorate also secured funding of \$2 million for the Glenroy West Primary School for the construction of a new library; Oak Park Primary School received \$2.5 million to build a new multipurpose hall; and Pascoe Vale North Primary School received \$2 million to construct a new library. The Oak Park and Pascoe Vale North primary schools have essentially been rebuilt from the last few Labor budgets, which are ensuring that working class Labor areas are being provided with the best infrastructure

possible to deliver the best educational outcomes for children.

It is not uncommon that we hear from the opposition that the non-government school sector is overlooked in a budget. I heard comments from opposition members, and I thought they needed to be refuted. This budget delivers for the non-government sector as well. In the budget papers there is an additional \$38.9 million which will be provided to the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and \$14.6 million to the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria to support needy, non-government schools upgrade their educational facilities. Those particular sector authorities will manage the distribution of funds to ensure that grants are directed to schools with the greatest need.

Lest people in my electorate or elsewhere be under any illusions, this government does engage with the Catholic school sector; it is in the middle of writing an agreement with the teachers, but I have absolutely no doubt that the good work undertaken by the chief executive officer of CECV and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will continue so that the next four-year funding agreements for their teachers and schools will provide an equally positive outcome for teachers, students and the non-government sector.

In the few minutes remaining, I want to highlight two areas in the transport section of the budget that particularly affect my electorate. The first is the VicRoads upgrade of the Western Ring Road. This is the first major section to be upgraded as part of the \$2.25 billion Western Ring Road project. The first phase of it will be between the Tullamarine Freeway and Sydney Road.

I had the opportunity to visit the project office at Essendon Airport recently and strongly advocate for the provision of appropriate noise walls along the Gowenbrae section of my electorate as part of that upgrade. The M80 Ring Road upgrade is expected to take more than four years, but when it comes to Moreland, the Moreland council and the relevant members of Parliament bordering that ring-road will be making sure that their electorates are well represented, to ensure that appropriate noise abatement walls are provided.

The second area I wish to highlight is public transport. When it comes to residents of the Pascoe Vale electorate, I think the Minister for Public Transport is an absolute hero. We have seen so many wonderful things happen under the Labor government, including increased frequency of bus services and increased hours

of operation. The SmartBus from Mordialloc to Altona has become almost a tourist bus. There are people coming into my electorate office asking for timetables. It is not often that people come into an electorate office and say, 'Will you please thank the government', or, 'Will you please thank the Minister for Public Transport', but that is what is happening with regard to this bus. People are wanting timetables and are acclaiming this fantastic initiative. The public transport plan has also delivered extra trains on the Broadmeadows line, which is helping to ease the congestion in the morning and afternoon peaks.

I am very proud to speak on this budget bill. I want to congratulate the Treasurer, the Premier, the expenditure review committee and the public servants and advisers who pulled this together. I want to put on the record how pleased I am to advocate strongly for my electorate and to have the commitments I made at the last election progressively honoured. The Pascoe Vale girls school's science wing is an election commitment in my electorate that I am particularly proud of.

Ms MORAND (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I am very pleased to make a contribution to debate on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. This budget is a positive for Victorians; it is also a positive for my constituents and for the two portfolio responsibilities I have. As other members have said, the budget has been developed in an environment that is under the influence of a global financial credit crisis and very much reflects that economic environment while still ensuring that the services Victorians expect us to invest in are invested in. Those services include education, early childhood services, health and transport services and community safety.

The Leader of the Opposition in his reply last night, which curiously was delivered at around 11.00 p.m. when many members were not present, seemed to be critical of the investment made by the commonwealth government. He spoke about Victoria being bailed out, as if the commonwealth's expenditure on education and health in Victoria were somehow a bad thing. We welcome this investment, and I am sure that if the Leader of the Opposition asked people at the schools in his electorate whether they welcome the investment in school infrastructure, they would tell him that the stimulus package is a great thing for infrastructure and local jobs.

We believe in investing in education and early childhood services, and this budget builds on what has been a decade-long investment in the portfolios I am responsible for. It includes a significantly increased

investment in kindergarten funding of 188 per cent since we came into government. That has been achieved through a range of new initiatives, including the introduction of cluster management and an increase in the subsidy from \$100 to \$750, which effectively provides free access to kindergarten for families with health care cards — and they represent more than a quarter of all families participating in the kindergarten program. This budget increases our investment by \$13.6 million, providing an additional 4000 places in kindergartens in the next 12 months. We know there are many more children heading towards kindergartens in response to the baby boom that Victoria is experiencing, so we have budgeted and planned for that increased participation in kindergarten.

We have also had a very significant increase in our maternal and child health spending since we have been in government of 145 per cent. This links very effectively with work done on Best Start, an initiative that this government introduced which has been very effective in relation to things like increasing the breast-screening rate and participation in maternal and child health key age-and-stage visits. Those are very important outcomes that make a tangible difference in children's lives. The children's centres that we have funded have been a great success across Victoria, with a total of \$43 million committed. I have opened a large number of those centres across Victoria, as did my predecessor. Of the 95 integrated children's centres planned, 49 have so far been opened, bringing together under the one roof a range of early years services, including kindergarten, and maternal and child health. They might also have occasional care, a neighbourhood house or a library. All of these have been developed in collaboration with local government and other community sectors and have been a fantastic success.

The Brumby government knows how challenging it can be to raise a child with a developmental delay or disability, and our investment reflects that understanding with a 138 per cent increase in our investment in programs that support preschool-age children with a disability or developmental delay. This budget continues to increase that investment through a further \$9 million in programs to support early childhood intervention services and to continue our reform of services that support children up to 18 years of age who have a disability. Specifically we will make improvements to the service system.

A quality assurance framework will be developed which will bring in new program standards that are more reflective of best practice. We will take a new look at the way this sector is managed and provide assistance for boards of management in the really

important work they do in providing early childhood intervention services through a whole range of non-government services right across the Victorian community. This builds on last year's budget with a really significant increase in the number of places for children in early childhood intervention. An extra \$29 million over four years will provide an additional 1000 places for children — that is, 500 in the last financial year, and I will shortly announce another 500 places distributed across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria.

As I mentioned, other reform investment will be made in the 0–18 developmental delay framework in order to improve coordination between government and non-government services and the disability services division to drive reform at a local level. This will be very much about improving service coordination and planning for children. A tangible example of that is that we will develop a common approach to assessment so that families do not have to wade through multiple assessments when they range from preschool-age services through to school-age services. This is really important and quite complex work, but we know that families and providers very much welcome this sort of reform.

We also increased our investment in services for children with autism in this budget, with \$4 million allocated over four years as part of the \$8 million statewide autism plan. Part of that is for the provision of 100 scholarships for teachers and student support officers in schools to undertake a graduate diploma in autism. I recently visited Western Autistic School to see the great work it does in training more teachers to go out to other schools and provide support for children with autism. I also had great pleasure in visiting Wantirna Heights School in the week after the budget to announce that we have allocated \$600 000 to begin planning for a new prep to year 12 school for children with autism. We will be looking at a suitable site in the city of Knox.

I want to acknowledge the work done by a member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in the other place, Shaun Leane, in supporting the families that have been working hard to try to get this facility in place. I also acknowledge the principal, Gail Preston, who is an outstanding leader and recognised expert on autism, and parents Cathy Hammond and Louise Anderson, who lobbied and talked to so many people about what they think are the needs of children in their locality. I was very pleased to be able to make that announcement with them present.

We do not completely understand why the prevalence of autism is growing so quickly. Part of it is better diagnosis and recognition of the condition, but otherwise it is not known why it is growing so rapidly. Of the 19 000 Victorian students supported through the program for students with a disability, over 3000 are now being supported under the autism spectrum disorder category. Overall we have doubled funding for the program for students with a disability. There has been a 112 per cent increase since we came to government.

The other component relevant to the budget is the national partnership we have through the Council of Australian Governments process on early childhood. One of those national partnerships is to deliver 15 hours of kindergarten per week for every child in the year before they start school. This is an ambitious project. In Victoria we fund 10 hours of kindergarten per week. Other states and territories put less funding into supporting kindergarten and preschool, but Victoria is well placed to implement this reform because the government has a very strong and effective collaboration with local government in the provision of kindergarten services.

We recently had a very successful outcome with kindergarten teachers and the Australian Education Union in relation to the enterprise agreement, and we believe that we are on the right track for implementing our commitment through the national partnership. This is to be delivered by 2013. Over the years we will also have a range of scholarships to support the recruitment of degree-qualified kindergarten teachers to work in long day care. That is part of ensuring that all children get 15 hours per week. We will be including children who are attending long day care full time in the year before they start school.

We also have a national partnership on indigenous early childhood development with funding of \$22 million over six years to help improve outcomes for indigenous children. That includes the development of two new children and family centres, one in rural Victoria and one in metropolitan Melbourne. This budget will very much continue to build on our ambitious reform agenda and early childhood framework. We have a clear agenda and framework from birth to adulthood and a clear way forward to implement our commitments through our national partnerships.

While I am on education and early childhood I want to mention the impact of the budget in my electorate of Mount Waverley. There was some fantastic news for my constituents in the state budget, one item of which was the \$402 million commitment to renovate or

extend 113 schools across Victoria. This included \$10.5 million for Mount Waverley Secondary College. This is a great project because it will virtually rebuild the school from the ground up. Mount Waverley Secondary College is a fantastic school providing education for 650 years 7 and 8 students at the junior campus in Stephenson's Road. It was originally a primary school and has now been servicing the Waverley community for many generations. I know that the teachers and the junior school principal, Gail Major, are very pleased, as was the community, with the 17 new classrooms, library, canteen and administration facilities and the music, textiles, home economics, drama, science and technology facilities, all to be built at the junior campus. It is fantastic news for my community.

I also want to mention two specific initiatives in my women's affairs portfolio, which again build on the investment we have made over many years. One of the budget announcements was the extension of the Rural Women, Drought and Climate Change initiative. This has been a great success, and one that I was very keen to see extended. As all members know, Victoria is experiencing a prolonged drought, which is putting additional pressure on women and families. It is important to build the capacity of country communities to ensure that women are supported in their communities. They play important roles in business, in local government, on the farm, in sporting and social clubs and also of course in families.

The Premier made an announcement at the rural drought and climate change conference of a further \$600 000 to support the Rural Women, Drought and Climate Change coordinators, and it was very well received. He also announced a new program of scholarships — \$500 000 over two years — which was very much in follow-up to the centenary of suffrage celebrations. We believe it is very important to provide women with the opportunities to participate equally in all aspects of Victorian life, and these scholarships will go some way to supporting women in leadership roles in their communities.

The other thing I just quickly want to mention is our continued investment in family violence prevention. We have had a lot of success in responding to family violence, and we are now focused on our prevention role, which includes the Enough campaign launched by me, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in December last year. There is currently a roadshow going around rural and regional Victoria to make sure that the community is aware of the new Family Violence Protection Act which came into effect at that time.

I will finish there and say in summary that this budget certainly continues our investment in quality services and infrastructure, and continues to invest in things that are important to Victorians, including education, health, public transport and community safety. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Dandenong) — It is a pleasure to contribute to debate on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill this year after hearing the minister's contribution detailing all the fantastic work she has been doing in her portfolios since she has been minister. In electorates like Dandenong we see the massive benefits of all that recent investment and her particular work, certainly in lifting participation rates amongst those members of the community who were perhaps not participating to the level they should have been because of cultural reasons. Thanks to cultural awareness in children's services we are seeing the benefits on the ground. There is no doubt we are going to see massive benefits in the future because the investment that we are making in kids now will provide a return on investment later on.

It is a pleasure to speak on this 10th Labor budget, which continues to build on the fantastic record of investment we have made in this state and that my electorate has been seeing, but unfortunately only for the last 10 years. It has been disappointing hearing speeches from the other side, because some of us who have been here a while remember and reflect on what the opposition's budgets used to mean for electorates like Dandenong. Some electorates are not well-off, flash areas, but the people who live there are very proud. Dandenong is a launching place for so many new immigrants who make Melbourne home. It provides a start in life for so many people. That is why we have this high concentration of diversity and refugee communities. Housing and rental accommodation is a bit cheaper than in other areas, but yes, people there are stressed as well.

It is this sort of budget though that delivers for these areas. Hearing some of the contributions from other members, you would think that this budget was not delivering anything and was about doomsday and destruction. The people of Dandenong know what that is about. During the seven and a half years of the Liberal government they saw money and services being taken out of the area through the sacking of people and the closing of facilities like schools and government offices.

We have seen a massive reduction in the public sector workforce in the local area and also in the many non-government organisations that service the

low-income people of the south-eastern suburbs and have their offices in Dandenong. They are the ones who are being pressured by the policies of the other side. The contrary side is what we have seen in the last 10 years: continuing investment in the areas of greatest need.

What is it that we have seen in Dandenong in the last 10 years which this budget builds on? This budget provides \$66 million for the upgrade of mental health facilities in Dandenong. When you look at what previous budgets have done and combine them, this \$66 million is the last allocation of a total rebuild of Dandenong Hospital into a great, new, modern facility that is not only efficient in the delivery of services but is much more comfortable for the people who use that place — the patients who stay in the beds overnight or for a few nights, or the many people who go in for their day procedures or their medical appointments.

We have brought all these extra services into the area. We have opened extra beds; we will see extra beds as part of this mental health facility upgrade. The emergency department upgrade was announced last year, and works will commence very soon. We have been building a new hospital while running the existing hospital — that is a hard thing to do, but it has been delivered amazingly well. I look forward to seeing these new mental health beds come to Dandenong, because when the project is completed, it will be a total rebuild, from top to bottom, of all health services that faced massive cutbacks and pressure from the previous government.

I have been talking about just the Dandenong Hospital, but the region benefits from other health services that have been delivered by previous budgets. The new Casey Hospital in Berwick is delivering great support to the people in Casey and to the people in Dandenong; my father spent five weeks at the Casey Hospital rehabilitation facility up until only a few weeks ago. These are services we did not have when I was an opposition member because the Liberal-Nationals government did not want to invest in the region.

We have seen extra benefits and services at the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton, which is the big campus for the entire south-eastern suburbs. We are seeing more beds and more services there. A few months ago it was a pleasure to see, as part of the Southern Health aged-care facilities in my electorate, the opening in Doveton by the Minister for Senior Victorians of a new aged-care centre.

It is great to have a facility where locals who may have to be discharged from hospital but who are not well

enough to go home can stay. In the past the choices were not good. When my mother was left with this sort of choice, we either had to go to a run-down Kingston facility, which this government is committed to repairing, or to a place at Sandringham. They were the choices that aged people had in Dandenong or in Doveton, where my parents live and in the area where I grew up. You were forced to either access not the best medical services or go to services which were far away from your family, friends and people who you needed around you when you were trying to cope or recover from difficult health issues.

It is a great budget. I keep hearing arguments about record debt, but people should understand that it is responsible debt. When you have the top economic advisers saying it is the right thing to do; when economic centres are saying it is the right thing to do; when the rating agencies are saying it is the appropriate thing to do, then it is appropriate to have debt at a certain point in time. If this is not the point in time, then I do not know what would be the better point.

I wonder sometimes, were those opposite running the national government or the state government, what sort of dilemma this country would find itself in. We are riding a very difficult global financial crisis quite well compared to other countries. What would the other side be like? The problem with so many people in the Liberal and Nationals parties is that they got involved because they are ideologues against debt. They never wanted to borrow money even when it was in the public interest to do so.

Ms Pike — Bolte didn't mind!

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — They are neoliberals nowadays, not like the true Liberals of the 1950s and 1960s. I acknowledge there are some on the other side, but the internal divisions would be such that they would never be able to make the right decision. They would make a mickey mouse debt decision that was not big enough to do the job, to keep as many people as possible employed, while at the same time investing in economic and productive infrastructure that builds efficiencies over time, saving money in the long term.

They are the sorts of things this budget is doing. We are seeing it on the ground in places like Dandenong. We are seeing some of the funding as part of the transport plan. The work that has commenced as part of what is called the Westall loop or of the third line on the Pakenham–Cranbourne rail corridor is 3.5 kilometres of rail track between Centre Road and Springvale Road which, when built, will see massive improvements in

public transport services that are under pressure in the region.

The services are under pressure because people have been voting with their feet to use public transport and because of the growth in population in the area has led to more patronage. With that Westall loop upgrade, when the new carriages come on board and timing is appropriate for that, we will see better and faster services from trains that are stopping at all stations going into the city. I look forward to that project.

I, as I know does the Acting Chair, look forward to the announcement in this budget of an allocation of \$74 million for the Dingley arterial. That builds on what was built as a consequence of EastLink, the Dandenong South bypass, which was part of the original Dingley Freeway alignment. It will be amazing to be able to drive all the way from the South Gippsland Highway in Dandenong South to connect with the Westall link.

I note how much industry and commercial business is in that region. That is the road people need to use, not to clog up Cheltenham Road and local suburban roads. Because EastLink was built and the Dandenong Southern bypass was built as a free road by EastLink — and I thank them for doing their sums or assessing that it is a good business case for them to deliver the Southern bypass without tolls — we will see the construction of the Dingley Freeway extension. That extension is going to be absolutely fantastic for commercial industry and also for the workforce, with all those east–west traffic movements in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

I also look forward to seeing the extra school works that are being funded in this budget together with funding in the federal budget. It is great to see for the first time in so long such great cooperation between state and federal governments. In my electorate we are seeing investments in schools that we never saw before. Over the last few days the federal government made funding of \$3 million for indoor sports and arts facilities available for my children's school at Rosewood Downs Primary School in Dandenong North. It has never had an indoor space, but now it will under this cooperative arrangement between the federal government and the state government. Dandenong South Primary School, which is in a low-income area, will see \$3 million spent on new indoor recreational facilities for its kids as well.

Stage 2 work is currently under way on the project that I have been so passionate about, the new Dandenong high school, which will bring three secondary schools together into one. It is already getting amazing

coverage around Australia and is providing new confidence to the people of Dandenong. These are the sorts of things that Labor governments do. They are the sorts of things these budgets do.

I am also pleased that this budget builds on the good work we have done in multicultural affairs for a number of years, again putting extra funding into the interpreting and translating services that are so important for the people in my electorate. There has been a particular focus on the newly arrived communities. It recognises that just because people speak a language, it does not mean they can be recognised as qualified interpreters for medical appointments or in legal cases. It is up to government to help fund those programs to build a pool of interpreters and to find people in the community who are prepared to invest their time in studying to get that diploma of interpreting. It is this government that is investing in those things.

As part of this budget we are investing in the multifaith initiatives through funding to the Victorian Multicultural Commission. This is so important in my electorate, which is not only culturally but religiously diverse. We know that every time is a great time to be investing in those initiatives because, as we are seeing with some of the issues with some of the Indian students at the moment, just when you think you have been doing well, you are reminded that you just have to keep at it with some of these sorts of things.

Those of us who were at the function for Israel's 61st Independence Day saw the benefits of the great work the Jewish Community Council of Victoria has been doing. It is one example of so many other interfaith groups in the region, including the Greater Dandenong Interfaith Network that services my electorate.

This is another exceptional budget that is delivering for all of us. When I hear the cries of opposition members, all I need to do is think about the *Australian* newspaper article of 19 May, which contains the following quote:

The Victorian budget is the benchmark that other Australian governments should follow ... It's not perfect, but they have been able to deliver infrastructure, cut lead times and control expenses growth in trying circumstances.

That quote was from none other than the New South Wales shadow Treasurer, Mike Baird, who said everyone should be following the lead of John Lenders and John Brumby. This is the way you deliver budgets. This is the way you deliver for the future. Because of our frugal and appropriate spending approach in the preceding years, despite this financial year experiencing

some of the most trying of international financial circumstances, we are left in an outstanding position. We thank Mike Baird for acknowledging that. We only wish those on the other side of the Victorian Parliament were prepared to be tall enough — and I mean tall enough — to acknowledge it.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — Late last night the Leader of the Opposition gave his pathetic budget reply when nobody was here. He played to an audience in the gallery that was most probably his Liberal Party administrative committee. What a vacuous response. It was a whinge. It was a response that talked down Victoria, a response that had no ideas and a response that did not refer once to his new policy of freezing all Victorian taxes and charges, therefore creating a \$6 billion budget black hole. It was a response in which he was hiding the real effect of his policies — to destroy jobs and the Victorian economy.

There have been consistent themes in the speeches made by the Liberals and Nationals in this budget debate. The first one is that all debt is bad regardless of what the money is spent on, regardless of the fact that it is creating 35 000 new jobs and regardless of the fact that it is about stimulating the Victorian economy in these difficult economic times. ‘Debt is bad’ is the opposition’s mantra. Their second point is that this global financial crisis is the fault of the Brumby Labor government. This is coming from the same people who believe there is no climate change due to carbon emissions. They are climate change deniers. Now members opposite are spinning this myth that the global financial crisis is solely the fault of the Labor government here in Victoria.

Their third point is that the Victorian state budget is in the red. These economic illiterates, led by the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer, keep repeating this falsehood. They believe that if they keep repeating it, it will happen and people will believe them. They are economically bankrupt.

Their fourth point — and this is the final clincher that every Liberal-Nationals member referred to in their contribution, contrary to all the abovementioned points about debt and the global financial crisis — is that their electorates have missed out. They want the debt spent in their electorates! They want Norman Lindsay’s magic pudding. This inconsistency and policy backflip is irrelevant to opposition members because they are playing to their own audience, which the Leader of the Opposition did late last night, as is recorded at page 133 of *Daily Hansard*.

All this is no surprise to us or to the Victorian community, because members of the Liberals and The Nationals are a disgrace. They are lazy. They are policy-free, excluding their policy of freezing all taxes and charges, thereby causing a \$6 billion black hole. They are disunited. Their leadership is under threat. Polling consistently shows — and the latest poll was conducted in February this year — that the Australian Labor Party in Victoria is on a 60 per cent, two-party preferred vote.

The opposition’s MPs are always doing the numbers. The shadow ministers are nowhere to be seen. They are in the bunker, waiting for that phone call on the leadership challenge, wanting to stay in the shadow ministry when the change happens. The leadership change will occur, because the loyal opposition of this state cannot continue to be a disaster for its party, its members and its supporters.

Mrs Powell — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is supposed to be speaking on the budget. He is speaking about leadership challenges, and I ask you to bring him back to the budget.

Mr NARDELLA — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the budget response and reply is a broad debate. I am referring to the budget throughout my contribution and to matters raised by members on the other side. I believe the point of order should not be upheld.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! I have been in the chair for a considerable amount of time this week. The debate on the appropriation bill as conducted by members on both sides has been very broad ranging, but I remind the member for Melton to confine his remarks more closely to the appropriation bill.

Mr NARDELLA — The opposition cannot continue to sideline and marginalise the young Turks on the median benches. They include the member for Kilsyth, who is a member of my parliamentary committee and a hard worker, a thinker and, if he survives, will be a future shadow minister. The member for Warrandyte is also a hard worker and is prepared to put his shoulder to the wheel. The member for Ferntree Gully, who hates being up the back there on the top bench — —

Mrs Powell — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, again the member is straying from the budget. This is a budget speech, and again I ask you to bring him back to the budget.

Mr NARDELLA — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the budget attracts a very broad debate. Various matters have been raised, just as they were by the Leader of the Opposition last night and by other members on both sides. I ask you again to rule that point of order out of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! With regard to the last point of order, as I said previously, this is a broad-ranging debate and once again I ask the member for Melton to confine himself more closely to the appropriation bill.

Mr NARDELLA — On the budget, the opposition has these ambitious members who have made their replies to the budget in debate over the last couple of days. The member for Ferntree Gully is ambitious and talented. I could discern that from his budget reply. He is eyeing off the poor performers under him. Even more to the point is the member for Mornington, whose contribution on the budget I heard last night. He has some understanding of economics. But that is it! There is no-one else on the back bench to take over the fight to dislodge the best government in Australia.

That is what this budget is about; it is about delivering for Victorians. The opposition could not possibly promote any of the others. They are timeservers and seat warmers who will never do more than occupy the back bench either in opposition or in government.

Who should they replace? Who are the non-performers who have demonstrated in this budget debate that they are not up to standard? I was in the house when the shadow Treasurer, the member for Scoresby, gave his reply. He does not understand the budget. He has developed this crazy, destructive \$6 billion black hole policy of the opposition.

Mr Kotsiras — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I raise a point about relevance. The member for Melton is not relevant. He has never been relevant. He has been a backbencher all his life, and he cannot handle it. I ask you to bring him back to the budget.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Kotsiras — If the member for Melton wants to talk about his backbenchers and about the worst government in history, he can, but the member is abusing the forms of the house, and I ask you to bring him back to the budget.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr NARDELLA — I heard the budget reply of the member for South-West Coast as well. He does not even know what the word ‘team’ means. He represents government policies, especially with country racing. He is a failed opposition leader; the opposition did not even allow him to run as a leader in an election. He is divisive, he is venal, he is a non-contributor and he should be replaced.

I turn next to the shadow minister for innovation and shadow minister for multicultural affairs and citizenship. Who is this man? Let me tell the house that it is the member for Bulleen, who is in the house at the moment. He is another one who should be replaced. What has been the contribution of the shadow Minister for Health?

Mr Kotsiras — Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mr NARDELLA — As I was pointing out before the call for a quorum, what has the shadow Minister for Health contributed towards getting her party into government? She has contributed absolutely nothing. And the list goes on. I have suggested replacing the worst four shadow ministers with their backbench A-team, even though there is nothing there.

I come now to the millstone around the neck of the opposition, especially in its responses to the appropriation bill — that is, the sycophants, the sell-outs who just want to get into the white cars. I am referring to the members of The Nationals. What an absolute disappointment they are to this Parliament and to country Victoria. The Labor Party is the only party for rural and provincial Victoria, with the best track record of delivering to country Victorians. How could members ever imagine the members for Benalla, Murray Valley, Rodney or even Swan Hill ever sitting around a cabinet table or ever making a contribution? One could never imagine that at all.

The Leader of The Nationals is its only performer. He is the party’s star, its thinker, its only leader, but there is nothing behind the member. The Leader of The Nationals single-handedly saved The Nationals at the last election and if he left tomorrow or got run over by the proverbial bus tomorrow, The Nationals would be stuffed.

Mrs Powell — On a point of order, Speaker, while I agree with what the member for Melton is saying about our leader, I ask you to call him back to your earlier ruling, which was that he should talk about the appropriation bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Melton should confine his comments more closely to the appropriation bill.

Mr NARDELLA — With the appropriation bill there is a solution so that following the next budget a genuine, well-thought-out and professional response could be given next year. Members have heard me say this before but I will now put it again: there needs to be a new leader, fresh blood, on the opposition's front bench so that its response in the debate on the next appropriation bill will be a thoughtful response, unlike the present one. But who could it be? As members would remember, my last suggestion was to give a transfer form to the Leader of The Nationals for him to become the Leader of the Opposition, which is where he really sits anyway. This would sharpen them up and also sharpen the response, because the response the current leader gave was pretty pathetic, as were others that were given over the last couple of days. If this is too unpalatable —

Mr Thompson — On a point of order, Speaker, there is some difficulty on the part of the member for Melton in accepting your rulings, because he is reading from his speech and he has preset the content of his contribution. The issue is the appropriation bill, not reflections on the other side of the house. I ask you to bring him back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! Is the member for Melton reading his speech or referring to notes?

Mr NARDELLA — I am referring to notes.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr NARDELLA — That is where the Leader of The Nationals sits anyway, and that would sharpen the budget response. However, it would be unpalatable to The Nationals to discourage the Liberals from believing they need to make the member for Polwarth their leader, because that would be an alternative option to get a good budget reply both next year and this year. However, there is no other choice; they have no other alternative.

Mr Thompson — On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Melton is defying your earlier ruling that he should discuss the budget. He is directing his comments further afield and focusing on the opposition. You should invite him to bring his contribution back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! I uphold the point of order. It is not appropriate for the member to use his speech to attack the opposition. The member for Melton should confine his comments to the appropriation bill.

Mr NARDELLA — This is a fantastic budget. It is a jobs, jobs, jobs budget. The one job that I would like to see done is the member for Polwarth getting the ticker to challenge the leadership, to take the reins of the opposition and bring it up to standard, because the opposition's budget reply, the things it has been doing and its future really do not rely on the Leader of the Opposition at the moment. Members only had to be here for his speech last night, as I was, to realise that. It was pathetic, and his administrative committee in the gallery thought it was pathetic. I support the appropriation bill.

Ms PIKE (Minister for Education) — It is most invigorating to follow the member for Melton in making my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill, because he has brought to the attention of the house the contrast between the approach of the government in developing a policy framework and then the resources to follow that, which will really drive productivity, growth, further jobs and employment in this state, and what is proposed by those opposite. We could not have a more stark difference.

In the area of education this budget has really been developed with a vision of how we should provide great educational opportunities for our young people in this state. This budget has been framed against the backdrop of one of the most difficult set of economic circumstances we have experienced in many years.

As a member of this house and a minister for nearly 10 years, I can say that this has been a really challenging environment in which to work. Yet we knew, and we continue to know, that laying the foundations for the future by working hard to make sure that every single child has every opportunity to thrive, to learn, to grow and to shine through a high-quality education system is the best thing we can do in this context to move our community forward and to make sure that we are well positioned when we move beyond difficult economic times. We want to be in the position to ensure that young people are well educated and well prepared to take up 21st century jobs because they have been engaged in 21st century learning.

This budget sees a huge rise in capital expenditure. In this term of government we are spending \$1.9 billion on the Victorian schools plan. Some \$400 million is provided in this budget as a tranche of that \$1.9 billion,

and that \$400 million continues our work in rebuilding, renovating and extending — —

Dr Sykes interjected.

Ms PIKE — It is interesting that members opposite ask how much of the \$1.9 million is Victorian money. All that shows is that they cannot read even a budget paper. The \$1.9 billion comes from the Victorian budget. It was provided so that we can rebuild, renovate and extend all our schools. That has been our plan; we have been working on that plan.

Right around the state, in every single electorate, schools are delighted with the resources we have been providing to our school rebuilding program. When you compare that to the meagre, miserly, mean resources that were provided during the term of the previous government — and remember it was the Kennett government which closed 300 schools and sacked 7000 teachers — you can see that this investment in our schools is a radical turnaround. It comes because we know that in whatever economic circumstance you find yourself, the greatest investment any community can ever make is in the education of its young people.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.05 p.m.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that the Minister for Agriculture is absent from Parliament today attending a funeral. The Minister for Regional and Rural Development will answer any questions on the minister's agriculture and small business portfolios.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

City of Brimbank: Ombudsman's report

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the findings of the Ombudsman's Brimbank report on Mr Ken Capar, who is a former staff member of both the federal Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Brendan O'Connor, and a Victorian parliamentary secretary, the member for Derrimut, and who is also a member of the Glengalla branch of the ALP, who used his council computer for pornography, misused information he obtained as a councillor for personal gain and engaged in improper conduct not befitting an elected representative.

Will the Premier act on his commitment to clean up corruption, bullying and intimidation in Victoria and ensure Mr Capar is expelled from the ALP?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The latter part of that question is out of order.

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, with respect to your ruling, Speaker, the Ombudsman's report to which — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I suggest to the member for South-West Coast that I had not concluded my ruling. The latter part of the question is clearly out of order in that it refers to ALP business, not government business. However, I rule that the question, apart from the second part, is in order.

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — Speaker, I thank — —

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, with respect to your ruling, Speaker, the question referred specifically to the Brimbank report. If you look at paragraphs 466 through to about 500, you will see that the report — to which the Premier has referred on a number of occasions in this house — makes an integral link between membership of the ALP, access to Victorian electoral records and corruption. That is what this report refers to. Therefore, I suggest that the latter part of the question is also in order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not wish to hear any more on the point of order. There is no point of order.

Mr BRUMBY — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his further question regarding the Ombudsman's report into Brimbank council. As I have made very, very, very clear to the house on numerous occasions, the Ombudsman's report has been provided to Parliament. The Ombudsman has unfettered powers to investigate these matters. He made the report, and I have accepted every recommendation of the report.

Employment: government initiatives

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the house on how the global financial crisis is affecting Victoria, what plans the government has in place to secure Victorian jobs and what the threats are to this approach?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I thank the member for Bundoora for his question, which concerns what I believe is probably the most important issue

confronting Victoria and Australia — that is, the issue of jobs. Jobs are crucial to families, to communities and to our state. That is why we made jobs and job generation the centrepiece of the budget we delivered just over a month ago. The fact of the matter is it may not be of any concern to the Liberal Party and the opposition parties, this may not concern them, but jobs are of concern to me and the government.

Virtually throughout the developed world economies are in recession, they are in negative growth, but there are a couple of exceptions. Australia is one of those exceptions, and Victoria is one of those exceptions. We would not be in that relatively positive position without the strong economic and budget policies our government and the Rudd federal government have put in place. Today's ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) labour force figures show that we have a global recession which is breaking over Australia and the world. Consistent with that global downturn —

Dr Naphthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West Coast will not interject in that manner.

Mr BRUMBY — Consistent with that global downturn and consistent —

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask for some cooperation from the member for Warrandyte.

Mr BRUMBY — Consistent with the budget forecasts we will see unemployment increase this year. Today's ABS labour force data confirms that, with the unemployment rate in both Victoria and Australia increasing.

The monthly data is volatile. I have often mentioned that in the Parliament, but I am pleased that this latest data shows growth of 11 200 in the number of people employed in Victoria — the largest result of any state in Australia.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the members for Scoresby and Ferntree Gully to cease interjecting in that manner.

Mr BRUMBY — The member for Scoresby would like nothing more than for unemployment to go up.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier will not attack members of the opposition.

Mr BRUMBY — As I said, in this last month the state which generated more jobs than any other state in Australia was Victoria. The budget we brought down a month ago includes \$11.5 billion worth of infrastructure spend — state and commonwealth — in the next financial year. That alone will generate 35 000 new jobs in our state. These are the direct jobs. Then you have the multiplier effect that runs on through that — the families and the children who get the benefit of that multiplier effect as it runs through the economy. In conjunction with that we have the biggest increase in training places of any state in Australia, with 172 000 additional training places being generated over the next four years.

If you put those things together with the huge cuts we have made to the top rate of land tax, the second lowest payroll tax rate in Australia and the five successive reductions in WorkCover premiums — all of this — plus our livability, our affordability and our leadership in building approvals, you see that they make our state a great place to live.

I go to comments on our budget. Here is what the *Australian* said about it:

In the hardest economic conditions since the Great Depression, yesterday's budget, the 10th delivered by Victorian Labor, illustrated the benefits of a steady, disciplined fiscal approach. Other governments would do well to emulate it.

Here is another quote:

The Victorian budget is the benchmark that other Australian governments should follow. It's not perfect, but they have been able to deliver infrastructure, cut lead times and control expenses growth in trying circumstances.

Who said that? The Liberal Party said that. The New South Wales opposition Treasury spokesman says ours is a great budget.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — You don't agree with him? The ANZ Bank said:

Victoria's budget should serve as a template for other states in tough economic times ...

They are strong endorsements of our state.

Yesterday's consumer sentiments survey showed that consumer sentiment in Australia lifted most in our state of Victoria. Victorians are more confident about the future than people in New South Wales, Queensland or Tasmania. In terms of that confidence, today's ABS data show a substantial increase in the labour force

participation rate to 64.6 per cent, which is on par with levels last seen in 2008.

We on this side of the house are committed to jobs. However, we know that if you took \$6 billion out of our budget, as some people suggest, you would take 16 500 jobs out of our public service. I would have thought that would be a completely irresponsible thing to do at this point in our economic history. We have a commitment to jobs; we saw that with the data today. We are leading Australia in new jobs generated across the country. We have a budget that delivers 35 000 new jobs. The only threat to this — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will come to order. The Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs is warned.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is clearly misleading the house. The *Age* reported on 9 May that the Treasurer's own department said that the 35 000 jobs were not new at all.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. I warn the member for Warrandyte that I will not allow debate points to be made under the guise of points of order. The Leader of The Nationals, on a further point of order?

Mr Ryan — As you were, Speaker. I was rising to address the next question — I thought the Premier had finished.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not believe the Premier has finished his answer.

Mr BRUMBY — The fact of the matter — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr BRUMBY — As I have said — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of The Nationals, on a point of order.

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier has been speaking for more than 4 minutes, and I would ask you to have him conclude his answer.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the Premier to conclude his answer.

Mr BRUMBY — As I have said, in the last month there were 11 200 new jobs — more jobs in our state than in any state in Australia. In April there were 19 500 new full-time jobs in our state. It is about time the opposition started focusing on policies that create jobs instead of cutting more than 16 500 jobs.

City of Brimbank: Ombudsman's report

Mr RYAN — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the findings of the Ombudsman's report into Brimbank council, which found that Cr Abate had abused and bullied Brimbank officers, and that according to the chief executive officer:

As far as menacing and bullying-type attempts — you'd have to say that Anthony Abate was probably an expert at it.

I refer the Premier to a leaked copy of a membership list which shows that Mr Abate is a senior operative in the Sunshine West branch of the ALP, and I ask: will the Premier act on his commitment to clean up corruption, bullying and intimidation in Victoria and ensure that Mr Abate is expelled from any organisation in relation to which the Premier has a substantial influence?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Batchelor — On a point of order, Speaker, the question raised by the Leader of The Nationals is a long question, but it does not deal with government administration; it deals with matters outside the realm of our ministerial responsibility. It is a question that should be directed to the political party that is responsible for its administration and not formal government. I ask you to rule that this question is out of order. There was no element to it that dealt with government administration. It asked the Premier to take action relating to the expulsion of a member of a political party. It is not within the Premier's gift to do that. If the Leader of The Nationals would like to see that occur, he should address the question to the political party in question. The Leader of The Nationals knows that, and it should be ruled out of order.

Mr McIntosh — On the point of order, Speaker, on 3 June a very similar question was asked in relation to the Ombudsman's report on the Brimbank council, and it went into the issues of corruption. Most importantly, Speaker, you ruled on that occasion that because of the recently released Ombudsman's report it was clearly within government business. I will quote what you said, Speaker:

Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the Minister for Energy and Resources. The question clearly

refers to the Ombudsman's report into Brimbank council, and the question can be answered by the Premier.

Accordingly, Speaker, I ask you to rule the question in.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind all members that every member has the right to take a point of order.

Mr Hulls — On the point of order, Speaker, to assist, there have been rulings given in the past, in particular by Speaker Plowman, that internal party matters are not a subject that can be accepted in a question without notice. The point of the question was whether or not a particular person ought to be expelled from a particular political party, which is simply not government business.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. Clearly there have been many questions asked in the last several weeks about the Ombudsman's report. The Ombudsman's report is clearly within the definition of a matter of government business. The Premier can answer the question insofar as it relates to his own ministerial responsibilities.

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — Thank you for your guidance on that, Speaker. There have been numerous questions asked in relation to this matter, and I have made it clear now on so many occasions that we have received the report and we have acted on it. In all of the relevant areas that go to government administration we have acted decisively in relation to the Ombudsman's recommendations.

Racing: regional and rural Victoria

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — My question is to the Minister for Racing. Can the minister inform the house what the government is doing to support the racing industry and what its long-term plans are for the future of racing, particularly in country Victoria?

Mr HULLS (Minister for Racing) — I thank the honourable member for his question and for his interest in racing in this state. As he would know, the Brumby government is a strong supporter of country racing, and it backs its support with action. In the next few weeks we will see the announcement and commencement of a range of racecourse infrastructure projects right across the state in regional and rural Victoria. Further projects will be rolled out over the next three years, thanks to the \$86 million Regional Racing Infrastructure Fund announced last year by the government in partnership, I might say, with the three racing codes — with greyhound, harness and thoroughbred racing.

This fund is made up of a record \$45 million from the government, with the remainder coming from the industry. In these difficult economic times the government has made the largest investment in regional and rural racecourses in this state's history. This massive investment means improved infrastructure at country racecourses; it means drought-proofing our racecourses; it obviously means improving occupational health and safety for all participants in the racing industry; and, more importantly, it means jobs, jobs, jobs. The fact is that this investment will lead to something like 400 jobs during the delivery of these very important projects — important projects that could not come about if there were a \$6 billion hole punched into the state budget.

The Regional Racing Infrastructure Fund is, as I said, a true partnership between the Brumby government and the racing industry in this state. This funding, combined with the recently released racecourse and training facilities infrastructure plan — a very important plan — from Racing Victoria Ltd (RVL) and Country Racing Victoria (CRV) will ensure the long-term future of racing in this state.

Under the plan, for the very first time every thoroughbred country race club in Victoria has a five-year blueprint outlining race dates and also funding for training infrastructure, maintenance and club meetings. Most of all, this very important plan gives certainty to country race clubs, and once again it confirms what RVL and CRV have been repeatedly saying — that is, that they have no intention of closing country tracks or clubs, indeed they want to enhance racing in this state.

It is disappointing then to know that an organisation that claims to support racing has been undermining its future to such an extent that two important bodies that oversee thoroughbred racing in this state — that is, Racing Victoria Ltd and Country Racing Victoria — have recently taken the extraordinary step of publicly denouncing a certain individual for his lies and misrepresentation about their plan. The RVL-CRV letter, which is now publicly available, refers to 'the unfortunate misrepresentation of the plan' by this person and how disappointed they are that the organisation he represents totally opposes RVL and CRV's plan.

We all know who that person is — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I happened to listen to the budget debate contribution of the Attorney-General yesterday in which he made similar allegations to those that he is making at present.

It is clear that those allegations are directed against the member for South-West Coast and are imputations against the honourable member which are out of order, and I ask you to rule accordingly.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order, but I suggest to the Attorney-General that he be very conscious of standing order 118, which stipulates that he will not make imputations of improper motive against a member of this house.

Mr HULLS — It was not me that outed the member for South-West Coast. The letter has been signed by Rob Hines, chief executive officer of Racing Victoria Ltd, and Scott Whiteman, chief executive officer of Country Racing Victoria, and makes it quite clear under the heading ‘Napthine has got it wrong’ that the shadow minister’s letter is an unfortunate misrepresentation of the truth.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Attorney-General has concluded his answer.

City of Brimbank: Ombudsman’s report

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Ombudsman’s report, which identifies the planning minister’s electorate officer, Mr Hakki Suleyman, as a key figure in corruption, bullying and intimidation in Brimbank and to a leaked copy of a membership list which shows that Mr Hakki Suleyman is a senior figure of the Maribyrnong North branch of the ALP, and I ask: given that Mr Suleyman has still not been sacked or even expelled from the ALP, is it not a fact that the Premier has allowed a culture of corruption, bullying and intimidation to run rampant in this state?

Mr Batchelor — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to the Leader of the Opposition’s question and his reference in that question to what he described as a leaked document from within the Labor Party, apparently a membership list, and I also refer you, Speaker, to a ruling made by you in May last year, which is recorded in *Rulings from the Chair 1920–2008*. The entry at page 156 states:

The Speaker ruled a question out of order on the grounds that the basis for the question was a document from a party ...

I put it to you, Speaker, that the question from the Leader of the Opposition, based on this alleged party document, must be ruled out of order to be consistent with previous rulings.

Mr BAILLIEU — On the point of order, Speaker, I refer to a question on 3 June when the Leader of the House raised a similar point of order and, as the member for Kew previously indicated, you ruled in quite the opposite fashion from the request of the Leader of the House on the following basis:

I do not uphold the point of order raised by the Minister for Energy and Resources. The question clearly refers to the Ombudsman’s report into Brimbank council, and the question can be answered by the Premier.

The SPEAKER — Order! Consistent with my rulings earlier today and on other occasions, questions about the Ombudsman’s report are clearly in order. Questions which relate to the business of the ALP are clearly not within the Premier’s portfolio responsibilities. The Premier may answer the question as it relates to the Ombudsman’s report.

Dr Napthine — On a further point of order, Speaker, I draw to your attention something which may influence your ruling.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have called the member for South-West Coast on a further point of order. I, the Chair, will decide when I have heard enough.

Dr Napthine — It relates to the relevance of the Australian Labor Party membership list. Under the name ‘Hakki Suleyman’ it gives his email address as hakki.suleyman@parliament.vic.gov.au. I suggest that that is a government-provided email address, and I suggest to you that it makes it very clearly government business.

The SPEAKER — Order! My ruling stands as it is. The membership of the ALP is not within the Premier’s portfolio responsibilities. He can answer the question as it refers to the Ombudsman’s report.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind government members once again that I will hear points of order at my discretion, and I again suggest to the member for Scoresby that I do not need his endorsement.

Mr BAILLIEU — On a further point of order, Speaker, I refer you to an article which appeared on 2 June this year entitled ‘Brumby talks tough over ALP clean-up’ which states the following:

‘Look, what I want to do is obviously clean up any issues in the party and I don’t intend to be distracted from that task’, Mr Brumby said. ‘I’ve seen his comments and I won’t resile from taking whatever action is necessary to clean up the party.’

The Premier has the opportunity to address this and not be distracted by the Leader of the House.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will repeat once again, and I will hear no more points of order on it, that the membership of the ALP is not within the portfolio responsibilities of the Premier and is clearly out of order at question time. The Premier may respond to the question as it relates to the Ombudsman's report.

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — As I have made very clear on numerous occasions, we have received the report from the Ombudsman, who has unfettered powers and authority to investigate these matters, and we are implementing every single one of his recommendations.

Arts: cultural events

Mr LUPTON (Prahran) — My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Can the minister please advise the house of upcoming cultural events on the arts calendar and their significance to Victoria?

Ms KOSKY (Minister for the Arts) — I thank the member for Prahran for his question and his longstanding interest in the arts. This side of the house is very committed to the arts in Victoria. We have invested very heavily in infrastructure, and we are backing this up with first-class arts programming.

Back in 2004 we initiated the Melbourne Winter Masterpieces program, which has been a fantastic success. The Melbourne Winter Masterpieces has occurred every winter in Melbourne and has been a major drawcard for people from around Victoria but also from interstate. Seven blockbuster exhibitions have been in the series — six at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) and one at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

It is worth letting the house know how successful the Melbourne Winter Masterpieces program has been. Almost 1.4 million visitors have visited the masterpieces exhibitions since we started them in 2004. Of those visitors, 25 per cent have come from interstate or overseas. The exhibitions have been a major drawcard for people from right around Australia, and along with other major events that occur throughout the winter period they certainly brighten up winter. The economic impact of these events is close to \$100 million, and the direct employment that comes as a result of the Melbourne Winter Masterpieces is extraordinary. They have been a great boon for Melbourne. This year we will have two.

This morning I was joined by the Premier at the media preview of Salvador Dali — Liquid Desire at the National Gallery of Victoria. The official opening is this evening, and it opens to the general public this Saturday. It is an extraordinary exhibition. When the Premier and I were there today we were joined by overseas visitors who have come to support this exhibition, which has been made possible because two international Salvador Dali museums, one in Spain and the other in the United States of America, have provided over 200 of their pieces. The visitors said that it is very rare to get this number of Salvador Dali exhibits from two major institutions together in one place. They praised the NGV for the way it has collaborated with them so that this could occur. This is probably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see so many of Dali's works in one place. It is a fantastic presentation by the NGV.

Another Melbourne Winter Masterpiece presentation, *A Day in Pompeii*, opens later this month as well at the Melbourne Museum. As we know, imitation is the greatest form of flattery. Queensland now has a summer blockbuster program that copies our winter masterpiece program. I am sure that whilst Queensland will imitate us, it certainly will not beat us or catch up to our standards.

These are fantastic exhibitions which are very much welcomed by everyone, not only in Victoria but around Australia. At the same time we have quite a number of other exhibitions occurring that are attracting people here to Victoria. The exhibition *Star Wars — Where Science Meets Imagination* at Scienceworks in Spotswood was opened by the Attorney-General and has had 7300 visitors in the first four days. I note that there are many members of this house who are keen to go to that exhibition, which is open until November.

Bendigo Art Gallery's Archibald Prize exhibition has had 11 000 visitors since it opened on 30 May, with 2500 visitors last Sunday alone. That has been an extraordinary success and builds on the recent exhibition at Bendigo Art Gallery, *The Golden Age of Couture*, which attracted 75 000 visitors. I was speaking with someone over lunch who said that they know of people who are travelling from interstate and will come to see the Salvador Dali — Liquid Desire exhibition, *A Day in Pompeii* and the John Brack exhibition, which is also on at the moment.

With all of these attractions in the arts and what is happening in sport, Victoria truly is the place to be — certainly in relation to the arts.

Australian Labor Party: identity fraud

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Attorney-General. On 16 September 2008 the Attorney-General is reported as stating, and I quote:

Identity fraud strikes at the heart of the way we operate in a contemporary Western society.

I refer the Attorney-General to media reports today of wholesale branch stacking being undertaken in ALP branches using names and identities of people without their knowledge, and I ask: in the interests of those persons concerned, will the Attorney-General immediately refer these very serious allegations of identity fraud being committed within the ALP to the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions for investigation and prosecution?

Mr Batchelor — On a point of order, Speaker, the Leader of The Nationals has again based a question on documents allegedly from a political party. He may have dressed it up with a quotation from the Attorney-General, but the basis of his question was premised on and referred to documents from a political party. In line with previous rulings, a question that is about party administration, irrespective of which party it is, is out of order. Accordingly the question should be ruled out of order.

Mr RYAN — On the point of order, Speaker, the Attorney-General, as the senior law officer in the state of Victoria, with an apparent commitment to issues to do with identity fraud in this instance coincidentally, is closely associated with a group of people who have been subjected to a commentary, as reported today, which is the very basis of the concerns the Attorney-General has expressed here and is well within his province as the Attorney-General to deal with. I ask therefore that he answer the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I believe it is appropriate that the Attorney-General does answer a question regarding identity fraud that has been publicly reported.

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — The fact is the Leader of The Nationals ought to come clean and make it quite clear he is a Lib and not a Nat.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will not allow the Attorney-General to attack members of the opposition in that manner.

Mr Wells interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Scoresby is warned.

Mr HULLS — As the Premier has made clear, each and every one of the Ombudsman's recommendations will be implemented and if the Leader of The Nationals — —

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, the Attorney-General is obviously debating the question. My question has nothing to do with the Ombudsman's report; I made no reference to it. I ask that the Attorney-General answer the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Attorney-General had just commenced responding to the question asked, so at this stage I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Polwarth

The SPEAKER — Order! Under standing order 124 I ask the member for Polwarth to vacate the chamber for 30 minutes.

Honourable member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Australian Labor Party: identity fraud

Questions resumed.

The SPEAKER — Order! I find the behaviour of members in today's question time appalling. I think we are all aware that many of us over the last two weeks have attended this Parliament in quite some ill health. For this to somehow be seen as a joke is unacceptable.

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — The Premier has made it quite clear that in relation to the issues concerning Brimbank and the Auditor-General's report and recommendations, that each and every one of the recommendations will be implemented.

Skills training: government initiatives

Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut) — My question is to the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation. Will the minister advise how the Brumby government is supporting the adult community and further education sector to make Victoria the best place to live, work and undertake training?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation) — I thank the member for Derrimut for his question. As the member is aware and as many members are aware, education and training is this government's no. 1 priority. Alongside the mammoth investment we have made in schools, which is delivering real results for young people in this state, particularly around a massive increase in the year 12 completion rate, the Brumby government is also working very hard to make our great vocational and educational training system even better through our \$316 million skills reform package *Securing Jobs for Your Future — Skills for Victoria*.

These are reforms that Victoria is leading and reforms that will revolutionise our vocational education and training system in this state. As the Premier has already said in question time, these reforms will deliver an additional 172 000 training places to Victorians. It introduces for the very first time a training guarantee. This is an Australian first that will provide an entitlement to all Victorians to access a post-school qualification; and it will deliver a flagship \$52 million program, a Skills for Growth program that is dedicated to supporting small and medium-sized businesses, to help those businesses and their workforce to address their skills needs. These reforms are all about making it easier for Victorians to access the skills they need or the skills they want to assist them to improve their job opportunities.

Critical to delivering these skills is our strong network of adult and community education (ACE) providers. All members of this house would be aware of the great work that our ACE providers do right across the state. We have more than 350 providers, and they have a strong presence in our suburbs, in our regions and in our small country towns. These providers alone employ around 8600 people and deliver training to around 130 000 Victorians each and every year. Creating a culture of lifelong learning is at the heart of our skills agenda and it is at the heart of what our great ACE sector does in this state.

I am pleased to advise the house that our ACE providers, but most importantly the learners in the communities that they support, are big winners under

our landmark skills reforms. They received a significant boost to their base funding, plus unlimited funding to be able to train every eligible student that comes to their doors for training — they will receive funding for their students. We have been building on this work and just today I launched a \$15.4 million new policy statement entitled *A Stronger ACFE — Delivering Skills for Victoria*. This is a package that includes \$8.4 million to bring more learners from disadvantaged backgrounds into training and a further \$6.5 million to build a stronger ACE sector in this state.

This additional funding brings our government's investment, the Labor government's investment, in vocational education and training to over \$1.65 billion since we first came to office in 1999. It may be stating the obvious, but to be able to deliver this massive extra funding boost to our vocational education and training sector, to be able to deliver these extra training places and to be able to deliver these extra services, you need to be financially responsible. This sustained investment would just not be possible if we had a \$6 billion black hole in our budget.

It is the Brumby government that is committed to ensuring that all Victorians have access to training no matter where they live. Unlike those opposite who do not have one single policy on skills or one single policy on jobs, we on this side of the house have policies. Through *A Stronger ACFE*, the statement that we released this morning, we are demonstrating our continued commitment to vocational education and training and to the adult and community education sector — a sector that was badly neglected by those opposite when they were in government — to make sure that they are part of a strong and vibrant skills sector in this state in the future.

Office of Police Integrity: telephone recordings

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Ports. When did the minister first become aware that telephone conversations between government members of Parliament and Victoria Police, as well as government staff and Victoria Police, had been secretly recorded by the Office of Police Integrity?

Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. These matters are the subject of proceedings before a court. As I understand it, Mr Ashby has effectively been committed for trial. In those circumstances — —

Mr Baillieu — On a point of order, Speaker, this was a question asked of the Premier. The Premier saw fit to answer it. The minister should answer it as well.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The minister is clearly responding to the question.

Mr PALLAS — These matters are before a court. The opportunity should be allowed for those matters to be put — —

Mr Ryan — On a further point of order, Speaker, the question queries the frame of mind and the knowledge of the minister in relation to the matters to which the question refers. They are not matters before the court; they are matters completely independent of what is happening at the court — either the committal hearing that finished yesterday or the impending trial. This is a question about this minister's frame of mind and his knowledge of the matters inquired of.

The SPEAKER — Order! I believe that is the same as the point of order I just ruled on. The minister is responding to the question.

Mr PALLAS — As I have said, these matters are before a court, and it would be inappropriate for me to make comment. But as I have previously said, there have been public allegations which have been the subject of a previous question to me, and I have answered that I refute those allegations unreservedly.

Health: services

Mr SCOTT (Preston) — My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister update the house on how the Brumby government is taking action to strengthen Victoria's health workforce so there are more doctors, nurses and other health staff to treat the growing number of patients presenting for care at their local hospitals?

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health) — I thank the honourable member for Preston for his question and for his longstanding interest in health services in his local community. This is a good question. While this is a source of laughter for those opposite, I was at the Alfred with the Premier today to announce \$72.2 million in additional funding to support the clinical placements that are central to the health workforce that we need today and the health workforce that we will undoubtedly need in the years to come.

This is a tripling of the already substantial effort on the part of our government. These clinical placements are only possible if you have a government that is clear

about where it stands in terms of health service provision. No-one could be clearer than this government in its absolutely consistent investment, budget after budget, year after year, health service after service. We are giving our dedicated hospital doctors and nurses the resources they need to treat more patients and provide better care.

This example — \$72 million in terms of additional critical placements — is just the most recent example of our consistent approach to building the health workforce that is necessary. It comes as part of a very strong budget for health in a broader sense, taking to a total of 126 per cent the acute health increase compared to the numbers for 1999 — 126 per cent more funding and treating 700 000 more patients a year. Could it be any clearer?

These additional clinical placements achieved through that \$72 million will fund the clinical training of 4500 medical students, 12 000 nursing students, 600 dental students and almost 6500 allied health students. We are very clear on making sure we support our health system so that it has the workforce it needs and in turn that patients need, and this is a great example of that investment.

Others are less clear on where they stand. Others are less clear on whether they would support our doctors and nurses or whether, as is so often the case, they would prefer to stand on the pavement outside the hospital and bag the staff, unlike the Premier and I, who today went inside and spoke to staff. That is what happens in so many places both in metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria again and again. Opposition members are unclear about where they stand.

You cannot take \$6 billion out of the budget and invest more in these sorts of supports to train the health workforce. You cannot, unless in some fantasyland, cut taxes but spend more on health services. It just does not work, and it is about time those opposite came clean on their real plans. The message for the member for Caulfield — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Burwood, on a point of order.

Mr Stensholt — On a point of order, Speaker, I wish to raise a matter which I believe is quite serious and may require further consideration and advice. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition asked a question of the Attorney-General with regard to telephone conversations recorded by the Office of Police Integrity. I am aware that chapter 8 of the

standing orders relates to questions seeking information. With regard to the answer, going by what seemed to be the intention of the Leader of the Opposition, by answering as per that intention the minister would have been caused to break the law. I see this as a very serious matter. The question seemed not to not be seeking information but to have a minister of the Crown break the law in answering it.

I am not sure which standing order this comes under. It certainly does not come under standing orders 118 or 119, but it may well come under standing order 125, which refers to a member being guilty of disorderly conduct. I found it quite difficult to see which standing order would apply, and that is why I did some research on it overnight. However, it seems to me that in asking that question the Leader of the Opposition, and I was concerned because it was not the first time he had been asked — —

Mr K. Smith — What's the point of order?

The SPEAKER — Order! Had the member for Bass been listening, he would have clearly heard the standing orders that were referred to. They were standing orders 118, 119 and 125. The member for Bass should listen more and interject less.

Mr Stensholt — As I said, this is a very serious matter, particularly when a question seemed to be asking a minister to break the law. You may not be able to answer this directly, Speaker; you may need to seek advice. I ask that you consider this matter and advise the house.

Mr Ryan — On the point of order, Speaker, this absolute beat-up, which has now been put to the Parliament 24 hours after the event, ought be treated on the basis that is obviously implied by the fact that the member is raising it a day after the event. Firstly, if there were a concern of the nature of that to which the member has referred, the point of order should have been taken at the time the question was asked. Secondly, if there were a concern from the perspective of the minister as to what the implications for the minister answering the question might be, the minister simply needed to say so at the time.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will take the point of order on notice. The time set aside for questions has expired.

APPROPRIATION (2009/2010) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — It is a great pleasure to rise to speak on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. There have been a number of speakers already, and certainly on this side of the house the familiar theme is that this budget has been very well received. I want to continue that theme.

It is a theme that does not just emanate from speakers on this side of the house, because a broad number of organisations and individuals, including interstate ones, have spoken strongly about the direction of this budget. Indeed they have been exceedingly positive about its direction. It continues the theme of jobs, it continues the theme of investing in services, and certainly from my perspective — and that of the member for Geelong, who will speak soon after me — it continues the theme of investing in regions, particularly in Geelong.

Highlights of the budget include a record investment — some \$11.5 billion in the next financial year — for the fast-tracking of job-creating infrastructure right across the state. It will also invest \$1 billion to help respond to and recover from the worst bushfires in Australia's history. Many speakers have spoken about the tragic events that befell our state. I want to acknowledge the contribution that our region made in terms of volunteers. One of my staff had three tours up to the bushfires, and I know that many other members, and staff members of members in this place, also had people who volunteered directly or indirectly over that tragic period in February.

There is a record \$1.7 billion investment in the state's education system, and I will speak more about that later from a local perspective. There is also \$3 billion to deliver the Victorian transport plan. I thank the Minister for Public Transport, who is at the table, and I will mention her again later in respect of a couple of local initiatives that have been very well received. There is a \$2.6 billion boost to Victoria's hospital and health services. The last speaker in question time was the Minister for Health, and I thank him for his contribution to health services in Geelong. There is also a record \$1.9 billion to provide Victoria Police with resources to keep Victorian families safe.

But I want to focus on the local level, and to start I will focus on education. I congratulate Garry Schultz, who is the principal of Belmont High School. The school has just received some \$4 million for a specialist

maths-science centre. I note from yesterday's newsletter to parents that the school has just appointed an architect and project manager for this critically important project. Garry Schultz has been angling, if you like, for this particular project as a regional resource for schools and for teachers in terms of maths and science. We need to continue to encourage young people to show an interest in that area. The centre will also aid in the upskilling of staff. I congratulate Garry Schultz and the Minister for Education.

A number of other schools have received dollars for upgrades, including Bellaire Primary School and Belmont Primary School, which are just down the road from my office. Education is indeed our no. 1 priority, certainly in my region of South Barwon. I know for sure that there will be additional announcements regarding educational provision in that area.

In health — and the minister has previously touched on this — there is \$30 million for an extra 24-bed surgical ward at Geelong Hospital, and very importantly, eight extra mental health beds at the Swanston Centre, which abuts the hospital. I note that the member for Geelong will probably outline that particular budget item as well. It will allow for the fit-out of a second new theatre and associated upgrades, and indeed it will reinforce the clinical service areas.

In roads and public transport I focus on the upgrade to car parking at the Marshall railway station. I thank the Minister for Transport, who is at the table, for that announcement, which has been very well received. Marshall station has been under pressure; it has seen a very significant spike in demand. I know that people from the Surf Coast travel in to park there because I was there the other morning and I saw the Torquay stickers on the backs of cars. A large number of people have been parking in the street, and the announcement of an expansion of the facilities at the Marshall station will alleviate some of the pressures on car parking in the area.

Other transport initiatives include a new bus interchange in the city. Thankfully, the City of Greater Geelong has finally made a decision in respect of that, and the minister at the table agrees with me. We thank the city for its belated support for public transport in Geelong. There will also be improvements to the cross-town connections, which will better link Deakin University and the V/Line train services. In addition there will be new cycling infrastructure. I will touch on that a bit later in terms of a walking and bike trail down the Surf Coast.

In respect of roads, as members may or may not be aware — and certainly the member for South-West Coast will be very pleased — the third stage of the ring-road will be officially opened at 10.00 a.m. this Sunday. This stage is of particular importance to me; it was a significant campaign incentive before the 2006 election, and I will be pleased to be there. It will be particularly well received by residents who live south of the river, as it completes the connection through to the Princes Highway. Importantly, we announced recently that stage 4A is to be undertaken.

Many people will enjoy the opening of the third stage of the ring-road on Sunday. It will take out some 29 sets of traffic lights for residents who live on the Surf Coast, and I am one of them. Importantly, people will be able to see continuing construction of that ring-road right through to the connection at Pettavel winery. Sunday will be a great day.

I am conscious of the time, but I want to touch on some environmental issues. I touched on the Surf Coast walk. We have just allocated some \$800 000 to the Surf Coast walk, which will link Torquay to Lorne, and that is the first stage of that walk. I certainly know the council and the coastal council are fully supportive of that, and it is very close to being started. It is an important link that I have walked myself from Torquay to just past Anglesea, but now people can take sections of that walk all the way from Torquay to Lorne, and indeed eventually that will link to the Great Ocean Walk which, as members here may be aware, starts at Apollo Bay and goes through to the Twelve Apostles just past Princetown.

Other important issues that continue are issues about water. The subject of water has been extremely topical in the *Geelong Advertiser*. Certainly the issue regarding dams is raised quite consistently, and this week we heard about the plans of The Nationals. Apart from the plans being economically mindless, consider the environmental devastation that would be caused by plonking a number of dams across the state.

One proposal by the Portarlington branch of the Liberal Party is for a dam in the Otways, a dam on the Mitchell River and a dam down on the Aberfeldy River, but certainly it is the damming of the Gellibrand River that has raised considerable concerns and put some pressure on the member for Polwarth — who hopefully will return because he has only got about 3 minutes to be able to come back into the house. That issue has put some pressure on the member for Polwarth, who said something down at Warnambool which was a little different to what he has said in Geelong; and there is a councillor from the City of Greater Geelong who has

said something different to the member for Polwarth. It is difficult to see where they stand.

There is a letter to the editor in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 6 June that encapsulates the issue beautifully. The letter is from Neil Longmore from Gellibrand, and it appears under the headline ‘Mulder confusing on water security’. In part, it states:

Liberal Party members voted at their recent state conference in favour of building a new dam on the Gellibrand ...

Liberal member for Polwarth ... appears, though, to think a Gellibrand dam unnecessary but is concerned about how Geelong ... can return to the days of having basic water supply for their community.

This presumably deliberate confusion between Mr Mulder and the opposition does not bode well for future water supplies in the Western District if the Liberal Party achieves government at the next election.

To win, the Liberals need to gain at least some seats in Geelong.

Mr Mulder and his party are trying to promise Geelong voters the Liberals can return water supplies to previous levels despite the obvious fact rainfall has decreased dramatically.

It finishes by saying:

Perhaps Mr Mulder should stand for one of the Labor-held Geelong seats if he is not going to fight for the future economic wellbeing of the people in Polwarth he now pretends to represent.

Importantly, when you drill down you find that this issue was exhaustively inquired into back in the 1980s, and indeed this government has examined the possibility of augmentations with its central SWIS (strategic waste initiative scheme). Our water plan looks at augmentations via the Anglesea borefield, augmentations via recycling, the northern treatment plant and importantly the Melbourne–Geelong interconnector.

If we go down the path of building a dam hypothetically at Dewing Creek — economic and environmental madness as it is, and presumably the member for Polwarth will say ‘Yes’ when down in Warrnambool and ‘No’ when in Geelong — it would retrieve some 7 gegalitres of water and cost around \$180 million. That is far in excess of the cost of the Melbourne interconnector.

The question for the Liberal Party proponents in the Geelong region is: which of the augmentations are they going to reverse by either stopping them or not using them? With all the augmentations, whether it be recycling or whether it be the Anglesea aquifer, which is 7 gegalitres, the Melbourne-to-Geelong

interconnector, which is 16 gegalitres, or the northern treatment plant, which is 2 gegalitres, you do not need another augmentation source — not at \$180 million. So if they are going to put a dam in the Otways, which of those augmentations are they going to shut down? The answer is: none of them. This will come out quite clearly over the next 18 months. Already we see the member for Polwarth back-peddalling at 100 miles an hour about this ill-considered view about a dam in the Otways.

A dam in the Otways, as Barwon Water has mentioned, would cost about \$180 million at 2009 figures and, importantly, it would not come online until about 2020; that is nine years after the Melbourne–Geelong interconnector comes online. That would come online nine years later and be some \$40 million or \$50 million more expensive, and it would produce some 9 gegalitres less water. Members can see that if you add all that up, it is indeed lunacy of the highest order. The Anglesea borefield will, on average, provide 7 gegalitres of water, and the actual capital cost of that augmentation is \$55 million — less than a third of the cost of a so-called dam at Dewing Creek.

Members can see that on cost, on volume — that is yield — and on timeliness, a dam in the Otways does not add up. I predict, and certainly I know that all the government members in Geelong predict, that the Liberals will step away from a dam in the Otways and will also step away from a dam in any other location. I look forward to the member for Polwarth clarifying his stance, because currently of two Liberal members in Geelong, one wants a dam in the Otways and the other one apparently does not. There is a slight contradiction in where they are going.

Finally, in my last 50 seconds — —

Ms Beattie — They had better have a chat!

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — I think they will have a chat, since preselections are around. Lastly, I acknowledge the \$1 million we have committed to the purchase of McAdam Park. Hopefully the single-minded zealotry of one or two people at the City of Greater Geelong Council will swing it around to support that important national asset. It is total madness for council not to contribute dollars to a regional facility. The other site it is looking at appears to be questionable at best, and in terms of timeliness it is at least one or maybe two years away. I hope that the City of Greater Geelong supports our contribution to secure McAdam Park.

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Public Transport) — It is with great pleasure that I join the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill debate today. This budget, which was brought down several weeks ago in this house, is fantastic for public transport. It comes only a few months after the Victorian transport plan was released in November last year.

The transport plan identifies a 12 year program of activity so that we can respond not only to the growing patronage we are seeing in public transport at the moment but also to the growing patronage we expect to see over the coming years. It is a plan for today and also a plan for the future. This budget is the first budget since the release of the Victorian transport plan to deliver on that plan. There is over \$2 billion worth of funding in this budget for public transport services, which is a record amount of spending. Up to 10 000 jobs will be created every year as a result of this investment.

I will mention just a few highlights of the budget, because there is a lot of detail in there, given the amount of money we are spending on public transport. Some \$650 million is provided in this budget for 20 new X'trapolis trains, which will cater for that increasing demand in metropolitan rail services. There is over \$562 million for the extension of the rail track through to South Morang; that includes duplication of the line between Keon Park and Epping, then the extension of that duplicated line through to South Morang.

There is also \$204 million in this budget to electrify the Sydenham line from Watgardens to Sunbury, and that project will secure around 240 jobs in construction. There is \$152 million in this budget for four new train stations. I am pleased that one of those is in my electorate, at the new housing development of Williams Landing. I believe one of those stations is in or near your electorate, Acting Speaker; there is a lot of good news right around Melbourne!

The budget also has \$112 million to build new buses and to commence services to and from Doncaster, which will be similar to the SmartBus services. The Doncaster Area Rapid Train project is well and truly under way. There is money in this budget for regional train station upgrades, and \$132 million has been allocated for a range of measures to improve rail capacity on the metropolitan system. That includes the employment of 24 additional staff to assist with passenger movements. We also have \$5 million in this budget to commence the procurement of up to 50 new trams, and that work is currently under way.

There is also \$4 million in this budget for safe taxi rank initiatives. Some proposals have come out of the regular discussions I have with the taxidriver body that meets to make recommendations to me; we meet to work through a whole range of issues to do with safety and the industry, and this is one of the initiatives they saw as being very important.

There is much in this budget for public transport. I know that many other members have talked about what is in this budget for public transport and also about the impact that will have within their communities — on people moving around their communities, into other communities, into the central business district and all around Victoria.

I would also like to mention briefly the commitments in this budget for my electorate, Altona. A new senior school building will be constructed in the Point Cook Boardwalk Estate, which is a growth area. Numbers at the P-10 school are growing incredibly, so I know the senior school will be very welcome and is certainly needed. As I said, we are also building the Williams Landing station and money has gone into the Laverton community renewal program, which I have worked very closely with since its inception; I was absolutely delighted that it got a continuation of its funding.

I think this is a great budget for communities, it is great budget in terms of jobs, and it is a fantastic budget for public transport. It really delivers as the first instalment on the Victorian transport plan. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I also rise to speak in full support of the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. In doing so I know that the Brumby government is committed to delivering new infrastructure and creating jobs across Victoria, including, as we have heard, in regional and rural Victoria and in my electorate of Geelong. This budget delivers in the key areas of education, health, roads and public transport. I acknowledge the minister at the table, the Minister for Public Transport, who has had an enormous job in 2009 in delivering services across Victoria and also within my electorate of Geelong.

As usual, on the Friday following the budget the Premier visited Geelong to conduct his annual post-budget luncheon. Nearly 100 people from various sectors of the Geelong community attended, including business leaders, trade union representatives, civic leaders and other community leaders.

I can assure the house that the budget and its initiatives were roundly applauded and welcomed by the people

of the Geelong community, because they know this budget will deliver for Geelong. It not only builds new infrastructure but in doing so creates jobs for local people, especially in education and health. That means better schools and more teachers, better hospitals and more nurses, and the list goes on.

Importantly, this budget has to be seen in the context of a work in partnership, as you would appreciate, Acting Speaker, with the Rudd federal government — a government that has done an enormous amount of work over the last two years. It is a federal government that has committed to regional centres like Geelong in education and in health.

Through this working partnership, people in Geelong are seeing record expenditure in upgrading their schools, hospitals and road projects. This includes, as the member for South Barwon mentioned before, the ring-road, which will be opened this Sunday by the Premier, and also the duplication of the highway to the west of Geelong and into Winchelsea.

On the ground we have seen the government's commitment to education in the delivery of a 21st century learning centre and library at Manifold Heights Primary School. This is a great primary school, and the school community does a great job for the residents of Manifold Heights.

We have also seen the allocation of funding for a new multipurpose room in Montpellier Primary School, and that has been very much welcomed by that school community. In addition to the two schools that I mentioned, there will also be various upgrades to other schools throughout my community, as I said, through the partnership with the Rudd government.

In health our record of building in Geelong is absolutely second to none. We have seen great work committed to by this government over the last 10 years, and through this building in 2009–10 that work in the health sector will continue at Geelong Hospital and the McKellar Centre. As has been mentioned before by MPs from my region, the Geelong Hospital will get a new 24-bed surgical ward and 8 extra mental health beds at the Swanston Centre. A total of something like \$30 million is being spent on health in Geelong, as I said, building on the work that this government has committed to over the last 10 years, and I must say it has done a magnificent job in reforming the health sector in Geelong.

Just quickly, as I mentioned before, the new bus interchange in the central activities area of Geelong will be a boon for bus commuters. Extra bus services will be

rolled out across the regions, starting firstly in areas like St Albans, Whittington and East Geelong. An amount of \$2.4 million has been allocated for a bike path that will link the Barwon River down to Eastern Beach — again a great boon for the local people at Geelong.

Given that time is against us, I just say again that this is a great budget for Victoria and it is a great budget for regional and rural Victoria. Above all, in my eyes it is a great budget for the electorate of Geelong and its people, whom I know have warmly welcomed it. I therefore wish the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill a speedy passage through this house.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing) — My colleague the cabinet secretary will follow my contribution to the debate, and he will be in excellent shape, finishing up the contributions for the day.

I will firstly spend a brief amount of time essentially speaking about some key budget highlights in my portfolio areas, and secondly, I will indicate some important initiatives within the electorate which have come to fruition. It is appropriate to commence my contribution by saying what an extraordinary time it is to be Minister for Housing in this state government. We are now in the situation where, through the leadership of our Premier, we have negotiated through the Council of Australian Governments process a new successor to the commonwealth-state housing agreement known around the place as national affordable housing agreement. It is a five-year base agreement between the commonwealth and the states which provides an excellent foundation for the delivery of public and social housing for all states.

That comes on top of the record investment provided by the Brumby government in the budget before last of \$500 million for public and social housing. As members in the chamber will be aware, \$200 million was allocated towards public housing and \$300 million towards boosting the capacity of our housing associations. On top of that members will recall that we also transferred, at no consideration to our housing associations, in the order of about 500 properties across to housing associations to further boost their balance sheets. That was really a magnificent kick-start to the further development of our housing associations.

However, on top of that again, quite unprecedented and extraordinary amounts of money have been provided to the state through the Nation Building and Jobs plan for social housing — a stimulus of \$1.6 billion over four years to deliver 5000 new houses and to perform maintenance on or benefit at least a further 5000 properties. I will tell the house what this means. This is

the biggest investment that will have been made and the biggest build that will have been undertaken in Victoria since we had the Olympic Games in 1956. This is a massive investment by the federal government, and it really achieves two key purposes. The first is the economic stimulus. Acting Speaker, having had a career in the building industry previously, you would be aware of the critical importance of providing support to the building industry, that such support has very significant initial impacts for the trades themselves and that support for the ongoing supply chain to the building industry is absolutely critical as well.

I think we can see very clearly that this timely intervention by the federal government in this area by way of the economic stimulus has already been brought to book. We can see also that compared to every other state in Australia Victoria is in much better shape to weather the global financial crisis that is sweeping across the world.

The second aspect is the extraordinary social outcome we get from this as well. As members of the house know, we are in a particularly difficult climate at the moment in terms of the private rental market. Vacancy rates in the private rental market are of the order of 1.3 per cent. Whilst there has been a slight easing over the last couple of months from a record low vacancy rate of about 0.9 per cent the practical reality is that anywhere within 10 to 15 kilometres of the parliamentary building that we stand in today there are in effect no vacancies — there are not vacancies in that inner ring. That is certainly reflected in the regional settings as well in our larger centres such as Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) —
Wonthaggi.

Mr WYNNE — Wonthaggi, as you say, Acting Speaker, and indeed the Latrobe Valley more generally. It is quite an acute situation.

We will get a great economic boost through this economic stimulus package, where the state is required to spend 75 per cent of those funds by the end of next year as part of an agreement with the commonwealth. It is a very significant challenge for the state, but one that, let me tell you, Acting Speaker, we are right up for. It is a very good situation that we find ourselves in.

The other aspect that I wanted to touch on briefly from a housing point of view is a further appropriation for the homeless national partnership with the commonwealth. You will recall, Acting Speaker, that in the past I have talked in this chamber about the green

and white paper processes that the federal government went through; it was a very thorough process. Tony Nicholson, the executive director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and a key author of many of those strategies, willingly signed onto this partnership with the commonwealth government.

Again, they are ambitious targets for us in reducing rough sleeping and homelessness more generally, but really the whole policy of the federal government has been around prevention. That is certainly a space that this government is in. It has provided \$122 million of new funding for a range of initiatives across homeless support and mental health and education, which is going to make an enormous difference to those who, through no fault of their own, find themselves homeless.

I know members of the house would want me to report on the progress of the groundbreaking Common Ground project, which as members of the house know is in Elizabeth Street in Melbourne. I can advise the house that that project is now out of the ground; construction is well under way, and it is expected that the project will be completed by late next year. It is appropriate that I acknowledge in that context the extraordinary contribution made to the Common Ground project by the Grocon Corporation, which is building this project for the state government at cost — which is in effect a philanthropic contribution to addressing homelessness worth in the millions of dollars. We will see the final outcome of what that looks like when the project is finished. It will be at least \$4 million, \$5 million or \$6 million, and could be even more. That is an extraordinary contribution by the Grocon Corporation. We acknowledge philanthropy of such a scale.

I will briefly touch on two other areas of my portfolio responsibilities. I want to touch on a couple of very important initiatives in the Aboriginal affairs area. The first is the government's commitment of \$6.2 million to fund Stolen Generations Victoria over the next four years. This is a significant indication of the government's commitment to some of the most displaced, most damaged and most impoverished members of our community.

I want to acknowledge Lyn Austin, the chair of Stolen Generations Victoria, for the extraordinary work she has done and continues to do to support her community. I had the honour of being at a function with Lyn Austin and members of the stolen generations only a few weeks ago. It reminded me how important it is that the state stands together, and indeed we do stand in a bipartisan way across this chamber, to acknowledge the

terrible wrongs that were done to Aboriginal people in Victoria. I acknowledge that the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of The Nationals have signed on to ambitious targets around closing the gap in life expectancy for Aboriginal people in Victoria.

We have a comprehensive response to closing the gap. It ranges across economic development, where we are doing very important work. We will continue to fund and support economic development initiatives for the Aboriginal community. The extraordinary amount that is being provided in health — in the order of \$56 million — is specifically targeted to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The third area is the importance of children being engaged in both kindergarten and education. That is absolutely fundamental to young people progressing forward. The Wannik strategy developed by the Minister for Education has very clear paths going forward in terms of supporting young Aboriginal people through education.

Another aspect I want to touch on briefly is the Aboriginal Heritage Act, which has been in place for a couple of years. The regulations were reviewed a short while ago by the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development, the member for Mill Park. The review was broadly supported by the Aboriginal community and strongly supported by the development community. There is no better acknowledgement of that than the support that came from the Urban Development Institute of Australia, which has been a fantastic advocate for the Aboriginal Heritage Act. As I said, it has been in place for a couple of years to provide certainty to all parties — certainty for the Aboriginal community and certainty for the development community.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the very significant announcement made by the state government in the last couple of weeks that we no longer seek to litigate against the Aboriginal community in relation to its aspirations for land. If anyone understands anything about the Aboriginal community, they would understand the importance of the relationship between Aboriginal people and, in many cases, their very modest aspirations over land.

Outcomes have been achieved through the work of Professor Dodson and the native title holders and more broadly the Federal Court of Australia and other interested parties. Victoria has sought to mediate outcomes to ensure that the very modest aspirations of Aboriginal people to have access to land and access to economic development opportunities and fishing and

hunting rights are realised. These are the things that are fundamental to Aboriginal people, and they will be delivered through this agreement.

In the local government area financial assistance grants remain a continuing challenge for us. While we did get a modest increase in our financial assistance grants to local governments across Victoria, I am still required by all of the councils across Victoria to continue to advocate to the federal government for a better deal for local governments. Members will recall that in 1996, 1.1 per cent of federal government outlays was directed to local government. It is now a bit over 6 per cent.

For Victoria that means a loss in the order of \$250 million in recurrent funding. That money would go an enormous way to assisting many of our poorer rural local councils. In many respects they are dependent for up to 50 per cent of their income on grants from the commonwealth and/or state governments.

There are good times ahead for libraries, with record funding for libraries going forward. Another round of library funding is going on at the moment. I know this is widely supported across the house. There can be no better investment by a state government than in libraries. The budget is a fantastic outcome for neighbourhood houses. Further recurrent and coordination hours are being provided for neighbourhood houses. Again, this is widely supported by our neighbourhood house network.

Briefly in terms of my electorate, we are completing Fitzroy High School for years 11 and 12. The building is now complete and will be opened very shortly. Let the record show that this school was closed by the Kennett government and reopened by this government. It is now a year 7–12 high school.

The budget offers fantastic support for our major hospitals by way of extra beds and support for the casualty department at St Vincent's Hospital. Our community health centres are, as always, getting excellent support from the Minister for Health. In the future there will be some very exciting announcements made in the electorate about public and social housing outcomes, not surprisingly. I very much look forward to the opportunity to be involved with the Premier and our federal colleagues in some of the announcements that will be made in the very near future. It is a great budget, a great budget for my portfolios and indeed for my electorate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! After all of the other speakers, I think the

member for Prahran is the last speaker on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill.

Mr LUPTON (Prahran) — I am absolutely delighted to have this opportunity to speak in support of the Brumby Labor government's Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill and to give my strong and wholehearted support to it. It has been rightly reported as a budget that builds jobs and builds Victoria. We are in this position because of the very sound, responsible and appropriate financial management displayed by our government since coming to office in 1999.

Since 1999 we have shown great fiscal responsibility while continuing to grow the whole state. We have put Victoria in a position where during the most difficult global economic times in many decades our government is able to continue to keep Victorian taxes competitive with the rest of Australia while expanding the infrastructure budget to create thousands of jobs, at a time when that is exactly what governments need to be doing.

The response of our government to the global financial crisis has been exemplary. It has been to make sure that we are directing infrastructure spending to those areas where it is most needed and where it can be most effective in creating and securing jobs. At this point in time there is probably no more important thing for the people of Victoria and the working families of Victoria than job security. Everything that we as a Parliament and we as a government can do to make sure that we are securing jobs and creating jobs is a very important thing for us to be doing as a government. We make no apology for that.

The budget does a great amount of good across all of those basic areas of state government responsibility around Victoria. I will deal with a number of those issues, one at a time. However, I should also say that not only do all of those areas of important government responsibility — education, health, community safety, environment, water, transport and community services — benefit the state and the people around Victoria but I am very pleased and proud to see they benefit the people of Prahran.

There are important local initiatives and improvements as a result of the spending in this year's Brumby Labor government budget. As a member of the government I am particularly delighted to be able to deliver in this way for the Prahran community. The spending embarked upon in this budget builds on the infrastructure spending and service delivery that we have been engaged in since 1999 — over the course of the life of this government

This budget continues the boost to education, particularly in our school rebuilding and modernisation program. In my own electorate of Prahran we have already seen extraordinary improvements, particularly at local primary schools. The Better Schools Today program has already been completed at Stonnington Primary School and St Kilda Primary School. Work is well under way at a number of other primary schools in the area and is about to commence at the rest. All schools in the electorate, including Toorak Primary School and South Yarra Primary School, have guaranteed funding, and the rebuilding and modernisation programs will be completed during the course of this year.

We now have a cooperative federal government — the Rudd Labor government — working hand in hand with our Brumby Labor government to make sure that we continue to expand education and health and increase expenditure in all those important areas neglected by the former Howard-Costello government. As a result, we are able to build on the record infrastructure investment our government is delivering, with continuing additions to that expenditure in cooperation with the federal government. It is a great partnership, and the people of Victoria understand and are responding very positively to the cooperative working relationship we now have between our state Labor government and our federal Labor government in Canberra.

In this budget our state government is committing a record \$11.5 billion in infrastructure investment, which will create up to 35 000 direct jobs. When we create 35 000 direct jobs we also have to bear in mind that many thousands of indirect jobs flow from that. The government stimulus creates the initial jobs but then flows through the economy, including through the private sector, and creates thousands of additional jobs, providing important job security to many working families around our state. It is important that we are taking that action now. It is important that we are acting in a speedy and efficient manner to make sure that our state is able to ride out the global financial crisis in the strongest possible terms.

The very interesting and positive set of statistics we heard about this morning showed that in the last month more jobs were created in Victoria than in any other state of Australia. That is a testament to the way in which our government has been investing and making sure that we secure and create jobs in our state. It is a result of our prudent financial management over a long period of time and also our commitment to utilising government resources in the most effective way we can to secure jobs.

The budget delivers in a wide range of areas such as schools, hospitals, roads and the public transport system. I particularly welcome \$650 million in funding under the Victorian transport plan for 20 additional trains and \$5 million to commence the procurement of up to 50 new trams. Those things are very important to the constituents of my electorate of Prahran, and they are very important to me. This funding under our government's \$38 billion transport plan will bring about the improvements in services that we all want.

There have also been very important funding announcements in the budget for the improvement of bus services. I know that an increasing number of people are very supportive of the bus system and the improvements we are making to it, not only around the Prahran area in my electorate but around Victoria. I am very pleased that there is a record \$1.9 billion budget for Victoria Police. That announcement will continue to help make our state the safest state in Australia, something we all aspire to and want to make sure continues.

I was delighted that funding was announced in the budget to begin planning for a redeveloped Prahran police station. The local community is very supportive of this, and we will continue to work towards it as we go forward. There was additional funding for 50 transit police and funding to extend the graffiti prevention and removal strategy, which is also very important in the local community.

I have had particularly positive feedback about the announcement in the budget of an additional \$1.1 million for the refurbishment of the Alfred hospital burns unit. It is doing a great job treating victims of the February bushfires. The funding will be used to upgrade the burns unit to provide better individual treatment for patients. I know this has been very well received by the Alfred hospital and the Victorian community.

Other initiatives in the budget that are of particular interest to our local community in Prahran involve expenditure in relation to green transport, particularly for expanded cycle paths and cycling infrastructure. As so many people in our local community use their bikes on a regular basis not just for exercise but to get to work, school and for other activities, it is a very important part of the overall transport plan. I am glad funding was delivered in the budget in order to do that.

We have also continued in this budget to work on the important infrastructure spending to secure our water supply in Victoria. Not only will that investment secure more than 2300 jobs as it builds the key infrastructure

in Victoria, but it is also important for the future of the state and our agriculture and livability. Of course our diversified water security plan involves desalination, which is the only way that we can have a source of water that is not rainfall dependent. It also involves the food bowl modernisation program, which will be putting more water into irrigation and more water into our rivers and providing more water for those rural communities as well as increased water supplies for Melbourne. That is a very important and appropriate part of that plan, and that is something the people in my area have talked to me about. They understand the significance of those projects, why we are doing them and how important they are to the whole state.

In summary, we have a budget delivered in this Parliament this year which is going to secure jobs for Victorians. It is going to build the important infrastructure that we need in this state, it is going to continue to build on the record infrastructure spending that our government has been engaged in over recent years, and in all of those areas — education, health, community safety, transport, environment and water supply — we are seeing the important infrastructure spending which will deliver the improved services that people in Victoria want and need. It will also ensure that we have the best economy in the country, that we create jobs and that we make sure that the working families in Victoria have job security.

As I said, the statistics that were released today show that more jobs were created in Victoria last month than in any other state or territory in the country. They are testimony to the fact that our government has the right recipe to make sure that we build Victoria, that we secure jobs and that we have the right investments and the right strategy to get through this global financial crisis. I commend this budget to the house.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) —
Order! The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

CLASSIFICATION (PUBLICATIONS, FILMS AND COMPUTER GAMES) (ENFORCEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 9 June; motion of Mr HULLS (Attorney-General).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

CASINO LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Statement of compatibility

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Gaming) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Casino Legislation Amendment Bill 2009.

In my opinion, the Casino Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The objectives of the bill are to:

1. more closely align the rate of taxation that applies to gaming machine revenue in Victoria between the casino and other gaming venues through imposing additional taxes on the casino's gaming machines; and
2. achieve this higher rate of casino taxes as part of a package of measures and via a negotiated agreement with the casino operator.

The bill provides for:

- a. tax increase on the casino operator of 10.32 percentage points of the tax applying to electronic gaming machines at the casino. The increase will:
 - i. be phased over six years with equal, annual increments of 1.72 percentage points and fully implemented by 2014–15;
 - ii. be complemented by abolition of the health benefit levy from 1 July 2012 and refinements to the super tax thresholds for regular gaming at the casino;

- iii result in closer alignment on the rate of taxation that applies to electronic gaming machines in Victoria and therefore improve the efficiency and equity of gaming machine taxes; and

- b. clarification that the definition of table game allows for automated tables (up to a licence-defined limit).

Human rights issues

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

The bill does not limit any human rights.

2. *Consideration of reasonable limitations — section 7(2)*

The bill does not limit any human rights.

Conclusion

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

Tony Robinson, MP
Minister for Gaming

Second reading

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Gaming) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Tax changes

On 12 May 2009, the government announced changes to the taxation arrangements for the Melbourne casino. These changes have been agreed with the casino operator, Crown Melbourne Limited, as part of a broad package of measures to the casino's licence conditions, which should allow the casino to maintain its status as a world-class tourist attraction.

The main change that has been reflected in the ninth variation to the casino management agreement involves a progressive increase in the tax rate on the casino's 2500 gaming machines, reflecting the maturing of the business and closer alignment of gaming machine taxes for the casino and gaming venue operators.

This will see the casino's gaming machine tax rate rise from its current level of 22.25 per cent to 32.57 per cent in 2014–15. This reform will result in tax rates being more closely aligned for Crown Casino and other gaming venues.

Under the current arrangements, the casino has benefited from comparatively lower gaming machine tax rates than those available in clubs and hotels so that it could establish itself in the Victorian gaming market.

The matured position of the casino, and the shift in 2012 to a venue model for licensing Victoria's

27 500 gaming machines outside the casino, have presented an opportunity to revisit the taxes that apply to the Melbourne casino's 2500 gaming machines.

The government considers that these taxes should now increase, and agreement has been reached with the affected party — Crown Melbourne Limited — to implement these changes.

As part of the tax changes agreed with Crown Melbourne Ltd:

the health benefit levy will be abolished from 1 July 2012, consistent with the fact that this levy will not be applied to gaming venues under the proposed post-2012 tax arrangements; and

there will also be adjustments made to the super tax thresholds for casino taxes. These threshold adjustments reflect that only the existing table game taxes should apply to Crown's expected increased revenue on table games attributable to the changed table game arrangements.

Any additional tax revenue arising from the changes will continue to fund vital government services including health.

Policy commitment — future tax changes

It is the Brumby Labor government's policy and intention that there will be no further amendments to the rates of tax payable on the Melbourne casino nor will any existing levy on the Melbourne casino be amended or any new levy imposed, before 30 June 2022, and that no action will be taken by the Brumby Labor government to initiate any such amendments before that date, except as expressly agreed between the parties. This is intended to provide investment certainty to the casino for that period.

Table games

These tax changes are occurring as part of a negotiated outcome with the casino operator which includes an announced expansion and reconfiguration of approved table games. These changes will be subject to the normal approval processes of the independent regulator — the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR).

These table game changes — which are subject to independent, regulatory approval from the VCGR — are expected to involve:

an increase in the maximum number of table games (such as roulette and blackjack) from 350 to 400, including up to 200 automated terminals; and

allowance for up to a further 100 poker tables.

Poker is essentially being treated as a separate table game category — whereas currently, poker tables form part of the aggregate limit of table games at the casino. It should be noted that poker does not involve gambling with the house, and it is widely available outside the casino. Therefore, it was seen to penalise the casino to have this type of game form part of its total table game allocation, particularly during poker tournaments, which bring international visitors to the state.

These changes will give the casino more flexibility and capacity to develop its business, so it can maintain its status as a world-class casino and entertainment facility. With additional tables, the casino will be able to host international poker tournaments and compete with venues in Las Vegas and Macau as the site for international poker events.

Attracting these high-calibre international events to Melbourne would provide a significant boost for tourism, building on the success of the Aussie Millions tournament.

All of the changes to the table games will be subject to the normal regulatory approval and review processes of the VCGR. The VCGR will continue to monitor and report on Crown Casino's operations to ensure it continues to provide a responsible gambling environment.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 25 June.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing).

ADJOURNMENT

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

**Victorian College of the Arts and Music:
courses**

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — I raise a matter on the adjournment for the Minister for

the Arts. I ask her to make representations to the federal arts minister and in particular ask him to ensure that the centres of excellence in the visual and performing arts previously established and operating under the former Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) are not lost to Victoria or Australia. In doing so I am very mindful and supportive of the member for Bayswater and the adjournment matter she raised on 4 June in which she invited the Minister for the Arts to make similar representations directly to Melbourne University.

The history of these concerns goes back to the joining of the VCA and Melbourne University, which the opposition supported, and indeed we supported the renaming propositions in this house earlier this year. That merger process has continued, but the assurances that we sought at the time of those pieces of legislation have become more problematic.

I am not unfamiliar with the VCA. I spent some time assisting in fundraising for the VCA's film and television school in years past, and obviously as a Melbourne University graduate myself I am familiar with and supportive of Melbourne University. I have had the opportunity to discuss these changes as they have progressed with a wide variety of people involved with the arts: Melbourne University, the VCA and the colleges. I have had many representations through correspondence and personally from students, teachers, graduates, parents and those associated with the arts, including those in the arts industry. There is growing concern that the centres of excellence that the VCA was so well known for are not to be assured in the merger process.

I have also had the opportunity to listen to the new head of the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music, Sharman Pretty, and I appreciate her desire to ensure that the arts are never institutionalised and her assertion that change is something that the arts always contend with. I have also had the opportunity to discuss these changes in the merger process with senior figures at Melbourne University and the VCA. I know and appreciate that there are ongoing concerns and a desire to ensure that those centres of excellence are maintained. The concern amongst so many constituents and those who have written to us, though, is that particularly the music theatre courses and many of the staff who have long been part of this process are disappearing.

We have been supportive of these changes, and we have at the same time been concerned about other funding issues. I urge the Minister for the Arts to deal with this promptly.

Rail: Berwick car park

Ms LOBATO (Gembrook) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is the construction of additional car parking at Berwick station. I ask that work on that commence immediately.

Last year the government announced the \$38 billion Victorian transport plan. One of the initiatives in it was the construction of 209 additional car parking spaces at Berwick station. People throughout the communities of Berwick, Beaconsfield, Upper Beaconsfield and Officer very much welcomed this announcement and have been eagerly awaiting the construction of the car parks. In fact at my mobile offices and morning teas, it is one of the most common subject matters raised with me, given the enormous take-up of train travel and the inability of people to be able to park securely at Berwick station.

A couple of years ago we funded the construction of a couple of hundred car parking spaces at Berwick station, but as soon as that was built, those spaces filled up straightaway. In the meantime we completed the sealing of the car park at Beaconsfield station; but as soon as we did that, it also filled up immediately. It is very encouraging and welcome that people are using public transport much more frequently but unfortunately people are sometimes put off because they cannot park their cars due to there not being enough spaces. They then end up taking up room in the adjoining streets instead.

I also mention that I am very pleased with Beaconsfield station. Unfortunately people want to be able to use Officer station as well but are finding that it needs constant grading and, ultimately, sealing. I know that works will be undertaken to grade it on a regular basis, but ultimately what we need is for it to be sealed, as that will take some pressure off Beaconsfield and Berwick stations.

Finally I want to make mention of the fact that in the Victorian transport plan we funded the Lakeside station, which has been welcomed by the Lakeside community. In closing, I ask for the minister to assist in taking action to see that Berwick station car park is sealed and expanded with additional car parking spaces.

Hospitals: data reporting

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — The issue I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Health. The action I seek is for him to deliver and publish the *Your Hospitals* report of December 2008.

It is an utter disgrace that the minister treats Victorians with such contempt by failing to report on the

performance of Victoria's public hospitals in a timely manner. The report relates to elective surgery and emergency department performance data for the period ending December 2008. That is nearly seven months ago. We are now into the next six-monthly reporting period.

The Victorian Labor government has form in trying to avoid scrutiny, particularly when it comes to the health system. It abolished quarterly reporting on hospital performance, because that involved just too much scrutiny, and reverted to six-monthly reporting. Now not even that time frame can be met.

If the need for two hospitals to resubmit their data and the entire system to be audited is the excuse for the minister's failure to deliver this report, he should make his reasons public. The following questions have to be asked. What has the Minister for Health got to hide? Is it his intention to yet again try to avoid scrutiny and abolish even six-monthly reporting on our hospital system in favour of annual reporting? Is it his intention to abolish reporting altogether?

I suppose if one were to apply a little logic, it would be obvious to conclude that, given the Minister for Health has been caught out covering up the manipulation of performance data in hospitals which form the basis of the *Your Hospitals* report, Victorians should reserve the right to assess whether the figures have been once again fudged and whether they in any way reflect the true state of Victoria's health system, should the minister deem to publish this report, which he has so far failed to do.

Heatherton Road, Endeavour Hills: shared pathways

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — The action I seek tonight is for the Minister for Roads and Ports to investigate the closing of the gap in the off-road shared path along Heatherton Road from Power Road to link it up to the Dandenong Creek trail. Currently, it is very difficult for bike riders and walkers alike to walk along Heatherton Road towards Dandenong from Endeavour Hills. This change would provide a great link between the two suburbs and between the Assembly electorates of Narre Warren North and Dandenong.

I know the state government has allocated enormous sums of money to its Victorian cycling strategy in an effort to improve the trails around public transport and freeways. It is looking to get more people on their bikes so they can enjoy a healthy lifestyle. I have also had very strong representations from a local resident, Doug

Wilkinson, who looked at getting the council to look at this issue, which it has not done. I personally believe it is largely the council's responsibility, but at the end of the day we failed in that endeavour. I am therefore going down another path to see whether I can get the path built, which would be great. Residents of Endeavour Hills find it dangerous to be crossing over the top of the Monash Freeway. They have to go through two or three sets of traffic lights, and life would be a lot better and it would be safer for them if there were an off-road path through that area and down along Heatherton Road.

As I said earlier, the action I seek from the minister is to investigate closing the gap to provide an off-road shared path along Heatherton Road from Power Road to link up to the Dandenong Creek trail. I know the trail is very popular in my community. It is well used, and the government has done a great job of maintaining it and making it a very popular area. However, at the moment the residents of Endeavour Hills are blocked off from that. I would like my constituents, including Doug Wilkinson and many bike riders in my area, to have the opportunity to access that path in an easy and streamlined manner.

Land tax: billing errors

Mr WELLS (Scoresby) — The action I seek is for the Treasurer to order a full audit of all land tax bills sent out this year. There is no doubt that the land tax rip-off continues in this state. More than \$1 billion more in land tax will be collected this year than was collected when the Labor government first came to power. This year the government will collect about \$1.3 billion in land tax. As we have said in the past, it is based on 31 December 2007 valuations. To top it off, we now find that dodgy land tax bills have been sent out.

The government has been sending land tax assessments to Victorian businesses that include the principal place of residence. That is totally incorrect. A person's principal place of residence is exempt. Valuations for principal place of residence have been added to other valuations, which in some cases has pushed the value over the \$250 000 threshold. The second point is that some people have received land tax bills where the \$250 000 threshold has not been exceeded. The concern is that a number of older Victorians are receiving these bills and feel compelled to pay them.

The Treasurer's explanation is not good enough. He has said that when people receive these bills they should check them themselves. We say bills should be correct before they leave the State Revenue Office. I am calling

for a full audit. I want to know how many dodgy land tax bills have gone out — how many have included the principal place of residence and how many have been sent where the \$250 000 threshold has not been exceeded.

Members on this side of the house believe this is a dreadful situation. We wanted the land tax cap kept and said if the government removed it a tremendous amount of heartache would be caused. Unemployment is now 5.9 per cent, and massive land tax bills will only add to the heartache experienced by businesses when they pay their bills. We want a full audit to ensure that no more dodgy land tax bills are sent out.

Consumer affairs: scam emails

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The specific action I ask is that the minister seek information from Consumer Affairs Victoria on what can be done to protect all Victorians and children, and in particular my constituents in the electorate of Cranbourne, from being scammed through the internet. I have had many calls from constituents who receive emails that are attempting to trick them into giving out their personal and banking information. These scam emails are a real nuisance to my constituents who use the electronic media for work, leisure, education and other activities. I expect this is an issue that all Victorians are facing. These emails, which purport to come from banks or other financial institutions, reduce productivity at work and cost the Victorian economy thousands of dollars.

Unfortunately these scammers are generally trying to get information such as bank account details, passwords and credit card numbers. This information is then used to attempt to steal the hard-earned money of constituents. Though these emails certainly look genuine, they are not.

Over the years we have seen big changes in how we do our banking and pay for goods and services; a lot of transactions are made on the internet. Unfortunately scammers are taking advantage of new technology to generate a number of scams that are potentially very costly. Whenever I meet heavy email users — irrespective of whether it is in the north, south, east or west of Victoria — the favourite question they ask is, ‘Can the government do anything about internet scams?’.

In the end we are up against a heartless, unscrupulous and destructive mob which is indiscriminately targeting all Victorians irrespective of their background or

circumstance. They are rotten to the core. Some of our vulnerable citizens unfortunately fall into these traps. Yesterday it was Nigerian scams, today it is banking scams. What will it be tomorrow? In my view this is a challenge that has to be taken seriously and tackled head-on so as to protect not only our current population but also future generations. It is important the minister take the relative action in protecting my constituents from these internet scammers.

Rail: freight movements

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — The issue I wish to raise is for the Minister for Roads and Ports. The action I seek is for the minister to publicly admit the Labor government has failed abysmally to deliver on its promise to have 30 per cent of the freight to and from our ports moved by rail by 2010.

In *Growing Victoria Together* in November 2001 the Labor Party said, ‘The proportion of freight transported to ports by rail will increase from 10 per cent to 30 per cent’. The then ports minister, Candy Broad, on 12 July 2002 said, ‘By increasing the amount of freight carried to ports by rail to 30 per cent by 2010, we will lower transport costs for the industry and allow freight operators to better compete for interstate businesses’. The Victorian ports strategic framework of November 2004 said, ‘The government announced an ambitious target to move 30 per cent of port-related freight by rail by 2010’.

Budget paper 3 shows that these were absolutely false and misleading promises, because not only has the government missed its target of 30 per cent by 2010, it has actually gone backwards. In the 2009–10 budget paper 3, chart B14 on page 386 shows that at the start of this decade 20 per cent of freight going to and from our ports went by rail. In 2007–08, the latest data, that proportion had dropped to 12.3 per cent.

You can see why this has happened. In 2001 the Labor Party’s budget promised all rail freight lines in Victoria would be standard gauge, but following that promise not 1 centimetre of track has been delivered into standard gauge. In the 2002 budget Labor promised to convert the Lascelles wharf connection to the port of Geelong to standard gauge rail, but that has not been done. No work has been done on that important project.

In 2007 the Labor government closed down the only rail shuttle service that operated between the port of Melbourne and Altona. The result of this broken promise is that there are thousands more trucks on our roads, which is causing congestion, particularly in the inner city areas around the port of Melbourne. It is bad

for the environment and extremely inefficient to have all these trucks on the road.

The first thing the minister must do is admit that the government has failed to keep its promise. Then the minister must devise a real plan of action to boost rail services, to boost rail usage and efficiency and to get goods to and from our ports using an efficient rail system based on a standard gauge rail freight system.

The government has made numerous promises over its decade in office, and it has simply failed to deliver. One of its most fundamental promises was in 2001 when it said that 30 per cent of goods would travel to and from our ports by rail by 2010. It has failed miserably; it has gone backwards. Now less goods are going by rail. We need more goods on the rails.

Housing: Geelong

Mr EREN (Lara) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Housing. The action I seek from the housing minister is for the Victorian government to divert some of the funding that was gained from the commonwealth's stimulus package to improve the supply and quality of public housing in my electorate. As part of the federal government's economic stimulus package, the state government has approximately \$99 million to spend on upgrading and carrying out urgent repairs to public and social housing. This provides us with a unique opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of public housing tenants in my electorate.

In response to the increasing demand for public and social housing, the Brumby government is leading the way in expanding housing choices for low-income Victorians through the building of new public and social housing as well as other initiatives such as the national rental affordability scheme. We welcome this new construction.

I must mention that I am certainly very grateful for the \$40 million that my electorate received in a previous budget to construct 200 brand new homes. That is going very nicely at the moment. Certainly people in my electorate are appreciative of this very important and significant funding. However, we also need to ensure that existing properties managed by the Office of Housing and the community sector provide safe and comfortable accommodation that meets the needs of the community.

In the electorate of Lara and throughout the greater Geelong area there are a number of social housing dwellings, both free-standing properties and housing

estates, that are in urgent need of maintenance work. Many of these are approaching the end of their life cycle or they have been listed as properties that are in need of maintenance in order to be habitable for an extended period of time.

Public housing estates such as at Rosewall in my electorate are in need of maintenance to improve the safety and comfort of the dwellings for tenants. This estate was built in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Improvements are needed to enhance the security of the estate. There is a need for exterior painting and for internal works to individual dwellings and common areas.

A program of neighbourhood renewal has been under way at Rosewall since 2002. This program has provided opportunities for renewal of both public housing stock and community housing. However, there are more properties that could benefit as a result of this investment. The people of the Lara electorate, along with all Victorians, deserve to live in safe and affordable accommodation that is close to jobs, services and recreational facilities. Therefore I call on the Minister for Housing to invest funds from the stimulus package into my electorate and improve the supply and quality of public housing.

Western suburbs: fire services

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — I have a matter I wish to raise for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services regarding serious concerns relating to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade's capacity in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The action I seek is that the minister act immediately to provide adequate resources and better management to ensure that the MFB is able to do its job properly in the western suburbs.

In the west there are real issues concerning the lack of adequate MFB facilities and equipment. In recent weeks I have been made aware that one fire station in the west is still operating with both mark 3 and mark 4 tankers and pumpers, although the mark 3 was recommended for immediate replacement. In any case, mark 3 tankers will not fit into the station's garage because the garage is too small. Equipment is stored outside due to lack of space, and the room the uniforms are stored in is too small, so that firefighters are falling over each other during emergency call-outs.

There are constant delays in approving and funding the rebuilding of antiquated stations in the west. Peter Marshall, secretary of the United Firefighters Union, has told me that the western suburbs have been treated

by this Labor government with utter contempt and as second best when compared with the northern, southern and eastern suburbs of Melbourne. I am also informed by Mr Marshall that fire stations in Altona, Laverton, Laverton North, Newport, Spotswood, Sunshine and Keilor are all in need of priority upgrades.

Mr Marshall further informed me that renovations at the Footscray fire station need to take place because to this point the works at the station have been so ill-conceived that it has been left without the ability to maintain its aerial platform. This aerial platform was to be strategically located in Footscray so that it would be able to respond to an emergency at, for example, Western Hospital. The firefighter accommodation at that station is on the second floor, which means that the 90-second rule cannot be the normal standard, leading to delays in getting fire trucks out of the station. The stairs are too narrow and steep, and there is no lift to provide access for the disabled to the public lecture room on the third floor.

Accordingly I call upon the minister to redress the imbalance in the resourcing of the MFB in the western suburbs and to provide better management and planning of station renovations and rebuilding work so the work of the firefighters can be enhanced, not made more difficult.

Small business: Forest Hill electorate

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Small Business. The action I seek is for the minister to ensure that this year's Energise Enterprise festival has an event held in my area, where many of my local business operators are doing it tough due to the global financial downturn. Energise Enterprise is Victoria's premier event for people starting, running and building a small business. In 2008 the festival was highly successful, with over 31 000 small and medium enterprises participating in 335 events; that was up 20 per cent on 2007.

As members no doubt understand, the global financial downturn has created a new set of challenges for small business, but I am pleased to advise the house that this year Energise Enterprise will focus on helping small and medium enterprises thrive in tough economic times. This is in addition to the festival's perennial objectives, which are: improving business management capabilities through an events program that offers access to high-quality information and education; creating greater awareness and uptake of the full range of Victorian government public and private sector support services available to business, including regional Victorian business; and celebrating small

business and the contribution it makes to the Victorian economy. These objectives will be achieved through seminars, information sessions, workshops, networking and special events.

I would like to advise the house that Energise Enterprise is linked to another fantastic Brumby government initiative, Growing Victoria Together, which is fostering a thriving economy, more quality jobs and strong, innovative industries across the state. In 2009 the Energise Enterprise festival will take place between 1 and 31 August at venues all around Victoria and is expected to attract in excess of 35 000 participants. This is vital work, given the challenges facing our small and medium enterprises, and will help our small business operators through this very bumpy period.

Last year the Minister for Small Business came out to my area and met with many local small business operators. We had a round table discussion at which the small business operators were able to put forward their personal experiences and at which the minister could hear firsthand some of the difficulties they are facing at this point in time. He was very warmly received, and I received fabulous feedback from the small business operators. We rightly talk about small businesses being the engine of the Victorian economy. In the eastern suburbs we have many small business operators operating out of the backs of houses.

I commend the Minister for Small Business for supporting this festival, and I urge him to ensure the festival comes to my area where, no doubt, the local small business operators will have a great amount to gain from the experience.

Responses

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for Lara for his longstanding interest in public and social housing. I am pleased to report to him and the house that work is under way as we speak to provide a repairs and maintenance program for literally thousands of dwellings across Victoria as part of the federal government's Nation Building economic stimulus package.

As members would be aware, \$99 million has been allocated for the next two years — to be spent by July 2010 — and we expect that in the order of 5600 houses will benefit from this economic stimulus through the maintenance program. A total of approximately \$6 million has been allocated in 2008–09 in greater Geelong through the Nation Building maintenance funding, and a substantial portion of this, not

surprisingly, will be in the seat of Lara, where there are major conurbations of public and social housing. I am pleased to report that funding will be delivered to approximately 220 homes across the Rosewall estate, which is a very significant commitment.

This investment will improve the livability and safety at Rosewall estate. The maintenance work that will be carried out at Rosewall will include new fencing, improved security, exterior painting and some internal works to individual dwellings and common areas. It will lift the external appearance of the properties, but there will also be some minor maintenance and upgrades internally, which I know many residents across the state have very much appreciated in the past.

Some work to improve the estate has already begun as a part of the incredibly successful neighbourhood renewal program that has been rolled out right across Victoria and is one of the great success stories of this government. The new maintenance work funded by the stimulus money will complement the works already under way at Rosewall, and the member is very aware of that. It will significantly expand the number of properties that can be upgraded.

The maintenance investment in greater Geelong, including in Lara in 2008–09, also includes approximately \$560 000 for repairs and maintenance to 39 community housing units. We have a mix of both public and community housing, and in essence that is the broader policy position that the government has taken. These dwellings will receive a full range of upgrade works to bring them to a good condition, including repair and replacement of kitchens, bathrooms, guttering, external painting and so forth.

In selecting properties for maintenance upgrades we have prioritised housing ministry dwellings located in areas where tenants have access to jobs, public transport and community facilities, which is consistent with the broader planning framework so well articulated in the Melbourne 2030 strategy.

As I said earlier in my contribution on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill, it is important to acknowledge that the stimulus package has played and continues to play a very important role in an immediate economic stimulus to the building industry, not only to builders themselves but also to the supply chain as well.

As we have already seen through the budget projections and the forecasts going forward, I believe this has very much buffered Victoria from the broader aspects of the global economic situation. Most pleasingly the flipside

of that is the achieved social outcome. This is a wonderful commitment by the Rudd government.

On top of that we will also have the very challenging job of delivering close to 4000 units of public and social housing between now and the end of next year, comprising 50 per cent in public housing and 50 per cent in the housing association area. I say to the member for Lara, and indeed to the house, that as Minister for Housing I find it a welcome challenge and one that I am more than willing to take up.

The Leader of the Opposition raised a matter for the Minister for the Arts, seeking her support and intervention with the federal Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett. He seeks her advocacy and support for the Victorian College of the Arts and Music centres of excellence, particularly in the areas of music and theatre, because of concerns about the diminution of both of those facilities through the merger process with Melbourne University. As the Leader of the Opposition said, this matter was canvassed previously by another member, and I will make sure the Minister for the Arts is aware of his request.

The member for Gembrook raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, seeking her support for the provision of further car parking at the very busy Berwick railway station, and I will make sure the minister is aware of that matter.

The member for Caulfield raised a matter for the Minister for Health, seeking the publication of the December 2008 *Your Hospitals* report which deals with the reporting of elective surgery and other matters, and I will make sure that request is brought to the attention of the minister.

The member for Narre Warren North raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Ports, seeking his support for a very important Heatherton Road bike path link with the Dandenong Creek trail, and I will make sure that matter is brought to the attention of the minister.

The member for Scoresby raised a matter for the Treasurer, seeking an audit of land tax bills to ensure that the bills are accurately constructed. I will make sure that matter is brought to the attention of the Treasurer.

The member for Cranbourne raised a very important matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs relating to something which I know all of us experience — that is, potential scams through the internet. He is seeking support from the minister about ways that communities in his area can be better informed about the traps that

are inherent in these internet scams. I think we have all noticed their recent proliferation through the various email systems.

The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Ports in relation to the target of a 30 per cent shift in freight by 2010, and I will make sure the minister is aware of his advocacy.

The member for Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in relation to further capital support for Metropolitan Fire Brigade infrastructure in the western suburbs of Melbourne, and I will make sure the minister is aware of that request.

Finally, the member for Forest Hill raised a matter for the Minister for Small Business, seeking his support for an Energise Enterprise festival in her electorate. I think there was one held last year, which was very successful, and she advocates for further support for the festival again this year.

The SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 4.44 p.m. until Tuesday, 23 June.



State Government of Victoria (2009) A Fairer Victoria, Standing together through tough times, Melbourne, Victoria. Available from: <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/afairervictoria>

