

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Wednesday, 4 May 2011**

**(Extract from book 6)**

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## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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### Legislative Assembly committees

**Privileges Committee** — Ms Barker, Mr Clark, Ms Green, Mr McIntosh, Mr Morris, Dr Napthine, Mr Nardella, Mr Pandazopoulos and Mr Walsh.

**Standing Orders Committee** — The Speaker, Ms Barker, Mr Brooks, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Hodgett, Mr McIntosh, Mr Perera and Mrs Powell.

### Joint committees

**Dispute Resolution Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Holding, Mr McIntosh, Dr Napthine and Mr Walsh.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

*Parliamentary Services* — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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**Deputy Speaker:** Mrs C. A. FYFFE

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The Hon. E. N. BAILLIEU

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party:**

The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

**Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Premier:**

The Hon. P. J. RYAN

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals:**

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

**Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Leader of the Opposition:**

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:**

The Hon. R. J. HULLS

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Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clayton	ALP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Murray Valley	Nats
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	McGuire, Mr Frank <sup>2</sup>	Broadmeadows	ALP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	McIntosh, Mr Andrew John	Kew	LP
Baillieu, Mr Edward Norman	Hawthorn	LP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Seymour	LP
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Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Bauer, Mrs Donna Jane	Carrum	LP	Miller, Ms Elizabeth Eileen	Bentleigh	LP
Beattie, Ms Elizabeth Jean	Yuroke	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Napthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Brumby, Mr John Mansfield <sup>1</sup>	Broadmeadows	ALP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Newton-Brown, Mr Clement Arundel	Prahran	LP
Campbell, Ms Christine Mary	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Noonan, Mr Wade Mathew	Williamstown	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Tarneit	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Pandazopoulos, Mr John	Dandenong	ALP
Delahunty, Mr Hugh Francis	Lowan	Nats	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
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Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Powell, Mrs Elizabeth Jeanette	Shepparton	Nats
Duncan, Ms Joanne Therese	Macedon	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
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Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Ann	Evelyn	LP	Shaw, Mr Geoffrey Page	Frankston	LP
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux	Brunswick	ALP	Smith, Mr Kenneth Maurice	Bass	LP
Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles	Mount Waverley	LP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Sykes, Dr William Everett	Benalla	Nats
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Helper, Mr Jochen	Ripon	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Eltham	ALP	Trezise, Mr Ian Douglas	Geelong	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Kilsyth	LP	Victoria, Mrs Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Holding, Mr Timothy James	Lyndhurst	ALP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Ballarat East	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Swan Hill	Nats
Hulls, Mr Rob Justin	Niddrie	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Keilor	ALP	Weller, Mr Paul	Rodney	Nats
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Scoresby	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Doncaster	LP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Ballarat West	ALP	Wreford, Ms Lorraine Joan	Mordialloc	LP
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP			

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 21 December 2010

<sup>2</sup> Elected 19 February 2011



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**Wednesday, 4 May 2011**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Ken Smith) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.**

## PETITIONS

### Following petitions presented to house:

#### **Planning: Shell Road sports precinct**

To the Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly:

We, the residents and friends of the towns of Ocean Grove, Wallington and Barwon Heads call upon the Victorian government to commit to the development of the new sporting precinct in Shell Road, Ocean Grove.

We draw attention to the house of Assembly that the Shell Road sports precinct is an important venue for AFL, netball, cricket and football (soccer). As such, it is important to the future health, wellbeing and the social life of our whole community.

The Shell Road sports precinct is one of the top priority sporting facilities on the Bellarine Peninsula. We believe all levels of government should be contributing to the funding of the facility.

It is unacceptable to have the Victorian government — the level of government which is traditionally responsible for funding major sporting facilities — refuse to commit funds.

The Shell Road sports precinct should be developed with a first-class outcome in mind that will serve the needs of the community for the next 20 years.

The petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly make a funding commitment to this project in the coming state budget.

**By Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) (131 signatures).**

#### **Rail: regional link**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of public transport users in Bendigo draws to the attention of the house the Liberal-National government's failure to commit to the regional rail link project and the purchasing of new regional trains and carriages.

In particular the petitioners note that the regional rail link project and the acquisition of new trains and carriages would deliver:

1. a dedicated rail line for central Victorian commuters into Melbourne;
2. up to 12 extra regional train services every hour; and
3. quicker and more frequent services to and from Bendigo.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly urges the government to immediately commit to

completing the regional rail link project and commit to purchasing new trains and carriages for regional commuters.

**By Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) (843 signatures).**

#### **Maroondah Highway–Killara Road–Station Street, Coldstream: traffic management**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Coldstream and Gruyere draws to the attention of the house the dangerous traffic congestion and difficulty to gain access at the intersections of Maroondah Highway, Killara Road and Station Street, Coldstream.

The petitioners therefore request of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria that there be an appropriate traffic control system that provides an enhanced level of safety for general motorists using the intersection at Maroondah Highway, Killara Road and Station Street as well as allowing controlled safe access for responding emergency vehicles.

**By Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) (445 signatures).**

#### **Pigs: sow stalls**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of undersigned residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the recent decision by the Tasmanian government to ban sow stalls from 2017 and reduce their use to six weeks per pregnancy from 2014.

Such a move is an acknowledgement that the current national pig code is inadequate in protecting the welfare needs of pregnant pigs as it condemns them to unacceptable suffering. Sow stalls have been banned in the United Kingdom for 10 years and several states of America have now vowed to prohibit their use also. The largest producer of pigs in Australia, Riverlea, has also announced a voluntary phase-out of sow stalls by 2017. The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria introduce a similar ban as a matter of urgency.

**By Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) (697 signatures).**

#### **Rail: premium stations**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria who travel on the Frankston and Sandringham train line draws to the attention of the house the Baillieu government's plan to abandon the proposed upgrade to premium status of Windsor station, Highett station, Chelsea station and Seaford station.

In particular we note that premium stations are necessary to provide:

1. improved safety for commuters;
2. more timely information about delays and cancellations; and
3. better customer service.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly urge the Baillieu government to reverse its decision to abandon the premium station upgrades and take urgent steps to immediately begin the process of upgrading our local stations.

**By Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) (88 signatures).**

### **Schools: Doreen**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the rapid increase in families moving to Doreen and Mernda, suburbs of northern metropolitan Melbourne.

In particular, we note:

1. there are now almost 1000 students enrolled at government primary schools in Mernda and Doreen, with that figure set to increase in the years to come;
2. there are no government secondary colleges in Mernda or Doreen; and
3. land has been purchased by the previous Labor government for a secondary college to be built in Cookes Road, Doreen.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly urge the Baillieu government to urgently fund the building of a secondary college in Doreen.

**By Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (319 signatures).**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Macedon be considered next day on motion of Ms DUNCAN (Macedon).**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Bellarine be considered next day on motion of Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine).**

## **DOCUMENTS**

**Tabled by Clerk:**

Anti-Cancer Council Victoria — Report 2010

Auditor-General:

Managing Student Safety — Ordered to be printed

Revitalising Central Dandenong — Ordered to be printed

*Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* — Report 2010 under s 96

Ombudsman — *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001*: Investigation into the improper release of autopsy information

by a Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine employee — Ordered to be printed.

## **PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES**

### **References**

**Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections) — By leave, I move:**

That —

- (1) Under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, an inquiry into violence and security arrangements in Victorian hospitals and, in particular, emergency departments, be referred to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee for consideration and report no later than 30 September 2011, including:
  - (a) the incidence, prevalence, severity and impact of violence in Victorian hospitals and, in particular, emergency departments;
  - (b) the effectiveness of current security arrangements to protect against violence in Victorian hospitals and, in particular, emergency departments;
  - (c) an examination of current and proposed security arrangements in Australia and internationally to prevent violence in hospitals and, in particular, emergency departments, including the appropriateness of Victoria Police protective service officers in Victorian hospital emergency departments; and
  - (d) a recommendation of initiatives to enhance the overall security arrangements and safety in Victorian hospitals, particularly emergency departments, to ensure appropriate levels of safety for health professionals and the general public without compromising patient care.
- (2) This house notes that to strengthen effective decision making for the successful delivery of significant infrastructure projects, including public-private partnership arrangements, there is an integral need for public sector managers overseeing these projects to possess appropriate skills and expertise in the field and, therefore, requires that under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, an inquiry be referred to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee for consideration and report no later than 14 December 2012 on:
  - (a) the competencies and skills that public sector managers require for the effective evaluation, decision making and oversight of significant infrastructure projects and protection of the public interest;
  - (b) the extent to which government policies such as the national public-private partnership policy and guidelines and the Partnerships Victoria requirements specify these requisite competencies and skills, and support the Department of Treasury

and Finance's application of these across the public sector;

- (c) strategies in place within the public sector for the development of such requisite competencies and skills and for their ongoing refinement and enhancement through knowledge building from the sharing of best practice examples and guidance in the public sector;
- (d) whether particular significant infrastructure projects have been developed and implemented in a manner which aligns with the public interest and maximises transparency and accountability for the life cycle of the project;
- (e) relevant infrastructure delivery strategies and practices, including in public-private partnerships, in relation to enhancing public sector expertise in place in other Australasian jurisdictions and relevant jurisdictions outside Australia; and
- (f) the merits of centralisation versus decentralisation of available skilled experts in the Victorian public sector during the life cycle stages of public-private partnership projects, including considering any benefits that may be derived from greater flexibility to contract specialist services from external sources.

**Motion agreed to.**

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Budget: Lowan electorate

**Mr DELAHUNTY** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — The state budget has delivered on commitments for my electorate of Lowan. This budget marks a new beginning for regional Victoria. Lowan has received its fair share in a very responsible budget that will create more opportunities and a better quality of life. There is \$7 million for a new special school at Horsham that will provide 21st century education facilities to students with disabilities, and there is \$40 000 for youth services. Young farmers will experience a reduced cost burden; young people buying houses will experience a reduced cost burden. There is the reintroduction of the popular fox and wild dog bounty.

We will be providing an additional \$414 million over the next four years to boost electricity, water and sewerage concessions to be made available to low-income earners. There is also money for men's sheds in the Lowan electorate. We will also provide a \$6 million boost for small rural kindergartens, which will be able to apply for grants of up to \$20 000 to cover operational costs.

The centrepiece of the budget is a \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, which will drive regional prosperity for years to come. This is a fund that will put rural communities back into the driver's seat after 11 dark years of Labor. This budget will deliver for families and the young and old. The government is assisting each and every person in rural and regional Victoria, particularly in country areas such as Lowan.

### City of Wyndham: growth

**Mr EREN** (Lara) — As I have said many times in this house, the municipality of Wyndham is currently experiencing rapid growth, and it is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the whole nation. Due to the increased population of this area, current infrastructure is inadequate, and the lack of action from the government is evidence that it just does not care.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! If the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the member for Bendigo East want to chat, they should go outside the chamber.

**Mr EREN** — It is more than happy to jam pack the western suburbs with housing developments, but it is unwilling to step up to the plate and provide vitally important infrastructure for these communities. One example of this is the plan for a new mini suburb in Werribee containing 4000 new homes, as described in the *Herald Sun* on 14 April.

This planned proposal will only add more congestion to the already gridlocked roads. So far the Premier has failed to commit any new funds towards current infrastructure needs, let alone adding the burden of another 4000 homes and potentially an extra 12 000 people to this area that is already bursting at the seams. While the government has begrudgingly committed to continue funding the regional rail link — which was our commitment — this is not enough. We have seen no commitment to extra police, roads, schools or health-care facilities, which are all very basic requirements for a growing population.

While it is great to allow housing developments, basic infrastructure needs must be met before adding any new burdens. This development will increase the strain on motorists, who will have to suffer because of a careless government. What more proof do we need of this than the statement of the Minister for Planning, who in an article in the *Wyndham Leader* of Tuesday, 19 April, was quoted as having said:

issues including impacts on transport could be worked through as part of the planning process.

This is not something that could be worked through; it is something that must be worked through, in fine detail, before any planning application is approved.

### **Former government: financial management**

**Mrs VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — I say well done to the Treasurer on the delivery of the latest state budget amid some of the worst economic circumstances faced by a government in recent times. Thanks to the incompetence of the previous Labor government, Victoria's finances were left in a state of decay. Three independent auditors discovered what we already knew: Labor cannot handle money.

Victoria faces a number of financial challenges in the near future, including the impact of federal Labor's decision to strip the state of billions of dollars in GST revenue, but the Baillieu government is showing it can resurrect Victoria's finances.

### **Anzac Day: Bayswater electorate**

**Mrs VICTORIA** — It was wonderful to see so many people take part in various Anzac Day services around my electorate. Dawn services held in Ringwood and Bayswater were well attended, as was the annual march down Maroondah Highway. Congratulations to the Ringwood and Bayswater sub-branches of the RSL on staging such fitting commemoration ceremonies, and the organising committee at Salford Park retirement village for its ongoing dedication to honour our diggers.

### **Arts: funding**

**Mrs VICTORIA** — Our city is so culturally alive! Opera Australia has excelled yet again with its sumptuous production of *La Bohème*; the production by the National Institute of Circus Arts of *Beautifully Imperfect* is truly captivating; *Rock of Ages* is seriously good fun; and the brand-new production of *Dr Zhivago* is thrilling audiences at Her Majesty's Theatre.

At the Melbourne Theatre Company and the Malthouse Theatre it is fantastic to see Australian artists performing such a vast array of works, and to see Polyglot Theatre stimulating young minds with its interactive *City of Riddles*. The arts sector is enjoying strong patronage at the moment, passionately supported by the Baillieu government. We are proud to be committing an additional \$11.7 million to the arts in the coming financial year.

### **Rail: Bendigo service**

**Ms ALLAN** (Bendigo East) — I am a regular train traveller on the Bendigo–Melbourne rail line, and you

can imagine my and many other commuters' disappointment that this Liberal-Nationals government has taken away our express service to Melbourne. For many years Labor had built up regional rail services to Bendigo, and that meant it could introduce an early morning express train from Bendigo to Melbourne, meaning that commuters could get to Melbourne in time for work. Imagine our shock and horror when we found out that this government was taking away this express service and replacing it with a train that leaves earlier, arrives in Melbourne later and now stops in Gisborne along the way.

This is a real rip-off of regional rail commuters in Bendigo. Last Friday the member for Bendigo West, Maree Edwards, and I were on the train talking to commuters, who told us just how disappointed they are with the decision. They cannot see why the government has made this decision. If the government wants to improve rail services in Gisborne, we fully support that, but it should not do this at the expense of rail commuters in Bendigo. Rail commuters in Bendigo and Castlemaine have had no support from a member for Northern Victoria in the other place, Damian Drum. The member for Bendigo West and I say to the minister: give us back our early morning train. We want our train back. He should listen to commuters and make sure he invests in regional rail and does not rip away services.

### **Anzac Day: Mornington**

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — On Anzac Day I had the customary privilege of participating in the ceremony at Mornington's Memorial Park. Memorial Park is truly a monument to those who served, and those who died, on our behalf. Developed under the enthusiastic and entirely voluntary direction of the late Bill Coventry, it provides a focus to remember those who have served with Australian forces in every conflict, big and small, across the globe. The park was immaculately prepared, as always, by the Mornington Peninsula Shire and its contractors, and provided a fitting venue for the crowds that attended.

My congratulations go to Colin Fisher, who served as master of ceremonies in his usual exemplary manner, and to Mornington RSL for once again providing the opportunity for present-day Australians to acknowledge those who served and returned, and those who gave their lives for the future of our nation.

### **Mornington Peninsula Schools Environment Week**

**Mr MORRIS** — On another matter, recently I had the pleasure of attending the Mornington Peninsula Schools Environment Week held at The Briars historic property at Mount Martha. When originally established, the event included all primary schools in the former Mornington shire. It has grown to encompass the entire Mornington Peninsula, and it provides a great opportunity to make sure that the next generation has a practical understanding of caring for our environment and that each and every one of us has not only the opportunity but also the responsibility to care for the world around us. Environment week is not about theory; it focuses on practical day-to-day issues. My congratulations go to the environment week committee on a very successful event.

### **Ballarat Gift**

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — Last Sunday, 1 May, I attended the Ballarat Gift, and I would like to congratulate the Ballarat Athletics Club on a successful event. The Ballarat Gift has a history of over 60 years, but competitive racing in our region goes back much further. It is a proud history that is built on each year as this event continues to grow. Sport plays a huge role in our community, and it was great to see one of our excellent sporting assets, the Eureka Stadium, filled with people, all having a good time.

Events such as these not only inject money into Ballarat's economy but also provide an opportunity for the community to come together to enjoy an afternoon of fun and to cheer on these athletes who devote so much of their lives to their sport. I can only imagine the dedication it takes not only for the athletes who train so diligently but for their partners, families and friends who support them along the way. It is also important to note that events such as these provide an incentive for children and young people to get involved and to get moving — and perhaps not just young people; it caused me to reassess my own level of exercise.

These events would not happen without the generous support of local sponsors. It takes many people to organise an event such as this, but I would particularly like to acknowledge Judy Frangos, Peter Emerson and Shane Woodrow. Not only did Shane do an amazing job of organising this event, but he also ran third in his race — a fantastic achievement indeed. I wish the Ballarat Athletics Club well and look forward to many more events such as the Ballarat Gift.

### **Western Park Recreation Reserve, Warragul: lighting**

**Mr BLACKWOOD** (Narracan) — I take this opportunity to acknowledge the \$100 000 grant provided by the Baillieu government for the upgrade of lighting at the Western Park Recreation Reserve in Warragul, which was announced last week. The Western Park committee of management, in conjunction with the Baw Baw Shire Council, has been trying to get government assistance to upgrade the lights at Western Park for about four years. The existing lighting system is totally inadequate. It compromises the safety of those participating in activities under the lights. Because of the poor lighting only part of the ground can be used for football training, which causes that part of the ground to deteriorate rapidly during the wet part of the year, which of course is during the football season.

The ground is currently shared by two football clubs — the Warragul Industrials, which plays in the Ellinbank league, and the Warragul Football Club, which competes in the Gippsland Latrobe football competition — so the ground rarely gets a break from activity during the winter, and it has cost Baw Baw Shire Council a lot of money to maintain the playing surface in a safe and acceptable condition.

Terry Stroud, a member of the Western Park management committee, has been a tireless advocate for the need to maintain the entire recreation reserve in good condition. He has approached me on numerous occasions regarding the urgent need for the lights to be upgraded and has worked with and supported the shire in its endeavours to have this work funded. The announcement made last week by the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hugh Delahunty, was extremely well received by all users of the recreation reserve and Baw Baw Shire Council. This is another example of the Baillieu government delivering on its commitment to country Victorian communities.

### **Pentland Primary School: community shed**

**Mr NARDELLA** (Melton) — I want to congratulate all the people and organisations involved in establishing the new community shed at Pentland Primary School. The partnership involved Moorabool police service area, Pentland Primary School, Bacchus Marsh College, Child and Family Services (CAFS), School Focused Youth Services, Centacare and Reconnect, and was spearheaded by a police youth resource officer, the energetic Senior Constable James Ross. The project aims to redress a lack of services, facilities and infrastructure gaps in Moorabool. All of

the above have banded together to get this vital community project up and running. I congratulate them.

Senior Constable Ross has indeed managed to bring together, in a spirit of cooperation and community building, service providers, young students, school councils, secondary schools and two local families, those being the Dickson and Hannah families.

The shed is not a men's shed, but more appropriately it is a community shed, as it draws together all members of the community. Stage 2 of the project will see the shed act as a focal point for referred clients of the police, CAFS and Centacare to help those in need of positive role models and direction for positive pathways and solutions.

Unfortunately when a combination of isolation, insufficient services and infrastructure gaps exists, too often families and young people, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds or those lacking in know-how, are unable to climb out of the ruts in which they find themselves. The shed provides a toolkit which, with community support, allows these people to overcome existing infrastructure and service gaps.

This is truly a project of which I am proud, and I fully support the hard work done by all involved. It is a fine example of community building at the highest level, and one which no doubt will be of great benefit to the Moorabool community. I say to them: well done and congratulations.

### **Yarra Hills Secondary College: funding**

**Mr HODGETT** (Kilsyth) — I am absolutely thrilled with the announcement in yesterday's budget that the students of the Yarra Hills Secondary College, formerly Pembroke Secondary College, will benefit from \$10 million in new facilities as part of the coalition government's plan to build better schools. The \$10 million investment at Yarra Hills Secondary College is part of a \$208 million school capital package announced yesterday in the 2011–12 Victorian budget. This investment at Yarra Hills Secondary College is clear evidence that the coalition government is committed to meeting its election promises.

Yarra Hills Secondary College will receive \$10 million for modernisation of its school facilities. This investment will fund the second stage of the school's redevelopment, including construction of new classrooms, specialist facilities, a new canteen and other amenities. The funding will bring the school's facilities and learning environment into the 21st century and will

benefit more than 650 secondary students in the Yarra Ranges area.

After years of battling in opposition for the funding I am delighted to have delivered to Yarra Hills Secondary College the stage 2 master plan funding in the Baillieu government's first state budget. This is the final stage of the master plan, and it will give the Yarra Hills school community certainty that its major refurbishment project will finally be finished. After a long and often frustrating journey this is a huge win for the Yarra Hills school community, and I am thrilled that the coalition government has delivered on this election commitment.

I take the opportunity to congratulate the Treasurer on his first Baillieu government budget. I thank the Minister for Education for listening to the Pembroke and Yarra Hills community and working hard to ensure that this funding was delivered in year one. Most importantly I express my sincere thanks to the college principal, Aidan Ryan, for his perseverance, commitment, determination and leadership in pursuing the interests of his school community.

### **Castlemaine Skate Park**

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) — On Friday, 8 April, I was very pleased to officially open the Castlemaine Skate Park along with Cr Christine Henderson from the Shire of Mount Alexander. Funding for the second stage of the project included \$60 000 from the previous state Labor government and \$90 000 from the shire. The opening coincided with the Castlemaine State Festival and the youth FReeZA event in the park. Thanks to the hard work of Lucas Clark and the Castlemaine Skate Park committee the second stage of the skate park was initiated and is now completed. This is a great facility for young people to use. It is a fantastic development that first commenced back in 2006, and it shows what can be achieved when the community and local and state governments work together.

### **Timor-Leste: Debt of Honour exhibition**

**Ms EDWARDS** — On Friday, 15 April, I was pleased to attend the opening of the Debt of Honour exhibition and to meet His Excellency Abel Guterres, the Timor-Leste ambassador in Australia, who is a remarkable man and a great inspiration to his people and to Australians for his dedication and commitment to his people and to his country during their long journey of recovery since independence from Indonesia.

The Debt of Honour exhibition reveals a great history of friendship and unity between Australian and Timor-Leste citizens and dates back to the Second World War. The images are very emotive and reveal what must have been a very horrific time. The images also reveal how friendship, cooperation and mateship developed between the Timor-Leste people and the Australian soldiers.

I would like to send my congratulations to the Mount Alexander Shire Friends of Lolotoe group — especially Marion Oakley, who has worked hard to make the exhibition happen — the Castlemaine RSL, the Harcourt Valley Heritage and Tourist Centre, the Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, and the Mount Alexander Shire Council.

### **Budget: Mordialloc electorate**

**Ms WREFORD** (Mordialloc) — Last night's budget has been very well received in the Mordialloc district. Many local promises have been delivered at the first opportunity: \$5.5 million for the second stage of Parkdale Secondary College, which has been particularly well received given that the school has been leaking water and basically disintegrating over the last number of years; \$20 million for the Kingston stage of the Dingley bypass; \$700 000 for planning of the Southland railway station; and the Mordialloc Creek dredging. There are a range of projects in this list that were talked about or ignored by the previous government for years and years. I am pleased that the new coalition government has hit the ground running so hard in Mordialloc.

The funding goes well beyond the big ticket infrastructure items, however. There is money allocated to palliative care, programs to help the disadvantaged, stamp duty cuts for first home buyers, funding for protective services officers and police, and much more. There are critical programs that the community demanded to see improved after 11 dark years of neglect and mismanagement under the previous Labor government.

This budget puts Victoria back on track. It addresses the shortages of recent times, with much investment in critical programs, public transport, roads, schools and many more things, including very importantly safety for the community on our streets and at railway stations. After 11 dark years we have taken bold steps to make Victoria a better, safer place to live.

### **Anzac Day: Yan Yean electorate**

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) — I rise today to pay tribute to my community for the respectful way that Anzac Day was commemorated across the Yan Yean electorate this year. Moving ceremonies and wreath laying occurred at Epping, Diamond Creek, Hurstbridge and Whittlesea, ably organised as always by the great RSL sub-branches in those towns.

I cannot think of a better way to begin Anzac Day than in the midst of the people of Epping, with the dulcet tones of Epping RSL sub-branch's Ken Jeffery. The Shrine of Remembrance service may have Tony Charlton, but we have former Country Fire Authority captain Ken leading our service, and it gets better and better every year. In Diamond Creek there was a great community turnout as always, with the scouts, the local CFA and many schools laying wreaths.

The Whittlesea march was a fantastic journey through the township, and wreath laying occurred at both the Honour Roll Fathers Association Memorial Arch and the soldiers memorial. It was fantastic in the beautiful sunshine, with many people listening to the band and seeing the Ivanhoe and air force cadets. It is a real privilege to represent this area and to see how respectful the people are about commemorating Anzac Day.

### **Budget: Yan Yean electorate**

**Ms GREEN** — I would also like to condemn the Baillieu government's budget. It has again left out the Yan Yean electorate.

### **Mitcham electorate: government initiatives**

**Ms RYALL** (Mitcham) — I rise to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on finding his way out to the Mitcham electorate last month. On 13 April he posted a press release on the ALP website headed 'Baillieu needs to deliver now on Rooks Road separation in Mitcham'. The Leader of the Opposition needs to do his homework before he ventures out of his Spring Street office in future, because it is Rooks Road and it is in Nunawading! The Leader of the Opposition said that the Rooks Road intersection is a major traffic problem and source of frustration for drivers — and it is. Labor had 11 long years to do something about it, and it did not.

I say to the opposition leader: it is the Mitcham level crossing he should have been standing at. Rooks Road is a pain, but the bigger problem is Mitcham Road, with 200 trains crossing it and 22 000 vehicles driving on it each day. The Leader of the Opposition wondered in

his posting on the ALP website why the government had not eased traffic congestion by removing the level crossings in just over 100 days. Today the Premier announced that we are getting rid of both crossings. Labor did nothing in 11 long years.

The opposition leader also calls on the government to stop ignoring the concerns of local residents. The people in the Mitcham electorate had had enough of being ignored and taken for granted. That is why Labor lost Mitcham and the coalition won government. We listen, and we deliver.

### **Ovarian cancer: awareness**

**Ms GARRETT** (Brunswick) — I rise to bring to the attention of the house an outstanding initiative that has been brought together by the mayor of Moreland, Moreland City Council, the Essendon District Football League, Victoria Police and Ovarian Cancer Australia. On 21 May Pascoe Vale and West Coburg football clubs will play for the inaugural Mayor's Ovarian Cancer Awareness Cup at Coburg City Oval. There will be a gold coin donation to get into the event, and all funds raised will be donated to Ovarian Cancer Australia for raising awareness about this terrible disease.

I am particularly honoured to say that this inaugural cup will be named in honour of my mother, Pam Garrett, who was tragically taken by ovarian cancer in 2009. During this round there will be tin rattlers at all other games in the Essendon District Football League not only to raise funds but also to raise awareness, and issues about the disease will be discussed at the lunches and various functions associated with the football matches. The football teams will also be playing for the Neil Clinch trophy, named after a young police officer who played for the West Coburg Football Club in the 1980s and who was tragically killed.

I would like to thank all members of the working group who have been involved in making this a reality, in particular the president and vice-president of the West Coburg and Pascoe Vale football clubs; the Essendon District Football League's president, Ian Price; Victoria Police inspector Dean McGowan; and particularly the courageous and passionate mayor of Moreland, Oscar Yildiz.

### **Floods: government initiatives**

**Mr WELLER** (Rodney) — On behalf of the constituents of the electorate of Rodney I welcome the announcement by the Minister for Water that the Victorian coalition government will spend

\$19.3 million over the next four years boosting Victoria's capacity to cope with floods. The commitment includes funding to repair flood warning networks damaged in the January floods, an undertaking to do more riverine flood mapping, and development of a web-based tool known as Floodzoom, which will significantly improve the effectiveness of community warnings and response and recovery.

Whilst I, along with many thousands of my fellow Victorians, appreciate the outstanding efforts of emergency services personnel in combating the floodwaters and protecting lives and property, there have been many concerns raised subsequently by the people of Rochester regarding the flood level predictions provided to the public and the need to develop a better planned and more coordinated approach to the warning system. I am pleased that the Baillieu government has listened to people who were severely affected by the floods and acted quickly to respond to their concerns that flood height predictions be as accurate as possible and that timely and accurate warnings be issued. This funding is welcome news and will bring some peace of mind to a community which has already suffered far too much.

### **Kangan Institute: wages**

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) — I rise to express solidarity with the professional and administrative staff at Kangan Institute who have taken industrial action in support of their claim for equal pay. Librarians, administrative staff, student counsellors and technical officers at Kangan Institute get less pay than those doing the same work in other TAFEs and universities. This is unfair.

These workers are also standing up against this state's government mean-spirited and stingy wages increase policy of 2.5 per cent, which does not even cover the cost of living — nor does it address such inequities. I was proud to attend the protest line on Monday, and I congratulate delegates such as Chris; the organiser, Janet; members; and also the musicians who volunteered their time to entertain us with Turkish music and lots of dancing.

### **Bethlehem Community**

**Ms HALFPENNY** — In addition I would also like to recognise the ongoing work of the Bethlehem Community organisation, which works particularly with women over 35 who are in need of housing support. Often it helps those recovering from domestic violence situations and other potentially life-crippling issues.

On Saturday, 2 April, I attended the Bethlehem Community gala ball, called Homework. I was delighted to join there more than 500 people from around Melbourne. The ball raised over \$50 000 in support of the work of Bethlehem Community to help homeless women. The Homework event was critical to the growth of Bethlehem Community, involving ongoing support for women and the construction of new apartments that have just been completed in the Thomastown electorate, which I represent. I thank those involved and congratulate them on their work.

### **Anzac Day: Forest Hill electorate**

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) — On the morning of Sunday, 17 April, I was privileged to attend the Waverley RSL Anzac Day commemoration service. Later that day I also had the privilege of attending and participating in the Anzac Day march and commemoration service at the Blackburn RSL. On Anzac Day itself I attended the dawn service organised by the Waverley RSL. These were all wonderful events which proudly paid tribute to the courageous men and women who served this great nation in military service. It was great to see the large numbers of people who attended and participated in these events. Men, women and children of all ages joined together to recognise and honour the numerous men and women who have served to protect the freedoms we now enjoy.

In particular, it was very impressive to see the large crowd that gathered at Glen Waverley in the pre-dawn darkness to pay their respects and remember those who served in the defence of our country. I congratulate all those involved in organising these events, particularly the members and committees of the Waverley and Blackburn RSL clubs. It was also great to return to these RSL clubs and enjoy refreshments and fellowship with those in attendance.

### **Schools: Forest Hill electorate**

**Mr ANGUS** — On another matter, I note that in recent months I have spoken to and visited many of the principals of schools in the Forest Hill electorate. During my discussions and visits I have been advised of and have noted the numerous outstanding maintenance issues at some of these schools. This lack of schools maintenance is yet another example of the mismanagement of the previous Labor government. After 11 years of hard Labor, it is now up to the incoming coalition government to fix up yet another Labor mess. I look forward to continuing to work with local schools to ensure that this maintenance backlog is addressed.

### **Australian Hellenic Cricket Federation**

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** (Dandenong) — I rise to commend the work of the Australian Hellenic Cricket Federation, which has taken its second tour to the island of Corfu, in Greece. Cricket has been played on Corfu, a former British colony, since 1823. There are 21 cricket clubs in Greece at the moment, and the Australian Hellenic Cricket Federation, ably led by president Nick Hatzoglou, was formed to grow the profile of cricket among the Greek Australian community. It has done so by taking the cricket tour to Corfu last October and by this year sending kids from Sunshine Heights Cricket Club to the first international schools cricket competition. I commend the kids, who came third in that international competition.

As part of their work the cricketers also conducted the Allstars game at the Antipodes Festival held in April, which is the biggest Greek festival in Australia. This game highlighted the great range of Greek Australian cricketers from around Australia. Participants in the Allstars game included Paul Maraziotis from Blacktown Cricket Club in New South Wales and Victorian Premier League cricketers James Nanopoulos from Dandenong, Elias Karageorgiou from Hawthorn Monash and young cricketers Stephen Hatzistavrou and Nick Deligiannis from Sunshine Heights.

I commend the work of this group, and in particular the work of George Pangalos of the Corfu Society, Peter Kallakoudis and Theo Doropoulos, who is probably the top Greek Australian cricketer in Victoria. I also commend the Australian Hellenic Cricket Federation president, Nikitas Losif, who has developed this relationship with Australia.

### **Anzac Day: Mount Waverley electorate**

**Mr GIDLEY** (Mount Waverley) — I rise this morning to acknowledge and thank the Waverley RSL sub-branch for its services commemorating Anzac Day. As the member for Forest Hill indicated, there has been a number of services which the Waverley RSL has conducted to commemorate this important event. On 17 April I had the privilege of laying a wreath on behalf of my electorate. At the dawn service on 25 April, on Anzac Day morning, the landing and sacrifice were commemorated. It is also important to note that Monash schools, involving 850 students, attended a special ceremony put on by the Rotary clubs in the Waverley area. It is a great opportunity for these students and future leaders of our country to gain greater awareness of the sacrifice that was made, and I thank the Rotary clubs of Waverley for that.

### Neighbourhood Watch: government support

**Mr GIDLEY** — I now turn my attention to a meeting which I attended recently, the Neighbourhood Watch area managers meeting for Mount Waverley. I put on record my thanks for the dedication and efforts of Neighbourhood Watch volunteers. I was very pleased to see in the recent state budget that the coalition government, unlike the previous Labor government, is prepared to support these volunteer commitments by providing \$550 000 for Neighbourhood Watch, the resumption of the calculation of street-by-street crime statistics and the implementation of a state area manager. This approach is a great contrast to the slash-and-burn approach Labor took to Neighbourhood Watch, and we on this side of the house support it.

### Brookland Greens estate, Cranbourne: landfill gas

**Mr PERERA** (Cranbourne) — There is no funding allocated in the Baillieu government's first budget to provide remediation work by the Casey City Council at Stevensons Road landfill. What a shameful backflip. What a disappointment. This is another one of the Baillieu government's broken promises. The lame excuse is that the government cannot honour its commitment until the class action involving the City of Casey, the Environment Protection Authority and Brookland Greens residents is resolved.

As soon as the gas leak was identified, the then Leader of the Opposition, now the Premier, attended the residents meeting in Cranbourne and said it was too big a task for the Casey council to shoulder by itself and that the state government should share the cost. Mrs Inga Peulich, a member for South Eastern Metropolitan in the other place, went around the Cranbourne electorate putting the blame on the state government and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The Liberals supported the field of independent candidates who were part of the 'make the state pay' campaign against Labor and who directed their preferences towards Liberal candidates. Prior to the November state election the coalition committed \$24 million to help clean up the methane-riddled tip — \$6 million every year for the next four years. No conditions were laid down.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The member's time has expired. The time for members statements has now ended.

### GRIEVANCES

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That grievances be noted.

### Budget: Geelong electorate

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — Following a disastrous budget that has failed to deliver for regional Victorians, I grieve for regional communities, including my electorate of Geelong and the people who reside there.

Since the election of the government some 150 days ago the people of Geelong, on at least a weekly basis, learn of another broken promise by this Liberal government. In the lead-up to last year's election, members of the former opposition — now the Baillieu government — ran around Geelong and Victoria promising everything to everybody and now have found it impossible to deliver on those promises.

In Geelong on at least a weekly basis the local people read in their newspapers — for example, the *Geelong Advertiser* — about another broken promise of this government. On a weekly or fortnightly basis people representing a community organisation come into my office with concerns about the failure of the Baillieu government to meet its commitments to that organisation. I could name those organisations, Deputy Speaker, if you would like.

Only last Saturday the *Geelong Advertiser* ran a story to highlight the point I am making. On page 3 of that newspaper the local people read of the government's failure to fund the much-needed upgrade of Geelong High School. Geelong High School is a great school, I have to say — I am an ex-student. The school has provided terrific educational services to the people of Geelong, specifically the people of East Geelong, for more than 100 years. Over the last three or four years I have been working hard with the school principal, David Whelan, the school community and the school council committee to ensure that we get much-needed funding for Geelong High School's master plan. To her credit, in 2010 the former Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike, agreed to provide the master planning and the much-needed funding.

Despite all the chest beating of the Liberal Party in Geelong over the last three or four years, including that of a couple of little Liberal Party lap-dogs who happened to go to the school in the last decade, the coalition has long been bleeding dry the funding for Geelong High School, and on Saturday we saw in the *Geelong Advertiser* that the Liberal Party has failed to deliver for the school.

I quote from page 3 of last Saturday's *Geelong Advertiser*, which states under the heading 'School's \$20 million blow — Geelong High upgrade axed':

Geelong High School's promised \$20 million upgrade has been shelved by the state government, the principal says.

Geelong High School principal David Whelan told the *Geelong Advertiser* the department of education had ... informed him that funding for a major overhaul of the school, which he said had been given a green light under the former Brumby government, would not be included in next week's state budget.

Mr Whelan said renovations detailed in a master plan, worth up to \$20 million, would have seen two-thirds of the school upgraded.

The master plan included:

- portable classrooms ...
- a new library;
- new outdoor recreation areas;
- complete rebuilding of the Kroger and Winstanley buildings ...
- a new canteen; and
- a new food technology building.

The article went on further:

'The environment the students and teachers have to work in directly affects their learning and performance', he said.

'The school community will be devastated that these plans have been ignored.'

That is, by the Baillieu government.

As I said, this is of course just one example of the Baillieu government failing Geelong. I can assure the house that it is just the tip of the iceberg. Right across the spectrum this government has failed to deliver for regional Victoria, including the good people of Geelong, especially in vital areas such as health, education, job creation, police numbers, regional development and cultural and heritage areas. These are all vital areas of government services for regional centres, including Geelong. As I said, the government has failed to deliver in every sector for communities across regional Victoria, including Geelong.

Let me just set the scene in health. In 1999, when the Bracks government came to power, the Kennett government had run down the Geelong Hospital and it was all set to sell to the highest bidder the then Grace McKellar Centre in Geelong. Since that time, through the Bracks government and then the Brumby government, we saw major upgrades to the Geelong Hospital and the McKellar Centre. For example, we

saw the Andrew Love Cancer Centre receive a \$26 million upgrade, we saw a \$20 million upgrade of the accident and emergency centre and we saw more than \$100 million spent on the McKellar Centre. We now see the renaissance of rehabilitation and aged care in Geelong through the McKellar Centre, which was going to be sold by the Kennett government. In addition to the upgrades of the accident and emergency, Andrew Love and McKellar centres, we have also seen an increase of 50 per cent in nursing numbers at the Geelong Hospital. In 1999 approximately 1000 nurses were employed at the Geelong Hospital, and now there are something like 1500 nurses employed there.

Prior to the 2010 election, as part of its ongoing work, the Brumby government committed to a \$165 million expenditure, with \$80 million for a community hospital at South Barwon, which the member for South Barwon is well aware of, and a further \$85 million to further upgrade the Geelong Hospital. As part of its ad hoc policy-on-the-run campaign, the then Baillieu opposition promised an \$80 million expansion of the Geelong Hospital and it matched the \$85 million with a promise of a second community hospital. The member for South Barwon knows this because he and the Minister for Health have been dodging and weaving around those commitments for Geelong.

Yesterday's budget highlighted exactly why the member for South Barwon and the Minister for Health have been dodging and weaving on the commitment to build a second hospital. It was because the Geelong Hospital received only 10 per cent, a little bit more than \$8 million, of its funding for expansion. Even more damning is the fact that there was absolutely no funding whatsoever for the second community hospital in South Barwon. No wonder the member for South Barwon and the Minister for Health have been keeping their heads down over the past month or so. Yesterday's budget flushed out exactly why they have done so: there is no funding for that commitment to the community of South Barwon, and the member for South Barwon stands condemned for failing to deliver on one of the coalition's key promises in the lead-up to the 2010 election.

In job delivery the picture is just as bleak, if not worse. In yesterday's budget delivery the Treasurer failed to mention the word 'jobs' even once. But as members on this side of the house know, jobs are the heart and the engine room of a regional economy. This is why, for example, when in 2006 Ford announced it was going to cut something like 200 or 300 jobs from the local plant it was the then Premier Bracks and Treasurer Brumby who rolled up their sleeves and came directly down to Geelong. Working on the ground with Ford and then

senior executive Marin Burela, we saved those jobs. Following that, the state government in partnership with Ford established the Geelong Investment and Innovation Fund, which was used to create jobs in Geelong. It was a very successful plan, and it was captained by the member for Bendigo East in the last couple of years of the Brumby government. It was job creation that drove, for example, the previous government's decentralisation of the Transport Accident Commission into Geelong. Those were big pluses for the Geelong economy.

As I said, yesterday in the budget there was no emphasis on employment in the regions. As a matter of fact when it comes to providing and saving jobs in the Geelong region this government is asleep at the wheel. There are two prime examples.

About a month ago Salmat, which is a call centre in Geelong that had a Telstra contract, announced that 220-plus people are going to lose their jobs because Salmat had lost the Telstra contract. In this Parliament I called on the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade and the Premier to come down to Geelong to work with Salmat, the unions and the employees on the ground to try to save those jobs. This government, the Premier and the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, who is a member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council, have failed to do that.

Two weeks ago Ford announced that it was going to cut around 200 jobs in Broadmeadows and Geelong. We still do not know the breakdown of those numbers. Last Friday the Leader of the Opposition and I met with union organisers at Ford to discuss their concerns. One of the concerns that the employees have is that this government is deafening in its silence when it comes to coming down to Geelong and working with Ford to save those jobs. We have seen absolutely no action with Salmat and absolutely no action from the Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade.

**Mr Katos** interjected.

**Mr TREZISE** — The member for South Barwon has a lot to say at the present time, but his silence has also been deafening in the last couple of weeks. There has been no mention of job creation in this budget. Therefore you have to ask: where is the Baillieu plan to create jobs, where is the strategy to attract investment to Victoria and where is the plan to ensure Victoria remains a competitive place to do business? The answer is that the government has no plan whatsoever.

In Victoria in the last 11 years the Labor government created 120 000 new jobs across Victoria and something like 10 000 in Geelong itself by investing in regional infrastructure. Given that the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund was such a success — and it was — you would think this government would have retained that fund, but unbelievably it has scrapped the RIDF, and it stands condemned for that as well.

As with what happened in health, on the last day of the 2010 election campaign the then Baillieu opposition promised to provide \$15 million in funding to the Geelong Performing Arts Centre and the Geelong library and heritage centre. This ad hoc, knee-jerk announcement was in response to the then Brumby government's rock-solid commitment of \$15 million to the library and heritage centre and \$15 million to GPAC. That was a rock-solid \$30 million commitment by the then Brumby government. The library is 50 years old, it is tired and it fails to cope with something like 100 000 visitors per annum. As I said, the Baillieu government, just prior to the last election — as a matter of fact it was on the Friday night before election day — promised \$15 million, but in this year's budget, which was handed down yesterday, there is absolutely no mention of the \$15 million.

**Mr Katos** interjected.

**Mr TREZISE** — I would be saying to the member for South Barwon that the government should put up or shut up, because it is not in the budget. As people have said to me, until we see the money in Geelong we will not believe it. In any case the government is still \$15 million short because there is no money for the Geelong Performing Arts Centre.

In the couple of minutes that I have left to speak I would also like to talk about police numbers in Geelong. Over the last 5 to 10 years we saw the then Liberal opposition come down to Geelong and spruik the idea that Geelong needed an extra 70 police. The then opposition painted a picture that Geelong's streets were awash with blood and we needed 70 extra police. Two weeks ago the announcement came that we were going to get seven extra police. The silence of the member for South Barwon and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services was deafening about the fact that instead of the 70 extra police that they have been spruiking over the last 10 years we are going to get seven. I have to say, Deputy Speaker, and you know this as well as I do, that it is up to police command to allocate its resources, but this is a typical example of the Baillieu government failing to deliver on the expectations it created in regional centres like Geelong.

The 2011 budget was a real chance for the Liberal government to show leadership and to explain to the Victorian people its vision for this state — for education, for health, for transport, and the list goes on. But what we have seen over the last couple of weeks is this government, including in Geelong, making up a raft of excuses for why it cannot deliver and has not delivered in yesterday's budget, and it is to the detriment of this state and to all Victorians. For that this government stands well and truly condemned.

### **Caulfield electorate: former government performance**

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) — I grieve for the people of Victoria over a number of issues they have been left with due to the poor economic management of the previous Labor government. It did not make the hard decisions, and it did not stand up for the people of Victoria. As a member of the community in Caulfield and as a candidate I listened, along with many of my colleagues on this side of the house, to the indifference of the previous government to crime, making the hard decisions and standing up for the community. Since we came into government we have seen that promises were not delivered and actions were not taken. The issues I wish to discuss today include the previous government's failure to make the hard decisions on crime, public transport, health and education. These are the fundamentals of good government. They are the important steps that we expect a government in Victoria to take, but unfortunately they were not delivered by the Labor government.

I grieve for Victorians about the economic mismanagement of the previous government. When we talk about economic mismanagement we talk, as we have stated on many previous occasions in this house, of the black holes that continue to get bigger. They remind me of what happened in *Battlestar Galactica*; the holes just keep appearing the further we look.

Yesterday the Treasurer handed down a terrific budget. He was meticulous about ensuring that the government looked at where it needed to go and at what it had been left with by the previous government. Some of the facts and figures speak for themselves. Expenditure under the previous Labor government increased by 8 per cent while revenue growth increased by 7.3 per cent. On this side of the house we know how to run a business. It is obvious that those on the other side had no idea. If you tried to run a business like that, you would quickly be calling in the administrators and liquidating the business almost instantaneously. You cannot keep spending when there is no money in the bank. You cannot keep hoping that you will receive handouts. If it

were not for major injections of capital, such as the Building the Education Revolution program, we would be in further disarray. The Labor government relied on handouts from its federal mates. Unfortunately that has left us in the disarray in which we find ourselves.

Major projects undertaken by any government are fundamental to strategic planning and the vision for the state's future. The opposition claims that our budget does not deliver a vision. However, one need only look at the lack of vision of the previous government. When it came up with major projects, it came up with ideas but gave absolutely no thought as to how it would fund them. We have cost blow-outs of \$2.5 billion on major projects — and we are still counting. Mention of the words 'desalination plant' sends shivers down the spines of most Victorians. It is shocking, it is horrifying that we are signed up to a 30-year deal on that project. You would get less time for committing a murder. Unfortunately we are signed up for a life sentence, which brings me to the issue of crime.

Crime was a platform the coalition took to the last election. We said we would be tough on crime. Today I grieve for the victims of crime who were let down by the previous government over the last 11 years. Many times these people have stood at the front of Parliament House saying that criminals were not punished, sentences were not tough enough and people were let free on suspended sentences, only to reoffend. In fact it was the victims themselves who were punished, not the criminals. Incidents that have occurred in my electorate of Caulfield go to the heart of this, and I am sure that every member on this side of the house would have plenty of examples of the same kind. During the last election I stood up many times and identified the issues in my electorate. There were stabbings and there were bashings. At Caulfield station a gentleman was bashed by half a dozen people, and when a reporter arrived their camera was smashed. This is but one example; there are plenty of others. You need only walk down the streets to see the graffiti that remains from the time of the previous government.

When once I stood up at a forum and mentioned crime I was shouted down by members of the Labor Party, who said, 'How can you mention crime in Caulfield? Caulfield does not have such a thing as crime. It is an issue made up by the candidate for Caulfield'. Let me say that we now know that the crime statistics used by the previous government were made up and the real statistics were covered up. It is unfortunate that an officer at the highest level within Victoria Police — a knight of the realm — has resigned his post because he could not continue in the knowledge that this occurred under the previous government and was in fact

mandated by that government. These are the sorts of things that we on this side of the house will not stand for; these are the sorts of things that we will ensure are disclosed. We will make sure that we will deliver on crime. The people of Victoria expect the area in which they live in the state to be safe. That is first and foremost in their minds. It is paramount to them. If nothing else, they expect to be safe.

To demonstrate what has been happening, I give the following examples. Only last week a taxidriver was stabbed by two young people in Inkerman Road. Illegal boarding houses keep popping up because there is no regulation of them. We are looking at shutting them down, but under the loose laws of the previous government they were allowed to exist. There are drug problems. Only a week and a half ago a 35-year-old person died of a drug overdose outside my office. These are problems, and they are identifiable. They happen right in front of our eyes and they are things that we need to address.

We in this government are going to be tough on law and order. We are not going to sit back and let these problems continue. I am certain that the reasons behind the grief I express are something that will be dealt with by the current government. The coalition has recognised the problems and in this budget has already addressed a number of those issues. We have heard that the government will be delivering more police. First and foremost they will be a visible presence on the streets, in their vans and in their uniforms. They will enforce our laws, and that is very important. The changes made to the granting of suspended sentences will ensure that offenders will not roam free and reoffend when they are subject to a suspended sentence. It is very important for us to send a clear message to the community that we will be tough on crime.

I am excited about some of the initiatives mentioned in the budget, particularly the ability of local communities to do something about crime. We are taking it back into our own electorates — and even the Labor Party will benefit from our policy to ensure that our streets are cleansed of crime through, for example, a zero tolerance policy on graffiti. If there is a problem, we will do something about it. We will not allow our streets to continue to be big, long murals of mess. Instead our streets will be clean and something we can all be proud of.

I am also happy that we are taking Neighbourhood Watch back to the streets. We fought for Neighbourhood Watch during the election and committed to ensuring that crime statistics would not only be reported but would also be released to the

volunteers who are out on the streets doing something about making our streets safe. Under the previous government those figures were to be withheld. They were to be pulled back, yet we expected people to volunteer to walk the streets without any information. It is tantamount to sending an ostrich out and hoping that it will come back with an answer. There is no head-in-the-sand ostrich work here. What we are doing is getting out and about and empowering young people, not so young people and all people in Neighbourhood Watch to do something and continue the great work that its groups do.

I now turn to the public transport system. I grieve for every single public transport user who has had to put up with a second-rate, and in many cases third-rate, public transport system in Victoria. We have all experienced or witnessed this. We have all stood and waited for a train, particularly in the morning, only to see cancellations and delays and then to see that the train will not be coming at all and that we need to take alternative measures. The Sandringham line, which is in my electorate, is infamous for this. I am sure that if members went out like I have done and spoke to many of my travelling constituents, they would tell them that over the last 11 years the Sandringham line has been a mess.

What we have delivered in this budget in terms of more trains and upgrades to stations is just the sort of thing that this problem needs in order to be rectified. We need to go and do something about it. The previous government attempted to introduce myki — and I call it an attempt because it was pretty poor at that — and again we have been left with a situation where we need to pick up the pieces. We are going to do it; we are going to pick up the pieces. We are not going to scrap myki. Why? Because we simply cannot afford to continually put up with the mess.

**Mr Holding** — You just made the announcement.

**Mr SOUTHWICK** — No, I did not make the announcement.

We will probably end up having to address things like myki, because at the end of the day you have spent too much on it. You have taken so much of taxpayers money and invested it in a system — —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The member should address his comments through the Chair.

**Mr SOUTHWICK** — The Labor Party has invested so much money in this scheme that we are now in an unfortunate situation whereby we need to make decisions on what we are going to do. We are not

going to make political decisions; we are going to make decisions that are right for Victorians. That is what we will be doing.

The deployment of protective services officers (PSOs) is a very important step in terms of making our trains safe. Having PSOs on train stations will make trains safe simply because people will feel comfortable using them. If people feel comfortable using trains, we will get more patronage, and if we get more patronage, we will get a more efficient system. It is a very simple strategy. If the opposition had known this and done something about it, we might have had a better public transport system.

There is a whole range of other things that I grieve for. I grieve for the schools. I grieve for the Victorian parents and kids who have had to put up with substandard measures by the previous government. In my electorate, members only have to go to Ripponlea Primary School and Caulfield Primary School and have a look at those schools that have had no funding — zero dollars — from the previous government over the last 11 years to see this. Caulfield Primary School has an infestation of possums, and it also has roofs that are unsafe and would probably amount to an occupational health and safety issue. At the same time, the school has an \$800 000 school hall that was funded by the previous government so that the school could have a lovely plaque saying that the government helped it. Again this is pure politics and spin by the previous government, and we will do something about it. I grieve for all Victorians over the mess that the previous government has left us in, which we are going to fix.

### **Ballarat base hospital: helipad**

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — I stand today in this house to grieve for the callous treatment of the people of Ballarat West at the hands of this government.

I fully expected to be standing here today talking about the helipad which was promised to Ballarat and about that helipad sitting on top of a multistorey car park. I am talking about it today but not in any positive sense, because not one dollar was set aside in the budget for the helipad. Not one dollar was set aside for a multistorey car park. This is not only disappointing for the people of Ballarat and surrounding districts but is also a blatant breach of the trust of my constituents and electorate.

I remember all too clearly the promise made by Liberal candidates during last year's election campaign that a helipad was a priority for this government. I remember

the candidates' campaign office being absolutely plastered with posters of helicopters and promises of a helipad as a no. 1 priority. Then there was the announcement by the now Premier about the helipad which he made from the steps of Parliament — perhaps an early indication of his aversion to setting foot in regional areas. The media release is dated Wednesday, 14 July 2010, and is headed, 'Coalition commits to build Ballarat helipad'. It states:

The Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition if elected in November will build a helipad at Ballarat ...

The coalition has long held the view that this helipad is urgently required and would save lives.

As part of its commitment the coalition will allocate up to \$2 million to build a helipad at Ballarat base hospital and to undertake an engineering scoping study to determine the most favourable site and configuration for a helipad, to report back before the end of June 2011.

The end of June 2011 is fast approaching, and there is no money for an engineering scoping study — no money for anything to do with a helipad.

The same media release states:

The coalition's announcement will give heart to those who have fought for so long for this vital service ...

Here are a few words from one of those who have fought for so long for this vital service:

... HELP member Wayne Rigg said the Ballarat community should feel betrayed by the lack of immediate funding.

He further said:

We have been let down in a big way. A promise was made to us, as a group, and to Ballarat for \$2 million for the project, and now we have nothing. It's an absolute crock to have one line in the budget saying a helipad will be funded in the future. What does that even mean? It's like the Gold Coast SUNS saying that one year in the future they may win an AFL grand final.

He went on to say:

No matter how you want to say it, the coalition has not honoured its promise. We are no better off than before the election ... we're getting nothing.

This was taken from the *Ballarat Courier* online article headed 'State budget: no money for helipad, despite pre-election promise', which was posted last night.

I quote again from the Liberal-Nationals media release of 14 July 2010:

Liberal candidate for Ballarat East Ben Taylor said, 'This is a win for the local community, one which will help save lives in Ballarat ...'

There is no win today — no victory dance to be held anywhere in Ballarat.

The only thing that will be taking off from the base hospital any time soon is the spin of the government. This government has absolutely breached the trust of the Ballarat people and reneged on its commitment. It has committed to a committee and nothing else. The Ballarat community has stated loudly and clearly what it requires — a helipad on top of a multistorey car park. It is needed for the use of the staff who work late-night shifts and have to walk, often alone, to their cars that are parked a distance away, often in the middle of the night. It is needed for the older people who need access to the hospital and who are unable to walk long distances; for those who have disabilities who cannot find a car park at the hospital and who have difficulty walking long distances; and for people who will need to be transported to or from the hospital by air ambulance and who need a helipad to land upon.

I also grieve for the Sebastopol community — namely, the Ballarat South community learning precinct. This education community had been promised \$18 million by the coalition to upgrade the Sebastopol College part of that precinct. In an online posting from the *Ballarat Courier* dated 4 November 2010 headed ‘Coalition pledges \$18 million for Sebastopol College’, the then deputy opposition leader and now Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business and Minister for Tourism and Major Events said that:

... old and run-down buildings at the school would be demolished under a coalition government —

and that it —

would also build an open plan learning space.

She went on to say:

The coalition’s \$18 million commitment to rebuild Sebastopol College is an investment in the local community and, most importantly, an investment in the future of our children.

I am not sure whose children she is referring to. Hopefully one day I will have some grandchildren or great grandchildren, and perhaps they may reap the benefits of this election commitment that has not been funded. Certainly I do not think any of the children or the parents actually believed that this Liberal-Nationals conservative government would keep its word.

Craig Coltman, the Liberal candidate for Ballarat West, who by the way had the slogan ‘A name you can trust’, stated in his vision for education in Ballarat:

A coalition government is committed to spending \$18 million to rebuild Sebastopol College. Our children and dedicated teachers have the right to a school they can be proud of. Sebastopol College is in a terrible state and this investment will enable the school to provide the quality education the students and communities of Sebastopol, Delacombe and Redan deserve.

The students and communities of Sebastopol, Delacombe and Redan deserve to have the election commitment that was made to them fulfilled, and do not deserve to have their trust betrayed. They deserve not to be lied to and not to be treated with contempt.

I grieve for the people of Ballarat and surrounding districts who have found that the election commitment made to fund the Ballarat western link road has not been fully fulfilled. The Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition media release dated Thursday, 25 November 2010, headed ‘Coalition commits \$38 million for Ballarat western link road’, states:

A Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition government will commit \$38 million to build the Ballarat western link road between the Western Freeway and Remembrance Drive, ensuring the employment of thousands in the region and attracting new industry to Ballarat.

The coalition will commit \$38 million to build the project in its first term, allocating \$10 million over the first two years to begin the planning and land acquisition and a further \$28 million over the following two years to see the project completed.

What did we see in yesterday’s budget? A grand total of \$1 million for the 2011–12 financial year and \$1.5 million for the 2012–13 financial year, which is only \$35.5 million short of the commitment that was made to the people of Ballarat.

The Committee for Ballarat and the City of Ballarat, as well as many other community leaders, see this as a high priority. In fact, the CEO of the Committee for Ballarat stated to the *Ballarat Courier* yesterday that:

Confirmation of the link road is vital. It’s a really important project, it’s not just a road. It’s a massive jobs boost.

I grieve for the people of Ballarat and district who expected that this government would consider the importance of jobs for Ballarat — or jobs for anyone, for that matter. The budget that was handed down yesterday was so lacking in vision and so short sighted that I do not believe the words ‘jobs’, ‘skills’ or ‘employment’ were even used in the Treasurer’s address.

I grieve for the commuters of Ballarat who are about to have their express service removed. This service will now stop at Ballan, extending the time of the trip. It is important that Ballan residents get the train services

they need, but not at the expense of Ballarat residents. This is simply robbing Peter to pay Paul. I am concerned that the loss of express services will have a detrimental impact upon Ballarat's commuters. Any increase in travel time impacts greatly upon the personal lives of rail commuters and their families.

Last night an online petition set up by the *Ballarat Courier* entitled 'Express yourself' had been signed by more than 460 concerned residents. It is an indictment of this government that since it has been elected travel times for Ballarat commuters are getting longer, not shorter. Ballarat has been identified as an area of potential significant population growth. Its proximity to Melbourne, relatively affordable housing and great lifestyle provide an incentive for families to move from Melbourne to our wonderful city. Making the trip to Melbourne longer does not help to entice people to Ballarat or to make the lives of those who have made the move and who commute to Melbourne for work or study any easier.

I raised this matter last night during the adjournment debate. I thank the Minister for Public Transport for taking time out of his busy schedule to come into the chamber and attempt to respond to this matter. I say 'attempt', because I did not hear anything in his response that would give the commuters of Ballarat any hope that he is listening to their concerns. The minister mentioned a planning study; however, I do not see how this relates to the timetable change which comes into effect on 8 May. The minister mentioned the regional rail link, which is a very important piece of infrastructure. It took a concerted community campaign to get him to agree to it. The minister mentioned protective services officers at stations, but I cannot see how this initiative will make a train go faster.

In conclusion I grieve for the Ballarat community, which was promised a helipad but is not getting one. I grieve for the Ballarat community, which was promised \$38 million for a ring-road but is not getting it. I grieve for the Sebastopol community, which was promised \$18 million to rebuild its school but is not getting it. I grieve for those commuters who now have to spend more time on a train and less time with their families. I grieve for the Ballarat community, which expected that its government would have a vision and a plan for job creation and skills development. I grieve for regional Victoria, because I do not believe we are feeling a whole lot of love from this government.

### **Natural disasters: Victoria**

**Ms McLEISH** (Seymour) — I rise today to grieve for the Victorians impacted by natural disasters over the

last few years, including the last few months, and the battles they have faced in overcoming those disasters and getting their lives back on track. I particularly grieve for those who have been impacted by both the horrific bushfires of Black Saturday and the many flood events of the last six months. Many of these people live in my electorate. The central and eastern parts of my electorate have been hit hard in the last few years. It is important that we understand the cumulative nature of these events, which have spanned both natural disasters and extremely ordinary governing — in fact poor governing — by the former government.

The towns of Flowerdale, Kilmore, Kinglake, Strath Creek, Reedy Creek, Strathewen, Steels Creek, Dixons Creek, Glenburn, Yarra Glen, Marysville, Buxton and Taggerty suffered greatly in the fires. The threat of fire is always on the minds of those living in rural communities. People are always on guard — more so on hot, windy days. Residents in the area around Glenburn, having experienced fires in January 2006, remain on high alert during the summer months.

The north-south pipeline debacle added to the stress of many of the residents of this area as they were disregarded, ridden roughshod over and walked all over by the Brumby government as it imposed its will, despite good sense and good economy. We saw one of the state's biggest white elephants being 'stuck in the ground', for want of better words. I grieved with those people at the time. For many of those people, things did not get much better.

Some 18 months after the January 2006 fires, the high levels of stress caused by a preposterous proposal were exacerbated when pipeline workers were discovered to be adopting extremely poor work practices on total fire ban days. Angle grinders, welders and chainsaws were all being used in the construction of the pipeline on those total fire ban days — that is, not just on one day but on many days. This appalling behaviour was captured by many of the residents on camera, including on video. Grief echoed in and throughout the community, and community members could not believe this could happen. They were aware of what can unfold when such equipment is used on a day of total fire ban. The horrors they all dreaded were seen in the unprecedented bushfires of Black Saturday. Their grief was truly exacerbated by these events.

As members would expect, communities did not find it at all easy when beginning the task of getting back on their feet. There were many hurdles placed in their way. They asked themselves, 'Where am I going to live in the meantime? Am I going to rebuild? If I rebuild, where am I going to rebuild? How am I going to do

that? Where am I going to get the money to rebuild?'. The hurdle of navigating the system that was put in front of them was supposed to be made easier with the help they received, but this was not always the case. They had to navigate the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, which was a bureaucracy created by the government of the day. They had to navigate local councils and their rules and regulations, which could be unclear and were known to change. They were told of the planning permits they needed to obtain, then they would find out they needed an additional planning permit or they needed to get something else from someone else. I grieve for the councils which were involved, particularly the Murrindindi Shire Council, which had the greatest proportion of bushfires in its area.

The workers in Murrindindi suffered, and many of them were locals. They were pushed aside as others from the city went to their area, took over and told them, 'Hop out of the way. We know what we are doing, and we can do it better'. Those council workers suffered on two fronts — they suffered personally and emotionally, and they suffered in terms of work because other people went to the area and rode roughshod over them.

Some \$46 million worth of public assets are being gifted, including about \$23 million or \$24 million to the Murrindindi shire. I continue to grieve for the Murrindindi council, because although the gifting of public assets sounds good, the Murrindindi shire needs money to maintain the assets. Those new assets are being imposed on a council with a very low ratepayer base and one which struggles financially at the best of times.

There are other hurdles. People needed to deal with their emotions regarding the fire and its aftermath. At the same time, Grocon went into these areas and got all the work. Local traders and local builders and construction workers watched as others got all the work and they were disregarded. Yes, they could have put their names on the list to be given some work, but you had to wonder about that list and how it was managed by the previous government when somebody in Kinglake was getting work in Bendigo. All the external work and the money did not stay with the community; it left the district and went to a large corporation.

There was another hurdle: juggling the bureaucracy. Many questions about the fires have arisen that communities are looking for answers to. Why have bushfire preventive measures fallen off the radar? What is going on? Why have the councils and the government changed the way preventive measures are

managed? What is going on with roadside vegetation? What is going on with the management of public and private land? Why do we not as a state have a better understanding of fires? Why were the communications systems not good enough on the day? Why are they not being addressed, and why were they not addressed by the previous government? When I go places I constantly hear queries about the communications systems and how they failed on the day, and virtually two years later, when we became the government, these systems had not been addressed.

Why has it taken so long to trial the siren system? What is going on about shelters and bunkers? What is going on about royal commission recommendations? These were questions that I heard as soon as we took over government — questions that had remained unanswered. Communities had no luck with the previous government in getting answers to questions that seemed to them to be things the government should have known and been on the ball about. Did it even know that the mobile phone service in the area is virtually non-existent?

I am pleased that the new fire services commissioner, Craig Lapsley, was able to attend a community meeting at Steels Creek with me on Monday to begin answering some of the questions on a number of these important issues which had never been answered and had fallen on deaf ears during the inaction of the previous government.

More recently the areas of Yarra Glen, Dixons Creek and Steels Creek have taken somewhat of a hit again. Small business is suffering, trade is suffering and tourism is down. There are many factors at play here which have impacted on spending, tourism and morale in the areas, and the slow recovery from the bushfires is certainly one. The population has decreased. The many renters in the wider areas, whose landlords were offered no assistance from the former government following the devastation of the fires, have moved away. With nowhere to live, people have had to move. That is money not going into the local economy. Tourism has not returned yet. Many of the folk who worked hard for the bushfire recovery effort are exhausted. This is typical across all the areas impacted by the bushfires — that the key movers within the communities, the people who have tried to help and to keep everybody up, are now exhausted themselves. The community is exhausted.

There has been an impact on spending and tourism through the global financial crisis. There is a new bypass, which has taken a very long time to be completed, and there was a lack of signage — which

we managed to get rectified so that Yarra Glen was not overlooked, as it had been previously while work was going on on the bypass. There is still a way to go. Many who relied on tourism got pressure from the banks. The banks were looking at refinancing options for businesses, and with the dollar being what it is, people were tending to go elsewhere.

Another natural disaster, which has been extremely difficult for these exhausted people to deal with — there has been the cumulative effect of fires, the pipeline, more fires, and tourism not returning — has been the floods. There have been several rain events which have impacted directly on the towns and surrounding areas. It is interesting that with some of these events there have been lesser amounts of rainfall but they have caused a greater number of problems.

The exhausted townspeople are again asking questions, and again the bushfires are still at play here. Previously three-quarters of the rainfall was absorbed and one-quarter ran off; following the bushfires this was reversed. The scorched earth meant that the water was not being absorbed. The earth had compacted. The lack of vegetation meant that the run-off was not being captured and slowed down. Gravel had moved down the creeks, limiting their holding capacity and quickly forcing water onto the flood plain. The other day one of the land-holders in the area told me that Steels Creek has lost 1.5 metres of depth and so it floods extremely quickly. I very much grieve for this community. We are told that this cycle should return to normal sometime next year and that the water will be contained in the confines of Steels Creek. Meanwhile the residents need to hope that rain does not bucket down — and we know that hope is not a strategy.

The residents of Gulf Road particularly are feeling the impact as the water banks up and floods. They have not understood what has been happening. After the bushfires they were not given any understanding that these sorts of things might happen and that they needed to prepare for them. Yarra Valley Racing, which has its home in Yarra Glen, lost a number of meetings during the floods, and I grieve for that race club in particular. It was flooded five times in as many months. The path of Steels Creek altered. Instead of flooding behind the racecourse, as it had done previously, due to the circumstances I have just mentioned the water ran directly through the track. It washed a new \$250 000 track straight down the gurgler. Now the creek floods directly onto the straight, where it has exposed holes. One race meeting had to be abandoned when a hole opened up in the middle of the track, and then the club discovered the extent of the holes throughout the track.

That means a lot of new drainage work needs to be undertaken at a substantial cost.

I grieve with the club on the realisation that there is no quick-fix solution. This has caused an enormous loss of income to the club. It has also meant the loss of the injection of tourism that normally accompanies the race meetings. The race meetings are extremely successful, on many occasions drawing larger crowds than Melbourne events. The atmosphere is terrific. Local traders are able to supply food and wine for the corporate boxes and the racegoers; without these opportunities, the traders are continuing to suffer. The area has had the bushfires and the pipeline, and now the flooding is impacting severely on those involved.

I look forward to continuing to support the communities through this rough period so that we can get tourism back on track, so that the residents have an understanding of what is going on with the efforts of the Country Fire Authority and Melbourne Water and so that they are helped to understand the flooding and the patterns and how and when things should return to normal. I am pleased that earlier this week representatives from Melbourne Water visited Steels Creek and met with the community so that they can have a greater understanding of the problems. In the meantime I grieve with the people of this area who have suffered over a very long period of time, particularly through the poor practices of the previous government.

### **Budget: Bendigo West electorate**

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) — Twice in less than three months I have risen in this house to grieve for the Bendigo West electorate and for the people of central Victoria. This government has revealed that it has no plans for the future of regional Victoria and that its vision for the state and for the Bendigo region is non-existent. It has no plan to grow our state, no plan to grow the economy, no plan to create jobs and no plan to ensure that Victorian households will have access to the services and infrastructure they will need in the future.

The budget has delivered nothing but disappointment for the people of Castlemaine and Bendigo. What we have seen in the last 24 hours is a Liberal-Nationals government whose members have not learned any lessons from the past and have continued to put themselves and their own electorates ahead of what is best for all Victorians.

The last 11 years have seen massive investment in the Bendigo region. Labor in government set about reversing the devastation caused under the previous

Kennett government. With a vision and plan for job creation and economic growth our region was rebuilt. This does not happen by accident; it takes good planning from government. Labor invested in key infrastructure projects such as the Bendigo education plan, hospitals — including our massive investment for the new Bendigo hospital — roads and rail. Across the state over 120 000 new jobs have been created. Bendigo has been thriving, and people have been flocking to the region. The region has been growing faster than it has in decades, because the Brumby and Bracks governments supported sustainable population growth, invested in job-creating transport infrastructure and delivered new investment.

Sadly, it has been revealed that the coalition government has no plan for the Bendigo region. Prior to last year's election the Liberal and Nationals representatives in Bendigo West frantically ran around promising the world to the people of Castlemaine and Bendigo West. These last-minute uncosted promises have been revealed for what they were: desperate attempts to gain votes. It is a shame that the Liberal-Nationals government has let down the people of Castlemaine. Despite The Nationals representative in the other place, Damian Drum, bleating about how much The Nationals have supported country Victoria, they have failed to deliver two vital projects they promised to Castlemaine. Mr Drum has spent the last eight years in opposition on the back bench having an easy ride and has not yet come to terms with the fact that The Nationals, as lackeys and puppets of the Liberal Party, are now in government. The pressure of having to deliver and work hard is obviously showing.

Castlemaine Secondary College was promised \$7 million for its new school, but it will get nothing. Mr Drum did not have the influence to persuade his Liberal masters that this was a priority. Castlemaine hospital was promised \$10 million by The Nationals in the final days of the November election campaign, but it will get nothing. Again Mr Drum did not have the passion to persuade his Liberal masters that this was a priority. Failure to fund these two projects is a slap in the face for local families who have been waiting for investment in their school. It is also a slap in the face for all local people who anticipated receiving funding to upgrade the Castlemaine hospital.

Last week The Nationals member for Northern Victoria Region, Mr Drum, described additional funding for Bendigo's new hospital this year or in future years as irrelevant. The coalition's budget confirms this view, as does the Minister for Health's failure to come to Bendigo and explain his plan for the Bendigo hospital. In opposition the health minister was frequently in

Bendigo, promising the world to the community. The member for Bendigo East and I have been urging the minister to come to Bendigo now that he is in government and explain to the Bendigo community what his government's plan is for the Bendigo hospital, but he has been a no-show. He has been avoiding Bendigo, and now we know why — yesterday it was revealed that for the next three years there will be no additional funding for Bendigo's new hospital. This will effectively blow out the completion date beyond 2016. The coalition has sent the Bendigo community a very clear message that this deadline cannot be met. The coalition promised an additional \$102 million for Bendigo's new hospital, yet now it has been revealed that it will get only a paltry \$20.5 million, but not until 2014.

Bendigo will soon be losing one of its two radiotherapy bunkers, and I have been pushing for funding of a replacement bunker before the old one is decommissioned and the new hospital is built. The \$20.5 million in yesterday's budget is needed now and should be spent on a new radiotherapy bunker as a priority and as a vital service in the region, one which cancer patients and their families should not have to wait for. Without this critical service, cancer patients in the region will be punished and will have to travel to Melbourne for treatment or, worse still, be put on long waiting lists for treatment. This is not good enough when we know that time is crucial for patients suffering from cancer. The coalition should match Labor's commitment and have a new radiotherapy bunker built by 2013. The patients of the Bendigo region deserve better, but they have been deceived by the coalition. They deserve to receive, in the coalition's first budget, the full \$102 million promised by the coalition.

The Nationals member for Northern Victoria Region gloats in today's media that the paltry \$20.5 million for the new hospital will silence critics who have been urging the government to meet its commitments. I say to Mr Drum: the critics are not silenced; in fact they are outraged at this government's deceit and failure to deliver what it promised. The coalition government has let down the people of Bendigo and regional Victoria.

There is no funding to upgrade the Calder Highway interchange at Fogartys Gap Road, Ravenswood South. Labor promised \$7 million to progress planning for this important interchange, but the coalition does not care about safety on our roads and has not funded this very important section of the Calder Highway. Bendigo knows well and remembers the poor track record of the Liberals and the dark days of its broken promises on the Calder Highway, and it seems it is a return to the past.

There is no funding for the community theatre at Bendigo's old jail. Labor promised to commit \$2.1 million to back Bendigo's reputation as a leading regional arts capital with an expansion of the city's arts precinct, including the development of a 900-plus-seat community theatre at the old jail. Labor made this commitment because the Bendigo Art Gallery is a vibrant cultural facility that attracts visitors, and that in turn creates jobs for Bendigo.

There is no funding to upgrade and rebuild fire stations at Huntly or Murphys Creek. These stations are in desperate need of funding, but the coalition government has turned its back on the brave Country Fire Authority volunteers in these communities and has not committed to funding the new stations. These communities are shocked and disappointed by the treatment they are being dealt by this government, which prefers to spend up big on CFA stations in its own coveted electorates.

There is no funding for the historic Fortuna Villa building in the heart of Bendigo West, despite the community loudly voicing its concern and wanting the building returned to the community for the community's benefit. Labor promised a \$7 million lifeline for this historic building, which would have transformed the facility into a major arts, learning and community precinct. That is what the people of Bendigo want, but the coalition has ignored them, disregarded them and not funded this important historical asset.

The state budget was a chance for the coalition to make investments that are needed to continue to grow jobs in the regions, but unfortunately it has failed to do that. The reality is that the coalition made some absurd election campaign promises which the state cannot afford to deliver. One of the most absurd examples was the Liberal representative in Bendigo West promising two protective services officers at Eaglehawk station after 6.00 p.m. every night. Perhaps if she had done her homework she would have discovered that only one train, on its way to Swan Hill, stops at Eaglehawk station after 6.00 p.m. each night of the week. It stops there for 5 minutes. This was an absurd and ill-thought-out promise, and I suspect it was broken because it was found to be unworkable and unnecessary.

This has been the way of this government, talking down places such as Eaglehawk and Kangaroo Flat. People in these communities do not want to be treated with contempt and told that they are living in violent communities or that they are dumb. This attitude does nothing to encourage investment in tourism or housing in our communities.

It is a fact that the Liberals and The Nationals have always opposed Labor's improvements to the Bendigo–Melbourne rail line that paved the way for the introduction of our flagship service, the early morning express service to Melbourne. It has served the Bendigo and Castlemaine commuters well until now. The Liberals and The Nationals have used the first opportunity to scuttle the early morning express and replace it with a service that will now stop at Gisborne. The 6.02 a.m. train is very popular, with the train full by the time it departs Castlemaine. Adding the stop at Gisborne is not a solution to the needs of Bendigo or Gisborne train travellers. It will mean overcrowded trains and a longer journey for travellers, and it will place them at risk of missing important public transport connections in Melbourne. The Minister for Public Transport needs to immediately change his mind and restore Bendigo's express service to Melbourne.

There is no funding for extra carriages on the Bendigo–Melbourne rail service. Extra carriages are needed because commuter numbers are growing substantially and the service is more popular than ever. Also, there is not a single cent for new tracks, only for more planning studies.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that this government has sorely let down the Golden Square Primary School community in Bendigo West. The Liberal-Nationals government is punishing parents for the way they voted by upgrading schools based on political rather than educational need. Golden Square Primary School is one school that has missed out on urgent funding to progress its plans to build a new school on the Maple Street site. The government is showing its true colours by abandoning this school, which is in need of modernisation, and is instead directing money to schools in coalition-held seats. The Nationals member for Northern Victoria should stand up to his political masters in the Liberal Party and demand that Golden Square Primary School be allocated these urgently needed funds.

Education should be above politics, and schools should be upgraded and rebuilt according to need, not according to the political whims of the Liberals and The Nationals. Corrupting the school rebuilding program will come as a slap in the face to the Golden Square Primary School community, which has been working very hard to plan for its new school.

The coalition government has let down the communities in the Bendigo West electorate and the region. It has no vision for the region, no plans to build and invest or to create jobs. It is only six months into the job and already we see that the writing is on the

wall: the regions will be sidelined and the Bendigo West electorate will suffer.

The state will suffer with its net debt increasing. The government promised \$1.6 billion worth of cuts in the election but gave no explanation of how those savings would be delivered without impacting on those front-line services. Public service job funding is down by \$500 million per year and thousands of families in Bendigo will lose access to the School Start bonus.

What is most shocking for young people in my electorate is the scrapping of the apprenticeship bonus. That is a very bad sign for the future when we have a skills shortage and should be encouraging our young people into the trades. The government's disappointing and lacklustre budget has failed to deliver for the future of the Bendigo West electorate and the region, and it should be condemned for it. The community of Castlemaine has been treated with contempt, and it now knows that it will not get its much-anticipated new secondary college or a new hospital.

This government inherited a AAA-rated budget, with a strong surplus over each of the next four years. There is no excuse for its not delivering what it promised. Residents in the Bendigo West region have missed out on key projects that are needed to support the community and jobs. This government has failed in its very first budget to deliver what the region needs.

### **Prahran electorate: former government performance**

**Mr NEWTON-BROWN** (Prahran) — I grieve for the neglect of Prahran by the former government. The Brumby government allowed a vibrant, internationally renowned entertainment precinct in Chapel Street to descend into lawlessness and alcohol and drug-fuelled violence. In my electorate it used to be a good thing to live close to Chapel Street, with its retail shops, bars, nightclubs and cafes. It was a place where people enjoyed living in the thick of things. It used to be fun: residents coexisted with the street life and they valued it as part of the character of the area. Residents loved the vibrancy. But something went horribly wrong during the last 11 years. Chapel Street, and to a lesser extent Toorak Road, became overrun on weekends with violent people and people who were drunk or drugged or both. It simply became a place that was no longer a comfortable environment for our residents.

I recall that after the birth of my first daughter over 10 years ago I used to take the pram and go for a walk down Chapel Street late at night to settle her. I would not dare do that now. Instead of the relaxed sometimes

festive atmosphere of Chapel Street at night, there is now a feeling of danger lurking somewhere just below the surface, a feeling that things could turn bad in an instant. Residents in my electorate come to my office and tell me they are concerned about their safety, about their property, about thefts from cars, about vandalism and about their general amenity. They wake up, especially on Sunday mornings, to find bottles, broken glass, rubbish, vomit and urine in the street. Living near Chapel Street is just not such a great thing any more.

It got particularly bad during the final years of the Brumby government. Even young voters in my electorate tell me that they want to feel safe when they go out in Prahran. They do not want to go out to Hungry Jack's and get beaten to a pulp, as happened to one of my young constituents a few years back. They expect government to deliver on street safety, and they expect that when you need a policeman, a policeman is going to be there and available to help you. But Brumby allowed the decay of Chapel Street to occur. He allowed a culture of lawlessness — a culture of a lack of respect for others and for other people's property. He allowed inadequate policing to occur in Chapel Street. This all happened on the former government's watch — it let it happen.

I am pleased to inform the house that the Baillieu government does not find this culture acceptable. We will not stand by, as the Brumby government did — as the mob on the other side did — and do nothing. We will not let our streets be handed over to the thugs and the drug dealers. We are not going to put it into the too-hard basket, or even worse, the don't really care basket. The Baillieu government will reclaim our streets and our neighbourhoods for lawful activity — and we have already progressed along this path. We have taken a multipronged approach to address the problems, and this approach spans several ministries.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs has already acted to change liquor licensing laws. He has extended the freeze on late-night venues in my area for 18 months, introduced laws to enable a statutory barring power, increased penalties for failing to leave a licensed premise when requested and also introduced a new offence for failing to leave the vicinity of a licensed premise. If we contrast that with what the former government did in relation to liquor licensing, the only thing I can recall it doing was imposing a 2.00 a.m. lockout — and what a disaster that was. It was a pathetic stunt, which actually made the situation worse, with drunk people out in the streets trying to get into licensed premises where their mates were. It was certainly no solution to the alcohol-fuelled violence we have seen proliferate in this state.

On front-line policing, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has overseen an investment of \$602 million to fund 1700 additional new police in this term of government. There is also money for training 940 new protective services officers in this term. The Attorney-General has implemented new legislation to stamp out crime. He is implementing tougher sentencing, abolishing suspended sentences and implementing more effective offender management.

I turn now to initiatives by the Minister for Corrections, who is also the Minister for Crime Prevention. He has funded grassroots crime-prevention initiatives, including a \$20 million fund for public safety infrastructure for things such as closed-circuit television cameras, which are so necessary and useful in the Chapel Street precinct of my electorate. The Baillieu government is implementing a multipronged approach, which spans several ministerial portfolios, and this works as a suite of measures which will restore law and order to this state and particularly to areas such as Chapel Street, where there is such a concentration of people who go there for entertainment purposes, particularly on weekends.

I turn now to my grief for the safety of tenants within the department of housing accommodation in my electorate. This area has been shamefully neglected by the previous government. It is a basic human need to feel safe in your own home, and when the state provides homes for our most needy, it comes with a duty of care to provide a safe environment for tenants — an environment in which they can live without fear of their neighbours and without fear of the people who come to visit their neighbours. Yet other than providing some automatic sliding glass doors, I did not see anything done by the government to address the chronic problems we have in the housing flats in my electorate. It did nothing to protect the tenants from the greatest source of their fears, which is drug dealers and drug users.

In my electorate the senior housing officer tells me that the most common complaint received by the department in Prahran is in relation to drug users and drug dealers. Some examples of complaints are: 'I'm kept up all night by people coming and going', 'Strange people knock on my door in the middle of the night mistaking my house for the drug house' and 'Dangerous and undesirable people hang out around the area'. In my own office in Chapel Street this year I think I have had about five different tenants come to see me who are concerned about problems in relation to drug use and drug trafficking on the housing estates, particularly in Moore Street, South Yarra.

I refer to the work of Judd, Samuel and Barton from the University of New South Wales in their review of the relationship between crime and public housing. They stated:

... there are strong associations between crime, fear of crime and public housing concentrations. Crime hot spots in all study areas were more likely to be associated with clusters of public housing properties.

It is a problem which needs particular attention, and it has not had that particular attention from the previous government.

In 2002 Dr Tony Dalton and Dr James Rowe from RMIT did a study in Victoria, and they looked at the problems of drugs and public housing in Victoria. The report is entitled *A Wasting Resource — Public Housing and Drug Use in Inner City Melbourne*. This study identified the tragic spiral of public housing once drug use and drug dealing is allowed to take hold. I quote from the introduction:

State government agencies, local governments and non-government agencies have already put considerable program effort into improving life for tenants in a number of high-rise flat tower blocks in the inner city of Melbourne. This includes improving the physical fabric of the buildings, supporting tenant groups, providing additional services and increasing security. However, the continuing reluctance of low-income public housing applicants to move onto those estates and the applications for transfer received from current residents indicate that making these estates popular places to live, or at least acceptable places to live, is going to be difficult. In housing policy terms this is a tragedy for a number of reasons. In the inner city this public housing, which is good quality housing located within easy reach of a wide range of services and facilities, provides almost all the affordable housing in the very expensive gentrified inner city housing market. More broadly it makes the task of meeting a very high level of demand for affordable housing more difficult in a system that is already under considerable pressure ...

A key factor in the reluctance of people to live on a number of these estates is that they have become sites for extensive trading and use of illicit drugs. This has led to the common areas, such as lifts, stairwells, laundries, foyers and surrounding open space becoming degraded with discarded sharps and other detritus. Tenants, including users who are tenants, Office of Housing workers and visitors, including visitors who are users, experience fears for their safety. This is, using Hardin's ... description, a 'tragedy of the commons', resulting from a breakdown in the social relationships around the use of a shared resource. The 'commons' in this situation are a small number of public housing tower blocks ... The 'tragedy' is degraded public space and fractured trust relations experienced daily by tenants, visitors and public housing managers as they move around these estates.

The study noted that many people living in these housing estates want to actually get out of them. Even the drug users themselves told these researchers that

they were scared to be living in the flats where they purchase the drugs.

The study included interviews with various tenants, and the results are very illuminating. One drug user said:

There are people who spend their time beating the shit out of people to get money and drugs. They will stab you; they'll do anything. It's happened to people I know a few times.

Another said:

I've spent enough time going up and down buying drugs in the high rise. I don't really go out to the high rise to buy drugs anymore, I stay away from it ... You would walk into the flat and there's the big guy standing and you know they're wondering, 'How much money has he got on him?'. You've got to worry about all of that ... it's dirty, there are syringes everywhere.

Another said:

You're worried about finding somewhere clean that you can go and have your shot. Because if you go into a stairwell ... there's ... needles ... around. There's always blood and God knows what. It's not a place that you really feel comfortable walking around by yourself.

The study then goes on to editorialise as follows:

A visiting purchaser ... challenged another about the source of the pervading smell of stale urine in the stairwells. He made his point by posing a question and answering it in the same breath:

'Does that mean you've never pissed in the stairwell? Tell me that and ... you're lying'.

Another problem stemming from the drug-dealing residents is predatory violence, where users who do not have enough money to buy their drugs know they can get their drugs from these areas so they attack soft targets such as other tenants. One of the other persons interviewed for the study said:

In the last few weeks there has been a bloke who apparently, I heard, has been hanging around there preying on women who come out there and obviously they've got drugs on them and so he takes it off them.

There's always a sense of fear. 'Where you're going?'. If you've got money on you or drugs on you there's always a sense of fear. Even when you haven't got anything someone might stop you if they suspect you've got something.

This study was done in 2002, and this report simply details the horrors of living in the housing flats. It is obvious that nothing has been done in the period between 2002 and now to address the problem. It was not obvious to the former Premier what he should do. The government did nothing to prevent drug dealers using or living on the estates.

It was pretty obvious to the Baillieu government that what it had to do was take swift action and give power to the department to remove the drug dealers and the drug users from the accommodation. Under the Brumby government the department could not act to evict a tenant until the police themselves had not only acted but had achieved a conviction, which could be six months down the track. Charging drug dealers with an offence was not enough; the police had to go through the whole process and go through the courts. Some drug dealers even used the charter of human rights to avoid eviction.

In the few short months of the Baillieu government we have done something to fix the problem. It was quite obvious to us what we had to do. We had to remove the dealers and the users, and we have done that by introducing the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Public Housing) Bill 2011. We were not scared to tread on the dubious rights of people who choose to deal and do drugs in public housing. Under this bill we will be able to evict people who are trafficking or attempting to traffic in drugs, supplying drugs to persons under 18 years of age, possessing drug-using equipment and cultivating a narcotic plant.

### **Budget: Ballarat East electorate**

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — It is, of course, not a pleasure to speak in a grievance debate. I am grieving for the people of my electorate and for regional Victoria generally because of the performance of the new Baillieu government in the five months since it came to power. This performance is reflected in the budget that was brought down yesterday. The budget is a great disappointment to people in the Ballarat East electorate in so many ways. This is the 12th budget that has come down since I have been a member of this Parliament, and it is clearly one to cause great disappointment when compared with the others.

The previous 11 budgets brought down under the Bracks and Brumby governments were always a cause for great enthusiasm. We would start off by seeing at least one school, if not two or three schools, listed for major infrastructure upgrades or renewal. Not one school is listed in this budget. Over the 11 years of the Brumby and Bracks governments nearly all of the approximately 40 state schools in my electorate received some funding for upgrades, but there is always more to be done.

At the top of the list is Kyneton Secondary College, which clearly warrants major upgrading. However, about four years ago when looking at the school's need for an upgrade the Kyneton school community decided

it was important to talk with Kyneton Primary School, which is located nearby on a block of limited size. That brought about further discussions with the Shire of Macedon Ranges and Lady Brooks Kindergarten, managed by the shire. Together the school communities received funding support from the Brumby government to look at the possibility of developing a new K–12 school on the present secondary college site. That master planning work has recently been completed, and it would have been reasonable for those school communities to have been excited about gaining funding in this budget to see their plans become a reality.

I wrote to the new Minister for Education soon after he took office to advise him of the importance of this school and to tell him that I believe it deserves to be considered a priority in this budget. While I did get a polite letter back from him, the truth of the matter is that no funding has been allocated for a Kyneton K–12 school in this budget. This is a source of great disappointment for that school community.

Likewise Daylesford Secondary College received stage 1 funding, completed a stage 1 redevelopment two years ago and was hoping to be able to move on with the replacement of its old 1960s building on the school site. Under the Brumby government members of that school community could have been confident of seeing funding in this budget to move on to stage 2, as was promised. But what do we see in this budget? The new Baillieu government has delivered nothing. Stage 1 has been completed, and there was excitement about the opportunity to see more of the school rebuilt, but nothing is going to happen. Gone is the plan announced by the former government to replace or rebuild all state schools across Victoria over a 10-year period, so many schools are going to be languishing. While they are continuing to provide great programs in their existing facilities, they could do so much more if they had their facilities upgraded to meet future needs and provide better opportunities.

This is a great disappointment. So much happened in the 11 years of the Bracks and Brumby governments; it just needed to continue on, but it has dropped dead. What is the outcome of this? Not only do we have disappointed school communities who are not getting capital infrastructure upgrade work but there is also an associated lack of jobs. When you stop funding capital projects there is an associated lack of job opportunities for those in the construction industry, and we know how important those jobs are in regional areas and right across the state.

By sacrificing so many capital project funding opportunities, this budget appears to have dropped the ball when it comes to job opportunities for the regions, for the Ballarat East electorate and right across the state. This is a serious issue in terms of the economy and also for the families in which one or both members are looking for work and are not able to find it. This budget really drops the ball on promoting and building opportunities for employment and for building confidence in the future for all families across the state.

I also notice that the School Start bonus has been dropped. This bonus provided so many families with a \$300 benefit to assist with new uniforms, books and so on when their children were starting primary or secondary school. Only those on an education maintenance allowance will be eligible for that funding in future, so many families will miss out on that opportunity. There are great disappointments for so many people in my electorate and across this state in terms education. If I have time, I will get back to some of the other issues I am concerned about in the education budget.

My electorate is broadbased and covers five different municipalities, and I see very little for it in the budget. The shire of Macedon Ranges includes the towns of Kyneton, Malmsbury and Tylden, and there is no mention of those towns in the budget. I note that the police station which is just about to be completed in Kyneton gets a final budget allocation, but the vast majority of the \$10.5 million for this police station had clearly been allocated under the Brumby government. This is a project I have been very pleased to work on over the last five years. I worked with local police, Kyneton community members, the Macedon Ranges shire and former ministers Tim Holding and Bob Cameron to secure funding for the Kyneton police station. The works were completed, and Kyneton now has a great new police station to serve the community and the surrounding area for many years to come.

Moving on to the shire of Hepburn, I see no mention of the various towns in that shire in the budget. On top of the list of things I have been concerned about is the new Daylesford police station, which was allocated funding in the last budget. I have written to the new Minister for Police and Emergency Services to advise that the funding is there but the project is stalling, and I have asked him to take action and look at this as a priority so that the work at the Daylesford police station gets under way and we see the project come to fruition, but to date nothing has happened.

The volunteers and supporters of the Daylesford Spa Country Railway will again be disappointed by this

budget. For many years they have been working hard, and they gained some funding from the former Bracks and Brumby governments to support their rail line and infrastructure works. They have run a service between Daylesford and Bullarto, but in recent years the last section of the track to Bullarto has fallen into disrepair. The former Brumby government had promised \$600 000 to see not just the rail line repaired but also a historic replica station established at Bullarto. Under the Baillieu government there is no funding for that project. I still challenge the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, to whom I have written about this project, and hope that in the years to come we will be able to find a way to get that project funded.

In regard to roads across my electorate, there is very little funding that is clearly defined to benefit any of my communities. Those who live along the Ballarat-Buninyong Road or use that road know that \$2.6 million has been committed in the current budget, but none of that money has been spent. I continue to encourage the new government to see that money expended and look forward to that so that we can get traffic moving more effectively along the Ballarat-Buninyong Road. The new government promised \$4.5 million towards that, and it has committed to its promise, but just \$1.1 million of that is committed in this year's budget. I do not know what we get for \$1.1 million, but it is not what people would have hoped for. They would have hoped for the \$4.5 million more up-front so that they could have those important works done on the Ballarat-Buninyong Road, which services the University of Ballarat, many schools and many people travelling to work and becomes very congested, particularly at school starting and finishing times but also at many other times in the day, and will only become more congested as more people come to reside in that area.

The residents of Mount Clear and Mount Helen are concerned that there is no mention in the budget of their new fire station, which is something that was promised by the former Brumby government and was echoed by the then Baillieu opposition, the incoming government. It is not in the budget, but I hope we will have an announcement about the Mount Clear and Mount Helen fire station. The area is clearly identified as a high fire-risk area, so we are looking forward to seeing the station built.

Those are some of the things that we are still waiting for in the Ballarat East electorate. As I have said, this budget contrasts significantly with the 11 budgets of the former Bracks and Brumby governments. The people of Ballarat knew that the Bracks and Brumby governments supported them. I guess that is why they

re-elected me and elected Sharon Knight, the member for Ballarat West. They knew that Labor had done well by them, and they will be thoroughly disappointed that the new coalition government appears to be letting them down badly.

In regard to health services, I am pleased that it appears that the Ballan bush nursing hospital will receive the \$2 million promised for the much-needed redevelopment of its acute health and administration areas. I hope that money will flow through to enable the hospital to see the plans that it has ready come to fruition over the coming months.

In regard to Ballarat Health Services more generally, people across Ballarat were given to understand that a helipad would be a priority of the new government, as it was for the former government. We see no funding listed for a helipad, so that project appears to be languishing. Many people across Ballarat who have been very excited about that possibility will be very disappointed.

Again, infrastructure spending on transport is very disappointing. There is no major transport project, which is quite a contrast to budgets brought down by the former Bracks and Brumby governments. We saw regional fast rail funded and a great project developing so that people have been able to travel quickly between Ballarat and Melbourne and Bendigo and Melbourne. Now already we see the service being downgraded; the express services between Ballarat and Melbourne have been lost. While \$700 000 has been allocated for the Ballan station upgrade, I have yet to understand how that will achieve the proposed passing loop that the new government said it would be building in the Ballan area.

Rail travellers will be relieved to learn that the regional rail link will be supported by this government. That project was initiated by the former government and gained lots of federal government funding. It is great that we will see that project of a dedicated country rail link from Sunshine to Southern Cross station. We know that under this government it will take a little longer to come to fruition, but I am glad that public pressure has seen the government recognise it as a project that needs to be continued.

Many areas are funded in the budget, and that looks good overall, but I am concerned that that funding will be woefully inadequate. As somebody who is interested in education and support for disengaged students, I think it is great that the budget has money allocated for pilot alternative settings for disengaged students — but there is only \$1 million over three years. What do you

get for \$330 000 a year in trying to support disengaged students across this state? It is a paltry amount that looks good but will mean very little in practice. Likewise, there is \$2 million over four years for teacher training. What do you get for \$500 000 a year in teacher training? It is a woefully inadequate amount for an area that is obviously very important.

Over and over again we see this budget letting down the people of Ballarat East and the people of Victoria. I grieve for the people of my electorate.

### **City of Greater Geelong: mayoral election**

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — Having sat through the last couple of contributions from the opposition, it would be very easy for me this morning to grieve for the people of Victoria, given the hollowness of the grievances that have been advanced by opposition members. They indicate the lack of substance among those on the other side of the house. That is not what I got up to talk about.

This morning I grieve for the people of the City of Greater Geelong, because now there is a real opportunity for major democratic reform in that city. There is an opportunity to open up the talent pool from which the mayor is chosen, solely because of a coalition government policy to implement the process of the direct election of the mayor. The implementation of that policy will give the people of Geelong the opportunity to have a real say in who is to lead their city for this term of the council.

There is one threat to this proposed reform. Sadly, not everyone is interested in getting the best possible outcome for the Geelong community by expanding the franchise — not everyone is interested in expanding the pool of candidates. The current pool of candidates is essentially the 12 Geelong councillors, or whoever they may be following the next municipal election. There is no doubt at all that there is some talent there, but the opportunity is also there to expand that pool to any person of ability, interest and commitment who wishes to put their name forward for election to the office of mayor.

Sadly, at least one person seems determined to preserve the old ways. Some people seem determined to fight the expansion of the franchise on what, from my perspective, can only be considered to be narrow views of self-interest, not the interests of the community. They are interested in preserving their perceived advantage — and it is only a perceived advantage — and preventing the wider Geelong community from having the opportunity to participate in a genuine

exercise of democracy. That is why I grieve for the people of Geelong.

The future of Geelong is indeed crucial to the future of Victoria. The City of Greater Geelong was established in 1993. Through amalgamation it combined a number of smaller councils into a body that was capable of serving the demands of the wider region. That is not a reflection on the former councils; they served their purpose well. They simply lacked the scale and capacity to serve the interests of the region.

The city now has a population of around 220 000, there are about 160 000 voters on the roll and some 90 000 people are employed within the municipality, which covers an area of about 12 000 square kilometres. It is the second-largest council in the state and is clearly a major centre for business and industry. Obviously what flows from that is that it is a major centre and provides major opportunities for jobs. The municipality has tremendous natural assets. It is right on the doorstep of the Surf Coast but clearly has great natural assets in its own right — great recreational assets, great cultural assets and great opportunities to develop interest in those areas and to develop facilities. Of course even if it were not good for any other reason, it is also the home of the mighty Cats.

There is an opportunity for the city of Greater Geelong to enjoy substantial growth with the development of the Armstrong Creek area. That is rapidly coming on line and will provide great opportunities for growth. Geelong is truly a leading regional city, and the future of Geelong is indeed crucial to the future of the state.

The notion of a popularly elected mayor has tremendous local support. I know this is contested in at least one quarter, but in recent weeks I have engaged in a consultation process which has confirmed for me that the support is undoubtedly real. I will come back to the consultation process in a minute.

First I will refer to *Hansard* of proceedings in the Legislative Council on 4 November 2004 and an adjournment matter that was raised for the then Minister for Local Government. A member sought the investigation of the possibility of the City of Greater Geelong directly electing its mayor. The member said:

I have been approached by many people in my electorate asking me whether, considering that Geelong is the second-largest city in Victoria, it is possible to publicly elect the mayor.

The member went on to say he was also informed that many states in Australia had directly elected mayors, which is quite right, and he talked about some of those

structures. Following an interjection from Mr Baxter, the member went on to say:

... Melbourne has a directly elected mayor, which I understand has been successful, Mr Baxter, particularly in terms of the stability and cohesion needed for good governance.

People in Geelong are not happy with all the politicking that too often takes place every year leading up to the council electing a mayor. It can be very disruptive.

He then went on to talk about the recent battle for the mayoralty and concluded by seeking the assistance of the minister to look into the matter. The member concerned was then a member of the Legislative Council but now serves in this place as the member for Lara.

Coming back to the consultation program, I should probably say at this point that the government has an entirely open mind on what the process might be to directly elect a mayor. Our commitment was to have a directly elected mayor. We did not talk about specific processes, because we took the view that the important thing was to provide the access and ultimately we should adopt a system that best fits what the Geelong community needs. The people of Geelong were asked to consider a number of questions that are central to this issue, such as should there be a mayor only, should a leadership team be elected or should there be some other combination. The leadership model is the one used at the City of Melbourne, where both the mayor and deputy mayor are elected as a team. There is an option to have a popularly elected mayor only and have the deputy elected by the council and to either make that compulsory or to make it optional, as is now the case in councils across the state. The third option would be to elect both the mayor and deputy at simultaneous elections — in other words, there would be a separate slate of candidates for the mayor and for the deputy mayor.

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages with all three of these methods. Those points have been laid out in a discussion paper that has been made available to the community. The second question that has to be settled is whether someone who has nominated for one position of mayor or deputy mayor should also be allowed to nominate for the alternative position or for a position as a councillor. Again there are a number of advantages and disadvantages to those different options.

We are very keen to learn the views of the Geelong community and what factors are important to them and to establish the sorts of parameters that the people of Geelong might want placed around the proposal. That

has been the purpose of the consultation process. Historically the process — it was followed by the former government — has been to issue a discussion paper, which we certainly have done, and then to conduct a public forum, which we have also done. Quite often in the past the former government sent in public servants and consultants rather than learning firsthand what was actually going on. But as we in this place all know, it is no good expecting people to simply come to you, come to a meeting or whatever; we wanted to know what people were really thinking and what the community out there wanted.

There is no point in simply asking people to come along to a meeting because you get a skewed view of the municipality. You need to go out and talk to people where they live their daily lives, and that is exactly what I did. I conducted listening posts across Geelong at Corio shopping centre, at Belmont shopping centre, at Westfield in the city in two stints at different times of the day to get a different cross-section of the community, outside the Geelong West library —

**Mr Trezise** — What did they say?

**Mr MORRIS** — at Ocean Grove, at the Leopold shopping village — I will come back to the Geelong West library in a minute — and at the Bellarine Village shopping centre in Newcomb, as well as a stint to talk to the early-morning commuters at the Geelong railway station.

I said I would come back to the Geelong West listening post because, with the exception of one location, the verdict from the community was overwhelmingly supportive of the opportunity for it to have a direct say in the election of a mayor. In one case only did we get a number of people — and I agree, it was a significant number of people but not a majority of those we spoke to at that location — coming along and arguing very politely that they did not really want to have a say in choosing the person who was going to be the leader of their community. They were content to leave that decision to others. That is fair enough; it is an acceptable view — but it happens to be very much a minority view.

However, it was no surprise to me that that particular listening post, the only listening post where there was any serious concern expressed about the plan, just happened to be 500 metres down the road from the office of the member for Geelong. That may have been simply a coincidence. Perhaps I have become a little bit cynical in my old age, but I do not think so. Perhaps I am a bit of a sceptic; I have probably always been one of those. But in this case I do not believe my scepticism

is in any way misplaced. Even if we give that result the benefit of the doubt — that one listening post where there was a number but not a majority opposed to the concept — there is no doubt that overall the community overwhelmingly supports a directly elected mayor.

The development of an appropriate mayoral electoral structure is an important step in the evolution of local democracy in the region, and it is very important that all stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss the issues and to provide input. No matter what stake they are holding, they need to have the opportunity to have input. In addition to the listening post and to the other opportunities that I have already referred to, I met with the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Victorian Local Governance Association and LGPro, which represents the senior officers in councils, with the councillors of the City of Geelong and so on, including some local members of Parliament.

Every person I have met with, no matter what their view, has provided considered and valued comment. These people have certainly assisted the goal of the process, which is clearly getting the best possible result for the people of the city of Geelong. All local members of Parliament, whether they be government members, whether they be opposition members, whether they be Liberal, whether they be Labor, whether they be state or whether they be federal, were invited to meet with me and with officers of Local Government Victoria to discuss the proposal and provide some input. There was one group conspicuous by its absence. There was one group that seemed for one reason or another — and some reasons were better than others, I concede that — not to participate. Not one member of the Labor Party, state or federal, took the opportunity to make their views known on the future of local government democracy in Geelong. Not a single person was prepared to spend an hour, half an hour or 10 minutes at a time of their convenience to have some input into this important process.

Some people might call such a high level of disinterest in this important debate laziness. I am not going to make that sort of judgement; I am not going to characterise it in that way. Perhaps it was really an amazing coincidence and all the Labor diaries were full. Whatever the reason, the Geelong community is getting no leadership from its Labor members. It is getting nothing but misinformation and negativism from at least one of them. We have to wonder why, because a lot of people on the Labor side of the fence have supported the issue. As the member for South Barwon identified in the chamber yesterday, the concept is supported by Labor luminaries or former luminaries such as a former mayor, Peter McMullin; a former

President of the Legislative Council, Rod McKenzie; and, as I said earlier, the member for Lara.

I say to those members who remain silent: it is not too late to have their say. By remaining silent they are failing the very people who elected them. They should get out of their offices and talk to the real people of Geelong, and they will find out there is widespread and genuine community support for a directly elected mayor. When they have done that, they should put their best foot forward and contribute to the debate in a constructive manner. The voters will not thank members for hanging back. They will not thank them for criticising the process. There is a real debate to be had on shaping the future of this great Victorian regional city.

**Question agreed to.**

## WYNDHAM PLANNING SCHEME: AMENDMENT

**Mr CLARK** (Attorney-General) — I move:

That under section 46AH of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, Wyndham planning scheme — amendment C93 be ratified.

The amendment which is the subject of the motion before the house is to implement the Werribee South green wedge management plan of October 2010, which is to form part of the Wyndham planning scheme. The Werribee South green wedge, as many members will be aware, forms part of a ring of green wedges that surrounds Melbourne's fringe. It covers an area of approximately 11 350 hectares and is located south of the Princes Freeway and outside the urban growth boundary.

The amendment introduces new local policies to support and manage the range of land uses in this part of the green wedge. The amendment also tightens the subdivision controls within the green wedge zone. In particular, landowners will no longer have the right to excise a vacant lot unless there are two or more existing dwellings on their land. General subdivision is only permitted where each new lot is at least 15 hectares in size.

Overall the amendment and the management plan will have the effect of reducing land fragmentation in the Werribee South green wedge area while recognising the existing dwellings in the intensive agriculture precinct. They will maintain and support viable farming land whilst recognising that other land uses such as housing, tourism and infrastructure are vital for the continued

economic prosperity of the area. They will require land use and development in the green wedge to have regard to the specific environmental context of each site and to the off-site impacts on agricultural land and waterways. They will provide a greater level of certainty for the Werribee South community and increased protection and certainty to the multimillion-dollar agricultural industry located in the Werribee South intensive agriculture precinct.

The reason this amendment comes before the Parliament for ratification is to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, because for a small portion of the affected land this planning scheme amendment will result in an increased subdivision potential. It is that criterion which requires this amendment to come before the house. The subdivision changes introduced by the amendment will only apply to one part of the Werribee South green wedge area, namely, the intensive agriculture precinct. The Minister for Planning has received advice from an independent panel, and based on that advice he has approved the amendment which is now before the house for ratification.

Credit needs to be given to the work of the Wyndham City Council in preparing the policy and the plan. It has fully supported and participated in the development of the plan and the amendment. It is worth providing members with some context for what we are considering today. As I mentioned, this amendment relates specifically to one precinct within the greater Werribee South green wedge area. It is not in order for me to demonstrate this by holding up a map for the consideration of honourable members, but if one were to look at a map of the Werribee South green wedge area, one would see that it has a number of precincts within it, including the intensive agriculture precinct; the Royal Australian Air Force and dryland farming precinct; the tourism precinct; the parks, coast, waterways and wetlands precinct; the Werribee South township precinct; the marina precinct; the rural residential precinct and the western treatment plant precinct. They run in an elongated stretch of land, and the intensive agricultural precinct lies in the middle.

To be more specific about exactly what the amendment will do, it will introduce the Werribee South green wedge management plan of October 2010 into Wyndham the planning scheme as a reference document and make changes to the local planning policy framework and schedule to the green wedge zone.

Let me provide the house with a bit more detail about how those changes will operate in the intensive

agricultural precinct. The amendment will remove the existing right to excise a vacant block in that part of the green wedge zone and will replace it with a control that allows subdivision only where there are two or more existing developments on a lot. Based on information I have been provided with, there are only 50 lots where there are two or more existing dwellings in the intensive agricultural precinct, and of those 50 lots, 11 will qualify for increased subdivision rights. I understand that in the case of four of those lots those increased subdivision rights will arise because under the existing scheme the lots would be too small to qualify for subdivision. In the case of seven lots a more extensive subdivision will be permitted than currently, for example, because there are three dwellings on the lot.

The key difference between the existing and new subdivision control is that fewer lots will meet the subdivision requirements under the change and therefore fewer new lots will be able to be created. According to the information I have been provided with, under the existing control there are 285 lots that can be subdivided, with the potential for an additional 323 lots to be created. By contrast, as I indicated, under the proposed new control, 50 lots will be able to be created, with the potential for creating 59 additional lots, each containing a dwelling. In essence, some 230 lots will relinquish their existing subdivision rights.

This amendment before the house needs to be assessed in the context of what has led to the requirement for ratification. Members who have been in this house for some time will recall that following the change of government in 1999 the incoming Labor government made a great deal of how it was going to protect the green wedges around Melbourne and introduce new rules that would effectively create inviolable boundaries to protect green wedges and draw a ring around Melbourne. In order to safeguard and protect the community from incursions into these green wedges there were to be stiff requirements placed on any modifications which would require them to come before Parliament.

The Labor government introduced those requirements with a great deal of fanfare and used them as a platform to attack the previous coalition government. What we have seen over time is that Labor's grand policies to draw an inviolable line around the urban boundary have been confronted with the reality that from time to time there is a need for change. As many members will know, that has resulted in a series of ratification motions coming into the house and various other amendments being made.

Clearly there is a commitment on all sides of politics to the concept of green wedges and the protection of green wedge areas, but there are also times when changes need to be made. As in this motion before the house, those changes are often based on very common-sense grounds. In particular with the motion before the house, the overall effect of the policy that has been developed is to preserve the integrity of the intensive agricultural precinct to prevent the sort of continued and unjustified subdivision that would undermine its purpose and objective as an intensive agricultural precinct, but at the same time to do so in a way that balances the competing considerations and provides some fairness for those lot owners who have dwellings on their lots where it has been concluded that they ought to retain those rights.

Overall this is a policy that will limit development. It will protect in particular the intensive agricultural precinct of this part of the green wedge, but there is also this small component that, in order to protect the position of landowners with existing dwellings, will allow in some circumstances for more intensive development, and that is why this motion has come before the house.

In conclusion, I seek the support of the house on behalf of the Minister for Planning for the ratification of planning scheme amendment C93. It continues to uphold, protect and strengthen the green wedge policy in its application to this part of the greater Melbourne urban area, and I commend the motion to the house.

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond) — I rise to make a contribution on behalf of the opposition in relation to amendment C93 to the Wyndham planning scheme. I indicate that the opposition does not oppose this amendment, although we will raise a number of issues of broader public policy both in my contribution and also in the contributions of my colleagues the member for Tarneit — whose electorate covers a vast amount of the land involved in this amendment — and the member for Lara, who also has a small part of it in his electorate. Each of the 12 green wedges requires a management plan. This is one of four that have been completed or are nearing completion. The others are Yarra Ranges, Nillumbik and Manningham.

The application by the Wyndham City Council in relation to amendment C93 has quite a long history to it. I understand that its genesis was in about 2001, and that it was a response by the then council to seek to address concerns about urban growth. I know that the member for Tarneit will make a significant contribution to this debate in relation to some of those challenges, both as a local member but also more broadly in terms

some of the public policy challenges that our government faced and that this government will face in dealing with population growth. There is also the potential for urban population growth to compromise what has historically been a very rich farming community in the region.

The amendment before us today was exhibited from July through to September 2007. There was a panel hearing, which is a normal process, undertaken from 18 to 20 March 2008. The council reviewed the panel's report on 2 May 2008 and subsequently released it at the end of that month. The panel adopted the council's strategy, subject to some minor amendments, and it was formally adopted by the council in July 2008. The Wyndham City Council's *Werribee South Green Wedge Policy and Management Plan* states:

The purpose of the Werribee South green wedges policy and management plan is to bring together a consistent policy for the entire green wedge, ensuring that all elements within Werribee South are planned for and managed in an integrated and sustainable manner. By setting clear directions on future land use, this document is designed to provide a framework on which decision making for the area can be based.

The plan provides greater certainty for landowners, developers and the community in planning matters involving green wedges and agricultural land. By any measure that is a wholly worthwhile thing for the council to show leadership on. It is able to say to the local community, particularly the farming community, and to developers and residents: 'Here is our vision as the local municipal authority, and here is a vision that is endorsed by the state government'.

I applaud both the process that was undertaken by the City of Wyndham and the outcomes that came out of it. If members look at this area, they will see that it is a unique part of the Melbourne metropolitan area. The plan that I have just mentioned covers the Western Plains, the south green wedge and the Werribee South green wedge. Werribee South, as the Attorney-General indicated, is comprised mainly of intensive agriculture and market gardens, and the green wedge aspirations of the council seek to protect that. The Western Plains region, as many people know, is comprised mainly of dryland farming and acts as a buffer to the potential encroachment of urban development.

The management plan also seeks to protect what is I think an extraordinary tourism precinct. It includes some magnificent sites — the Werribee Open Range Zoo, the Werribee Park Golf Club and the Victorian State Rose Garden — for those of a particular gardening bent such as myself. There is the Werribee Mansion, and I am sure many members have enjoyed

the hospitality of that particularly beautiful historic precinct. It was built in the 1870s and was formerly a Catholic seminary, but it is now a five-star hotel and accommodation facility. There is also the National Equestrian Centre, and for those who may imbibe there is the Shadowfax winery, which provides first-class wines from the region.

**Mr Pallas** interjected.

**Mr WYNNE** — I mentioned the rose garden earlier, which the member would have heard if he had been listening. The member for Tarneit has been distracted, getting himself ready for his contribution. I talked about the rose garden earlier.

There is the Point Cook Coastal Park and Cheetham Wetlands, which are not only of extraordinary local significance but also of national and international significance. There is also the Point Cook marine sanctuary and the homestead, which many members know. I am starting to sound like the local member here, but the Royal Australian Air Force base is a really fantastic facility, and I recommend that anyone with young children take them to have a look at it. It is sensational. I really think it is wonderful. There is also the Truganina Coastal Parklands, the boating facilities at Werribee, the coastal reserve and the Werribee River.

These sites are not only of local significance to the residents of the region; they are also of state significance, and in some contexts they are of national and international significance. I commend the City of Wyndham for understanding and nurturing what I think are some of the greatest natural assets that we enjoy in this part of Melbourne.

The green wedge protection policy seeks to stop further fragmentation caused by subdividing land. Currently the intensive farming precinct has the capacity to subdivide, which, as the Attorney-General indicated, has been reduced under the plan. The plan will allow 50 lots to be subdivided into an additional 59 lots. This subdivision can only occur where there are two or more houses on that lot. Of these 50 lots, 11 lots have no current ability to be subdivided. Green wedge protection provides a new entitlement to 11 landowners who can now for the first time subdivide their land.

The metropolitan and green wedge protection section in the Planning and Environment Act stops the further fragmentation of green wedge land by requiring any new applications to subdivide land to be endorsed by Parliament. That is a proper process. When you are dealing with precious parcels of green wedge land that have been in effect been recognised not only at a local

level by relevant councils but also by the Parliament, which recognises that the green wedges are in the broader public interest, you find that any proposition to tamper with green wedges or to amend green wedge regulations ought to be dealt with by the Parliament. That is the proper thing to do right across the green wedge areas.

We as an opposition raise the concern that this first green wedge plan that is before the Parliament has the potential to further fragment what is a very important and high-level public policy proposition — that is, how land within green wedges is dealt with. Whilst these subdivisions will be quite significant and in the range of 4000 to 5000 square metres, they are obviously not large enough for farming. It is pure residential land. There are still significant challenges about how this land is serviced and accessed that I know my colleague the member for Tarneit will address in his contribution. These will become significant challenges for the new government.

Many of us travel down Geelong Road and have seen the extraordinary level of development that has occurred right down the Geelong Road corridor. I have travelled through the corridor on many occasions. The amount of development that has occurred in that corridor is quite phenomenal. It was a challenge for our government, and it will be a challenge for this government. According to the latest projections, in the order of 1500 people a week are seeking to come to Victoria and make their homes here. Many of those people are coming to this particular corridor because it offers an extraordinary quality of life; it offers extraordinary access to employment opportunity; it provides extraordinary access to everything we enjoy in the city; and it provides an amazing natural environment that is such a rich part of this precinct. That is why green wedges are so crucial to this area.

We will be very carefully watching all proposed amendments that come into this chamber in terms of this issue. Where they propose to encroach on or fragment existing green wedges we will provide commentary, where necessary, and our voice will be clear and unambiguous. We will oppose amendments where we believe there has been a diminution of what has been a significant and largely bipartisan position of protecting the crucial importance of our green wedges.

In conclusion, we do not oppose amendment C93 to the Wyndham planning scheme. In doing so, we say to the government that it needs to be careful in future when dealing with green wedge propositions to ensure that there is integrity at a very broad public policy level and in a practical way and that there is no diminution or

fragmentation of green wedges, because these will in the future become crucial to the livability of Melbourne and the broader metropolitan conurbation. Green wedges must continue to be a crucial part of the way we develop these growth areas. We must ensure that the quality of life these green wedges provide is protected and maintained.

**Mr HODGETT** (Kilsyth) — I rise to make a brief contribution on the motion of the Attorney-General:

That under section 46AH of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, Wyndham planning scheme — amendment C93 be ratified.

From the previous contribution I note the opposition is not opposing this motion. That is a sensible move. As the previous speaker said, the issue of green wedges always generates a lot of discussion and debate. There are a number of views on green wedge policy. It is healthy for the Parliament to have a lot of discussion and debate about green wedge zones.

The amendment before the house implements the Werribee South Green Wedge Policy and Management Plan of October 2010 in the Wyndham planning scheme. The Werribee South green wedge forms part of a ring of green wedges surrounding Melbourne's fringe, covers an area of approximately 11 350 hectares and is located south of the Princes Freeway and outside the urban growth boundary. The amendment introduces new local policies to support and manage the range of land uses in the green wedge. The amendment also tightens the subdivision controls within the green wedge zone. Specifically landowners will no longer have the right to excise a vacant lot unless there are two or more existing dwellings on their land. General subdivision is only permitted where each new lot is at least 15 hectares in size. The amendment will reduce land fragmentation in the Werribee South green wedge whilst recognising the existing dwellings in the intensive agricultural precinct. It will maintain and support viable farming land whilst recognising that other land uses such as housing, tourism and infrastructure are vital for the continued economic prosperity of the area.

I should say here that in the 56th Parliament I was one of a number of members of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee. A number of references given to that committee looked at farming, at land use — —

**Mr Wakeling** interjected.

**Mr HODGETT** — And at farmgate issues — and a number of inquiries were undertaken by that joint

parliamentary committee. Those inquiries took us to the Werribee area a number of times and a number of the interface areas in and around Melbourne, including the municipalities of Yarra Ranges, Nillumbik, Cardinia, Hume, Wyndham and Melton.

**Mr Morris** — And Mornington.

**Mr HODGETT** — And Mornington. We were made well aware of the need to support viable farming land whilst still recognising the other uses — such as housing, tourism and infrastructure — that are vital for the continued economic prosperity of these areas. I very much enjoyed my time on the committee. I note that the Baillieu government has formed the same committee in the 57th Parliament. I look forward to reports on some of the references given to that committee coming to this house; I will watch with interest.

The amendment will require land use and development in the green wedge to have regard to the specific environmental context of each site and off-site impacts on agricultural land and waterways. The amendment will provide a greater level of certainty for the Werribee South community, and it will also provide increased protection and certainty to the multimillion-dollar agriculture industry located in the Werribee South intensive agriculture precinct.

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires this amendment to be ratified by Parliament, as a small portion — some 11 lots, I am informed — of the affected land will be provided with increased subdivision potential. However, it is important to note that the subdivision changes introduced by the amendment apply only to the intensive agriculture precinct in the green wedge. It is important that the house notes this, particularly the opposition, as it does not have a good track record on planning. It should note well that the subdivision changes introduced by the amendment apply only to the intensive agriculture precinct in the green wedge.

We looked at the planning process based on the advice of an independent panel. The Minister for Planning has approved the amendment before us for ratification today, which in due process, in proper process, requires ratification by both houses. I must say it is a pleasure that we have a planning minister who actually knows what he is doing. He is listening to the community, he is listening to stakeholders and he is listening to local councils. We on this side of the house believe in and have a strong commitment to planning processes, and we strongly believe in giving people a say in local planning issues. I commend the Minister for Planning

for listening and acting and actually knowing what he is doing.

In concluding I would like to acknowledge and note the work of the Wyndham City Council, which has fully supported and participated in the development of the Werribee South Green Wedge Policy and Management Plan and this amendment. It is a great example of how state and local governments can work together to ensure that the economic prosperity and environmental values of an area are protected and enhanced for the community. That being said, I strongly encourage — I urge — all parties to support the motion before the house.

**Mr PALLAS** (Tarneit) — It gives me great pleasure to speak to the motion before the house today. In so doing I acknowledge that the substantive effect of this planning scheme amendment will be to have a principal impact upon my constituency. I also wish to indicate and reaffirm that the opposition does not oppose this planning scheme amendment. In so saying I note, as did the member for Richmond in his address, that the community affected by this proposed planning scheme amendment is one that is both diverse and vibrant, that is growing rapidly and that will be all the better for the clarification, the preservation and the retained integrity of the broader green wedges proposition.

There are some 12 green wedges that require management plans. The management plan for this green wedge is one of just four that has been or is nearing completion. The others are for Yarra, Nillumbik and Manningham. The application to amend the local planning scheme was made by the Wyndham City Council. I think there is a measure of bipartisan recognition that the council has conducted itself appropriately in the development of this management plan. Might I say it is a council that does an outstanding job for its community. The work on the development of the planning scheme amendment and of the management plan itself has been going on since 2001.

The development of the management plans is broadly a response to the concerns around urban encroachment and the potential for that urban encroachment to compromise the capacity for farming. In the Werribee South area farming is a vitally important aspect of the community and is something that needs to be preserved. Both in terms of management plans and, in a broader sense, overall government policy it must be ensured that this vital farming community is assisted and its efforts preserved. I say that because it is, after all, the broadleaf capital of Australia. It produces some of the best broadleaf vegetables. I might say that not all of those broadleaf vegetables are ones that I robustly

embrace every day in my diet, but I should. Australia would be the worse for its loss and if it were absent, so the preservation of the integrity of this farming is critically important for the future.

The plan covers the Western Plains south green wedge and the Werribee South green wedge. Werribee South has mainly intensive agriculture and market gardens, and the Western Plains region, which has mainly dryland farming, is a buffer to encroaching urban development. I think I detected a measure of envy in the contribution of the member for Richmond about the wonders of my electorate. It is little wonder really: it is an outstanding community and one that people are flocking to. That is the issue I want to spend just a moment on in the context of this debate. Green wedge protection seeks to stop further fragmentation by the subdivision of land. That is fundamentally its principal tenet.

Currently the intensive farming precinct provides capacity to subdivide. This capacity to subdivide has been reduced under this plan, and that is something I fully support. However, one issue of concern is that the plan will allow some 50 lots to be subdivided into an additional 59 lots. That subdivision can only occur where two or more houses are on each lot. Of those 50 lots — and I think we heard from the Attorney-General in relation to this — something like 11 lots have no current ability to be subdivided. So the green wedge protection provides a new entitlement to 11 landowners who can now for the first time subdivide their land. This in itself is not an issue of substantial moment, but it is the principle here that I wish to address, because essentially, in providing a capacity for fragmentation and indeed endorsing it here today, we need to recognise that that brings with it an attendant potential for greater population.

It is on the issue of population that I want to spend a moment looking at what is happening in my community, in this local government area of Wyndham. Melbourne's outer suburbs have been growing faster than any other area in Australia. As we provide for the capacity for an increase in population and as we put in place provisions for the potential for further fragmentation, albeit only in negligible terms in the context of this proposal, we have to recognise that we are flirting with the potential for broader dissolution of that policy into the longer term. It is this issue about which I have grave concerns — not this proposal in itself, because I think that fundamentally it has struck a reasonable balance in the provision for disaggregation in those areas where there is a need for what will essentially be residential housing, given the small areas of land that could be disaggregated into, which are in an

area that is reasonably tight and capable of managing those challenges — because we are establishing a principle here that disaggregation can occur in certain circumstances and clarification of that and the population associated with it may well mean that in the future there are broader impacts that should be adjusted.

As I have said, Melbourne's west is growing faster than any other suburban area not only in Victoria but in Australia. It has left coastal Queensland and Western Australia's mining towns effectively in its dust. We are seeing more than 1000 people a week pouring into Melbourne's fringes. That does not contradict what the member for Richmond said: while 1500 people are making Victoria their home in the Melbourne fringe, some 1000 people are doing so here in Melbourne. One point I want to make is that in the year to June 2010 Melbourne is estimated to have grown by 79 000 people — more than 1500 people per week. For the ninth consecutive year Melbourne has seen the biggest growth of any Australian city.

To put that into a broader context in terms of what this means for population in Wyndham and the attendant infrastructure challenges that will occur, Wyndham grew by 4000 dwellings, or 10 500 people, in 2008–09, and by 4600 dwellings, or 12 600 people in 2009–10. The council believes that it will gain another 5200 dwellings, or 14 000 people, in 2010–11. To put this into context, there are at least half a dozen councils in Victoria with populations that are smaller than the population growth occurring in this local government area year on year. That is essentially the point that I am making.

Whilst the opposition does not oppose this proposal, and whilst we think it is an important and a valuable contribution to the long-term viability of green wedge preservation which essentially provides some clarity in relation to the long-term preservation of the green wedge, I urge the government to recognise that we cannot continue to put people into these areas without providing the attendant infrastructure. The previous government had a \$38 billion transport plan which is no longer relevant.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr PALLAS** — Some \$10.3 billion of which was funded in the first 18 months, thank you!

The other important point we need to recognise is that there are now an increasing number of proposals to put more people into this community. For example, the provision of a 4000-home development on 438 hectares near Princes Highway is expected to strain an already

congested road by bringing some 20 000 vehicle movements a day into that area. Disaggregation of existing land-holdings without the adequate provision of infrastructure will lead to social dislocation. That is critically important in terms of how we preserve and maintain green wedges. It is important that we maintain and preserve the vibrancy of our community. The opposition does not oppose the government's proposal.

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — It is a great pleasure to make a few comments on proposed amendment C93 to the Wyndham planning scheme. The intent of the scheme is, from my perspective, threefold: it essentially allows the *Werribee South Green Wedge Policy and Management Plan* to become a reference document for the Wyndham planning scheme; it implements the Werribee South green wedge management policy, which is clause 22.08 of the Wyndham planning scheme; and in particular it amends the schedule to the green wedge zone, hence requiring ratification by both houses of Parliament, because that is a variation to the subdivision controls in the zone.

Before I get involved in the detail of the amendment, I congratulate Wyndham City Council on the process it has undertaken. The planning process under the former government had greater longevity than was perhaps desirable. However, the amendment was first authorised in March 2007, in the relatively early days of the 56th Parliament, and was exhibited in July. The panel process took place in March 2008. It has taken some time to get through the process. The important thing is that it has actually come through the process. My understanding is that it has now been approved by the minister with some minor modifications to the amendment that was originally exhibited. The amendments that have been made are basically in line with the panel recommendations and are supported by the council.

Strategic justification for the amendment came from the *Werribee South Green Wedge Policy and Management Plan*, which was completed over the last decade. It has been supported by the council and now signed off by the minister. I am very pleased to hear that it also has the support of the opposition, albeit to some extent in a qualified manner.

The area affected by the amendment is part of the ring of green wedges that surrounds Melbourne. It is a critically important part of planning for the greater metropolitan area and for the Port Phillip and Western Port region, and it is important that we get it right. The intent of the amendment is to introduce a new local policy to support current land uses — there are a variety of land uses, and I will refer to those in a minute — that

occur in the green wedge. It tightens the subdivision controls, and it means that landowners will no longer have the opportunity to excise a vacant lot unless there are two or more existing dwellings on their land. General subdivision can only occur where each new lot is the productive size of 15 hectares.

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

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Budget: employment

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Treasurer. Given that previous governments have had specific job creation targets, including the creation of 18 000 jobs in the 1999 Kennett budget, the creation of 30 000 jobs in the 2010 Victorian budget, and even in New South Wales a commitment by the O'Farrell government to the creation of 100 000 jobs, can the Treasurer tell us on which page of his budget we will find his job creation target?

**Mr WELLS** (Treasurer) — I refer the —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr WELLS** — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question — and if he waits just one second, I will be able to answer it for him. I refer him to budget paper 2, chapter 2, page 9, which lists Victorian economic projections: an unemployment rate, employment rates, real gross state product, the consumer price index, the wage price index and population growth.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question.

**Mr WELLS** — The question is: how many jobs will be created over the forward estimates period of our budget? If you looked at employment and looked at the figure of 1.75 per cent, the growth in employment, you would realise that that equates to between 50 000 and 55 000 jobs being created every year over the forward estimates period under this budget. Don't be embarrassed!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not think the Treasurer needs any help from the government benches

when answering a question. The Leader of the Opposition asked his question, and I would ask that when he is getting an answer he remain silent.

### Budget: commentary

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier outline measures in the 2011–12 budget that will benefit the people and the economy of Victoria, and is he aware of an independent reaction to yesterday's budget?

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — I am proud to respond to the member for Ferntree Gully on this question, and I thank him for the great service he has given to the people of Ferntree Gully. The first Baillieu budget was introduced yesterday, as you know. We undertook to be a stable, responsible and disciplined government, and indeed we have approached this budget on the basis of being responsible and caring in very challenging times.

We know about the increased impost that results from the \$4 billion withdrawal of GST and the \$2 billion black hole left by the Labor government. What we have achieved in this budget is a surplus of \$140 million. We have restricted expenditure growth from an 8 per cent average over recent years to just over 3 per cent. We have made significant savings of \$2 billion. We have secured a significant rating, and we have met our election promises. In the first instance I can report that Standard and Poor's has confirmed Victoria's AAA rating as a consequence of the budget.

I was asked about independent commentary, and I will just pick up on a few responses. The Master Builders Association of Victoria said the Baillieu government's first budget is a boost for the building sector. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia said:

This is a solid and responsible budget that makes some tough calls to rein in expenses, while at the same time confirming funding for Victoria's committed infrastructure projects and delivering on the government's election promises.

The Victorian director of the Australian Industry Group stated:

The Victorian Treasurer Kim Wells has delivered a responsible and forward-looking budget that is strong on building infrastructure, skills and productivity.

The Real Estate Institute of Victoria welcomes stamp duty cuts for first home buyers, pensioners and farmers. The Minerals Council of Australia welcomes the Victorian budget announcement of \$625 000 to develop a better understanding of the mineral and resource wealth of Victoria. The Victorian Farmers Federation's media release of yesterday states:

Major wins for farmers and rural Victorians the coalition's first budget.

The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria has stated that the budget is a good start but more is needed, and we acknowledge that. I conclude with what Standard and Poor's said:

Today's budget is consistent with our expectation that the new state government will continue to manage the state's finances prudently.

**Ms Allan** — On a point of order, Speaker, it appears the Premier has missed the report from Stephen McMahon that outlines how the Premier failed to provide a vision — I can assist the Premier with that — and John Ferguson's comment that the Premier's budget was breathtakingly disingenuous.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! That was no point of order, and the member for Bendigo East knows it. The member was also using a prop, and I would rather she did not do so. I see other members in the house also have props ready to use, and I ask that they do not use them. If they do, they will be suspended.

**Mr BAILLIEU** — As the Treasurer has just indicated, in the first year of the coalition in government 50 000 to 55 000 jobs will be created. This is a responsible, disciplined and caring budget. It has been warmly welcomed by the community, and I am proud to say that the Baillieu government's budget will deliver.

### Minister for Health: legal expenses

**Ms HENNESSY** (Altona) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to his commitment to accountability and transparency in government. I ask: does the Premier deem it appropriate that personal expenses of his ministers are paid by a fundraising arm of the Liberal Party and that these payments are facilitated by his own chief of staff?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have some concerns with the question the member for Altona is asking. I do not believe it relates to government administration. I ask the member to rephrase her question and ensure that it addresses government administration.

**Ms HENNESSY** — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to his employment responsibilities for his chief of staff, and I ask: is it appropriate that his chief of staff administer the payment of legal expenses to a minister of the Crown?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I still have problems with the question relating to government administration.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, this question is clearly relevant — it relates to commitments made by the Premier to openness and transparency. If that is not part of this government's platform and program, if that is not part of public administration in our state and if that is not part of the business of this government, then that speaks volumes about this government.

The question also referred to the conduct of a member of staff who is the closest political adviser to the Premier and is funded by the taxpayer. The Premier is the employer of that individual. If these matters are not matters of public interest and of direct relevance to the administration of government in this state, then I do not know what would be. With the greatest of respect, I put it to you, Speaker, that these questions were deemed in order for the Leader of the Government in another place to answer. If the Leader of the Government representing the Premier in the other place can answer them, why would the Premier not answer them here?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! What may have been asked in another place has no relevance whatsoever to this house. I do not believe the question to be in order.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Hulls** — On a point of order, Speaker, I ask whether your ruling is that issues of perceived conflict of interest, issues that relate to integrity in government and whether or not a minister of the Crown has had his legal bills paid by the 500 Club, a fundraising arm of the Liberal Party — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have already answered the point of order; it is no use raising it again. I do not believe the question related to government administration.

**Mr Foley** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Albert Park is reflecting on the Chair. He should either withdraw or leave the chamber.

**Mr Foley** — I withdraw.

**Mr Andrews** — By way of a further point of order, Speaker, I seek some clarification. Is it your ruling that matters of standards and the conduct of ministers are

not relevant to the administration of government in this state? You have made your ruling, and I would never dream of challenging it, but I am unclear about the basis for your ruling. I have no sense of what the basis of your ruling is. Why are the standards, conduct and behaviour of ministerial staff not considered to be matters of government business in this state?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have already ruled on the point of order.

**Mr Andrews** — No, you haven't.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have. Does the member for Bendigo East have a further point of order? I have ruled on the last point of order.

**Ms Allan** — On a new point of order, Speaker, under standing order 56, 'Language of questions', there is an opportunity for a question to be rephrased, as you afforded the member for Altona just previously. I have been in this house for some time and have seen multiple opportunities given to members to rephrase their questions. I recall in the last 12 months — forgive me if I am wrong, but I think it might have been a question from the Deputy Premier — that there were three opportunities allowed for one particular member to do so. My point, Speaker, is that I request that you give the member for Altona another opportunity to rephrase her question in order for it to be asked.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have already given the member for Altona an opportunity to rephrase her question. I have also ruled that question out of order.

**Mr Hulls** — On a point of order, Speaker, to assist the house in the future, could you explain to the house the basis on which you have ruled out of order a question that deals with a potential conflict of interest? We all know that members' interests fall within the Premier's area of responsibility. The conduct of ministers and whether or not they have had personal bills paid by a fundraising arm of the Liberal Party is something that goes to the heart of democracy in this state, so I ask: on what basis have you ruled that out of order? I seek clarification.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! You may seek clarification. I have ruled on the point of order.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms Allan** — On a further point of order, Speaker, I refer you to *Rulings from the Chair*, November 2010, at page 157. In 1998, concerning a matter raised in question time in November of that year, Speaker Plowman ruled that members' interests are within the

Premier's responsibility. The matters that have been raised by the member for Altona regarding the interests of a member — indeed, a minister — are clearly in order. They have clearly been ruled in order by previous Speakers, including Speaker Plowman, and they are certainly within the Premier's area of responsibility, according to the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978. I put it to you that your ruling the member's question out of order is entirely inconsistent with the past practice of this house and indeed the responsibilities of the Premier as set out in legislation.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I will hear the question again.

**Ms HENNESSY** — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to his statement on 'Integrity in government' made during the budget speech, where he said:

Victorians have always expected high standards of integrity in their ... representatives and public officials.

What explanation can the Premier give in relation to his chief of staff, Michael Kapel, facilitating the payment of a minister's legal bills?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! That was different from the previous two versions of the question. I will allow the question.

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Premier) — Let me begin by saying that if ever there was an endorsement of yesterday's budget, this is it.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BAILLIEU** — This is the opposition's attempt to divert attention from a successful budget. It is an attempt to rehash a story that got media coverage in July of last year. This is nonsense. Our staff work with all members of our team, and they do that on a daily basis.

### **Budget: regional and rural Victoria**

**Mr WELLER** (Rodney) — My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional and Rural Victoria. I refer the Deputy Premier to the 2011–12 budget, and I ask: can the Deputy Premier outline to the house how the coalition government is investing more than ever before to deliver new prosperity, greater opportunities and a better quality of life for regional and rural Victoria?

**Mr RYAN** (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — I thank the member for his very appropriate question. It is extremely pertinent to the interests of Victorians. I commend the member for the great work he does on behalf of his electorate.

Yesterday was a great day for rural and regional Victorians, because a budget was delivered by the Baillieu coalition government which offers all sorts of promise in relation to them. It is in keeping with the promises that were made leading into the campaign, and it will deliver a new era of prosperity for those various communities.

There are many highlights. The banner highlight is the delivery of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. The first \$500 million is to be allocated over the first term of this government — that is, \$500 million will be available for rural and regional Victoria in addition to the usual core funding. No-one in rural and regional Victoria has ever seen funding on this scale before. In the budget for this year there is \$259 million for the upgrade of regional health services, \$16 million for the provision of additional ambulance stations and \$151 million to engage a further 340 ambulance officers throughout the state. There is \$160 million to be allocated over four years for the all-important country roads and bridges.

I pause to say that these initiatives are absolutely critical to the interests of country Victorians. We depend very much on our road infrastructure and bridges not only to be able to conduct our commerce but also to be able to live in the areas where we reside in the regions beyond Melbourne. There is another \$140 million for regional highway upgrades and \$20 million over four years for the Regional Aviation Fund. Not surprisingly this has been greeted with absolute acclaim throughout rural and regional Victoria.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr RYAN** — Yes, I have the clippings with me. The first of them is from the *Riverine Herald*, up there in that great city of Echuca. The heading on the front page says, ‘Yes, we have budget funds’, and this is addressing the fact of \$40 million being committed by the coalition government to the rebuilding of the Echuca hospital. It is a great tribute to the efforts of the local member — \$40 million! In the *Wimmera Mail-Times* the headings are ‘\$7 million windfall’ and ‘Leaders applaud cash for special school’. That is reflective of the great efforts of the member for Lowan and what he has been able to do on behalf of his electorate.

The headline in today’s edition of the *Weekly Times*, that great journal of the country, is ‘Coalition keeps its promises to country’. It says on another page ‘Windfall helps take heat off CFA’, and it talks about the fact that we are going to build another 60 fire stations in the course of this first 12 months and acquire another 101 vehicles for the Country Fire Authority. What a great announcement for the CFA.

Among the stations being built is one at Carrajung in my own electorate. I mention it particularly because just last week Labor members were out saying it would not happen. They were trying to tell my constituents it would never happen, and there it is amongst the stations that are going to be built. It is going to be built.

Under the headline ‘Budget looks promising’ the *Weekly Times* says:

Regional communities will be relieved to see the promises to invest in hospital upgrades ...

It then refers to other forms of upgrade, and so it goes on and on. Of course there are many more great stories to be told. There were many people celebrating in here last night as well. Indeed the Labor opposition members were having a bit of a nosh-up over in their room too. I think they were celebrating it as well. I think they were, because they too recognise that this is a great budget for rural and regional Victoria, and we are thrilled to have been able to deliver.

**Ms Barker** — On a point of order, Speaker, it is a bit late to take a point of order if the member keeps talking after I have been on my feet for about 60 seconds. My point of order is that clearly the minister was debating. Referring to what the Labor Party may or may not do in its own private rooms is out of order.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Deputy Premier has completed his answer.

### **Minister for Health: legal expenses**

**Ms HENNESSY** (Altona) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978, which says in section 3(1)(e):

... a Member who is a Minister shall ensure that no conflict exists, or appears to exist, between his public duty and his private interests ...

How is the acceptance by the Minister for Health, Mr David Davis, of Liberal Party 500 Club funding for his own personal legal costs consistent with this code of conduct?

**Mr O'Brien** — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to *Rulings from the Chair*, November 2010, the bottom paragraph on page 157, which says:

Internal party matters — questions unacceptable. Internal party matters are not a subject that can be accepted in a question without notice.

I also refer you to the ruling on page 156 headed 'Question on issue arising prior to Premier's administration'. The nub of the ruling contained there is:

The question instead related to a matter which took place before the period of the government's administration (that is, when the Premier was Leader of the Opposition) and the Speaker advised the member he could raise the matter during the grievance or adjournment debate.

On both those precedents, Speaker, I believe this question is clearly out of order, and I urge you to so rule.

**Mr Andrews** — On the point of order, Speaker, this is not a matter of internal party administration; this is a matter about the obligations of ministers under an act of this Parliament which imposes on all of us, regardless of what party put us here, certain important duties. That is what the question relates to. That is the first issue.

On the second issue, it is totally unclear whether these bills were paid or have been paid and whether they remain outstanding now, so this notion that somehow this matter began, was prosecuted and ended before Mr David Davis became a minister is complete nonsense.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I uphold the point of order raised by the Minister for Gaming, and I ask the member for Altona to rephrase her question.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have ruled the question out of order, and I am giving the member for Altona an opportunity to rewrite the question.

**Ms Allan** — On a point of order, Speaker, on what grounds?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! On the grounds of the issues that were raised by the Minister for Gaming.

**Mr Hulls** — On a point of order, Speaker, I seek clarification. It is obviously very difficult for the shadow minister to rephrase the question — which deals specifically with the current ministerial code of conduct, deals specifically with special duties imposed on ministers to avoid conflicts of interest or potential

conflicts of interest and deals specifically with legal bills being paid for a minister by the fundraising arm of the Liberal Party — unless she knows the basis upon which this question has been quite extraordinarily ruled out of order. We seek clarification, Speaker, as to why you have ruled this out of order.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The issues that were raised by the Minister for Gaming relate to internal party matters, which relates to the fundraising arm that the member for Niddrie spoke of. They also relate to whether it was an issue that arose prior to the Premier's administration.

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! No, therefore I would rule that it is a hypothetical question, because you do not know whether the money has been paid or not.

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have ruled on the point of order.

**Mr Andrews** — On a further point of order, Speaker, the question just asked by the member for Altona related to obligations of ministers under an act of this Parliament. How those obligations and scrutiny as to whether they were met are internal political party matters, how they are not connected with the duties of this house and how that question is out of order beggars belief. If the government is not prepared to answer questions about a minister receiving secret payments of personal bills, then so be it. But this question is in order and ought to have been answered.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I again raise with you the point that you are saying you do not know whether the money has been paid or not. The question is then hypothetical. I rule the question out of order.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have ruled on the point of order. The question is out of order; I will not accept it.

### **Budget: commentary**

**Mr SHAW** (Frankston) — My question is to the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer aware of any reaction — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Hulls** — On a point of order, Speaker, if this Parliament has any role to play at all, it is to scrutinise actions of ministers and indeed to scrutinise whether or

not ministers have been involved in conflicts of interest. When specifics in relation to the section of the act that has been quoted come under the auspices of the Premier and make it quite clear that conflicts of interest go to the heart of democracy in this state, if you are to now rule questions out of order that relate to whether or not a minister has received secret payments in relation to his legal bills and you will not allow the Premier to address these matters, the whole show becomes a farce. That is why — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have ruled on the question; I have ruled it out of order.

**Mr SHAW** — My question is to the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer aware of any reaction — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I called the member for Frankston. I am not going to entertain any further points of order on the issue. Is this a new point of order?

**An honourable member** — Yes, it is.

**Ms Allan** — On a further point of order, Speaker, to assist the opposition in the conduct of question time it would be helpful to know why you have accepted the view of the government and the Liberal Party that the matter that is being referred to is a matter that occurred prior to the time that the Premier became Premier. We have asked a question in good faith seeking information, which is the purpose of question time. We have asked the question on a direct matter.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have ruled the point of order out of order and I have ruled the question out of order. I ask the member to resume her seat.

**Ms Allan** — Perhaps if I could finish my point of order — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the member to resume her seat.

**Ms Allan** — Perhaps if I could finish my point of order — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have asked the member to resume her seat. I have ruled on the point of order, I have ruled the question out of order, and I am calling on the member for Frankston. I will not accept any further points of order on the issue.

**Mr SHAW** — My question is to the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer aware of any reaction by independent commentators to the 2011–12 budget he introduced

yesterday, which delivers on the coalition's election commitments made at the last state election?

**Mr Hulls** — On a point of order, Speaker, that relates to the issue of integrity in government and the conduct of this Parliament, it appears that the rulings you have made without explanation are now fettering the opposition in asking bona fide questions about whether or not secret payments have been made to a minister of the Crown. By ruling these questions out of order you are saying that the opposition will continue to be fettered in its ability to probe the government in relation to conflicts of interest, potential conflicts of interest and whether members are using their positions as ministers appropriately or inappropriately. We have had examples right around the country where ministers have got themselves into all sorts of dramas and traumas and troubles because — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! This is the same point of order that I have already ruled on. I am not going to uphold the point of order that has been raised by the member for Niddrie. If members wish to ask questions about government administration and government business, I ask them to ask questions in that way. I do not believe that the questions that have been asked, even when they have been rephrased, fit into that line of questioning. I did not hear the question of the member for Frankston.

**Mr SHAW** — My question — —

**Ms Allan** — On a point of order, Speaker, you just indicated that you would accept as in order questions on government administration. The question that was asked referred to the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978, which the Premier is directly responsible for, and I would ask that if you are going to accept those sorts of questions, you give the member for Altona the opportunity to rephrase the end of her question to have it accepted as in order, which is in keeping with the past convention of this house to give a member a chance to rephrase a question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! We have moved on. I have ruled the question out of order, and I call on the member for Frankston.

**Mr SHAW** — I hardly heard my question myself! My question is to the Treasurer.

**Ms Duncan** — On a further point of order, Speaker, in clarifying your comments to the member for Altona you said at one point that she did not know whether a payment had been made to the minister and therefore the question was hypothetical. My question — and my point of order — is: are you saying that if the

opposition does not know the answer, that a question is therefore out of order?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! In fact I suggested that the Leader of the Opposition had said it related to it.

**An honourable member** — No, you said it.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

**Mr SHAW** — My question is to the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer aware — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I will not continue until the house comes to some order, and if it does not come to order, I will suspend the house. Members can make up their minds.

**Ms Campbell** — On a point of order, Speaker, my point of order is in relation to *Rulings from the Chair* at page 157, which deals with cases where matters are raised in relation to the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978. Speaker, you ruled that last question out of order because you accused it of being a party political contribution. Are you saying in your ruling that we are not allowed to ask questions if a political party is involved, but it is okay if a third party that is not a political party is involved? It is inconsistent if that is your ruling.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The point of order that was raised by the minister related to two previous rulings from the Chair. One of them related to internal party matters, and that relates to payments that were made by an internal Liberal Party organisation. The second one related to this question and issue arising prior to the Premier's administration, and it appears that it was before the Premier's administration, so I am sorry, but the member is raising the same point of order.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Holding** — On a point of order, Speaker, you have invited from the opposition, by way of your rulings, a clarification as to whether the matters raised predate the election and the oath of office of the Minister for Health or whether in fact they postdate it. We put it to the house today, unambiguously and unequivocally, that the payments in relation to these personal legal expenses by the Minister for Health are in fact still outstanding, and they unambiguously postdate his oath of office as the Minister for Health.

Therefore it is completely within order for the opposition to come into this chamber and ask questions which relate to activities that have occurred since his acceptance of the oath of office as Minister for Health. It is completely legitimate for members of the opposition to pose these questions, so not only is this matter within order insofar as it relates to the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978 code of conduct, which is an act of Parliament administered by the Premier in this chamber but it is also in order because the payments remain outstanding, and as long as they remain outstanding, if they are to be paid it would be a personal benefit received by the Minister for Health that occurred while he was the Minister for Health and subject to that code of conduct which imposes a special responsibility on ministers in accordance with that act.

These questions are completely within the standing orders, and the failure of those opposite to be willing to answer these questions shows that their commitment to be open and transparent with the Victorian people is a hollow claim of spin and rhetoric.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Lyndhurst says, and I think he said it twice, that these payments had not been made, which means there is no conflict of interest even — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I call the member for Frankston.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr SHAW** — Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the leg workout that I am having at the moment! My question is to the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer aware of any reaction lately — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I am going to suspend the sitting of the house until the ringing of the bells.

**Sitting suspended 2.44 p.m. until 3.03 p.m.**

**Ms Allan** — On a brief point of order, Speaker, the opposition does have some fundamental concerns with a number of the rulings that you have made during the course of question time, particularly in relation to ministerial responsibility. However, I indicate to you that out of respect to the Parliament and to facilitate the ongoing operation of question time this afternoon we will attempt to pursue these matters via a dissent motion later this day.

**Mr SHAW** — My question is to the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer aware of any reaction by independent commentators to the 2011–12 budget he introduced yesterday, which delivers on the coalition’s election commitments made at the last state election?

**Mr WELLS** (Treasurer) — I thank the member for Frankston for his question, because at last I have a chance to talk about the budget. The extraordinary efforts the opposition has gone to during question time to ensure that we do not get to talk about this budget have been quite extraordinary.

The Baillieu government brought down the budget yesterday, and it is a budget that we are very proud of. It is a great budget that is about delivering on our election commitments. That is what we said we would do, and in government that is what we have done. Despite all of the problems we have inherited, we are delivering on community safety, public transport and health, and we have maintained an operating surplus. But there is a lot more hard work to be done to ensure that we stabilise the budget. We have to stabilise debt, and we have to make sure we are able to control expenditure over the forward estimates period.

What are people saying about the budget? The Real Estate Institute of Victoria was mentioned by the Premier. I want to pick up on the other issue the REIV pointed to. First home buyers, farmers and pensioners have been looking forward to the cuts that they were promised at the November 2010 election. They will no doubt welcome the announcement and details about these in the budget.

The Master Builders Association of Victoria welcomed the budget and said it considered the growing population and its needs while also cutting taxes for first home buyers.

The *Herald Sun* editorial article headlined ‘Sound budget for the times’ states:

In the context of tougher economic conditions ahead for Victoria, the Baillieu government’s first budget should be seen as sensible, and an economic plan for the times ahead.

The Victorian division of the Minerals Council of Australia said that the budget had a strong focus on competition and regulation reform.

The good news is to be found in the press release that Standard and Poor’s put out yesterday afternoon, which says:

Today’s budget is consistent with our expectation that the new state government will continue to manage the state’s finances prudently ...

They are all great stamps of approval from important organisations in the community. This is a great budget. We have delivered on our election commitments. We will do the job that Victorians expect the Baillieu government to do.

### **Teachers: remuneration**

**Mr HOLDING** (Lyndhurst) — My question is to the Treasurer. When the Premier promised that ‘we must immediately lift the pay of teachers in our school system so they are not just equal with other states but the highest paid in the nation’, was that a promise?

**Mr WELLS** (Treasurer) — The government’s wage position, its wage policy, is 2.5 per cent plus productivity. At the moment we are in a situation where we are negotiating with the police, with the public sector and with teachers. That is our expectation, the 2.5 per cent, and we are working very hard with the public sector in those areas.

The Baillieu government respects the hard work that is done by our police, our teachers and our public sector employees. We also want to be seen as a responsible employer. We will work through a process methodically with those public sector people — the teachers, the police and public sector workers — to ensure a fair outcome.

### **Budget: mental health**

**Ms WREFORD** (Mordialloc) — My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Is the minister aware of any reaction by independent organisations in the minister’s portfolio to the 2011–12 budget, which delivers on the coalition’s election commitments made at the last state election?

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE** (Minister for Mental Health) — I thank the member for Mordialloc for her question and for her great interest in mental health matters. The Baillieu government has a real vision for mental health in Victoria. Our policy and our budget commitments have been roundly supported by people with a mental illness and by people who deliver services to people with a mental illness.

There is a \$105 million package to make a real difference in the lives of people with a mental illness. It ranges through a whole series of areas, with a comprehensive package starting with early intervention by investing in Headspace services, co-investing with the federal government; suicide prevention for gay and lesbian young people; and also with eating disorders, both consolidating existing programs and adding a new program at the Royal Children’s Hospital.

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria was very pleased as an independent third party. It said:

YACVic welcomes the announcement of \$4 million of funding of services for suicide prevention for same-sex attracted and gender-questioning young people.

‘This is a much needed boost for —

these services. The council’s representative also said:

Many of these services have been running on the smell of an oily rag for years.

YACVic went on to say:

The commitment of an additional \$6 million for Headspace initiatives, will further enhance the vital integrated youth mental health services that this program provides ...

We have also made a significant investment in community mental health, a real boost, with a recognition that community mental health serves a critical role in the delivery of services — community clinical mental health, non-profit-delivered psychiatric disability rehabilitation and support services, and also with recurrent and capital funding to make sure these services can be delivered effectively.

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) said:

VCOSS welcomes ... major initiatives in the 2011–12 state budget including ... community-based mental health funding — particularly for young people ...

It is very good to have VCOSS endorsement of our policies.

We are also delivering on inpatient services. Forty-six new beds are coming on line this year. The beds were built, but they were not funded to run. We will be making sure these beds can be delivered. We will also be delivering four new psychiatric assessment and planning unit beds in Sunshine. There has been massive pressure in relation to mental health services in the western suburbs, and these four beds will make a real difference.

We are delivering the central coordination for access to mental health beds so that doctors can spend time dealing with patients rather than on the phone trying to find access to a bed. There is a significant investment in the safety of women in inpatient units — a very important issue.

The Australian Medical Association had this to say:

The government’s investment in mental health is welcomed. Particularly encouraging is the funding for gender-segregated psychiatric wards ...

We welcome its support for this important package.

Accommodation and recovery have been critical parts of our investment as well. We are doing new thinking on housing and in terms of employment and education and linking them with clinical services so that we can really focus on the successful recovery of people with a mental illness.

Liz Crowther, the CEO of the Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria, said ‘there are some terrific innovations in this’, which is a great endorsement of the Baillieu government’s mental health investments.

There was another endorsement, when it was said:

... I welcome ... additional funding to support better outcomes for the one in five Victorians who will have to deal with mental illness.

I welcome that endorsement of the Leader of the Opposition on ABC radio 774 yesterday of the Baillieu government’s mental health commitments. This is a significant investment for people with a mental illness. We are delivering on our election commitments, which we very proudly announced at the end of last year; we are delivering a vision for better mental health services for people with a mental illness; and we are delivering for better outcomes for Victorians who are vulnerable.

### **Apprenticeships: early completion bonus**

**Mr HOLDING** (Lyndhurst) — My question is to the Treasurer. I ask: why is the Treasurer cutting the job creating and highly successful early completion bonus for apprentices paid to employers?

**Mr WELLS** (Treasurer) — I thank the shadow Treasurer for his question. The position was that we were handed a financial situation which was a complete and utter mess. We had a situation of increasing debt from \$3.5 billion racing up to \$31 billion.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Albert Park is on a warning.

**Mr WELLS** — We had a situation on the operating statement over the last 10 years where on average expenditure was growing at 8 per cent and revenue was growing at only 7.3 per cent — a completely unsustainable situation. On top of that we found there was the \$2.5 billion cut in GST. In addition there was a \$1.6 billion retraction in the GST consumption pool. That was \$4.1 billion in lost GST. We also add the \$2 billion of cost blow-outs that the previous government has left us to sort out. In addition to that

there was \$550 million of deferred commonwealth payments. That racks up to about \$6.6 billion.

At the last election we promised a savings policy of \$1.6 billion, but as we started to dig deeper into the financial mess that was left by the previous government, we had to commit to more savings. Yes, there has been some pain, but at the end of the day we have to make sure that we deliver on a surplus and make sure that we deliver on a budget that is sustainable into the future.

### **Budget: education**

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — My question is to the Minister for Education. Is the minister aware of any reaction to funding in the 2011–12 state budget, which delivers on the coalition government's election commitments, by organisations representing Victorian children with special needs?

**Mr DIXON** (Minister for Education) — I would like to thank the member for her question and for her real interest in education and also special education here in Victoria. It really is an honour to tell the house today about two large commitments that we made in the budget yesterday to students with a disability and to their schools. First of all the Treasurer announced an extra \$156 million of payments for the Program for Students with Disabilities — a huge increase.

The reason we have made that extra commitment is that there has been an increase in the number of students who qualify for the program. When we came to government we found there was absolutely no provision for that growth, and in fact if the funding for next year had remained at the same level that we inherited from the previous government, there would have been 700 eligible students who would not have been able to access that payment. It would have been the first time ever that we would have had a waiting list for that program.

We have come to the party. We have said we recognise that need, and we are investing that \$156 million. It was good to read the media release from the Association for Children with a Disability yesterday, which the member referred to, in which the CEO said:

Many children with a disability and their families are breathing a sigh of relief at the Victorian government's budget announcements today ...

Help with aids and equipment, respite and holiday programs, inclusion in kindergarten and support at school will make a difference for many ...

... The strong voice of parents has been heard. Our association is hopeful that the significant capital investment in specialist education outlined in today's budget will achieve the success parents want for their children, as well as opportunities to actively participate in community life.

This brings me to my second point and our other major investment in education, which is the largest single investment in one year in capital works for special and autistic schools in over a decade. We have delivered the single largest one-year capital investment in special schools, and I am proud to be able to say that.

Over 11 special and autistic schools will benefit from this funding, and I would like to highlight two particular schools in relation to this. Members may be aware of the Broadmeadows regeneration project. Only two schools missed out under this project: the Hume Valley School and the Broadmeadows Special Developmental School. They have been asking for funding for years and were ignored by the previous government. Coincidentally the schools were in the electorate of the former Treasurer and former Premier, but he did not deliver for the special students in his electorate. It has taken this coalition government to do so.

We know how special these kids are. We know they have been waiting for this for 11 years, and we are delivering on that. Those children in Hume Valley and Broadmeadows will receive their school funding from a coalition government, not from a Labor government. I would like to pay tribute to all the parents, carers and teachers of all our students with disabilities in Victoria. They do a great job, and we are delivering for them. It is a coalition government delivering for them, not the opposition.

### **WYNDHAM PLANNING SCHEME: AMENDMENT**

#### **Debate resumed.**

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — When time caught up with me at 1 o'clock we were talking about the Werribee South green wedge policy, and I was referring to the three documents contained within that policy: the incorporated documents and particularly the specific subdivision provisions.

Firstly I will deal very quickly with the subdivision provisions. Essentially the variation to the minimum subdivision areas relates purely and simply to the Werribee South intensive agriculture precinct, which is, as is usual in planning schemes, defined on a map. The intention is to vary the minimum to 15 hectares except

where two or more dwellings exist on a lot. Where they lawfully exist as of today, there will be the opportunity to create two lots, with a minimum of 4000 square metres and a maximum of 5000 square metres, which each contain additional dwellings. Beyond that the minimum lot size becomes 40 hectares in the Werribee South intensive agriculture precinct, and on other land in the areas it becomes 80 hectares.

I think the member for Richmond and the member for Tarneit both referred to the desirability and almost the essential nature of the preservation of the green wedge. As someone who has a significant amount of the Mornington Peninsula green wedge in my electorate, I certainly share those views.

The Werribee South green wedge, which abuts Port Phillip Bay, is a very complex area. It consists of eight different precincts: the intensive agricultural precinct, which I have just been talking about; the Royal Australian Air Force precinct; the dryland farming precinct; the tourism and recreation precinct, which is primarily comprised of the Werribee zoo; the Werribee South township precinct; an area for a proposed marina; the western treatment plant; and the rural residential precinct. The significance of the intensive agriculture area is that it is very close to the existing urban area, and, as other speakers have mentioned, it is an area that is subject to a very rapid pace of growth. It is important that we protect it, not only because it is green wedge but also perhaps for a far more important reason as far as I am concerned, and it is a matter that has become a hobby horse of mine — that is, the necessity to protect high-quality agricultural land that is close to the metropolitan area.

In 2010 we saw the unfortunate loss of some high-quality agricultural land in the Clyde area, so I took with a grain of salt the member for Richmond's suggestion that he would be closely watching this government's form with regard to green wedges. The former government extended the urban growth boundary substantially and did so in a manner that allowed the removal of a substantial tract of prime agricultural land. Not only was it prime agricultural land; it was prime agricultural land that could easily have been served by the south-eastern treatment plant, so a significant opportunity to utilise high-value land in a productive manner has unfortunately been lost.

The amendment will provide a greater level of certainty for the Werribee South community. That certainty is important for the community, and I am pleased that support for this motion — and the debate that we have had — is bipartisan, because nothing in planning schemes is set in concrete. They are very much a

creature of the government, the municipality and to some extent the fashions of the day. In this case this motion sends a strong message to the people of Werribee South and to those who might have other ambitions for the land that it is the view of both sides of the Parliament that this highly productive land should be retained for agricultural production for many years to come.

**Mr EREN (Lara)** — I rise today to speak to the house regarding the very important amendment C93 to the Wyndham planning scheme. I will make my contribution brief. Members on this side of the chamber have eloquently put some of the concerns that we have about this amendment and more generally in relation to the western suburbs. Having said that, we are not opposing the amendment before the house.

The amendment proposes to incorporate the objectives of the draft *Werribee South Green Wedge Policy and Management Plan* into the Wyndham planning scheme. It will do this by providing a policy that will guide the preferred land uses and their locations within the green wedge and by presenting a schedule that will provide limits on the subdivision of land within the green wedge zone. This application has been made by the Wyndham City Council and is in response to apprehension among locals about the advance of urban sprawl and the effects this will have on farming.

As I have said many times in this house Werribee and the western suburbs are one of the fastest growing residential areas in Melbourne — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr EREN** — The fastest in the nation. I made a statement this morning in relation to how fast it is growing and the pressures that are being put on the fast growing areas of Melbourne by infrastructure needs.

Access to green spaces and recreational opportunities is central to creating a livable community and developing healthy and happy kids and families. We are known as the garden state and are very conscious of making sure, even when you walk out of Parliament into the middle of the city of Melbourne, that there are lots of parklands and green open spaces to make sure that the quality of life we have in Melbourne, particularly in the outer Melbourne areas, is of the utmost standard. That is a concern, and the western parts of Melbourne are among those areas that need to continually receive investment. We can go through the process of jam packing a place full of residential allotments, and that is one of the concerns that we have in making sure that infrastructure needs are met in accordance with growth.

This plan covers the Western Plains South green wedge, which is predominately farming land and a buffer on encroaching urban development. It also covers the Werribee South green wedge, which is an intensive agricultural area. The amendment seeks to protect that as well. The plan allows for the subdivision of 50 current lots into an additional 59 lots, but that can only occur where there are two or more houses on those lots. Of the 50 lots, 11 are not currently able to be subdivided, as I understand it.

My Labor colleagues and I are very supportive of the protection of green wedges, which we view as the lungs of the city. It was just before the election that the member for Tarneit and I announced the building of a bridge to new open space at Werribee — a 230 hectare urban park. Lots of families were excited about the prospect of having such a large open space.

I want to move on. I know that there are some pressing issues before the house, so I will make sure that my contribution is brief. This is the first green wedge plan that has come before this government, and the concern we have is that this first one has come to Parliament because the government wants to increase green wedge fragmentation. The chopped up bits will be between 4000 and 5000 square metres, which is not large enough for farming. It is obviously residential land, but there is no sewerage or public transport within 10 kilometres of that area. While we are not opposing this planning amendment, we are very protective of the green wedge and want to ensure that no precedent is set that will encroach upon it.

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me pleasure to rise to contribute to debate on amendment C93 to the Wyndham planning scheme. The amendment implements the Werribee South Green Wedge Policy and Management Plan of October 2010 so that it becomes part of the Wyndham planning scheme. It is pleasing to hear the comments of those opposite that they will be supporting, or at the very least not opposing, this amendment.

The issue of green wedge land is very dear to many of us in this house, particularly those of us who are located in electorates on the outer fringes of Melbourne. In my electorate we have been grappling with the issue of the interconnection between residential housing and green wedge land. We have had many issues in the past where housing has been established abutting the urban growth boundary, which in many respects does not provide for a smooth transition from residential into green wedge land.

The Werribee South green wedge forms part of the ring of green wedges which surrounds Melbourne's fringe. It covers an area of approximately 11 350 hectares and is located south of the Princes Freeway and outside the urban growth boundary. As the member for Richmond advised us in his tourist guide to the planning scheme, it incorporates areas around the Werribee mansion and Werribee Open Range Zoo.

The amendment introduces new local policies to support and manage the range of land uses in the green wedge. It also tightens subdivision controls within the green wedge zone. Specifically, landowners will no longer have the right to excise a vacant lot unless there are two or more existing dwellings on that piece of land. More importantly, general subdivisions are only permitted where each new lot is at least 15 hectares in size. That was a point that was strongly put by my colleague the member for Kilsyth in his contribution.

The amendment will reduce land fragmentation in the Werribee South green wedge whilst recognising the existing dwellings in the intensive agriculture precinct. It will maintain and support viable farming land whilst recognising that other land uses, such as housing, tourism and infrastructure, are vital for the continued economic prosperity of the area. It will require land use and development in the green wedge to have regard to the specific environmental context of each site and of off-site impacts on agricultural land and waterways. It will provide a greater level of certainty for the Werribee South community and provide increased protection and certainty to the multimillion-dollar agriculture industry located in the Werribee South intensive agriculture precinct.

In your contribution to this debate, Acting Speaker, you provided an overview of some of the issues in the Clyde community. Many of us who travel through Clyde on our way to South Gippsland, or more importantly down to Philip Island, will see how large tracts of agricultural land have now been converted to accommodate housing. In fact my own brother, who resides in the city of Casey, lives in one of those areas.

It is important that we get the planning right on this issue. Residents in my electorate have raised concerns with me about the impact of planning decisions that are taking away our food bowl. It is important that when we look at this issue it be done properly and in collaboration, so I am pleased to see that this amendment before the house has involved community consultation and cooperation between the City of Wyndham and the state government.

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires this amendment to be ratified by Parliament as a small portion of 11 lots of the affected land will be provided with increased subdivision potential. The subdivision changes introduced by the amendment apply only to the intensive agriculture precinct in the green wedge. That is a very important point and one we stress must be fully understood by those opposite. It is important to see important changes pushed and passed by the Parliament. Clearly this is an amendment that has support at the local level. I would hope that under this new government a hallmark of planning will involve community consultation, something that clearly was not the case previously — a legacy of the former Brumby government.

**Motion agreed to.**

### DISSENT FROM SPEAKER'S RULING

**Ms ALLAN** (Bendigo East) — I desire to move, by leave:

That this house dissents from the Speaker's rulings made during question time today where relevant questions from the member for Altona to the Premier on government administration and ministerial conduct and integrity were ruled out of order and the Speaker failed to take into account previous rulings from the Chair, standing orders and sessional orders in making his rulings.

**Leave refused.**

### FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION AMENDMENT (SAFETY NOTICES) BILL 2011

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 6 April; motion of  
Mr CLARK (Attorney-General).**

**Ms HENNESSY** (Altona) — I rise to speak on the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. I am very grateful for the opportunity to do so, because family violence is a crime and it ought to be treated as such. I was very interested to see in crime statistics for the last quarter that 41 per cent of assaults that occur in this state are family-violence-related assaults. We ought not underestimate the level, scale and impact of family violence.

I am proud of the work that has been done around family violence, particularly under the previous Labor government, not only in the community services sector

but particularly around justice reforms — a whole range of law reform issues were adopted by the previous government. It is an issue which we need to continue to work on tirelessly. It is interesting to reflect on the reason that as a community we are not as publicly horrified sometimes about private crime as we are about public crime. That is what makes some of the complexities, issues and challenges around regulating family violence so much more acute.

This bill is a validation and vindication of the approach Labor took when it was in government, particularly when Labor introduced the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, which was a groundbreaking piece of legislation. Those who work and spend time with people not just in the justice sector but in the community services sector — and I have had the privilege and benefit of being involved with both cohorts of organisations — consistently say to me that the justice reforms were absolutely critical in any attempt to break the cycle of family violence being seen as a private and domestic crime, not a public crime that demands the resources of the state.

I would like briefly to go through some of the reforms that the Family Violence Act 2008 introduced, because they are incredibly significant. They provided a comprehensive definition of family violence, one previously lacking in the law. It extended the definition of family members, and in essence that better captured the various faces that a modern family might have. It broadened the use of the holding powers provisions, again another critical issue to ensure that agencies have the capacity to keep people who are the victims of family violence safe. It introduced an enhanced system of family violence intervention orders.

Critically, the act changed the way that evidence is given in a court. We know giving evidence is an issue that particularly affects children and victims of family violence and often serves as a disincentive for them to participate in the prosecution of those who were the perpetrators of violence — it was a critical reform. The act also gave police greater search and seizure powers. The seizure powers are incredibly important because they go to things like firearms and other equipment that is sometimes used in the course of family violence. The act strengthened the provisions for the protection of children, and I will come back to that issue later in the context of this bill.

Most importantly, the 2008 act introduced provisions in relation to a regime that enabled police to provide protection to victims of family violence outside court hours. This was done through the enactment and provision of the family violence safety notice. These

notices could be issued by police for a period of 72 hours, which gave police a tool to provide immediate protection when responding to family violence. That was a critical change, and it focused on the crisis response and protection of predominantly women and children rather than relying on a system whereby a victim of family violence might have to go off to a court, when it was open, and seek an intervention order. The regime under which that occurred reinforced the outdated concept that family violence is a private domestic matter. It essentially dealt with family violence in almost a civil manner before the amendments to the Crimes Act 1958 picked up stalking provisions under section 21A. But before that occurred it put the onus on the victim of family violence rather than on accepting and understanding that family violence is a public crime, that when a child or a person in a home is a victim of violence we are all hurt and offended and that family violence ought be regulated in that regime.

When the Family Violence Protection Bill was debated in 2008 the now Attorney-General, then shadow Attorney-General, made what I believe to be quite an ungracious contribution in the course of that debate. He essentially claimed credit for the 2008 bill and then critiqued the bill on the basis that it had not come soon enough or gone far enough and there was a delay, and unfortunately when I read the second-reading speech of the now Attorney-General on this bill it became apparent to me that he is in fact at it again.

In the second-reading speech the Attorney-General effectively said there was too much delay involved with the family violence protection legislation. As I said, I think that is quite a petty and silly critique he has given, because when the family violence safety notice provisions were enacted in 2008 they were a new tool for police. That was a reform that occurred along with the reforms within Victoria Police around different standards of practice and memorandums of understanding. Culturally it was important that members of Victoria Police were also encouraged to understand the move from the prosecution and protections around family violence — moving from the construction of their being regulated in a civil regime to being regulated in a criminal regime — and the culture and the skills evolution that is required to evolve when new legal norms are established.

Therefore in my view it was entirely appropriate that they be trialled and independently evaluated and it was entirely appropriate to have a period of time to assess whether or not they were an effective tool. So the 2008 family violence safety notices provision did include a sunset provision that allowed the Parliament to

effectively look at an independent evaluation and determine whether or not they should proceed.

Those of us who spend time with people who work in the family violence sector would understand that the most critical issues they seek to reinforce with those who influence and make public policy are that when it comes to family violence it is critical that we use an evidence base, that evaluation is of the utmost importance and that when we regulate issues around family violence we cannot assume that it is a uniform or a homogenous group that we are trying to regulate, due to the complexity of family violence.

Family violence is an issue that does not know class boundaries, that does not know cultural or language boundaries and that does not know geographic boundaries, and within that complexity it is incredibly important to ensure that with the introduction of a tool that seeks to protect victims of family violence, including children, we do not regulate in such a way that a particular group then effectively does not use those sorts of tools. Therefore the evaluation was critically important.

The evaluation of the family violence safety notices was completed in October last year, and the good news is that it showed that it had led to an improved after-hours response to family violence by police and to an increase in the safety of victims. The data showed that police had issued almost 4000 family violence safety notices in the period of just a year and a half, and again those were notices issued out of hours.

It is quite a staggering statistic when one reflects on it, because it goes to the scale of the problem of family violence. As I said at the commencement of my contribution, it is an issue in relation to which we do not tend to examine the statistics and we feel outraged in the same way as we might when we look at antisocial behaviour on King Street or watch television footage of an incident that has occurred.

I certainly look forward to the day when community sentiment is outraged about what occurs with family violence, because the reality is that one of the greatest risks for many women and children is not what happens when they walk down King Street — although feeling safe in that environment is of course important — but what happens when they go home at night and close the door.

It is important, as we continue to look at the public policy opportunities and challenges around community safety, that we ensure that this is not just a debate and discussion that focuses on what we see in public spaces.

We also need to keep very focused on what occurs privately: how do people behave when no-one is watching, and how is it that we have people in the alleged sanctity and security of the familial environment where the most cruel and inhuman things are occurring?

Most people involved in this sector will know that the greatest cause of death, disability or injury for women aged between 15 and 45 is in fact family violence. Many of the statistics that look at homelessness among women demonstrate that there is almost a causal connection between family violence and homelessness. When one looks at the corrections system and drills down to the very challenging histories of many of the women in our corrections system, one sees that family violence is an incredibly important issue that has not been given the mainstream and public attention that it ought to have been, particularly in the context of the community's safety and law and order debates.

I put on record that the opposition will ensure that the law and order and community safety debate is not just about what happens on King Street. Opposition members will be holding this government to account, because we say that the debate ought to include public policy energy, resources and leadership to address the risks that women and children face when they go home each night and close the door.

Turning back to the evaluation, it also found that police felt empowered to take action with this additional tool in responding to family violence. It also found that the vast majority of police call-outs occurred out of hours, as I previously said, and again that provides us with some insight as to what is occurring and at what times it is occurring. The time when the greatest risk seems to peak is also the time when there are fewer opportunities for women to access other forms of social support.

I now wish to speak on some of the provisions that cause the opposition some concern. The opposition wishes to place on record its concern in respect of proposed changes in clause 6(3) of the bill and consequently in clauses 7(2), 8(3) and 9(2). I had the benefit, along with the shadow Attorney-General, of a briefing with the Department of Justice, and again I place on record our thanks and appreciation to the departmental officers for the time and insights they provided to us. But the opposition is concerned that the proposed changes in these clauses will potentially run the risk of denying a court the ability to fully protect a child in a situation where their parent may not provide that protection. Whilst that is a proposition which might at first blush sound confronting, we know that there are many circumstances in which that does occur.

Where a police officer makes an application for a family violence intervention order and the victim does not consent, there are some orders the court can make and some it cannot. For example, where there is no consent by the victim the court cannot order separation. Currently that limitation does not apply if the affected family member is a child. The effect of this amendment is that the limitation is reimposed if one of the affected family members is an adult. If a police officer makes an application to protect an adult and a child and the adult does not consent, the court is limited in what it can order. Our concern is that this might put vulnerable children at risk in circumstances where, for instance, the child's mother is in fear of the father or stepfather and refuses to support the application.

Information contained in a briefing from the Department of Justice indicates that this type of circumstance does occur, and Labor believes this constitutes a real and live risk. Subject to what the Attorney-General has to say on the issue, I wish to foreshadow a potential amendment to be made in the other place when this bill reaches there. Labor puts the government on notice that it needs to be satisfied beyond any shadow of a doubt that such children will be protected by other jurisdictions.

I accept and understand that there are other regulatory frameworks that may help to protect those children; the mandatory reporting obligations of police might be one of those. When we are applying that limitation to this bill it is important that we require adequate assurance from the Attorney-General that no child will be put at risk as a result of this amendment. We ask that the Attorney-General address that point when he speaks on the bill.

Subject to that reservation, the opposition is supportive of the safety notice regime being extended and made permanent. For that reason Labor does not oppose the bill. On behalf of the opposition I also wish to state for the record and foreshadow for the government that the issue of family violence will be one on which Labor will hold the government to account. When we see resources and public policy energy being spent exclusively on what is perceived as public crime, we will demand that the government spend the same amount of energy dealing with the type of crime that people may not see. Family violence may not be a crime that shock jocks in the media jump up and down about, but according to the most recent quarterly crime statistics 41 per cent of all assaults were cases involving women and/or children being hurt.

If we are serious about improving community safety and investing more energy in law and order, then we

need to not just invest in the crisis response; we need to invest heavily in prevention. This bill is a very important part of the crisis response, and I wish it a speedy passage through Parliament.

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — I rise today to support the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. I start by acknowledging the importance of this bill not only to my constituents in Gembrook but to all Victorians. Family violence affects us all, whether we are wealthy or not, working or unemployed, young or old. The statistics from 2009–10 on family violence crimes show that there were 35 000 incidents of family violence responded to by Victoria Police. In the past family violence has been referred to as a silent crime. It is something that happens behind closed doors, and many of us do not hear about it. While watching TV we hear about the crimes in King Street, but we do not hear about the violence occurring in houses and homes that affects so many.

According to the 2009–10 statistics there was a 5.4 per cent increase in the number of family violence incidents reported in Victoria. The figure we do not ever hear, and the figure we will probably never know, is the number of unreported incidents. There are so many unreported family violence incidents throughout Victoria that we will never have the opportunity to hear about. Family violence is something which, if it were possible, we would not have at all. However, it exists, and we must make sure we are out there and active, giving authorities the powers to police these crimes and the tools to prevent them from continuing.

Women are three times more likely to be affected by violence in the home than men. The other statistic that scares me is that one in four children has witnessed family violence. This means one-quarter of our community has witnessed family violence. That is disgusting, and it is something we are working hard to try to prevent. We want to make sure the kids of the future do not have to witness what others have seen.

In November 2003 the then opposition released a policy aimed at giving greater protection to women and children who were victims of violence. The former government, which did not support those reforms in 2003, waited five years to implement this policy. There were five years during which this policy could have been in place, giving police the power to go into a house and use the intervention order system to ensure the safety of the people who were in there at the time, including women and children.

In 2008 the government agreed with the merits of the then opposition's policy and brought in family violence

safety notices, which are the main part of what we are talking about today. In 2008 the government of the day saw this as a temporary measure, but family violence is not temporary. Family violence will be ongoing for a long time, and it is not something to which we should be applying only temporary measures. We must ensure that we provide police with the tools for today and tomorrow as well.

The family violence safety notice was introduced in 2008 to provide immediate safety for victims and their children. Such a notice can include a condition to exclude a violent party from the home. It acts as an application to the Magistrates Court of Victoria for a family violence intervention order. It also acts as a summons to attend court and must be returned to the court for review within 72 hours.

During the time I worked in Dandenong there was an increase in family violence. It got to the stage where the Dandenong police station had a family violence vehicle — and now many stations have one. The vehicle was operational every Sunday from 5 o'clock in the afternoon until 1 o'clock in the morning. The sole duty for the police officers on the shift was to attend family violence incidents. It is sad to say that that was the busiest car on the road in the Dandenong response zone, covering just Dandenong and Springvale. I assume that that happens not just in Dandenong and Springvale but across Victoria.

At the time it was very difficult for police to take action. Laws were in place but there was often a lot of protection for the offender. This bill that has been introduced could have been passed in 2003. As a member of the police force at the time I was saddened that it did not go through Parliament in 2003 to give us the opportunity to use something like the safety notice program that was introduced in 2008. The evaluation of the program has occurred. It has been found that it has contributed to an improved after-hours response to incidents of family violence. Family violence is not something that happens from 9 o'clock to 5 o'clock or from 10 o'clock until 4 o'clock, when a lot of the magistrates courts are operating. It happens well and truly outside those hours, and the police need the opportunity to act outside those hours and ensure that they have a provision to protect someone who is in fear in their own home.

The program has been found to have led to an increase in civil actions taken against perpetrators of family violence. Members of the community affected by family violence, including the victims, who can be women, children and men, have a reluctance to go into court or to even stand up against somebody who has

assaulted them for fear of retribution. This obviously gave the victims a bit of power and strength because they saw that some action was taken. If it happened on a Friday, they were not told that they had to wait until Monday — some action was actually taken on the day.

The program also improved victim safety by removing the burden of decision making from the affected family member to police. This bill is very important. It gives Victoria Police members the opportunity on behalf of another to take out an intervention order against somebody. As I said, the victim, in fear of retribution, may not be willing to stand up and say that they need an intervention order. An intervention order can be made for anything. It is not always an order for separation or for someone to move out of the house; it can just provide that physical or verbal abuse within the house is not allowed. Many conditions can be included in an intervention order.

The program was found to have increased perpetrator accountability by providing a clear and immediate message that family violence is unacceptable. Earlier today in the debate on the bullying legislation that the house passed, I said that it is important to have in place a law that has some strength and power, so that someone who has committed family violence, whether it be verbal or physical, understands the implications of what could and will happen if they continue on that course of action. As I said before, the program gave the police the power to act. That is essential because when officers of the police force or any other agency turn up at any family violence incident they must have something in place that gives them the opportunity to act on the then current situation. It is difficult if they have to walk away. If someone goes into a home where there is family violence they need to know that they can do something there and then to prevent the actions continuing.

While family violence obviously has its implications for the victim, I am not sure how many members are aware that it is one of the most dangerous situations for Victoria Police officers to go into. Members of the police force would tell anyone who spoke to them that they have been confronted or had a violent confrontation most times in the homes where they go because of family violence. Quite often when they attempt to remove the offender the victim turns on the police officers. That is out of fear that they will be seen to be not defending the offender. That can cause them concern. The police need that power. As I said, the bill gives them the opportunity to use that power, not temporarily but for the future.

Under the current law the police can make an application for an intervention order with or without the consent of the aggrieved family member. This will continue. The bill allows the court to make a limited order that protects the aggrieved family member but does not necessarily affect the living arrangements of the parties. That is important too. It gives magistrates the opportunity to put in place an order to prevent the actions that were happening in the house at the time and to ensure the safety of everyone in our community.

Family violence is something that members of this government are very serious about. When we spoke about law and order and the increase in crime in Victoria, we were referring to everybody in our community. We were not referring to just those walking down King Street or Chapel Street or those who are worried about someone whilst they are walking home or going to catch a train. We were referring to every person in every home across the state. In Gembrook we have some fantastic nightclub venues where we do not have any issues, but we want to ensure that people feel safe in their own homes, not just from somebody outside but also from the people in that house as well.

Today I am proud to stand and support this bill. It is a very good move forward that will ensure security for the police to act in the future. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr DONNELLAN** (Narre Warren North) — As was said previously by the member for Altona, the opposition will not be opposing this bill. The bill is very much an ongoing vindication of the approach Labor took when it introduced the important Family Violence Protection Act 2008. I remember that at the time it very much impressed me that it provided the capacity to move the perpetrator of violence out of the house, which was obviously something that was not available before. It is important to actually bring the violence to a halt to some extent for at least 72 hours but also to deal with it in a serious way.

In my local area in the city of Casey we have a specific family violence unit at the Narre Warren police station. There were, I think, four officers — there could be more now — dealing with just the specific issue of family violence, and they are led by a senior sergeant. It shows how important the issue is in the local Casey community that senior police officers are dealing with this terrible crime.

When the former Labor government introduced the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 it provided for an enhanced system of family violence protection orders.

The act gave the police the capacity to exercise search and seizure powers, and it strengthened provisions in relation to the protection of children. Obviously most times the person who has violence perpetrated against them is the female or the mother of the house. It is damaging for children both to potentially be victims of and also to grow up in a household where violence against anybody is pretty much a norm of life. That is not an appropriate way for children to grow up. If they see that as normal behaviour, when they grow up they will potentially perpetrate that upon others. That is certainly something that I have no doubt members on both sides of the house very much want to bring to a halt. As has been mentioned, opposition members have concerns about one part of the bill, which I will come back to a little later.

When the safety notices were introduced it was recognised that violence against women and others does not occur in a 9 o'clock to 5 o'clock situation; it is very much a 24-hours-a-day occurrence. Therefore it was acknowledged that the police needed to have a tool so they could go into a household and move the perpetrator of the violence out of the household. For the police officers to whom I spoke that was a necessary tool. Until that time family violence was very difficult to deal with. As the police did not have such tools they could not stop a perpetrator from punishing those who had called the police. It might have been the next-door neighbour or someone inside the household who may have raised their concerns and asked the police to come and deal with it.

As was mentioned, there has been an evaluation of the system. This bill continues and expands the family violence safety notice system, which is very good. The evaluation occurred in October 2010. It showed that the system led to improved after-hours response to family violence by police and increased safety for the victims. It showed that there were 3309 family violence safety notices issued in a 15-month period since the introduction of the notices and in 84 per cent of the cases the alleged perpetrators were removed from the house. It is so necessary, as I keep emphasising, to get the people out of the house so they cannot perpetrate any more violence upon the female and potentially the children.

As mentioned, there is a concern because we are not convinced the changes made in clause 6(3), and consequently in clauses 7(2), 8(3) and 9(2), will not potentially put children at risk when an adult and child is part of the intervention order. Under these proposed changes, if the adult does not consent, the court is limited in its capacity to make orders in relation to the child and the adult.

We all know that many women who have been continually subject to violence find it very difficult to extricate themselves from the situation. They live in great fear and need enormous support to get out of the household. If the adult who has been subject to this violence is asked to consent, in all likelihood or potentially they may not consent to any orders of the court and that would be putting the child at risk.

My concern is that we have legislation coming into the house soon in relation to mandatory reporting. Mothers and parents will be required to report abuse, violence and the like within a household. It seems strange to ask those adults to mandatorily report abuse, violence and so forth in a household, but then in relation to these family violence orders people can be brought before the courts when violence is being perpetrated in the house and victims are then allowed to not consent to orders of the court and to continue to be victims of this violence. If we are introducing mandatory reporting, we should also allow the courts, if they believe violence has been perpetrated and so forth, to make orders in relation to children.

The safety of the child should be pre-eminent in this situation. One needs to be aware that people who have been subject to violence over many years are not well equipped to deal with such stressful situations. The court needs to be able to do it of its own accord and protect the child. That is our specific concern about the variation of those clauses. I ask the Attorney-General to explain to the house how he will deal with that. In his contribution to the second-reading debate on the Family Violence Protection Bill 2010 on 2 May 2010 his comments as a then opposition member were pretty simple and straightforward. He said:

We strongly support improved protection for victims of family violence, and we hope the government will take on board the concerns we have raised.

Today we are raising a specific concern. The Attorney-General has indicated he very much wants stronger support for those victims of violence, as do we. My great concern as shadow minister for child safety is that this bill, as we have had it explained to us — not myself personally but others — by the Department of Justice, could leave children quite seriously exposed. I think that needs to be addressed, and I would very much encourage the Attorney-General to do so.

With that short contribution, I repeat that we will not be opposing the bill because we do want the safety notices provisions to continue. As the member for Altona has indicated, we may be moving an amendment to the bill in this house or in the other house to ensure that the

safety of children is protected in these instances and they are not potentially exposed to further violence.

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) — I rise in support of the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. I begin by noting that this bill provides further protection for the victims of family violence. It is another way that the new coalition government is seeking to support and protect family members who find themselves the victims of family violence or in a family violence situation.

Family violence safety notices are police-issued protection orders that can be used when responding to incidents of family violence after hours. These notices enable access to protection for victims of family violence outside of court hours. That is a very important aspect of this bill because, as the member for Gembrook noted, oftentimes the incidents of family violence experienced by members of the police force and others are not in the so-called 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. or 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. time frame but after hours. It is important that this bill address that aspect of the family violence issue.

Family violence safety notices aim to increase the safety of the affected family members in three ways. Firstly, by a notice provides immediate protection for victims and their children for 72 hours from the time of issue. Secondly, it acts as an application to the court for a family violence intervention order. Thirdly, it acts as a summons for a respondent to attend court on the first mention date. I also note that a family violence safety notice can only be issued by a police officer at the rank of sergeant or above. That gives the community confidence that these sorts of orders will not be issued willy-nilly but rather will be issued by appropriately senior and experienced police officers.

A family violence safety notice can be issued only when it is believed on reasonable grounds that it is necessary for three things: to ensure the safety of the affected family member, to preserve any property of the affected family member and to protect a child who has been subjected to family violence committed by the respondent.

There are some limitations on police officers applying for family violence safety notices, including that such applications can only be made after court hours when the respondent is present and if the respondent is an adult. There are a number of other restrictions. Again there is some tempering of the requirements and some safeguards within this particular bill.

On a more general note, it is obviously a very sad situation to note the increase in incidents of family violence in the community as a whole. Statistics show that during 2009–10 police responded to over 35 000 incidents of family violence in Victoria. That is quite a staggering number, and it reflects how significant this issue is in the broader community. Whatever we can do to ease the burden and to protect victims in family violence situations, we must do. The 35 000 incidents is a 5.4 per cent increase on the previous year, which is clearly an unacceptable trend and one which we as a community need to be significantly alarmed about. I know people in this place would certainly be alarmed about that.

Not unexpectedly, women and children are most often the victims of family violence. Indeed women are over three times more likely to be victims of family violence than men. That statistic just shows how disproportionately vulnerable the wife or female in the family is to the violence of other members of that family, often the husband.

I want to quote from the Attorney-General's second-reading speech. It says:

The evaluation found that family violence safety notices:

contributed to an improved after-hours response to incidents of family violence;

led to an increase in civil actions taken against perpetrators of family violence;

improved victim safety by removing the burden of decision making from the affected family member to the police; and

increased perpetrator accountability by providing a clear and immediate message that family violence is unacceptable.

As I said, by introducing this bill the government is ensuring that family violence safety notices are embedded as one of a suite of options that are available to police when responding to incidents of family violence. The government takes very seriously this issue, particularly the third point I read, in removing the burden of decision making from the affected family member. As other speakers in this place have mentioned, it is often the females who are the victims, and they are very unlikely to be wanting to take out intervention orders against their spouse or partner or the offender. If that decision is taken out of the hands of the victims, I think they will be very much strengthened. They will not be seen later on in the cool light of day as the instigator of this particular order; rather, the police will be seen in that role. After the event has subsided

that could well make for an easier existence for the victim, who in most cases is female.

The bill also clarifies the Magistrates Court's powers in two areas. Firstly, magistrates have the power to adjourn applications for intervention orders commenced by way of family violence safety notices, and that is an appropriate clarification. The Magistrates Court can still make a limited order if the affected family member does not consent to the court making an order. Again the magistrate in the cool light of day has the benefit of seeing the evidence, of hearing witness statements from informants and others, and as a result of that can exercise their judgement using their experience on the bench. The bill also amends sections of the Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010 that apply in circumstances that do not involve family violence.

In conclusion, I note in passing that there are several other Australian jurisdictions that have this type of legislation in place, including Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. As other speakers have mentioned, it is interesting to see this bill coming out of a trial period of this particular form of order. It is appropriate that we embrace this with a view of the proposed commencement date being 1 November 2011, unless it is decided it will be proclaimed earlier. This is another way that the new coalition government will continue to support and help protect those members of the community who are victims of family violence.

As I said, the incidence of family violence is rising at a very alarming rate. We on this side of the house, and indeed the opposition, take these matters very seriously. We as legislators in this state have a responsibility to empower the police and the system, if you like, so that there can be more protection afforded to the most common victims of family violence — namely, the females in the relationship. It gives me great pleasure to support the bill and to be part of the coalition government that is seeking to improve law and order issues in all aspects of our society, not the least of which is in the family unit. I support the bill and commend it to the house.

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) — I rise to speak on the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. I would like to say that as a Labor member of Parliament I am very proud of the strong stand that the previous Labor government took on the issue of domestic violence. I am proud of the support, the legislation and the services they provided as well as the campaigns to raise community awareness about family violence.

I find it incredibly shocking — and I am sure everybody else here does as well — that the leading factor in the ill health, the disability and in fact the death of Victorian women aged between 15 and 45 is domestic violence. We cannot even imagine the impact that family violence has on children in the home, including those who may witness acts of family violence or be subjected to that family violence themselves.

Labor members of Parliament do not oppose this bill. The 2008 legislation from which it has evolved was introduced by the Labor Party to create things such as family violence safety notices and all the other provisions that other speakers have spoken about. I will not repeat all the changes that the 2008 legislation brought about.

The reason this amendment legislation is before the house today is that the 2008 legislation had a sunset clause. The reason for that was that it seemed right to trial the new powers and tools that police, for example, would have and to make sure that the legislation would be used as it was intended to be used and that it assisted police in supporting people subjected to domestic violence.

There has been a report on the success of the legislation, and that report overwhelmingly endorsed and supported the legislation continuing. The current government has introduced this legislation to continue the provisions of the 2008 act. The only differences and concerns, I believe, are around the issue of whether this amended legislation provides the same protection to children who are in the household where domestic violence is committed and where the adult who is also subjected to domestic violence may not consent to orders such as the separation or removal of the offender from the house. However, as the member for Altona raised earlier that is something to be discussed further in the other place.

I would like to talk about family violence as it relates to the electorate of Thomastown and how this legislation will support those people subjected to domestic violence in the seat of Thomastown. The electorate of Thomastown includes parts of the municipalities of Whittlesea, Moreland and Darebin. Whittlesea has one of the highest rates of reported domestic violence in the state, while Moreland and Darebin also have very high rates.

I would say that pretty well everybody in this house would have had some experience in some way or another of domestic violence through people they know, such as friends, family members or work

colleagues. The constituents whom members see and meet with would have experienced domestic violence at some stage in their lives. For example, as a teenager I had friends whose fathers were violent, one to the point where he would threaten his children with a gun. As I grew up I also had friends who had violent partners, and they received very little support. If legislation like this along with other supports had been available, I can only wonder whether things might have been different for them.

Only recently a constituent came to see me in my electorate office. She had really been sent by her doctor. She was the victim of domestic violence; she had fled her home and for more than three years she had been homeless because of the fact that she could not return to the family home. This was before this legislation came into effect, and again perhaps if this legislation had been in existence at the time, she would not have had to be homeless for many years. She could have been living in the family home, and the perpetrator of the domestic violence — her husband — could have been removed from the house rather than her.

In terms of the municipalities that are part of the Thomastown electorate, I know that the Whittlesea, Moreland and Darebin councils have all done a great deal of work on the issue of domestic violence. These and other councils have done things such as running awareness and education programs in their areas. In Whittlesea they have initiated a blokes barbecue whereby council workers are given time off to attend a barbecue and hear speakers on the issues of domestic violence. They have also been involved in and organised media conferences and other events bringing together police, community leaders and legal services to discuss and try to raise community awareness about domestic violence. These municipalities host White Ribbon Day lunches along with festivals. Last year I attended a festival in Darebin where there was African music. Many people, including representatives of the local West Preston football club and the Northern Football League, have played quite a prominent role in the northern suburbs in supporting and trying to raise awareness about issues of domestic violence.

**Ms Green** interjected.

**Ms HALFPENNY** — ‘And funded by a Labor government’, says the member for Yan Yean.

Council workers in these municipalities get some training to enable them to at least identify where domestic violence is occurring in their areas and among the people they come into contact with.

While we are talking about domestic violence and the legislation which is before the house, another area that is progressing is what can be done within the workplace to support victims and through supporting employers. Unions and working people are working towards having provisions in enterprise agreements to support workers who are subject to domestic violence, whether it is encouraging women to report domestic violence or providing time off with pay to those who are subjected to domestic violence when they need to attend court and for other reasons. Victims often experience the terrible flow-on effects of domestic violence, such as the loss of their homes, their families and their lives. They often become poor performers at work, are frequently absent and as a result lose their jobs as well as everything else. Without a job they have no income, and it is much more difficult for them to leave the situation and be able to live a normal life. Without any money they cannot pay for a house or cover daily living expenses.

I call on the government to support employers by assisting them with the implementation of agreements and policies in the workplace to assist workers who are subject to family violence, in addition to legislation that applies to what happens in the home. This is an issue that affects the community overall and, as was said earlier, it is not something that occurs just behind closed doors. We should all be playing a part in trying to get rid of domestic violence.

Again, in terms of the workplace, I have had experience on at least two occasions where women have been — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Northe)** — Order! The member’s time has expired.

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE** (Minister for Women’s Affairs) — I rise today to speak in support of the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. I do so in my capacity as Minister for Women’s Affairs, because family violence is an absolutely critical issue for women across the state. Family violence safety notices impose short-term protective conditions after hours for victims of family violence pending further hearings by the court. These police-issued family violence safety notices have a maximum life of 72 hours and must be returned to the court within that time. The provisions were designed to sunset on 8 December 2011 so that they could be trialled and evaluated. The bill we are debating today repeals that sunset provision. It also clarifies the power of the Magistrates Court in relation to the adjournment of the intervention order applications brought by way of the family violence safety notices

and the power of the Magistrates Court to make intervention orders where the protected person does not consent to the making of an application by police and/or the order by the court.

As the Attorney-General indicated in the second-reading speech for this bill, police responded to over 35 000 reported incidents of family violence in the last financial year, representing a 5.4 per cent increase on the previous year. In these incidents police sought intervention orders or issued safety notices in 9229 instances, an increase of 2.6 per cent on 2008–09. Women and girls comprise the majority of reported victims of family and sexual violence to Victoria Police. Last year in Victoria 77 per cent of reported family violence victims were women and girls. We know that the police statistics do not reveal the full extent of family violence and that many women who experience violence do not report it. Nationally only 19 per cent of women who have experienced sexual assault by a male perpetrator and 36 per cent of women who have experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator reported it to police.

The protection of women and children, as well as their right to live a life free of violence, is critical to the delivery of safety and justice. Certainly that is what we are seeking to do. Women must have confidence in the family violence system to report incidents of family violence and receive effective support from a range of services. It is critical for police to have options for providing immediate protection to victims of family violence, including after hours, when the majority of police attendances for family violence incidents occurs. Family violence safety notices have proven to be effective in improving the safety of women and children, and this bill provides for the continuation of family violence safety notices as an essential element of an integrated system to deal with family violence.

Family violence safety notices enable police to take protective action in a very immediate way and in a way that holds perpetrators to account for their actions. An independent evaluation of family violence safety notices has shown that police reported that perpetrators took the notice more seriously when it was issued at a police station and after the perpetrator had been removed from the home. The evaluation also found that the immediate issuing of a safety notice by police, close to the time of the incident, provided a clear and strong message that family violence is unacceptable and against the law.

Of course safety notices are just one component of a whole-of-government response to the issue of family violence in our community. We need to build

confidence in the entire system — a system that involves the police, the courts and specialist and community services. We need to make sure that we have a system that responds effectively to family violence by protecting victims, making perpetrators accountable and delivering just outcomes. As the Minister for Women's Affairs, I will continue to work with the sector and experts in the field, as we are doing, to identify what is successful in what we are doing and what more needs to be done to strengthen the system for women experiencing violence.

Making police-issued safety notices a permanent option for police is part of this stronger response to family violence. Other elements of this bill will assist the courts by clarifying their powers when protective action is sought on behalf of victims of both family and interpersonal violence. This is especially critical when it comes to incidents of family violence and ensuring victims receive appropriate protection. We know that power and control lie at the heart of family violence and that violence and abuse is about exploiting these dynamics to engender fear in women and children. There is still much work to be done to address community attitudes about family violence, which is an essential factor in why family violence continues to occur.

The most recent national survey on community attitudes to violence against women, which was conducted in 2009, showed an incredible 18 per cent of the community believed domestic violence can be excused if it results from people getting so angry that they temporarily lose control and 22 per cent believed domestic violence can be excused if the perpetrator subsequently regrets what they have done. These types of views, combined with a lack of knowledge and understanding about the factors that cause and contribute to family violence against women and children, need to be challenged and need to change. These statistics show that we have some way to go in winning the hearts and minds across the board.

In the same way that we have been able to change attitudes and behaviour around drink driving, workplace safety and smoking, we need to think about this ongoing agenda to change the attitudes about violence towards women and children. The evidence indicates that we need to work at the community level and across schools, workplaces, local government, community services, sporting environments and the media. Consistent messages coming from all parts of the community are required to make it clear that violence against women is never acceptable, that it cuts short lives, causes untold misery to those who are

affected by it and that all of us need to work together to prevent it from occurring in the first place.

Obviously when the law delivers a strong message that violence against women and their children is unacceptable and that there are serious consequences for perpetrators, as is provided for in this bill, it is also a critical part of changing attitudes. That is why I am speaking in support of this bill. I congratulate the Attorney-General for introducing the bill and for ensuring that family violence safety notices will continue and that we clarify some aspects of them to make sure they can be as effective as possible. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr LANGUILLER** (Derrimut) — I rise to support the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. From the outset it is important that I place on record that the opposition will be supporting this legislation. This is good legislation for the purpose of further protecting those who are subject to family violence; those people are predominantly, as data will show, women and children.

The Attorney-General introduced the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011 in the Assembly. The key amendment proposed by the bill is that the sunset clause in the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 concerning the operation of family violence safety notices (FVSNs) be repealed. It is important we do this. In addition a FVSN, which is a police-issued protection order, can be used when responding to incidents of family violence after hours. I think this is another important contribution to legislation enacted by the previous Labor government when it introduced a whole package of measures that were designed to protect men and women but predominantly, as many speakers have indicated, women and children, who happen to be the most vulnerable in our community.

It is important that I place on record that Victoria has led the way in terms of bringing about measures that are designed to do everything we can to protect victims. They are further indications that violence of any type in our community is not to be tolerated, is not to be condoned and is not to be justified in any way. That was a groundbreaking piece of legislation. It provided a comprehensive definition of family violence; it extended the definition of a ‘family member’; it broadened the use of holding powers provisions; it introduced an enhanced system of family violence intervention orders; it changed the way evidence was given in court; it gave police greater search and seizure powers. I commend all of that, and I think all of those measures and mechanisms were absolutely right.

In addition — and I think it is incumbent upon me to make a brief remark about this, and I am sure members would be fully aware of this — I represent a very multicultural community. I am very proud of that. I am very proud of the fact that the absolute majority of those communities, and this happens more broadly in our community, condemn family violence.

But it would be remiss of me not to say that on rare occasions I have heard arguments and justifications put forward in the name of diversity or other cultures. It is important that I say that in this society, whilst we are all committed to a multicultural, multifaith and multilanguage community, there is no justification for accepting anything in the name of culture or religious diversity that warrants violence of any type.

I have said many times in private and public discussions that we should be very careful. I think members would accept that I would be the first one amongst others, including the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, to support a multicultural society and community. Let there be no mistake about that: there should be no excuses whatsoever. When it comes to these matters there is one rule of law. We on the opposition side will uphold it, and we will support the government in upholding that one rule of law for everybody. When it comes to domestic violence none of it will be tolerated.

There was an evaluation of family violence and safety notices released in October 2010 which shows that notices have led to an improved after-hours response to family violence incidents by police and have increased the safety of victims. The data shows police had issued 3909 family violence safety notices in a 15-month period since the introduction of the notices. In 84 per cent of cases the alleged perpetrators were removed from homes. This evaluation has led to the proposed amendments and reforms, which we do not oppose.

The safety notices were intended to make perpetrators of family violence more accountable, and the immediate issuing of a notice provides a strong and clear message, delivered by police, that family violence is unacceptable and against the law. The majority of police call-outs to family violence incidents occur after hours. Giving police this additional tool has meant they feel more empowered to take action, which contributes to an increase in the civil action taken by them.

I say in passing, have we not come a long way in terms of the approach and attitudes which are held by police? I commend this. I have recollections of the 1970s, or thereabouts, when some complaints were made, particularly by women, to police stations, and officers

would then say quite typically, 'You might have done something wrong', or 'You'd better go home and sort it out with your husband', or commentary of that kind. Haven't we come a long way in terms of Victoria Police, and in terms of institutions, which is something I wholeheartedly support and commend because of the whole approach to domestic violence, violence generally and bullying? We talked about bullying and harassment in the workplace in debates in this place yesterday. Hasn't Victoria Police come a long way? It certainly has.

I am proud to say and place on the record that because of my close association with Sunshine police and the Magistrates Court, I have had fruitful and constructive discussions, relationships and understandings in terms of what members of the Victoria Police do in the community of Brimbank and broadly in the western suburbs.

I commend all the officers — the senior officers and others. I believe fundamentally they understand this is an issue which affects the community and which, as you would be fully aware, Acting Speaker, has a negative impact in terms of family, work and of productivity at work and the wellbeing and the future of children who, unfortunately, in some cases grow up experiencing domestic violence or family violence generally. Speakers on both sides have talked about the data. I think it was said that one in four kids in our community has experienced domestic violence of one type or another.

The opposition will not be opposing this bill. We are proud of the very reforms that we have brought about. It would be remiss of me not to commend the previous Attorney-General on his strong commitment and strong reform agenda under the Labor government to ensuring that the right messages are given to the community right across the state — that violence of absolutely any type, certainly domestic violence, is not tolerated, not condoned and not accepted.

We will not be opposing this measure. We are proud of the reforms that we brought about. I reiterate my position as the elected member for Derrimut and the position of those on both sides of the chamber that we condemn any form of domestic violence. We will do everything we can as an opposition to ensure that the government introduces good reforms and good legislation that is aimed at strengthening the architecture we put in place for the purpose of protecting vulnerable men and women, but particularly women and children, in our community.

**Ms RYALL** (Mitcham) — I rise in support of the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. The purpose of this bill is to provide for family violence safety notices to become part of the suite of options available to police and the courts in dealing with domestic violence. It is also to provide clarity and consistency to the police and the courts by clarifying the powers of the Magistrates Court in relation to provisions of the existing act.

There is a worrying trend that in recent years violence within the domestic situation, where one should expect to feel safe and protected, is on the increase. The Attorney-General, in his second-reading speech, said that in 2009–10 police in Victoria responded to over 35 000 incidents of family violence — a 5.4 per cent increase on the previous year. Remember that they are just the cases that were attended to or reported to police. As we know, many domestic or family violence incidents go unreported by those who are victims in these cases. According to a report on a study conducted in 1998 by Carlos Carcach from the Australian Institute of Criminology entitled *Reporting Crime to the Police*, most violent assaults in a family home are against women where the victim knows the offender through a previous or current relationship, and as a result these offences go unreported to authorities.

Domestic and family violence is said to occur when someone who has had an intimate or familial relationship attempts to gain and/or maintain power and control over another through a wide range of abusive behaviours. A single act may amount to abuse, and a number of acts that form part of a pattern of behaviour may amount to abuse, even though some or all of those acts, when viewed in isolation, may appear to be minor or trivial. They are not. Other research, both in Australia and overseas, has shown that family violence is a common experience for many people. The statistics show that women are much more likely to experience domestic violence and abuse than men. This bill aims to stem the trend by embedding the current temporary family violence safety regime as a permanent option among a suite of other options available to the courts and to police when responding to incidents of family violence.

The family violence safety notices regime was a policy conceived by the then opposition in 2003 because it saw the need for victims of family violence to be protected further. It was designed to provide greater protection to women and children who were the victims of family violence. The policy provided for police to issue interim, on-the-spot intervention orders for up to 72 hours in circumstances where victims needed immediate protection from the person instigating the

violence. At least 23 per cent of women in Australia have experienced domestic or family violence and, as the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures point out, this accounts for around 2.2 million women.

Domestic violence is not confined to court hours. Police are often called to or become aware of domestic violence issues that the courts have no prior or current knowledge of, and even with pre-family violence safety notices they would not have become aware of those incidents. Domestic violence has no cultural, age or gender boundaries. It is about power and control; it is about who has it and who does not. It is not necessarily physical abuse; it can be psychological and emotional. It results in the victim living in fear — fear for their life, fear of others not understanding, fear of being alone and fear of retribution. It results in pain, both physical and psychological, and often the consequences are physical injury, mental illness and, in too many instances, death.

Feelings of helplessness and failure arise, as do feelings of being trapped with no way out. For those involved in domestic violence, the scars stay with them for life. The cost to individuals, children, the family unit and society is enormous. The economic impact is also huge.

One in four children have witnessed family violence. This has horrendous repercussions for these children, who are powerless, vulnerable and need to be protected. Family violence safety notices have been found to be effective. We supported the former government in implementing our 2003 policy when the Family Violence Protection Bill 2008 was introduced and the subsequent act was passed. The new bill will build on the principal legislation by providing immediate safety for victims and their children. A family violence safety notice can include a condition to exclude a violent party from the home, act as an application to the Magistrates Court of Victoria for a family violence intervention order and act as a summons to attend court. It must be returned to court for review within 72 hours.

Family violence is not acceptable. It destroys lives. Authorities need the necessary powers to stem its increase and deal with it. These amendments provide the necessary tools in the toolkit for police and our courts. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr LIM** (Clayton) — I am pleased to join the debate on the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. I welcome the opportunity to speak on this bill. As many members of the house have already mentioned, the family is a place for love, trust, protection and comfort and for personal growth and support. Sadly, that is not always the case, as we have heard many times from other speakers.

When violence occurs within the family, some members of the family are particularly vulnerable to physical, sexual or mental harm. Once the euphemism ‘a domestic’ was used to mask something more serious. A domestic was something a bit embarrassing that polite people did not talk about, an event that diverted police from dealing with more serious crimes. The attitude was, as the title of one 1970s book on family violence put it, ‘Scream quietly or the neighbours will hear’.

But these days the community recognises that family violence is a serious issue requiring a range of responses, including comprehensive legislation and committed resources through the police, the courts and social support. I agree with the honourable member for Derrimut, who mentioned that we have a very proud record of providing just that, especially under the leadership of former Attorney-General Rob Hulls.

From the perspective of a multicultural Victorian I would particularly like to say that no matter what bill we introduce, the cultural boundaries are such that domestic violence is pretty well hidden, particularly in my community — that is, the Chinese community. Three weeks ago I had the opportunity to speak in Sydney at the national conference of the Chinese community about the fact that the Chinese community had to come of age and people had to stop trying to protect its so-called honour by not speaking out. The degree of domestic violence in the Chinese community is as high as it is in any other community, yet I do not think it has been brought to the attention of the authorities. This also means that resources have not been appropriately directed to supporting the Chinese community. I would particularly like to see this addressed.

Interestingly enough, this past weekend in all the major dailies — the *Herald Sun*, the *Australian* and the *Age* — it was reported that domestic violence had been a particular focus of attention for the federal government. The government advertised a national plan to reduce violence against women and their children as part of the Community Action Grants funding round. This is a funding provision of \$3 million over a period of three years, and each community organisation can apply for up to \$250 000 over that three-year period. I hope the Chinese community will take up this offer and the challenge of addressing meaningfully the domestic violence problem that has been hidden.

For a local member there is another aspect to this issue. Many other members have mentioned that violence comes in many forms, including both physical abuse and mental abuse. However, members may not be

aware or may not have come across other forms of violence perpetrated against women, particularly those in the migrant community. These women may be here as a sponsored spouse, and they may be subjected to horrendous treatment. This is related to financial control. If a bride or spousal member does not behave, they may be threatened with being sent back or subjected to traditional ways of treating daughters-in-law. They may be subjected to tremendous psychological violence which may impair them for a long time, or they may end up being divorced or forced to seek refuge elsewhere. That again is another major problem. This bill means a lot to my community, and I am truly supportive of every aspect of it.

Let me come back to the focus of the bill. A nine-year trend analysis prepared by the Victims Support Agency and published by the Victorian government's Department of Justice in 2009 contains important data. The report is entitled *Measuring Family Violence in Victoria — Nine-Year Trend Analysis — Victorian Family Violence Database*. The key findings, a number of which are intuitive and well understood, appear on pages 16 and 17. For example, among patients presenting to Victorian public hospital emergency departments, 75 per cent of adult females had experienced their injury by being struck by another person. Only 26 per cent of adult males had experienced this type of injury. Three-quarters of adult women, compared with 40 per cent of men, sustained their injury within their home. Another issue that is also now better understood is elder abuse, whereby older parents are vulnerable to assault by their children.

Of particular importance in considering this bill are two key findings. Firstly, and I quote from page 16:

One of the main reasons family violence victims often remain in abusive situations is due to a lack of affordable and safe housing options.

Secondly, in many of the cases recorded there was no active intervention order. Again, I quote:

According to the police data, only one-quarter of the incidents they attended had an active intervention order at the time they were called out.

The report further states:

More than one-third of aggrieved family members who were very fearful of the perpetrator did not have an active intervention order in place and more than 40 per cent of incidents where the violence was reported to be getting worse also did not have an active intervention order in place.

In addition:

Aggrieved family members with multiple reports to the police for previous family violence incidents are less likely to have an active intervention order in place.

Family violence safety notices are a critical measure in allowing the police to take quick action, and that is the focus of this bill. They were introduced by the previous government on an interim basis in 2008, and the sunset clause of that act is removed by this bill.

Unfortunately the Attorney-General has been somewhat churlish in spending much of his second-reading speech on attacking the previous government for introducing family violence safety notices on an interim basis. He is obviously still in opposition mode, but it is not appropriate to play partisan politics in this case. Just because something is introduced on an interim basis or has a sunset clause does not mean it will be scrapped at the end of the period. It is often the means to allow a quick response and to pilot and evaluate prior to a permanent arrangement.

For the record, an evaluation of family violence safety notices was conducted by Thomson Goodall Associates. It was presented to the Victorian family violence round table. The evaluation found that overall family violence safety notices were working. It is very important for all of us to remember that. Without much more to say, I commend the bill to the house. It goes a long way to further strengthening action against family violence in this state.

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me pleasure to rise to contribute to the debate on the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. This bill seeks to do a number of things. It seeks to maintain the suite of options that are available to police and the court system in responding to reports of family violence. It seeks to ensure enhanced protection for victims of family violence, many of whom, as we all know, are women and children. It also seeks to clarify issues for the Magistrates Court concerning its power in relation to the adjournment of applications commenced by way of family violence safety notices and its power to make limited intervention orders on police application where an affected family member does not consent to the order being made by the court.

The issue of family violence is of concern to many on both sides of this house. It was the subject of legislation with the introduction of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008. In 2003 the then opposition proudly prepared a policy that sought to give greater protection to women and children who are victims of family violence. The

policy at that time provided for on-the-spot intervention orders for up to 72 hours in circumstances where victims required immediate protection from perpetrators of family violence. History tells us that at that point the then government was not willing to take up the cudgels on that very important issue. However, in 2008 the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 was implemented. That allowed for a trial of the issuing of family violence safety notices, so in a sense this bill ensures that that legislation remains open to the community and to police in dealing with this very important issue.

As the Attorney-General indicated in his second-reading speech, during 2009–10 police responded to over 35 000 incidents of family violence. That was a 5.4 per cent increase on the previous year. Politics aside, I think we would all agree that that is a horrendous figure and that in a modern economy such as the one we share in Victoria these types of incidents should not occur at such a rate. One has to ask, given the 35 000 incidents that police responded to, how many more were not reported.

It is pleasing that the evaluation conducted during the review of the interim notices clearly found that there have been benefits from the issuing of these notices. The Attorney-General indicated that they have contributed to an improved after-hours response to incidents of family violence. They have led to an increase in civil actions taken against perpetrators. They have improved victim safety by removing the burden of decision making from the affected family members to the police. They have also increased perpetrator accountability by providing a clear and immediate message that family violence is unacceptable. I think that at the very least we would all hope that this important message is made clear: that family violence, particularly violence that is perpetrated against women and children, is unacceptable.

Upon my election to Parliament in 2006 — when you were also elected, Acting Speaker Northe — I spoke to members of my local police force and asked them what some of the challenges of being a member of the force were in terms of their hours. One of the biggest challenges that many members of the Knox force faced was that they knew that a call-out regarding family violence could take up an entire shift. They knew that a significant amount of time would have to be devoted to that incident. If a significant amount of time during a police officer's shift is occupied by one incident of family violence, it demonstrates not only the prevalence of family violence but more importantly that there are many incidents that may not be visited by police, given that it is a police force struggling with numbers. When I

talked to members of the police force at the time, they wanted to have the opportunity for intervention, so I am pleased to see that this is being continued.

Under the watch of the Attorney-General this government has clearly indicated that it will be strong on issues to do with policing, community safety and sentencing. This bill provides a part of the suite of options that we as an incoming government want to put in place not only to provide police with greater powers and not only to provide our courts with powers under which they can deal with perpetrators of crime but, more importantly, to send three messages. The first is a message to perpetrators of crime that their behaviour is unacceptable and that action will be taken against them.

The second is a message to victims of crime that they are not forgotten, that what they are suffering is not acceptable and that we as a government and a Parliament want to put in place measures that protect them and provide options to deal with that suffering.

The third and most important is a message to the broader community that family violence is not something that people do not talk about and that happens only to the family next door. We as a community will not accept family violence. We accept that it happens. However, we also accept that it should not happen, and more importantly, we take action to try to deal with it. I am pleased that the evaluation has shown that this system has worked, that it has delivered benefits and that we are taking the necessary action by way of this bill to ensure that that continues.

The bill clarifies the powers of the Magistrates Court. Firstly, magistrates will have the power to adjourn applications for intervention orders commenced by way of family violence safety notices where no interim or final intervention order is made on the first hearing date. As the Attorney-General has indicated, this will confirm that when the court is faced with insufficient evidence at the first hearing the court will be able to adjourn the application hearing to a later hearing date, allowing the parties time to gather the required evidence and to attend court. This important feature has been identified as needing to be implemented to allow the Magistrates Court to effectively and appropriately deal with applications where necessary evidence has not been provided in the first instance.

Secondly, police will be able to make an application for a family violence intervention order to protect a victim of family violence even if that person does not consent to the police taking that action. The amendment simply provides that when the police bring an application on behalf of someone, even if that person has not

consented, the court can still make a limited order that protects the affected family member but will not necessarily affect the living arrangements of those parties. The amendment obviously takes into account some of the personal needs and living arrangements of individuals, but by the same token it will still allow police to intervene in areas where they think it is appropriate. This is a fair and reasonable approach to dealing with this issue.

Family violence is clearly something that Victorians abhor, and I am pretty sure that Victorians would be shocked to hear that we are still dealing with 35 000 incidents of family violence. That is the statistic of reported incidents, and people would be shocked to hear that that number has increased by 5.4 per cent. All of us in this house would agree that what we want to do is to reduce this number over time.

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) — I rise to speak on the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. The key purpose of the bill, as stated by the Attorney-General, is to ensure that victims of family violence, mostly women and children, are afforded protection both within and outside the home and outside of working hours. This is a commendable purpose and Labor will not be opposing the bill.

Labor has taken a leading approach to family violence and was at the forefront of tackling this difficult social and cultural problem by introducing legislation in 2008. Labor's Family Violence Protection Act 2008 was a first in this area and was groundbreaking in its definition of a family member and the definition of family violence, particularly by introducing the definition of economic violence and abuse. The act also changed the way evidence was given in court and gave police increased powers to search and seize weapons. Most importantly, it strengthened the provisions for the protection of children. Labor has social values at its heart, and paramount to that is that the protection of the most vulnerable in our community should be supported and should be a goal of government. That is why the former Labor government introduced safety notices. They were intended to make perpetrators of family violence more accountable; the immediate issuing of a notice was to provide a strong and clear message delivered by police that family violence is unacceptable and against the law.

An important and key element of family violence reform has been the operational and policy changes initiated by Victoria Police. The Victoria police code of practice implemented in 2004 was recognised nationally as excellent practice and is being modelled in other states. Between 2004 and 2009 there was a

212 per cent increase in the number of intervention orders sought by Victoria Police, including family violence safety notices. This means that the number of people receiving intervention orders more than doubled in four years. In its budget last year Labor had a new funding commitment of \$14.1 million over four years to implement the first phase of *A Right to Respect — Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020*. These have all been extremely positive steps forward in the prevention of family violence.

My concern is that the amendments being introduced by the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011, particularly the addition of certain clauses, may without proper scrutiny and management run the risk of denying the courts the ability to fully protect a child in a situation where the child's parents may not. There is the potential for vulnerable children to be put at risk, particularly in circumstances where, for example, a child's mother is in fear of the father or the stepfather and refuses to support the application. Fettering the power of the Magistrates Court to protect a child in some instances is concerning and something that needs to seriously considered and addressed by the Attorney-General.

In my electorate in Bendigo there is growing evidence to suggest family violence is taking up more and more Victoria Police resources. We know that family violence is profound, particularly for children and their long-term development. The development of a child's brain in their early years plays a key role in how they develop into adulthood. Prolonged exposure to violence can also affect a child's physical health, their performance at school and how they react to stress. Children need positive role models; they need adults who know how to deal with stress and conflict and who can make the right choices. But most importantly they need to feel safe.

An increase in family violence in Bendigo could be the result of greater community awareness and better police reporting. Police responded to 97 incidents of family violence in January this year, compared to 57 call-outs for the same period last year. In the first 14 days of February this year police responded to 58 reports of family violence, compared to 49 for the same period in 2010. These incidents, according to Julie Oberin, CEO of the Annie North organisation, are reflective of an increase across the state, but they also demonstrate that there is more reporting of family violence incidents.

Community attitudes are also changing, and an increasing number of women are reporting family violence. I have personally known many women who have suffered family violence, including my own

mother. Often this violence is insidious and would not be obvious to outsiders. In some cases it is economic abuse, with the taking away of any ability to have control over household money and spending; emotional abuse is not always recognised, but it is severely damaging; and physical and sexual violence is confronting to outsiders and not easy to comprehend.

In my electorate office in Bendigo it has not been uncommon to have women and children in desperate need seeking assistance. We are fortunate in Bendigo to have a number of agencies that are well placed to assist these women and children. These agencies include Centacare, the Department of Human Services, Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre, the Centre Against Sexual Assault, St Luke's Anglicare, Loddon Mallee Housing Services and Women's Health Loddon Mallee, among others. However, there are 26 women's domestic violence refuges in Victoria and they are all full. While it is important to support victims of family violence, it is also paramount that the prevention of family violence be addressed. We can keep building and funding refuges, but it would be so much better to educate and prevent family violence, whether it be against children, women or men.

Family violence is often not recognised due to prejudice, guilt and shame. It is also often associated with drug and alcohol abuse in lower socioeconomic situations. However, family violence exists across all socioeconomic levels and all cultural groups and is usually hidden from public view. We also know that indigenous women and children report higher levels of physical violence than others and are more likely to experience sexual violence and sustain injury.

When family violence safety notices were introduced in 2008 they were a new tool for police to use. It was appropriate that this new tool be given time to be trialled and independently evaluated to determine the effectiveness of family violence notices. Parliament was then given the powers to decide if they should continue. The evaluation of safety notices, which was released in 2010, reveals that they have led to an improved after-hours response to family violence incidents by police and have increased the safety of victims. They are an important tool for police to use in instances where vulnerable women and children are at risk, and it is important that they continue.

I have a family member who works in child protection, in the adolescent section, and she has informed me that without the safety notices it would be almost impossible for child protection workers to protect vulnerable children outside of the hours that normally exist, including call-outs on weekends, public holidays

and often in the middle of the night. It is absolutely vital that they have access to those safety notices via the police. There are several limitations, however, on police officers applying for these safety notices. An application can only be made after court hours; when the respondent is present; if the respondent is an adult; if there are no reasonable grounds for suspecting the respondent has a cognitive impairment; if there are no reasonable grounds for suspecting that there is a Family Law Act order or child protection order in place that may be inconsistent with the proposed terms of the safety notice; if there are reasonable grounds to suspect there is no family violence intervention order already in operation; and if it is determined that a safety notice is necessary before an order can be decided by the court. So there are limitations. However, I commend the bill to the Parliament, and the opposition fully supports it.

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — I am pleased to speak in the debate on the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. The bill repeals section 41 of the act, thereby retaining the family violence safety notice (FVSN) as one of a suite of options available to the police and the courts for responding to incidents of family violence. The bill amends section 30 of the act to clarify that the Magistrates Court has the power to adjourn hearings for family violence intervention orders. It also amends section 31 of the act to clarify that unless an application for an intervention order that was commenced by way of an FVSN is finally determined at the first hearing date, the application continues. Previously the onus was on the victim to lodge an FVSN — that is, the victim had to consent before the police could act and submit an FVSN. The bill clarifies that an FVSN automatically leads to a family intervention order.

Family violence is on the rise, with the latest numbers showing an 8.1 per cent increase statewide. Domestic violence takes up more police time in the Yarra Valley than any other offence, and because we are a widespread community and officers go two-up in a vehicle, it can take a number of hours. It is not that the police mind that time, but because of the underresourcing that we have had for such a long time, it means they sometimes have to make a choice between attending a domestic violence incident, a road accident or a crime. They want more powers, and I think they have been pleased with some of changes that have been made.

The Eastern Community Legal Centre is a legal aid-funded body providing legal services for those in need throughout the Yarra Valley. The majority of its time is spent dealing with family matters, and 23 per cent of all its work involves dealing with family

violence. Over the 2010 financial year, two family intervention order applications were lodged every week in the Yarra Valley. That equates to more than 66 intervention orders per 100 000 people in the Yarra Valley alone. Ninety-seven per cent of all domestic violence involves women being harmed by their partners. Perpetrators must realise that their behaviour has consequences. They must learn respect for their families and respect for the law. Time after time from the police and from community groups the message is the same — that those who assault their partners and children believe they have the right to do so. This must change.

There is a culture change that must occur. Perpetrators must feel the consequences of their actions. They must learn that they cannot rule and control their partners and children through violence. Assault against the person is a crime, and people must realise that whether that crime is committed in the home, on the street, at a place of business or in an entertainment centre, it is still a crime against the person. Many people wait several hours before they call the police. In fact research states that it is not until the seventh time that the victim of a domestic violence walks out of the house that the break occurs. There are many reasons for this — lack of money, isolation, lack of a place to go, concern about the children, concern about the animals — but the major problem is a mental state of continuous violence. Whether it is all physical violence or whether it involves emotional violence, they are persuaded that no-one else will want them, no-one else will care for them, no-one else will love them and that only the person committing these acts of violence is there for them and is the one they should be staying with.

Whether it is because of the way we have moved into nuclear families where we do not have the larger extended family around to help or whether it is because we are a population that moves frequently around the country and the state, it means these people are living in isolation, and the effect on the children is tremendous. A woman will often put the children into the bedroom when she knows the husband is coming home. She will close the door and tell them not to come out. However, the children still hear and see the effects of what has happened to their mother, and sadly often children are also subjected to physical violence.

There are many people who are street angels and house devils — people who are respected in their various communities at whatever level and who are hail-fellow-well-met types when they are out but who on returning to their homes are, one could say, at times evil. In terms of what they do and what they inflict on others, I have heard of men — and it is usually men —

refusing to allow their partner to go to the toilet, only allowing them to go at certain times or insisting they go to the toilet in the corner of the room. I have heard of men insisting that their partner not talk to anyone else, insisting that they stay in the house at all times and only leave it when they are with the partner, and of men not allowing their partner to speak to anybody outside their front door. That is mental torture — brainwashing — so that the partner does not know where to go and usually it takes an extreme case where the partner or their children are so badly injured that an ambulance is called or when they stumble on someone who gives them the courage to move out of that situation.

This mental and physical violence must be treated as a crime against the person. Family violence is not a separate crime. For so long it was hidden, and I guess it has been going on for a long time. Perhaps now that women have more access to information there might be more reported cases of it or it may actually be increasing greatly. Whatever the reason is, the increasing numbers should not be tolerated by anyone in this society.

The violence inflicted on another person by a stronger person, by a person who has power over them, should not be tolerated by anyone. This bill will help the police to take action and hopefully will see a limiting of the incidence of family violence. However, often no-one turns up at the court. The victim does not want to go because she has been persuaded that she is no good, that no-one else cares, that no-one else loves her as much as this person who is inflicting the violence and that she will lose the children or the children will be killed or injured if she goes or the animals will be killed and that is the incentive to stay. The animals can be an important part of the family. In the Yarra Valley we are fortunate to have Animal Aid in Colchester Road, which has a program now such that when the police are assisting a person to leave a violent situation, where the women and children want to leave, the dogs or other pets can be taken to Animal Aid and looked after until the person has a home they can take their children to.

I find it absolutely abhorrent that in this modern day and age we still have people who are exerting power over other people and using their fists and other implements to do so. Such people are street angels and house devils. That is an expression my mother used to use. I never worked out exactly why she used it, but as you grow up you realise that a lot of the things your mother said, when you rolled your eyes and thought, ‘What on Earth is she saying?’, were right. As I was thinking about this bill I remembered a family friend from the village I grew up in who, by all appearances, was very comfortably off and had no concerns. He was

the one my mother referred to as a street angel and a house devil. I support this bill, and I hope over time we will take further action to deal with violent people.

**Ms BEATTIE** (Yuroke) — Labor will not be opposing this bill. Yesterday we talked about a bill on bullying, and in their contribution many members made the point that the bullied often become the bullies. That is often true regarding domestic violence. Often it is the children of domestic violence who become perpetrators of the same type of violence, and families get into a vicious cycle in which domestic violence is, while not acceptable, almost taken for granted.

In 2008 Labor introduced the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, which was a groundbreaking piece of legislation. It provided a comprehensive definition of family violence, and also extended the definition of what constituted a family member. The act broadened the use of holding power provisions and introduced an enhanced system of family violence intervention orders. It also changed the way that evidence was given in court, giving the police greater search and seizure powers and strengthening the provision for the protection of children. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 established a regime which provided protection outside of court hours.

When they were introduced in 2008 the family violence safety notices were a new tool for police, and it was appropriate that they be trialled and independently evaluated. A sunset provision was applied to them, which allowed Parliament to decide whether they should continue. That evaluation has been completed and was released in October 2010. It shows that the family violence safety notices have led to an improved after-hours response to family violence by police and have increased the safety of victims. The evaluation was very important and it highlighted that the notices are working. The data show that police issued 3909 family violence safety notices in a 15-month period, and in 84 per cent of cases the alleged perpetrators were removed from the home.

We all know family violence tears families apart. The member for Derrimut highlighted the fact that there are some cultures in which there is an impression — I would not say it is acceptable, but there is an impression — that violence is acceptable. The member for Derrimut carefully laid out the reality that violence is not acceptable in any ethnic or religious group. However, there are some societies that need greater support and greater strength to help them. One of those groups is our indigenous people, unfortunately. One of the things I want to see is members opposite committed to the Koori court system. It is a vital tool in helping

our indigenous people surmount the very deep problems that exist in some of those groups. I call on the opposition to fully support the Koori courts.

**An honourable member** — And the government!

**Ms BEATTIE** — Sorry, I also call on the government to do the same.

As a consequence of the positive evaluation of family violence safety notices this bill has been introduced to extend their use, and we on this side are happy to support the government in having them made a permanent tool in the hands of police to help combat family violence. I am a little concerned that a couple of speakers have said that when police have things to do, it takes a lot of time for them to tend to family violence. That is not an excuse. Family violence is violence; there should be no prioritising of offences. Family violence is an offence.

At the moment the limitation does not apply when there is an affected family member who is a child. The effect of the amendment is that the limitation is reimposed if one of the affected family members is an adult. I am concerned that this might put vulnerable children at risk, for instance, when a child's mother is in fear of the father or stepfather and refuses to support the application. I would like the Attorney-General to address this issue.

Despite some reservations, not many I must say, Labor supports the bill. There has been an improved after-hours response to family violence incidents. I talked about the prioritising of family violence, which seems to have increased the response time.

Another objective of the 2008 act was to improve the safety of victims after hours. The evaluation concluded that the introduction of safety notices had contributed to the improved safety of affected family members, so obviously the notices were working.

Objective 3 was about holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour. There has been increased perpetrator accountability through the introduction of family violence safety notices. Those measures include immediate action by police, subsequent accountability to the Magistrates Court and increased referral to men's services. Earlier I talked about having those support services available for all those involved in family violence. Sadly the perpetrators are mainly men. As men can help each other, opposition members consider the funding of men's sheds and other such support services as vital.

Family violence is not a matter for just the family. It is a whole-of-society problem. It knows no boundaries, and it does not take into account whether people are wealthy or disadvantaged. In members' electorates across the breadth of the alphabet, from Albert Park to my own electorate of Yuroke, and across the state geographically — whether in the country, city or suburbs — everyone is torn apart when family violence occurs. Any special legislation that we can introduce into this house to lessen the likelihood of family violence occurring is good legislation. Therefore the opposition will not be opposing the bill.

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. Gauging the debate thus far, it would be fair to say that members on both sides of the chamber support the principle of the legislation before us today.

This legislation does a few things. Principally it amends the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 by repealing the expiry of division 2 of part 3 to continue the operation of family violence safety notices (FVSN). Members have spoken very clearly in support of that aspect of the bill. The bill also clarifies the adjournment of family violence safety notice applications on the first mention date. It clarifies the powers of the court relating to applications for family violence intervention orders made by police. It also amends the Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010 to clarify the powers of the court relating to applications for personal safety intervention orders made by police.

This bill is essentially about family violence safety notices and their introduction. It ensures that there is some permanency for police to issue the notices. As was mentioned in the second-reading speech, in November 2003 the then opposition put forward a policy to provide greater protection particularly for women and children who are victims of family violence. The policy provided for on-the-spot interim intervention orders for up to 72 hours where victims required immediate protection from the perpetrator of family violence.

What does a family violence safety notice seek to do? Essentially it seeks to provide immediate protection for victims and their children for up to 72 hours from the time of issue. It also acts as an application to the court for a family violence intervention order and as a summons for a respondent to attend court on the first mention date. The FVSN was finally included in a bill introduced into Parliament by the former government in 2008. It was implemented on a trial basis pending an

evaluation of the system, which I will talk about in more detail shortly.

Unfortunately, as mentioned in the second-reading speech and as other speakers have indicated in their contributions to the debate, over time we have seen a significant rise in the number of family violence incidents. In 2009–10, police responded to some 35 000 incidents of family violence, a 5.4 per cent increase on the previous year. These are startling figures, and it is difficult to fathom the number of incidents across the state. As many other speakers have also alluded to, unfortunately there are probably many more incidents that go unreported.

Thomson Goodall Associates undertook a pretty thorough evaluation of the family violence safety notices and in some sense endorsed aspects of the system. That evaluation took into account the effectiveness of the system of notices against the stated objectives of the 2008 bill. The evaluation considered three key areas. One objective was an improved after-hours response to family violence incidents. It would be fair to say that improvement did occur, and that is a positive thing. By the same token, that is not to say that there are not challenges with the family violence safety notices system. We trust that this legislation will ensure that there are improvements in the achievement of the objectives, which is what it is all about.

One of the other objectives of the system that was considered in the evaluation was the improved safety of victims after hours. The member for Yuroke alluded to that in her contribution. Again, it was found that there was improved safety for victims after hours. That is what the bill is all about: ensuring that not only are perpetrators deterred but also the safety of victims is protected.

The third objective of the system of notices was to hold perpetrators to account for their actions and behaviour. Again, the system achieved that objective to some degree. It makes sense that the Attorney-General and the government would want to enshrine the family violence safety notices system, as is sought to be achieved through this bill.

Comments have been made about police issuing the notices. I was very much drawn to and interested in the contribution of the member for Gembrook, who was a serving police officer in the past. He referred not only to the challenges in relation to domestic and family violence but also to the support that Victoria Police officers need when issuing the notices and the difference that support makes in helping them to do

their job at the same time as protecting victims. This is just one of many measures that police officers can use to tackle incidents of family violence.

Particular provisions of the bill clarify the powers of the Magistrates Court. The member for Ferntree Gully referred to those powers. Firstly, magistrates have the power to adjourn applications for intervention orders commenced by way of a family violence safety notice where no interim or final intervention order is made on the first hearing date. That means the court is able to adjourn the application hearing to a later date, and that allows the parties involved to gather evidence and attend court. That is a very sensible provision. Secondly, under current law police can make an application for a family violence intervention order to protect a victim of family violence even if that person does not consent to the police taking that action. The amendment simply confirms that when police bring these applications the court can still make a limited order that protects the affected family member but does not necessarily affect the living arrangements of the parties. That might seem a little bit uncommon or out of order in some respects, but it does give the court the power to provide that flexibility in such circumstances.

A previous speaker — I think it was the member for Ballarat West — made comments about local service providers in this particular field. I know from local experiences that the Department of Human Services in Gippsland, the Latrobe Community Health Service, the Gippsland Women's Health Service, Quantum Support Services and the Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault are all vital organisations in our community which assist the victims of family violence with support services that are much required in these circumstances.

Family violence is a whole-of-community issue which should be frowned upon. The family violence statistics are damning in terms of the number of incidents that occur. We need to recognise that it is a whole-of-community issue, and we need to do something about it. Sure, the proposed legislation before us today will help in some regards — there is no doubt about that — but we need to raise community awareness across all of Victoria and Australia to stop this scourge and to say that it is not all right.

Days such as White Ribbon Day on 25 November are important days to say no to violence. It does not negate that importance to say that violent incidents do not just occur against women and children; there are men who are victims as well. We do not want to categorise people in that respect. I think White Ribbon Day, 25 November, is an important day when all men should get together and say, 'No, it is not acceptable to treat

any person in that manner, and we should not be condoning it'.

The Minister for Women's Affairs also made a very good contribution in terms of saying that very thing: this is a whole-of-community issue that affects us all. It is important that we be proactive in this area to make sure that perpetrators understand violence of this nature is cowardice. I commend the Attorney-General for what is a good piece of legislation.

**Ms HUTCHINS** (Keilor) — I rise to support the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. Unfortunately this is a big issue in my electorate. Family violence, violence against women and violence against children must be stopped. In Australia today one in five women experiences sexual violence and one in three women experiences physical violence at some point in their lives. More shockingly, a woman is killed almost every week by a male partner or ex-partner and thousands are injured each year. It is not acceptable in Victoria. It was not acceptable yesterday, it is not acceptable today and it will not be acceptable tomorrow.

The member for Altona, who spoke earlier in this debate, raised a very good point that we do not accept violence on our streets — we do not accept the violence that occurs because of alcohol and drug abuse on King Street — however, there seems to be a quiet silence when it comes to family violence in our suburbs. It is something that we, in government and in opposition, have to continue to fight and stamp out on behalf of the families in our areas.

Whether violence is between a man and a woman, a father and a child, a mother and a child or an elderly person and their adult child, it has a profound and devastating effect on families and entire communities. Its social and psychological impact can become entrenched across generations. It can be seen in schools, workplaces and homes.

I am proud of the leadership the Brumby government took on this issue a number of years ago by putting together a plan that was inclusive of legislative change and funding to the tune of \$175 million. Called *A Right to Respect — Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020*, it is a plan that acknowledges that women are three times more likely than men to experience violence and that on average one child in four witnesses some sort of family violence in their lifetime. This plan acknowledges that violence against women is prevalent and serious but also that it is preventable. The plan sets goals: to significantly reduce violence against women; to promote non-violent

and non-discriminatory social norms; to promote gender-equitable, safe and inclusive communities and organisations; and to promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women at all levels of our society.

The drivers of the Brumby government's commitments on this policy, the funding of this policy and the legislative work that was completed in 2008 to move the offender out of the family home have made a real difference over the years in domestic violence and gained real ground.

The family violence notices have been a success, with almost 4000 notices issued within a 15-month period and 84 per cent of offenders having been removed from the family home. However, there is still a great deal that needs to be done to improve the situation of family violence in our suburbs in particular.

The Law Institute of Victoria recently wrote to the government about the success of the safety notices. The institute clearly stated in its letter that most respondents understand the ramifications of the safety notices, because the notices are returnable to court fairly quickly — within 72 hours of service of a safety notice — coupled with the application of section 35 of the act, which states that the police officer must explain the nature and consequences of the notice to the respondent and that reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the respondent understands the nature and consequences of the notice.

However, we have a long way to go in terms of educating the community about family violence. The Law Institute of Victoria stated that without educating respondents as to the dangers of family violence and the impact it has on their family, any change will be limited, regardless of the family violence system in place. What LIV is saying is that not only do we have to continue to pursue legislative change and take good steps like we are doing today but we also have to continue to resource and educate people in our community, which is something that I hope the current government remains committed to.

Safety notices are currently limited to a 72-hour period. If an offence occurs on a Wednesday or Thursday in the electorate of Keilor, police are not able to use a safety notice because they are unable to present the case before the court as the 72-hour period falls on the weekend when courts are closed. Our local court, Sunshine court, only hears family violence cases on Mondays and Wednesdays. Instead police have been forced to go through lengthy procedures of issuing a complaint and obtaining a statement and a warrant if

required, which has involved taking the accused to the station, obtaining a statement and entering information into the central computer — a process which could possibly take up to 2½ hours. In contrast these safety notices take only an hour to complete. Some in the chamber may not actually identify with the big difference that would be made by such a change, so I will explain.

My local police station, Keilor Downs, receives 3200 calls per year relating to family violence. It is the single biggest issue it gets calls on every single weekend. The unit consists of two constables from Sunshine police station and two from the newly reinstated family violence unit at Keilor Downs police station. Ninety cases per week from seven police stations front the Sunshine Magistrates Court on the two days that it hears family violence matters. Unfortunately not all of those cases get heard. This is where the importance of changing the provisions of safety notices so that they last beyond 72 hours comes in.

I would like to acknowledge and commend the work of the officers at the Keilor Downs police station, who work tirelessly in general, but in particular in the area of domestic violence. They have informed me of the huge amounts of paperwork that they have to complete and also the endless hours that they have to spend accompanying those involved in family violence, particularly affected family members, to make sure that they travel safely to and from home when an incident has occurred.

In a recent meeting local police outlined two cases, one of which I would like to put on the record today just to bring to light this matter of domestic violence and how important these issues are. Our local police attended an incident involving a couple and their children. The woman had been attacked by the male with a glass tabletop and a set of keys. The eldest child had also been attacked. The perpetrator was arrested, an intervention order was given and safety notices were implemented straightaway. For a few days the family felt safe; however, the male continued to suffer from mental illness and fronted up to his local hospital for assistance. After he was declined admission he was given medication and he left the hospital. Under police guidance he was taken back to the house to collect some belongings, but whilst he was in the house unattended unfortunately he committed suicide. It is an ongoing tragedy that has struck that family, and it has certainly had a huge impact on the police at my local police station.

The west has a rapidly growing population, and unfortunately with all the new residents come a whole lot of issues. We have had 7000 new residents move into my part of the electorate alone over just the last four years, and with all the issues of infrastructure and population growth comes the issue of domestic violence due to isolation, financial pressure and dependency on alcohol, drugs and gambling, all of which are most prevalent in the west.

I would like to quote Ban Ki-Moon, the United Nations Secretary-General, who last year said:

Up to 70 per cent of women experience violence in their lifetime ...

We sometimes hear it said that such practices are a matter of culture. They are not.

They are not part of our culture in the west, and I strongly commend the bill to the house.

**Ms WREFORD (Mordialloc)** — I rise in support of the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. I strongly believe that a significant part of our role as a community is to do everything we can to protect the vulnerable. In an ideal world nobody in our community should feel threatened or unsafe.

Family or domestic violence is a horrible situation that unfortunately occurs far too often in our community. Sadly, it is often, but not always, physically smaller or more vulnerable people who are threatened, abused and harmed in rage-fuelled incidents. Many people can only imagine the horror of seeing a loved partner or parent erupt with rage and react savagely. The impact on partners and children of seeing a trusted relative explode against them or other family members is hard to imagine. It is not something you want to imagine or experience, but it is something that needs to be addressed as a high priority so as to prevent as many incidents as possible and minimise the harm of those that do occur. It is for that reason that it is important to get legislation like this right.

This legislation is designed to give police and courts the tools they need to respond quickly and appropriately to situations of family violence. It is designed to remove the previous government's sunset clause on family violence safety notices, making them available as a tool for police into the future. It also tidies up other parts of the legislation to make it more effective. It is a pleasure to make this legislation better. This issue was never given a high enough priority by the previous government. It always seemed to be on the backburner and was never given urgency. It seemed to be more about playing politics than protecting people.

The concept of 72-hour immediate intervention orders was introduced by the Liberal Party in 2003 when it became Liberal Party policy. It was a clear and logical idea to offer quick and appropriate protection to victims of family violence. With around 30 000 cases of family violence reported each year and government estimates of another 150 000 incidents, reported and unreported, it is the sort of policy you wish had been implemented immediately to try to protect such a large number of people.

The Law Reform Commission came on board in December 2005 supporting the idea in a report which the previous government received in 2005 and became public in 2006. But that was not good enough for the previous government as it continued to drag its feet and a further 150 000 cases of family violence continued to occur each year. Labor finally saw the light in 2007 and announced for the first time that they supported the idea. Like so many Labor announcements, that was only the first of repeated announcements that their spin doctors became famous for — never any action but plenty of announcements and reannouncements.

In opposition in 2007 the Liberals offered to support immediate legislation for an on-the-spot protection but Labor opted to hold back until the full family violence legislation was tabled in 2008 — another year, another 150 000 family violence incidents later. Eventually, in late 2008, it finally introduced legislation, but only as a trial, and it did not come into effect until well after that. Five or six years after the Liberal Party introduced its policy of 72-hour immediate intervention orders Labor had finally taken some action but only as a trial. An estimated 750 000 cases occurred between the Liberal policy being formed and the eventual implementation of the legislation. It was far too slow. It is an interesting contrast to see that legislation that the previous government took five or six years to get around to is legislation that this coalition government has made a top priority to get right and make permanent.

We are a government that cares about families, safety and decency. We are a government that does what it can to protect the people of Victoria. The statistics are quite frightening. As I have mentioned, there are about 30 000 incidents of domestic violence reported each year. That is quite an alarming rise from the 19 500 reported in 1999 to 2000. Government estimates from 2008 suggest there are a further 120 000 incidents that go unreported, bringing the total to around 150 000 incidents per annum. According to the crime statistics, recorded incidents continued to rise under the previous government. Across Victoria in 2009 there were 154.2 incidents per 100 000 people in the state. In 2010 it rose to 173.2 incidents per 100 000 people.

Across Kingston in my electorate, in 2009 there were 117.3 incidents per 100 000 people reported. In 2010 it rose to 122.9 incidents per 100 000 people.

A small part of this is the progress being made in having incidents reported. A couple of generations ago family violence was there but was rarely reported. It was rarely discussed. Each year progress has been made as partners and children become more willing to report incidents and put a stop to the violence. I hope this continues as we empower people to take action to protect themselves and as we improve legislation like this to give police more tools to stop violence. However, despite an increase in reports, levels of violence are still too high. Part of this relates to general increases in the violence and antisocial behaviour that was the hallmark of the 11 dark years under the previous government. I have already discussed in three or four speeches in this place how the previous government removed disciplinary actions from principals, making it harder for them to intervene in violent situations in schools. The removal of discipline in schools and the soft-on-crime attitude of the previous government sent a message to the community that bad behaviour is not your fault but is the fault of society, which is nonsense. If you misbehave, it is your responsibility, and you should expect to be disciplined accordingly.

In my contributions on every bill I speak on I seem to talk about how this government's legislation is making people responsible for their own actions again. The same applies here. If you are threatening or violent towards your family, you are responsible for that behaviour and should be punished accordingly. In this case, if you are the victim of family violence, you can expect this government to provide the police and courts with the tools they require to offer you a reasonable level of protection. For my part I am keen to see more action taken to prevent violence and increase safety. Family violence is a horrible situation for the partners and children it impacts on. It is bad for the community too, but it is the directly affected family members who need our support in this. This legislation will certainly help police and the courts to take prompt and appropriate action in these difficult and explosive situations.

The concept of a 72-hour immediate intervention order is an extremely good one for the authorities and victims involved in these incidents. Now that it is finally in legislation, after all the delays, it is terrific as part of this amendment to be making it a permanent part of the suite of tools authorities can use. It is also good to be clearing up the other elements of this legislation. This government is determined to make Victoria a less

violent place. As a top priority, we are making great strides to make it safer. Family violence is a horrible situation, but this legislation takes steps to reduce it. We will keep working to reduce it further, making life safer and happier for so many more Victorians. This government is committed to protecting the vulnerable, protecting women, protecting men, and ever so importantly, protecting our children. I commend this amendment to the house.

**Mr NARDELLA** (Melton) — I never thought the day would come where I would hear the politicisation of family violence in this Parliament. We just heard the honourable member for Mordialloc absolutely gloating that 750 000 people had been affected by family violence and blaming the former Labor government for that. That is just appalling, because the matters before the house are serious. More importantly, the honourable member does not understand and does not want to understand or realise that it is critical for the people who are going through those extremely serious situations. She gloated that — and these were her words — incidents rose under the previous government.

I inform the house that incidents, the reporting of incidents and the related statistics increased under the previous government, because we took these incidents extremely seriously. We gave extra powers to the police to handle these situations and take them seriously. Christine Nixon, the former Chief Commissioner of Police, took these incidents seriously. Under her direction the police followed guidelines and started to report and take action on these matters. These incidents were taken more seriously during our period of government, and women and children were better protected in those situations.

The thing the honourable member for Mordialloc does not want to understand is that when you put in place legislation and make changes to existing legislation, then it is appropriate to have sunset clauses. Why is that? I will explain it to the honourable member: it is because these were new powers given to the police. It was appropriate for that review to occur. That review occurred, and there were matters that arose because of that review that have been considered by the Baillieu Liberal government. That is appropriate. When you deal with matters to do with families and family violence, it is absolutely appropriate to go through a review process. That was what the Parliament decided in relation to the 2008 legislation.

Just because you have a policy does not mean you go out and implement it immediately. It does not mean that the government of the day — whichever day that is —

then goes and puts in place legislation without having done the work at the beginning to make sure that that legislation is appropriate. Such legislation, like the legislation about family violence safety notices that we are discussing today, must be put in place so it is effective. It is not put in place so that it makes things worse for the people who the government is trying to protect.

'Policy' is a cheap word, and when it is used by the Liberal Party in opposition it is extremely cheap. In terms of the real actions that need to be taken by a government, policy making needs to be done in a very serious and thoughtful way. The government brings cheap political shots into this house, which is inappropriate when a serious matter is before the house.

I am not one to not let fly. In most debates I am not particularly vocal or critical of the government. However, government members need to be a bit mature about this. They have to pick their target. If I were to pick my target, I would not go out and pick vulnerable families, vulnerable women and vulnerable children to throw in a cheap political shot that somebody else has written. The member has learnt a page by rote that was written by somebody else — —

**Mr R. Smith** — That is ridiculous!

**Mr NARDELLA** — It is not ridiculous, because she read it. She read it in the chamber, because she cannot give a speech that she has written herself. She has no ability to make her own speech. She has to read something that has been — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood)** — Order! The member should restrict his comments to the bill, and he should not respond to interjections.

**Mr NARDELLA** — These matters are extremely serious.

**Mr R. Smith** — Who is politicising it now? Who is making it personal?

**Mr NARDELLA** — I am absolutely making it personal, because the member made a political point about a very serious matter before this Parliament. I am happy to make it personal, because she made it personal by using all of those victims in the community.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood)** — Order! I ask government members to stop interjecting.

**Mr NARDELLA** — These matters are extremely important. When police face the situation of dealing with vulnerable people, essentially women and children, they must have the tools available to them to be able to put in place orders to protect these people. For example, perpetrators must be able to be kept out of the family home and away from their partners or wives, whatever the case may be, and, in some instances, their children.

It is very important for police to get it right when taking away those rights. That is why I think this legislation is appropriate. We are not opposing it, because all too often, and I referred to this in my contribution to a debate yesterday, there are matters that are raised in members' electorate offices and that come before members of Parliament that involve our own friends, contacts and acquaintances. They are also raised with us as individual members of our society and community. There has to be legislation there that assists these people — friends, colleagues and neighbours — in these awful situations. As I said the other day, in our office out at Melton we had to deal with a serious situation, and intervention orders were put in place.

It is appropriate that police have this legislative authority in instances where family violence occurs out of hours. I note that only a senior sergeant of police or those of a higher rank have the authority, which is appropriate because of the severity of the offence, with rights being taken away from some people and protections being needed for family members who have been acted against by another family member.

The legislation is good legislation. It is appropriate that it was sunsetted and reviewed, given the way it was put together and the extra responsibilities that were given to police. Those review processes occur with many pieces, if not all pieces, of legislation over time. The government at the time believed it was appropriate that the legislation be sunsetted and that a review occur. From memory, the review came up with a number of recommendations that have been taken into account by the government.

We support the legislation before the house. It is good legislation, it is about protecting women and children, and I seek its speedy passage.

**Mr SHAW (Frankston)** — I rise to support and discuss the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011. It is also disappointing to be talking about this bill on family violence, just as it has been disappointing to be talking about the bills on bullying or extra protective services officers (PSOs) and talking about extra police. It is sad for me because

of where society is headed, which means we need to talk about these things.

It is not something that is new. The first recorded family violence act happened about 6000 years ago when Cain killed his brother Abel. That was the first act of jealousy and of family violence recorded. But should we really be surprised, given what is happening in society at the moment and the speed at which we receive information through the internet or through the television news? If we turn on the news — we will flick it on in a few minutes — we will see something on some terrorist, we will see something on asylum seekers burning down buildings, we will see something on a local killing or we will see something like the footage of the child who was bullied by someone and retaliated, which was shown last month on YouTube. We see kids in front of electronic games which are highly violent. Where are the parents during these important times of their lives? Should we be surprised that when we turn on the TV we see things like street gangs and violence?

It is with sadness that I talk about this bill, but it is something that we need to do and the bill is something that we need to support, because this is where society is headed. I thank the members of the opposition for supporting the bill. They also see family violence as an important thing not to have in our society.

Addressing crime was our major election promise. With the bills I mentioned before, as well as this one, we are keeping our promises and we are delivering now. As far as policing is concerned, which was our first major initiative, in Frankston we received 35 extra police, and we will receive a similar figure next year. We needed those because Frankston is the second highest municipality for call-outs for domestic violence.

In Frankston we have some other issues. The council had a city safe officer program, which it established because the police could not put resources onto the streets. One of the reasons was that there were other activities they needed to attend to, which were incidents of family violence. Frankston has the highest 000 call-out rate. That is a sad indictment of the city that I love and that I represent. Thank goodness we are doing something about that. Having consequences for actions is what this is about as well. The bill will give the police powers to protect the vulnerable in society, the women and children, from family violence.

I come to the question: why is there family violence? There are two places where I think children should be safe: one, in the womb; and two, in the home. Fortunately we are dealing with the second one here

tonight — children being safe in their own home and having the love and care of their parents.

There are a plethora of causes that people point to, and I will mention just a few. In Frankston — and it could be statewide as well; it probably is — one is drug influence. We hear about drugs in society. After dinner I will talk about a couple of examples of family violence happening in Frankston with regard to drugs.

Members may have heard that Frankston has some sort of an image with regard to those sorts of substances. I am totally against them. I do not think Frankston needs any more methadone clinics. I want to see them reduced. I do not think Frankston needs extra drug services that attract people into that area. Instead of servicing people with needles and methadone, should we not be doing something else to prevent drug use? My answer to that is yes, the answer of the Frankston chamber of commerce to that is yes and Frankston City Council's answer to that is yes. We need to be looking at methods other than catering to the needs of some of those people.

Alcohol is of course a big cause of domestic violence, and violence overall. I am grateful that we are looking at alcohol as far as liquor licensing is concerned, but I think a whole educational process is required there. We hear about alcohol-fuelled violence, wherever that may be — in pubs, footy clubs or wherever — and bringing that back home.

#### **Sitting suspended 6.30 p.m. until 8.02 p.m.**

**Mr SHAW** — Before we stopped for dinner I was talking about the causes of family violence and some of the items that people might throw around. Drugs was one of them and alcohol was another. These are a scourge on Frankston, and we do not want to see an expansion of extra hotels opening up to serve liquor for longer hours. We do not want to see extra drug services that bring people into Frankston for those services. What we want to see is a better image for Frankston, and that better image would rub off onto the families — onto the people.

Some other areas of family violence that people might be affected by are the everyday pressures of work, of paying the mortgage, of the cost of living and, maybe, of homelessness. Those pressures can quite often be taken out on the most vulnerable people, whom one is supposed to love and cherish — one's family, one's wife and children. I think this comes down to something even more basic than that. What is the common problem with all these things and this violence necessitating these bills we have been discussing, such

as the antibullying bill and the extra protective services officers? Why are these becoming so important in our society? I think it comes down to a very simple explanation. That simple explanation is not just disillusionment, the hopelessness and the lack of hope; it comes down to a very simple word for me, and that simple word is sin. It is as simple as that. No-one disagrees that drugs and anger will cause upset and family violence, but it comes down to a simple word.

Another less than 20 simple words sum up this situation, I think, but we have had a departure. The Bible says: love the Lord God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbour as yourself. It is just under 20 simple words, and we break that rule every single day. That is flowing into why we need the bullying bill, why we need the family violence bill, why we need extra police and why we need PSOs. I mentioned earlier that the first family violence act happened 6000 years ago when Cain killed Abel. I want to raise a more up-to-date version of that story.

In 2009 a 37-year-old drug-and-alcohol affected son shot his father in Frankston North, just slightly outside my electorate. This 37-year-old son claimed he had a dysfunctional upbringing, including domestic violence. His father had been hospitalised five times in the period between 1998 and when he was shot. This was family violence between a son and a father, so it is not just about the vulnerable children and the wife; it is also about violence against males as well. To relate another story about violence in Frankston, in September 2009 a 33-year-old mother of two was shot with a sawn-off shotgun by a 61-year-old male who had been her partner of about six or seven weeks. I know there was about a 28-year age difference there when you work it out, but 40 years prior to that incident this 61-year-old had been on death row and due to be hung. Forty years later he committed this crime, shooting the woman in the back in Frankston with a sawn-off shotgun. Of course this incident attracted a lot of media and surveys about whether the death penalty should be reintroduced, and about 69 per cent said yes while the balance said no.

These terrible things are brought up because of family violence, violence in the home, violence on our streets and violence in our town. The consequences of family violence are enormous — the emotional and financial costs can destroy lives — so I am very pleased and proud of this government which has put safety first and which is putting police and law and order first on its agenda. The majority of bills that are being passed are designed to protect society. Protection of society is a very important role of government — that is, protecting those who are vulnerable by having these laws

presented and passed to show people by sending a message out there that violence, antisocial behaviour and particularly family violence will not be tolerated in this society. I commend this bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr McINTOSH (Minister for Corrections).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## DENTAL HOSPITAL LAND BILL 2011

### *Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 6 April; motion of Mr R. SMITH (Minister for Environment and Climate Change).**

**Ms NEVILLE** (Bellarine) — I am pleased today to speak on the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. The opposition will support this bill. We will support the bill because it is about facilitating the building of the comprehensive cancer centre. As all members would know — and I am sure that most members of the community would be aware — this was a vision and priority of the former Premier and the former Minister for Health. Tackling cancer was an absolute priority for the Brumby government. That is why in the 2009–10 state budget we announced funding of \$426.1 million towards the establishment of the new comprehensive cancer centre in Parkville. This billion-dollar project will be undertaken in partnership with the commonwealth government, which is providing another \$426.1 million, with a further \$200 million to be raised from private donations, philanthropy and the sale of some of the land.

The funding of the comprehensive cancer centre was the result of the work and vision of a huge number of people and organisations that worked hard in turning this dream into a reality. It is a formal collaboration between the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Melbourne Health, the University of Melbourne, the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. Construction of the new centre is due to start in 2011 — or was when the Brumby government set the time lines — and I hope the new government keeps to these tight time lines.

**An honourable member** — You never funded it!

**Ms NEVILLE** — Funding of \$426.1 million was allocated. Let it be clear to all members of this house that in the 2009–10 budget capital outputs they will see \$426.1 million allocated to this project.

This bill is an important step to enable construction to commence. The site identified by the former Brumby government was the site of the dental hospital at 711 Elizabeth Street. This land is currently permanently reserved as a site for the dental hospital and dental school. Some time ago the land was granted as a Crown grant to the University of Melbourne and the dental hospital as joint trustees. Under that arrangement the University of Melbourne and the dental hospital could surrender the Crown land back to the Crown with written consent of the Governor in Council. Last year both parties gave written agreement to relinquish their interest. This bill will now revoke that permanent reservation to enable the site to be used for health purposes, thus enabling the construction of the comprehensive cancer centre. Once the bill is passed a Governor in Council order will be sought to reserve the land for health purposes and to make the Peter MacCallum board the committee of management.

In December 2008 the Brumby government provided funding of \$10.5 million to clear the site and make way for the facility. All the groundwork is in place. The Brumby government provided state funding, the commonwealth government committed its funding and through that funding we were able to clear the site. Let us hope the current government remains as committed to this project and ensures that it moves forward as quickly as possible.

The state government has made claims that the commonwealth government has delayed some of its funding, which would have some impact on state government revenue. We have heard claims of black holes over recent months, like the one we heard yesterday from the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business about the synchrotron. I am not sure whether the government yet understands how the budget process works. These processes are what budgets are about. I do not think Victorian taxpayers have signed up forever and a day to ongoing funding for every single project in the whole world without them being revisited. Budgets are about an opportunity for us to review how projects are going and then to re-fund them if they are achieving their aims. It is another ludicrous claim from those in government about the commonwealth government's funding.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood)** — Order! The member for Bellarine without assistance from members at the table!

**Ms NEVILLE** — The delay in receiving \$50 million from the commonwealth was agreed based

on the project time lines. It does not affect the revenue of the state and should not in any way be used as an excuse to delay this very important project.

Tackling cancer in terms of research, treatment and prevention was a major priority of the Brumby government. It was a priority because we recognise the impact that cancer has on individuals, families and communities. Unfortunately each year 10 000 lives are lost, and way too many of those are very young people. Each day around 70 Victorians are newly diagnosed with cancer. That equates to 26 000 people per year. I am sure that everyone in this chamber knows people in their families who have been affected, and many will have lost family members or close friends to cancer.

It is not just the loss of lives that is difficult to watch; it is also very difficult to watch someone you love struggle with cancer on a day-to-day basis. Even with the best care — and in Victoria we have some of the best and most amazing care provided by our doctors and nurses — it is still a very difficult experience to watch someone struggle with cancer. On a personal level, in the last two years I lost both a very close friend and my mother to cancer. I know that the impact is enormous and long lasting for many families and communities.

That is why the Brumby government announced and funded a new cancer action plan backed up with \$150 million in the 2008–09 budget. It was a plan designed to achieve our goal of increasing cancer survival rates in Victoria by 10 per cent by 2015. If this is achieved, it will save literally thousands of lives and reduce the suffering of many more thousands of Victorians. We need to know whether this government is committed to this plan, to its ongoing funding and to the goal of increasing survival rates.

It was more than a plan. It built on the other significant investments that we had made to tackle cancer in our community. These ranged from investment in research as well as in treatment and in improved care for those in our community who are living with cancer. We invested across the board because we knew that you need to invest in research as much as in teaching, treatment and care options to make real inroads into survival rates.

That is why we invested in biomedical research, for example, through the doubling of the capacity of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. It is why we invested in the synchrotron. The synchrotron has developed a unique way of dealing with and responding to some of the rare cancers in our community, like brain cancer. It is making significant

inroads into the treatment and survival rates of people living with brain cancer.

It is why we invested in the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, with new treatment facilities, research and wellness services at the Austin Hospital — another project that those opposite have unfortunately played politics with. We invested \$94 million and at the election committed a further \$45 million for the final stage, which was about the fit-out of this great new facility. There was no black hole, as those across the table have claimed — no black hole at all. It was more that they were embarrassed that they went to the election without any commitment to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre. They did not meet our commitment. They were dragged to the table by the local community, which was so vocal and committed to the project that those opposite had to come up with the money.

It is also the reason the previous government invested in cancer facilities not just in Melbourne but also in regional Victoria, because it knew that there are lower survival rates for cancer sufferers in our regional communities. The upgrade and expansion of the Andrew Love Cancer Centre in my community is a great facility with great staff who have provided enormous assistance to many thousands of families in the Geelong and Barwon south-west region. The previous government provided over \$20 million for a state-of-the-art facility to support the community of Geelong. It is why we also committed funding towards the Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Centre and why we included improved cancer services in our vision and plans for a new Bendigo hospital. Unfortunately in some of the short-term funding announcements made by members of this government what Bendigo residents are going to face over the next few years is one less access point for a radiotherapy bunker. That is going to cause enormous grief in the Bendigo community for those families who are dealing and struggling with cancer.

The previous government invested in new facilities right across the state, and importantly it invested in research to prevent cancer in our community. The announcement of over \$400 million in the 2009–10 budget for the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre was about building on our investments and commitments in order, as I said, to reduce cancer incidence in our community and to improve survival rates. Once completed, the new facilities will provide over 90 000-plus square metres of purpose-built facilities, including an integrated research and training facility and a dedicated cancer clinical trials unit. This will enhance clinical research and also provide around

25 per cent additional capacity for patient treatment. It will also provide for nearly twice the number of existing cancer researchers; currently about 800 researchers work in the precinct, but this new facility will be able to cater for up to 1400 researchers. The comprehensive cancer centre will be a statewide state-of-the-art centre supporting patients with rare and complex cancers. It will also provide very important support to our other cancer centres right across the state, so that people can get the treatment that they need in the communities in which they live.

As I said, the collaboration that will operate between the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Children's Hospital, the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research will enable seamless patient care and better research collaboration. This will ensure that Victoria has one of the great cancer centres in the world. I remember at the time — —

**Mr Walsh** — And the Baillieu government will deliver it.

**Ms NEVILLE** — This is obviously great to see, and I hope those opposite are going to continue the commitment made by the Brumby government to this project to which it provided over \$400 million worth of funding. As I said, this will create one of the world's great cancer centres in Victoria. I remember the former Premier talking about wanting Victoria to be in the top 10 in the world in terms of cancer research and treatment, bringing together some of the world's leading specialists to work together to provide great treatment and also providing opportunities to prevent cancer and improve survival rates here in Victoria.

Of course in mentioning all those partners above, such as the Royal Children's Hospital, the Royal Melbourne Hospital et cetera, it also reminds me what an amazing precinct is being built in Parkville and the range of investments made by the former Brumby government in that precinct. What a great health and research precinct we have already and will have into the future. We have the new children's hospital that is currently being built, the new Royal Women's Hospital that is open and operating and that already provides great cancer support to women in our community, the upgrades to the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the investments in research and technology at the University of Melbourne, the work that we did at the Walter and Eliza Hall institute — —

**Mr Wynne** — Bio21.

**Ms NEVILLE** — The Bio21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute, and the list goes on. It is incredible. It is going to be a world-class precinct that will support medical research and treatment into cancer.

As a community and as a former government we made a lot of strides in tackling cancer. However, we need and this Parliament and government need to remain committed to continuing that work, because it is about saving lives. The comprehensive cancer centre is a critical part of the puzzle and will build on the expertise at the current Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

As I said, the opposition is supporting this bill because it ensures that the comprehensive cancer centre that was supported and funded by the former Brumby government can be facilitated as quickly as possible. The investments we have made in this facility will pay dividends for the families in Victoria. In my view the decision by the former Brumby government to prioritise this project will ensure that Victoria is up there with the best in the world and that will serve our community for generations to come. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on behalf of the government in support of this very important piece of legislation, being the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. What this bill seeks to do is remove the permanent reservation of the site of the former dental hospital and dental school, which was on Crown land in Parkville, to allow for the facilitation of the construction of the new Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre on that parcel of land. As it was put by the member for Bellarine, we are pleased to see that the opposition will be supporting the government on this very important piece of legislation.

The site for the new cancer centre was originally established in 1936 as a permanently reserved site for a dental hospital. Recently that building was demolished, and this piece of legislation is small but important in allowing for that reservation to be removed so that the construction of this important facility can occur. The bill will also amend the Royal Melbourne Hospital Act 1935, which will remove specific provisions relating to this site that have also become redundant.

The Victorian government has committed \$428.5 million, with an additional funding commitment of \$426.1 million from the commonwealth government, towards the establishment of this very important centre, and I say from the outset that the new government is committed to the construction of this important piece of infrastructure.

Before I deal with the specifics of this new important cancer facility I would like to take up some of the issues raised with regard to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre that will operate out of the Austin Hospital — a facility which will be important. I recently had the pleasure of touring the centre with the chief executive officer and board members of the Austin Hospital. The important thing to note about that facility was that the previous government left the building as a shell. That was quite obvious as I wandered through it. It is a multistorey building, but it had not been fitted out and no money was committed for that fit-out. In fact when we came into government we soon learnt, like we did about so many other projects, that that important piece of infrastructure was going to remain as an empty shell until we, as the incoming government, fixed the mess left by the previous government.

That is just one example. There are so many other examples. As Parliamentary Secretary for Health I take great interest in the new Royal Children's Hospital. It is a fantastic facility which the member for Bentleigh along with other members and I had the pleasure of inspecting, but unfortunately the previous government forgot to provide money for computers. I do not know how you operate a new hospital without a computer system. This new facility is important for the provision of health services in this state, but it was left without the necessary funding for computers. I appreciate that we have a number of students in the gallery, many of whom use iPods. Perhaps we could ask those students to provide us with their iPods or laptops!

There are so many other examples. The regional rail link was such an important piece of infrastructure, but the previous government forgot to provide money for signals — —

**Mr Wynne** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is well aware that this is quite a contained bill. We are not here to debate the regional rail link or other major projects; we are here to talk about the dental hospital bill, and I ask that you bring the member back to the bill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Sykes)** — Order! I ask the member for Ferntree Gully to stick to the health-related issues in particular.

**Mr WAKELING** — I am more than happy to talk about this important piece of legislation, and I appreciate the concerns those opposite have about being reminded of how they operated while in government. Nevertheless, let us deal with the specifics of this important piece of legislation.

The comprehensive cancer centre will provide for 196 inpatient beds, 110 same-day treatment places, 8 medi-hotel beds, over 30 000 square metres of specialised research space, a clinical trials facility with 24 treatment places, education and training facilities, outpatient clinic and treatment facilities, 8 radiation therapy bunkers and a 700-plus space car park. I am sure both sides of the house would agree that that is an important piece of infrastructure.

As the member for Bellarine mentioned in her contribution, many people in this state are touched by cancer either personally or through the experience of members of their family, and I am sure all of us in this house and those in the gallery would also have many family members or friends who have been touched by cancer. Any work that can be done in this area is greatly needed.

This new facility will have very clear educational and scientific links as well, and to prove that, one need only to look at the work of organisations such as Melbourne Health, the University of Melbourne, the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research at its Parkville branch, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital. They are all doing fantastic work. I recently had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. They are adapting years of research to deal with a whole range of cancers. For example, I witnessed their wonderful work in the area of lymphoma, which is a type of cancer that has affected my mother-in-law, so I had a great personal interest in the work they were undertaking.

The comprehensive cancer centre, along with the Olivia-Newton John centre in Heidelberg, will become key planks in the provision of health services in this great state, and we are very pleased to see that its establishment, alongside the women's hospital, the Royal Children's Hospital and the other important health facilities in Parkville, will ensure that Victoria remains a leader in the area of not only health services but also health research. It is something that we as a government are very keen to continue. One can see from yesterday's budget that it took a coalition government to provide a record level of funding in the area of health facilities. There is a clear need not only to continue the great work occurring in this state but also to ensure that the facilities in our acute hospitals remain cutting edge in order to meet the needs of Victorians.

A key plank of that commitment is the provision of 800 new beds, and yesterday we saw the funding commitment to start that important process. For

residents in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne we have announced an upgrade not only to Box Hill Hospital but also to Maroondah Hospital. Around the state we are looking at upgrades in a whole range of health facilities throughout regional and rural Victoria, which is important to so many people. For members of this house who represent those communities it is very important that we ensure that we provide the best health services for Victorians.

This is a very important piece of legislation. I am pleased to see that the opposition will support the government in the passage of this bill. I trust that the bill will have a speedy passage through both this house and the other house so that we can get on with the job of lifting the existing caveat over this parcel of land. Once that is lifted we can get on with building this important facility for the Victorian community.

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond) — I rise to join the debate and indicate, as our lead speaker did, that we strongly support this bill, which lifts a covenant over the revocation of a reservation for a site in Parkville, which was previously occupied by the dental hospital, allowing for the development of a comprehensive cancer centre on the site.

If you think about that boulevard along Flemington Road and the quite extraordinary investment that was made by the Brumby and Bracks governments — using taxpayer funds, of course — you realise that this is something that we as Victorians, on a bipartisan basis, ought to be immensely proud of.

As you drive up Flemington Road you pass the extraordinary Royal Children's Hospital. There would not be a person in this chamber who has not at some point had an experience at the Royal Children's Hospital and hopefully received, as was certainly the case with my children, the most expert level of care from that magnificent institution. Just a few weeks ago over the Easter break we saw how near and dear to the hearts of Victorians the Royal Children's Hospital is. Victorians have shown that over many years with their generosity during the Good Friday appeal in support of the hospital.

If you proceed further up Flemington Road, you come to the magnificent Bio21 Institute research centre, followed by the completely rebuilt the Royal Women's Hospital and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, in which extraordinary investment has been made, with successive upgrades of its casualty wards and so forth, and then to the marvellous Melbourne University research precinct with its Ludwig and various other

cutting-edge research facilities. At the top of the university is the new dental hospital.

The extraordinary investment of public funds is something I submit to the house we ought to be proud of on a bipartisan basis. This is a magnificent educational, research and health precinct. In that context to have the iconic Peter MacCallum hospital physically join that precinct — it has always been networked with many of those existing facilities and has played a pivotal role — really is the icing on the cake for this magnificent research hospital precinct. If we think about the Royal Children's Hospital as one of the iconic health facilities in this state, is there any other name that evokes the same sentiment as Peter Mac? There is not a person in this state, and I would suggest in this country, who does not know the name Peter Mac, which is synonymous with the magnificent cancer research institute just here at the back of Parliament House.

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre is the major and, can I say, pre-eminent cancer treatment centre in this country. As well as cancer treatment it offers professional oncology training and research. As many people know, it was named after Professor Sir Peter MacCallum, the then dean of the faculty of medicine at Melbourne University. Peter MacCallum, along with Rutherford Kaye Scott, played a very significant role in the founding of the then Peter MacCallum Clinic. Its initial site, as I recall, was in Lonsdale and Little Lonsdale streets in the legal precinct at the top end of the city. Based here in East Melbourne, it is one of the few cancer treatment facilities in the world that has a fully integrated clinical and laboratory program situated alongside a hospital. Those facilities enable the translation of research findings into clinical outcomes on a single site, which was one of the driving goals of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute.

I had the opportunity to take a tour of some of the facilities. Many people are unaware of this, but some of the most cutting-edge research and science is being undertaken at the Peter MacCallum Institute in East Melbourne. A unique opportunity now presents itself to further enhance the marvellous precinct in Parkville with the collaboration of the Peter MacCallum centre with the Melbourne branch of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, some parts of Melbourne Health and the University of Melbourne, intimately linked with Victoria's major teaching hospital, the Royal Melbourne Hospital. We have this extraordinary capacity now with the marvellous bringing together of a major teaching and clinical hospital in the Royal Melbourne and extraordinary new research facilities that will be available at the new comprehensive cancer

institute, which will be linked to all the other partners and to Melbourne University.

In my view — and I say this with the support of both sides of the house — it is hoped that this particular institute will become one of the top five in the world. The world's top comprehensive cancer institutes are the Royal Marsden Hospital in London, the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre in New York and the Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto. I believe this new comprehensive cancer centre will take its place alongside those other institutions. We as Victorians can be justifiably proud of the investment that will be made in this centre.

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre is, in my view, in the heart of every Victorian. Every Victorian understands just how important this facility has been in the lives of many. So many people have experienced treatment at this cancer centre. There are many cancers for which successful treatment or prevention programs exist, and these have been significant in treating and preventing cancer. Unique research opportunities will be provided by this comprehensive cancer centre, particularly for many of the young researchers establishing their professional lives in Victoria. There will also be those who are attracted back to Victoria to pursue their academic and intellectual careers. This new cancer centre will be a beacon for them and will be one of the five best cancer institutes in the world.

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre will offer inpatient beds, day treatment programs, radiation therapy bunkers and, importantly, 30 000 square metres of research space to accommodate up to 1400 cancer researchers. What an opportunity this new facility offers the people of Victoria and, more broadly, the people of Australia.

Cancer strikes many families. A lot of us can attest to that. My own mother was cut down by cancer at a young age. I was barely a teenager when she passed away. I lost her way too young; she was just 53 years of age. Cancer is a very personal thing to many of us, and we recognise just how crucial these sorts of facilities are to our own lives and to the lives of those in the broader public. If we can do anything as members of Parliament, we must invest in these sorts of facilities and cutting-edge research. Opportunities will arise from the extraordinary collaborations this new cancer centre will allow for, and these opportunities will span across the university teaching precinct. The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre will be one of the most exciting things to open in the next few years. The Flemington Road boulevard will be the site of crucial investment of public funds in the health of this state.

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words in support of this bill which, as many members have commented, is essentially a subject in two parts. The detail of the bill we are discussing this evening is about the process to be followed in terms of the status of the land. This bill has the support of the opposition, and so it is assured. It would be assured in any case as it is a government bill, but with bipartisan support it is certainly assured passage, and what follows from that is the opportunity to develop a purpose-built comprehensive cancer research, treatment and care facility. This is an exciting concept and something that is desperately needed in this state.

As I said, the bill before us is essentially a necessary change to the legal status of the site. It was once the home of the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne in Parkville; it is the site bordered by Flemington Road, Elizabeth Street and Grattan Street. That hospital relocated long ago to 720 Swanston Street, which enables us to recycle the land, as it were, to have the existing permanent reservation removed and to have the land temporarily re-reserved for health purposes. I understand this is the standard practice these days. I do wonder why a long-term project like this might be temporarily reserved, and I am sure there is some legal basis for that, which is beyond a humble parliamentarian like me. Once that process is complete a committee of management will be appointed, and then the exciting project can proceed.

That is essentially the meat of the bill. The existing permanent reservation is revoked by clause 3. Clause 4 deals with consequential issues arising from the effects of clause 3. The land will revert to the status of unalienated Crown land and will then be dealt with by the normal Crown land management process.

Clause 5 preserves the existing lease for CitiPower, which enables it to retain access to the site for a substation that is currently on the property. Clause 6 basically refers to the ability for the registrar of titles to register the land. Clauses 7 and 8 are essentially consequential clauses affecting the Royal Melbourne Hospital Act 1935.

That is almost the entire technical detail of the bill. There is absolutely nothing controversial in the bill at all in terms of the process to be followed with the revocation of the permanent reservation and the re-reservation on a temporary basis for health purposes. As I said at the outset, what is of great importance for the Victorian community is that the site then, once it is temporarily reserved for health purposes, becomes

available for the construction of a purpose-built comprehensive cancer centre.

As others have remarked, the scourge of cancer in our community and in any modern community is felt, I would suggest, by everyone, whether they be our family, friends, acquaintances or colleagues. I am sure that almost everyone in this state has been touched in some way by the terrible scourge of cancer. It is the greatest cause of mortality in Victoria. As a consequence it generates a high level of public concern. People are concerned for themselves, their families and their loved ones. A more pragmatic but no less significant issue for us on this side of the house as a government and for all members as legislators is that the care of cancer patients consumes a significant proportion of all health care delivered in this state. While I do not have any figures in front of me, it seems to me that it is, sadly, a growing proportion and certainly a growing demand.

The new cancer centre will not cure the problem. We know the task is far greater than that, but at least it puts in place a process where the more minds that are dedicated to delivering comprehensive cancer services the more quickly we are likely to have methods available to reduce the impact of cancer. As has been said on this side of the house, we in this government are certainly committed to funding and supporting cancer services on an ongoing basis, because it is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges in health in the current era.

What are we actually going to see with this cancer centre? It will be a world-class, purpose-built facility for research, treatment and care, as I said before. It will certainly accelerate the translation of the very innovative research that is being done into new treatments. That is where the business end is. The research is obviously important as a precursor to treatment, but the treatment is where it cuts in.

Some 1400 researchers will be able to be accommodated in the new centre. It will have 196 inpatient beds; 110 same-day treatment places, which will be effectively for day surgery; and 8 medi-hotel-type beds, which will provide supported accommodation for those who do not need an acute inpatient bed. The centre will have 30 000 square metres of specialised research space. That is quite a figure. It will have a clinical trials facility with 24 treatment places; education facilities; training facilities; an outpatient clinic for treatment of outpatients; 8 radiation therapy bunkers; and a necessity in the modern era, a 700-space car park, which is something fairly basic.

The member for Richmond referred to the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre near the back of Parliament House. I note in passing that it is on a site well known to me because I was born there when St Andrew's Hospital was on the site, which is going back a long time. In the interim Peter Mac has become, as the member for Richmond also rightly said, a much-loved part of this community.

Peter Mac will be an important part of the centre. Melbourne Health, which incorporates the Royal Melbourne Hospital, will also be involved, as will Melbourne University, the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital. There will be an opportunity for all those partners to be involved, but particularly Peter Mac and the relevant clinical and research services from Melbourne Health, Melbourne University and the Ludwig institute that will be located on the site.

It will be a \$1 billion facility. It is important to note that both the Victorian and commonwealth governments have committed roughly equal amounts of money to it. That is obviously to be commended, because a state cannot do these things on its own. It is public money that will be well spent.

Extensive consultation regarding the development of the centre has been undertaken between potential joint venture partners, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and others. Not only will the centre provide a great health facility but it will result in significant local industry participation, employment opportunities and other things as well. Not only will it be a tremendous health facility in Victoria for the long term but in the shorter term it will generate jobs and advances in other areas as well. I understand that the public tender process is under way. It is a tremendous project, and I wish the bill a speedy passage.

**Mr NOONAN** (Williamstown) — Like other speakers, it gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. What a magnificent piece of legislation this is. It might be only technical in detail, but the benefits associated with its passage will be felt in this state for generations to come.

As other members have said, the objective of the bill is to remove the current permanent reservation over the former site of the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, which will pave the way for the construction ultimately of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. That was, of course, very much an initiative of the Brumby Labor government and arose out of a terrific policy to tackle cancer.

That policy, announced back in 2008, was one of the top priorities for the Labor government and the then incoming Premier Brumby. He was ably supported in this quest by the current Leader of the Opposition, the member for Mulgrave, who served as a Minister for Health in the previous government. It is worth placing on the record our thanks to those two individuals for having the vision to craft this comprehensive cancer centre for Victoria and for following that vision right through to where we find ourselves today to ensure that in the future Victorians have the best possible cancer centre informed by the best possible world-class research right here in Victoria. That is what you call a plan; that is what you call a vision.

To expand on the policy that was developed, the previous government set a cancer patient survival rate goal of an additional 10 per cent by 2015, which is the equivalent of about 2000 Victorian lives being saved each year. There were four components of that particular plan; firstly, a goal to reduce major cancer risk factors in the population and maximise effective screening; secondly, ensuring rapid translation of research into effective treatment and clinical care; thirdly, to invest in innovative treatments and technologies and sustainable integrated-care systems; and fourthly, supporting and empowering patients and their carers throughout their cancer journey.

Whilst any government can produce a whole bunch of good intentions, and some might add glossy plans, it is the follow through and delivery that really makes the difference between one government and the next. The previous Labor government was absolutely committed to delivering a comprehensive agenda that would deliver a long-lasting difference in the area of cancer treatment and services, and I think it needs to be commended for that. It is this type of policy approach that sets us apart from those opposite and makes me very proud to stand among my Labor colleagues in this place.

On 18 April 2009 the then Premier, John Brumby, and my good friend, Nicola Roxon, the honourable member for Gellibrand in the federal Parliament and federal Minister for Health and Ageing, announced \$1 billion in funding for Victoria's new world-class centre. It needs to be stated that this was a monumental announcement that will ultimately deliver a research and cancer centre of the highest quality to Victoria. On that day the then Premier and Minister Roxon jointly committed \$853.2 million for the project, with the remainder to be funded from the sale of surplus land, contributions from the private sector and philanthropic donations.

We pride ourselves in Victoria on the way we do partnerships — in fact some would say we do partnerships better than any other government in this country. I think this centre will be a shining example of how well we can do those partnerships. It has been mentioned by other members in their contributions to this debate that the centre will bring together leading cancer research institutes such as the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre; the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Melbourne Health, which obviously includes the Royal Melbourne Hospital; the University of Melbourne; the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research; and the Royal Women's Hospital, all under the one great roof which will ultimately be out there in Parkville.

I think it is worth making clear what we will end up with when this comprehensive cancer centre is completed. The Department of Health has some details on its website which would be well understood by members. The centre will include 196 inpatient beds, 110 same-day treatment places, 8 medi-hotel beds, 8 radiation therapy bunkers and more than 30 000 square metres of research space capable of accommodating up to 1400 cancer researchers.

As the member for Richmond said, when we put all those facilities and all those stakeholders under the one roof here in Victoria, what we will end up with is already being likened to some of the world's top centres such as the Royal Marsden Hospital in London, the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York and indeed the Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, and that should never be understated.

I suspect that the staff at the Peter MacCallum centre, with their alliance partners in this project, will probably be counting down the years and months until the centre's anticipated opening in 2015. It will be a great day for Victoria and a dream come true for many dedicated professionals in our cancer community. Ultimately the facility will be able to treat about 25 per cent more patients than are currently treated at Peter Mac or the Royal Melbourne Hospital. In straight figures that will be up from about 31 000 today to a capacity of around 46 500 when operational. It will be a vital boost to Victoria's capacity to treat patients, and, more importantly, to save lives.

In terms of saving lives and the commitments made by the previous Labor government in relation to cancer treatment, I place on record my genuine pride about Labor's commitment to fund and build the first-ever radiation therapy centre in the western suburbs, in St Albans, which was opened just a couple of months ago by the new health minister.

Sadly, over the last five years 4120 people from the western and central regions of Melbourne have been diagnosed with cancer. Up until March this year, people living in Melbourne's west who had been diagnosed with cancer had to travel out of the western suburbs of Melbourne to receive treatment. That is not the case any more. The new Sunshine Hospital Radiation Therapy Centre, which is a partnership between the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and Western Health, is now able to provide about 900 people a year from Melbourne's western suburbs with the cancer treatment they need — importantly, close to home. This is certainly a first for the people of Melbourne's west, and it took a Labor government to deliver it for them. It was the Brumby Labor government that delivered a capital investment of \$40.5 million to build the facility, which will also employ around 50 staff, many of whom I am sure will be from the region.

We on this side of the chamber stand proudly by commitments such as this one that we made in government, just as we stand proudly by the fact that we committed and brought to book, in terms of the budget, more than \$400 million to build this new comprehensive cancer centre in Victoria. We know that building a centre like this one will save additional lives. We also know that a centre like this one needs to be integrated into a broader cancer strategy — otherwise known as a policy, for those opposite. Like all Victorians, we look forward to a world-class comprehensive cancer centre being opened in Victoria in 2015. We know the centre will become part of Labor's legacy in government.

In the very brief time I have left, I note that other members have mentioned the impacts of cancer in their own lives. I want to place on record that my father is a survivor of prostate cancer, which was diagnosed a couple of years ago. Because of the terrific treatment and research in the area of prostate cancer, we are now seeing many more men survive it. Due to his experience as a survivor of prostate cancer, my father continues to work as hard as he possibly can to encourage other men to go to the doctor and have their screening.

**Mr WELLER (Rodney)** — I rise tonight to speak on the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. The main purposes of the bill are to revoke the permanent reservation of the former dental hospital and dental school site in Parkville to facilitate the construction of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre on the site and to make consequential amendments to the Royal Melbourne Hospital Act 1935.

The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre will provide a world-class centre of excellence for cancer research and treatment. It will bring together recognised leaders in cancer research, clinical services, education and training — including the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre; Melbourne Health, which includes the Royal Melbourne Hospital; the University of Melbourne; the Parkville branch of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research Melbourne; the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research; the Royal Women's Hospital; and the Royal Children's Hospital.

The fundamental objective of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre is to reduce the burden of cancer, and the burden of cancer is quite a big one in Victoria. I will go into that further later in my contribution. The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre will benefit all Victorians, providing services and treatment to patients from rural and regional parts of Victoria. Both the Victorian and federal governments have committed substantial funding for the development of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, along with contributions from other sources.

Cancer has touched many people in Victoria and there are many forms of cancer. To name a few, as we all know, there is breast cancer, prostate cancer and skin melanoma, which is a problem in Rodney. It is probably a problem right across the state, Australia and the world. As members would know, I come from a farming background. When I was growing up as a kid, in the hay season you would take your shirt off and get a tan while carting hay or driving the tractor, but sometimes you might live to regret those actions later in your life. I personally have had several moles removed, but fortunately they have all been benign. I encourage members to keep a good eye on such things.

Research helps to make sure that there are greater success rates in curing cancers. Many members would know that I turned 50 a couple of years ago. When one turns 50 a self-testing kit for bowel cancer arrives in the mail. I will not go into the details of what has to be done, but that is another cancer where prevention is far better than cure. The research which the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre will conduct will help to find better ways to cure cancer for those who are unfortunate enough to develop it.

Another personal experience I will share is that my daughter at the age of four got leukaemia. Although she was a normal young girl, she suddenly became very tired for some unknown reason. We took her to the doctor who said that she may have leukaemia. We brought her down to the Royal Children's Hospital and indeed she did have leukaemia, but fortunately it was a

leukaemia for which there is an 80 per cent chance of a cure. Luckily my daughter was one of the 80 per cent. She is probably tougher than her father. I could not go through a lumbar puncture when they take fluid from the spinal cord to conduct tests. It looked very painful to me, but those are the things patients go through. Of course the doctors and nurses acted with the utmost care and there was a very good outcome. My daughter is now 23 years old and believes her father knows very little, but she is learning that perhaps he does know a little bit more than she thought. I guess that is the case with all 23-year-olds!

We should also remember that communities throughout Victoria have many fundraising events and contribute to many organisations such as the Royal Children's Hospital appeal on Good Friday which this year raised, I think, \$15.2 million, but I will touch on a few others in the electorate of Rodney. There is the Girls Night Out — —

**Ms Green** — Girls Night In!

**Mr WELLER** — No, the member does not have a good memory. I have a better corporate memory. It started off as the Girls Night Out when there would be 300 or 400 ladies attending. They would get a guest speaker and have a bit of entertainment. It could raise up to \$20 000 for the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre or to support cancer sufferers in recovery. It was a very good cause. Then, as prompted by the member for Yan Yean, it was succeeded by the Girls Night In to get together and make a donation to raise funds for the sufferers of cancer and for research into cures for cancer.

Another well-known event in northern Victoria that is a fundraiser for cancer research is the Murray Meander. This was started by a group of blokes who got together and decided that they would travel down the Murray in tinnies. There is the Murray River marathon where you have to paddle a kayak, or you can do it in style in a tinny with a little outboard motor on the back. I have participated in the last two Murray Meanders, and I must pay tribute to the Otis Foundation that helps run it. Each year I have been involved, only as a participant, it has been very successful. In 2010 I think it raised \$150 000. Half of that went towards research into prostate cancer and half went into funding homes where women recuperating from breast cancer treatment can go to recover. These are very worthwhile things for people to be supporting.

I pay tribute to the Murray Meander event. The first year it was from Echuca to Mildura, and I must say we had an all-star team comprising me, the members for

Swan Hill and Mildura and a member for Northern Victoria Region in another place, Mr Drum. It was a great week, and we were quite pleased to be supporting an event that raised \$150 000. This year the member for Swan Hill, being a minister, did not have the time, and the member for Mildura had to deal with floods in his local area. I still participated and flew the flag for our side. The event went on to raise \$160 000, which was quite pleasing.

Lou Iannacone drove a dual-wheeled Grey Fergie all the way from Echuca to the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre at the back of Parliament House and raised some \$50 000. Unfortunately Lou lost his brother to cancer, and that is what motivated him. It was a great support for the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre to have a Grey Fergie drive all the way down from Echuca.

Shane O'Brien, a prostate cancer sufferer who has been treated and had a very good outcome, decided he would run a function in my local town of Lockington, which has a population of 402 people. There were about 350 people at the event, and they raised about \$8000 for the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

The communities of the Rodney electorate are very supportive of this bill and going through the formality of making the land available for the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. We very much support research so that people who have the misfortune of suffering from cancer will benefit from higher success rates to have a better quality of life and beat these problems. As I mentioned earlier, research also needs to focus on curing cancer. I support the bill and acknowledge that the opposition is supporting it as well.

**Ms GREEN (Yan Yean)** — It is with great pleasure that I join the debate on the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. Based on the title of this bill, a member of the community looking in from the outside might think it would be about the dental hospital. Like other members in the house, I am pleased that this bill is about delivering the \$1 billion Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre to drive the next generation of progress in the prevention, detection and treatment of cancer in this state.

The idea and passion for this project and the regeneration of the hospital network in this state derives from a time when there was a government in charge that believed in innovation, forward planning, prevention and good modern health services being delivered to this state. I am very pleased that it seems that this is one project that the new government is not going to back down on. I am also very pleased to serve

in a party under the leadership of the member for Mulgrave, who has a fantastic record of looking forward and planning for health services in this state.

The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre supports the formal collaboration of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, the University of Melbourne, the Royal Children's Hospital, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. Funding for the comprehensive cancer centre was committed to in 2009, flowing from both the Victorian and commonwealth Labor governments, with each contributing \$426.1 million and the remainder to be funded from the sale of surplus land, partner contributions and philanthropic donations. The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre is being established under the Partnerships Victoria policy — a great policy that over the last decade has delivered many projects of benefit for this state, particularly in the area of health. Construction is scheduled to commence this year, with the building expected to be completed in 2015.

The reason we are having this debate under the title of the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011 is that the comprehensive cancer centre is to be built on the former dental hospital site at 711 Elizabeth Street. That is where this development will be constructed, and the site is being cleared for that purpose. Funding of \$10 million to undertake the clearing of this site was provided by the Labor state government. Under current legislation the site is permanently reserved as a site for a dental hospital and a dental school. The land was granted as a Crown grant to the University of Melbourne and the dental hospital as joint trustees some years ago. As joint trustees of the site the University of Melbourne and the dental hospital can surrender the Crown grant back to the Crown under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 with the written consent of the Governor in Council. This bill gives effect to that consent, both parties having provided written agreement to relinquish their interest in the Crown grant. It is very pleasing that this comprehensive cancer centre will be built on this site.

Cancer affects one in three Victorians, and around 70 Victorians a day are newly diagnosed with cancer — that is, 500 people a week or 26 000 people per year. Sadly 10 000 Victorians die each year from cancer. We on this side of the house have been very strident in having a forward plan. When in government we had a \$150 million Victorian cancer action plan to improve cancer survival rates. Our aim in that plan was to improve cancer survival rates by 10 per cent by 2015.

That measure would have saved 2000 Victorian lives. The billion-dollar joint investment with the federal government for the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre will be among the top 10 of its kind in the world.

One other thing I am proud of in Labor's comprehensive cancer strategy was the funding allocated to the Austin Hospital — \$93.9 million to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre — which will provide new treatment facilities, research space and importantly wellness services so that we are treating the whole person, not simply the cancer. I want to place on record my gratitude to people in the community of north-eastern Melbourne, particularly those in the Diamond Valley, for standing up so stridently in support of full funding for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre and forcing this government to match Labor's commitment and ensure that the centre was funded.

It was dirty and messy politics in the extreme for those who now sit on the government benches to have presented this funding as a black hole when it was simply an election commitment that those in government failed to match. Had we been returned to government, that funding would have been in the budget papers that we would have delivered this week, but this government has been elected and it is in a position to govern. It is just a great shame that it had to be dragged kicking and screaming to adhere to the wishes of the community to support that centre. Cancer is something that should be above politics, and I hope the government has learnt its lesson from that.

We are also proud to have contributed \$13 million towards the \$55 million Ballarat regional integrated cancer centre for that region; \$473 million for the new Bendigo hospital to include improved cancer services, including an additional linear accelerator and radiotherapy bunker; facilities at Sunshine Hospital to provide the first public radiotherapy facilities in the western suburbs of Melbourne; and \$78.8 million for the Victorian Cancer Agency as part of Victoria's cancer action plan to advance translational cancer research. This include grants to more than 160 cancer research projects along with many other measures like the Victorian Tobacco Control Strategy; \$10 million for new digital technology for BreastScreen Victoria; and \$34 million in funding for extra breast screening.

The so-called metropolitan health plan delivered by the new Minister for Health is a great shame and a lost opportunity. I hope the minister is going to learn that it is really not words that deliver health services to patients. They do not treat patients. It is the funding of

good-quality facilities and doctors and nurses. It is an absolute travesty that we have seen the Monash children's centre pushed out and deferred to 2018. This is not just a problem for families in the south-eastern corridor and in Gippsland. It is a problem for everyone else as it puts pressure on the Royal Children's Hospital. I hope that in a future budget the government realises the error of its ways.

As I said earlier, cancer is a dreadful disease. I want to thank some of the fantastic activists in my local community: Michelle Molinaro, who founded the CCCCs — the Chicks with Cancer who Coffee and Chat. They provide great support to one another and they give great support to any woman in the local community who is newly diagnosed with cancer. I thank all the great women who organise the Girls Night In functions in Diamond Creek, Doreen and Whittlesea and all the morning teas that are held. I place on record my gratitude to those who have provided support to my mother over the last four and a half years in her journey to surviving breast cancer. I want to wish my two wonderful girlfriends — Julie Miles who is currently battling bowel cancer and my dear friend Rachael who is undergoing surgery for breast cancer treatment tomorrow at the fantastic Peter MacCallum centre across the way — all the best for positive and speedy recoveries.

I am pleased that we are having bipartisan support for the bill before the house for the comprehensive cancer treatment centre. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr McCURDY** (Murray Valley) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. This government continues to show leadership in terms of the health and safety of our communities, and our priorities continue to shine above all the rhetoric and rubbish that we sometimes hear throughout the media. I am very proud to be a part of this government that is acting in this responsible way.

Health, as we all know, consumes a huge part of our budget — just short of 28 per cent of our annual budget goes into health. There is no doubt that our communities would literally wither and fade away without this significant and very important investment. How we look after our sick and vulnerable is a sign of the maturity and development of our community. The Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011 is a good example of that.

I think it is fair to say that Victoria does it better than most. Depending on what side of the house you sit on, you might differ on how much we spend in different areas of the budget, whether it is health or education —

we still agree to disagree — but by and large, relative to most other places Australia is still the lucky country, and many of us agree on that at the end of the day.

Balance is required to ensure that enough dollars are spent on health, education and safety. If we overspend in one area, there is always a wonderful leveller: it is called an election, and it is held every four years. There is also a balance between metropolitan Melbourne and rural and regional Victoria. Regardless of whether you are wealthy or poor, educated or not, this coalition government continues to show why Victorians elected it to run this state — because we care about the people of the state and want to see vibrant and healthy communities. We will deliver a first-class, community-focused health system of which all Victorians will be proud. Our health strategy addresses a combination of short-term medical needs and long-term research and development needs. Rural and regional Victoria is a significant part of this strategy. It is important that all Victorians are given these opportunities.

Cancer is a disease that strikes with little warning. It is hard to know whether you are high risk or low risk; it is not predetermined by the socioeconomic group to which you belong, the suburb in which you live or the level of education you have had. It touches us all, either directly or indirectly. As we know, it is the greatest cause of mortality in Victoria, and it has a significant impact.

The government is committed to funding a fully operational Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. It will be a world-class centre of excellence for cancer-related research and treatment, and it will bring together leaders in cancer research from the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Melbourne Health and various other hospitals and universities throughout Melbourne, including the Royal Children's Hospital. This collaboration of recognised leaders has one fundamental objective — that is, to reduce the burden of cancer on our communities.

Relay for Life is a wonderful program that is run in many of the communities with which I have been involved. In my electorate, Yarrawonga, Wangaratta and Cobram have all had a Relay for Life. Most towns have a Relay for Life event to support cancer research in whatever way they can. It is a grassroots-driven exercise that is held in many small communities, and this investment needs to be made. I was in Melbourne this weekend, and as I drove past Albert Park Lake I saw people walking around in the Relay for Life shirts. It just shows that all communities are exposed to this. Everyone will tell you that the government's

commitment to the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre is a magnificent investment.

As I said, cancer touches us all. Just today I received a letter from some students at Wangaratta High School who are raising money for Camp Quality as part of a community learning challenge. They asked me to support their efforts, and I certainly will. One of the young fellows, Sam Burbury, suffered from cancer as a four-year-old boy. He is now in year 9, and he and his friends have decided that they want to give something back, so they are conducting fundraising activities with the view to organising a disco to raise more funds. That is representative of how cancer strikes all of us and how people from all walks of life and of different ages and genders are happy to support this push to reduce cancer in our community. When I have the opportunity next week I will be proud to tell these students that this investment of approximately \$1 billion is well supported. Although some of us do not want to go without better classrooms, better roads or faster trains, every once in a while a chance comes along to make a real difference, and I think this is one of them.

Sadly, making way for this cancer centre at the Parkville site is the dental hospital and dental school. We would love to keep both projects alive and well, but we cannot because of the significant losses and blow-outs in the past. We cannot do everything, so we have to prioritise. Not all projects will survive. We are not here to make empty promises. We do not want to get people salivating over new infrastructure that we cannot afford. We are realistic, and we will deliver.

This Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre will be purpose built; it will have 196 inpatient beds, over 30 000 square metres of specialised research space, and, among other things, 8 radiation therapy bunkers and adequate car park space for 700 cars, which will be most suitable.

In summary, this cancer centre will be first class and world class. This alliance will again demonstrate the outstanding skill set that exists in Victoria. We are supporting it strongly. Cancer is the greatest cause of mortality in Victoria. The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre works on the fundamental model that more minds and more resources give us a greater chance to reduce this impact. I do not want to underestimate or understate that we are revoking the site of the former dental hospital. That is a shame. In an ideal world we would have all of that.

No community is immune from cancer. We have done extensive communication and consultation in rural and regional Victoria, in metropolitan Melbourne and with

communities, the Department of Health, the Department of Business and Innovation and the Department of Treasury and Finance. We are not going to go into this with a half-baked idea. This cancer centre will be exceptionally good. We believe there will be long-term benefits for all Victorians. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — The purpose of the bill before the house tonight is an important one. In practical terms it is more elementary — that is, it provides for the revocation of the former site of the dental hospital and dental school in Parkville and for the facilitation of the construction of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre on that site. This land is banded by Grattan Street, Elizabeth Street and Flemington Road. It is a site that has been well known to Victorians for generations. The site was set aside earlier in 1936 as a permanent reservation. It will have a continuing use in terms of the medical care and treatment of Victorians.

Included in the provisions of the bill is the specific revocation of the earlier reservation and the preservation of an existing lease between the Minister for Health and CitiPower. The interest of CitiPower in the land is such that there is a substation on site which provides electricity to medical services within the immediate precinct. Therefore it has an important use. The continuation of the exercise of the lease on the part of CitiPower will enable it to continue to fulfil its function in the area.

There is a procedural element of the bill regarding the registrar of titles making necessary amendments. According to the Department of Health's information sheet on the department's new website, the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre:

is a powerful alliance between the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Melbourne Health, the University of Melbourne, the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research Melbourne-Parkville branch, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital.

A number of members would recall that the current site of the Peter MacCallum hospital is at the back of Parliament House and on the former St Andrews Hospital site. Peter MacCallum had relocated there in the last several decades from a site in Little Lonsdale Street near the legal precinct of Melbourne. It moved to the area occupied by the former St Andrews Hospital. Reconstruction works were undertaken there. It is an excellent asset for Victorians, including many who would have travelled there from country areas and others who have been transported there by ambulance

for day procedures. There are the amenities of the parks nearby, including the Fitzroy Gardens and Treasury Gardens. It is a fine amenity in the immediate precinct of the hospital afforded to people having treatment and to their families, friends and companions.

I understand via reliable advice in the house tonight that the Peter MacCallum Centre at the back of Parliament will be sold. The land value will be realised and that resource will be reinvested in the development of the new centre.

It is important to note a number of other matters in relation to the bill. The medical care of Victorians is of major importance. There is the scope of immediate prevention and the cancer messages of the Cancer Council and SunSmart campaign as well as the tobacco advertising campaigns for antismoking which have served to provide one focus in the prevention of cancer.

The contribution of Victorian medical and Australian medical researchers has established our state and nation as one of the best precincts and countries in the world in the area of medical research. This includes the Parkville strip and the centres relocated to the Alfred hospital. Monash University also has an important medical research operation on the Commercial Road site. Australia has led the world across a number of medical research frontiers. The aggregation of different hospitals on the Parkville site will enhance collaboration.

I also note that the silicon chip has provided a major impetus to the development of medical research. International research work that is undertaken here can be understood instantaneously around the world. The searching of medical journals and reports for causes and cures has enhanced the study of medical science. The world human genome project is another example of international cooperation that has taken place.

Within the Sandringham electorate the Sandringham and District Memorial Hospital has had a long-term role in the treatment of a range of conditions, along with Linacre Private Hospital nearby. A number of years ago the Sandringham electorate was identified as one of the electorates in Victoria with the highest incidence of cancer. That led a number of people to speculate as to what the reason for that might have been. One determining factor was the proportion of people over the age of 65 years among the population.

Cancer is an issue that has been mentioned in other contributions before the house. It is an issue that has confronted virtually every family in the state and all members in this chamber. I will place a few more

immediate examples on the parliamentary record. On Sunday my 13-year-old son started wearing an armband that marked the passing of Luke Bailey, a school friend who died of cancer in May last year. The armband marked the words 'Courage, friendship, remember Luke forever'. It was a very poignant reminder of a very sad occasion. I pay tribute to the courage of Luke's parents, Tim and Leanne Bailey, who over a long period of time went through the harrowing ordeal of caring for their son and helping him through his experience. They had the option of travelling overseas for treatment but ultimately the best available care was able to be provided in Melbourne, albeit not sufficient to extend Luke's life beyond his tender primary school years.

As we remember Luke's life and the impact of cancer on his family, so too we recognise other examples. The Rotary Club of Cheltenham played an important fundraising role for the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre through the work of its former president, Bernadette Hamilton-Greer, whose life had been extended through the outstanding work undertaken by the medical physicians, doctors and surgeons operating there. As a tribute to their work Bernadette organised a major fundraiser to buy an important piece of medical equipment. This was facilitated through her initiative and work. There was also a former parliamentary colleague, Dr John Ross, a member for Higinbotham Province in the Legislative Council, who died of cancer early in his 60s, which was premature.

Finally I refer to another example. The Moller family have a daughter, Ann, a mother of five children, who has cancer at the present time. Her brother Paul is lining up to be a bone marrow donor to assist the medical treatment of his sister. That operation was performed successfully on Tanya Lea, the wife of a former member for Sandringham, at the Royal Women's Hospital.

Cancer is an illness that can affect all of us — it can strike without warning, and it exacts a high toll — and the contribution to medical research as a consequence of the amalgamation of an important cancer research and treatment precinct is important. Over 2000 years ago the Roman poet Horace noted that the impartial footstep of death resounds outside the doors of all people alike with little discernment. I trust that as a result of the good work being undertaken through this and other measures on the part of the Victorian government, the life journeys of many Victorians and people around the world will be extended through the development of excellent medical research and methods of treatment. I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms MILLER (Bentleigh)** — I rise to speak about this very important Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. The bill provides the necessary legal changes to the status of the site so that the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre can be built. Presently the site for the VCCC is Crown land permanently reserved for a dental hospital and dental school. The reservation on the land was made in 1836. The bill revokes the permanent reservation over the land, making it unreserved Crown land. The bill also makes consequential amendments to the Royal Melbourne Hospital Act 1935 to provisions that are now spent and preserves an existing lease for part of the land which has been granted by the Minister for Health to CitiPower for an electricity substation that is still in use.

Following the revocation of the permanent reservation of the site it will become unreserved Crown land. The bill proposes that the land will be temporarily re-reserved for health purposes under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978. This is in line with current practices for Crown land, and there will be no time limit or term of use. A committee of management for the land will be appointed and construction of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre will commence.

The site was vacated by the Royal Dental Hospital and the University of Melbourne in 2003 when they relocated to Swanston Street, Carlton, and the demolition of the former buildings was completed in August 2010, leaving the land vacant for construction. This particular site is bordered by Flemington Road, Elizabeth Street and Grattan Street in Parkville. The site was selected for the construction of the new Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre because of its prime location within Victoria's largest medical research and technology precinct.

I have a personal association with this particular site, among many. As a registered nurse for over 25 years I have had the privilege of working not only in this particular facility but also in the hospitals neighbouring it. There is the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the University of Melbourne, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital. I think we would all agree that the new development will make this site a medical research and technology precinct. It will be a fantastic facility for all Victorians. Whether you are a child, a teenager, an adult or a mature-aged individual, if you have cancer and require some form of intervention, this facility will enable you to more comfortably receive the appropriate treatment you require. This is a very good thing.

In my electorate of Bentleigh the Moorabbin hospital, which is part of Southern Health, has an oncology section which provides chemotherapy and radiotherapy predominantly to residents who live in the southern region of Melbourne. This new facility in Parkville will capture residents who live in the northern and western regions of Victoria. Whilst they may have to travel into the city, they will be able to receive the treatment they require in a more timely manner and in a comfortable environment. The Victorian government is committed to ensuring the best care for cancer sufferers in this state. As part of that the government has committed to investing \$44.88 million in the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre which will result in the complete fit-out of this facility.

The VCCC will be a world-class, purpose-built facility for cancer research, treatment and care. It is based on the premise that the more minds dedicated to delivering comprehensive cancer services the more quickly methods to reduce the impact of cancer will be discovered.

This new facility will include 196 inpatient beds, 110 same-day treatment places, 8 medi-hotel beds, supported accommodation for patients who do not require acute inpatient beds, over 30 000 square metres of specialised research space with room for 1400 researchers, a clinical trials facility with 24 treatment places, education and training facilities, 8 radiation therapy bunkers and car parking for 700 cars. This is a tremendous initiative that the Victorian government will implement in the near future, and Victorians who visit this facility for treatment will experience a place of holistic wellness.

This \$1 billion facility that is going to be built will be delivered under the Victorian government's Partnerships Victoria policy, using the skills and abilities of the private sector to finance, design, build and maintain the centre. Work is due to commence around mid-2011 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. The Victorian government has committed \$428.5 million and the commonwealth government has committed \$426.1 million to the development of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. The remainder of the funding will be provided from sources including the sale of surplus land, member contributions and philanthropic donations. The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and Melbourne Health will continue to provide all publicly funded health and medical support services.

The government's vision is one of providing leadership in cancer treatment and this facility will be a centre of excellence. The fact that we have leading researchers in

the medical field here in Victoria stands Victoria's health-care reputation in good stead not only in this country but throughout the world. I have had the privilege of working with many talented oncology surgeons in this state, and many years ago the gynaecology-oncology surgical field was my area of expertise, so I am quite familiar with some of the surgeons who still operate today.

The other important thing to note is that cancer is a growing factor in terms of health care, and that is predominantly because of the current lifestyle habits of many of us. Some cancers are hereditary, and some are due to unknown circumstances, but research today indicates that cancer is caused by many lifestyle habits, and the most recent one we have heard about in the media is excessive consumption of alcohol. It has been suggested that excessive consumption of alcohol can lead to an increase in incidence of cancer. We know that cancer can occur in many different forms throughout the body in both men and women.

I think this will be a fantastic facility that Victorians will embrace. They will certainly benefit from the treatment they will receive from it. I conclude by confirming that a facility of this size and the services it will bring to Victoria will be of benefit to those who use it. The cancer centre will be in an appropriate place given the neighbouring hospitals. This site in Parkville will be known as a very compact, centralised forum for health care and treatment. I commend this bill to the house.

**Ms McLEISH** (Seymour) — I rise in support of the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. Put simply, this bill will allow for the construction of the new Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre on the site of the former Royal Dental Hospital in Parkville. For this to happen there needs to be a revocation of the permanent reservation of the Crown land site as a dental hospital and dental school placed on the site some 75 years ago. The change needs to be made legislatively. This bill also makes amendments to the Royal Melbourne Hospital Act 1935 as a result of these changes.

The costs of building a comprehensive cancer centre are great. Plenty of money has been committed by both the federal and state governments — some \$850 million between the two. With other sources this project is closer to \$1 billion. Finding a site that is appropriate and relevant can be tricky. We need to consider size, access and proximity to associated services. The site selected fits the bill. It is ideally located within Victoria's largest medical research and technology precinct. There are many illustrious bodies in that immediate precinct including the University of

Melbourne, a fine institution, and Melbourne Health, of which the Royal Melbourne Hospital is part, and the Royal Melbourne Hospital being a teaching hospital in close proximity to Melbourne University is extremely important. The other institutions are the Royal Women's Hospital, the Royal Children's Hospital, the Parkville branch of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research.

I am very proud to know many family members and good friends who have worked at a number of these research institutions, who believe very much in the cause of medical research and who in many instances forgo the lucrative salaries that they could earn elsewhere in the name of medical research. These bodies, together with the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, which is also an extremely fine institution, will come together as recognised leaders in research.

Why is this necessary? We know that cancer is an important disease. We know that it touches everybody: a family member, an extended family member, somebody at a sporting club, somebody from school or a work colleague. It is important that we reduce the burden of this disease on society as a whole and on families and individuals.

I have been looking at the Cancer Council of Australia's website and I have some figures, some of which I find quite surprising: 1 in 2 Australians will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85. That is every second person in this chamber. Cancer is the leading cause of death in Australia, and more than 43 000 people are estimated to have died from cancer last year. The survival rate for many common cancers has increased by 30 per cent in the last two decades. With an institution such as the one proposed, which is devoted not only to treatment but also to research, we can hope and expect that survival rates will improve at a much greater rate in the coming years.

Cancer costs about \$3.8 billion, or 7.2 per cent of direct health system costs in Australia. The cost to the community is indeed large. In 2000–01 \$378 million was spent on cancer research, which is 22 per cent of all health research expenditure in Australia. We know the cost of cancer, and we know its impact on people and on society.

We need to look a little further at what the bill will offer with the construction of the new cancer centre. If we look at the roles that people have had in the workforce in Victoria over the years, we see that there have been some changes as job numbers have declined in the manufacturing industry, with Victoria becoming less

and less dependent on it. It is important that we develop in other areas the skills and strengths for which we are already recognised. We know that more and more jobs are being created in the fields of finance and insurance, but there are also many opportunities for us to continue to invest in medical services and in research.

I am delighted with the increase in investment in biomedical research. It will allow innovative research discoveries, and it will develop the skills of those working in the science field even more. It can also be used to develop and utilise new technologies and enhance existing technologies.

The bill is important to enable the project to go ahead so that Melbourne and Victoria are on the international radar as leaders in the field of cancer research, cancer treatment and cancer care. I look forward to being part of a state that helps put Australia, and certainly Melbourne, on the map and to Victoria leading the way in this important research and cancer treatment facility. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr CRISP** (Mildura) — I rise to make a very brief contribution on the Dental Hospital Land Bill 2011. The purpose of the bill is to change the reservation of land so we can build the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, which is something — —

**Ms Campbell** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Mildura should continue.

**Mr CRISP** — Cancer touches many families across Victoria, including those in country Victoria. This facility will certainly be used by country people. Many country people travel to Melbourne for cancer services — —

**Ms Campbell** — On a point of order, Speaker, this is the second time in the last two days that I have been on my feet prior to a member of the government when it is our turn to speak and I have been ignored by the Chair on both occasions. I ask that when people are called in this house the normal procedures of the house — that is, one speaker from the government and one speaker from opposition — are continued. That is a longstanding tradition, and it is one that should not be broken.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Pascoe Vale's whip provided me with a list, which expired some four speakers ago. There was no indication that the member was going to speak. The member for Mildura indicated to me that he was going to speak, and his name was on the list. The member for Pascoe

Vale's name was not on the list that was provided to me. The debate has not finished, so there will still be time for the member to speak.

**Ms Campbell** — On a further point of order, Speaker, do I take it from that ruling that you now ignore people standing on their feet and go by the list?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! No, that is not the indication the member should take. I have explained to her the circumstances of why I did not give her the call. I saw the member for Mildura, and then I saw the member for Pascoe Vale after that.

**Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

### **Sport and recreation: Pascoe Vale electorate facility funding**

**Ms CAMPBELL** (Pascoe Vale) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The action I seek is that he visit the Pascoe Vale electorate and examine three or four key sites that are relevant to this year's sport and recreation funding applications. I would like to take him to the Pascoe Vale Sports Club to meet with the club president, Brian Campisi, and the football club president, Kaye Beidukiewicz. The club has over 1000 members, and this year it fielded a women's football team. The women's change facilities in the clubrooms are in desperate need of attention and funding.

Another spot in the Pascoe Vale electorate I would like to take the minister to is the Coburg athletics track at the Harold Stevens reserve to meet with club representatives, including Gordon Proudfoot, and some of the great club legends — Harold Stevens, Pauline Nippard and Ken Carter, to name just three. The track is home to the Coburg Harriers, which has 100 members, and Coburg Little Athletics, which has 400 members. It is also the regional base for athletics meetings and championships for many schools and interested groups. Unfortunately the track is in grave decay, thus its usage is restricted. Refurbishment will allow it to be used more often and extend its life for 12 to 15 years. An injection of much-needed funding will ensure that the track is safer for the people using it. At the moment, because of track decay, those hurtling down the track at great speed are at risk of injury.

It is very important that the minister visit the Pascoe Vale electorate. I can assure him of a great coffee shop that has excellent Italian cakes. If he prefers Greek cakes, we would love to show him some of our other coffee shops while he is with us. When he visits he will be made very welcome by the sports clubs. He will be very much appreciated if he provides funding to them. The visit could also cover the Oak Park Aquatic Centre and the Coburg City Oval, with the Moreland council's dynamic sports infrastructure team led by Joe Luppino and Nerina Di Lorenzo. I use this opportunity to note and pay tribute to Tony Oulton, who recently left the Moreland council staff. Our sports clubs appreciated Tony's dedication and professionalism.

### **Shedfest: funding**

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — My request for action is to the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. I request that she look to support funding for the marketing of Shedfest in the Yarra Valley. Shedfest is an annual festival celebrating good food, good music and, most of all, good wine. Now going into its ninth year, it was started by Susanne Pyle and Judy Zuk to show people that the Yarra Valley wine region does not stop at the Maroondah and Melba highways and that Warburton Highway in the south of the Yarra Valley also produces some fantastic wines.

The festival is called Shedfest to reflect the basic simple sheds that comprise the wineries to the south of the Yarra Valley, which are in stark contrast to the more upmarket cellars typical of the wineries in the north of the valley. The festival incorporates 10 wineries along the Warburton Highway: Brumfield Winery, Bulong Estate, Elmswood Estate, Five Oaks Vineyard, Killara Estate, Seville Estate, Seville Hill, Shelmerdine, Whispering Hills and Wild Cattle Creek. Not only is Shedfest a great event for local wineries, it is also a boon for many local businesses and community groups and provides employment for many people in the area.

One of the wineries, Five Oaks Vineyard, joins with a croquet club to show visitors the great game of croquet amongst the vines over a couple of glasses of fine wine. It is an absolutely beautiful day, and I have my fingers crossed that the weather will be as superb as it was last year.

The Transport Accident Commission has become a major and important partner of Shedfest by not only sponsoring the event but also providing a free bus shuttle service from Lilydale railway station up the Warburton Highway. Like all the wineries in the Yarra Valley, those that participate in Shedfest encourage the

safe consumption of alcohol and encourage visitors to nominate a non-drinking driver.

The importance of Shedfest as a marketing tool for the wineries on the Warburton Highway cannot be underestimated, particularly as the Grape Grazing Festival is not running again this year. Grape Grazing was cancelled the year of the bushfires, and due to the issues and concerns that were expressed in the lead-up to summer last year the organisers decided not to continue the festival for a couple of years while they look at remodelling it. It is very important that the smaller festivals such as Shedfest receive the support of the government so that visitor numbers grow and these small wineries, with their individual handcrafted wines, can demonstrate that they are equally as good as the wineries on the other side of the valley.

### **Moorabbin Airport: pilot training**

**Mr LIM** (Clayton) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry in relation to the latest increase in pilot student numbers at Moorabbin Airport of an additional 200 students. The action I seek is for the minister to adopt the position of Kingston City Council as reported in the *Mordialloc Chelsea Leader* of 13 March, which states that Kingston council wants the training to end by 2030, with helicopter training to be phased out by 2015. In that article, Kingston council is also reported as saying:

Pilot training hours should be limited to weekdays between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m., and banned on weekends and public holidays.

I urge the minister to adopt this position as well. The article goes on to say:

In recent years, there have been several incidents involving training aircraft in Kingston residential areas and within the airport boundary. A trainee pilot was killed in a midair collision over Cheltenham in 2008.

I received the minister's media release of 25 March this year applauding and heralding the extra capacity at the airport, and I quote:

The Baillieu government is actively supporting the growth of our state's aviation and aerospace industries in both domestic and international markets, including pilot training —

at Moorabbin Airport.

This is news to my community in Clayton South and Clarinda and also to the community in the neighbouring area of Dingley Village. These communities live under the flight paths and experience noise on a daily basis. I would like the minister to explain what sort of

consultation with the community was undertaken to form the position outlined in the media release. Did he even speak to residents in the cities of Greater Dandenong and Kingston to see what their views were? I think the answer is no. Does the minister agree that his support of the increase in training at Moorabbin Airport goes against the will of the community and the councils that are at the coalface and that experience the effects of living so close to the airport?

I ask the minister to acknowledge the comments of the Dingley Village Community Association which stated very clearly in a recent submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport that it believed the community should be meaningfully consulted if there is going to be a change in the current situation and that the community should be given an opportunity to have some input into managing noise and safety issues which are a real source of frustration and annoyance.

The Moorabbin Airport Residents Association has said that no-one listens and no-one helps. I invite the minister to come to my community so that he can start listening — —

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

### **Landcare: South Barwon electorate**

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. The action I seek is for the minister to come to South Barwon and meet with Landcare groups. Over the 11 years of the previous Labor government Landcare funding was slashed. The principle of Landcare is to fund volunteer groups to work on land management projects for issues such as salinity, erosion and weeds. There are many fine volunteers in South Barwon who give their time and effort to the preservation of both private and public land.

Landcare is so effective as the time and effort is donated by volunteers, which gives us more bang for our buck. I have seen the effectiveness of environmental volunteers firsthand in my previous role as a councillor at the City of Greater Geelong. Each year I would make a disbursement of \$20 000 to the Friends of Buckley Falls to manage the Buckley Falls Park on the Barwon River. The fine work done at Buckley Falls would easily have cost council \$80 000 to \$100 000 if council officers had been engaged to perform the same work. This is why Landcare is so important and why the Baillieu government has committed funding of \$12 million to provide

60 Landcare coordinators, who will oversee the proper preservation of farmland and the environment. The Landcare groups in South Barwon have expressed a willingness to share their ideas and views with the minister, and they eagerly anticipate a visit from him.

### **Schools: Boronia**

**Mr MERLINO** (Monbulk) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that he meet with the principals and school council representatives of Boronia Heights College and Boronia Primary School as a matter of urgency. The meeting is to discuss how stage 2 funding for the new Boronia K–12 school can be secured as soon as possible. In the lead-up to this year's budget I wrote to the minister requesting such a meeting, and I know that the schools were desperately trying to gain access to the minister for a number of months to gain stage 2 funding in this year's budget. Unfortunately the attempts to both meet the minister and secure \$12 million in the 2011–12 budget for this exciting project have failed.

This is the most significant education project in this region of the city of Knox for generations; it is simply that important in terms of the educational opportunities for young people in Boronia and the surrounding communities. I have worked closely with Colin Davies, the principal of Boronia Primary School, and Kate Harnetty, the principal of Boronia Heights College, and both school communities for a number of years to get this project off the ground. It has the full and active support of the eastern regional office of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. It is acknowledged by the department as being a project of the highest priority.

Labor recognised the need and the unique opportunity that this project presented. In the 2010 state budget \$10 million was allocated by the previous Labor government for stage 1 works, which I am very proud of. Works are well under way, and I am advised that construction of stage 1 is scheduled to be completed by November or December this year. I recently visited the construction site and was advised by both Colin and Kate that it was essential that funding for stage 2 be allocated in the 2011 state budget. It was required not only because it makes sense to continue the construction seamlessly and not to have the site lay idle for a 12-month period or longer, but also because the facilities to be constructed in stage 2 are essential for utilisation of the facilities constructed in stage 1. Stage 2 includes a new administration building, a new senior programs building and a new learning neighbourhood facility. The facilities provided for in

stage 1 will be of limited use to students until stage 2 is completed.

The other factor that should be taken into account is that every year that Boronia Heights College is unable to begin transferring students to the new school, further pressure is placed on the school in terms of dropping enrolments and maintenance concerns. This delay will hurt students and families. The Boronia K–12 project came into being because there was a very real concern about the provision of government secondary schools in this part of the city of Knox. Works should not have been delayed, and it will be a massive disappointment for families and students in Boronia that funds for stage 2 have not been forthcoming. I request that the minister meet with the schools as a matter of urgency to discuss how stage 2 funding can be provided as quickly as possible.

### **Rodney electorate: junior sporting clubs**

**Mr WELLER** (Rodney) — In my adjournment matter tonight I seek action from the Minister for Sport and Recreation. It is good to see that he is in the chamber. He is a good minister, and the trend of having ministers in the chamber to answer adjournment questions is commendable in this Parliament as compared to the last Parliament. The action I seek is for the minister to support junior sporting clubs in my area, the Nathalia Little Athletics Club being one of those clubs. The little athletics club encourages habits for life — being fit, being involved in an activity — —

**Mr Foley** — You weren't involved!

**Mr WELLER** — I wasn't involved, that is right — I had to milk cows!

Club members develop good habits and good life skills. The clubs get the young people involved, and they do not have problems later in life. It is an investment in the future which turns into a huge saving in the future.

The Cohuna Kangas Football and Netball Club is in the Murray league. The Mid Murray Football League extends from Cohuna all the way to Balranald. If you are playing in the fourth team at Balranald, your father is likely to have got up at 3.00 a.m. to milk the cows so he can be at Balranald by 9.00 when the fourths start. There are a lot of travel problems, especially when young players get to the representative level. These travel problems are a big drain on the club, which needs some support.

The Moama-Echuca Soccer Association, incorporating the Moama Border Raiders club, is involved in the Loddon Mallee league, and players are required to

travel all the way to Bendigo, Mildura and, when it comes to the representative level, further. That club has been successful in having some of the outstanding juniors from the area in representative sides.

Then we have the Rochester and District Horse and Pony Club. As anyone may know, young people riding horses go to gymkhanas. In taking the horses to events they often travel all over the countryside, competing and developing skills in horsemanship and participation, which gives people life skills that they will have for the rest of their lives.

The travelling is a problem for the clubs, and I ask the minister if he has any ways of supporting those clubs in relation to that issue.

### **South Melbourne Districts Little Athletics Club: track access**

**Mr FOLEY** (Albert Park) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The specific action I seek from him is that he direct his department and his agency, the State Sports Centre Trust, to ensure that the new state athletics centre at the Lakeside Oval in Albert Park Reserve be made available on a secure basis and on reasonable terms to the South Melbourne Districts Little Athletics Club.

This club, volunteer run and supported by over 200 local families, has been given short shrift by the minister and his agencies. This is most disappointing. I could not agree more with the comments the member for Rodney just made and other comments made in this chamber about the importance of encouraging young people in sport and activity, including:

My focus as the Minister for Sport and Recreation is to see more people being more active more often. It is good for our communities, and it is good for the health and wellbeing of people across the state —

as the minister himself said on 7 April. Apparently this is not so for people who live in the district of Albert Park and who want to see their kids be the best they can be and participate in athletics and have a healthy lifestyle.

I understand the club has sought to meet with both the Premier and the minister on this issue and has received a heartless response from the minister, effectively locking it out of this community asset. The minister's response made it clear that when not being used for elite events the facility would be available 'for ... community and other events throughout the year'. It even confirms what was promised in the original design of the facility — that the venue would be open to the

general public to access the facility for informal use. In meeting with the trust representatives, however, the volunteer-based club has been told that the facility is a commercial operation and that the club would need to pay the same rate as if it were the Australian Olympic team.

Let us be clear here. This new facility is wonderful. It will be both an elite and a community facility. The little athletics club, which runs its activities on a nearby ground, needs the minister's support to make sure it can move from its inadequate facility, where even the 400 metres has to be squashed into a track only 300 metres long. The track is also severely potholed. The little athletics runners run on Sunday mornings, and discussions with the chief executive officer of the State Sports Centre Trust have indicated there would be minimal overlap with other potential users.

This club — which as I said runs on Sunday mornings, the quietest time for the trust — is now facing the prospect of folding. It faces losing its existing ground, ground no. 1 at Albert Park Reserve, should Parks Victoria allocate it to a competing cricket club. Once again I urge the minister to direct his department and his agency to ensure that the children in the little athletics club will have secure and reasonable access to this track and its facilities. The minister should not lock the community out of this community facility.

### **Moe Racing Club: flood damage**

**Mr BLACKWOOD** (Narracan) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Racing. The action I seek is that the minister visit the Moe Racecourse to inspect the flood damage to the track arising from heavy rainfall in March. The Moe Racing Club is a historic club dating back to early last century. The club is managed by a very dedicated, hardworking group of local men and women, guided by the wisdom and experience of CEO David McKinnon. The club is a very professional organisation and has developed a magnificent convention centre, pokies venue and bistro. The racing facilities are excellent for horse, jockey and punter.

The racing club makes a significant contribution to the local economy of Moe and broader Gippsland. It has been very successful in attracting well-known and respected trainers to the region, creating employment and boosting the demand for goods and services to their industry from local suppliers. The club conducts 13 race meetings a year, with the highlight being the Moe Cup on 13 October — one of Gippsland's premier race days.

There was significant damage to many parts of the Latrobe Valley following heavy rainfall in March this year. The Moe Racecourse was a victim of this heavy rainfall, with the sand track being washed away and damage to the drainage system of the course proper. This has greatly inconvenienced local horse trainers over the past six weeks, who have been unable to access the sand track, the course proper, or the grass training track due to other works on the ambulance track. This damage has also forced the transfer of Moe race meetings to other tracks in the region. I understand the club has already repaired some of the damage to the sand track without external assistance, but damage to the drainage system in particular will take a lot more time and money. It is critical that the club is supported in its efforts to fix up the damage. I ask the minister to visit Moe, discuss the matters with local racing representatives and determine how the government might be able to assist.

### **Northern Hospital: academic and research precinct**

**Mr McGUIRE** (Broadmeadows) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Health. The action I seek is for him to stop jeopardising a \$50 million deal to build a clinical teaching and education precinct for the Northern Hospital and provide the required funding before 30 June. The Baillieu government's decision not to commit an \$11 million share in yesterday's budget risks this vital project and is a potential deal breaker with partners who have worked in good faith for years to deliver the academic and research precinct and to enable 600 medical, nursing and allied health professionals to be trained at the Northern Hospital. The commonwealth government has already committed \$14 million, La Trobe and Melbourne universities have committed \$7.2 million each, Northern Health has committed \$5 million and Victorian Labor has committed an additional \$11 million to enable this project to become a reality.

Why is this project important? The Northern Hospital serves the third-fastest growing region in Australia and is one of the most disadvantaged areas in the state, with soaring demand from an older, sicker population. The Baillieu government and particularly the Minister for Health know how essential this project is. Under the shadow of its first budget the health minister yesterday slipped out his metropolitan health plan, avoiding critical scrutiny. Here are the disclosures that count: the outer north-west is expected to experience the highest percentage population growth of all planning areas in Victoria, with growth of almost 50 per cent during the next decade; and Victoria's health workforce is

inadequate, with the system set to lose 6000 nurses during this period, according to the metropolitan health plan.

Those revelations define the life-and-death need for this project. The Baillieu government's failure to commit to this project means the deal may collapse and the opportunity may be squandered. The commonwealth government's \$14 million commitment expires on 30 June. The Baillieu government knew this, which makes its decision irresponsible.

The coalition's biggest promise to win the election was to 'fix the problems and build the future'. In this case the coalition is the problem, but I can assist with a solution. The Treasurer rightly defines budgets as being about priorities. Instead of providing the \$11 million to secure a \$50 million investment and build Victoria's future with this iconic health project, it decided to fund an alternative education project, the 'shotgun education program'. This program is designed to provide for Victorian hunters to improve their practical shotgun skills.

Could there be any bigger contrast in priorities between the government and the opposition than placing shotgun training ahead of training doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and all the other health workers desperately needed to build Victoria's future in a region where investment for research and training is critical to saving lives? I call on the minister to secure the \$50 million investment that will truly build Victoria's future.

### **Murray Valley electorate: elite athlete funding**

**Mr McCURDY** (Murray Valley) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and the action I seek is funding support for elite athletes within the electorate of Murray Valley. Living in rural and regional Victoria has many benefits and lifestyle advantages; however, individuals who are elite athletes need to travel on a regular basis to compete in higher grade competitions and there are a great many costs associated with this, including getting to and from the competitions.

Two particular sports in Wangaratta have faced challenges in financing local competitors, and the community has worked tirelessly to support these individuals. Firstly the Wangaratta Cycling Club has some very successful athletes who regularly travel and require accommodation and travel expenses for competitions. Another example is the Wangaratta soccer club. That sport also requires travel to various

locations for exposure to the highest levels of competition.

If we want to give our young athletes the chance to succeed, we need to assist them wherever we can and as much as possible. We do not want to see these young athletes simply decide they do not want to compete because the expenses involved in getting to and from an event and the accommodation are too high. These athletes work hard to raise funds for themselves from their own initiatives, but there are also times when the local raffle and the cake stall wear a bit thin.

I ask the minister — and it is pleasing to see him in the house — if he would consider these two specific sporting areas and wherever else the opportunity arises and support our young stars and coaches in their endeavours to represent us and themselves at the highest levels in their chosen fields. I seek the minister's assistance for local funding.

### Responses

**Ms ASHER** (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — The member for Evelyn raised with me an important issue regarding regional tourism support. In the specific instance she raised she asked for funds for a local event, the Shedfest Wine Festival, which is due to be held from 8 to 9 October. During that festival wineries on the Warburton Highway — and the member listed them — open their sheds for a two-day wine and food festival.

This is one of a number of significant local events in regional Victoria where the objective of government funding is to get tourist visitation to those regions. The member for Evelyn has a strong track record in tourism and has been a strong supporter of and business owner in the wineries industry. I am delighted to inform her that under the Country Victoria Events program she will receive a small grant — this is a very small grants program — of \$3000 for that particular event.

I would also like to advise the house that 24 regional organisations will receive funding for marketing their events right across Victoria, and a total of \$74 500 will be provided in this round. I am happy to advise the house that the Bendigo Annual Harvest Moon Festival, by way of example, will be funded; the Pyrenees Escape will be funded, the King Valley wine region's Weekend Fit for a King and La Dolce Vita events will be funded; Geelong's Toast the Coast will be funded with significant support from the member for South Barwon; the Heathcote Wine and Food Festival will be funded; the Shepparton Kidsfest will be funded, with strong support from the member for Shepparton; the

Australian Show and Shine at Euroa will be funded, with exemplary and typical support from the member for Benalla; and there will be funding for an inaugural event, the festival of performing arts at Lorne, and the member for Polwarth has been a strong supporter of that.

As I indicated, there are events right across country Victoria. I will not name them all, nor will I provide the details of the strong funding support from a range of local members, but suffice it to say that the Country Victoria Events program is one that I initiated when I was in government a long time ago. I was pleased to see that the Labor Party continued that program. I am delighted to be here tonight to announce 24 grants across regional Victoria. As I always say, the idea is to get visitation to those regions, and I urge all members of Parliament, if they have the opportunity, to attend some of these significant events in regional Victoria, because their presence will generate a significant economic benefit, which is the reason the government is involved in the grants program.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I will first respond to the adjournment matters raised by the member for Rodney and the member for Murray Valley, who made very similar requests. They are trying to get assistance for high-level athletes and community clubs that are doing great work in promoting sport and recreation in country Victoria. As we all know — and, as I think was highlighted by the members speaking on this matter — there is a great deal of cost for athletes if they have to travel to national events in Melbourne or across the state. It is a very heavy burden on their families and a very heavy burden on their clubs. It is a big cash burden with which they need assistance.

I am pleased to say that there are a couple of programs that are run by the government, which have been run since 1996. Those are the Country Action grant scheme and also the Victalent scheme. These programs have funded more than 4000 local projects since 1996. The Country Action grant scheme supports organisations to improve the way they operate, better shape the opportunities they offer and develop their members, including volunteers. As we all know, volunteers play an important role in the support of sport and recreation, particularly in country Victoria. The Country Action grants also assist other community groups. The Victalent grants assist athletes, coaches and teams with the cost of travel for training and competition.

I am pleased to be able to say to the member for Rodney and particularly to the member for Murray Valley that I will be able to assist the groups they have

spoken about. The member for Rodney spoke about the Nathalia Little Athletics club. I am pleased to say that it will be supported through the Country Action grant scheme. I will be able to assist the club through that program by supporting its coaching program to the tune of \$2480. The request relates to a very important program, and that will be funded.

The member for Rodney also spoke about several other clubs wanting support for their athletes and coaches to travel to events, those being the Cohuna Kangas Football and Netball Club, the Kyabram football netball club and the Rochester and District Horse and Pony Club. Each of those clubs put in applications under the Victalent program, and I can advise the member for Rodney that they will also receive funding under that program.

The member for Murray Valley raised a couple of matters in relation to support for athletes. Again, I can assist the member in announcing that the Wangaratta City Soccer Club, which put in two applications, and the Wangaratta Cycling Club, which also put in two applications for Victalent grants of \$500 each, will get those grants.

The member for Pascoe Vale tried to speak to me earlier in the night — at least she had the decency to try to speak to me — about matters in relation to the Pascoe Vale Sports Club and the Harold Stevens athletics track, which I am informed by the member supports the Coburg Harriers and various schools around that area. The matter she raised is that the condition of the track is 'grave' and support is needed for the refurbishment of it. She also spoke about support for the Coburg City Oval and the Oak Park pool. The member has invited me to her electorate and offered me coffee and cakes. I am not a coffee drinker and I probably do not need to eat cakes, but I appreciated the offer all the same. I ask the member to write to me with some details, and we will see what we can arrange.

In response to the member for Albert Park, it is interesting that he has raised this matter. I did not think he would have the courage to raise it, because he knows full well that his government after 11 years left us with a big black hole in relation to the state sporting centre.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — The former minister, the member for Monbulk, is sitting at the table opposite me. Members of the previous government all allowed for the scope of this project to explode. Every day, every week there was more to be done, but did they

fund it? No, they did not fund it. They were told it would cost \$60 million to relocate the athletics centre and the Victorian Institute of Sport to the Albert Park Reserve. They were told it would cost \$60 million, but what did they put up? They put up \$50 million. That was not enough. They knew it was not enough. They left us with a black hole. It was the good and responsible government on this side of the house that delivered that in this state budget. Another \$15 million had to be tipped into this project to ensure it would be completed.

Nothing is going to change in relation to the way those facilities will operate. The member has put out press releases about how good this project will be, but I wish he had put out requests. I wish he would show us letters where we asked for this to be fully funded, but he has not. He spoke to me when I was appointed minister and said, 'I hope you have got more money to fill this project's black hole'. We found the money, and we filled the black hole. But did he do anything about that?

We know these facilities will be world class because of the \$15 million extra funding we have put into them. They will be utilised all year round for school athletic meetings, regional and state athletics — and, importantly, the Little Athletics clubs will be able to use that facility for competitions. Little Athletics Victoria has been consulted throughout the development of the new centre at Albert Park. I can confirm that the facilities have been designed to accommodate Little Athletics meetings and events. It should be noted, and I can guarantee, that Little Athletics Australia will be a tenant at this place, along with Athletics Australia and Athletics Victoria. This will be a premier athletics facility for the state. Victoria has a proud history of providing quality athletics facilities. Whether it be the MCG or the Rod Laver Arena, all these facilities are fantastic. This facility at Albert Park will be of world-class standard for athletics and for the Victorian Institute of Sport.

I want to reinforce that the facility will certainly be made available for use by local Little Athletics clubs, such as the South Melbourne District Little Athletics Club, which is based at Albert Park. I wrote to the club and asked it to work with the State Sports Centre Trust as future venue managers of that facility. The venue will be the home of Little Athletics and athletes, ranging from those at the grassroots level to those at the elite level. I am advised that the State Sports Centre Trust is yet to finalise its pricing schedule for the new facilities. However, I am also advised that the trust will finalise these details in the coming months after it has taken over the management of the facility.

I highlight again that were it not for the Baillieu government this would not be the world-class facility that was promised by the Labor government through the former minister and the strong support of the member for Albert Park. The member for Albert Park's campaign is scurrilous, because he knows that nothing has changed in relation to the management of that facility and that if it were not for the \$15 million, it would not happen.

**Mr DIXON** (Minister for Education) — I speak in relation to the matter raised by the member for Monbulk regarding Boronia Heights primary and secondary schools, the new P-12 school and the funding of its second stage. Over the last few months many school communities and members have come to me asking for funding. During the last 11 years the former government had ample resources and record income margins to take the opportunity to build many schools and finish a lot of projects. What we found when we came to government was that a number of these projects were just empty promises. School communities were promised a pot of gold if they signed on the dotted line. They went through all the pain and suffering over a number of years only to find there was no money for them at the end of the rainbow. Additionally, incredible amounts of maintenance have been let fall by the wayside.

There are a lot of schools in Victoria that want a lot of money. I am proud that under difficult circumstances we have announced over \$200 million of capital funding in this year's budget. There were priorities right around the state, including a couple of very important special schools in the Broadmeadows electorate, as I mentioned earlier today. We are looking at all the needs across all the schools across all of Victoria and all around Melbourne, no matter what suburb it may be. I am happy to talk with the school community in Boronia Heights. I know they have requested a visit, and that was the request from the member. I will get out there at some stage because I am keen to follow up on all of those requests, but no promises can be made.

We have black holes out there. For example, we can look at the \$4 billion in GST revenue that we expected to receive but since coming to government have not received. My ministry would have expected to receive, conservatively, about \$1.5 billion of that over four years. You can imagine how many schools we could have worked on and repaired if we had received that funding — that is, if our friends on the other side had stuck up for Victoria rather than taking what I think is a raw deal.

They are the conditions. That is the reality of the situation. We cannot fund all of the people all of the time, but I would like to be informed about all the projects that require funding, and I look forward to coming out there to visit the school and talk to the school community.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Minister for Racing) — I thank the member for Narracan for raising his concerns, those of the Moe Racing Club and those of the wider Moe and district community with respect to rain damage at the Moe Racecourse.

The member for Narracan understands that racing is not only an exciting sport; it is also an important part of the regional and rural economy. It is an industry worth over \$2 billion across Victoria and one that creates 70 000 jobs, many of those in regional and rural Victoria. That is why in the budget that was handed down yesterday the Baillieu government provided \$79.5 million in additional funding to help grow and develop our racing industry across all three codes.

The member raised an issue with respect to flood damage at the Moe Racing Club. Members would be aware that we had heavy rainfall and flood events late last year and early this year that caused significant damage to a number of racing facilities throughout the state, whether they be harness racing facilities at Charlton or thoroughbred racing facilities at a number of other venues. The thoroughbred industry has been hit particularly hard, with flood damage to infrastructure at racecourses at Kyneton, Echuca, Stawell, Yarra Valley, Ballarat, Moe and Geelong. Many race meetings have had to be transferred, cancelled or abandoned as a result of that flood damage, and it has had an impact on training facilities at a number of those venues.

I have already visited the racecourses at Yarra Valley, Kyneton and Benalla to inspect the damage and help find solutions. As Minister for Racing I have worked constructively with Country Racing Victoria and Racing Victoria Ltd, which both do an excellent job in working in partnership with government to provide funding and assistance for a number of those tracks.

I understand that Moe Racing Club has already undertaken significant works of its own volition, and it is to be congratulated on not sitting back and waiting but getting on and fixing the sandtrack and undertaking a number of works. As the member for Narracan said, some of the significant drainage system problems will require further work and more expense, which is beyond the capacity of the Moe Racing Club.

I am pleased to advise the member for Narracan that I will accept his invitation to visit Moe. I will be available to visit Moe next Wednesday with the member for Narracan, and I look forward to meeting with the representatives of the Moe Racing Club and having the member for Narracan make representations on their behalf with respect to the extent of the flood damage. I know that he, in conjunction with Racing Victoria Ltd and Country Racing Victoria, will put forward a very strong case for government assistance. I am sure that the government and the racing industry will look favourably upon those issues. I very much look forward to visiting Moe next Wednesday with the member for Narracan in order to follow up on these important issues.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** (Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship) — The member for South Barwon raised a matter for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. He requested that the minister visit and meet with local Landcare groups. I will refer that matter to the minister for his response.

The member for Broadmeadows raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health and asked him to provide \$11 million in funding for the Northern Hospital to build a training and education centre. I will refer this matter to the Minister for Health for his direct response.

The member for Clayton raised a matter for the attention of the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry. He requested that the minister meet with key stakeholders, including the local council and residents, to discuss the phasing out of training at Moorabbin Airport by 2015. I will refer that matter to the minister, but I am of the understanding that last year the federal government signed off on a master plan for Moorabbin Airport which I think included training. Perhaps the member for Clayton should also speak to Simon Crean, the local federal member, to see what he can do to assist him. As I said, I will refer the matter that the member raised for the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry for his direct response.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — Order! The house is now adjourned.

**House adjourned 10.46 p.m.**

